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PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

WE welcome the indications, now crowding upon us from every quarter, that the people of this country are beginning to feel the importance of taking active measures for the establishment and increase of public libraries. Large collections of books, open for common use, are at once the storehouses and the manufactories of learning and science: they bring together the accumulated fruits of the experience, the research, and the genius of other ages and distant nations, as well as of our own time and land; and they create the taste, as well as furnish the indispensable aids for the prosecution of literary and scientific effort in every department. In great cities they qualify the exclusive spirit of commercial and professional avocations, and encourage men to steal an hour from the pursuit of gain, and devote it to the attempt to satisfy a natural curiosity and to cultivate an elegant taste. Connected with literary and academical institutions, they supply the means and multiply the objects of study, and keep alive that enthusiasm in the cause of letters without which nothing great or permanent can ever be accomplished. Their establishment is a boon to all classes of society, and all may find in them both recreation and employment; for as the poet Crabbe says—

> 'Here come the grieved, a change of thought to find;
> The curious here, to feed a craving mind;
> Here the devout their peaceful temple choose;
> And here the poet meets his favouring muse.'

The origin of libraries is involved in obscurity. According to some, the distinction of having first made collections of writings belongs to the Hebrews; but others ascribe this honour to the Egyptians. Osymandyadas, one of the ancient kings of Egypt, who flourished some 600 years after the Deluge, is said to have been the first who founded a library. The temple in which he kept his books was dedicated at once to religion and literature, and placed under the special protection of the divinities, with whose statues it was magnificently adorned. It was still further embellished by a well-known inscription, for ever grateful to the votary of literature: on the entrance was engraven, 'The nourishment of the soul,' or, according to Diodorus, 'The medicine of the mind.' It probably contained works of very remote antiquity, and also the books accounted sacred by the Egyptians, all of which perished amidst the destructive ravages which accom-

panied and followed the Persian invasion under Cambyses. There was also, according to Eustathius and other ancient authors, a fine library at Memphis, deposited in the Temple of Phtha, from which Homer has been accused of having stolen both the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey,' and afterwards published them as his own. From this charge, however, the bard has been vindicated by various writers, and by different arguments.

But the most superb library of Egypt, perhaps of the ancient world, was that of Alexandria. About the year 290 B.C., Ptolemy Soter, a learned prince, founded an academy at Alexandria called the Museum, where there assembled a society of learned men, devoted to the study of philosophy and the sciences; and for whose use he formed a collection of books, the number of which has been variously computed—by Epiphanius at 54,000, and by Josephus at 200,000. His son, Ptolemy Philadelphus, an equally liberal and enlightened prince, collected great numbers of books in the Temple of Serapis, in addition to those accumulated by his father, and at his death left in it upwards of 100,000 volumes. He had agents in every part of Asia and of Greece commissioned to search out and purchase the rarest and most valuable writings; and amongst those he procured were the works of Aristotle, and the Septuagint version of the Jewish Scriptures, which was undertaken at the suggestion of Demetrius Phalereus, his first librarian. The measures adopted by this monarch for augmenting the Alexandrian Library were pursued by his successor, Ptolemy Euergetes, with unscrupulous vigour. He caused all books imported into Egypt by Greeks or other foreigners to be seized and sent to the Museum, where they were transcribed by persons employed for the purpose; and when this was done, the copies were delivered to the proprietors, and the originals deposited in the library. He refused to supply the famished Athenians with corn until they presented him with the original manuscripts of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; and in returning elegant copies of these autographs, he allowed the owners to retain the fifteen talents (more than £3000 sterling) which he had pledged with them as a princely security. As the Museum, where the library was originally founded, stood near the royal palace, in that quarter of the city called Brucheion, all writings were at first deposited there; but when this building had been completely occupied with books, to the number of 400,000, a supplemental library was erected within the Serapeion, or Temple of Serapis, and this gradually increased till it contained about 300,000 volumes—making in both libraries a grand total of 700,000 volumes.

The Alexandrian Library continued in all its splendour until the first Alexandrian war, when, during the plunder of the city, the Brucheion portion of the collection was accidentally destroyed by fire, owing to the recklessness of the auxiliary troops. But the library in the Serapeion still remained, and was augmented by subsequent donations, particularly by that of the Pergamean Library of 200,000 volumes,* presented by Mark

* The library of Pergamus was founded by King Eumenes, and enlarged by his successor Attalus. It soon became so extensive that the Ptolemies, afraid that it would speedily rival their own collection at Alexandria, issued an edict forbidding the exportation of papyrus; but this prohibition, so far from attaining the unworthy object for which it was destined, proved rather beneficial, for the Pergameans, having exhausted their stock of papyrus, set their wits to work, and invented parchment (*charta Pergamena*) as a substitute.

Antony to Cleopatra, so that it soon equalled the former, both in the number and in the value of its contents. At length, after various revolutions under the Roman emperors, during which the collection was sometimes plundered and sometimes re-established, it was utterly destroyed by the Saracens at the command of the Caliph Omar, when they acquired possession of Alexandria in A. D. 642. Amrou, the victorious general, was himself inclined to spare this inestimable treasury of ancient science and learning, but the ignorant and fanatical caliph, to whom he applied for instructions, ordered it to be destroyed. 'If,' said he, 'these writings of the Greeks agree with the Koran, they are useless, and need not be preserved; if they disagree, they are pernicious, and ought to be destroyed.' The sentence of destruction was executed with blind obedience. The volumes of parchment or papyrus were distributed as fuel among the five thousand baths of the city; but such was their incredible number, that it took six months to consume them. This act of barbarism, recorded by Abulpharagius, is considered somewhat doubtful by Gibbon, in consequence of its not being mentioned by Eutychius and Almacin, two of the most ancient chroniclers. It seems inconsistent, too, with the character of Amrou, as a poet and a man of superior intelligence; but that the Alexandrian Library was thus destroyed is a fact generally credited, and deeply deplored by historians. Amrou, as a man of genius and learning, may have grieved at the order of the caliph, while, as a loyal subject and faithful soldier, he felt bound to obey.

Among the Greeks, as among other nations, the first libraries consisted merely of archives, deposited, for the sake of preservation, in the temples of the gods. Pisistratus, the tyrant of Athens, was the first who established a public library in his native city, which, we need not say, always took the lead in everything relating to science and literature in Greece. Here he deposited the works of Homer, which he had collected together with great difficulty and at a very considerable expense; and the Athenians themselves were at much pains to increase the collection. The fortunes of this library were various and singular. It was transported to Persia by Xerxes, brought back by Seleucus Nicator, plundered by Sylla, and at last restored by the Emperor Hadrian. On the invasion of the Roman Empire by the Goths, Greece was ravaged; and on the sack of Athens, they had collected all the libraries, and were upon the point of setting fire to this funeral pile of ancient learning, when one of their chiefs interposed, and dissuaded them from their design, observing, at the same time, that as long as the Greeks were addicted to the study of books they would never apply themselves to that of arms.

The first library established at Rome was that founded by Paulus Emilius, in the year B.C. 167. Having subdued Perses, king of Macedonia, he enriched the city of Rome with the library of the conquered monarch, which was subsequently augmented by Sylla. On his return from Asia, where he had successfully terminated the first war against Mithridates, Sylla visited Athens, whence he took with him the library of Apellicon the Teian, in which were the works of Aristotle and Theophrastus. Lucullus, another conqueror of Mithridates, was not less distinguished by his taste for books. The number of volumes in his library was immense, and they were written in the most distinct and elegant manner.

But the use which he made of his collection was still more honourable to that princely Roman than the acquisition or possession of it. 'It was a library,' says Plutarch, 'whose walls, galleries, and cabinets were open to all visitors; and the ingenious Greeks, when at leisure, resorted to this abode of the Muses, to hold literary conversations, in which Lucullus himself loved to join.' But although both Sylla and Lucullus liberally gave public access to their literary treasures, still their libraries can in strictness be considered as only *private* collections. Among the various projects which Julius Cæsar had formed for the embellishment of Rome was that of a *public* library, which should contain the largest possible collection of Greek and Latin works; and he had assigned to Varro the duty of selecting and arranging them. But this design was frustrated by the assassination of the dictator, and the establishment of public libraries did not take place in Rome until the reign of Augustus.

The honour of having first established these valuable institutions is ascribed by the elder Pliny to Asinius Pollio, who erected a public library in the Court of Liberty, on the Aventine Hill. The credit which he gained thereby was so great, that the emperors became ambitious to illustrate their reigns by the foundation of libraries, many of which they called after their own names. Augustus was himself an author, and in one of those sumptuous buildings called *Thermæ*, ornamented with porticos, galleries, and statues, with shady walks and refreshing baths, he testified his love of literature by adding a magnificent library, which he fondly called by the name of his sister Octavia. The Palatine Library, formed by the same emperor in the Temple of Apollo, became the haunt of the poets, as Horace, Juvenal, and Perseus, have commemorated. There were deposited the corrected books of the Sybils; and from two ancient inscriptions, quoted by Lipsius and Pitiscus, it would seem that it consisted of two distinct collections—one Greek, and the other Latin. This library having survived the various revolutions of the Roman Empire, existed until the time of Gregory the Great, whose mistaken zeal led him to order all the writings of the ancients to be destroyed. The successors of Augustus, though they did not equally encourage learning, were not altogether neglectful of its interests. Suetonius informs us that Tiberius founded a library in the new Temple of Apollo; and we learn from some incidental notices that he instituted another, called the Tiberian, in his own house, consisting chiefly of works relating to the empire and the acts of its sovereigns. Vespasian, following the example of his predecessors, established a library in the Temple of Peace, which he erected after the burning of the city by order of Nero; and even Domitian, in the commencement of his reign, restored at great expense the libraries which had been destroyed by the conflagration, collecting copies of books from every quarter, and sending persons to Alexandria to transcribe volumes in that celebrated collection, or to correct copies which had been made elsewhere. But the most magnificent of all the libraries founded by the sovereigns of imperial Rome was that of the Emperor Ulpius Trajanus, from whom it was denominated the Ulpian Library. It was erected in Trajan's Forum, but afterwards removed to the Viminal Hill, to ornament the baths of Diocletian. In this library were deposited the elephantine books, written upon tablets of ivory, wherein were recorded the transactions of the emperors, the proceedings

of the senate and Roman magistrates, and the affairs of the provinces. It has been conjectured that the Ulpian Library consisted of both Greek and Latin works; and some authors affirm, that Trajan commanded that all the books found in the cities he had conquered should be immediately conveyed to Rome, in order to increase his collection. The library of Domitian having been consumed by lightning in the reign of Commodus, was not restored until the time of Gordian, who rebuilt the edifice, and founded a new library, adding thereto the collection of books bequeathed to him by Quintus Serenus Samonicus, the physician, and amounting, it is said, to no fewer than 72,000 volumes.

In addition to the imperial libraries, there were others to which the public had access in the principal cities and colonies of the empire. Pliny mentions one which he had founded for the use of his countrymen; and Vopiscus informs us that the Emperor Tacitus caused the historical writings of his illustrious namesake to be deposited in the libraries. The number of calcined volumes which have been excavated from the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii would also seem to indicate that collections of books were common in those cities. But the irruptions of the barbarians, who overran and desolated the Western Empire, proved more destructive to the interests of literature than either volcanoes or earthquakes, and soon caused the disappearance of those libraries which, during several centuries, had been multiplied in Italy. Those of the East, however, escaped this devastating torrent; and both Alexandria and Constantinople preserved their literary treasures, until their capture by the Saracens and the Turks, who finally subverted the Eastern Empire.

When Constantine the Great made Byzantium the seat of his empire, he decorated that city with splendid edifices, and called it after his own name. Desirous to make reparation to the Christians for the injuries they had suffered during the reign of his predecessor, he commanded the most diligent search to be made after those books which Diocletian had doomed to destruction; he caused transcripts to be made of such as had escaped the fury of the pagan persecutor; and, having collected others from various quarters, he formed the whole into a library at Constantinople. At the death of Constantine, however, the number of books in the imperial library was only 6900; but it was successively enlarged by the Emperors Julian and Theodosius the younger, who augmented it to 120,000 volumes. Of these more than half were burned during the seventh century, by command of the Emperor Leo III., who thus sought to destroy all the monuments that might be quoted in proof respecting his opposition to the worship of images. In this library was deposited the only authentic copy of the proceedings of the Council at Nice; and it is also said to have contained the poems of Homer written in gold letters, together with a magnificent copy of the Four Gospels, bound in plates of gold, enriched with precious stones, all of which perished in the conflagration. The convulsions which distracted the lower empire were by no means favourable to the interests of literature. In the eleventh century learning flourished for a short time during the reign of Constantine Porphyrogennetus; and this emperor is said to have employed many learned Greeks in collecting books, and forming a library, the arrangement of which he himself superintended. But the final subversion of the Eastern Empire, and the capture

of Constantinople in 1453, dispersed the literati of Greece over western Europe, and placed the literary remains of that capital at the mercy of the conqueror. The imperial library, however, was preserved by the express command of Mohammed, and continued, it is said, to be kept in some apartments of the seraglio; but whether it was sacrificed in a fit of devotion by Amurath IV., as is commonly supposed, or whether it was suffered to fall into decay from ignorance and neglect, it is now certain that the library of the sultan contains only Turkish and Arabic writings, and not a single Greek or Latin manuscript of any importance.

Such is a brief survey of the most celebrated libraries of ancient times. Before we proceed to describe those of modern days, we shall offer a few remarks on the extent of ancient as compared with modern collections of books. The National Library of Paris contains upwards of 824,000 volumes, and is the largest in existence. It will be easy to prove that it is the largest that ever has existed.

The number of writers, and consequently of books, in the bright days of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, could not have been very great. It must, on the contrary, have been limited by various causes, which contributed powerfully to retard the composition of new works, and prevent the multiplication of new editions. In fact, the histories of cities and of nations, together with descriptions of the earth, which have become exhaustless sources for the writers of modern times, must have been but sterile themes at a period in which history was confined within the limits of a few centuries, and hardly a sixth part of the world now known had been discovered. Add to these considerations the difficulties of communication, by which the inhabitants of different countries, and often those of different sections of the same country, were kept apart, together with the number of arts and sciences which were either wholly unknown, or confined within very narrow bounds, and it will become evident, that for every thirty or forty authors of the present day, ancient Europe could hardly have supported one or two.

Another circumstance which may be adduced in support of our proposition, is the fact, that an increase in the number of readers leads to a proportionate augmentation in the number of works prepared for their gratification. We have every reason to suppose that the reading class of the ancient world was small in comparison with that of the modern. Even setting aside the circumstance of the narrow limits by which the creative literature of ancient Europe was bounded—Greece and Rome being almost the only nations whence new productions were derived—we shall still be constrained to acknowledge the vast distance which separates the creative literary power of modern from that of ancient times. Our schools, which abound with such a variety of class-books upon every subject, bear little or no resemblance to those of Greece and Rome; nor can the text-books prepared for our universities be brought into comparison with the oral instructions of the old philosophers. Passing by, also, the subjects which have been opened to our research by the discoveries of modern science, and confining our attention to the single branch of philosophy, in the old sense of the word, which has always been more or less studied and disputed upon since the days of the earliest Greeks, we shall probably find

that the productions of any one modern school outnumber those of the whole body of Greek philosophers. How much more would the balance lean towards the moderns were we to add all the varieties of the French, German, English, and Scottish schools, to say nothing of those whose tenacious subtleties have procured them the name of schoolmen! If, going a step further, we consider that reading, which the peculiar cast of modern civilisation has classed among the luxuries of life, is one of those luxuries, in the enjoyment of which all classes come in for a share, we shall find here also a wide distinction between ancient times and our own. During that epoch of splendid decay, in which the immense wealth of the Roman senators was found insufficient to satisfy the longing for new forms of stimulant and of pleasure, their reading, as we are told by Ammianus Marcellinus, a contemporary historian, was confined to the writings of Marius Maximus and Juvenal. What would they not have given for a modern novel, or to what unlimited extent would the imagination have poured forth its fantastic creations had the art of printing been at hand to keep pace with the productive powers of the mind, and the cravings of a morbid intellect? On every score, therefore, the numerical difference between the intellectual wealth of ancient and of modern Europe must have been decidedly in favour of the latter.

The high price of the materials for writing, and the difficulty of procuring them, must also have been a great obstacle to the multiplication of books. When copies could only be procured by the slow and expensive process of transcription, it seems impossible to suppose that a large number could have been usually prepared of any ordinary work. Those of our readers who are aware that only about 450 copies of the celebrated *Princeps* editions were struck off, will readily assent to the correctness of this opinion. The barbarous system of ancient warfare must have also caused the destruction of a great many works, raised the price of others, and rendered extremely difficult—not to say impossible—the accumulation of a very large number in any one place. The difficulties which the bibliomaniacs of our own times encounter in procuring copies of the editions of the fifteenth century, and the extravagant prices at which some of them have been sold, are enough to show how small a part of an entire edition has been able to pass safely through the short space of four centuries. How few copies, then, of a work written in the time of Alexander could have reached the age of Augustus or of Trajan! With facts like these before us, how can we talk of libraries of 700,000 or 800,000 volumes in the ancient world? When we find it so difficult at the present day, in spite of the testimony of intelligent travellers, and of all the advantages we possess for making our estimates, to ascertain the truth with regard to the great libraries of modern Europe, how can we give credit to the contradictory and exaggerated statements which were promulgated in ages of the darkest ignorance concerning ancient Rome and Alexandria? 'After an attentive examination of this subject,' says that eminent bibliographer M. Balbi, 'it seems to me improbable, if I should not rather say impossible, that any library of ancient Europe, or of the middle ages, could have contained more than 300,000 or 400,000 volumes.'

But even allowing 700,000 volumes to the largest of the Alexandrian libraries—that, namely, of which a great part was accidentally destroyed

during the wars of Julius Cæsar—allowing the same number to the library of Tripoli, and to that of Cairo; and admitting that the third library of Alexandria contained 600,000 volumes, and the Ulpian of Rome, and the Cordovan founded by Al-Hakem, an equal number—it will still be easy to show that the whole amount of one of these was not equal to even a fifth part of a library composed of printed books.

Every one who has had anything to do with publication, is well aware of the great difference between the space occupied by the written and that filled by the printed letters. It is well known that the volumes of ancient libraries consisted of rolls, which generally were written only on one side. Thus the written surface of one of these volumes would correspond to but half the written surface of one of our books, of which every page is covered with letters. A library, then, composed of 100,000 rolls would contain no more matter than one of our libraries composed of 50,000 manuscripts. It is well known, also, that a work was divided into as many rolls as the books which it contained. Thus the Natural History of Pliny, which in the *Princeps* edition of Venice forms but one folio volume, would, since it is divided into thirty-seven books, have formed thirty-seven rolls or volumes. If it were possible to compare elements of so different a nature, we should say that these rolls might be compared to the sheets of our newspapers, or to the numbers of our weekly serials. What would become of the great library of Paris were we to suppose its 824,000 volumes in folio, quarto, &c. to be but so many numbers of five or six sheets each? Yet this is the rule by which we ought to estimate the literary wealth of the great libraries of ancient times; and 'hence,' says M. Balbi, 'notwithstanding the imposing array of authorities which can be brought against us, we must persist in believing that no library of antiquity, or of the middle ages, can be considered as equivalent to a modern one of 100,000 or 110,000 volumes.'

No one of the libraries of the first class now in existence dates beyond the fifteenth century. The Vatican, the origin of which has been frequently carried back to the days of St Hilarius in 465, cannot with any propriety be said to have deserved the name of library before the reign of Pope Martin V., by whose order it was removed in 1417 from Avignon to Rome. And even then a strict attention to exactitude would require us to withhold from it this title until the period of its final organization by Nicholas V. in 1447. It is difficult to speak with certainty concerning the libraries, whether public or private, supposed to have existed previous to the fifteenth century, both on account of the doubtful authority and indefiniteness of the passages in which they are mentioned, and the custom which so readily obtained in those dark ages of dignifying with the name of library every petty collection of insignificant codices. But many libraries of the fifteenth century being in existence, and others having been preserved long enough to make them the subject of historical inquiry before their dissolution, it becomes easier to fix with satisfactory accuracy the date of their foundation. We find, accordingly, that during the fifteenth century ten libraries were formed: the Vatican at Rome, the Laurentian at Florence, the Imperial of Vienna and Ratisbon, the University at Turin, the Malatestiana at Cesena, the Marciana at Venice, the Bodleian at

Oxford, the University at Copenhagen, and the City at Frankfort on the Maine. The Palatine of Heidelberg was founded in 1390, dispersed in 1623, restored in 1652, and augmented in 1816.

The increase of the libraries of Europe has generally been slowly progressive, although there have been periods of sudden augmentation in nearly all of them. They began with a small number of manuscripts; sometimes with a few, and often without any printed works. To these gradual accessions were made from the different sources which have always been more or less at the command of sovereigns and nobles. In 1455 the Vatican contained 5000 manuscripts. In 1685, after an interval of more than two centuries, the number of its manuscripts had only risen to 16,000, and that of the printed volumes did not exceed 25,000. In 1789, but little more than a century later, the number of manuscripts had been doubled, and the printed volumes amounted to 40,000.

Far different was the progress of the Royal, or as it is now called, the National Library of Paris. The origin of this institution is placed in the year 1595—the date of its removal from Fontainebleau to Paris by order of Henry IV. In 1660 it contained only 1435 printed volumes. In the course of the following year this number was raised to 16,746, both printed volumes and manuscripts. During the ensuing eight years the library was nearly doubled; and before the close of the subsequent century, it was supposed to have been augmented by upwards of 100,000 volumes.

In most cases the chief sources of these augmentations have been individual legacies and the purchase of private collections. Private libraries, as our readers are doubtless well aware, began to be formed long before public ones were thought of. Like these, they have their origin in the taste, or caprice, or necessities of their founders, and are of more or less value, as one or the other of these motives has presided over their formation. But when formed by private students with a view to bring together all that has been written upon some single branch of science, or by amateurs skilled in the principles of bibliography, they become more satisfactory and complete than they could possibly be made under any other circumstances. Few of them, however, are preserved long after the death of the original collector; but falling into the hands of heirs possessed of different tastes and feelings, are either sold off by auction, or restored to the shelves of the bookseller. It was by availing themselves of such opportunities that the directors of the public libraries of Europe made their most important acquisitions. This is, in short, the history of the Imperial Library of Vienna; and it can hardly be necessary to add, that it was thus that the rarest and most valuable portions of that collection were brought together.* It was thus, also, that the Vatican acquired, some twenty years ago, by the purchase of the library of Count Cicognara, a body of materials illustrative of the history of the arts, which leaves comparatively little to be wished for by the most diligent historian.

It can hardly be necessary to enlarge upon this subject. Every one who has engaged, even in a small degree, in historical researches, must have

* One of the most remarkable of these purchases was that made of the private library of the Prince Eugene, for a life-income of 10,000 florins. It was composed of 15,000 printed volumes, 337 manuscripts, 290 folio volumes of prints, and 215 portfolios or boxes.

observed how soon he gets out of the track of common readers, and how dark and difficult his way becomes, unless he chance to meet with some guide among those who, confining their attention to a single branch of study, have become familiar with, and gathered around them almost everything which can serve to throw light upon it. And when a public institution has gone on through a long course of years adding to the works derived from other sources these carefully chosen stores of the learned, it is easy to conceive how much it must contribute not merely towards the gratification of literary curiosity, but to the actual progress of literature.

From these general considerations respecting modern libraries, we proceed to give some particulars which may serve to convey an idea of the history, character, and contents of the principal book-collections now in existence; and with this view, as well as for convenient reference, we shall arrange them under the respective heads of *British Libraries*, and *Foreign Libraries*.

BRITISH LIBRARIES.

1. *British Museum Library, London.*—There is probably no other public institution in Great Britain which is regarded with so great and general interest as the British Museum. By the variety of its departments, this splendid national depository of literature, and objects of natural history and antiquities, meets in some way the particular taste of almost every class of society. The department of Natural History, in its three divisions of Zoology, Botany, and Mineralogy, contains a collection of specimens unsurpassed, probably unequalled, in the world. The department of antiquities is in some particulars unrivalled for the number and value of the articles it contains. But the library is the crowning glory of the whole. If, in respect to the number of volumes it contains, it does not yet equal the National Library of Paris, the Royal Library of Munich, or the Imperial Library of St Petersburg—in almost every other respect, such as the value and usefulness of the books, the arrangements for their convenient and safe keeping, and, in fact, in every matter pertaining to its internal arrangements, the library of the British Museum, by the concurrent testimony of competent witnesses from various countries, must take rank above all similar institutions in the world. Well may the people of this country regard the Museum with pride and pleasure. The liberal grants of parliament, and the munificent bequests of individuals, are sure indications of a strong desire and purpose to continue and extend its advantages.

Some idea of the magnitude of the Museum, and of its vast resources, may be formed by considering that the buildings alone in which this great collection is deposited have cost, since the year 1823, nearly £700,000; and the whole expenditure for purchases, exclusive of the cost of the buildings just named, is considerably more than £1,100,000. Besides this liberal outlay by the British government, there have been numerous magnificent bequests from individuals. The acquisitions from private munificence were estimated, for the twelve years preceding 1835, at not less than £400,000. The latest considerable bequest was that of the Right Hon. Thomas Grenville: his library, which he gave to the Museum entire, was valued at £50,000. The annual receipts of the institution of

late years, from parliamentary grants and the interest of private legacies, have been about £50,000. The number of visitors to the Museum is immense. In the year 1848 they amounted to 897,985, being an average of about 3000 visitors per day for every day the Museum is open. On special occasions there have been as many as 30,000 visitors on a single day.

This noble institution may be said to have originated in the bequest of Sir Hans Sloane, who, dying in 1752, left his immense collections of every kind to the nation, on the condition of paying £20,000 in legacies to different individuals; a sum considerably less than the intrinsic value of the medals, coins, gems, and precious metals of his museum. This bequest included a library of 50,000 volumes, among which were 3566 volumes of manuscripts in different languages; a herbarium of 334 volumes; other objects of natural history, to the number of six-and-thirty or forty thousand, and the house at Chiswick, in which the whole was deposited. The Harleian collection of manuscripts, amounting to 7600 volumes, chiefly relating to the history of England, and including, among many other curious documents, 40,000 ancient charters and rolls, being about the same time offered for sale, parliament voted a sum of £40,000, to be raised by lottery, and vested in trustees, for the establishment of a National Museum. Of this money, £20,000 were paid to the legatees of Sir Hans Sloane, £10,000 were given for the Harleian Manuscripts, and £10,000 for Montague House as a receptacle for the whole. Sloane's Museum was removed thither with the consent of his trustees. In 1757 George II., by an instrument under the great seal, added the library of the kings of England, the printed books of which had been collected from the time of Henry VII., the manuscripts from a much earlier date. This collection was very rich in the prevailing literature of different periods, and it included, amongst others, the libraries of Archbishop Cranmer, and of the celebrated scholar Isaac Casaubon. His majesty annexed to his gift the privilege which the royal library had acquired in the reign of Queen Anne, of being supplied with a copy of every publication entered at Stationers' Hall; and in 1759 the British Museum was opened to the public.*

The value of the library has been greatly enhanced by magnificent donations, and by immense parliamentary purchases. In 1763 George III. enriched it with a collection of pamphlets and periodical papers, published in England between 1640 and 1660, and chiefly illustrative of the civil wars in the time of Charles I., by whom the collection was commenced. Among other valuable acquisitions may be mentioned Garrick's collection of old English plays, Mr Thomas Tyrwhitt's library, Sir William Musgrave's collection of biography, the general library of the Rev. C. M. Cracherode, the libraries of M. Ginguené, Baron de Moll, Dr Burney, and Sir R. C. Hoare; and above all, the bequest of Major Arthur Edwards, who left to it his noble library, and £7000 as a fund for the purchase of books. Four separate collections of tracts, illustrative of the revolutionary history of France, have been purchased at different times by the trustees, in the exercise of the powers with which they are invested. One of these was

* For a detailed account of, and guide-book to, the treasures of this great national collection, see 'The British Museum, Historical and Descriptive, with Numerous Engravings,' recently published by W. and R. Chambers.

the collection formed by the last president of the parliament of Bretagne, at the commencement of the revolution; two others extended generally throughout the whole revolutionary period; and the fourth consisted of a collection of tracts, published during the reign of the Hundred Days in 1815—forming altogether a body of materials for the history of the revolution as complete in regard to France as the collection of pamphlets and tracts already mentioned is with respect to the civil wars of England in the time of Charles I. Another feature of the Museum Library is its progressive collection of newspapers, from the appearance of the first of these publications in 1588. Sir Hans Sloane had formed a great collection for his day. But to this was added, in 1818, the Burney collection, purchased at the estimated value of £1000; and since that period the Commissioners of Stamps have continued regularly to forward to the Museum copies of all newspapers deposited by the publishers in their office.

In 1823, the Royal Library collected by George III. was presented to the British nation by his successor George IV., and ordered by parliament to be added to the library of the British Museum, but to be kept for ever separate from the other books in that institution. The general plan of its formation appears to have been determined on by George III. soon after his accession to the throne; and the first extensive purchase made for it was that of the library of Mr Joseph Smith, British consul at Venice, in 1762, for which his majesty paid about £10,000. In 1768 Mr (afterwards Sir Frederick) Barnard, the librarian, was despatched to the continent by his majesty; and as the Jesuits' houses were then being suppressed and their libraries sold throughout Europe, he was enabled to purchase, upon the most advantageous terms, a great number of very valuable books, including some very remarkable rarities, in France, Italy, and Germany. Under the judicious directions of Mr Barnard, the entire collection was formed and arranged; it was enlarged during a period of sixty years, by an annual expenditure of about £2000, and it is in itself perhaps one of the most complete libraries of its extent that was ever formed. It contains selections of the rarest kind, particularly of scarce books which appeared in the first ages of the art of printing. It is rich in early editions of the classics, in books from the press of Caxton, in English history, and in Italian, French, and Spanish literature; and there is likewise a very extensive collection of geography and topography, and of the transactions of learned academies. The number of books in this library is 65,250, exclusively of a very numerous assortment of pamphlets; and it appears to have cost, in direct outlay, about £130,000, but it is estimated as worth at least £200,000.

The nucleus of the department of manuscripts at the British Museum was formed by the Harleian, Sloanean, and Cottonian collections. To these George II. added, in 1757, the manuscripts of the ancient royal library of England. Of these one of the most remarkable is the 'Codex Alexandrinus;' a present from Cyril, patriarch of Constantinople, to King Charles I. It is in four quarto volumes, written upon fine vellum, probably between the fourth and sixth centuries, and is believed to be the most ancient manuscript of the Greek Bible now extant. Many of the other manuscripts came into the royal collection at the time when the monastic institutions of Britain were destroyed; and some of them still retain upon their spare

leaves the honest and hearty anathemas which the donors denounced against those who should alienate or remove the respective volumes from the places in which they had been originally deposited. This collection abounds in old scholastic divinity, and possesses many volumes, embellished by the most expert illuminators of different countries, in a succession of periods down to the sixteenth century. In it are also preserved an assemblage of the domestic music-books of Henry VIII., and the 'Basilicon Doron' of James I. in his own handwriting. The Cottonian collection, which was purchased for the use of the public in 1701, and annexed by statute to the British Museum in 1753, consists of 861 manuscript volumes, including 'Madox's Collections on the Exchequer,' in ninety-four volumes, besides many precious documents connected with our domestic and foreign history about the time of Elizabeth and James. It likewise contains numerous registers of English monasteries; a rich collection of royal and other original letters; and the manuscript called the 'Durham Book,' being a copy of the Latin Gospels, with an interlinear Saxon gloss, written about the year 800, illuminated in the most elaborate style of the Anglo-Saxons, and believed to have once belonged to the venerable Bede. The Harleian collection is still more miscellaneous, though historical literature in all its branches forms one of its principal features. It is particularly rich in heraldic and genealogical manuscripts; in parliamentary and legal proceedings; in ancient records and abbey registers; in manuscripts of the classics, amongst which is one of the earliest known of Homer's 'Odyssey;' in missals, antiphonars, and other service-books of the Catholic Church; and in ancient English poetry. It possesses two very early copies of the Latin Gospels, written in gold letters; and also contains a large number of splendidly illuminated manuscripts, besides an extensive mass of correspondence. It further includes about three hundred manuscript Bibles or Biblical books, in Hebrew, Chaldaic, Greek, Arabic, and Latin; nearly two hundred volumes of writings of the fathers of the church; and a number of works on the arts and sciences, among which is a tract on the steam-engine, with plans, diagrams, and calculations by Sir Samuel Morland. The Sloanean collection consists principally of manuscripts on natural history, voyages and travels, on the arts, and especially on medicine.

In 1807 the collection of manuscripts formed by the first Marquis of Lansdowne was added to these libraries, having been purchased by parliament for £4925. It consists of 1352 volumes, of which 114 are Lord Burleigh's state papers, 46 Sir Julius Cæsar's collections respecting the reigns of Elizabeth and James I., and 108 the historical collections of Bishop Kennet. Other valuable collections are the classical manuscripts of Dr Charles Burney, the Oriental manuscripts collected by Messrs Rich and Hull, and the Egyptian papyri presented by Sir J. G. Wilkinson. It would be endless, however, to enumerate these treasures; we have indicated enough to convince our readers that the library of the British Museum is worthy of the nation to which it belongs.

2. *Bodleian Library, Oxford.*—This institution, so called from the name of its illustrious founder, was established towards the close of the reign of Elizabeth by Sir Thomas Bodley, who, having become disgusted with some court intrigues, resigned all his employments about the year 1597, and resolved to spend the remainder of his life in a private station. Having

thought of various plans to render himself useful, he says, 'I concluded at the last to set up my staff at the library door in Oxon, being thoroughly persuaded that in my solitude and surcease from the commonwealth affairs, I could not busy myself to better purpose than by reducing that place, which then in every part lay ruined and waste, to the public use of students. For the effecting whereof I found myself furnished in a competent proportion of such four kinds of aids, as, unless I had them all, there was no hope of good success. For without some kind of knowledge, as well in the learned and modern tongues as in sundry other sorts of scholastical literature; without some purse-ability to go through with the charge; without great store of honourable friends to further the design; and without special good leisure to follow such a work, it could but have proved a vain attempt and inconsiderate.' Having set himself this task—'a task,' as his friend Camden justly says, 'that would have suited the character of a crowned head'—Bodley despatched from London a letter to the vice-chancellor, offering not only to restore the building, but to provide a fund for the purchase of books, and the maintenance of proper officers. This offer being thankfully accepted, he commenced his undertaking by presenting to the library a large collection of books purchased on the continent, and valued at £10,000. He also collected 1294 rare manuscripts, which were afterwards increased to 6818, independently of 1898 in the Ashmolean Museum. Other collections and contributions were also, by his example and persuasion, presented to the new library; and the additions thus made soon swelled to such an amount that the old building was no longer sufficient to contain them. The edifice was accordingly enlarged; and Bodley thus had the proud satisfaction of seeing Oxford possessed, by his means, of such a library as might well bear comparison with the proudest in continental Europe. It would require a volume to contain an enumeration of the many important additions which have been made to this library by its numerous benefactors, or to admit even a sketch of its ample contents in almost every branch of literature and science. The Oriental manuscripts are the rarest and most beautiful to be found in any European collection; and the first editions of the classics, procured from the Pinelli and Crevenna libraries, rival those of Vienna. In a word, it is exceedingly rich in many departments in which most other libraries are deficient, and it forms altogether one of the noblest collections of which any university can boast.

3. *University Library, Cambridge.*—This is a library of considerable extent, and contains much that is valuable or curious both in the department of printed books and in that of manuscripts. The printed books comprise a fine series of *editiones principes* of the classics, and a very large proportion of the productions of Caxton's press. Among the manuscripts contained in it are the celebrated manuscript of the four Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, known by the name of the *Codex Bezæ*, which was presented to the university by that distinguished reformer; Magna Charta, written on vellum; and a Koran upon cotton paper, superbly executed. In the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, there are several exceedingly interesting literary curiosities; amongst others, some manuscripts in the handwriting of Milton, consisting of the original copy of the 'Masque of Comus,' several plans of 'Paradise Lost,' and the poems of 'Lycidas,'

'Arcades,' and others; and also Sir Isaac Newton's copy of his 'Principia,' with his manuscript notes, and his letters to Roger Coles.

4. *Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.*—This library was founded in 1682, at the instance of Sir George Mackenzie of Rôsehaugh, who was at that time Dean of Faculty, and the plan was carried into execution on a small scale, by a fund which had been formed out of the fines of members. It was originally intended that it should consist merely of the works of lawyers, and of such other books as were calculated to advance the study of jurisprudence; it now comprehends, in a greater or less degree, almost every branch of science, philosophy, jurisprudence, literature, and the arts. Its collection of historical works is very complete. Among the curiosities shown to visitors are a manuscript Bible of St Jerome's translation, believed to have been written in the eleventh century, and known to have been used as the conventual copy of the Scriptures in the Abbey of Dunfermline; a copy of the first printed Bible, in two volumes, from the press of Faust and Guttenberg; the original Solemn League and Covenant, drawn up in 1580; and six copies of the Covenant of 1638. Among other manuscripts in the collection are the whole of the celebrated Wodrow Manuscripts, relating to the ecclesiastical history of Scotland, and the chartularies of many of the ancient religious houses. For its extent, no less than for the liberal principles upon which it is conducted, this deserves the name of the National Library of Scotland.

5. *Trinity College Library, Dublin.*—This library owed its establishment to a very curious incident. In the year 1603, the Spaniards were defeated by the English at the battle of Kinsale; determined to commemorate their victory by some permanent monument, the soldiers collected among themselves the sum of £1800, which they agreed to apply to the purchase of books for a public library, to be founded in the then infant institution of Trinity College. This sum was placed in the hands of the celebrated Dr Usher, who immediately proceeded to London, and there purchased the books necessary for the purpose. It is a remarkable coincidence, that Usher, while occupied in purchasing these books, met in London Sir Thomas Bodley engaged in similar business, with a view to the establishment of his famous library at Oxford. From this commencement, the library of Trinity College was, at different periods increased by many valuable donations, including that of Usher's own collection, consisting of 10,000 volumes, until at length its growing magnitude requiring a corresponding increase of accommodation, the present library-hall, a magnificent apartment of stately dimensions, was erected in the year 1732. Since that time numerous additions have been made to the library; amongst others, that of the library of the Pensionary Fagel, in 20,000 volumes, and the valuable classical and Italian books which had belonged to Mr Quin; so that, altogether, the library of Trinity College now forms one of the first order, at least in this country.

The five libraries thus briefly described are the principal ones in the United Kingdom, and they are all entitled to receive a copy of every new work on its publication; so that they are continually on the increase, and enabled to keep pace with the activity of the press. Of the numerous other libraries of this country we have no space to give a detailed account,

and must therefore content ourselves with merely indicating the names of the more extensive ones. In London are the libraries of the Royal Society and the Royal Institution; Sion College Library; Archbishop Tenison's Library; and Dr Williams's Library, belonging to the Dissenters. The Lambeth Library of the Archbishop of Canterbury is exceedingly rich in ecclesiastical history and biblical literature. At Oxford and Cambridge, all the different colleges have libraries more or less extensive and valuable. Chetham's Library at Manchester is also worthy of mention. The library of the Writers to the Signet at Edinburgh is an excellent and valuable miscellaneous collection of books in science, law, history, geography, statistics, antiquities, literature, and the arts. Finally, the Scotch universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrews, and Aberdeen, all possess academical libraries of considerable size, and which are steadily on the increase. Many of the above receive an annual grant of money from government, as a compensation for the withdrawal of the privilege of receiving copies of every book published in the kingdom. All such, at least, ought to be thrown open to the public, and doubtless soon will be.

FOREIGN LIBRARIES.

1. *National Library, Paris.*—This library is justly considered as the finest in Europe. It was commenced under the reign of King John, who possessed only *ten* volumes, to which 900 were added by Charles V., many of them superbly illuminated by John of Bruges, the best artist in miniatures of that time. Under Francis I. it had increased to 1890 volumes, and under Louis XIII. to 16,746. In 1684 it possessed 50,542 volumes; in 1775 it amounted to above 150,000; and by 1790 it had increased to about 200,000. At present it contains 824,000 volumes of printed books, and 80,000 manuscripts. It is divided into four departments:—1. Printed books; 2. Manuscripts, charters, and diplomas; 3. Coins, medals, engraved stones, and other antique monuments; and 4. Engravings, including geographical charts and plans. Of the contents of this magnificent, nay, matchless collection, it would far exceed our limits to give any details, or even to enumerate its choicest articles. It is rich in every branch and department, unique in some, scarcely surpassed in any, and unrivalled in all taken together. Of books printed on vellum it contains at once the finest and most extensive collection in the world.

2. *Arsenal Library, Paris.*—This library, founded by the Marquis de Paulmy, formerly ambassador of France in Poland, was in 1781 acquired by the Count d'Artois, who united to it nearly the whole of the library of the Duke de la Valliere. It possesses the most complete collection extant of romances, since their origin in modern literature; of theatrical pieces or dramas, from the epoch of the Moralities and Mysteries; and of French poetry since the commencement of the sixteenth century. It is less rich in other branches, but it has all works of importance, and in particular contains historical collections which are not to be found elsewhere.

3. *Library of Ste Genevieve, Paris.*—The foundation of this library dates as early as the year 1624, when Cardinal de Rochefoucauld, having reformed the Abbey of Sainte-Genevieve, made it a present of 600 volumes. At present it contains 160,000 printed volumes and 2000 manuscripts. In it

may be found all the academical collections, and a complete set of Aldines; it is particularly rich in historical works; and its most remarkable manuscripts are Greek and Oriental. Its typographical collections of the fifteenth century are not more valuable for their number than the high state of preservation in which they are found. This library is open of an evening, and is much resorted to by students, and men of the operative classes.

4. *Mazarin Library, Paris.*—This library, as its name denotes, was instituted by Cardinal Mazarin. The formation of it was intrusted to the learned Gabriel Naudé, who, having first selected all that suited his purpose in the booksellers' shops in Paris, travelled into Holland, Italy, Germany, and England, where the letters of recommendation of which he was the bearer enabled him to collect many very rare and curious works. Cardinal Mazarin, by his will, bequeathed it to the college which he founded, and in 1688 it was made public. It is remarkable for a great number of collections containing detached pieces and small treatises, which date as far back as the fifteenth century, and exist nowhere else; nor has any other library so complete a body of the ancient books of law, theology, medicine, and the physical and mathematical sciences. It also possesses a most precious collection of the Lutheran or Protestant authors. In one of the halls are placed models in relief of the Pelasgic monuments of Italy and Greece; in another is a terrestrial globe, eighteen feet in diameter, formed of plates of copper, and executed by order of Louis XVI.; but this instrument, which is unique in Europe, is unfortunately unfinished, being destitute of several requisite circles.

5. *National Library, Madrid.*—This 'is one of the many institutions which awaken the admiration of the stranger in Spain, as being at variance with the pervading decay.' According to Mr Ford, 'it is rich in Spanish literature, especially theology and topography, and has been much increased numerically since the suppression of the convents; but good modern books are needed.' It contains many valuable Greek, Latin, and Arabic manuscripts, and unedited works, chiefly Spanish. The *Monetario*, or cabinet of medals, is arranged in an elegant and beautiful apartment, and contains an unrivalled collection of Celtic, Phœnician, Greek, Roman, Gothic, Arabic, and modern coins and medals, in excellent preservation. The library is open to all, at least as far as the printed books are concerned.

6. *Vatican Library, Rome.*—Among the libraries of Italy, that of the Vatican at Rome stands pre-eminent, not more for its grandeur and magnificence, than for the inestimable treasures with which it is enriched. It was originated about the year 465 by Pope Hilary, and has been augmented by succeeding pontiffs, and by various princes, until it reached its present extent and value. Our space will not permit us to give anything like a detailed account of its treasures; but we condense from Sir George Head's admirable work on Rome the following description of the grand saloon of the library:—'The principal chamber of the library appears to be 179 feet long by 51 broad. The ceiling is remarkable for presenting to the eye the appearance of a uniform extensive surface, as if it were a beautifully broad elliptical vault, though in fact it consists of a double range of groined arches that, springing on each side from the walls, and blending together in the middle, are supported on a row of six pillars planted in a line on the ground. These pillars are contrived, accordingly, of an oblong shape, so

extremely narrow that, planted as they are longitudinally, and encompassed by large rectangular mahogany bookcases to serve as pedestals, they occupy but an inconsiderable space in the apartment when viewed edgewise by a spectator standing at the entrance, and from their form effectually counteract the appearance of weight, that would certainly otherwise be produced by the double vaulting. Moreover, while the lines of curvature slide as it were thus gently and harmoniously into the outline of the pillars, the transition of surface is the less perceptible, owing to the whole of the vault and pillars being painted in a uniform delicate pattern of arabesque, by Zuccari, as it is affirmed; but at all events, in figures of plants and flowers, almost as light and exquisite as the paintings on a china teacup, and thrown into relief by the prevalence of a clear white ground; so that an appearance is produced of airiness and space to all intents and purposes as effective as if the ceiling were really contained within the span of a single elliptical arch. Along the base of the ceiling is a cornice of stucco, ornamented with a light pattern in white and gold; and underneath, upon the upper portion of the walls, are six windows on each side; and the remainder of the surface is covered with paintings by several different artists, one of which represents Sixtus V. receiving from his architect, Dominico Fontana, the plan of the present library. The lower portion of the walls is entirely occupied by closed bookcases, composed of panels of wood painted in arabesque on a ground of white and slate colour, and surrounded by gilded mouldings; which receptacles bear no sort of affinity in appearance to ordinary library furniture, and thoroughly conceal from public view the valuable manuscripts which they contain. No books, in fact, are to be seen in the whole chamber, and particularly the rectangular bookcases above referred to, that serve the purpose of pedestals, from the middle of which each pillar supporting the ceiling and resting on the ground below rise, as the pier of a bridge from its ceisson, rather resemble ornamental buffets upon whose tabular surface vases and other splendid objects of art and antiquity are arranged in order.

'With regard to the principal objects worthy of observation there are, in the first place, two very magnificent tables, both alike, placed in the middle of the room in a corresponding position to one another, between the first and second pillar at each extremity. Each is composed of an enormously thick and very highly polished slab of red Oriental granite, supported by six bronze figures of slaves as large as life. Such being the appropriation of two of the intercolumnial spaces, a third is occupied by a low column of Cipollino marble, serving as a pedestal to support a splendid and very large vase of Sevres china, which was presented by the Emperor Napoleon to Pius VII. In a fourth intercolumnial space is to be seen, supported on a pedestal of Cipollino, whose base appears to be a sort of alabaster marked with different shades of olive-green, a square tazza of malachite, presented to Gregory XVI. by the Crown-Prince of Russia, after his visit to Rome in 1838. In the fifth intercolumnial space are a magnificent pair of candelabra of Sevres china, brought by Pius VII. from Paris, and also a splendid vase of the same material presented to his holiness by Charles X. There is also to be observed, placed at the extremity of the room, on the right-hand side near the wall, a spirally-fluted column of Oriental alabaster, which was discovered near the church of St Eusebio, on the Esquiline; and

suspended against the wall, not far distant, is a curious old Russian calendar painted on wood.

'The bookcases being continually locked, as above stated, permission is nevertheless granted to those visitors who may be desirous of consulting the books and manuscripts, on making application to the cardinal-librarian or his assistants; but the privilege is merely nominal, in consequence of the extremely imperfect state of the catalogue; and in point of fact the multitudinous volumes on the shelves may be compared to a mine, unexplored and unexplorable; whence only a few particular objects, considered the staple curiosities of the region, and consequently continually had recourse to by the visitors, are extracted. The volumes in question consist principally of a splendidly-illuminated Bible of the sixth century; the most ancient version of the Septuagint; the earliest Greek version of the New Testament; the "Assertio Septem Sacramentorum," written by Henry VIII.—a royal literary effort in defence of the seven Roman Catholic sacraments that procured the title of Defender of the Faith for the author, which descended to the Protestant monarchs of England; and a most curious and authentic collection of original correspondence between Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn. The "Assertio Septem Sacramentorum" is a good thick octavo volume, written in Latin, and printed in the year 1501, in London, on vellum. The type is clear, with a broad margin, and at the beginning is the original presentation addressed to Leo X., as follows, subscribed by the royal autograph—

> "Anglorum Rex Henricus Leo Decime mittit
> Hoc opus, et fidei testis et amicitiæ."

The whole work—in the preface of which the writer descants on his humble talents and his modesty—would seem, as far as I was able to judge by turning over the pages hastily, to be composed in a remarkably clear style, and to abound with naïve phrases and genuine expressions of the king himself, wrought into the mass and substance of a prolix theological dissertation, that no doubt was prepared and digested for the purpose by the divines of the period. With regard to the correspondence with Anne Boleyn, which places the royal author altogether in a different point of view before the public, the latter consists of a considerable number of original letters, of which those written by the king are for the most part in French and the remainder in English, and those of Anne Boleyn written all in French. The documents are all in excellent preservation, and the handwriting perfectly legible; from the difference of the character at the period in question, and owing to the abbreviations, somewhat difficult to decipher; not so much so, however, but that even an unpractised person, with sufficient time and leisure, might make them out without much difficulty. Visitors are relieved from the labour of the experiment; and fair copies, made in a clear round hand, are placed, each copy side by side with the original, and all are stitched together in a portfolio, where they may be perused with the utmost facility. The letters, which to those inclined to ponder on the anatomy of the human heart afford a melancholy moral, are chiefly remarkable for the boisterous eager tone of the king's passion towards his lady-love, which, expressed in terms that would hardly be considered proper now-a-days, verges on the grotesque.'

7. *Casanata Library, Rome.*—This library, founded by Cardinal Girolamo Casanata in the year 1700, is said to contain a greater number of printed books exclusively, in contradistinction to manuscripts, than any other in Rome, not excepting the Vatican. 'The library,' says Sir George Head, 'is a very beautifully-proportioned chamber, upwards of fifty feet in breadth, and long in proportion, with an elliptically-vaulted ceiling, along the base of which are a series of acute-angled arched spaces containing windows that throw an admirable light on the apartment, which is whitewashed most brilliantly. The books are ranged all round the room on open shelves, with a communication to those of the upper row by a pensile gallery that surrounds the whole periphery. At the extremity of the room is a white marble statue, by Le Gros, of Cardinal Casanata, the founder, elevated with remarkably good effect on a pedestal of dark-coloured Brazil-wood, very highly polished, and surmounted by a splendid frontispiece, supported on two pair of fluted Corinthian columns, all of the same material. The door of the room at the entrance is also surmounted by a frontispiece and columns of Brazil-wood, similar to the preceding. The librarian, a Dominican friar, dressed in the habit of his order, and seated in an easy-chair in the middle of the room at his desk of office, attends there continually, and is exceedingly kind and attentive to the applications of strangers who wish to read books in the library, though his good intentions are of little avail, from the want of a proper catalogue.'

8. *Laurentian Library, Florence.*—This institution was commenced by Cosmo de Medici, the father of a line of princes whose name and age are almost synonymous with the restoration of learning. Naturally fond of literature, and anxious to save from destruction the precious remains of classical antiquity, he laid injunctions on all his friends and correspondents, as well as on the missionaries who travelled into remote countries, to search for and procure ancient manuscripts in every language and on every subject. He availed himself of the services of all the learned men of his time; and the situation of the Eastern empire, then daily falling into ruins by the repeated attacks of the Turks, afforded him an opportunity of obtaining many inestimable works in the Hebrew, Greek, Chaldaic, Arabic, and Indian languages. From these beginnings arose the celebrated library of the Medici, which, after having been the constant object of the solicitude of its founder, was after his death further enriched by the attention of his descendants, and particularly of his grandson Lorenzo; and after various vicissitudes of fortune, and frequent and considerable additions, has been preserved to the present day—the noblest monument which its princely founders have left of the glory of their line.

9. *Magliabecchian Library, Florence.*—Antonio Magliabecchi, from being a servant to a dealer in vegetables, raised himself to the honourable office of librarian to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and became one of the most eminent literary characters of his time. The force of natural talent overcame all the disadvantages of the humble condition in which he had been born, and placed him in a situation to make his name known and respected. But he endeavoured to deserve still better of his countrymen, by presenting them, shortly before his death in 1714, with his large and valuable collection of books, together with the remainder of his fortune, as a fund for its support. This constituted the foundation of the Magliabecchian Library,

which, by the subsequent donations of several benefactors, and the bounty of some of the grand dukes of Florence, has been so much increased both in number and value that it may now vie with some of the most considerable collections in Europe.

10. *Imperial Library, Vienna.*—This collection is perhaps inferior only to that of the Vatican, and the National Library at Paris, for the rarity and value of its contents. It was founded by the Emperor Frederick III., who spared no expense to enrich it with printed books as well as manuscripts in every language. By the munificence of succeeding emperors, numerous important and valuable accessions were made to the collection; amongst which may be mentioned the large and interesting library of Prince Eugene, and a considerable portion of the Buda Library, founded by Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary. The Imperial Library occupies eight spacious apartments, and a ninth is appropriated to a very valuable collection of medals and other curiosities. Besides the cabinet of medals, there is also attached to the library a superb collection of engravings, consisting of 473 large folio volumes, 510 volumes of different sizes, and 215 folio cartoons. The collection of music contains upwards of 6000 volumes, theoretical and practical; and that of autographs exceeds 8000 pieces, classed under the heads of monarchs and princes, ministers and statesmen, poets, philosophers, and men of learning or science, generals and renowned warriors, artists, musicians, and others.

11. *Royal Library, Munich.*—This is the most extensive collection in Germany. It was founded in 1550, and is very complete in all its departments. The ancient manuscripts relative to the art of music amount to a great number, and are exceedingly curious.

12. *University Library, Gottingen.*—The library attached to the university of Gottingen contains 360,000 printed volumes, and 3000 volumes of manuscripts. But its extent is its least recommendation, for it is not only the most complete among those of the universities, but there are very few royal or public collections in Germany which can rival it in real utility; and if not in Germany, where else? It is not rich in manuscripts, and many other libraries surpass it in typographical rarities, but none contains so great a number of really useful books in almost every branch of human knowledge. This library is mainly indebted for the pre-eminence it has obtained to the labours and exertions of the illustrious Heyne. In the year in which he came to Gottingen as second librarian, the entire control of the library was committed to him, and he became chief. From this moment commenced at once its extension and its improvement. When Heyne went to Gottingen, it already possessed a library of from 50,000 to 60,000 volumes; at his decease it had increased, according to the most moderate computation, to upwards of 200,000 volumes. Nor was this all. At the commencement of his librarianship entire departments of learning were wholly wanting; at its close, not only were these deficiencies supplied, but the library had become proportionally rich in every department, and, in point of completeness, unrivalled. Fortunately, Heyne's place has been filled by worthy successors, and the reputation of the collection is still as great as ever.

13. *Royal Library, Dresden.*—The king of Saxony's library at Dresden contains 300,000 volumes of printed books, and 2800 volumes of manu-

scripts. The valuable library that formerly belonged to Count Beurau forms part of this noble collection, which is most complete in general history, and in Greek and Latin classic authors. Amongst the printed books are some of the rarest specimens of early typography, including 600 of the Aldine editions, and many on vellum, besides a copy of the first edition of the 'Orlando Furioso,' printed by Mazocco, 'coll' assistenza dell'autore,' in 1516, and other rarities. In the department of manuscripts are a Mexican manuscript, written on human skin, containing, according to Thevenot, a calendar, with some fragments of the history of the Incas; the original manuscript of the 'Reveries' of Marshal Saxe, bearing at the end that he had composed this work in thirteen nights during a fever, and completed it in December 1733; a fine copy of the Koran, taken from a Turk by a Saxon officer at the last siege of Vienna, and said to have formerly belonged to Bajazet II.; and a Greek manuscript of the Epistles of St Paul of the eleventh century. An extensive collection of antiquities is preserved in twelve apartments under the library, below which are eighteen vaulted cellars, stored with a vast quantity of valuable porcelain, partly of foreign and partly of Dresden manufacture.

14. *Royal Library, Berlin.*—This collection includes works upon almost all the sciences, and in nearly all languages. Among the manuscripts are several Egyptian deeds, written on papyrus, in the demotic or enchorial character. These are very curious, and *fac similes* of some of them have been published by Professor Kosegarten in his valuable work on the 'Ancient Literature of the Egyptians.'

15. *University Library, Leyden.*—This library was founded by William I., Prince of Orange, and is justly celebrated throughout Europe for the many valuable specimens of Greek and Oriental literature with which it abounds. To it Joseph Scaliger bequeathed his fine collection of Hebrew books; and it was further enriched by the learned Golius, on his return from the East, with many Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Chaldaic manuscripts. In addition to these it received the collections of Holmanns, and particularly those of Isaac Vossius and Ruhuken—the former containing a number of valuable manuscripts, supposed to have once belonged to Christina, queen of Sweden; and the latter an almost entire series of classical authors, with a collection of manuscripts, perhaps unique, amongst which are copies of several that were consumed by fire in the Abbey of St Germain-des-Prés.

16. *Imperial Library, St Petersburg.*—Russia is indebted for this splendid collection to an act of robbery and spoliation. In 1795, when Russia triumphed over the independence of Poland, the victorious general, Suwaroff, unceremoniously seized the Zaluski Library, of nearly 300,000 volumes, had it packed up in all haste and despatched to St Petersburg. There it formed the basis of the present Imperial Library, which, but for that stolen collection, instead of now ranking in the first class of European libraries, would scarcely have been entitled to a place in the third.

17. *Libraries of Constantinople.*—This city possesses thirty-two public libraries, all varying in extent, but more or less celebrated for the number and value of their manuscripts, which are neatly bound in red, green, or black morocco. The Mohammedans have a peculiar method of indorsing, placing, and preserving their books. Each volume, besides being bound in morocco, is preserved from dust in a case of the same material; and on it,

as well as on the edges of the leaves, the title is written in large and legible characters. The books are placed, one upon another, in presses ornamented with trelliswork, and are disposed along the wall, or in the four corners of the library. All these collections are open to the public throughout the year, excepting on Tuesdays and Fridays: the librarians are as polite and attentive as Turks can be to those whom curiosity or love of study attract thither; and every one is at liberty not merely to peruse, but to make extracts from the books, and even to transcribe them entirely, provided this be done within the walls of the library. Theology, including the Koran and commentators thereon, jurisprudence, medicine, ethics, and history, are the sciences chiefly cultivated by the Osmanlis. The books are all written with the greatest care on the finest vellum, the text of each page is enclosed in a highly-ornamented and gilt framework, the beginning of each chapter or section is splendidly illuminated, and the value of the manuscripts varies in proportion to the beauty of the characters.

We here terminate our rapid survey of the principal libraries of Europe. Small, however, would be the interest which one should feel for these magnificent establishments were they designed solely for the benefit of a few individuals, or of any favoured class. They would still be splendid monuments of the productive powers of the human mind, and of the taste or learning of their founders; but they would have no claims to that unbounded admiration with which we now regard them. There is a republican liberality in the management of the great libraries of the continent of Europe which is well worthy of our imitation. In these alone is the great invention of printing carried out to its full extent, by the free communication of all its productions to every class of society. No introduction, no recommendation, no securities are required; but the stranger and the native are admitted, upon equal terms, to the full enjoyment of all the advantages which the uncontrolled use of books can afford. As this mode of accommodating, or rather of meeting the wants of the public, is the real object of these institutions, they are provided with librarians, who, under different titles corresponding to the duties imposed upon them, receive from government regular salaries proportioned to their rank and to the services which they perform. To these the immediate superintendence of the library is wholly intrusted, and at a stated hour of every day in the week, except of such as are set apart for public or religious festivals, they open the library to the public. There, undisturbed, and supplied with everything the collection contains that can aid him in his studies, the scholar may pass several hours of every day without any expense, and with no other care than that natural attention to the books he uses, which every one capable of appreciating the full value of such privileges will readily give. Nor do his facilities cease here. The time during which the libraries remain open may be insufficient for profound and extensive researches, and the writer who has to trace his facts through a great variety of works, and to examine the unpublished documents to be found in public libraries alone, would be obliged to sacrifice a large portion of every day if his studies were regulated by the usual hours of these institutions. For such persons a proper recommendation can hardly fail to procure the use, at their own houses, of the works they may need. In this

manner the door is thrown open to every one who wishes to enter, and science placed within reach of all who court her favours.

This is as it should be; and it is therefore with great pleasure that we have observed symptoms of improvement in this respect originating in our legislature. In March 1849 a select committee was appointed by the House of Commons, on the motion of Mr William Ewart, to report on the best means of 'extending the establishment of libraries freely open to the public, especially in large towns, in Great Britain and Ireland.' This committee consisted of fifteen members—namely, Mr Ewart, Viscount Ebrington, Mr D'Israeli, Sir Harry Verney, Mr Charteris, Mr Bunbury, Mr G. A. Hamilton, Mr Brotherton, Mr Monckton Milnes, the Lord Advocate (Mr Rutherford), Mr Thicknesse, Sir John Walsh, Mr Mackinnon, Mr Kershaw, and Mr Wyld. These gentlemen seem to have entered upon their labours with zeal, and to have performed their duty with thoroughness and fidelity. They held numerous sessions, and examined a large number of witnesses. The particulars of these examinations have been printed in full, and form a rather bulky blue-book, in which the report of the committee occupies only twelve pages, while the minutes of evidence, tables, &c. fall over three hundred. The committee appear to have felt that it was only necessary to lay before parliament and the public the facts concerning the present condition and wants of the public libraries of this country in order to insure the supply of all deficiencies.

After presenting a brief view of the principal libraries in the various countries of Europe, with a more particular account of the present condition of those in Great Britain, showing that the English are far behind their continental brethren in this respect, the committee thus express their conviction—'Whatever may be our disappointment at the rarity of public libraries in the United Kingdom, we feel satisfaction in stating that the uniform current of the evidence tends to prove the increased qualifications of the people to appreciate and enjoy such institutions. Testimony, showing a great improvement in national habits and manners, is abundantly given in the evidence taken by the committee. That they would be still further improved by the establishment of public libraries, it needs not even the high authority and ample evidence of the witnesses who appeared before the committee to demonstrate.'

Frequent and favourable allusions are made in the report and the minutes of evidence to the numerous popular libraries in this country for district schools, factories, &c. These, we are aware, are of the greatest value; but these alone are not sufficient. The establishment of even a hundred thousand small village or district-school libraries would not supersede the necessity of a certain number of large and comprehensive ones. These little collections are much alike, each containing nearly the same books as every other. The committee of parliament appear to understand this. 'It is evident,' they say, 'that there should be in all countries libraries of two sorts: libraries of deposit and research, and libraries devoted to the general reading and circulation of books. Libraries of deposit should contain, if possible, almost every book that ever has existed. The most insignificant tract, the most trifling essay, a sermon, a newspaper, or a song, may afford an illustration of manners or opinions elucidatory of the past, and throw a faithful though feeble light on the pathway of the future

historian. In such libraries nothing should be rejected. Not but that libraries of deposit and of general reading may (as in the case of the British Museum) be combined. But though such combination is possible, and may be desirable, the distinction which we have drawn should never be forgotten.'

The first, and apparently, in the estimation of the committee, the most important witness, was Edward Edwards, Esq., an assistant in the department of printed books in the British Museum. The minutes of his evidence alone cover between sixty and seventy of the closely-printed folio pages accompanying the report; and besides this, he has furnished various statistical tables, occupying fifty pages, and a series of twelve maps. In one of these maps it is his purpose to exhibit, by various shades, the relative provision of books in public libraries in the principal states of Europe, as compared with their respective populations; and in the others, the local situation of the public libraries in some of the principal cities is indicated. The evidence of Mr Edwards has been severely commented upon in the London papers and elsewhere, and some inaccuracies in his tables, of greater or less magnitude, have been pointed out. We might, perhaps, by a particular examination of every word and figure, add something to the list of errata. But we think that those persons who are most familiar with the difficulty of obtaining exact statistical details will not wonder that an error should here and there be found. We have looked over the evidence and the tables with considerable care, and think them, on the whole, highly creditable to the author. It is evident, however, from the general tenor of his testimony, that Mr Edwards presses rather too strongly the point respecting the condition of England, compared with that of the countries on the continent, as to the number and accessibility of their public libraries. His enthusiasm on the subject, arising probably from a laudable desire to have his own country take a higher rank in respect to libraries than she now holds, has led him, we think, to overlook or undervalue some of the advantages which she already possesses. But his facts and figures are in the main to be relied upon; and we shall make use of them as sufficiently accurate to give our readers a general view of the present bibliothecal condition of the principal countries of Europe.

On Mr Edwards's map of Europe we find the smaller German states to be represented with the lightest lines, indicating the highest rank, and Great Britain with the darkest or lowest. He states the provision of books in libraries publicly accessible, as compared with the population, to be as follows:—In Saxony, for every 100 inhabitants there are 417 books; in Denmark, 412; in Bavaria, 339; in Tuscany, 261; in Prussia, 200; in Austria, 167; in France, 129; in Belgium, 95; whilst in Great Britain there are only 53 to every 100 inhabitants.

In the following tables, the libraries containing fewer than 10,000 volumes each (of which there are, in France alone, at least seventy or eighty) are not taken into the account:—

France	has 107	public libraries,	containing	4,000,000 vols.
Prussia	... 44	...	...	2,400,000 ...
Austria	... 48	...	...	2,400,000 ...
Great Britain	... 33	...	...	1,771,000 ...
Bavaria	... 17	...	...	1,267,000 ...
Denmark	... 5	...	...	645,000 ...

Saxony	has 6 public libraries, containing	554,000 vols.
Belgium	... 14	538,000 ...
Tuscany	... 9	411,000 ...

Taking the capital cities, we find the following results :—

Paris	has 9 public libraries, containing	1,474,000 vols.
Munich	... 2	800,000 ...
Copenhagen	... 3	557,000 ...
Berlin	... 2	530,000 ...
London	... 4	490,500 ...
Vienna	... 3	453,000 ...
Dresden	... 4	340,500 ...
Florence	... 6	318,000 ...
Milan	... 2	230,000 ...
Brussels	... 2	143,500 ...

Arranging these libraries according to their extent, or number of printed books, they would stand as follows :—

	Printed Books.	Manuscripts.
Paris (1), National Library,	824,000	80,000 vols.
Munich, Royal Library,	600,000	22,000 ...
St Petersburg, Imperial Library,	446,000	20,650 ...
London, British Museum,	435,000	31,000 ...
Copenhagen, Royal Library,	412,000	3,000 ...
Berlin, Royal Library,	410,000	5,000 ...
Vienna, Imperial Library,	313,000	16,000 ...
Dresden, Royal Library,	300,000	2,800 ...
Wolfenbuttel, Ducal Library,	200,000	4,580 ...
Madrid, National Library,	200,000	2,500 ...
Stuttgard, Royal Library,	187,000	3,300 ...
Paris (2), Arsenal Library,	180,000	6,000 ...
Milan, Brera Library,	170,000	1,000 ...
Darmstadt, Grand Ducal Library,	150,000	4,000 ...
Paris (3), Ste Genevieve Library,	150,000	2,000 ...
Florence, Magliabecchian Library,	150,000	12,000 ...
Naples, Royal Library,	150,000	3,000 ...
Edinburgh, Advocates' Library,	148,000	2,000 ...
Brussels, Royal Library,	133,500	18,000 ...
Rome (1), Casanata Library,	120,000	4,500 ...
Hague, Royal Library,	100,000	2,000 ...
Paris (4), Mazarine Library,	100,000	4,000 ...
Rome (2), Vatican Library,	100,000	24,000 ...
Parma, Ducal Library,	100,000	...

The chief university libraries may be ranked in the following order :—

	Printed Books.	Manuscripts.
Gottingen, University Library,	360,000	3,000 vols.
Breslau, University Library,	250,000	2,300 ...
Oxford, Bodleian Library,	220,000	21,000 ...
Tubingen, University Library,	200,000	1,900 ...
Munich, University Library,	200,000	2,000 ...
Heidelberg, University Library,	200,000	1,800 ...
Cambridge, University Library,	166,724	3,163 ...
Bologna, University Library,	150,000	400 ...
Prague, University Library,	130,000	4,000 ...
Vienna, University Library,	115,000	...
Leipsic, University Library,	112,000	2,500 ...
Copenhagen, University Library,	110,000	...
Turin, University Library,	110,000	2,000 ...
Louvain, University Library,	105,000	246 ...
Dublin, Trinity College Library,	104,239	1,512 ...
Upsal, University Library,	100,000	5,000 ...
Erlangen, University Library,	100,000	1,000 ...
Edinburgh, University Library,	90,354	310 ...

The largest libraries in Great Britain are those of the

	Printed Books.	Manuscripts.
British Museum, London, . .	435,000	31,000 vols.
Bodleian, Oxford, ...	220,000	21,000 ...
University, Cambridge, ...	166,724	3,163 ...
Advocates', Edinburgh, ...	148,000	2,000 ...
Trinity College, Dublin, ...	104,239	1,512 ...

There are in the United States of America at least 81 libraries of 5000 volumes and upwards, each to which the public, more or less restrictedly, have access, and of these 49 are immediately connected with colleges or public schools. The aggregate number of volumes in these collections is about 980,413. We subjoin the contents of a few of the largest:—

Harvard College Library, ...	72,000 vols.
Philadelphia and Loganian Library, ...	60,000 ...
Boston Athenæum, ...	50,000 ...
Library of Congress, ...	50,000 ...
New York Society Library, ...	32,000 ...
Mercantile Library, New York, ...	32,000 ...
Georgetown College, ...	25,000 ...
Brown University, ...	24,000 ...
New York State Library, ...	24,000 ...
Yale College, ...	21,000 ...

America will, however, soon possess a library worthy of its character as a great nation. The Astor Library, now in course of formation, owes its existence to the munificence of John Jacob Astor, who died on the 29th of March 1848, leaving by his will the sum of 400,000 dollars for the establishment of a public library in the city of New York. Seventy-five thousand dollars were to be appropriated to the erection of a suitable building, and 120,000 dollars to the purchase of books as a nucleus. The smallest number of books which the trustees consider it safe to estimate as a basis for enlargement is 100,000 volumes. The Astor Library will probably, when first formed, contain a larger number and a better selection of books than any other in the United States. With the generous provision which the founder has made for its increase, together with the liberal donations which will undoubtedly be made to this as the chief library in the country, it is likely to grow rapidly, till it will take rank with the large libraries of the old world. Under the direction of an enlightened and judicious Board of Trustees, with Washington Irving for president, and Dr Cogswell for superintendent of the institution, there is every reason to believe that the desire so warmly expressed at the conclusion of their report will be fulfilled: 'That the Astor Library may soon become, as a depository of the treasures of literature and science, what the city possessing it is rapidly becoming in commerce and wealth.'

The second witness examined by the committee was M. Guizot. In the distinguished positions which he has filled as minister of public instruction and prime minister in France, his attention has been turned to the public libraries of that country. While in office he ordered an inspection of those institutions, and the French government now has complete and exact documents relative to the number of public libraries, and the number of books in each. These institutions are accessible to the public in every way for reading, and to a great extent for borrowing books. Some

of them receive direct grants from the government towards their support; while others, in the provincial towns, are supported by municipal funds; and to the latter the government distributes copies of costly works, for the publication of which it in general subscribes liberally. M. Guizot attributes the happiest results to this system. He says—'There are two good results: the first is, a general regard in the mind of the public for learning, for literature, and for books. That complete accessibility to the libraries gives to every one, learned or unlearned, a general feeling of good-will for learning and for knowledge; and then the second result is, that the means for acquiring knowledge are given to those persons who are able to employ them.'

His Excellency M. Van de Weyer, the Belgian ambassador, was next examined. He testified that the public libraries in his own country were numerous, large, and easily accessible to all who desire to make use of them. He attributes the best results to the literary character of his country from this privilege of free access to their large collections of books. He thinks the people are better prepared than is generally supposed to appreciate works of a high character. He seems to think it unwise to attempt to popularise science and literature by printing inferior books, written expressly for common and uneducated people. The government subscribe for a number of copies of nearly every valuable work published, by which means they encourage the progress of literature, and are enabled to enrich many of the public collections. 'The government have sometimes, within a space of twenty years, spent some £10,000 or £12,000 in favour of libraries. I take this opportunity of stating also, that though the Chamber only votes a grant of 65,000 or 70,000 francs for the Royal Public Library of Brussels, whenever there is some large sale going on, there is always a special grant made to the library. Lately one of the most curious private libraries had been advertised for sale; a catalogue had been printed in six volumes; the government immediately came forward, bought the whole of the collection for £13,000 or £14,000, and made it an addition to the Royal Library in Brussels; they did the same thing at Ghent: I believe that the library that they bought at Ghent consisted of about 20,000 volumes, and in Brussels about 60,000 or 70,000 volumes.' Our own government would do well to imitate this example more frequently than it has hitherto done.

Passing by several witnesses whose evidence we should be glad to notice did our limits permit, we come to George Dawson, Esq., who, as a lecturer, has had opportunities of becoming acquainted with the condition, the feelings, and the wants of the working-classes in the manufacturing towns both in England and Scotland. He testifies that libraries to some extent have already been formed in those places, and that there is a very general desire among the working-people to avail themselves of more and better books. They can appreciate the best authors. Political and historical subjects interest them most, but the higher class of poetry is also read by them. Milton is much read. Mr Dawson says, 'Shakspeare is known by heart almost. I could produce men who could be cross-examined upon any play.' The contrast between the manufacturing and the farming districts in respect to the intelligence of the people and their desire for improvement is very great. Speaking of one of the agricultural districts,

Mr Dawson says, 'I have heard of a parish in Norfolk where a woman was the parish clerk, because there was not a man in the parish who could read or write!'

Henry Stevens, Esq., formerly librarian of one of the libraries connected with Yale College, gave some valuable information respecting the present state of public libraries in the United States. He says, 'the public libraries of the United States are small but very numerous. We have but two containing above 50,000 volumes, while there are nine above 20,000, forty-three above 10,000, more than a hundred above 5000 volumes, and thousands of smaller ones. The want of large public consulting libraries, like those of Europe, is much felt.' The chief readers in these libraries are the working-classes, and persons who are engaged in active business through the day. Works on physical science, history, biography, and of a superior class, are those chiefly read by them; and Mr Stevens stated, that when he came to England, he could not help being struck by the 'little reading that there is among the labouring and business-classes' of this country as compared with the United States. This is succinctly explained by Mr Dawson, who says, 'the quantity of people who cannot read and write in this country is a very great hindrance to the demand for books. We have *eight millions* who cannot write yet!' Mr Edwards, in his evidence, also points to the same deficiency of elementary education. 'In addition,' he says, 'to the positive want of schooling on the part of large numbers of the population who are now growing up, those who do get some partial education habitually neglect to improve what they get from the want of cultivating a taste for reading. Unless good books are made accessible to the people, this is very likely to continue to be a cause—even where education by Sunday schools, and other efforts of that kind, have been brought within the reach of a considerable number of the population—why the good effects of education have not been continued in after-life.'

The committee very justly place much value on the opinions and suggestions of M. Libri. The thorough knowledge which that eminent bibliographer possesses of all matters pertaining to the condition and wants of public libraries, as well as of the needs of literary men, renders his remarks worthy of careful consideration. In a letter addressed to Mr Ewart, the chairman of the committee, he develops his views at some length, and shows the necessity of having in great countries libraries 'in which one may expect to find, as far as it is possible, all books which learned men—men who occupy themselves upon any subject whatever, and who cultivate one of the branches of human knowledge—may require to consult. Of these there is nothing useless, nothing ought to be neglected; the most insignificant in appearance, those which on their publication have attracted the least attention, sometimes become the source of valuable and unexpected information.' It is in the fragments, now so rare and precious, of some alphabets—of some small grammars published for the use of schools about the middle of the fifteenth century—or in the letters distributed in Germany by the religious bodies commissioned to collect alms, that bibliographers now seek to discover the first processes employed by the inventors of xylography and typography. It is in a forgotten collection of indifferent plates, published at Venice by Faush Verantio towards the end of the sixteenth century, that an engineer who interests himself in the

history of the mechanical arts might find the first diagrams of iron-suspension bridges.

Nothing should be neglected; nothing is useless to whoever wishes thoroughly to study a subject. An astronomer who desires to study the motions peculiar to certain stars requires to consult all the old books of astronomy, and even of astrology, which appear the most replete with error. A chemist, a man who is engaged in the industrial arts, may still consult with profit certain works on alchymy, and even on magic. A legislator, a jurisconsult, needs sometimes to be acquainted with the laws, the ordinances, which derive their origin from the most barbarous ages; but it is particularly for the biographer, for the historian, that it is necessary to prepare the largest field of inquiry, to amass the greatest quantity of materials. This is not only true as regards past times, but we ought to prepare the materials for future students. Historical facts which appear the least important, the most insignificant anecdotes, registered in a pamphlet, mentioned in a placard or in a song, may be connected at a later period in an unforeseen manner with events which acquire great importance, or with men who are distinguished in history by their genius, by their sudden elevation, or even by their crimes. We are not born celebrated—men become so; and when we desire to trace the history of those who have attained it, the inquirer is often obliged to pursue his researches in their most humble beginnings. Who would have imagined that the obscure author of a small pamphlet, 'Le Souper de Beaucaire,' would subsequently become the Emperor Napoleon? and that to write fully the life of the execrable Marat, one ought to have the very insignificant essays on physics that he published before the Revolution? Nothing is too unimportant for whoever wishes thoroughly to study the literary or scientific history of a country, or for one who undertakes to trace the intellectual progress of eminent minds, or to inform himself in detail of the changes which have taken place in the institutions and in the manners of a nation. Without speaking of the commentaries or considerable additions which have been introduced in the various reprints of an author, the successive editions of the same work which appear to resemble each other the most are often distinguished from each other by peculiarities worthy of much attention. It has been well said, that a public library should contain all those works which are too costly, too voluminous, or of *too little value* in the common estimation to be found elsewhere, down even to the smallest tracts. An old almanac, or a forgotten street-ballad, has sometimes enabled the historian to verify or correct some important point which would otherwise have remained in dispute.

With a brief extract from the evidence of one other witness we must close our notice of the Report on Public Libraries. Charles Meyer, Esq., German secretary to his Royal Highness Prince Albert, had given attention to the public libraries of Germany, having resided several years in Gotha, Hamburg, Leipsic, and Munich. He had perused the principal part of the evidence which had been given by Mr Edwards upon this subject, and found all that he stated to be quite correct. Dr Meyer thinks the existence of the numerous and valuable libraries of Germany has given the literary men of that country an advantage over the literary men of England. 'It has saved a great number of our German learned men,' he says, 'from the

danger of becoming *autodidactoi*—self-taught. I think that is one essential point of difference that is visible in comparing the general character of the instruction in this country with that on the continent: there are in this country a great number of self-taught people, who think according to their own views without any reference to previous scientific works. They make sometimes very great discoveries; but sometimes they find that they have wasted their labour upon subjects already known, which have been written upon by a great number of people before them; but as they have no access to libraries, it is impossible for them to get acquainted with the literature of that branch upon which they treat.'

From the preceding quotations, it is evident that, in the opinion of the Parliamentary Committee, and of the witnesses examined by it, there exists in this country at once a great deficiency of public libraries and a pressing necessity for their establishment. Our people are and will be readers. They are generally prepared to make a good use of books of a higher order than those offered to them in so cheap and attractive a form by our enterprising publishers. Now, either their energies will be wasted in a desultory course of reading, by which they will gain only a superficial knowledge of almost every conceivable subject, or they must be furnished with the means, which they are so well prepared to use to advantage, of going to the bottom of whatever subject interests them, and having exhausted the wisdom of past generations, of adding to the stock of general knowledge from the results of their own thoughts and experience.

The necessity for the establishment of large collections of books, freely open to the public—of institutions in which, as Ovid well expresses it,

> 'Quæque viri docto veteres cepere novique
> Pectore, lecturis inspicienda patent'—

is, we imagine, unquestioned and unquestionable. The question now arises, How are these libraries to be constituted? On this point it will not be expected that we should dilate at length. At the present time the best books on all subjects are to be purchased at a moderate rate; and in the formation of new libraries, attention should first be paid to the supply of works most generally in demand. It will neither be wise nor just to the public to purchase, at the outset, rare and curious works: when a sufficient supply of really useful and generally-read publications has been obtained, it will be quite time enough to think of indulging the bibliomania. But there is one subject on which this taste may advantageously be indulged—and that is, every town in which a public library is established should take care to collect all works relating to its local or municipal history. A selection of the best books on bibliography should also be possessed by each. These are to the librarian and the literary man what the compass is to the mariner, or the tools of his trade to the artisan.

But we must hasten to a conclusion. As a pendant to the Report of the Parliamentary Committee, Mr Ewart brought forward a bill for the establishment of libraries and museums in country towns. This bill has now received the sanction of the legislature; its operation is, however, limited to boroughs whose population exceeds 10,000; and before it can be carried into effect, a public meeting of rate-payers must be called, and the consent

of two-thirds of those present obtained. Liverpool was the first to profit by this act: other towns have followed her example; and we trust that ere long, in all the considerable towns throughout the length and breadth of this land, public libraries and museums will be established. The subject is one that cannot be long neglected. It will go on gaining upon public attention, until seen by all in its true light, and in all its bearings. Then the connection between a sound literature and the means used for its formation will be felt; then the numerous and immediate advantages of such a form of encouragement, as the establishment of these institutions, will be clearly seen and fully understood; and the rich harvest of glory which our future scholars will reap in every branch of study must convince even the most incredulous that literature asks no favours and receives no aid for which she does not repay the giver with a tenfold increase.