PUBLIC UTILIZATION OF EXISTING LIBRARIES.

AFTER about sixty years of stress and worry, inquiry and half-hearted legislation, the library system of the United Kingdom is as great a mystery to the man in the street as it was in the days when Edwards, Ewart and others tried to work up an interest in the subject. On one side we have Parliament offering a solid obstruction to the development and improvement of municipal libraries; and on the other we have educated University Extensionists, in alliance with 'Down - with - the - Rates' illiterates, denouncing them as dangerous institutions which are tending to undermine the morals of the poor. Then we have the spectacle, not to be seen even in our own colonies, of a Parliament which cannot recognize the educational value of libraries under any circumstances, unless they are connected with some department of State, or chance to be quondam-Royal institutions, which are enjoying a reversion of favour inherited from those dark ages when libraries were properly regarded as the principal elements in the apparatus of learning. The principle of state recognition of libraries of all kinds has never been seriously considered by the Legislature of the United Kingdom, and the public have been taught to look upon them as mere luxuries, not necessary in the

work of education or research. For this the feeble and permissive Acts of Parliament relating to municipal libraries are partly responsible, because it is quite conceivable that any intelligent community will regard with suspicion a power which is given with the suggestion that it may be used only if considered worth while, and which is subject to miserably hampering pecuniary restrictions.

It is not only in regard to municipal libraries that Parliament has shown itself unsympathetic. Every other variety of library is left to work out its own destiny unaided, with the result that there are enormous collections of books in every department of human knowledge, which cannot be utilized by the community at large, partly because the Government has not recognized the educational possibilities opened up by a system of subsidies to libraries conforming to certain regulations. The colonies offer an object lesson in this respect. Under certain legislative enactments, which need not now be recited, most of the British Colonial governments offer temptations and facilities to the corporate owners of semi-public libraries to give the public access to their collections of books for reference purposes, in return for an annual grant of money which is usually equal in amount to that raised by subscription. The effect of this is to place numerous libraries at the service of the citizens which would otherwise only be available to a few private members, while the funds so provided are of immense service in strengthening the stock of the institutions and improving their equipment. Other governments have recognized the utility of setting free as many

of the existing libraries as possible, and obtaining access to them for the public on terms which are mutually advantageous. The State Library Commissions of the United States have power to make arrangements akin to this, and all the collegiate, school and scientific libraries of France are aided and controlled by the State. Even without these foreign examples it is obvious that if the existing book wealth of Britain could be more effectively placed at the disposal of the public, a very powerful engine for the diffusion of knowledge would be set in action, and that at a comparatively small cost.

In the large towns of the country there are many good and valuable libraries of a general and special kind, languishing because they are neglected by their owners, and gradually becoming out of date for want of a little money with which to revise the stock and add modern books. Such libraries may represent the collections of years in some important class of literature, yet, in the majority of cases, it is quite well known, they are in a moribund condition, because neither rate-supported nor State-aided. They are, furthermore, lying idle, and thus we are confronted with the melancholy spectacle of much of the wisdom of the ages being locked up in a state of neglect for lack of the attention and oversight which a government grant could secure. The problem is how to make this great body of erudition available to the public without injustice to the interests and enjoyments of the small body of private owners. My proposal is, that in return for an annual government grant every scientific, technical, college, pro-

prietary and institutional library shall permit any reader to make reference use of its collections, on the request of any municipal, State or other subsidized library, under such conditions as may be fixed.

The effect of this simple reform would be the guidance of thousands of inquirers to the right centres for all kinds of special studies, and the utilization of library resources for the furtherance of education, which could only tend to the advancement of knowledge. For example, suppose a reader came to a municipal library wanting particular information about some obscure point in colonial history or geography which could not be afforded by the books on the subject stocked at that library. Why should not the librarian be able to give the reader a permit to visit the Colonial Office, or the Royal Colonial Institute, and there procure the information wanted? Again, a working optician wants to read up some point connected with the correction of defects of vision from the physiological point of view, or, perhaps, requires access to a large collection of different works on diseases of the eye not to be found in an ordinary municipal library. Why should he not, on the introduction of the librarian, be able to go to the library of the nearest medical or surgical society and get what he wants? There are hundreds of cases of this sort occurring daily, and if Parliament would grant a reasonable subsidy to these non-public libraries possessing special collections, there is no doubt many of them would welcome the chance of extending their usefulness, and at the same time improving and enlarging their collections

of books. The amount of subsidy I do not pretend to estimate. It might have to vary in different cases, but it seems reasonable to suppose that most of the law, medical, scientific, artistic and other special libraries would be only too glad to aid in the general work of education by throwing open their collections of books and periodicals, under the conditions already mentioned, for an annual grant of £100 or £200 towards the equipment of their libraries. Only those who have inquired for themselves can form any idea of how great is the popular ignorance of the functions and capabilities of libraries. The amateur coin collector, or photographer, or actor, or chemist, or billiard player, or botanist who indulges in ignorant declamation against municipal libraries probably never troubles to inquire if they keep books of a helpful sort dealing with his pet hobby. Such persons simply content themselves with an echo of the silly and never-ending cry about novel reading. Of the very existence of other libraries, especially those of a scientific or technical character, the average citizen is mostly ignorant, but he might become interested if he were taught that access was easy and that Parliament smiled rather than frowned on the library idea. No doubt also some indirect advantage would accrue to the collegiate and other institutions which threw open their libraries to the public, by attracting a certain proportion of the casual readers thus introduced, and so securing an entirely new recruiting ground for students.

I have prepared a brief classified list of a few of the most representative libraries of the various

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kinds indicated, and have marked with an asterisk (*) those to which the public have a right of access with the minimum of trouble or preliminary formality. From this it will be seen what a large field still remains for occupation by students and readers of all kinds. The figures given are only approximations, and must not be regarded as representing the total number of volumes in any of the libraries at the latest count.

CLASSIFIED LIST OF LIBRARIES.

* Libraries open to the public without any formality or special introduction.

UNIVERSAL.		COLLEGIATE AND SCHOOL.	
	Vols.	General.	Vols.
London, British Museum.	2,300,000	Aberdeen University.	140,000
Oxford, Bodleian Lib.	631,000	Belfast, Queen's Coll.	46,000
Cambridge, University Lib.	580,000	Cambridge Colleges, excluding	
Edinburgh, Advocates' Lib.	450,000	University Lib.	400,000
Dublin, Trinity College.	270,000	Cork, Queen's Coll.	10,000
LARGE GENERAL (over 100,000 vols.).		Durham, University.	35,000
* Manchester Public Lib.	290,000	Edinburgh, University.	215,000
* Birmingham Public.	283,000	Galway, Queen's Coll.	40,000
* Leeds Public.	227,000	Glasgow, University.	220,000
* Liverpool Public.	220,000	London Univ. Coll.	110,000
London Library.	200,000	Oxford Colleges, excluding Bod-	
Dublin, National Lib. of Ireland	150,000	leian.	600,000
* Glasgow, Mitchell Lib.	150,000	St. Andrews Univ.	120,000
* Edinburgh, Public.	135,000	<i>Special.</i>	
* Sheffield Public.	130,000	Aberystwith, Univ. Coll.	19,000
* Dundee Public.	122,000	Birmingham, Mason Coll.	30,000
* Newcastle Public.	122,000	Cardiff, S. Wales Coll.	7,000
* London, Guildhall.	120,000	Cheltenham Coll.	10,000
* Bristol Public.	115,000	Egham, Royal Holloway Coll.	6,000
* Westminster Public.	107,000	Glasgow, Anderson's Coll.	16,000
* Bradford Public.	106,000	Godalming, Charterhouse.	12,000
Liverpool Lyceum.	100,000	Harrow, Vaughan Lib.	12,000
London Institution.	100,000	Liverpool, Univ. Coll.	35,000
* Nottingham Public.	100,000	London, King's Coll.	30,000
Edinburgh, Signet.	100,000	Manchester, Owens' Coll.	60,000
* Bolton Public.	100,000	Marlborough Coll.	8,500
SMALL GENERAL (under 100,000).		SCIENCE.	
All municipal (about 400 in all), sub-		<i>General.</i>	
scription, proprietary, and other libraries		London, Royal Soc.	80,000
with fewer than 100,000 vols. of a general			
character, including special libraries like the			
Chetham and John Rylands of Manchester.			

EXISTING LIBRARIES.

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	Vols.
London, S. Kensington Science Lib.	50,000
Edinburgh, Museum.	19,000
— Royal Society.	17,000
Glasgow, Philosophical Soc.	15,000

Anthropology.

London, Anthropological Inst.	4,500
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Zoology.

London, British Museum, Natural History.	73,000
— Zoological Soc.	23,000
— Entomological Soc.	5,000

Botany.

London, Linnean Soc.	50,000
Kew, Royal Botanic Lib.	17,000

Geology.

London, Museum of Pract. Geol.	30,000
— Geological Soc.	17,000
Edinburgh, Geological Soc.	2,500
Manchester, Geological Soc.	2,000

Chemistry.

London, Chemical Soc.	18,000
— Pharmaceutical Soc.	15,000

Physics and Physiography.

London, Meteorological Office.	14,000
Edinburgh, Royal Physical Soc.	11,000

Astronomy.

London, Royal Astronomical Soc.	10,000
— Royal Observatory, Greenwich.	7,000

USEFUL ARTS.

General.

*London, Patent Office.	90,000
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Medicine and Surgery.

Aberdeen, Medico-Chirurgical Soc.	6,500
Birmingham, Medical Inst.	13,000
Dublin, Royal Coll. Physicians.	6,000
— Royal Coll. of Surgeons.	30,000
Edinburgh, Royal Coll. of Physicians.	50,000
— Roy. Coll. of Surgeons.	10,000
— Royal Medical Soc.	30,000
Glasgow, Faculty of Physicians.	50,000
Liverpool, Medical Inst.	11,000
London, Guy's Hospital.	7,000
— Medical Soc.	13,000
— Obstetrical Soc.	5,300
— Royal Coll. of Physicians.	20,000
— Royal Coll. of Surgeons.	56,000

	Vols.
London, Roy. Med. and Chirg. Soc.	45,000
— St. Bartholomew's Hosp.	13,000
Manchester, Medical Soc.	32,000

Engineering.

London, Inst. of Civil Eng.	40,000
— Inst. of Electrical Eng.	100,000
— Iron and Steel Inst.	4,000
— Soc. of Telegraph Eng.	4,000

Naval and Military.

London, Admiralty Lib.	40,000
— War Office.	26,000
— Royal Military Academy.	14,000
— Royal Naval Academy.	7,000
— Royal United Service Inst.	26,000

Gardening.

London, Royal Horticultural Soc.	3,000
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FINE ARTS.

Architecture.

London, Architectural Assoc.	2,000
— Royal Inst. of Brit. Arch.	12,000

Painting, etc.

London, So. Kensington Art Lib.	95,000
— Royal Acad. of Arts.	6,000
Edinburgh, Royal Scottish Acad.	2,000
London, Royal Acad. of Music.	4,000
— Royal Coll. of Music.	7,000

SOCIAL SCIENCE AND LAW.

Law.

Aberdeen, Advocates.	8,000
Birmingham, Law Soc.	12,000
Bristol, Law Soc.	8,000
Dublin, King's Inns.	60,000
Edinburgh, Solicitors' Lib.	14,000
Glasgow, Faculty of Procurators.	18,000
Leicester, Law Soc.	2,000
Liverpool, Law Soc.	7,000
London, Gray's Inn.	16,000
— Home Office Lib.	8,000
— Incorporated Law Soc.	38,000
— Inner Temple.	58,000
— Inns of Court, Bar Lib.	15,000
— Lincoln's Inn.	72,000
— Middle Temple.	40,000
Manchester, Law Soc.	10,000

Friendly Societies.

London, Freemason's Lib.	7,000
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Education.

London, Teachers' Guild.	9,000
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<i>Statistics.</i>			
	Vols.		Vols.
London, Royal Statistical Soc.	30,000	London, Lambeth Palace.	40,000
<i>Economics.</i>		— New College.	40,000
London, School of Economics.	15,000	— Religious Tract Soc.	12,000
<i>THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY.</i>		— Sion Coll.	60,000
<i>Cathedral Libraries.</i>		— Soc. of Biblical Archaeology.	2,500
Durham.	20,000	— Theological Soc.	5,000
Ely.	9,000	— Williams' Library.	40,000
Exeter.	8,000	Manchester, Lancashire Indep.	
Lichfield.	6,000	Coll.	15,000
Lincoln.	7,000	Maynooth Coll.	58,000
London, St. Paul's.	20,000	Stonyhurst Coll.	60,000
— Westminster Abbey.	12,000	<i>HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY.</i>	
Ripon.	6,000	Edinburgh, Royal Scottish Geog.	
Salisbury.	5,200	Soc.	7,000
Truro.	16,000	Soc. of Antiquaries.	9,000
Winchester.	4,000	London, Colonial Office.	14,000
Worcester.	3,000	— Foreign Office.	75,000
York.	20,000	— India Office.	60,000
<i>Theological Colleges, etc.</i>		— Japan Soc.	2,000
Aberdeen, Free Church.	17,000	— Numismatic Soc.	2,500
Bristol, Baptist Coll.	20,000	— Royal Archaeological Inst.	4,000
Cashel, Diocesan Lib.	16,000	— Royal Asiatic Soc.	15,000
Edinburgh, New Coll.	43,000	— Royal Colonial Inst.	40,000
Oscott Coll.	36,000	— Royal Geographical Soc.	36,000
Fort Augustus, St. Benedict's		— Royal Historical Society.	4,000
Abbey.	20,000	— Soc. of Antiquaries.	42,000
Glasgow, Free Church.	25,000	<i>LITERATURE AND BIBLIOGRAPHY.</i>	
Hawarden, St. Deiniol's Lib.	33,000	Kilmarnock, Burns Lib.	1,000
London, Allan Lib.	18,000	London, Garrick Club.	—
— Baptist Coll.	13,000	— Royal Soc. of Literature.	8,000
— Brit. and For. Bible Soc.	11,000	— St. Bride Foundation Inst.	10,000
— Church House.	15,000	Stratford-on-Avon, Shakespeare	
— Congregational Lib.	14,000	Memorial Lib.	10,000

The five libraries in this list which I have complimented with the heading 'Universal' of course deserve the epithet only in virtue of (what should be) their ideals. Of these they fall short not only by some hundreds of thousands of volumes, but also in many points of administration. Even the British Museum, though it provides splendid accommodation for the comparatively small body of literary worthies who make daily use of it, is far less popularly useful than it would be were it more

liberally supplied with funds and furnished with additional reading-rooms for periodicals, reference books, etc., administered by a staff trained on municipal-library rather than Museum lines. What is true of the British Museum is yet more strikingly true of the other libraries which enjoy the privilege of obtaining gifts of books under the Copyright Acts, and give absolutely nothing in return, either to publishers or public. It is quite certain that none of the library resources of the United Kingdom will ever be effectively utilized till Parliament steps in and frees existing institutions from the disabilities under which most of them labour. We have State libraries which are understaffed and poorly financed; State-aided libraries which keep the general public at arm's length in the selfish interests of their private members; municipal libraries which are starved by the government which called them into being; and, as I have shown, a large and valuable array of private and semi-private libraries which could, in many cases, be utilized by the general public if Parliament gave the necessary assistance. Here then is a starting-point for the revision and utilization of the library service of the whole kingdom. Let those educationists whose ideal is the fusing of all existing educational facilities into one harmonious whole apply themselves to this problem, and devise a practicable method of utilizing *all* the libraries of the country to serve as the apparatus of education in all its branches. If books can be made to the general public what they are to the lawyer, the doctor and the clergyman, there will be little
7 need to fear the industrial or literary invasions of

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foreigners, or to bewail the growth of that spirit of vulgar and illiterate bounce which is said to exist because British education stops at the door of the Board School.

JAMES DUFF BROWN.