

SCOWAH—THE SCHMULOWITZ COLLECTION OF WIT AND HUMOR

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"A vain man, a frightened man, a bigoted man, or an angry man, cannot laugh at himself or be laughed at; but the man who can laugh at himself or be laughed at has taken another step towards the perfect sanity which brings peace on earth and good will toward man."

This is the credo of Nat Schmulowitz, prominent San Francisco attorney and civic leader. The Schmulowitz Collection of Wit and Humor (SCOWAH) is a clear manifestation of his belief.

As a token of seven years' service as a member of the Library Commission in San Francisco, Mr. Schmulowitz gave this collection to the Public Library on April 1, 1947. Beginning with ninety-three choice books he has added to the collection, sometimes at the rate of one thousand items a year. In his diligent search Mr. Schmulowitz has combed bookshops all over the world for suitable additions to SCOWAH. The result is a collection which is one of the most complete and rare of its kind, numbering in excess of 13,000 items at present, and still growing.

SCOWAH includes books, pamphlets, and magazines of wit and humor in more than thirty-five languages and covers a span of more than four centuries. Anecdotal humor is especially strong and many items in the area of identifiable folklore can be found. There are numerous scarce, out-of-print books and rarities; among these are various editions of Joe Miller, Nasreddin, and the facetiae of Poggio.

ANECDOTA SCOWAH, a series of historical studies on humor, serve to illustrate Mr. Schmulowitz's scholarly interest in this field. He has published five numbers as keepsakes for Roxburghe Club members thus far: Number One, Epitaphia, and a Precursory Apologia with an Apologue, by Nat Schmulowitz; Number Two, The Legend of Joe Miller, by Evan Esar, with a Prefatory Fragment by Nat Schmulowitz; Number Three, The Ancient Greeks and Joe Miller, by Albert Rapp, and a Prolegomenon by Nat Schmulowitz; Number Four, The

Joe Miller of the Near East (Nasreddin Hojah), by Albert Rapp, and an Onsoz and Bibliography by Nat Schmulowitz; Number Five, The Facetiae of Poggio, by Albert Rapp, and a Praefatio and Bibliography by Nat Schmulowitz.

Also included are a variety of humor magazines from many lands. A sampling of these would show such titles as Pourquoi pas? (Belgium); Fou-rire and Rire (France); Simplicissimus (Germany); Punch, Tit-bits, and Humour Variety (Great Britain); Dublin Opinion (Ireland); Candido and Traverso (Italy); Mangadokuhon (Japan); Chistes y pasatiempos (Spanish); and Krokodil (U. S. S. R.).

In June, 1962, Mr. Schmulowitz published the Catalog of the Schmulowitz Collection of Wit and Humor (SCOWAH) which has been distributed by the San Francisco Public Library to other libraries and educational institutions throughout the United States and Europe. This guide describes the contents of the collection as of October 10, 1961.

Upon the establishment of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections in the San Francisco Public Library last March, SCOWAH was assigned to this new unit. Plans call for full cataloging of the collection. At the present time holdings are listed under author, title, and language. To provide a better guide to the collection, Library of Congress subject headings will be employed; these will be augmented by supplementary headings used to describe rarities or unusual specialties.

On the shelves the books will be arranged so that they will ultimately be divided by imprint or country, with subarrangement by author; therefore, American humor, British humor, Chinese humor, etc. will be separated from one another. Books on similar subjects will be brought together by means of subject headings in the card catalog.

The collection is open and available to research scholars, writers, and to general readers interested in the subject of humor. Because of the specialized nature and scarcity of most of the collection, the Library's general policy is not to loan materials from it. However, facilities for photo-reproduction are available and copies of needed materials and information can be provided.