

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

REPORT OF PROGRESS, WITH LIST OF THE RECENT CONTRIBUTORS.

We are glad to be able to announce that the purpose which the Governors of the John Rylands Library had in view, in December, 1914, when the present scheme was inaugurated, has been abundantly realized, and it may not be out of place again briefly to recall the circumstances which led up to this undertaking, and also those which have contributed to its success.

The scheme grew out of a desire on the part of the Governors to give some practical expression to their deep feelings of sympathy with the authorities of the University of Louvain in the grievous loss which they had sustained, some four months earlier, through the wanton burning of their famous library by the Germans. This, they felt, could be best accomplished by means of a gift of books to form the nucleus of a new library to replace the splendid collection of manuscripts and printed books involved in that senseless act.

The offer of the gift was made to one of the members of the exiled staff of Louvain professors, and was gratefully acknowledged by him on behalf of the University authorities, as the first contribution which had been effectually made to the future library of Louvain.

At that time Belgium was in the occupation of the Germans, so the Governors undertook to house their gift until such time as the country had been freed from the presence of the invaders, and the University had been repatriated.

Having given this undertaking it occurred to them that there must be many other libraries and learned institutions, as well as private individuals, who would welcome the opportunity of sharing in such an expression of sympathy, and with a view of inviting their co-operation an announcement was made in the subsequent issue of this BULLETIN of our willingness to be responsible for the custody of any suitable work which might be entrusted to us for the purpose. We also announced

our intention of preparing a register of the various contributors with an exact description of their gifts, for presentation with the books when the appropriate time should arrive, to serve as a permanent record of this united effort to repair some of the damage which had been wrought by the war.

Our appeal met with an immediate and generous response, which has continued unabated throughout the five years that have elapsed since it was first made public. One of the most gratifying features of the response has been that all classes of the community, not only in this country but in many parts of the English-speaking world, as well as in several of the allied and neutral countries, have participated in it. Many of the gifts partake of the sanctity of a sacrifice, since they consist of treasured possessions which had been acquired by struggling students through the exercise of economy and self-denial.

A new impulse was given to the movement in the early part of 1916, through the action of the British Academy in calling together representatives of the principal libraries and learned societies of the United Kingdom, under the presidency of Viscount Bryce, to consider the advisability of co-operating in the work of restoring the University of Louvain and its Library. This meeting resulted in the formation of a National Committee, and in the appointment of a small Executive, consisting of the following members: Lord Muir Mackenzie, G.C.B., K.C.; Sir J. P. Mahaffy, G.B.E., C.V.O.; Sir F. G. Kenyon, K.C.B.; Sir A. T. Davies, K.B.E., C.B.; Sir A. Hopkinson, K.C.; Edmund Gosse, Esq., C.B.; Hugh Butler, Esq., Librarian of the House of Lords; Sir I. Gollancz, Secretary to the British Academy; Henry Guppy, Esq., Librarian of the John Rylands Library; Dr. M. R. James, Provost of Eton; C. G. Kekewich, Esq.; Dr. J. W. Mackail; Bodley's Librarian; Sir Norman Moore; Dr. A. E. Shipley, F.R.S., Master of Christ's College, Cambridge; H. R. Tedder, Esq.; and Dr. C. T. Hagberg Wright; with Lord Muir Mackenzie as Chairman, and the Librarian of the House of Lords as Honorary Secretary, to consider the best way of organizing the movement effectively, and to take whatever steps were considered necessary.

The first meeting of the Executive was held in the Library of the House of Lords, by permission of their Lordships, who gladly showed their sympathy with the movement by allowing this Committee to use their House for its meetings, and as its base of operations generally,

when it was decided to co-operate with the Governors of the John Rylands Library in the development of the scheme which they had already inaugurated, and as a result of the personal appeals made by Lord Muir Mackenzie, Sir Alfred Hopkinson, and other members of the Committee, who since its formation have taken an active part in furthering the objects of the scheme, success has been achieved.

As evidence of this success it needs only to be stated that since January last we have had the pleasure of transferring to Louvain nearly 400 cases, containing no fewer than 30,427 volumes, forming the major part of the splendid collection of books which has been gradually accumulated here in Manchester as the outcome of these combined efforts. The discrepancy between these figures and those given in the paragraph under "Notes and News" may be explained by the fact that a further consignment of nearly 5000 volumes has been dispatched to Louvain since that note was written. Even this does not complete the record, for yet another consignment is in active preparation for shipment, whilst fresh contributions and offers of assistance are still almost daily reaching us.

Further evidence of this unflagging interest in our project is to be found in the accompanying list of contributors, representing gifts to the extent of nearly 10,000 volumes which have reached us since the publication of our previous report, in December last.

Amongst the more recent gifts, which have come to hand since the accompanying list was drawn up, mention may be made of a valuable collection of general literature, consisting of 1200 volumes, from the University of Toronto, and of another collection of great interest contributed by Mr. Humphry Ward, in memory of his wife, the late Mrs. Humphry Ward, who in her younger days, some forty years ago, was a diligent student of early Spanish literature and history, and contributed most of the Spanish and West-Gothic biographies to Smith & Wace's "Dictionary of Christian Biography". To do this Mrs. Humphry Ward formed a small library of old Spanish books, and these, when our scheme was first made public, she said she would like to give to Louvain, as the old connection between Spain and Flanders had been so close. The collection includes many of the standard historians, such as Florez, Mariana, Nicolas Antonio, and Los Rios, amongst other interesting works, and thus forms a most welcome addition to the new library, not only on account of their intrinsic worth,

but by reason of their personal association with one whose works take rank amongst the classics of our literature.

In one of our earlier appeals for help we explained that whilst keeping in view the general character of the library which we had in contemplation, we were at the same time anxious that it should be thoroughly representative of English scholarship, in other words, that its equipment should include the necessary materials for research on the history, language, and literature of this country, together with the contributions which British scholars have made to other departments of learning. The attainment of that object has been made possible by the ready and generous co-operation of many of the learned societies, universities, university presses, and by a number of the leading publishers, to whom we take this opportunity of renewing our thanks.

In this connection it may be permissible to quote a few sentences from a letter received from Prof. A. van Hoonacker, who, writing under date of the 3rd April last, refers to the character of our contribution in the following terms :—

“ . . . The restoration of our library is progressing splendidly, and it is a very gratifying thing to acknowledge for us, the most valuable contributions, by far, are those of our English friends. Our debt of gratitude towards the Rylands Library is very great indeed and can never be forgotten. Our library will be a historical monument in a special way : it is going to be for its best part an English library ! ”

With a view of enabling readers to form some idea of the deep feelings of gratitude and appreciation which our united action has evoked, we venture to reproduce several passages from letters received from the Rector of the University, Monsignor P. Ladeuze. Writing on the 30th January, soon after the receipt of our first consignment of books, Monsignor Ladeuze expresses himself, on behalf of the University, in the following significant terms :—

“ . . . Les résultats que vous avez obtenus sont merveilleux. Vous avez atteint votre but. Grâce à vous nos professeurs et nos étudiants ont encore une bibliothèque, et une bibliothèque utilisable, longtemps avant que les Allemands aient réparé leur crime. Par la richesse de son contenu, par les soins qui ont été donnés aux livres, par la peine que vous avez prise de dresser un catalogue soigné et une bonne partie des fiches, votre premier envoi de livres dépasse de loin tous ceux que nous avons reçus jusqu'ici. La joie de nos professeurs devant ces beaux

livres faisait plaisir ; j'aurai voulu que vous en fussiez témoin. Et voici qu'un nouvel envoi nous parvient, encore plus précieux que le premier ! Les listes que j'ai reçues me permettent d'en apprécier toute l'importance, et en particulier l'utilité que nous pourrions en retirer tout de suite pour nos études. Du plus profond de mon coeur, je vous dis mon meilleur merci."

Again, under date of the 23rd February, upon receipt of the detailed lists of the contents of the cases forming the third consignment, Monsignor Ladeuze writes :—

" . . . Ce nouvel envoi va être réellement d'une grande utilité pour nos professeurs et nos étudiants. La liste du contenu de chaque caisse, que je reçois en même temps que votre lettre, me le prouve surabondamment, et je vous demande la permission de ne pas chercher de formules pour vous exprimer à nouveau notre vive gratitude . . . 16,390 volumes, choisis, bien ordonnés, en excellent état ! C'est déjà toute une bibliothèque, et une bibliothèque universitaire ! Et vous voulez bien me dire que ce n'est par fini, qu'au contraire le nombre des dons s'accroît tous les jours ! Encore une fois, sans formules, merci de tout mon coeur ! "

Again, under date of the 22nd May :—

" Je ne sais plus à quelles formules recourir pour vous dire mon admiration et ma gratitude.

" Il y a quelques jours, je parlais à M. le Professeur Van der Essen de vos envois. Et il me répondit : ' J'ai vu les débuts de la collection pendant la guerre ; ils étaient déjà magnifiques. Mais je n'aurais pas pu soupçonner alors les développements que cette collection allait prendre. . . . ' Ces paroles se rapportaient aux quatre premiers envois. Le cinquième va encore considérablement augmenter ces richesses, comme je puis en juger par les indications que vous voulez bien me donner, en m'annonçant son arrivée.

" . . . Soyez encore remercié 26,336 fois pour les 26,336 volumes, tous de choix, que nous vous devons !

" Les volumes de quatre envois précédents sont déjà à la disposition de nos lecteurs, et se trouvent bien établis sur les rayons de notre bibliothèque provisoire.

" Il est bien regrettable qu'il ne soit pas encore possible de commencer à construire notre nouvelle bibliothèque."

Yet again, under date of the 23rd July :—

“. . . Au moment où je reçois votre lettre et le catalogue de votre nouvel envoi, je suis sur le point de m'absenter pour plusieurs jours. Je veux cependant vous envoyer tout de suite une rapide mais très sincère expression de ma vive gratitude. Ce m'est un grand plaisir de faire connaître à tous ceux qui visitent notre Bibliothèque provisoire l'importance extraordinaire de votre collaboration à l'oeuvre de la restauration de notre dépôt. Nous voici 30,427 fois obligés envers vous ! Et combien ce nouvel envoi nous sera précieux, la brève description que vous m'en donnez, le montre éloquemment. La semaine prochaine aura lieu la grande réunion annuelle de notre conseil d'administration, présidée par le Cardinal Mercier. Je me ferai un devoir de lui exposer tout ce que nous vous devons.”

Monsieur L. Stainier, Administrateur de la Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels, who has undertaken the direction of the restoration of the Louvain Library, and consequently has had the handling and direction of our consignments, when acknowledging their safe arrival employs the same emphatic terms of appreciation.

On the 6th April he writes as follows :—

“Your letter of the 1st April reached us at the time the Easter bells were chiming in happy remembrance of the Saviour's Resurrection, and I could not refrain from associating their chimes with the joy of the resurrection of our library. . . .

“The first three consignments have caused the greatest satisfaction among the professors, but I think they will feel no less happy when the fourth consignment is ready for consultation. Such interesting and useful sets as the publications of the Early English Text Society, the Gibb Memorial Fund, The Royal Asiatic Society, the Gwatkin collection, etc., will enable our masters and students to resume their work anew.”

On the 3rd May :—

“. . . Above all we congratulate you upon the system of transmission you have instituted ; the rapidity and smoothness of which is marvellous ; and we are now considering the application of the system to the recuperation in Germany, the beginning of which is now in view.”

On the 31st May, thus :—

“. . . Once more I am able to report the safe arrival of your latest consignment of sixty-three cases of books . . . no, of treasures !

“Positively such collections as the texts of the Manchester University

Press and of the Clarendon Press at Oxford would be considered among the most useful collections already shelved in our stores, and I do not doubt of the satisfaction of masters and students when they are enabled to know the Mayhew and Jenner collections, and peruse the books gathered by such workers.

“In the case of the publications of the Folk Lore Society we had to open the cases in which they were contained in order to satisfy the impatient professor who had been waiting its coming since early morning.

“The ‘Agrippa’s Works’ (a volume which at one time belonged to the Louvain Library) was received as a Prodigal Son reintegrating his parents’ home.”

We cannot conclude this report without acknowledging our indebtedness for the great service which has been rendered by the Cork Steamship Company, Limited, for whom Messrs. J. T. Fletcher & Company of Manchester act as agents, in so generously undertaking the entire responsibility of the transportation of the new library to Louvain. Nearly four hundred cases have been collected in Manchester and shipped to Louvain, free of cost—a most liberal contribution towards our scheme of restoration. We have also to thank Mr. Jebson, the representative of Messrs. Fletcher, for the great interest he has taken in the matter, and for the advice and help which he has so readily given in making the necessary arrangements for shipment.

#### CONTRIBUTORS TO THE NEW LOUVAIN LIBRARY, NOVEMBER, 1919, TO JUNE, 1920.

(The figures in Brackets represent the number of Volumes.)

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