

## FUNCTIONS OF A LIBRARIAN.

Nowhere is the difference more marked between the old and new conceptions of librarianship, than in the duties of the librarian, his attitude towards the library and his attitude towards the public. Under the old dispensation the librarian was merely a custodian of books. Books were few; readers were fewer; the librarian had very little to do, and was estimated accordingly. He was considered to be, and as a matter of fact generally was, a comparatively useless member of society. One John Durie published a little book, in 1650, "The Reformed Librarie-Keeper," in which he drew a very unflattering picture of the librarians of his day. "They subordinate," he says, "all the advantages of their places to purchase mainly two things thereby, viz., an easie subsistence, and some credit in comparison with others; nor is the last much regarded, if the first may be had." He then proceeds to set forth what he considers the "proper charge of the Honorable Librarie-keeper," to wit, "to keep the publick stock of learning, which is in Books and Manuscripts, to increas it, and to propose to others in the waie which may be most useful unto all"; from which one gathers that John Durie was a man several hundred years in advance of his age. Among other things, he recommended a "Catalogue of Additionals," to be printed every three years.

An English librarian of our own times, Mr. Henry Bradshaw, gives in a single sentence an admirable definition of the ideal librarian. "A librarian," he says, "is one who earns his living by attending to the wants of those for whose use the library under his charge exists; his primary duty being, in the widest possible sense of the phrase, to save the time of those who seek his services." And to this might be added the qualification suggested by an American librarian, Mrs. M. A. Sanders — herself a striking example of the success of her theory — "the librarian should meet the reader in the position of a host or hostess welcoming a guest."

Unfortunately, even in these latter days there are not wanting people, and educated people too, whose conception of the librarian and his work is a conception that belongs to the seventeenth or eighteenth century. According to their idea, his chief duty consists in handing books over a counter to the library's customers. How surprised they would be to be told that the conscientious librarian—the librarian who has the best interests of his library at heart—gives, and must give, not an hour or two daily, but his whole waking thoughts,