

friend Grollier, one of the most remarkable of his time, and his books are also in the greatest request among collectors.

Diane de Poitiers, too, the beautiful and accomplished mistress of Henry the Second of France, had, as well as her Royal lover, a passion for and an unrivalled taste in books. I have already alluded to Cardinal Mazarin, as the possessor of a noble library, which was mainly owing to the zeal and intelligence of Gabriel Naudé the eminent man of letters, to whose care as librarian it was entrusted; and the names of the great Colbert, and of his successor Louvois, stand high among the men of note, who after his time collected on their own account, and also contributed in an important measure to the formation of a national library.

During this time England had not been idle, as is evident from the names of Sir Robert Bodley, the munificent benefactor to whom the great Bodleian Library at Oxford owes its foundation and its name, and of his great friend Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, who chose the library of Osorius, known as the Cicero of Portugal, as his share of the booty taken in the expedition against Cadiz in 1596, and bestowed a large part of it upon the institution founded by Bodley.

The quaint and gossiping, but most intelligent Pepys, the secretary to the Admiralty in Charles the Second's reign, and the friend of Evelyn, was in the next century, an ardent and successful collector of books, and his library is now preserved at Magdalen College, Cambridge.

It is however to the history of society in France that we have to look during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for illustrations of the progress of European civilization, of which during that period she was the pioneer and the guide, and I shall reserve a necessarily hasty sketch of our own English labours in the same direction, for the account of our great national library with which I propose to conclude.

In France then, book-collecting gradually became a sort of fashionable pastime, from the influence of which no one was exempt. A library was a necessary part of the furniture of the chateau of the noble, and of the boudoir of the fine lady, and of the palace of the wealthy parvenu who had made a fortune by farming the taxes. This mania for books, as a mere freak of fashion, is lashed among the other follies of his time by the witty moralist, La Bruyère. He describes his visit to the library of a fashionable collector, bitterly abuses the fine Morocco bindings of the unused books, the smell of which makes him sick, and ends by declaring that he will never again be seduced into entering this tan-yard, misnamed a library.

We are told of the famous Surintendant Fouquet, that in the ante-room of his library there was always a pile of white gloves laid ready, and that no one was allowed to proceed further, until duly provided with a pair, lest the books within should receive a soil from the naked hand.

A very remarkable library, which illustrates this state of things, was that collected by the Countess de la Verrue. This lady, who had been the favorite of Victor Amédée of Savoy, retired to Paris, and there occupied herself in bringing together romances, and other works of fiction. Of these she had an amazing number, all exquisitely bound, and like the books of that day, stamped with her arms. And thus the little world of Paris and of Versailles went on, like the greater world before the deluge, eating and drinking, marrying or not marrying, until the flood came and swept them from the face of the earth. And now these little books, or such as these, beautiful in their Morocco bindings, rich in their heraldic blazonry, surge up occasionally, light and frivolous as the foam wreath, but full of instruction as to the past, and of solemn warning for the future.

I would fain, if time permitted, have carried you with me through some of the great libraries of Continental Europe—the Roman Vatican with its countless but hidden treasures concealed in beautifully painted presses, which clothe the walls of galleries a thousand feet in length—the Imperial Library at Paris—the Public Libraries at Florence, at Milan, at Venice, at Vienna—but I have already trespassed too long upon your patience, and I shall conclude with a notice of our own national collection at the British Museum, which will incidentally furnish hints as to the progress of the taste for books in England, from an early period to the present time.

The National Library may be said to have owed its existence to the donation made by George the Second, in 1757, of the Royal Library which had been accumulated by the sovereigns of England, from Henry the Seventh downward. Henry was a munificent patron of printers, and his collection comprised a remarkable series of illuminated books on vellum, from the press of Antoine Vêrard. Relics of succeeding sovereigns abound, including Henry the Eighth's own copy of his "Assertion of the Sacraments" against Luther, which procured him from the Pope the title of Defender of the Faith, and his copy of the Bible of 1540, which now stands in the same press with a New Testament that once belonged to Anna

Boleyn. The Greek Grammar of Edward the Sixth, (and in this place we ought not to forget that his preceptor, Sir John Cheke, who introduced the study of Greek into England, was an Isle of Wight man), Queen Mary's copy of Bandello's Novels, and Queen Elizabeth's copy of Parker's Lives of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the first book privately printed in England, are also here. Of Charles the First, there are memorials in Almanacs in which he had scribbled his name in a childish scrawl, and in the beautifully bound volumes of the Harmony of the Gospels, illustrated by the protestant Nuns of Little Gidding, and presented to the King by their founder, Nicholas Ferrar.

The principal additions which were afterwards made to the library arose from bequest from gift and from purchase.

The most important bequests were that of the Rev. Mr. Crache-rode, who left his exquisite library of four thousand five hundred volumes, unrivalled in beauty and condition, in 1799; that of Sir Joseph Banks in 1820; and exceeding all in extent as well as in value, that of the Right Honorable Thomas Grenville in 1846. This noble legacy consisted of upwards of twenty thousand volumes, collected during a long life at an expense of more than £54,000.

The most valuable gift was that of the new Royal Library made by George the Third, at vast expense, and consisting of sixty-five thousand volumes, which was presented to the nation by George the Fourth in 1823.

The purchases of most value were the collection of Sir Hans Sloane, which were, with his cabinets of natural history, bought in 1753 for the sum of 20,000l. The same Act of Parliament which was passed for this acquisition, also sanctioned the purchase of the Harleian Manuscripts, which had been collected by the Lord Treasurer Harley, Earl of Oxford, and his son. Their noble library of printed books had been previously allowed to be dispersed to the irreparable loss of our national literature.

The vast collection of printed books which has increased upon us with giant strides, has risen from two hundred and thirty-five thousand volumes in 1838, through four hundred and thirty-five thousand in 1849, to a total of six hundred thousand at the present time, of which the old library accommodates about five hundred thousand. The new building, which is of iron, is calculated to hold about fifteen hundred thousand volumes, and you will be tempted to accuse me of exaggeration when I assure you that it contains three miles of book cases eight feet high, and twenty-five miles of shelves. Yet with all this, such is the portentous rate at which books accumulate, that it is calculated that there will not be room for the probable accessions of the next forty years, and that before that time the vast space which has been prepared will be gorged with books.

For the use of the reading public, who are admitted with a liberality and treated with a courtesy which it is impossible to overestimate, a new circular reading room has been erected containing sixty thousand volumes, all books of reference and periodicals, and offering most convenient accommodation to more than three hundred students at a time. The dome of this magnificent building is the second largest in the world, being only two feet narrower than that of the Pantheon at Rome. In size, decoration, and convenience, it stands unrivalled among similar edifices, and we may boast of possessing in it the most splendid temple ever erected to literature in any country or in any age.

II. Further Papers on Books and Libraries.

1. SUGGESTIONS IN REGARD TO OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES.

As the usual period of the year for establishing or replenishing the Public School Libraries has now arrived, we desire to call the attention of the local school authorities to the subject,

The approaching long winter evenings will afford ample leisure for reading as well as for study. The perusal of good books will be at once a stimulus and a relaxation, as well as an intellectual advantage to the pupils themselves. It will doubtless also be no less a source of pleasure and profit to their parents and other rate-payers, who have the right of free access to the public school library, under the regulations provided by law.

Painful evidence has already been afforded in Canada* of the evil effects upon young persons of an acquaintance with that pernicious class of the lighter literature of the day only, which is everywhere so abundantly supplied, and which, in the absence of better tastes and some controlling influence against it, young people are too apt to seek out and to read with avidity.

Most of our public schools,—chiefly in cities, towns, and villages,—have by their excellence created, especially among the more advanced pupils, a taste for reading and intellectual culture, which,

* See *Journal of Education* for April, 1861. See also the *Journal* for the present and successive months.