

Medal Room than the Barberini or Portland Vase, which belongs to the Duke of Portland. It was found in the early part of the seventeenth century in a sepulchral chamber a few miles from Rome. It went into the hands of the Barberini family, and then into Sir William Hamilton's, who sold it to the Duchess of Portland for 1800 guineas. Many years ago a crazy man got access to the room in which it was kept, and broke it into fragments. It was, however, so well repaired that the fractures are scarcely visible. The room in which it is now kept can be visited only by special permission.

To students of Zoology, Palæontology, Botany, etc., the collections relating to these several sciences possess many and great attractions. But to the majority of persons the principal interest centres probably in

#### THE GREAT LIBRARY,

which is supposed to be the largest in the world except, perhaps, the Imperial Library of Paris. It contains nearly a million volumes, and the rate of increase is over 20,000 volumes a year. There are few German Libraries which contain more German books, few French Libraries which contain more French books, few American Libraries which contain more American books, than are found in this one library. It is thus like London itself, which is said to number in its population more Scotchmen than are found in Edinburgh, more Irishmen than are found in Cork, and more Jews than are found in Jerusalem. In fact, it might be called a collection of libraries, many of them large and valuable, as those presented by George II. and Thomas Grenville. In the room which contains the latter, may be seen the signature of Shakespeare to the mortgage of a house in Blackfriars; Queen Elizabeth's prayer book, entirely in her own writing when Princess; the original draft of the will of Mary Queen of Scots; the original agreement between Milton and Symons the printer for the sale of the copyright of *Paradise Lost*; Nelson's unfinished letter, written on the eve of the battle of Trafalgar; and the famous Magna Charta of King John,

dated at Runnymede. A long gallery adjoining contains George III.'s library, which was handed over to the nation in 1823. It comprises upwards of 80,000 volumes, and cost about £130,000. The collection is remarkable for the discriminating choice of the editions, and for the bibliographical peculiarities and varieties of the copies. Here is a volume of the Arabic Koran, written in gold 860 years ago; the original Bull of Pope Innocent III., granting the kingdoms of England and Ireland in fee to King John and his successors; and the original Bull of Pope Leo X., conferring on Henry VIII. the title of Defender of the Faith.

In the inner quadrangle of the Museum, and reached by a long corridor, is the

#### NEW READING ROOM,

which is the finest for the purpose in the world. It is circular in plan, and is covered with a dome 140 feet in diameter, and 106 feet high. In point of diameter it is larger than any existing dome, except the Pantheon at Rome, which exceeds it by only two feet. It is constructed principally of iron, of which more than 2,000 tons were used. The quantity of glass employed in the dome was about 60,000 superficial feet.

Here good accommodation is afforded to 300 readers, each of whom has a space of 4 feet 3 inches allotted to him, with an ink-stand, a hinged desk, and a folding shelf. There are 35 reading tables, two of which are set apart for the exclusive use of ladies. Near the centre of the room are placed on shelves the catalogues of books and manuscripts contained in the library, and which readers must consult for the "press mark" before they can send for a volume. Around the walls are shelves for the reception of 85,000 volumes. Those under the gallery are filled with books of reference, about 20,000 in number, which readers may remove to their desks without any formal application. All other books must be applied for through the medium of signed tickets, which are handed to attendants, who bring the books from their shelves in the library.

Admission to read here is granted on