

THE " BIBLIOTHECA LINDESIANA "

IT is with feelings of profound regret, coupled with sympathy for the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, that we learn of the impending breach of a tradition that has lived in his family for more than four centuries.

This tragedy has been brought about by the crushing burden of to-day's heavy taxation, which has been responsible for the dispersal of yet another of the few remaining great private libraries, which hitherto have been reckoned among the glories of Great Britain.

There have been times in the past, to quote Lord Crawford's own words, when the tradition became a trickle. but it has never ceased to flow through all these years, and to-day, did not circumstances decree otherwise, it would be in full flood.

The earliest book known to have belonged to one of the Lindsay family is a copy of the *Roman de la Rose*, written in 1323 for Christine de Lindsaye, Dame de Coucy. Many volumes were purchased throughout the sixteenth century, but it is not until the latter half of the seventeenth century that a collection was systematically formed by John Lindesay, Lord Menmuir, son of David, Earl of Crawford.

In spite of a crowded public life as Secretary of State, Lord Menmuir was able to lay the foundation of a great library. The brightest jewel of his library, a series of State Papers, including letters which passed between Mary, Queen of Scots, and the French Court, subsequently known as the *Balcarres Papers*, was handed over to the Advocates' Library in 1712 by his great-grandson, Colin, who, fearing their destruction during the troubled times which he anticipated, thereby ensured their safety even if his family should perish in the Highlands.

Haigh Hall, the big plain house on the wooded hill which commands the town of Wigan, in Lancashire, from which the famous library is in process of removal, was rebuilt about 1830 by the twenty-fourth Earl of Crawford, and it was partly to

furnish its walls that his son, in whom revived the old Lindsay passion for book-collecting, began as a boy at Eton to gather volumes which gradually filled four great rooms and all the wide passages of the house.

It was an old passion, for as long since as the days of James VI of Scotland, John Lindesay, Lord Menmuir, filled with books and historical papers the old mansion-house of Balcarres, which he had purchased and brought into his family. He and his grandson Alexander, first Earl of Balcarres, the friend of William Drummond of Hawthornden, and of William Cowley, there built up the first Lindsay library, the "Great Bibliothek" of Balcarres.

It was largely dispersed later on when the head of the family was abroad as a soldier and there was no one at Balcarres to care for the books or to have any conception of the value and interest of the treasures that had been stored up for two centuries. This period of neglect was followed by one of destruction, for in his absence abroad much of the library was literally torn up, thrown away, used as wrapping paper by the local tradesmen for bacon and butter, and by the maids for lighting the fires. In the last decades, however, of the eighteenth century, the whole collection was transplanted to Haigh and the old library struck new root in the foreign land of Lancashire, where it was joined with the useful library of 5000 books bought by Alexander on the death of his father-in-law, Lord Muncaster.

But these unhappy years had their compensations. The eldest daughter of the house, Lady Anne Lindsay, married the son of Dr. Barnard, Bishop of Limerick, a friend of all the great men of the day. Through him the library possesses many papers of interest, including Dr. Johnson's Latin Epitaph on Goldsmith, and the famous "Round Robin", "circumscribed" by Burke, Sheridan, Gibbon, Sir Joshua Reynolds and others, begging the doctor to re-write the epitaph in English.

Lady Anne will always be remembered for her ballad of the Balcarres shepherd, "Auld Robin Grey", but of greater importance are her nine volumes of memoirs, which remain unpublished.

Once more the period of desolation was swiftly followed by

one of reconstruction, and the library was soon to be restored to a degree undreamed of by its founders.

Lady Anne's nephew, the great-grandfather of the present Earl, was filled from his earliest years with a desire to rebuild the family library. Soon after he went to Eton he had covered one wall of his room with books—chiefly incunabula and early editions of the classics—that he bought on a schoolboy's allowance. In his earliest youth he proposed to himself, as an object, the development of the library into one worthy of his family, not a mere bibliomaniacal congerie of undigested accumulation but a library of intrinsic excellence to contain the most useful and interesting books, old and new, in all walks of literature, although including the chief bibliographical treasures, which lend grace and value to such collections. But it was not until 1834 that a legacy enabled him for the first time to buy on a considerable scale.

At this time he felt himself to be under the influence of Bibliomania, and from a sense of self-distrust confined himself rigidly to the acquisition of the most useful and substantial backbones of a library, only purchasing such of the rarer books as were absolutely essential to its completeness. He bought many books, for instance, at the Heber Sale, which began at this time, but other rare books he let go in the expectation of having later opportunities of acquiring them. Many of them never again came to the surface, many others in later days had to be bought at considerably enhanced prices. Thirty years later he regretted this line of action, and was sailing on a tack directly contrary to that which he then pursued. He was buying rarities indispensable to his scheme, neglecting books which might be obtained at any time, leaving their acquisition to his old age—or his successor.

He began by compiling from special bibliographies and works of criticism, the ideal catalogue of a library such as might serve not only himself, but a whole family of varying tastes and pursuits. This was revised from time to time, but the balance between department and department was always preserved. No book was admitted merely because it was rare; utility and interest liberally construed were the test for admission.

The great-grandfather of the present Earl had always before him the ideal of a general or catholic collection. He did not wish to buy everything, but the best in each department, and thus to form a broad and sufficient basis on which any one of his successors might build towers or wings according to his particular pursuit or taste.

As the years went by he realized that no time was to be lost if he were to accomplish the object he had in view. Rare and valuable books were fast disappearing from the market. How prophetic were his words when he wrote "Ours will probably be one of the last great libraries formed in Europe, of the class of which the Harleian, the La Vallière, the Heber, the Spencer, and the Grenville are the most noble examples".

The great public libraries were in a great measure indifferent, with the result that numbers of rare books not to be found in the public libraries appeared in the open market and were absorbed by the great private collections, such as the Pinelli, the Roxburghe, the Sykes, and the Heber collections, then again to be dispersed and in time to be absorbed by the great permanent collections of Grenville or Lord Spencer.

By the middle of the century the public libraries both at home and abroad were endeavouring to fill their lacunae—with the result that many rare books were obviously lost to the private collector for ever, and many private libraries passed into national possession, as in the case of the early printed books of the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*, and of the manuscripts of the *Bibliotheca Lindesiana*, which have furnished Manchester with the proud position of eminence among the universities and libraries of the world.

The keystones of any great library should include a Bible Collection, consisting of original texts and translations, a comprehensive collection of Greek and Latin Classics, and one of "Incunabula". In respect of these departments, thanks to the discrimination exercised by the Crawfords and the Spencers, Manchester is to-day in proud possession of rich collections, which include many examples and editions of outstanding importance.

In books of travel, in other words of the drama of geographical discovery, the library is rich, but the outstanding collection is

the series of voyages and travels in the Eastern and Western World, commonly known as the "Grands et Petits Voyages", published by the family of the De Brys at Frankfort between 1590 and 1634. The collection comprises not only the entire series complete in their first editions, but also the second and third editions with their endless variations of texts and illustrations. It formed a bibliographical puzzle of the utmost complexity, and the result of thirty years' work may be seen in the resulting singularly complete series, of which a detailed collation of the entire work was made by Lord Crawford's grandfather, by means of which the student may ascertain the constitution, page by page, of each separate part and edition, together with any known variations. The three volumes, of which the original set was composed, have grown to no fewer than 193 volumes, which are now in the custody of the Rylands Library.

Apart from theology and religious controversy many interesting publications deal with language and grammar. Comparative grammar, always one of Lord Crawford's great-grandfather's special studies, was of course well represented in his library. Every advance in language reveals the growth and greater intellectual attainment of the race that speaks it; and from the bibliographical point of view, works on grammar and dictionaries are of supreme interest.

The language and literature of the East were also a particular study of Lord Lindsay, and this section of the library became the most important collection in private hands, occupying over a thousand feet of shelving. Printed, or even lithographed books, were excessively scarce. The great works of Oriental thought had to be sought for in manuscript, and such manuscripts seldom appeared in the European market. Lord Lindsay commenced these collections during his travels in Egypt and Syria in 1836. He made long lists of desiderata and contemplated sending agents out to the East, especially commissioned to search for what he desired to obtain; but this course was not adopted with regard to the Persian and Arabic tongues, though it was carried out to a considerable extent in the case of Chinese works. It meant long and patient waiting; and it was ultimately found more satisfactory to buy *en bloc* existing libraries, thereby

concentrating into the moment of such sale and purchase a lifetime of watchful success and experienced accumulation.

With these Oriental and Western books, bought for their intrinsic beauty, Lord Lindsay, the twenty-fourth Earl of "Christian Art" celebrity and his son, found the nucleus on which to build this collection of some six thousand manuscripts, which to-day, with Lord Spencer's collection of some forty thousand printed volumes, form the chief glories of the John Rylands Library. Lord Lindsay set out to illustrate the history of writing and illumination, and possessed examples of all dates from the papyri of Early Egypt to modern times in almost every known written language.

Lord Crawford possesses in a letter of some two hundred closely written foolscap pages, written by his grandfather in 1864, describing "the present state and future prospects of the Crawford or Balcarres Library" the "Bibliotheca Lindesiana". The scheme is probably the most comprehensive that any private book collector has ever formed in modern times, and it has been carried out through two generations in the most logical way. The library was to be thoroughly representative of all the literatures of the world. It was to contain, not everything, but the best of everything—"the best that has been known and thought in the world". All the literatures of Europe were to be represented by the best poets and prose writers in the best editions, both those issued in the lifetime of the authors and those of modern and critical ages. The literature of the countries which have been slow in adopting printing were to be represented by the finest obtainable manuscripts. The history of each country was to be treated in the same way. We have already expressed the hope on another occasion that Lord Crawford will see his way to give us the privilege of quietly perusing this letter in print.

This library has from time to time suffered. Two great sales, at Sothebys, took place in the eighteen eighties; many thousands of books were sold in 1920; and now another blow is imminent, for great houses cannot survive to-day's burden of taxation, and yet another of the few remaining great private libraries is doomed.

"There are, however", writes Lord Crawford, "certain special collections which I am not likely ever to have space to house myself, but of which I should deeply regret the dispersal over the world. They are collections which, if scattered, could never again be brought together, for the material no longer exists. Some of these collections are the finest of their kind, whilst all are of considerable importance. Their value lies in their existence as a collection and it would be a tragedy for scholarship were they broken up."

Lord Crawford would have desired to give these collections to a library where they would be kept intact for all time, and where they could be freely used: but financial considerations prevent his losing complete control of them in this manner. Alternatively, they could be sold *en bloc* to an American library, for any one of them would bring distinction in its particular line to almost any library—serious research on any of the subjects contained in these collections would make it necessary that they should be consulted. Such a course may be inevitable, but it is one which would naturally be regretted by the scholars in this country.

A third alternative, however, has suggested itself to Lord Crawford's mind, namely, that some public libraries in this country might care to accept on semi-permanent loan these or some of these collections. This would have the advantage of retaining unbroken some sections of the "Bibliotheca Lindesiana", of preserving for scholars in this country an asset unobtainable elsewhere, and of adding something of value to the particular public, or semi-public, library concerned.

This suggestion of a semi-permanent loan would not differ materially from an outright gift.

Lord Crawford brought these matters to the attention of Dr. Guppy, and after careful consideration of this generous proposal it became quite clear that some of these collections would add materially to the utility of the Rylands Library.

There will always, however, remain a valuable printed historical record of this great library, in the form of an alphabetical analytical catalogue, in four folio volumes, consisting of 5000 pages arranged in double columns, in which such

collections as Pertz, Muratori, the Bollandists, and publications of learned societies have been carefully analysed and arranged in one alphabetical sequence, by a staff of cataloguers working under the direction of Lord Crawford's grandfather, his father, and Mr. J. P. Edmond.

This is quite distinct from the catalogues of Royal Proclamations, Miscellaneous Broadsides and Ballads, and from the series of "Notes and Collations" published over a number of years by Lord Crawford, and dealing with intricate bibliographical problems of certain books and series of which the object was to form perfect or standard copies of such sets as Fowler's prints of stained glass and mosaics, Sanderus's *Brabant*, de Bastard, and others.

The first of the collections which have been deposited in the Rylands Library consists of :

REFORMATION AND LUTHER TRACTS

In this collection there are some 1350 volumes written by, for, or against Luther, presenting a complete and many-sided picture of the Reformation, of which many of the wood-cut title-pages were designed by such artists as Holbein and Cranach.

By means of these tracts of humble proportions and consequent cheapness which were easily hawked about, the public were kept in daily contact with every stage of the development of the movement.

The first of Luther's works in history and importance is the famous Disputation of 1537, the original edition in book form of the Theses against the system of indulgences, the first blast of the trumpet heralding the Reformation.

No four pages of print ever changed the course of history as did these. It was the broadside edition of the Theses which Luther himself used to post upon the gates of the churches and the University of Wittenberg.

No change was made in the rites and ceremonies of the Church until 1523, when Luther published the "Order for the Worship of God" which lays down certain principles for the conduct of Divine Worship.

It is doubtful whether there are collections of these contemporary pamphlets of this importance in Germany.

A separate catalogue has been printed and accompanies the collection.

Other collections are :

ENGLISH TRACTS

A very large collection consisting of 11,700 volumes in folio and quarto dating from 1587 to 1912. The Civil War period is exceptionally fine. The only other collection at all comparable is the "Thomasson Tracts" in the British Museum.

FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY AND ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY TRACTS

A very large collection, which is probably the finest outside France. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the Bibliothèque Nationale has anything of comparable importance.

The pamphlets number 15,200, Periodicals 211, Manuscript documents and transcripts 270, making a collective total of 15,681 items.

This collection supplements the extremely important gift made to the library by the father of the present Earl of Crawford, as a mark of his appreciation of the services the library was rendering to scholarship, on the occasion of the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of its inauguration on the 6th of October, 1924, when the Lord Mayor and Corporation of Manchester entertained the Trustees, Governors and Officials of the Library and their principal guests, to the number of 400, to a civic luncheon in the Town Hall.

Lord Crawford's gift consisted of a collection of upwards of 20,000 proclamations, placards and other broadsides and bulletins, issued in France and other European countries.

It comprises 10,000 proclamations and placards relating to the French Revolution, to the Napoleonic Régime, to the Restoration, and the Commune of 1871, ranging from 1789 to 1871; 200 proclamations relating to the earlier period of French history covering the years 1532 to 1780; a set of the "Bulletin de la Convention Nationale", 1792 to 1795; 2000 proclamations relating to the Netherlands from 1584 to 1848; 1000 relating to Tuscany from 1548 to 1793; 107 relating to the Venetian Republic from 1668 to 1797; 200 relating to the Neapolitan Revolution of 1848-49; and 50 relating to Spain from 1716 to 1843.

It is difficult to estimate the importance of this collection, but it is certain that many of the items which it contains are not to be found elsewhere.

THE BORGHESE COLLECTION OF PAPAL BULLS, BRIEFS, PROCLAMATIONS, BROADSIDES, ETC.

In this collection we hear from Rome the thunder of anathema and excommunication against the reformers.

It is an unique collection of the greatest importance, numbering some 8000 items, collected by the Borghese family, and contain an amazing store of information not only on public affairs, but also about the social life of Rome, particularly between 1550 and 1700. Indeed, it is doubtful whether a more complete insight into the social life of any town can be obtained elsewhere.

The subject of seventeenth-century Papal Government is more or less virgin soil, which is full of surprises and in this collection is material for a great book.

These documents were all printed in the Vatican. They include some unique items, and are accompanied by the beginnings of a catalogue in manuscript of the Papal Bulls, by Robert Steele.

DE BRY: GRANDS ET PETITS VOYAGES

Reference has already been made to this collection, which forms one of the most intricate bibliographical puzzles of the whole library.

The collection comprises not only the entire series of first editions in different languages, but also the second and third, and their endless variations of text and illustrations.

The three volumes of the original set have grown to no fewer than 193 folio volumes.

THE BALCARRES AND CRAWFORD PAPERS, ETC.

This collection includes the muniments, charters, deeds, and other papers relating to the Crawford Family and their Estates, which range from the 13th to the 20th century, and comprise some 10,000 items.

It also includes a considerable collection of Library correspondence and accounts, as well as colliery accounts.