RICHARD GARNETT

ESSAYS IN LIBRARIANSHIP AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Содержание

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PREFACE

The essays collected in this volume are for the most part occasional and desultory, produced in compliance with requests of friends, or the appeals of editors of bibliographical journals or organisers of library congresses, to meet some special emergency, and treating of whatever appropriate matter came readiest to hand. The most important of them, however, though composed at considerable intervals, and devoid of any conscious relation to each other, are yet united by the presence of a pervading idea, which may be defined as the importance of scientific processes as auxiliaries to library management.

It seems almost preposterous to speak of typography as a scientific process, yet such it is in its relation to the graphic art which it superseded as an agent in the production of books. It would be the merest surplusage to advocate the application of printing to any class of manuscript books but one; and that, strangely enough, is the book of books, the catalogue. When it is considered how few of the great libraries of Europe have

as yet managed to get their catalogues printed, and in how many the introduction of print is as yet resisted, or beset with impediments hitherto insurmountable, it is clear that the benefits of printing may even now be set forth with profit. Fortunately, however, the question is but historical as regards the only library of which the present writer can presume to speak. Typography has now reigned at the British Museum for nearly twenty years, and any discussion of its advantages or disadvantages contained in the following essays may be regarded as out of date. It is hoped, nevertheless, that the historical interest attaching to the subject may excuse the reproduction of these papers. "Public Libraries and their Catalogues" (1879) depicts the hesitations of a transition period when the subject was in the air, but when the precise manner in which the introduction of print would take place was as yet uncertain. "The Printing of the British Museum Catalogue" (1882) describes the results of nearly two years of actual work; and "The Past, Present, and Future of the British Museum Catalogue" (1888) reviews the entire subject, both historically and with a view to the eventual republication of the catalogue. A fourth paper, contributed to the American Library Conference of 1885, has been withheld, to minimise the repetition which may be justly alleged as a defect in the essays now reprinted. The indulgent reader will consider that it was impossible to travel repeatedly over the same ground without frequent recurrence to the same facts and arguments: and it has been thought better to tolerate an admitted literary

blemish than to run any risk of impairing the documentary value of the articles. If the writer had once begun to alter, he might have been tempted to alter much. Readers of the present day may feel surprise at the tentative character of some portions of the first essay in order of date, and at what seems almost a discouragement of the idea of a complete printed catalogue. The principal reason was the moderate expectation then entertained of any substantial help from the Treasury. As a matter of fact, the annual grant bestowed in the first instance would have kept the catalogue forty years at press; and, had a strictly alphabetical order of publication been adopted, it would after some years have been pointed out with derision that the great British Museum Catalogue was still in its A B C. The writer, therefore, exerted what influence he possessed to keep the idea of a complete printed catalogue in the background, and to enforce that of the publication of single articles complete in themselves which would be valuable as special bibliographies. A mere fragment of letter A, it was manifest, could be of little use beyond the walls of the Museum, but a separate issue of the article Aristotle might have great worth. The situation was entirely altered when the Treasury so increased their grant as to afford a reasonable prospect of finishing the catalogue in twenty years instead of forty. The fragmentary system of publication was thereupon quietly dropped, and printing went on in steady alphabetical sequence. It is due to the Treasury to state that, since this augmentation of the grant, their treatment of this branch of the

Museum service has been uniformly liberal. It is to be hoped that this bountiful spirit will not expire with the completion of the catalogue, but will find expression in a reprint incorporating all the accessions which have grown up while it has been at press, as proposed in a very able article in the *Quarterly Review* for October 1898.

After the application of print to the catalogue, mechanical process has rendered no such service to the British Museum Library as the introduction of the sliding-press, the subject of another essay. While, however, printing was the result of half a century of incessant controversy, the sliding-press seemed to fall from the clouds. Its introduction was a *coup d'état*; five minutes sufficed to convince the Principal Librarian of the soundness of the idea, and the thing was virtually done. No more striking contrast can be conceived than that between the condition of the Library the day before this feasibility was demonstrated, oppressed by the apparently insoluble problem how to find room for its books, and the condition of the Library the day after solution, suddenly endowed with a practically indefinite capacity for expansion, save only in the department of newspapers. No one unacquainted with the internal economy of the Museum will fully appreciate the saving of public money, to say no more, effected by this simple contrivance.

Print and the sliding-press are now, along with the electric light, undisputed possessions of the Museum; but telegraphy and photography, the two other applications of scientific ingenuity

recommended in this volume, have not yet been enlisted in her service. When the printing telegraph obtains a footing, ample occupation will be found for it. Its most useful as well as most striking application, however, will probably always be the one principally dwelt upon here, the enabling every demand for a book made in the reading-room to be simultaneously registered in the Library, thus abolishing at a stroke the vexatious delays that now intervene between the writing of a ticket and its delivery in the proper quarter. The advantage alike to the public and to the staff is so obvious that the only question ought to be as to the applicability of electrical power to the transmission of legible messages under the special circumstances, which an intelligent course of experiments would speedily determine.

If telegraphy has been neglected, the same cannot be said of photography. The most perfect unanimity exists within and outside the Museum with respect to the benefit which the adoption of photography as a department of the regular work of the institution would confer alike upon it and upon the public. Nevertheless, not a single step has been taken since the writer brought the subject forward in 1884, preceded as this had been by the successful introduction of photography at the Bodleian Library in connection with the Oxford University Press. Government seems unable to perceive the public benefit to be derived from the cheap reproduction and unlimited multiplication with infallible accuracy of historical documents and current official papers; and although the Museum has of

late successfully resorted to photography for its own publications, this has necessarily involved the employment of a professional photographer, whose charges are an insuperable impediment to any considerable extension of the system. It cannot be too emphatically reiterated that the question is entirely one of expense. So long as the photographer is a private tradesman he must of necessity be paid by his customers, and for any extensive undertaking must inevitably charge prices embarrassing to public institutions and prohibitive to private individuals. Make him a public salaried officer, and by far the larger part of the cost is eliminated at a stroke. What may be done is shown by the recent exploit of the Newbery Library at Chicago, referred to in a note at page 86, which has turned the bewildering multitude of the "accession" parts of the British Museum Catalogue into a single alphabetical series by simply photographing the titles singly, and then combining the copies in a catalogue. It is quite possible that the enterprise may prove financially unremunerative, but this would not be the case if it had been executed as a portion of the work of a national institution controlled by the State, which on its part would have been recouped, or nearly so, by the patronage of private customers. It is only necessary to add that the State should on no account seek to make a profit out of photography, and that all transactions between the Museum or any other public department and the nation, where money is concerned, should be conducted on the principle of affording the greatest possible public advantage at the smallest possible cost.

Of the essays and addresses unconnected with this particular group not much need be said. As before mentioned, they are in general mere occasional pieces, called into being by the casual need for a literary contribution or a speech. On such occasions the writer has always endeavoured to select some subject somewhat out of the common track, with a distinctly bibliographical flavour if possible, but not quite so dry as an exact collation of all the known copies of the Gutenberg Bible. In such a line he would have been little likely to distinguish himself. The Pope is not always a theologian, nor need the Keeper of Printed Books inevitably be a devotee of black-letter lore. The bibliographical erudition apparent in the essay on South American bibliography is entirely derived from Señor Medina's classic work upon the subject.

The biographical notices at the end of the volume have afforded the writer a welcome opportunity of paying a just tribute to men of eminence in the world of librarianship. The memoir of Sir Anthony Panizzi may demand some apology on the ground of the haste and slightness almost inseparable from an obituary notice indited *currente calamo*. The fame, however, of the man universally recognised as the second founder of the British Museum, can well dispense with polished eulogy. The notices of his successors, composed more at leisure, embody the writer's cordial appreciation of public service, and grateful sense of personal kindness. In conclusion, the author has to acknowledge his obligations to the Council of the Library

Association, to Messrs. Kegan Paul & Co., and to others, by whose permission these essays are reprinted.

R. GARNETT.

May 18, 1899.

ADDRESS TO THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION[1]

There are times in the lives of institutions as well as individuals when retrospect is a good thing; when it is desirable to look back and see how far one has travelled, and by what road; whether the path of progress has always been in the right direction; whether it may not have been sometimes unnecessarily devious; whether valuable things may not have been dropped or omitted, in quest of which it may be desirable to travel back; whether, on the other hand, the journey may not have been fertile in glad surprises, and have led to acquisitions and discoveries of which, at starting, one entertained no notion. The interval of sixteen years which has elapsed since the first meeting of this Association at London, suggests that such a time may well have arrived in its history. There is yet another reason why the present meeting invites to retrospection. We can look back in every sense of the term. All our past is behind us in a physical as well as in an intellectual sense. We are as far north as ever we can go. There are, I rejoice to think, British libraries and librarians even farther north than Aberdeen, but it is almost safe to predict that there never will be congresses. We are actually farther north than Moscow, almost as far as St. Petersburg. Looking back in imagination we can see

[1] Aberdeen, September 1893.

the map of Great Britain and Ireland – and we must not forget France – dotted over with the places of our meetings, all alike conspicuous by the cordiality of our reception, each specially conspicuous by some special remembrance, as —

> "Each garlanded with her peculiar flower,
> Danced into light, and died into the shade."

The temptation to linger upon these recollections is very strong, but I must not yield to it, because more serious matters claim attention, and because time would not suffice, and because the interest of our members and any other auditors must necessarily be in proportion to the number of meetings they have themselves attended, while the time, alas! slowly but certainly approaches when the first meetings will not be remembered by any one. Yet in a retrospective address it would be impossible to pass without notice the first two meetings of all, for it was by them that the character, since so admirably maintained, was impressed upon the Association. We first met at the London Institution in Finsbury Circus under the auspices of the man who, above all men, has the best right to be accounted our founder – the present Bodleian Librarian, Mr. Nicholson. Meetings in London, I may say for the information of our northern friends, labour under a serious defect as compared with Aberdeen and other more favoured places – a deficiency in the accessories of sight-seeing and hospitality. Not that Londoners are any

less hospitable than other citizens, but there are reasons patent to all why in that enormous metropolis – till lately under such a very anomalous system or no system of municipal government, and where innumerable objects of interest are for the most part common property – entertainments cannot be systematically organised, especially at seasons of the year when unless, under the present dispensation, one is an unpaired member of Parliament, it is almost a reproach to be found in the metropolis. For all that, I scarcely think that any meeting was enjoyed with zest equal to the gathering in that amphitheatre and lecture room, nearly as subdued in light but nowise as cool as a submarine grot. For we were doing then what we could not do afterwards in the majestic hall of King's College, Cambridge, or in the splendid deliberative chamber accorded to us by the liberality of the corporation of Birmingham. We were legislating, we were tracing the lines of the future; most interesting and important of all, we were proving whether the conception of a Library Association, so attractive on paper, was really a living conception that would work. That this question was so triumphantly answered I have always attributed in great measure to the presence among us of a choice band of librarians from the United States. These gentlemen knew what we only surmised; they had been accustomed to regard themselves as members of an organised profession; they felt themselves recognised and honoured as such; they had ample experience of congresses and public canvasses and library journals; they were just the men

to inspire English librarians, not with the public spirit which they possessed already, but with the *esprit de corps* which, in their then dispersed and unorganised condition, they could not possess. They came to me at least as a revelation; the horizon widened all round, and the life and spirit they infused into the meeting contributed largely to make it the success it was. Had we gone away then with the sensation of failure, it is not likely that I should now be addressing you in Aberdeen or elsewhere. But there was another ordeal to be faced. Critics say that the second book or picture is very commonly decisive of the future of an author or artist whose *début* has been successful – it shows whether he possesses staying power. Well, when next year we came to Oxford, in that sense of the term we did come to stay. The variety and the interest of the papers, and the spirit of the discussions, showed that there existed both ample material for our deliberations and ample interest and ability to render deliberation profitable. Here again we were largely indebted to individuals, and my words will find an echo in all who knew the late Mr. Ernest Chester Thomas, when I say that never did he exhibit his gifts to such advantage, never did he render such services to the Association, as on this occasion. His courtesy, tact, and good humour all can emulate; the advantages which he enjoyed in finding himself so thoroughly at home could have been shared by any other member of the University; but the peculiar brightness with which he enlivened and irradiated the proceedings was something quite his own. I must not suffer

myself to dwell on other gatherings – all equally agreeable, some almost as memorable; but, lest I seem forgetful of a very important branch of the work of the Association, I must briefly allude to the monthly meetings held in London, where so many valuable papers have been read – subsequently made general property by publication in the Journal of the Association, if originally delivered to audiences probably very fit, certainly very few. It is greatly to be regretted that provincial members cannot participate in these gatherings, but this is practically impossible, save by the annihilation of time and space – the modest request, says Pope, of absent lovers.

I shall now proceed to take up some of the more interesting themes broached at the first meeting of the Association, time not allowing me to proceed further, and to remark upon the progress which may appear to have been made in the interval towards accomplishing the objects then indicated. I shall then venture some brief remarks on the library movement at the present day, as concerns public feeling and public sympathy in their effect on the status of librarianship as a profession. My observations must of course be very desultory and imperfect, for an adequate treatment of these subjects would absorb the entire time of the present meeting. I have also always felt that the President's address, though certainly an indispensable portion of our proceedings, is in one aspect ornamental, and that the real business of a meeting, apart from its legislative and administrative departments, is the reading of papers and the

discussion to which these give rise. I hope that these discussions will be, like the Thames, "without o'erflowing, full." Overflow we must not. It will be a great satisfaction to me if, when the meeting is over, it should be found that everything written for it has been heard by it, and that nothing has been "taken as read."

The most important subject introduced at the Conference of 1877 was that of free libraries in small towns, but any remarks which I may offer on this will come more appropriately into a review of the progress which libraries are now making. Next in importance, perhaps, certainly in general interest, were the discussions on cataloguing. In this department I may congratulate the Association on material progress, to which its own labours have, in great measure, contributed. There is much more unanimity than there used to be respecting the principles on which catalogues should be made. Admirable catalogues have been issued, and continue to be kept up by the principal libraries throughout the country, and if now and then some very small and benighted library issues a catalogue whose *naïvetés* excite derision, such cases are very exceptional. Rules have been promulgated both here and in the United States which have met with general assent, and I do not anticipate that any material departure from them will be made. I only wish to say, as every librarian is naturally supposed to regard his own catalogue as a model, that I do not regard the British Museum Catalogue in this light so far as concerns libraries of average size and type. The requirements of large and small libraries are very different,

and that may be quite right in one which would be quite wrong in another. I can, perhaps, scarcely express this difference more accurately than by remarking that while the catalogue of a small, and more especially of a popular, library, should be a finding catalogue, that of a large library representing all departments of literature must be to a great extent a literary catalogue. It is not meant merely to enable the reader to procure his book with the least possible delay, but also to present an epitome of the life-work of every author, and to assist the researches of the literary historian. Hence the explanation and justification of some points which have on specious grounds been objected to in the Museum Catalogue. It has been thought strange, for instance, that anonymous books of which the authorship is known – such as the first editions of the Waverley Novels – should not be entered under the names of the authors. Two excellent reasons may be given: because by so entering the book the character of the catalogue as a bibliographical record would be destroyed; and because by entering one description of anonymous books in one way and another in another, there would be an end to the uniformity of rule which is necessary to prevent a very extensive catalogue from getting into confusion. Another instance is the cataloguing of academical transactions and periodicals under the respective heads of Academies and Periodical Publications, which has been much criticised. It is quite true that the *Quarterly Review* can be found more easily under that head than under "Periodical Publications, London," but it is also true that the

grouping of all academical and all periodical publications under these two great heads is invaluable to the bibliographer, the literary historian, and the statistician, who must be exceedingly thankful that the information of which they are in quest is presented to them in a concentrated form, instead of having to be sought for through an enormous catalogue. These observations do not in any way apply to libraries of an essentially popular character, and I merely make them by way of enforcing the proposition that the works of such libraries and those of national or university libraries are different, and that we must beware of a cast-iron uniformity of rule. There is yet another intermediate class of library, the comparatively small but highly select, such as college and club libraries, which will probably find it more advantageous to pursue an intermediate course, as I imagine they do, judging from the very excellent specimens of cataloguing for which we are indebted to some of them. And there is yet another class, the libraries of the collectors of exceedingly rare literatures, such as the Chatsworth Library, Mr. Huth's, and Mr. Locker-Lampson's. In such catalogues minuteness of bibliographical detail is rightly carried to an extent uncalled for in great miscellaneous catalogues like that of the British Museum, and which, it is to be hoped, may never be attempted there, for if it were it would disorganise the establishment. It is not the business of librarians as public servants to provide recondite bibliographical luxuries. These things are excellent, but they lie in the department of specialists and amateurs, who may be

expected to cultivate it in the future as they have done in the past. The limits of public and private enterprise must be kept distinct.

Another question of cataloguing which occupied the attention of the Conference of 1877 was the important one of subject catalogues. In this I am able to announce the most satisfactory progress. In the face of the mass of information continually pouring in, the world has become alive to the importance of condensing, distributing, and rendering generally available the information which it possesses already. Three very remarkable achievements of this kind may be noticed. The first is Poole's Index to Periodicals, with its continuation, a work so invaluable that we now wonder how we could have existed without it, but so laborious that we could hardly have hoped to see it exist at all, especially considering that it is an achievement of co-operative cataloguing. In illustration of the want it supplies, I may mention that it has been found necessary at the British Museum to reproduce the preliminary tables by photography in a number of copies, the originals having been worn to pieces. The next work I shall mention is the subject index to the modern books acquired by the British Museum since 1880 – two bulky volumes, prepared in non-official time, with the greatest zeal and devotion, by the superintendent of the Reading Room, Mr. Fortescue, and continued by him to the present time. They are simply invaluable, and it is only to be regretted that they have been issued at too high a price to be generally available to the public. This is not the case with the third publication which I have to mention – the

classed catalogue issued by Mr. Swan Sonnenschein, the utility of which is very generally known. A cognate feature of the times is the great comparative attention now paid to indexing, which is sometimes carried to lengths almost ludicrous. The author of a work of information who does not give an index is sure to be called over the coals, and with reason, for how else is the reviewer to pick out the plums unless he actually reads the book? I am not sure that this extreme facilitation of knowledge is in all respects a good thing, but it is at present a necessary thing, and correlated with that prevalence of abridged histories and biographies which it is easy to criticise, but which has at least two good points – the evidence it affords of the existence of a healthy appetite for information among a large reading class, and the fact that information is thus diffused among many to whom it would have been inaccessible under other circumstances.

Connected with the subject of indexes is that of dictionary catalogues, in which the alphabetical and the subject catalogues are found in a single list. I retain the opinion I have always held, that this plan may answer where the library and the catalogue are not extensive, but that where they are, confusion results; the wood cannot be seen for the trees. I therefore recommend the librarian of even a small library, in planning his catalogue, as well as everything else, to make sure whether his library may not be destined to become a great one. Half the difficulties under which great libraries labour arise from the failure to take from the first a sufficiently generous view of the possibilities and prospects

of the institution. With this view of dictionary catalogues, it is not likely that they will be adopted at the British Museum, but I have already explained more than once the facilities which the Museum possesses for forming an unequalled series of subject catalogues by simply, when the great general catalogue has been printed, cutting up copies printed on one side only, and arranging them in a number of indexes. There is no doubt that the Museum can amply provide for its own needs in this manner, and thus remove the reproach under which it has always laboured, and still labours, of having no subject catalogue except Mr. Fortescue's. The question is whether the indexes thus created are to become available for the service of libraries and students all over the world by being published and circulated. The solution of this question rests with the Government, and I have alluded to it here principally in the hope of eliciting that expression of public opinion without which Government is hardly likely to act. The question will probably become an actual one towards the end of the present century.

Mention of this question naturally leads to another, which occasioned one of the most interesting discussions of the Conference of 1877 – the subject of the British Museum in its relation to provincial culture. This was ably introduced by our friend Mr. Axon, who dwelt especially on two points in which provincial culture could be promoted by the Museum – the distribution of duplicates and the printing of the catalogue. On both these I am enabled to announce the most satisfactory

progress since they were ventilated in 1877. As regards the distribution of duplicates, indeed, further progress is impossible, for we have distributed all we can spare. The subject was energetically taken up by the present Principal Librarian, Mr. Maunde Thompson, shortly after his accession to office, and the result has been that almost all the principal libraries throughout the country have received important benefactions from the Museum. Libraries of the rank of the Bodleian and the Guildhall have, of course, received the first consideration; but nearly all have had some accession, and in some instances provision has been made for a regular supply of duplicate parliamentary papers. Since the distribution of these duplicates the opportunity has further presented itself, through the extensive purchases made at the sale of the Hailstone Library, for enriching Yorkshire libraries with duplicate tracts relating to that county, and I am sure that the trustees will readily avail themselves of any subsequent occasions. I am aware that some think that distribution might be carried even further, but I am certain that this is not the case. We are bound in honour not to give any presented books; valuable presented books must be protected by second copies; copyright books cannot be parted with because receipts have been given for them which, if the books disappeared, there would be nothing to justify, while the books and the stamp showing the date of reception may be required for legal purposes; finally, the international copyright which used to provide the Museum with so many duplicates of

foreign books has now become utterly extinct in consequence of the Berne Convention. The progress made in the far more important department of the printing of the catalogue is already well known to you. I have been able to give the Association a satisfactory report of progress on two occasions, and I am now able to state that we have entered into letter P. Some important gaps remain to be filled up, but on the other hand the latter part of the catalogue is printed and published from U to the end. If the Treasury continues its aid, I have little doubt that the whole will be published some time before the end of the century. Mr. Axon certainly did not exaggerate the value which such a publication would possess for general culture, and I am only sorry that it is not as yet properly recognised. Every large town ought to have a copy of the Museum Catalogue, and the supply of the accession parts ought to be regularly kept up. It is too late now to do what might have been done if the importance of the undertaking had been recognised from the first: but the oversight can soon be repaired if the catalogue is reprinted as soon as completed, with the inclusion of all the additional titles that have since grown up. The edition can then be made as large as is necessary to accommodate every important town in the United Kingdom. But this will not be done without the application of considerable pressure to the Government, and this will not come without a much more general interest on the part of the public than there is any reason to suppose exists at present. This might, however, be created by judicious stimulus, which must come in the first instance from

librarians, who, though not collectively a highly influential body, have many means of privately influencing persons of weight, and making themselves directly and indirectly heard in the public press.

I will take the opportunity of adding a few words for the honour of a late eminent librarian. In the numerous papers which I have written on the subject of the Museum Catalogue, I have always made a point of bringing forward the inestimable services of the late Principal Librarian, Mr. Edward Augustus Bond, in relation to it. Everything which I have said I repeat. Without Mr. Bond the catalogue would not now exist in print, or its appearance would at any rate have been indefinitely deferred. In examining, however, non-official papers, I have lately ascertained that Mr. Thomas Watts, one of my predecessors as Keeper of Printed Books, advocated the printing of the catalogue as early as 1855. Like myself, when I recommended printing, not on abstract grounds, but from the impossibility of any longer finding space for the catalogue in the Reading Room, Mr. Watts was led to adopt his view by collateral considerations, which it would take too much time to explain now, but which will be understood when I publish his paper, which I purpose doing. Meanwhile I am glad to have paid this passing tribute to the memory of the most learned and the most widely informed librarian that the Museum or the country ever possessed.

Speaking of the publication of Museum catalogues since the

foundation of this Association, I ought not to forget that of the early English books prior to 1640, edited by Mr. Bullen; or that of the maps, edited by Professor Douglas; or the various catalogues of Oriental books and manuscripts. The latter, prepared by Dr. Rieu, are treasures of information, very much more than ordinary catalogues.

Another subject was introduced at the Conference of 1877, which admits of wider development than any of those already mentioned, and in which very much more remains to be done. I allude to the question of the employment of photography as an auxiliary to bibliography, broached by our lamented friend the late Mr. Henry Stevens, in his paper on "Photo-Bibliography." Though the ideas suggested by Mr. Stevens were highly ingenious, they were perhaps better adapted for development by private enterprise than by library organisations. But they led up directly to another matter of much greater importance, which I had myself the honour of bringing before the Dublin Conference – the feasibility of making book-photography national by the creation of a photographic department at the British Museum. I need not repeat at length what was then said by myself and other speakers respecting the immense advantage of providing a ready and cheap means for the reproduction of books in facsimile, by which rare books and perishing manuscripts could be multiplied to any extent; by which press copies could be provided at a nominal expense for anything that it was desired to reprint; by which legal documents could be placed beyond

the reach of injury, and the vexed question of the custody of parish registers solved for ever; by which a great system of international exchange could be established for the historical manuscripts of all countries. The one point which cannot be too often repeated or enforced is that the essence of the scheme consists in the abolition of the private photographer, at present an inevitable and most useful individual, but who is sadly in the way of larger public interests. So long as a private profit has to be made, photography cannot be cheap. Transfer this duty to a public officer paid by a public salary, and the chief element of expense has disappeared; while the slight expense of this salary and cost of material, if it is thought worth while to insist upon its repayment, will be repaid over and over by a trifling charge imposed upon the public. Our Association took the matter up, but nothing tangible has as yet resulted from its efforts, nor can much be fairly expected. We are not a body adapted for public agitation, nor can we be; we have too little influence as individuals; as a corporation we are too dispersed; our general meetings are necessarily infrequent; we want organisation and momentum. Nevertheless, very important progress in this direction may be recorded, or I should not have been able to include it in my address. It is due to the University of Oxford, which has established a photographic department in connection with the Bodleian Library and the University Press, which has shown the practicability of the undertaking, and has already rendered important services to private persons

and public institutions, the British Museum among the latter. We are as yet far from the ideal, for the University must of necessity make a higher charge than would be requisite in a Government department, which might indeed be but nominal. But an important step has been taken, and Oxford will always have the honour of having taken the lead in the systematic application of photography to library purposes, as the sister University has that of having been the first, not merely to print a catalogue but to keep a catalogue up in print.

Another subject which naturally attracted the attention of the Association from the first was that of binding. There are few matters of more consequence, and the increasing degeneracy of the bindings of ordinary books, as issued by the publishers, renders it of more importance to librarians than ever. This deterioration is, of course, likely to extend to books bound for libraries, if librarians are not very vigilant. I was amused the other day with the remark of an American librarian, that he bound his newspapers in brown. I thought he exercised a wise discretion, for the newspapers which were bound in green at the Museum have become brown, like the withered leaf, and might as well have been so from the first. I do not know that any important progress has been made in ordinary binding, although our American friends, in their *Library Journal*, are continually giving us ingenious hints which may prove very useful. The buckram recommended by Mr. Nicholson has, I think, maintained its ground; we use it to some extent at the

Museum, and are well satisfied. Goatskin also has been recently employed; it is a beautiful binding, but liable to injury when a volume is subjected to much wear and tear – a point which should always be carefully considered before the binding of a book is decided upon. The better descriptions of cloth seem to be improved, and very recommendable for books in moderate use. I am continually struck with the excellence of the vellum bindings we get from abroad, especially of old books, and wish very much that means could be found of cheapening this most excellent material. In one very important description of binding – roan and sheepskin – I fear we are going back; not from any fault of the binders, but from the conditions of modern life. I am informed that owing to the early age at which the lives of sheep are now prematurely terminated, it is impossible to obtain sheepskin of the soundness requisite for binding purposes, and that books for which it is used must be expected to wear out much sooner than formerly. It is also said, however, that this does not apply to the sheep slaughtered in Australia and New Zealand, and if this is the case it may be worth the while of librarians and bookbinders to enter into communication with the farmers of those parts, through the medium of the Colonial Agents General or otherwise.

Any positive progress that can be reported in binding rather relates to the study, appreciation, and reproduction of old and precious bindings, especially of foreign countries, and is mainly summed up in the record of the exhibitions of bindings which

have been held here, the literary labours of Miss Prideaux and others, the numerous splendid reproductions in chromo-lithography, published or to be published here or abroad, and the tasteful designs of Mr. Zaehnsdorf, Mr. Cobden-Sanderson, and other artists in this branch, which I am glad to see encouraged by the Arts and Crafts Exhibition. The very deterioration of the bindings for the many, to which I have had occasion to refer, stimulates the production of choice bindings for the few. Liberal patronage will not be wanting, and there is no reason why we should not have among us now Bedfords, Roger Paynes, and even craftsmen of a more purely artistic type. Among the signs of the times in this respect is to be noted the establishment of the Grolier Club at New York, celebrated for the admirable examples it has collected, and the interest and value of its publications.

There is another subject which came before the Conference of 1877, which, but for our American friends, I should be unable to include in my survey without infringing my principle of touching upon those subjects alone in which substantial progress can be reported. It is that of co-operative cataloguing, the subject of a note by M. Depping, and indirectly of the late Mr. Cornelius Walford's paper on a general catalogue of English literature. The success of Poole's Index has proved that co-operative cataloguing, or at least indexing, is feasible. I doubt if there is another instance, except one – a work of great national importance, whose long condition of suspended animation and eventual successful prosecution eloquently evince under what

conditions co-operation is practicable or impracticable. This is Dr. Murray's great English dictionary, originally a project of the Philological Society. Until Dr. Murray was invented, the Philological Society could do nothing. The scheme absolutely required some one of competent ability who would go into it heart and soul, sacrifice everything else to it, and devote his whole time to it. When such a man was found in Dr. Murray it is astonishing how soon willing co-workers abounded, and how readily the mass of unorganised material already collected was got into shape. So it will be, I believe, with all co-operative schemes. They will require a head, a single directing mind. Whether this will be forthcoming for the very useful work projected by the Association, the completion of the British Museum Catalogue of early English printed books by the preparation of a supplementary catalogue of such of these books as are not in the Museum, is to me problematical, but time will show. I am, for my part, of opinion that the undertaking had better be delayed until the publication of the second edition of the Museum Catalogue, which it is intended to issue as soon as the printing of the general catalogue is complete, as this would considerably abridge the labour of preparing the supplement. I have already, in the paper read at Paris last year, expressed my opinion that the Museum Catalogue, when complete, will afford the only practicable basis for the far more important and extensive undertaking of a universal catalogue. Success in such an undertaking would indeed be the triumph of successful co-

operation, but when the enormous difficulties of establishing co-operation among the libraries, not of a single country only, but of the whole civilised world, are considered, the difficulty may well appear insuperable, until the various countries shall have approximated much more nearly to the condition of a single country than they have done as yet. Such, however, is the unquestionable tendency of the times, depending upon causes which, so far as can be foreseen, appear likely to operate with augmented intensity, and this movement may proceed far enough to eventually bring with it the universal catalogue along with the universal language, the universal coin, and the universal stamp. Till within a short time ago I had reason to believe that a co-operative catalogue, which I myself proposed several years ago, was on the point of being undertaken. Some may remember that I once read a paper at a London monthly meeting on the preparation of an index of subjects to the Royal Society's catalogue of scientific papers, without which that great store of information is in a measure useless. This paper was re-published in *Nature*, the idea was taken up by Mr. Collins of Edgbaston, the compiler of the indexes to Herbert Spencer's works, and a few weeks ago success seemed about to crown his efforts. I now learn with regret that the scientific men who met in conclave on the project have not been able to agree, and I suppose it will remain in abeyance until some Hercules-Littré arises and does it by himself.

Want of time precludes me from dwelling at length upon any

other subjects than those brought forward at the first Conference of our Association. A brief enumeration, however, of some of the additional subjects discussed at ensuing meetings, to within the ten years immediately preceding our last meeting, will be serviceable as showing the extent of its activity, and, did time permit, it would be possible to show that satisfactory progress has been made in many of the directions indicated. At Oxford, in 1878, besides recurring to many of the themes previously treated, the Conference discussed the condition of cathedral and provincial libraries, printing and printers in provincial towns, size-notation, and, most interesting of all, the salaries of librarians. At Manchester, in 1883, it considered the consolidation and amendment of the Public Libraries Acts, the grouping of populous places for library purposes, the free library in the connection which it has or should have with the Board School, the extent to which novels should be permitted in free libraries, and security against fire. In 1880, at Edinburgh, the libraries of Scotland, and early printing in Scotland, were the subjects of valuable communications, as were press and shelf notation; copyrights, the disposal of duplicates, and the subject which may be said to lie at the root of all the rest, "The Librarian and his Work." In 1881, at London, besides important subjects previously discussed, we heard of law libraries and library buildings. In 1882, at Cambridge, a meeting ever to be remembered for the hospitality and kindness of our distinguished and lamented President – Henry Bradshaw – the Association

heard for the first time of progress actually made in printing the British Museum Catalogue, and papers were read on the all-important subject of librarianship as a profession; on the work of the nineteenth-century librarian for the librarian of the twentieth; on public documents and their supply to public libraries; on local bibliography; on the cataloguing of periodicals and academical publications; and on electric lighting.

Here I suspend my survey, but I think quite enough has been said to indicate the number and importance of the subjects taken up by the Association, while the present condition of some of them, compared with that which they held before they had become subjects of public discussion, proves that the Association's labours have not been in vain in the past, and the rapid development of library work on all sides proves equally that there need be no apprehension of the failure of material for its discussions in the future.

I may fitly conclude my address with some notice of this decided increase of interest in libraries, especially as it relates to free libraries; of the effect which it may be expected to produce upon the status of our profession, and of the claims encouraged and the duties imposed in consequence. Before coming to this division of my subject, however, I ought, as this address is mainly retrospective, to record briefly some exceedingly gratifying occurrences which the historian of libraries will have to note. First among them I place two munificent benefactions – Mr. Carnegie's gift of fifty thousand pounds to the people of

Edinburgh towards the formation of a public library, and Mrs. Rylands' establishment of the Spencer Library, worth probably nearly a quarter of a million, in the city of Manchester. The first is an instance of that public spirit not unknown here, but I fear less known than in the United States, which in that country frequently takes the form of library donation or endowment, but here seldom enters that channel except when a generous employer, like Mr. Brunner of Northwich, builds a library mainly for his work-people. The second instance is almost unprecedented. Donations of money for library purposes are not infrequent, but that a public benefactor like Mrs. Rylands should purchase a famous library at an enormous expense only to make it a public library immediately afterwards, and should moreover take upon herself the entire cost of the requisite buildings, and provide it with a staff and funds for its further extension, are indeed an unprecedented series of occurrences. I need not say that had Mrs. Rylands purchased Lord Spencer's Library solely for herself, we should still have been under deep obligation to her for preventing the books from going out of the country. As it is, she has not only laid Britain under infinite obligation, but I hope will prove to have in the long run raised the standard of bibliographical research throughout the country, both by bringing together so many bibliographical treasures, and by her eminently judicious choice of a librarian. In this connection I may pass on to another event of moment – the recent foundation of a Bibliographical Society through the untiring exertions of Mr.

Copinger. It is very gratifying to find that the constituents of such a society exist in a country where exact bibliography has been so little cultivated, and there can be no doubt of the extent and interest of the field which is open to such a body.

The spread of a taste for bibliography is further illustrated by the fact that an enterprising publisher has found it worth while to produce a series of bibliographical manuals under the able editorship of Mr. Alfred Pollard, and that these have amply repaid him. I may further notice the recent appearance of two works of great importance to English bibliography: Professor Arber's transcripts of the registers of the Stationers' Company, now on the point of completion, and the supplement to Allibone's Dictionary of English Authors. Two great advances in library construction also call for a word of recognition; the introduction of the sliding press at the British Museum, which indefinitely adjourns the ever-pressing question of additional space both in this and in every other library to which it can be adapted; and the general employment of the electric light, which insures libraries against the worst enemy of all. While touching on library construction, I must briefly allude to a very remarkable recent publication, the article "Bibliotheca" in the German Cyclopædia of Architecture. This exhaustive disquisition is illustrated with a number of views of libraries in all parts of the world; not merely of their plans and elevations, their stately saloons and commodious reading rooms, but of the most humble details of

library furniture. It ought to be translated.[2]

I have now to offer some concluding observations on the present prospects of the library movement, as it affects our country and ourselves. In both points of view there is, I think, much matter for congratulation. We have progressed very decidedly since the period to which I have been carrying you back in retrospect. As is often the case, the foundation of this Association was both a symptom and a cause. It indicated the existence of a feeling that libraries had not hitherto occupied that position in public esteem which they ought to have; it further powerfully contributed to secure this due position for them. I think they are obtaining it. We cannot but be conscious of a wave of public feeling slowly rising, the action of which is visible in the establishment of new libraries, in the adoption of the Free Libraries Act by communities which had long resisted it, in improved library buildings and appliances, in acts of munificence like Mr. Carnegie's and Mrs. Rylands's, and as a natural consequence, in the improved salaries and status of librarians. I am aware that very much remains to be done in this latter respect. No one can more earnestly desire that the librarian's position were better than it is. It would not only be a boon to the individual, but a sign full of hope for the community. We are progressing, but we must progress much further. The key of the position seems to me the restrictions imposed upon rates for library purposes. If we could obtain more freedom for

[2] It has since been used in Mr. Burgoyne's volume on Library Architecture.

the ratepayers in this respect, and, which would be much more difficult, persuade them to use it when they had it, our free libraries might be in general what some of the more favoured actually are. It is discouraging indeed to observe in a not very wealthy community, when all necessary expenses have been met, including the librarian's very inadequate salary, what a ridiculous trifle remains for the acquisition of books.

There is only one way to obtain the desired end – to convince the public that they are getting value for their money. The utility of the public library must be visible to all men. It must be recognised as an indispensable element of culture, and it must be shown, which is unfortunately more difficult, that it is actually subserving this end, not only for a few persons here and there, but for a considerable proportion of the population. I am not opposing the admission of fiction into public libraries, but it is evident that if fiction constitutes the larger portion of the literature in request, the average ratepayer will not think, nor ought he to think, that any case has been made out for his inserting his hands more deeply into his pockets. I am quite aware, of course, that librarians individually can do but little in this direction. Whatever can be done should be done, for the entire case of the librarian in claiming respect from the community and the material advantages concatenated therewith is that he is, in however humble a measure, a priest of literature and science; as truly, though not as ostensibly, a public instructor as if he occupied the chair of a professor. Let him endeavour

to live up to this character, and in proportion as the community itself becomes conscious of its shortcomings and its needs, the librarian's estimation will rise and his position improve. We need not despair; like Wordsworth's imprisoned patriot, "we have great allies." The library movement itself is merely the fringe of a great intellectual upheaval, most visibly personified in the School Boards which now cover the country, but also obvious in many other directions. This upheaval will elevate libraries along with it, if they really are the instruments of intellectual culture we firmly believe them to be. Let us ally ourselves with those concerned in the diffusion of these educational agencies. Many of them feel, I know, that schools ought to be the highway to something better, and that even if public school instruction could be accepted as sufficient for the citizen, much of it is inevitably lost from the divorce from all intellectual life which too commonly supervenes when the boy leaves school. But, if the school have but instilled a love of reading, the library steps in to take its place: —

> "Chalice to bright wine
> Which else had sunk into the thirsty earth."

Let the librarian but recognise his true position, and eventually he must find his true level. I do not think that librarians as a body are chargeable with insensibility to their duties in this respect; but it does need to be kept before their fellow-citizens, whose ideas of the profession – derived from tradition, and from

personal experience among some of its inferior branches – are naturally different from those which obtain among ourselves. The librarian will therefore do well to interest himself in useful and philanthropic movements, avoiding, of course, anything tinged with party spirit, political or religious. If he is a vegetarian, or a theosophist, or anything that begins with *anti*, let him be so unobtrusively.

I must not conclude without mentioning an incident connected with our profession, which has recently given me great pleasure – the acquaintance I was enabled to make with the students of the Library School, mostly young assistants in provincial libraries, on their visit to London last summer. I received a most favourable impression of their modesty, intelligence, eagerness to learn, and general interest in their calling. This bodes well for the librarians of the future. I trust that they and all of us, and all whom the profession may receive into their ranks from other sources, will labour to preserve that high ideal of the librarian as a minister of culture, and no less that other possession, which our Association – if it did not actually create – has so greatly fostered that it may almost be looked upon as its creation, the feeling of fellowship and *esprit de corps*. We do not meet merely to read papers and exchange ideas, and provide for our administrative arrangements, but to encourage and renovate something "better than all treasures that in books are found" – the consciousness of mutual interest, and the feeling of mutual regard, which will, I trust, be found reflected in the harmony and business-like

conduct of our present meeting.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND THEIR CATALOGUES[3]

"At the laundress's at the Hole in the Wall, Cursitor's Alley, up three pairs of stairs, the author of my Church History – you may also speak to the gentleman who lies by him in the flock bed – my index-maker." Thus Mr. Edmund Curll, *apud* Dean Swift, and the direction certainly does not convey an exalted idea of the social status of the gentleman who shared the hole of the ecclesiastical historian.

It is gratifying to remark the augmented consideration, in our day, of this despised fraternity. There is no omission for which an author of serious pretensions is now more frequently taken to task than that of an index; and if on the one hand it is unsatisfactory that the offence should be so frequent, it is on the other encouraging that its obnoxiousness should be so generally recognised. "Every author," sententiously observes an American sage, "every author should write his own index. Anybody can write the book." Without going quite to this length, very many are disposed to affirm of a book without an index what the Rev. Dr. Folliott, in "Crotchet Castle," affirms of a book without matter for a quotation, namely, that it is no book at all. Now, what Mr. Curll's index-maker was to Mr. Curll, librarians are to the

[3] *New Quarterly Review*, April 1879.

general republic of letters. Every visitor to the Reading Room of the British Museum who is guided by the mere light of nature persists in styling the catalogue "the index": their promotion in public consideration has accordingly kept pace with that of their humbler allies, or rather exceeded it, for if not starting originally from a point quite so depressed, they have attained one much more exalted. The cause, however, is the same in both cases – the enormous increase of knowledge, the need of a rigorous classification of its accumulated stores, and the development of a specialised class of workers to discharge this function. Next to the importance of information existing at all is that of its being garnered, classified, registered, made promptly available for use. A good public library has been aptly compared to a substantial bank, where drafts presented are duly honoured; and librarians, as such, occupy much the same relation to the republic of letters as the commissariat to the rest of the army – their business is not to fight themselves, but to put others into a condition to do it. As a consequence, their collective organisation is much more complete than of yore; and their calling assumes more and more the character of a distinct profession requiring special training, with a distinct tendency to gravitate towards the Civil Service. Time has been when a librarianship was most probably a sinecure, or at best a "Semitic department," created for the express benefit of desert too angular and abnormal to fit into recognised grooves. Lessing was a typical specimen of this class of librarian, installed at Wolfenbüttel nominally to catalogue

books but in reality to write them. This type is now nearly extinct in England, except here and there in one of those colleges which Mr. Bagehot thought existed to prevent people from over-reading themselves, or some cathedral, where the functions of librarian are entrusted to a church dignitary or a church mouse. Elsewhere the professional character of the librarian's pursuits is pretty generally recognised; the need of special training and special qualifications is commonly admitted; and the result has been a general improvement in the status and consideration of librarians, the more satisfactory as it is in no degree due to quackery or self-assertion, but has come about by the mere force of circumstances. It may not be uninteresting briefly to trace the steps by which librarianship has become a recognised profession, and the public library an acknowledged branch of the State service.

"Prior to the year 1835," says Mr. Winter Jones, in his inaugural address before the first Conference of Librarians, "there had been little discussion, if any, about public libraries." In that year – the year of the publication of the epoch-making works of Strauss and De Tocqueville, and of the removal of Copernicus and Galileo from the *Index Expurgatorius*– the complaints of a discharged clerk led, *more Britannico*, to an inquiry into the state of the British Museum, which would at that time hardly have been granted upon public grounds. From that inquiry dates everything that has since been done. Some not very judicious changes in the administrative machinery of the

Museum were the chief ostensible results, but the real service rendered was to create a consciousness in the public mind of the deficiencies of the national library – strengthened no doubt by the contemporaneous disclosures of the condition of the public records. The way was then prepared for the truly great man who assumed office as Keeper of the Printed Books in 1837, and whose evidence had mainly created the impression to which we have referred. To the administration of the British Museum, Sir Anthony Panizzi brought powers that might have governed an Empire. Sir Rowland Hill is not more thoroughly identified with the penny post than Sir A. Panizzi with the improvements which have made the Museum what it is, and not merely those affected immediately by himself, but those which owe, or are yet to owe, their existence to the impulse originally communicated by him. In 1839 the Museum received from Sir A. Panizzi and his assistants its code of rules for the catalogue – the Magna Charta of cataloguing. In 1846 the enormous deficiencies of the Library, as ascertained by prodigious labour on the part of the librarian and his staff, were fairly brought to the knowledge of the nation. In 1849 Sir A. Panizzi's multitudinous reforms were tested and sanctioned by one of the most competent royal commissions that ever sat, whose report offers at this day a mass of most amusing and instructive reading. We may note in its minutes of evidence, as subsequently in the yet more remarkable instance of President Lincoln, how little able Mr. Carlyle is to recognise his hero when he has got him, and may obtain a new

insight into the extraordinary powers of the late Professor De Morgan. In 1857 Sir A. Panizzi's exertions received their visible consummation in the erection of the new Reading Room and its appendages, capable of accommodating a million volumes; and about the same time his political and social influence raised the Museum grant to an amount capable of filling this space within thirty years. Such an example could not fail to elevate the standard of librarianship all over the country, and it was now to be supplemented by the movement with which the name of Mr. Ewart is chiefly associated. The comparative failure of the Mechanics' Institutes, from which so much had been expected, had led the friends of popular education to take up the subject of free libraries. Mr. Ewart's Act (1850) forms another era in library history, and its operation, while slowly but surely covering the country with libraries supported out of the rates, has tended more than anything else to elevate the profession by making it a branch of the public service, and offering some real, though as yet hardly adequate, inducement to men of ability and culture to follow it. The recent library conferences have shown what an admirable body of public servants England possesses in these administrators of her free libraries. The next great era in library history dates from 1876, when the practical genius of the Americans led them to perceive the benefit of giving bibliothecal science a visible organisation. The Philadelphia Conference of that year resulted in the foundation of the American Library Association, the prototype of our own. About the same time

the *American Library Journal*– now the organ of the library associations of both countries – was established, and the Bureau of Education issued its volume of reports, the most valuable collection, not merely of statistics, but of close and sagacious discussion of library questions, that has yet been produced anywhere. That the American example should have been so promptly imitated in this country is mainly due to Mr. E. W. B. Nicholson, the librarian of the London Institution. Mr. Nicholson conceived the idea of an English conference on the American model. Messrs. Tedder, Harrison, Overall, and other distinguished metropolitan librarians, contributed their time and their marked capacity for business towards carrying it out. Mr. Winter Jones, as Principal Librarian of the British Museum, gave the conference *éclat* by accepting the office of President, and the welcome presence of a strong deputation of American librarians, together with some distinguished representatives of the profession from the Continent, imparted the international character which it alone needed to ensure success. The second conference, held at Oxford, was equally successful, and the present year is to witness a similar gathering at Manchester. An English Library Association has been called into being, and the *Library Journal*, the organ of this Association, equally with the American, indicates and records the active development of library science in both countries. One thought clearly underlies all these various undertakings – that library administration actually is a science and a department of the public service, and

that it is only by these matters being thus generally regarded that the librarian can render full service to the public, or the public full justice to the librarian.

We now propose to offer a few observations on some of the points of principal national concern connected with the administration of libraries in general, and, as from this point of view is inevitable, of the national library in particular. In so doing we must acknowledge our special obligations to the following works, and recommend them to the study of all interested in library subjects; 1. The Transactions and Proceedings of the Conference of Librarians held in London, October 1877, edited by E. B. Nicholson and H. R. Tedder: Chiswick Press. 2. The *Library Journal*, official organ of the Library Associations of America and of the United Kingdom: Trübner. 3. Public Libraries in the United States of America; Special Report. Washington: Bureau of Education. To these may be added Mr. Axon's able article on the Public Libraries of America in the last number of the "Companion to the Almanac."

It might seem that not much could be said respecting the mere purchase of books, but even this department is subject to the general law of specialisation, and the character of a collection must vary as it falls within the category of national, academical, or municipal libraries. The mission of the national library is the simplest: its character is determined for it by the enactment which in most civilised states constitutes it the general receptacle of the national literature, good, bad, and indifferent,

and imposes the corresponding obligation of rendering itself the epitome of foreign literatures, as far as its means allow. Every such library is the mirror of its time, and perhaps even its services to contemporaries are of less real account than those which it performs for posterity in preserving the image of the past. This is the apology of the librarian's anxiety to collect what the uninitiated regard as trash. Yesterday's news-sheet, waste paper to-day, will be precious after a century, and invaluable after a millennium. The same principle justifies the heavy expenditure which it is frequently necessary to occur in procuring what is truly illustrative of the history of a life or a nation, even when it comes in the costly shape of a bibliographical rarity. A black-letter ballad on a Smithfield martyrdom, a collection of cuttings illustrating Byron or Dickens, must be secured for the national Museum if at all within the compass of its resources. Hardly as much can be said for another class of rarities – the vellum page or the sumptuous binding which makes a volume a work of art, but adds nothing to the value or significance of its contents. Such luxuries, the darlings of the genuine bibliographer, the tests of his professional taste and the *chevaux de bataille* of his collection, are nevertheless only to be indulged in by a conscientious man when he is certain that such an indulgence is compatible with the ends for which national libraries exist. Even the ideal of rendering the library a representative of the thought and knowledge of the age must either be moderated, or pursued at the risk of incurring comparatively expenditure.

A new periodical gives pause: it must be taken, like a wife, for better or worse; for once commenced it can seldom be dropped. New editions of scientific works occasion much perplexity: it is equally vexatious to be behind hand with the latest results of discovery, and to spend money over something which is certain to be soon superseded by something better still. In such cases compromise alone is possible, and compromise can never be quite satisfactory. Such difficulties press less heavily on the curators of academical libraries, where the demand for universality is not preferred, and even an accidental circumstance may legitimately impart a bias to the entire collection. The acquisition of Professor De Morgan's books, for instance, has made it imperative upon the University of London to be always strong in logic and mathematics, at all events. The principle of specialisation, indeed, admits of being carried very far in a large community, where it is possible to conceive groups of libraries working in different directions to a common end, and mutually completing each other. Such a system was supposed to have been inaugurated at Oxford, although we have only heard of two colleges which are actually working it out – Worcester, with its deliberate and most laudable bent towards classical archæology; and All Souls', whose noble collection of law books might, if law were more scientifically taught in this country, contribute to make Oxford a great school of jurisprudence. Some of the other college libraries, it is to be feared, justify the philippic which Mr. Ernest Thomas, at the Oxford Conference, clenched with this

climax of scornful reference to a flagrant case, "The librarian receives only ten pounds a year, and I am sorry to say that even that is too much."

The municipal librarian has his peculiar difficulties. His means are seldom large, and out of them he has frequently to provide for branch libraries, involving numerous duplicates. He has to study not only what his public wants, but what it thinks it wants; not only to make ready for guests, but to "compel them to come in." This raises the difficult question how far the taste for fiction should be condescended to in free libraries. We cannot agree with those who think that public money may be properly expended upon trashy novels, in the chimerical hope that the appetite for reading they will probably create may be devoted to worthier objects. It is far more likely to destroy any latent capacity for serious reading which a more judicious treatment might possibly have called forth. At the same time, the adverse experience of mechanics' institutes has shown that it will not answer to be too austere in such matters, and indeed the man who is capable of relishing Thackeray or George Eliot is not far from the kingdom of culture. Other novelists of a less purely intellectual cast may awaken the love or stimulate the pursuit of knowledge. Scott indirectly teaches not a little history, Marryat not a little geography; either might provoke a craving for further information, and both are adapted to keep the mind in a state of healthy curiosity, susceptible of new impressions and ideas. The municipal librarian will

also consider the especial circumstances of his locality. Leeds, we understand, collects everything relating to the history or processes of the woollen manufacture, and the example will no doubt be generally followed. One of the most useful suggestions made at the Librarians' Conference was that provincial librarians should make a point of collecting publications printed in their own districts, as well as the municipal documents which are rarely deposited in the British Museum. It met with a cordial response, and we believe is being extensively carried out.

Due provision having been made for replenishing the library with the books most appropriate to its circumstances, the question of the catalogue next presents itself. The controversies which used to prevail on this point may be regarded as in a great measure laid to rest. The rules of cataloguing, framed in 1839 by Sir A. Panizzi, Mr. Winter Jones, and their staff, will, we believe, be now generally accepted by bibliographers as embodying the principles of sound cataloguing.[4] They may not be equally satisfactory to the general public, with its preference for rough and ready methods; a very short experience, however, will convince any man that such methods in cataloguing mean simply hopeless confusion, and that it is far better that a book should be now and then hidden away than that entire categories of books should be entered at random, with no endeavour at

[4] A revised edition of these rules, substantially the same in principle, but different in wording and arrangement, was prepared in the Department of Printed Books in 1895, and printed privately in the following year.

principle or uniformity. On the part of almost all qualified bibliographers, the Museum Catalogue receives the sincerest form of flattery – imitation: the few points still debated, such as whether anonymous books with no proper name on the title-page should be entered under the first substantive or the first word, are not material; and the impediments sometimes experienced in consulting it arise from no defect in its cataloguing rules, but from the great difficulty in digesting such long and complicated articles as Academies into a perspicuous and logical arrangement. The problem is no longer one of cataloguing, but of classification, and in this department ample room remains for discussion and scientific progress. The question of the strictly classified catalogue *versus* the strictly alphabetical, may, indeed, be considered as decided. The former method may have answered in the library of Alexandria; but the multiplicity of the departments of knowledge in our own day, their intricacy and the nicety with which they blend and shade into each other, render cataloguing solely by subjects a delusion. A catalogue of books on any special subject must either be imperfect, or must contain a large number of entries repeated from other catalogues; while, in any case, the reader can never satisfy himself without a tedious search that the book he has at first failed to find is not after all actually in the library. If, nevertheless, a subject catalogue without a general alphabetical arrangement is often useless, it must be admitted that an alphabetical catalogue without a subject index is not always useful. It is somewhat humiliating for the

librarian unprovided with this valuable auxiliary, to find himself dependent upon the classified indexes to the London publishers' list and Brunet's *Manuel du Libraire* for information which he ought to be able to supply from his own catalogue. Even the Bodleian, we perceive, is about taking measures to prepare an index of subjects, and the Bodleian is a library for scholars who might not unfairly be expected to bring their bibliographical information along with them. The need must evidently be more imperative in libraries which assume a distinctly educational function, and in those which, like the national and most municipal collections, are supported at the expense of the learned and the ignorant alike. The recognition of the want, however, imposes an additional strain upon the resources of the institution, which the British Museum, at all events, over-burdened as it is already, cannot encounter without a considerable addition to its resources. The question of classification is, moreover, most difficult of solution. Only two points seem universally agreed upon: that the best subject index must be far from perfect, and that the worst is far better than none. Two principal methods are proposed for adoption. The first is the simple and obvious one of recataloguing every book entered in the Alphabetical Catalogue in the briefest possible form, and breaking up these titles into sections, according to subject, the alphabetical order being still preserved in each. Thus Simson's "History of the Gipsies" would be found in the General Catalogue entered at length, and again in an abridged form in a special index of

books relating to the Gipsies, which would refer the reader to the General Catalogue. The other system is the so-called Dictionary Catalogue, which combines the main entry and the subject entry in the same alphabetical series. In such a catalogue Simson's book would be entered twice over, under Simson and under Gipsies; while Paspati's "Dictionary of the Dialect of the Turkish Gipsies," if the librarian were as accommodating as some of his fraternity, would stand a chance of being catalogued four times over, under Paspati, Gipsies, Turkey, and Dictionaries. This system, first brought forward by Mr. Crestadoro, the very able librarian of the Manchester Free Library, and retouched by Messrs. Jewett, Abbott, and Noyes, in the United States, has been thoroughly discussed in Mr. Cutter's masterly contribution to the American report on public libraries. Mr. Cutter, on the whole, supports the plan, whose defects he has nevertheless stated with his usual force and candour. The principal objections are the great bulk of a catalogue constructed upon such a plan, and the sacrifices of one of the principal advantages of an alphabetical classed index, the congregation of a great number of minor subjects into a grand whole. In such an index, for example, works on the liberty of the subject, Bankruptcy, Divorce, though formed into special lists, would still be found together within the covers of the same comprehensive volume on law, and, taken all together, would afford a general view of whatever existed in print upon that grand division of human knowledge. In the Dictionary Catalogue, where authors and subjects are thrown

together in the same alphabetical series, this advantage would be lost; Bankruptcy would be in one part of the catalogue, Divorce in another, and a general view of the entire body of legal literature would not be available at all. The inconvenient bulk of a Dictionary Catalogue (except in the case of small libraries, and any small library may one day become a large one), would be owing to the necessity for multiplying cross-references. To take Mr. Cutter's own illustration, a treatise "On the Abolition of the Death Penalty" must be entered along with other books referring to the subject under the head of "Capital Punishment." The average reader, however, will not think of looking for it there. He will turn to "Death" or under "Penalty," and, not finding the book under either heading, will conclude that it does not exist in the library. Two cross-references to "Capital Punishment" must accordingly be made for his accommodation; and, after a few generations of literary industry, the catalogue, like the proverbial wood, would be invisible on account of the entries, generally speaking; the cardinal error of plans for dictionary catalogues appears to us to be an excessive deference to the claims of the average reader. Nothing can be more natural, considering that these plans originated in Manchester and were perfected in the United States, where the educational character is much more distinctly impressed upon libraries than in England, and where the appetite for knowledge is as yet in advance of the standard of culture. It is fortunate when the librarian is able to consider not merely what may be most acceptable to a miscellaneous body of

constituents, but also what is intrinsically fit and reasonable.

We must hold, then, that the alphabetical index of subjects should be the auxiliary and complement of the Alphabetical Catalogue, not a part of it; that each book should be entered in it, as in the catalogue, once and once only; that the minor indexes should be grouped together so as to form collectively a whole (*e. g.* ornithology and ichthyology, as sub-sections of zoology); and that the operations of cataloguing and indexing should go on *pari passu*. If this is attended to for the future, the future will take care of itself; but "not Heaven itself upon the past has power," and it is discouraging to think upon the immense leeway which remains to be made up in most of our great public libraries. The experience of the Bodleian will be very valuable, and we must confess to much curiosity to see how long the operation of classifying its multifarious contents will take. In the British Museum the foundation of a classed catalogue has already been laid by a simple process. As fast as the titles have been transcribed for insertion in the three copies of the catalogue by a manifold writer, a fourth copy has been taken, and this copy is arranged in the order of the books on the shelves. As the various subjects are kept together in the library, such an arrangement is practically equivalent to a rough classed catalogue, which could be digested into order with comparative facility. The publication of such a classified index, reduced to the utmost possible brevity, offers, as it seems to us, the best solution of the vexed question of the publication of the Museum

Catalogue. On this point much remains to be said. Meanwhile, before quitting the subject of cataloguing methods, a tribute is due to Mr. Cutter's important contribution to the subject, in his rules for his Dictionary Catalogue. Next after the settlement of the Museum rules in 1839, these form the most important epoch in the history of cataloguing. Agreeing with the latter rules in the main, and when differing, generally, as we must think, not differing for the better, they nevertheless contain a most valuable body of acute reasoning and apt illustration, which it did not fall within the province of the Museum authorities to provide; they bring unusual experience and ability to bear upon the intricate subject of classification, and are further reinforced by most ingenious remarks on the economy and manipulation of print, making the mere variations of type instructive.

Assuming the catalogue to be completed, the question remains for decision whether it shall be printed. In most cases this question is easily determined with reference to the circumstances of the individual library; but in one instance the nation claims a voice in the matter. It is hardly necessary to say that we refer to the Catalogue of the British Museum, the theme of forty years' controversy. Every one will admit the intrinsic superiority of a catalogue in print over a catalogue in MS. The question is, whether the advantage may not be bought too dear. To form a sound opinion on this point it is necessary to have an approximate estimate of the extent of the Museum Catalogue, and of the expenditure and the time involved in the undertaking to print it.

Some statistics may accordingly be useful. The printed volume of the catalogue containing letter A, published in 1841, has about 20,000 entries. It forms about a twentieth part of the catalogue as it now exists, which would accordingly comprise about 2,000,000 entries, in about 100 folio volumes. In addition, however, to these titles now existing in the catalogue, there are about 200,000 titles and cross-references awaiting final revision, and which, unless the present state of this revision is very considerably accelerated, will not be ready for several years. During all this period, titles for new acquisitions will keep pouring in at the rate of 40,000 per annum. All the time that the catalogue is at press, somewhere between a decade and a generation, they will continue to pour in, and will have to be included as far as possible. We must consequently expect to have to deal with from 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 titles, occupying from 150 to 200 volumes folio. It is clear that no private individual could afford either to purchase or to store such a catalogue. It would, therefore, only be useful to such institutions as might buy it or receive it as a gift. Unlike the newspapers we have mentioned, its usefulness would diminish in the ratio of its antiquity, and it could only be kept up to the mark by a succession of supplements. The total cost of providing it, minus these supplements, may be roughly estimated at £100,000. We scarcely think that Government will incur such an expenditure for such a purpose.

We should ourselves have little hesitation in pronouncing

it undesirable to print the Museum Catalogue as it stands, merely for the convenience of the public. It is quite another question whether a recourse to print may not be desirable in the interests of the Museum itself, and from this point of view the answer must be widely different. It is desirable, and will shortly become imperative. The reason is prosaic, but unanswerable: the MS. catalogue cannot be much longer accommodated in the Reading Room. Partly from necessity, partly from oversights, the Museum Catalogue is most extravagant in the matter of space. To preserve the alphabetical order of the entries, the titles are necessarily movable, pasted, therefore, on each side of the catalogue leaf, thus trebling the thickness of the latter. It is equally indispensable that wide spaces should be left between the entries when a volume is first laid down, and that when these become insufficient from the number of additions, as is continually happening, the over-charged volume should be divided into three or four. These inconveniences are unavoidable. It can only be regretted that part of the available space of every slip is lost in transcription; that scarcely a single transcriber appears to have studied the art of packing; and that the catalogue is over-run with practically duplicate entries of slightly differing editions, transcribed at full length while they might have been expressed in a single line. From all these causes the Museum Catalogue is rapidly becoming unmanageable, and the time is approaching when the Reading Room will contain it no longer. Something might no doubt be done to postpone the evil day

by excluding the map and music catalogues from the room; but apart from its inconvenience, such a measure is obviously a mere temporary palliative and ultimate aggravation of a difficulty which acquires strength not *eundo*, but by standing still. The bulk of the catalogue must be reduced, and we are not aware that any method has been suggested, or exists, except a recourse to print. It is unfortunate that this purely administrative measure, founded on no preference for print over manuscript as such, but the simple dictate of an economic necessity, should be so constantly confounded with the totally different proposition to print and publish the catalogue like any other book, on the expense and inutility of which we have already commented. Publication is not in question: it is simply for the authorities to consider whether the bulk of the MS. catalogue will not some day shut out the public from access to it; and if this is found to be the case to lose no time in averting the evil. We do not believe that the present Principal Librarian, or his predecessor, entertains any doubt upon the subject; the ultimate decision, however, rests neither with the Principal Librarian nor the Trustees, but with the Treasury. From the Treasury's point of view, it is to be observed that the present system is financially justifiable only on condition of its being persisted in to the end of time. If a resort to print will one day be compulsory, existing arrangements are the climax of inconsiderate wastefulness. That transcribing is cheaper than printing may be admitted, though it has hardly been demonstrated. But to print is manifestly cheaper than to

print and transcribe also. Yet this is just what the Museum is doing if the catalogue is ever to be printed at all. There are about 250,000 titles for the new catalogue still remaining to be transcribed. To transcribe these at the present rate of progression would occupy about fifteen years, but let us say ten. During this period titles for new acquisitions would be coming in at the rate of 40,000 a year. These would also be transcribed. The total number of transcripts would thus be 650,000. Now it seems to be seriously contemplated by the advocates of a complete printed catalogue that all this enormous mass of careful copy shall in a few years be completely superseded by print, and rendered absolutely useless. After paying, let us say, threepence a slip to do its work, the nation is to pay fourpence a slip more to undo it, and is to be charged altogether twice as much as it need have been if it had known what it wanted from the first. It is, indeed, high time for the representatives of the nation in these matters to determine once and for ever whether the catalogue is to be in print or manuscript. If MS., let the idea of print be authoritatively discountenanced; but if print, let the ruinous system be abandoned of paying highly for work performed only to be undone.

The solution of these perplexities will be found, we think, in a strict adherence to the principle that administrative arrangements must primarily have respect to the advantage of the institution, which will in the long run prove to be the advantage of the public. The Museum is not bound to undertake the publication

of an enormous printed catalogue merely for the convenience of persons at a distance; but it will introduce print in so far as print tends to economise its own funds, and to obviate confusion and encumbrance in its own rooms. The two vital points are to stop the waste incurred by transcribing what must ultimately be printed, and to put an effectual check upon the portentous growth of the catalogue. The first object may be attained by simply resorting to print for the future, and pasting the printed slips into the catalogue as the MS. slips are pasted now. The second can best be accomplished by tolerating the mixture of printed and MS. slips in each volume of the catalogue, until the volume has arrived from constant accessions at such a bulk as to require breaking up, then printing the MS. entries in that volume, and profiting by the economy in space of print over MS. to rearrange the contents in double columns, which would afford room for additions for an indefinite period. In this manner the cost of printing would be spread over a long series of years, and the catalogue would insensibly be transformed into a printed one by much the same process as that by which Sir John Cutler's worsted stockings became silk. Any requisite number of printed slips might be produced, and offered by subscription to public institutions and private individuals. The former might thus in process of time acquire the whole catalogue without any violent strain upon their resources; the latter might procure what they wanted without being compelled to take what they did not want. It would at the same time be

beneficial to the Museum and to literature, if some of the most important articles were printed entire and brought out as soon as possible for the sake of relieving the pressure upon the catalogue. Such articles as Bible, Shakespeare, Luther, Homer, embracing nearly complete bibliographies of the respective subjects, would probably command a fair sale, and effect something towards diminishing the inevitable cost of print.

The formation of a subject index to the Alphabetical Catalogue is a matter of much less urgency to the Museum itself, but one of even greater importance to the public. It could not be undertaken without special assistance from the State, but would probably repay its cost in a great degree, and has in any event the very strongest claims upon the support of an enlightened government. It is moreover much less formidable than appears at first sight. We have already explained how the way for a more exact classification has been prepared by arranging one copy of the catalogue in the order of the shelves. The apparent magnitude of the task is further diminished by the following considerations: 1. It requires no cross-references. 2. Titles may be abbreviated to the utmost. 3. It can be temporarily suspended upon the completion of any section. 4. The section of biography is classified already, merely requiring the cross-references from the subjects of biographies to be brought together; and several other extensive sections need not be classified at all. Nobody, at least nobody worth taking into account, wants catalogues of the titles of novels, plays, and sermons. Classified lists of some

other subjects, on the other hand, would be of inestimable value, and there is one which, in the interests of the Museum itself, should be undertaken without delay. Among the inconveniences attending the ill-considered removal of the Natural History collections to South Kensington – a measure forced on by the Government against the wish of the working Trustees of the Museum – is the injury likely to be inflicted upon them from want of access to a library. Naturalists cannot study without books any more than without specimens; but the Government which gratuitously created the want seems in no hurry to supply it. The principle of a grant appears indeed to be admitted; but at the rate at which this grant seems likely to be doled out, English Natural Science will be placed at a serious disadvantage for many years. Something may possibly be done by transferring duplicates from Bloomsbury (a question, however, not to be decided in haste), and some anonymous writers in scientific journals have modestly suggested that all books on Natural History might go to Kensington; so that a student of the physiology of colour, for example, would have to read his Wallace at one end of the town and his Tyndall at the other. We should, however, just as soon expect Parliament to decree on similar grounds the cutting of the zoological articles out of the encyclopædias as to enact that the national library of England should be the only professedly imperfect library in the world. Indeed the argument cuts two ways, for if it is fair that the mineral department should have Cresconius Corippus to illustrate its gems, it must

be equally fair that the library should have the mineralogist's gems to illustrate its Cresconius Corippus. Until then, the Natural History departments can acquire a library of their own, it must be desirable for them to possess a catalogue of everything relating to their subjects extant in the British Museum. An abridged list, classified according to subject, might be speedily furnished if Government would provide the compilers, and would be an invaluable boon to the scientific world at large, abroad quite as much as in England. Scientific authorities, of course, would be consulted respecting the principles of classification, and we may take this opportunity of repeating that while probably no subject-index has been or can be free from inconsistency and ambiguity, none has ever been too bad to be useful. That a high degree of excellence is attainable is shown by Messrs. Low & Marston's alphabet of subjects to the London Catalogue. The meritorious compiler, we should suppose, can hardly have seen all the books he indexes; yet, so far as we are aware, he has only committed one positive error, the very pardonable one of enumerating Mr. Gosse's "On Viol and Flute" among works on musical instruments.

In connection with the subject of classification, reference should be made to the excellent classified catalogue of manuscripts prepared by the present Principal Librarian when keeper of the MS. department. It is not yet printed or entirely complete, but is sufficiently advanced to be exceedingly serviceable. Like most of Mr. Bond's reforms, it has been

achieved so quietly and unostentatiously, with no help from paragraphic puffery, that few know of it except those whom it actually concerns. The scholar goes to the Museum with no expectation of finding any such aid to his pursuits, and hardly realises the boon until he finds himself profiting by it. A perfect contrast in every point of view is afforded by the remarkable proposal emanating from the Society of Arts that the Museum should make and publish a catalogue of English books before 1641, or just the period when books were beginning to be useful. The project bespeaks a very imperfect appreciation of the needs of the institution and the public. When the great problem of the Museum is to diminish the pressure on its space, it is proposed to afflict it with yet another catalogue. When the public is crying out for classified lists as aids to knowledge, it is offered an alphabetical list with no attempt at classification, and containing nothing worth classifying. When libraries are becoming more and more valuable in proportion as they subserve educational purposes, it is proposed to employ money and labour in telling a few specialists what they already know. When the overworked library is unable to discharge some of its most obvious duties, it is proposed to detach not a little of its best strength for an utter superfluity. Not only are new books to remain uncatalogued, but even the final revision of the old books is to be delayed indefinitely, that what has been already catalogued may be catalogued again.[5] The project would hardly

[5] The line was drawn here to eliminate the Thomason tracts, a special catalogue of

demand discussion, but for the possibility that it may after all be forced upon the Museum, notwithstanding its repugnance to the common-sense of the late and the present Principal Librarian. If ridicule could kill, it could hardly have survived the discussion which arose among its advocates at the late Oxford Conference. Those external to the Museum suggested that the Museum should catalogue not only the old English books it possessed, but also those it did not possess. The Museum representatives, enamoured with the project as they were, pleaded that it would be unreasonable to expect them to describe what they had never seen. The other side concurred, but represented in turn that a catalogue of such English books only as happened to be in a particular library would be very imperfect, and of very little use. Having thus mutually demonstrated the unreasonableness of the proposal from one point of view, and its inutility from another, they agreed that it should by all means be persevered with, and went home.

The subject of the classification of books within the library itself – a matter of even more importance to the librarian than the preparation of classified lists – has received a great impulse from the ingenious system contrived by the principal editor of the *Library Journal*, Mr. Melvil Dewey. Mr. Dewey – a remarkable instance of the combination of disinterested enthusiasm with

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which would be really valuable: just as in "Erewhon," the date of operation of the retrospective enactment prohibiting machinery was fixed in the middle of the fifteenth century, in order to include a certain mangle.

thorough business capacity – is devoted to several other causes beside the causes of libraries, and among these is the cause of the decimal system. His experience in the latter field has given him the idea of dividing the departments of human knowledge decimally. His scheme provides for a thousand divisions. Every tenth number embraces some important section of knowledge, and the following nine as many subjections or allied subjects admitting of classification under the principal head. Thus number 500 might represent mathematics in general, and 501 conic sections, analytical geometry, or any other branch of the general subject. Further subdivisions, if needed, would be made by appending letters to these numerals, as 501*a*, 501*b*. Each book would be numbered in the order of its accession to the library, and receive its place upon the shelves accordingly, so that there never would be any doubt as to the press-mark or position of a book that had once been properly classed. Our space does not permit us to dwell upon many other points connected with the working of this ingenious scheme, which, if inapplicable to the great old libraries whose catalogues, like the Abbé Vertot's siege, are already done, deserves the most careful consideration on the part of the founders of new institutions. It must, as the inventor admits, receive some modification in practice from the impossibility of accommodating books of all sizes upon the same shelf; it is only to be feared that these and similar necessary condescensions to the prosaic exigencies of space might in process of time throw it out of gear altogether. Space

is the librarian's capital enemy, and the more cruel as it turns his own weapons against himself. The more ample the catalogue, the more liberal the expenditure, the more comprehensive the classification, the greater, sooner or later, are the difficulties from lack of space. It is not too early to direct the earnest attention of the public to the question of the accommodation of the national library. The pressure upon its capacity, now merely beginning to be felt, will soon become serious. It cannot from the nature of the case be divided or dispersed; books required by readers must be within reach of the Reading Room, or they might as well be nowhere. If the library does not receive its fair share of the space about to be vacated by the Natural History departments, the consequence will most assuredly be, first some years of confusion and deadlock as regards all new acquisitions, and then a large expenditure, superfluous with better management, upon new buildings, whose space will be mortgaged before they are completed. It does not seem to us very difficult to devise means for economising the existing space to the utmost, and reconciling the interests of all the departments concerned – but we must not be seduced into a disquisition upon architecture.[6]

Free libraries and public reading-rooms are among the most important departments of library administration in our day, and constitute the most distinct expression of the growing conviction

[6] Within a few years the difficulty was solved by the introduction of the sliding-press, the subject of another paper in this volume.

that the librarian is called upon to be a great popular educator. This sentiment has attained its fullest development in the United States, where the great free libraries have taken a most important place among national institutions. Not merely are such cities as Chicago and Cincinnati provided with libraries of which any city might be proud, but the custodians have in many instances gone beyond the strict limits of professional duty by not merely furnishing reading for the people, but instructing the people what to read. "They have tried," says Mr. Axon in the paper cited already, "and with no small measure of success, to lead readers to higher levels of intellectual interest, and to help all students to the fullest acquaintance with the capabilities of the library." There are no more remarkable examples of popular bibliography than the various catalogues and helps published by the Boston Public Library. These sheets, prepared by Mr. Justin Winsor, have been continued at Harvard since the indefatigable editor's removal thither as professor of bibliography. They include lists of the most important books in all departments of literature, with a selection of the notices of the press best adapted to explain their purport. Special bibliographies of great value are frequently interspersed, and when it is considered that the whole is rather a labour of love than of duty on Professor Winsor's part, his diligence and acumen will appear not more worthy of praise than his disinterested zeal. It might be well for the directors of English free libraries to consider whether something similar could not be produced by co-operation. The

list of scientific books recommended to students at the Radcliffe Library, Oxford, is most useful and creditable as far as it goes. Generally speaking, the condition of free public libraries in England may be considered satisfactory; among the directors are many men not merely of administrative quality, but of high bibliographical attainments. The principal obstacles to their usefulness may be briefly characterised as the popular and municipal parsimony. Of the former we have spoken; the latter requires to be dealt with tenderly, and is not equally applicable to every locality; it is nevertheless the fact that in many towns the allotted grant is insufficient to maintain the library and librarian together. Nowhere is the cause of free libraries so backward as in London, although the Guildhall library is an honour to the city. The other metropolitan districts, notwithstanding, continue deaf to Mr. Nicholson's earnest expostulations; and although the number of readers at the British Museum is as large as that institution can well deal with, it seems small in comparison with the vastness of the metropolis and the occasions for reference to books which continually arise in the daily life of even the least lettered members of the community. The suggested opening at night by the aid of the electric light would almost certainly attract a new and valuable class of students, at present virtually excluded. It would be premature to say much about the recent experiments with the electric lamp; but we believe it may be stated that they have been highly encouraging as far as they have gone, and that the question is safe in the hands of Mr. Bond,

to whom the public are already indebted for so many signal improvements.[7] Should the experiments result in perfect success, it is to be hoped that their object will not be frustrated by the propensity of all governments to save where they ought to spend, that they may spend where they ought to save. To allow the infinitesimal risk of accident to the institution to obstruct the full development of its usefulness would indeed be *propter vitam vivendi perdere causas*.

We have left ourselves no space for any observations upon the circumstances of libraries on the Continent, although there is ample evidence both of the activity of librarians and the public recognition of their functions in France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Nor can we remark at length, as we gladly should have done, upon the tendency of the peculiar circumstances of the United States to develop a most valuable type of librarian, destined to exert more and more influence in Europe as libraries become more and more the possession of the people at large. Every advance in general knowledge tends to make them so, and the whole movement towards improvement in library administration – some only of whose features we have imperfectly striven to indicate – rests on the more or less conscious perception of librarians that the growth of human knowledge necessitates a strict classification with a view to facility of reference; that this important function devolves to a

[7] It is almost needless to remark that soon after these lines were printed the electric light was in successful operation at the Reading Room.

considerable extent upon them; and that, to qualify themselves for its discharge, they must begin by perfecting their own systems.

Note. – The advocacy of printing in this essay may appear somewhat undecided, and the tone towards the catalogue of the early English books altogether unjustifiable. The former peculiarity is explained by the writer's uncertainty what turn the negotiations with the Treasury for the introduction of printing might take, and his dread of compromising the plans of Sir Edward Bond, who knew nothing of the article until it was in type, when he read it, and returned it without remark. (See also pp. 75, 76, of this volume.) The observations respecting the early English catalogue were dictated by no hostility towards that undertaking in the abstract, but by indignation at the largeness of the staff employed upon a non-essential, while the final revision of the catalogue, the indispensable preliminary to a complete printed catalogue, was so languidly prosecuted that it seemed in danger of coming to a standstill. So matters continued until 1882, when the decided interference of the Principal Librarian, and the adoption of a suggestion tendered by the present writer, brought the final revision to a speedy completion, and removed the principal objection to the English catalogue.

THE PRINTING OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM CATALOGUE[8]

The subject of my paper is one which has for many years attracted a large share of attention from the world of letters. It formed a topic of discussion at the first meeting of this Association; when few anticipated within how short a period it would be possible to state that not merely was a printed catalogue of books already in the Museum in progress, but that the titles of all books received were also printed, and issued in the form of an Accession Catalogue. Having already had the honour of giving some account of the latter department of the undertaking to the Conference at Manchester, I shall on the present occasion confine myself principally to the printed catalogue of books actually in the Library. I propose to offer a brief retrospect of what has been done during the half-century over which the discussions respecting the Museum Catalogue have extended; to indicate with corresponding brevity what is doing now; to answer some natural inquiries by anticipation; and, finally, having shown, I trust, that the Museum is performing its part, to appeal for the national support requisite to expedite the progress of this truly national undertaking. Though compelled to withhold much illustrative matter of great interest, I cannot

[8] Read before the Library Association, Cambridge, Sept. 1882.

forbear to remark upon the signal fitness of such a theme being brought forward for discussion in the halls of the University of Cambridge, whose library has, I believe, the honour of being the first to demonstrate the practicability, not merely of printing a catalogue, but of keeping a catalogue up in print. Three particulars will, I think, clearly appear from this brief retrospect. That the initiation of the British Museum Catalogue was the act of the Trustees of the British Museum themselves. That, having prematurely commenced the publication of an imperfect catalogue, they acted wisely and rightly in suspending it until it could be resumed with effect. That, acting under the guidance of Mr. Bond, whose name will ever be the name especially connected with the Museum Catalogue in its aspect of a catalogue in print, they have resumed it at the right time, and in the right manner.

I am unable to ascertain that any public demand for a printed catalogue of the Museum Library existed in the year 1834. On April 12 of that year, the Trustees of their own motion called upon Mr. Baber, then keeper of printed books, to report upon the subject. This he did on April 26. On April 30 he attended personally before them, stated his views, and in particular offered the earnest advice to send no portion of the catalogue to press until the whole was ready. During the remainder of his keepership, and the early portion of that of his successor Mr. Panizzi, the catalogue was the theme of constant communication between these officers and the Trustees. On

December 17, 1838, the Trustees announced their determination to commence not merely the compilation but the printing of a catalogue, comprising all books then in the Library, in the following year. Mr. Panizzi, though entirely concurring with Mr. Baber's views as to the inexpediency of going thus prematurely to press, accepted the responsibility imposed upon him by a letter dated the next day. In the spring of 1839 the famous ninety-one rules of cataloguing were framed by him, with the assistance of Messrs. Winter Jones, Watts, Parry, and Edwards. On July 13 these rules were sanctioned by the Trustees, and on August 8 the commencement of the undertaking was formally announced by Mr. Panizzi, in a circular addressed to the whole department. In July 1841, the first, and last, volume of the catalogue was issued to the public. It was an admirable catalogue, reflecting high credit upon all who had taken part in it, especially Mr. Winter Jones, who had exercised a general superintendence, Mr. Bullen, who had prepared the extensive and difficult article Aristotle, and Mr. Rye, who had read the whole in proof. But, although the catalogue continued to be actively prosecuted in manuscript, the Trustees ceased to urge the continuance of the printing, and not another sheet ever went to press.

Whence this abortive result? Mainly because the entire undertaking was premature. The unfortunate determination to print letter A before the whole catalogue was ready, excluded a considerable portion of letter A itself. As other letters were proceeded with, it was inevitably discovered that numerous

books which in the old catalogue had been entered under headings commencing with other letters required to be brought under A, according to the new rules. Cross-references under A were continually springing up, of course too late to be printed. In fact, however, the publication of a printed catalogue at that time was inexpedient for a more weighty reason. The Library was too deficient in most branches of literature to deserve one; and it was not until these deficiencies had been remedied by the unexampled exertions of Mr. Panizzi, that an exact register of its contents could be contemplated with satisfaction.

While discussion respecting the printing of the Museum Catalogue was proceeding, the character of the catalogue itself was undergoing modification. Great additions were daily being made to the number of books. The new entries thus rendered requisite were at first made in the old manuscript catalogue of additions interleaved with the original printed catalogue of Sir Henry Ellis and Mr. Baber. Two alphabetical series of titles, one printed and the other manuscript, were thus comprised within the same volumes. The amalgamation of these two sets of titles, and the consequent absorption of the catalogue commenced in 1839 into a more extensive general catalogue, was effected by the ingenious and admirable suggestion, made independently in 1849 by Mr. Wilson Croker and Mr. Roy, of the Library, that the entries, instead of being written upon the leaf itself, should be written upon movable slips pasted upon it, so that insertions might be made without any disturbance of alphabetical

order. The suggestion was promptly adopted, transcribers were engaged to copy the great mass of accumulated titles, and, all thoughts of printing the catalogue commenced in 1839 being laid aside for the present, the titles prepared for it were also transcribed and incorporated with those written for the books newly acquired. In 1851 this new catalogue, transcribed fourfold by the "carbonic" process, and with copious space provided for insertions and interleavings, was placed in the Reading Room in 150 volumes, or about as many as are now occupied by letter B alone. The catalogue of 1839 and the supplementary catalogue were thus put into a fair way to become one, and it became obvious that printing must be deferred until the amalgamation was complete. It was still, however, a fair question whether the catalogue might not be kept up in print; whether it was better to transcribe titles fourfold as we did then, or to multiply them indefinitely by print as we do now. I cannot find that the practicability of keeping up a continually augmenting catalogue in print was seriously considered, until, in October 1861, it was proved by the introduction of print into the University Library of Cambridge. Some years afterwards the system was strongly pressed upon the attention of the Museum by the Treasury, which had remarked the gradual and inevitable increase of expenditure in binding, breaking up, interleaving and relaying the volumes of the manuscript catalogue, increased by this time from 150 to 1500. I well remember the pains which Mr. Rye, then keeper of the printed books, took in investigating the subject, and I believe

I may say that had it depended upon him, the transition to print would have been effected immediately. Other views, however, prevailed for the time; and when, in October 1875, the subject was again brought forward by the Treasury, it fell to my lot to treat it from a new point of view, suggested by my observations in my capacity as superintendent of the Reading Room. I saw that, waiving the question as to the advantage or disadvantage of print in the abstract, it would soon be necessary to resort to it for the sake of economy of space. There were by this time 2000 volumes of manuscript catalogue in the Reading Room, exclusive of the catalogues of maps and music. There would be 3000 by the time that the incorporation of the general and supplementary catalogues was complete. Hundreds of these volumes in the earlier letters of the alphabet were already swollen with entries, and required to be broken up and divided into three. Sooner or later every volume would have undergone this process. By that time there would be 9000 volumes of manuscript catalogue, three times as many as the Reading Room could contain, or the public conveniently consult. The only remedy was to put a check upon the growth of the catalogue by printing all new entries for the future, and to mature meanwhile a plan for converting the entire catalogue into a printed one. I prepared, at the request of Mr. Bullen, a memorandum embodying these ideas, and entered into the subject more fully when, in January 1878, it was again brought forward by the Treasury. These views, however, did not find acceptance at the time. Mr. Winter

Jones, and Mr. Newton, acting on the latter occasion as deputy Principal Librarian, were, indeed, both theoretically in favour of print; but it was thought that the desired financial economy, the only point on which the Treasury laid any stress, could be better obtained by the employment of Civil Service writers. The question was thus left for Mr. Bond, who became Principal Librarian in the following August. As keeper of the manuscripts, Mr. Bond's attention had never been officially drawn to the catalogue of printed books, but, as a man of letters, he had formed an opinion respecting it; and I am able to state that he came to the Principal Librarianship as determined to bestow the boon of print upon the catalogue and the public, as to effect the other great reforms that have signalised his administration. From the moment of his accession the question may be said to have been virtually decided. In April 1879, I published an article in the *New Quarterly Magazine*, foreshadowing almost everything that has since been accomplished. In the summer of the same year, Mr. Bond, having secured the concurrence of the Trustees, proposed to the Treasury to substitute print for transcription in the case of all additions henceforth made to the catalogue, a proposal which the Treasury could not refuse to entertain, as it had originally come from itself. It was accordingly accepted; the details of the scheme were settled by Mr. Bond in concert with Mr. Bullen and the assistant keepers; the general supervision of the printing was entrusted to my colleague Professor Douglas; and by the beginning of the new year the press was fully

at work. We had thus successfully introduced print into the catalogue, and by diminishing the size of the entries checked the enormous pressure upon our space which threatened to swamp the catalogue altogether. We had also, by providing for the issue of the new printed titles in parts at regular intervals, enabled any subscriber to obtain a complete list of future additions to the Museum. But this related to the future only; nothing had yet been done to meet the public demand for a printed catalogue of all books already in the Library. The satisfaction of this demand was the second item in Mr. Bond's programme. In recommending his proposal to the Treasury, he relied upon the same grounds that had been shown to exist in the case of the Accession Catalogue. He pointed out the enormous number of manuscript volumes, the ponderous unwieldiness of many among them, the expense of perpetual breaking up, rebinding, and relaying; the manifest advantage of compressing many volumes into one, and providing space for additions for a practically indefinite period. On these grounds, and not on literary grounds, the Treasury assented to the proposal, and agreed to devote, for as long as they should see fit, a certain annual sum for the gradual conversion of the manuscript into a printed catalogue. It is desirable that this should be thoroughly understood, as it affords the answer to some questions which may very naturally be asked respecting the method of publication adopted for the catalogue. Why is it not brought out at once, complete from A to Z? Because the Treasury have not granted £100,000 for the purpose. They simply make

an annual allowance of limited amount, liable to be withdrawn at any time. Might not, however, the allotted sum be employed as far as it will go in printing the catalogue consecutively from the beginning, instead of in selected portions? To this there are several things to be said. The grant is made upon condition that it shall before all things be employed in remedying the defects signalised by ourselves, bringing cumbrous, overgrown volumes into a handy form, and putting a stop to the perpetual rebinding and relaying. The most bulky volumes, therefore, must in general be those selected for printing. An equally powerful consideration is that we thus escape all danger of the reproach that has hitherto attached to almost every similar undertaking, "This man began, and was not able to finish." The funds on which we relied might at any time fail us, and we might never progress beyond our A, B, C. By making the printing a portion of the daily life of the institution, a piece of administrative routine like cataloguing or binding, we escape alike ambitious professions and ambitious failures. Once more, a strictly alphabetical procedure would destroy one of the most valuable features of the scheme, the separate issue of important special articles, not merely to our limited body of subscribers, but offered on a large scale to the public generally. We have already the article Virgil in the press on this principle, and it is hoped that Bible, Shakespeare, Milton, Homer, Dante, Academies, Periodicals, and others, may ere long be added to the list. Even our ordinary volumes frequently contain articles better printed now than twenty years hence:

one of the last completed, for instance, contains the article Gladstone. It would indeed be well if our resources admitted of these three operations being carried on simultaneously, the consecutive publication of the catalogue, the compression of overgrown volumes wherever occurring, the independent issue of important special articles. With sufficient means to defray the additional cost of printing and provide the needful literary revision, all three might very well go on *pari passu*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.