



Berlin Public Library.



Collingwood Public Library.



St. John, N.B., Public Library.

THE MUSINGS OF A LIBRARIAN

Third Article

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LIBRARIANS, whose duties in the estimation of some people entitle them to be ranked on the same level as teachers, are far too often not fully or properly qualified for the duties of their position, their literary equipment being not infrequently only confined to a knowledge of the merits or demerits of the latest novel. Fortunate indeed the town with the ideal librarian—happy the people who can go to their public library knowing their librarian is able and willing to assist them, no matter what the subject of their research is, whether it be the best authority on zygobranchia or a harmless novel to lull asleep o' nights. "You have myopia, haven't you?" asked an eye doctor who called at a public library to look at a reference book. "I don't know, sir," replied the near-sighted attendant, blinking at him, "but if we have you will find it in the catalogue."

Much has been said and written on the subject of the cataloguing of public libraries, and we are all familiar with the humour displayed in the ludicrous combination:

Mill on Liberty.
Do. the Floss.

But I knew a worthy librarian who, in the preparation of a classified catalogue of the library under his charge showed some remarkable examples of originality. Under Philology he included Drummond's "The Habitant," for the reason that the classification guide which he followed showed "dialect" as a branch of "philology." Jerome K. Jerome's little book, "Stageland," was shown among the books on Fine Arts; whilst the volume entitled "My First Book," and which gives the personally-related experiences of prominent authors of the difficulties they encountered in their first literary efforts, and therefore a very serious book from their point of view, was included by my friend among the books on humour, simply because Jerome K. Jerome, with a reputation for humour, edited the volume in question.

But not amongst librarians alone is unconscious humour displayed. The reading public has furnished their quota. A young man of Liverpool, studying the very commendable subject of shipping, on applying for a book shown in the catalogue as "The Flora of Liverpool," was pained to find it a book on local botany. In a library I know the attendants have been asked for "Miss Wiggins in the Cabbage Patch," and the same book has been twisted into "Mrs. Wiggs's Vegetable Garden." "Jude the Obscure" was asked for by some one wishing Thomas Hardy's novel, "Jude the Obscure." A. E. Wilson's novel, "The Speckled Bird," has been enquired for as "The Speckled Hen," and also "The Speckled Cock." On a par with the experience of the Liverpool man just mentioned, was that of one embryo sportsman, who asked for "Back-

wood's Magazine," and quickly returned it when he received the staid, chocolate-covered, famous old Blackwood's! And "Public Libraries" for the month of May is authority for the statement that a high-school pupil appeared at a library recently and asked for "Graceology in a country churchyard."

Of catalogues of second-hand books there is no end. Yet I confess to a fascination in perusing these catalogues ("Got-as-a-clue," as some one has cleverly anagrammed the word), and I have a friend who finds delight marking books in such catalogues which he would like to buy but does not order. Whereby he avoids possible disagreeable consequences. I have heard of a librarian who, when ordering from a catalogue, included Archbishop Trench's book on proverbs; but, not being quite sure if the worthy cleric's subject was Solomon's wise sayings, and knowing how seldom readers call for biblical commentaries, wisely made the proviso that the bookseller was not to send the volume if it belonged to that unpopular class of literature. Piti-ful, however, are those catalogues of what are known in the book-trade as "remainders," that is, books which have proved unsuccessful or unpopular, and which the publishers dispose of in job lots, to be offered by the dealers at greatly reduced prices. With what enthusiasm perhaps did the author write his book, dreaming of the fame it was to bring, the friendships it was to create; and the result—only to find a place in one of those literary ceme-

the fiction shelves of any public library, and note the books, now never read, but which for a period more or less brief represented current literature, and enjoyed temporarily a popularity so great that their readers deemed they would prove of lasting value.

A librarian who takes an interest in his work and who knows literature ought unconsciously and without an effort to be a well-informed person; and if he loves books he need never have a moment's ennui, for he has but to open any volume and be immediately in the company of the masters. Dipping into dictionaries and other works of reference or general information even cursorily is sure to result in some information being fastened in the memory, and thus extend the knowledge and broaden the mind of the librarian; and a person thus happily endowed can be the most useful man in his community. But, alas, how many librarians there are who, when asked for bread, can only give a stone!

The Views of a Capitalist

Editor CANADIAN COURIER:

Sir,—I am for Laurier. No, don't say that. I will admit it—at least most of it. I am for Governments. I was for Whitney in Ontario, and for Gouin in Quebec. Yes, before they were elected. No, I am not always for Governments. I was against Ross.

Why shouldn't I be a Grit to-day and a Tory to-morrow? You see I am not a politician, only a business man. When you speak of the glorious traditions of the great Liberal party, or wave the flag in my face, and ask me to remember the old chieftain, Sir John A., and the National Policy, your eloquence stirs not a drop of blood in my veins. I am a business man and somehow I just can't help looking at it from a business standpoint. I've got some manufacturing interests in the East. Maybe you would call them small but they are big to me. I've got some land in the West; not much, but enough. I am not telling you this to boost myself, but simply to show you that I have a stake. Sir Wilfrid's tariff suits my factories, and his immigration policy is making my land more valuable. Possibly a sordid point of view—but it's business.

Maybe Borden would suit me as well—perhaps better—but if I am satisfied, why should I make a change? Every week I have a half-dozen good men

come to me for jobs and go away without them. Perhaps they would suit me as well as the heads of my different interests—perhaps better—but if I am satisfied with the men who are managing my affairs, you don't blame me for not making a change.

Sir Wilfrid's Government has made mistakes. Of course they have. Between the two of us, I have made a few myself, and if Borden were in power he would make some.

I am going to give Sir Wilfrid the same chance I give to the manager of one of my factories and I am going to support him until I am dead sure that I can't go wrong in making a change.

A BUSINESS MAN.



The New Toronto Public Library.
(Wickson & Gregg and A. H. Chapman, Associated Architects).

teries, a remainder catalogue.

I leave to librarians' associations and debating societies the settling of the question as to whether fiction should form part of public libraries. Goldwin Smith says somewhere that people have no more right to novels than to theatre tickets out of the taxes. But what about picture galleries, public gardens, public fountains? Besides, there is fiction and—fiction. No one will surely class the novels of Dickens, Scott, Thackeray and Stevenson, dead, and Meredith, Hardy, Hall Caine and Ralph Connor, living, with the output of some writers whose names for my own peace I shall not mention. It would astonish most persons, however, to carefully inspect