

## THE LIBRARY OF THE UNITED STATES.

THE cardinal object of a National Library should be the collection and preservation of the nation's literature. This postulate once granted, it follows that the method or law of its growth should be inclusive, not exclusive. The library of the Government, that is, the only one belonging to the whole people, is to contain all the books which the smaller and more select libraries have neither the room nor the means nor the motive to accumulate. The citizen in quest of any American book ever published should be assured of finding it in the one national repository provided as the conservator of the product of the nation's mind in every department of science or literature.

In this view, the Congressional or Government Library at Washington has been made by law the depository of all books and periodicals protected by copyright. All such publications are to be preserved, irrespective of their merit, some as works of reference, some as chronicles of the times, and not a few, doubtless, as models to be avoided. The apprehension is sometimes expressed that the National Library may become overloaded with trash, and so fail of its usefulness. "'Tis a lost fear." There is no act of Congress requiring all the books to be read. The reading world is perpetually winnowing and sifting the multifold productions of the press, and every book sooner or later finds its proper place and destiny, whether that destiny be a swift passport to oblivion or a certificate of immortality. The sense of the world is keen, and the survival of the fittest is as certain as that art is long. If it be objected that multitudes of books are not worth shelf-room, and that a wise selection from the mass should be made, thus adding value to the collection by weeding out the valueless, the answer is two-fold: First, there can be no critical authority competent to select, whose judgment would not be constantly called in question by authorities equally competent. What is trash to one may contain what another prizes as pure gold. Secondly, the assembling of all the works which the country has produced on any subject gives opportunity to all would-be writers to examine what has already been done in any field, and thus save countless misdirected

efforts. The land is full of ambitious authors burning for utterance. The knowledge that what they are so anxious to say to the public has not only been said before, but a great deal better said than they can say it, might save them the mortification of publishing a neglected volume. Besides, one may learn as much from the failures of his predecessors as from their successes. An experienced educator, having occasion to compile a new spelling-book, went through the large collection of such school-books in the library at Washington and produced a better work, both as to selection and arrangement, than could ever have been done by his unaided efforts. This is one example among thousands, and it proves, *instar omnium*, the unexpected but undeniable utility of conserving every book, even of a class commonly and thoughtlessly deemed not worth preserving. The many books which have disappeared, even since the invention of printing, from the small editions printed, the ravages of fire, etc., serve to show how many publications may owe to a government library, charged by law with that duty, their sole chance of preservation.

While thus constituted the great repository of the nation's literature, our National Library has other and wider functions to discharge. As the library founded primarily for the use of our national legislature, it has always been a leading aim to render it as complete as may be in political science, in history, and in jurisprudence. Out of its 650,000 volumes, some 100,000 appertain to law and legislation, while in history, political economy, finance, statistical science, and sociology its stores are being constantly increased. At the same time, there being almost no subject treated in books which may not at some time be found important to the legislator in his labors, the collection has become one of almost universal range, though with very numerous gaps to be filled in every department. With all its deficiencies, most marked in the literature of foreign tongues, it may be said that the collection has been formed with a view to the highest utility and with some general unity of plan. By assiduous selections from sale catalogues and from the many private libraries constantly poured into auctions at home and abroad, many rare and valuable books are annually added and the more important new books of the day are secured. The appropriation of about \$11,000 a year for this purpose (nearly \$3,000 of which is required to keep up the continued serial publications which must be taken) seems ridiculously small when compared with the \$60,000 annually devoted to the increase of the British Museum Library, or even with the sums expended by public

libraries in some of our large cities. A want of room for increase, heretofore pleaded as an obstacle to more liberal appropriations, will shortly cease to stand in the way.

Brief reference may be made to some of the special collections which go to make up the aggregate of the Congressional Library. In books which are known as *Americana*, its treasures, while far from complete, are rich, and represent a goodly share of original editions and many of the *rarissima* so much prized by collectors. As the representative library of America, it is constantly sought to render it complete in all that relates to the discovery, settlement, history, biography, topography, natural history, etc., of the continent. The narratives of early voyages as well as of later travellers and observers, in whatever language, are mostly in the collection. A large share of the books produced in America in early days is to be found here, and the first editions of our writers of later times, now so much sought for, are well represented, though the existing copyright law has not been long enough in existence to bring in the larger share of them, many of which have been purchased. A long series of early American imprints, many of them representing places in which books are no longer printed, has been gathered.

The library is specially rich in newspapers and periodicals, both American and foreign. The only complete file in this country of the London "Gazette," from its origin in 1665, the London "Daily Times" from 1796, the German "*Allgemeine Zeitung*" from 1798, the Paris "*Moniteur*" and the "*Journal des Débats*" from their first issues in 1789, with full sets of most of the British reviews and magazines, are here, while in American periodicals a century and a half are represented. Of newspapers alone there are about 15,000 bound volumes, and no department of the library is more constantly used. The American journals include complete sets of several New York, Washington, Philadelphia, and Southern newspapers, from the beginning of the century, and of those printed prior to 1800 there are about 300 volumes, being more than any library, except one, possesses. For many years it has been the usage to bind up files of at least two journals from each State and Territory in the Union representing each political party. All important American reviews and magazines are of course in the collection, and sets of numerous technical, literary, religious, legal, agricultural, pictorial, and miscellaneous journals are preserved.

Particularly important are the collections representing the publi-

cations of foreign and American scientific associations. These were mainly added to the National Library through the Smithsonian Institution, and embrace some 50,000 volumes of the transactions, proceedings, and journals of most societies devoted to scientific or literary research, procured through the liberal system of exchanges of that institution. They embrace many rare and valuable series, some of which are now quite unattainable in complete form, and they furnish to students in every field of investigation invaluable material not readily to be found elsewhere.

The pamphlet collections of the library are varied and extensive, embracing some 250,000 English, American, and European pamphlets (not reckoned in the aggregate of books before given). The stores of American pamphlets of the last and the present century are especially rich, embracing among others the collections formed by William Duane and Ebenezer Hazard respectively, the latter an ardent Federalist and the former an equally ardent Republican, who preserved and bound most of the pamphlet literature of their time. To those who appreciate the very characteristic lights so frequently cast upon the politics and social elements of any period by the pamphleteers of the time, and the large use made of such materials for history by the most able and philosophical of modern historians, these treasures will be regarded as of high value.

While no American library outside of some few historical societies is rich in manuscripts, the library of the Government possesses a collection of some historical value. It embraces about seventy volumes of scrap-books filled with original military papers and letters, mainly of the period of the American Revolution, by generals and other army officers, letters of statesmen, etc. There are also eleven volumes of original papers of Commodore Paul Jones, two volumes of Major-General Greene's papers, two original journals of George Washington, about thirty Orderly books of the Revolutionary army, the original papers of the Marquis de Rochambeau, manuscript copies of several unpublished works on Spanish America by Las Casas, Duran, Panez, and Teniente, the MS. Records of the Virginia Company, 1619 to 1624, and many other manuscripts of interest.

The collection of maps comprises more than 10,000, among which early maps relating to America and many original MS. maps and plans by British, French, and American engineers, illustrative of camps, battles, and campaigns in the Revolutionary war, occupy a conspicuous place.

The special library known as the Toner collection was presented to the United States in 1882 by Dr. J. M. Toner, of Washington. It embraces some 30,000 volumes of medical, historical, and miscellaneous books and a great mass of unbound material illustrative of American biography. As the first instance of the donation to the Government of the large library of a private citizen, it is worthy of special mention.

In the history of most public institutions there may usually be traced certain epochs or periods of foundation and of development. There have been several marked epochs in the progress of our National Library. Beginning in 1800, with the removal of Congress and the several departments of the Government to Washington, by the small appropriation of \$3,000 for the purchase of books required for the use and reference of Congress, the entire collection was destroyed with the burning of the Capitol by the British in 1814. The purchase of ex-President Jefferson's library of 7,000 volumes followed, as the nucleus of a new collection, which had grown by slow accretion to 55,000 volumes in 1851, when a fire in the library rooms consumed all but 20,000 volumes of the collection. Congress at once voted \$75,000 in one sum for the increase of the library, and \$72,500 for rebuilding its apartments in solid iron—the first instance of the application of that material to form the interior of a public building in America. The next notable epoch in library history was the acquisition of the large historical library of Peter Force in 1867, together with the removal to the Capitol a little earlier of the scientific and miscellaneous library of the Smithsonian Institution. The collections were more than doubled in extent by these additions, although still numbering less than 165,000 volumes. In the year 1870 came by far the most important step forward in the annals of the library, through the enactment of the amended copyright law, by which all the records of American copyrights, as well as all deposits of copies of books and other publications in evidence of copyright, were transferred to Washington. This far-reaching measure secured prospectively to the library of the Government the whole annual product of the American press, so far as protected by copyright, thus endowing it with that fruitful source of increase which has been enjoyed from early times by the great government libraries of Europe. The law of growth thus established differentiates this collection from other American libraries, however well endowed.

The next important epoch was the provision for erecting a new

and separate library building, to contain the invaluable stores of publications which the Capitol has long been inadequate to accommodate. The agitation for this indispensable necessity, begun in Congress as early as 1873, led to so great a variety of plans and to such conflict of opinion as to site, architects, and ultimate cost that its consummation was delayed, by repeated disagreements between the two Houses of Congress, until 1886, when the bill for the purchase of a site became a law. The building thus provided for, fire-proof in all its parts, has been planned with a view to the ultimate accommodation of nearly five million volumes. With a central reading-room one hundred feet in diameter, which will contain the more important and constantly used books of the collection, the outlying book repositories, in which the system of iron stacks with abundant space between is employed for the storage of books, will be gradually filled by the accessions of each advancing year.

When it is considered that the largest existing public library, that of the French government at Paris, contains as yet but 2,300,000 volumes, and that ample space exists in the edifice now rising on Capitol Hill for storing more than twice that number, it will be perceived that the wants of the future are well cared for. While nearly every government edifice appears to have been built only for a generation and its uses have long overgrown its limits, this one, through the far-sighted liberality of Congress, will provide room for the nation's books for nearly two centuries to come. The ultimate cost is limited to six millions of dollars, a sum somewhat less than half the cost of the Capitol or of the large building erected for the accommodation of the State, War, and Navy departments. The library building covers very nearly the same space as each of these government buildings (about three acres), and is constructed of solid granite, with iron, brick, and marble interior. Its ample interior courts and numerous windows will render it the best-lighted and best-ventilated library of large proportions yet erected.

There is no government institution of any considerable cost which is not frequently required to answer the inexorable query—" *Cui bono?*" To what end does it exist and what does it accomplish? In a popular government this is more peculiarly a pertinent inquiry, since every citizen has a voice in the making of the laws through which all government agencies perform their functions. He is, moreover, directly interested in the proper expenditure of the money raised by taxation from the whole people. Can the government library,



then, justify its existence and the cost of its maintenance by its actual utility to the nation? This question is but partially answered in what has gone before. Viewed in a closer light, the value of a comprehensive national library to Congress, in its varied and responsible functions as the legislator for 65,000,000 of people, cannot be overrated. In the vast and complicated range of its powers are embraced all the questions of public welfare and economic science, the methods of taxation, the proper sphere of government, the foreign policy of the country, the surveys and explorations of public lands, the questions of immigration, quarantine, naturalization, inter-State commerce, internal revenue, customs, tariff, the postal system, patents and copyrights, education, agriculture, pensions, the military and naval establishments, territorial government, lighthouses and coast surveys, the policy toward Indians and the treatment of the Chinese, the fiscal system and the people's money, the public debt and its management, State rights and national supremacy, the fisheries, mining, manufactures, merchant shipping, foreign mails, the conduct of the civil service, and an infinitude of questions, new and old, constantly arising in our complex system of government. To say that every member of Congress is well informed upon all these subjects would be as far from the truth as to deny that many Senators and Representatives make an earnest and intelligent study of each question involved in their public labors. When the subject of restricting Chinese immigration is up, all the literature upon the races, from the fifteen-volume "*Mémoires concernant les Chinois*" of the early French missionaries in the flowery kingdom to Minister Seward's latest pamphlet on the Chinese question, is drawn upon. When Charles Sumner prepared the notable speech on Russian America which so largely influenced the purchase by the United States of the vast territory of Alaska, he drew nearly all the materials for his argument from the great arsenal in the Congressional Library. Not a problem in national or international policy is ever grappled with but has its lights or illustrations in the history or experience or discussions of other nations, which only the ample stores of a collection rich in books, pamphlets, and periodicals can supply. Of all nations the Americans are perhaps the most persistent in their search for precedents, although candor may require us to add that none is more ready to disregard them when found. The almost innumerable reports of committees in both houses of Congress often require on the part of those preparing them a breadth of information little comprehended by those who think the daily work of the legislator is light and easy.

The administrative officers of the Government, in their various departments, have to deal with a range of subjects so comprehensive as to require access to the largest collections, legal, political, and scientific, for facts and references. They have in the limited store of books gathered in the departments and bureaus resources often found wholly inadequate to answer the numerous inquiries that arise. A great national library is the only means of supplying these constant calls for information in the many fields of research which have to be explored. The newspaper files of the principal cities here gathered have supplied large materials for detailed reports upon strikes and other labor difficulties, epidemics, etc., while the thousands of town and city and trade directories furnish other classes of information.

The uses made of the law department of the library are of cardinal importance. As the seat of the judicial tribunal of last resort, the Supreme Court of the United States, Washington should furnish the most comprehensive library of jurisprudence which can be assembled, while at the same time its stores in other directions should be rendered more and more complete every year. The judgments of the Court of Claims, the Inter-State Commerce Commission, and the Supreme Court, all located at the national capital, involve investigations which demand the widest range of authorities. And the bar of Washington and other cities, having causes before the Federal tribunals, find in the extensive collection which is at once the library of Congress and of the Supreme Court, professional aid which it is no misuse of words to term invaluable.

As to the general public use and frequentation of the Government Library, it may be said that it increases in a greater ratio than even the rapidly growing treasures of the collection itself. While there may be found persons narrow-minded enough to insist that it is no proper function of our democratic Government to provide a great library for the use of the citizens and visitors at the capital, the fact remains that the library has been gathered, primarily for the use of the national legislature and the judicial and executive branches of the Government, and in great part (through the copy-tax) without expense to the nation. Not to open so rich and extensive a collection to public use and reference just as freely as is consistent with its safety and preservation would be a monstrous perversion of the objects for which national libraries exist. Accordingly, the Congressional Library has from the beginning been open to adult readers, without formality or introduction, by an unwritten law which takes the place of statutes



and makes the people partakers in its benefits. The government libraries of Europe, in like manner, though with more restrictions, are all accessible to students, and form one of the foremost attractions of the capitals in which they are found.

The readers who frequent the library at Washington form a composite class, in which, however, serious students predominate. There will be found, pursuing each his independent theme, readers from nearly all parts of the globe. The industrious compiler of facts and statistics, the searcher after quotations in poetry or prose, the ever-present person who has the genealogical fever in a mild, or acute, or chronic form, the student of history, the lover of art, the devotee of music, the editor who seeks topics or illustrations, the grubber of Greek roots, the naturalist exploring the vast field of the vegetable or animal kingdom, the student of social science, the lawyer comparing authorities and cases, the enthusiast who reads the mystics, the sporting man who follows up the pedigrees of horses, the preacher in search of homilies or commentaries, the investigator of heraldry, the devourer of French novels, the peruser of the daily newspaper or the literary serials, the young lady in quest of costumes, the old soldier renewing his memories of the civil war, the hunter after anecdotes and *bon mots*, the physician studying the history of epidemics, the reader who pursues the military art or naval science, the lover of biography, the youth who is hungry for books of adventure, the explorer who delights in voyages and travels, the absorbed admirer of poetry, the student of metaphysics, the reader of political or economic science, the architect in search of designs or models, the inquirer after the latest application of electricity—all these and many more come daily or hourly before the librarian or his assistants. Every great library must be one of universal range, to answer the multifarious demands upon it for ideas and information.

One of its uses must not be overlooked, namely, the facilities supplied to students in the many colleges and seminaries of learning, public and private, at the national capital. On a Saturday holiday the schools transfer many of their pupils to the library in quest of knowledge not elsewhere found upon the numerous topics of study or of composition which engage their attention. Its narrow and overcrowded halls would be still more thronged by this class of students were room to be found—a want which will be amply met in the new library building at a time not far remote. Frequent are the inquiries received by letter from all parts of the country, to learn whether cer-

tain books are to be found in the collection; and it is gratifying to find that in the great majority of cases the authorities sought for can be consulted at Washington.

The legal requirement of two copies of each publication, as a condition of valid copyright, has been sometimes, though rarely, objected to as an exaction which might be dispensed with. A careful consideration of the *rationale* of the case, however, will vindicate the wisdom of the requirement. Obviously it is in the interest both of authors and publishers that every book or other publication should be somewhere preserved by law in a fire-proof accessible repository. It is equally in the interest of the people that the government library should possess for reference a complete collection of the products of the American press. It is no unreasonable condition for the Government to stipulate thus with authors and publishers: "Your country gives you the sole privilege of printing and selling your work, at your own price, for forty-two years; give the country, in consideration of this, two copies, one for the use and reference of Congress and the public in the National Library, the other for preservation in the copyright archives, in perpetual evidence of your right." In view of the valuable monopoly conferred by copyright, does not the Government in fact give much more than a full equivalent for the publications required? It is not a case of compulsory taxation: no one need furnish any copies unless he demands exclusive right to multiply them. Obviously, it would not be just to exact even one copy of publications not secured by copyright (the daily journals, for example). In this case the Government gives nothing and receives nothing; but the requirement of the protected publications, unfelt as it is by publishers, is manifestly in the interest of the public, as well as of authors and publishers themselves. In England five copies of every book published are exacted, for five different libraries, which appears somewhat unreasonable.

By the act of 1870, providing for the registry of all copyright titles in the office of the Librarian of Congress, the removal of the collection of copyright books from the overcrowded Patent Office to the Congressional Library was provided for. These publications were the accumulation of about eighty years, received from the United States District Clerks' offices all over the country (where copyright entries were made from 1790 to 1870). These deposits were found to number about 23,000 volumes, a much smaller number than had been anticipated, in view of the length of time during which the law of copy-

right had been in operation. But the observance of the acts requiring deposits of copyright publications with the clerks of the United States Courts had been very defective (no penalty being provided for non-compliance) and, moreover, the Patent Office had failed to receive from the offices of original deposit large numbers of publications which should have been sent to Washington. From one of the oldest of the Eastern States not a single book had ever been sent in evidence of copyright. The books, however, which were thus added to the library, although consisting largely of school-books and the minor literature of the last half-century, comprised many valuable additions to the collection of American books.

The whole number of entries of copyright in the United States since we became a nation considerably exceeds three-quarters of a million. It may be of interest to exhibit the progress of American enterprise as shown in the aggregate number of publications registered for copyright in each year since the removal of the entire records to Washington in July, 1870.

1870.....	5,600	1878.....	15,798	1886.....	31,241
1871.....	12,688	1879.....	18,125	1887.....	35,083
1872.....	14,164	1880.....	20,686	1888.....	38,225
1873....	15,352	1881.....	21,075	1889.....	40,777
1874.....	16,283	1882 ...	22,918	1890. ....	42,758
1875.....	14,364	1883.....	25,273	1891.....	48,908
1876....	14,882	1884.....	26,893		
1877.....	15,758	1885.....	28,410	Total...	525,261

The reduced number of entries from 1875 to 1878 was owing to a removal, by act of 1874, of the registration of all prints and labels (previously copyrighted) to the Patent Office. The records of copyright had been encumbered with a great mass of so-called publications having no relation whatever to literature, but belonging to the mechanic arts, as illustrating articles of manufacture. The number of these was about 5,000 annually, and notwithstanding their withdrawal, the increase in the aggregate of other publications has been so extensive as to exhibit a marked advance in the publishing activities of the country.

Of course this large exhibit of copyrights (now annually more than double the average registry of patents) is far from representing books alone. Many thousands of entries are periodicals, claiming copyright protection and required by law to register every separate issue just as the volumes of books are entered. These embrace a great variety of

weekly journals, literary, scientific, religious, pictorial, technical, commercial, educational, agricultural, sporting, humorous, musical, dramatic, etc., including a number in foreign languages. The registry of serials also includes nearly all the largely circulated monthly and quarterly magazines and reviews, with many devoted to specialties, *e.g.*, sociology, law, finance, education, art, fashion, mechanics, theology, metaphysics, trade, manufactures, stock-raising, and the arts and sciences generally. The next largest class of copyrights, embracing some 8,000 a year, consists of musical compositions, many of which are held as valuable property. There are also accumulated, under the law of copyright, a great number and variety of works of graphic art—engravings, lithographs, photographs, photogravures, etchings, chromos, prints, and drawings. Many of these are of great beauty and value, and representing, as they do, many years of the progress of the arts of design, they will form in the new library building, where a gallery of ample proportions is to be devoted to their arrangement, an art exhibition both interesting and instructive.

Through the enactment in 1891 of the law of International Copyright, the receipts of new publications of all kinds at the Congressional Library will be largely increased. The foreign accessions have hitherto been most extensive in musical compositions and fine-art publications; but with the growth in literary production which an extension of the area of copyright may in time induce, many books will flow in to the collection from Great Britain and from some of the continental nations. This experimental act is yet to be fully tried, and the conflicting opinions upon its merits await the results of actual experience. In any event, a literature which has exhibited such evidences of growth and vigor as that of America is in no danger of arrested development. And as the various libraries of the departments and bureaus of the Government are steadily enriching the most extensive collection which the country possesses by such of their accumulations as are not needed for their special uses, it will grow continually more worthy of the title first bestowed upon it by Mr. Jefferson, "The Library of the United States."

AINSWORTH R. SPOFFORD.

## THE MATTER WITH THE SMALL FARMER.

WHATEVER may be the condition of agricultural interests elsewhere, there is no doubt that the small farmer who plants cotton in the South is embarrassed, and the future holds out little hope of relief through established methods. He knows what it is to work hard and live scantily, for from choice or necessity he has tried it for years. Every Spring he has set to work with all the hope that is inseparably connected with the turning up of the mellow soil with the plough and the new birth of nature, and yet every Autumn his chief harvest has been disappointment. He finds himself in Summer with a mortgage on his land and his mule and a lien on his growing crop, while "futures" are quoted at less than the cost of production. He is not a theoretical economist; indeed, his ideas of economics are often as crude as the crudest raw material he produces; yet he knows that he cannot go on losing year after year without winding up in the almshouse. Hence his restlessness, his willingness to listen to any plan of redemption, provided it has never been tried before. He has heard, he thinks, enough of the old ways. They cannot help him.

If he has toiled faithfully all these years, as many farmers have, and is yet penniless, he feels that misfortune has come not through his remissness, but is the result of some extrinsic baleful influence. There is injustice somewhere; some one is walking off with the surplus that he sees accumulating and believes should be his. The next step is to catch the thief. The small farmer believes he has found him skulking in Wall Street, or hiding behind railway embankments, or lurking in the vaults of national banks. The plutocrats of the land, leagued with "debauched and bamboozled" politicians, have so managed the Government and manipulated the finances that the poor man has no chance. He is told that if he can capture the strongholds of political power and use the Government for his behoof, as his oppressors have used it for theirs, he can solve the problem and make himself and everybody else happy by coining plenty of silver dollars to lend to agriculturists at nominal interest. Hence his eagerness to leave the harvest for the political field, and to seek through legisla-