

*The Thomas Greenwood Library  
for Librarians at Manchester*

BY  
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## THE THOMAS GREENWOOD LIBRARY FOR LIBRARIANS AT MANCHESTER.

BY WILLIAM E. A. AXON.

MR. THOMAS GREENWOOD, whose name is deservedly held in honour for the services he has rendered by his advocacy of popular libraries as a necessary element in national education, has made a new departure by the foundation of a "Library for Librarians". The phrase might be interpreted either in a narrow or in a broadly inclusive spirit, and it is in the latter that Mr. Greenwood has worked. In a Library for Librarians there should be gathered, so far as is possible, all the literature that bears upon the knowledge of books in the past and in the present. The librarian has to deal with the physical aspect of literature and he has also to deal with its life-giving spirit. This has to be kept distinctly in view and yet is sometimes in danger of being forgotten. The Greenwood Collection has been presented to the Manchester Reference Library, but on conditions by which it will be available to librarians and to students outside of Manchester. The library at present contains more than ten thousand volumes, and the founder has made arrangements for increasing it, and also for supplying it with the bibliographical literature of the future as it appears. If we consider bibliography in the widest acceptance of the word, it has to do with all the methods by which men have recorded events and ideas since the beginning of time. The brick-libraries of Assyria and the papyrus MSS. of Egypt belong to the librarian and the bibliographer no less than the products of the Aldine, the Chiswick, or the Kelmescott press. The history of writing in all ages, the history of libraries in all ages and the history of printing in

all countries have a special interest for him. Hence Silvestre's great book on universal palæography and the publications of the Palæographical Society have a place in this Library for Librarians. But this historical side of the librarian's interest is not the only one, nor in this work-a-day world is it, perhaps, the most important. A library is, or ought to be, a sort of "universal provider" both of information and of ethical inspiration and enthusiasm. Knowledge, like faith, should produce good works. The librarian of even the smallest library has to find the answers to a hundred questions, and the man who asks about the pictures of Lionardo may be succeeded by an anxious inquirer as to the cookery of prehistoric ages and he by a student of the Russian land laws. The investigator of Buddhism may be followed by one who needs a book of practical directions as to plumbing.

To know what has been written, and especially to know what has been printed, and more particularly to know what is easily available, is the function of the librarian, and for this he needs the list of books published in all countries and on all subjects so far as these can be obtained. Consider for a moment what this means for our own literature alone. Herbert, Ames and Dibdin, the Stationers' Registers, the Term Catalogues, the long series of the English Catalogue and its predecessors stretching backward from the twentieth to the eighteenth century, the works of Lowndes, Allibone, W. C. Hazlitt, and other bibliographers make altogether, in spite of their varying value, a fine record of English authorship. In a similar fashion the literary activity of other countries can be traced through the centuries. France in particular is rich in the extent, variety and excellence of its bibliographical books. The universal catalogue seen in beatific vision by earnest bibliographers is still unaccomplished. The greatest contribution that has been made to it is the magnificent catalogue of the printed books in the British Museum. This work, unequalled in extent and excellence in the whole range of bibliographical literature, has done much to raise the standard of cataloguing. Having used it almost daily since the first section came from the

press I have had a fair opportunity of finding out both its strength and its weakness. When all deductions have been made for minor mistakes in fact, and for mistakes, or what may seem such, in method, the British Museum Catalogue is a magnificent work of which the nation may be justly proud. There is no greater collection of accurate and well-arranged bibliographical data in the world. The efforts of Graesse, Ebert, Brunet and others to deal with literature in the mass, or at least with masses of literature, are of course represented in the Greenwood Collection. Here too are the bibliographies of individual writers from Ruskin and Austin Dobson to Dante and Pushkin. An interesting feature of this section are the lists of the writings of men like Mandell Creighton who have written in periodicals and transactions many illuminating monographs on special and little-known topics. To look over the list of the books and articles of John Eglinton Bailey is like peeping into a scholar's notebook. Then there are bibliographies of special institutions—Ackworth School for instance—and the special classes or orders, such as the Quakers or the Jesuits. There are clues to the anonymous literature of various lands. Then there are long series of special bibliographies on subjects in every department of intellectual research. The writings and history of different schools of philosophy, of different religions and sects and their dogmas and creeds; many questions of political, social and national science have been explored by bibliographical experts. Another wide field in which there is still much to be done is the bibliography of literature. It is not always easy to mark off the boundaries of literary history and bibliography; they shade off into each other perhaps more readily than the other departments of intellectual activity. This is perhaps more particularly noticeable in what is sometimes called comparative literature. Thus Prof. Victor Chauvin's Arabic bibliography is the most detailed study that has been made of the history of prose fiction. Internationalism has got a surer footing in literature than in politics; no one can really understand, for instance, Byron's position without taking into account his widespread influence on continental literature. It is better wherever there is

doubt to be inclusive rather than exclusive. The bibliography of history and topography is at once extensive and interesting. In many of the counties of Great Britain something has been done to register the literature of the district, and these lists are gathered together in the Library for Librarians. Special bibliographies are increasingly important from the enormous mass of existing literature, from the rapidity with which it accumulates, and from the difficulty and sometimes the danger of the destruction of what may seem to have lost its force and usefulness. In this manner the bibliographer is the friend and helper of every serious student of every serious subject. What gratitude we owe to Poole and his successors for their efforts to make available the contents of periodical literature. Some of it, much of it, perhaps, is rubbish, but hidden away in the dust-heap are many careful scholarly articles that tell more, in a few pages, than we should extract from a long-winded folio.

It is part of a librarian's work to nourish, if not to create, a love of reading. Therefore the Library for Librarians has some shelves for treatises on the love of books, on the duties of the librarian and on the varied knowledge that the ideal booklover should possess, though the real one may sometimes not quite reach the ideal standard. Richard de Bury had predecessors and he has had successors whose words have a glow that gives a charm to their wisdom.

Catalogues of libraries great and small are an important section of the Library for Librarians. Here are the catalogues, so far as they have been printed, of the great public collections of the world, and of famous private libraries. The commercial aspect is represented by a long array of sale catalogues and booksellers' catalogues. There are materials for thought on all the problems of library management from fireproof buildings to movable shelves, indicators and scrap books. There are schemes of classification and courses of reading and plans for the better utilisation of library forces. There are books relating to all the arts and industries that go to the manufacture of books. There are also specimens of what has been done in the past and the present in beautiful bookwork. There are a few fine examples of mediæval and oriental

manuscripts, some interesting incunabula, examples of famous presses, remarkable bindings, microscopic books and other curiosities. These form a valuable and interesting section of the collection, but they only form a small section of it, for the aim of the founder has been utilitarian. He has gathered many fine copies, special copies, and presentation copies, books remarkable for rarity, for extra illustration, for fine bindings or other peculiarities, but the main intention of the Greenwood Collection is to help the librarian in all departments of his work, alike in those which relate to its material problems and in those which deal with its loftier aspects. How shall libraries be best housed, be best arranged, be best managed to serve the purpose for which they were created? How shall they be made to contribute in an ever-increasing degree to the spread of information and to the deepening of the love of literature and of learning and to their increase as forces in the life of the nation? These are the problems to the right solution of which the Greenwood Library for Librarians is an important contribution.