

QUARTERLY BULLETIN
OF THE
JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THE question of paramount importance in the administration of every great or important library is: How best to render accessible to students the constantly increasing stores of literature to be found upon its shelves?

It is not sufficient for a library to be simply famous; it must be effective if it is to serve its real purpose.

That the John Rylands Library contains a very remarkable collection of bibliographical and literary rarities is a matter of common knowledge. It is wrong, however, to suppose that it is a place of pilgrimage for the lovers of rare books and nothing more, for side by side with these treasures there is an excellent working library for students, whether in the department of theology, philosophy, history, philology, art, belles-lettres, or bibliography, and it is the wish and intention of the President and Governors to assist all to carry their researches to a point beyond the resources of the private or the free public library. To that end suggestions from students have been invited and welcomed, with the result that during the three years which have elapsed since the library was opened to readers nearly twelve thousand volumes have been added to its shelves.

With a view to correct any erroneous ideas that may still exist with regard to the scope of the library, to remove the imaginary barriers by which it has been surrounded in the minds of many people, and at the same time to provide a medium of communication between the library and the reader and to make clear to all lovers of literature the great possibilities of usefulness which such a library holds out, the Council of Governors has sanctioned the publication of a quarterly bulletin.

The primary purpose of this bulletin is to record the titles of works acquired for the library during the quarter preceding the date of each issue, in order that students, not only in Manchester, but also in other and distant parts of the world, may be kept informed of the growth of its collections. In short, it will be made a vehicle for conveying information respecting the library, its progress, and even its wants.

But there are other and more ambitious designs that we have in view, and it may be well in this our first number to state that we shall hope from time to time to deal with much that concerns bibliography. When we speak of "bibliography," we use the term in its broadest sense, as the science of books considered under all aspects. This will include occasional lists of works on specific subjects, in the nature of reading-lists, bibliographical and historical notes on any specially noteworthy additions, and articles on the special collections and famous books in which the library is so rich, with the object of extending the usefulness of the library and of making its resources better known.

That such a publication will materially increase the general interest felt in the institution, and not only promote the use of books that would otherwise be neglected, but directly tend to the advancement of knowledge, is, we venture to think, all but certain.

It is not intended that the bulletin shall supersede the catalogue, but that it shall serve as a provisional hand-list or forerunner of the supplement to the general catalogue and of the special catalogues, which are in active preparation.

In this connection it may not be out of place here, to offer some explanation of the apparently unreasonable delay which is attending the issue of the promised supplement to the general author catalogue.

It has been said: "A collection of books no matter what may be its size is not of necessity a library. Not until it has been systematically arranged and thoroughly catalogued can that term properly be applied to it."

Much has been done already by means of the printed author catalogue, with its manuscript supplement, to enable readers to make out, in a general way, what is in the John Rylands Library, but much remains to be done before it can be said that the resources of the library in any department of literature may be seen at a glance.

Here, as in every other library of any importance, there are thousands of volumes that have never been opened, because nobody knows they are here for want of a proper analytical catalogue. Whereas, by the aid of judicious cataloguing, these neglected volumes may be opened up, and in numberless instances it will be found that they disclose information which would have been sought elsewhere in vain, though all the time it was so near at hand.

The question may well be asked: Why should valuable works be buried and neglected as they are in so many libraries, for want of adequate cataloguing, because by an accident of birth they appear buried in the heart of a volume with others varying in importance, lumped together without any special title pages, and disguised under some misleading general title?

The component parts of the transactions and publications of many of the learned societies, or of such composite works as: *Historical Essays by Members of the Owens College*, *Selected Essays and Papers of Richard Copley Christie*, *The Collected Papers of Henry Bradshaw*; the great historical collections: *Monumenta Germaniae historica*, *Scriptores rerum Italicarum*, to mention a few familiar titles, constitute so many separate works, and in many cases are of much greater importance to the student and specialist than many of the more imposing but less trustworthy works that are granted space upon our shelves and in our catalogues.

Every item recovered from this buried material, or, in other words, from the thousands of works which year by year are diverted from the natural stream of literature, because they are published as subordinate parts of other books, and made readily accessible to readers by means of the catalogue entry, is more valuable in many cases than the purchase of new volumes.

The desirability of getting at this hidden material has never been questioned, but the ability to carry out the work of disinterment with the limited resources at their disposal has long taxed the ingenuity of librarians.

Here is one of the tasks we have set ourselves, and it must serve as our apology for the delay in the issue of the supplementary and other catalogues referred to above, for such work, if it is to be of any value to the student, must be prepared with the utmost care.

Many thousands of slips have been prepared already as a result of this analysis, these have been arranged in cabinets and are accessible to readers for purposes of reference.

The subject catalogue is likewise in process of construction, and many thousands of cards have been written. These also have been arranged in cabinets and are accessible to readers, to whom they should prove to be of great service.

In order to facilitate consultation in the list of accessions, which is the real purpose of this bulletin, a method of classification has been adopted, which constitutes the skeleton of the scheme which is being elaborated for the better arrangement of the books upon the shelves of the library. The object of the scheme is to group together the books of each subject, surrounded by those of other subjects which lead up to it and grow out of it—an invaluable aid to the student.

In justification of the order in which the principal subjects follow one another in our scheme of classification, it may be necessary to explain that the special character impressed upon the library from its foundation makes it inevitable that the first place in it should be assigned to theology and philosophy. Next to theology and philosophy the

faculty of history will receive most attention, and so history follows philosophy, the other faculties following in the sequence shown in the order of classification.

List of Periodicals.—The present number contains, in addition to the list of works added to the library during the latter part of 1902, a list of the periodical publications regularly received and displayed in the periodical room. The list also shows the extent of the library file of each periodical, and it will be noticed that, with a few exceptions, the library possesses a complete set from its commencement of each of the respective publications.

LIBRARY NOTES.

Open Evenings.—With a view to make the resources of the library better known, the Governors have decided to throw the building open to the public on the second Wednesday evening of each month, between the hours of seven and nine o'clock, when an address or lecture will be given in the lecture room, commencing at half-past seven.

The series of lectures that is being arranged for these open evenings will cover a somewhat wide range of subjects, and is designed rather to stimulate an interest which may lead to further study, than to furnish any detailed or exhaustive treatment. The knowledge that a lecturer can hope to communicate directly in lectures of an hour's duration, at intervals of a month, is but insignificant when compared with what his audience will acquire by their own reading, if he can only get them interested in the study. Therefore the object of this scheme is to quicken or to awaken interest in the subjects covered by the lectures, and to direct attention to the sources of information thereupon to be found upon the shelves of the library.

The first series upon "Books and their Makers," will deal with the various methods that have been employed from the earliest times for the preservation and transmission of knowledge.

The first of these open evenings took place on Wednesday, the 11th of March, with an address upon "The History and Scope of the Library," when much to the gratification of the Governors and the librarian between five and six hundred people responded to the invitation. This was followed on the 8th of April by a lecture on "Books before Printing to the Classical Period," and on the 13th of May by one on "The Books of the Middle Ages". The subjects for the months of June and July will be as follows:—

JUNE 10TH: "The Books of the Middle Ages," continued.

JULY 8TH: "The Book Prints and Books".

Bibliographical Demonstrations for Students.—Should the interest in this new departure be maintained, the Governors will be encouraged to continue their experiments by arranging some bibliographical demonstrations for students, with the object of further stimulating interest in the many valuable collections which the library contains, and in that way lay the foundations for future study.

Nothing will help a student to appreciate the reality underlying the great names in the various fields of literature like a personal introduction to their works. Some slight acquaintance with an author's works, no matter how fragmentary, an occasional dip into their writings, if only to read the title pages, the headings of the chapters, or a short passage on some subject having special interest at the moment, will give a sense of personal acquaintance with, or a vivid impression of, the writers, very different from the mere shadowy idea previously gathered from seeing their names quoted or from hearing a lecture about an author one has never read even in part.

After such a glimpse one sometimes feels impelled, and certainly more prepared, to gather up from historical or biographical works more detailed information as to the lives and doctrines of those who have left their mark for all time.

The plan proposed is to show all the best editions of the authors discussed, and also the most authoritative works bearing upon the subject, so far as they may be available; to have extracts read so as to place the subject fairly before those present at the demonstration, and give time and opportunity for examining the various books exhibited.