

# THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUVAIN.

BY THE EDITOR.

WE are glad to be able to announce the rapidly approaching realization of the purpose which the Governors of the John Rylands Library had in view in December, 1914, when the present scheme was inaugurated for rendering assistance to the authorities of the University of Louvain in their heavy task of making good the ruin wrought by the war, by providing them with the nucleus of a new library to replace the famous collection of books and manuscripts which had been so ruthlessly destroyed by the Germans, some four months earlier.

In January last, Belgium having been freed from the hateful presence of the invaders, the University was repatriated, by the return of the authorities to the devastated scene of their former activities and triumphs, there to reassemble their scattered students, to resume their accustomed work, and to take a prominently active part in the immediate business of effecting a transition to a peace footing, as well as in the educational and other schemes of reconstruction which were already taking shape.

The Rector of the University (Monsignor P. Ladeuze) writing under date of the 21st September, in the name of his Alma Mater, at the conclusion of the first session of its revival, refers in terms of gratitude and appreciation to what has been accomplished by the Rylands Governors in collaboration with the Executive of the National Committee for promoting the resuscitation of the Library of the University of Louvain, and with the aid of the many contributors both individual and institutional, who with great promptitude and generosity responded to our appeals for help.

From the same source we are delighted to learn of the success which has attended the University since its reopening. No less than 3200 students have been in attendance, and Monsignor Ladeuze

anticipates a still larger number of entries at the opening of the new session this month.

As we pointed out in a previous report, one of the first essentials in the organization and equipment of any University is a library, for without one it has been likened to a garden without flowers, or a purse without money. It is not surprising, therefore, to learn that, in the absence of this essential part of the University's equipment, the work of the students has been somewhat hampered. Fortunately, this is a deficiency which will be remedied during the ensuing session, since temporary premises have been secured, to serve as library and reading room, pending the erection of the new library building, and it will be our privilege to assist in the furnishing of the shelves with a live, up-to-date collection of books designed to meet the immediate requirements of staff and students.

To this end we are making arrangements for the despatch to Louvain of the first instalment of the new library, which has been in process of formation here in Manchester since December, 1914. This consignment will consist of 5000 volumes, accompanied by a catalogue on cards, and will be followed by others as quickly as they can be made ready for shipment.

It is gratifying to be able to report that the appeal for further contributions which we made in our last issue, has met with the same encouraging response as was accorded to our earlier requests for help. In proof of this statement it needs only to be pointed out that since the publication of our last report upwards of 9000 additional volumes have been contributed, whereby the total number of volumes actually received and registered is increased to 21,000. Even this does not complete the record, for it does not take into account many other definite promises of help which have still to materialize, and several consignments of books, at present in course of transit from such distant parts of the Empire as Bombay, Toronto, and Sydney, which together will still further swell the total by many thousands of volumes, on behalf of the Governors and the Executive Committee.

This is a very substantial beginning for a new library, and we take this opportunity of renewing our thanks to those who have assisted us in the formation of such a collection ; but when it is compared with the library it is intended to replace, comprising as it did at least a quarter of a million of volumes, it can only be described as the nucleus,

and it is obvious that very much more remains to be done if it is to approach anything like the equivalent of its predecessor.

There are a number of well-wishers who decided to withhold their proposed gifts until such time as we could announce the repatriation of the University, and the actual re-establishment of the library at Louvain. This was at a time when Belgium was still in the occupation of the Germans ; and there may have been some reason for their anxiety, although personally, incurable optimists as we are, we never had any doubts as to the ultimate issue of events. There can be no longer any reason for withholding such contributions, which we shall be glad to receive at the earliest convenience of the prospective donors.

In making our last appeal we explained that whilst keeping in view the general character of the library which we had in contemplation, we were anxious that it should be thoroughly representative of English scholarship, in other words, that its equipment should include the necessary material for research in the history, language, and literature of this country together with the contributions which British scholars have made to other departments of learning. That appeal has borne excellent fruit, as will be seen from the accompanying list of contributors. Many societies have furnished either full sets of their transactions and other publications, or such as were in print and consequently available. Several of the leading publishers have also rendered most valuable assistance in the building up of the collection on its modern side.

The Honorary Secretary of the Irish Texts Society (Miss Eleanor Hull) in forwarding to us on behalf of the Council of that Society, a set of their recently issued edition of Keating's "History of Ireland," took the opportunity of reminding us of the close and friendly connection that has existed for a long period, but more particularly during the seventeenth century, between Louvain and Ireland.

The communication is so full of interesting information, which is not otherwise accessible in the form in which it is given, that, with Miss Hull's consent, we are reproducing it for the benefit of our readers, and in order that it may have the wider publicity which it merits.

"At a time when Catholic education was difficult to obtain in Ireland, great numbers of young men found in Louvain an educational centre. Three Irish colleges flourished there ; the Irish Dominican College in the street then known as 'Rue des Dominicains Irlandais' ;

the Pastoral College in the Rue des Orphelins, which up to a recent period bore the name 'Collegium Hibernum' cut in stone above its gateway; and the still more important foundation of the Recollects in the Marché aux Porcs, established in 1616 and named after Saint Anthony of Padua."

"Within the walls of this later college worked the famous group of scholars who might fitly be termed the Irish Bollandists. Ward, Fleming, John Colgan, O'Sheerin, Stephen White, and Luke Wadding contributed to the collection and compilation of the Irish Saints' Lives, and other religious works, some of which were published by Colgan under the titles 'Trias Thaumaturga' and 'Acta Sanctorum veteris et majoris Scotiæ seu Hiberniæ,' great undertakings which Colgan's feeble health did not permit him to complete, but much more of which remains in manuscript among the Irish collections now in the Burgundian Library of Brussels. These were found in Colgan's room and removed from Louvain for safety about the time of the French Revolution."

"In 1608 there came to Louvain the hunted Earls, Tyrone and Tyrconnell (O'Neill and O'Donnell) with their party of nearly one hundred followers. They were hospitably entertained by the city during the whole winter, O'Neill being lodged in a hostelry known as the 'Imperial House,' and O'Donnell in another palace close by. A contemporary record, written by the Secretary who accompanied the Earls in their travels, describes the revels organized for their entertainment at Christmas, and also the unusual event of the spearing of a large salmon through the bridge crossing a branch of the River Dyle brought up into the city with the flow of water consequent on the breaking up of the ice after a severe winter."

"On the floor of the Chapel of St. Anthony is still to be seen the inscription on the tomb of two of their party, Rose, wife of Cahil, O'Donnell's brother, and her son Hugh. After Cahil's death she married the great Owen Roe O'Neill (the Don Eugenio O'Neil of Spanish documents) whose early career in the Netherlands gave promise of his warlike nature, and of those powers of organization which he afterwards exercised in his own country.

"Finally, we recall the visit of Michael O'Clery, afterwards one of the 'Four Masters,' from Donegal to Louvain to assist Hugh Ward in carrying out the literary work on which he had set his heart. Some time about 1627 it was decided by Ward and Colgan that

O'Clery should return to Ireland to collect fresh materials for their use. The industry he displayed in this expedition is shown, not only in the vast mass of material in his beautiful handwriting which forms the bulk of the Irish collections at Brussels, but in a series of hagiological and historical works, of which the most lasting in its importance is the 'Annals of the Four Masters,' on which Michael O'Clery and his helpers worked uninterruptedly from January, 1632 to August, 1636, under the shade of the ruined Franciscan Monastery of Donegal, on the shores of Donegal Bay. It was during the very same period in which O'Clery was working on the Annals in Donegal that Dr. Geoffrey Keating was writing in his hiding place in the glens of Aherlow, in Munster, the legends and history known under the name of the 'Foras Feasa ar Eirinn,' a copy of which we now give ourselves the pleasure of presenting to Louvain Library. It may add to its interest to know that the earliest existing copy of this history was carried over to Louvain, probably by O'Clery himself, and is described as one of the volumes 'found in the chamber of our Father Colgan' after his death. This manuscript with many others once preserved in Louvain, is now in the collection in the Franciscan Convent, Merchants' Quay, Dublin. It was written before 1640, and therefore in Keating's own lifetime. O'Clery died at Louvain in 1643."

Apparently, Ireland is not to be behind in this good work, and has entered into the generous rivalry of restitution. We gather from an interesting article which appeared in the "Tuam Herald" of May 17th, that already a representative committee has been formed in Dublin, under the auspices of the four Archbishops, and the Presidents of Maynooth, Dublin, and Cork University Colleges, with some representative laymen to collect money and books for the Louvain Library, with which Ireland was for centuries so closely associated, and to which it is bound by so many close ties. There, in the cloisters of Louvain, countless Irishmen taught and were taught. The College of St. Anthony of Padua, already referred to by Miss Hull, owes its foundation to a distinguished Archbishop of Tuam, Florence Conroy, "flos mundi," a familiar name by which that learned man was known by his contemporaries. He it was who established the first printing press in connection with the University, and many historical and devotional books that subsequently found their way into Ireland came from the

Louvain Press. The establishment of the school of St. Thomas Aquinas in the Superior Institute of Philosophy, was the work of Pope Leo XIII, and the first to fill that chair was he who is now the most prominent and revered churchman in Europe, the distinguished Cardinal Mercier. That great and good man who nobly stood up for the defence of his people in this war, who bravely faced the cruel arrogance and insolence of the Germans, was himself originally a student of Louvain, and afterwards Professor of Moral Philosophy.

We shall be glad to receive further offers of books, or contributions in money to meet the expenses incidental to the organization of such a library. Many of the books already contributed have required attention at the hands of the binders, before they could be regarded as ready to be placed upon the shelves of the new library, we should, therefore, welcome contributions towards the fund to meet these and other contingent expenses.

In order to obviate any needless duplication of gifts, would-be contributors are requested in the first instance, to be good enough to send lists of the books they are willing to offer to THE LIBRARIAN OF THE JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY, MANCHESTER.

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