SUBSIDISED INDEXING.

WISH you would add an index rerum,' wrote Samuel Johnson to Richardson, 'that when the reader recollects any incident he may easily find it, which at present he cannot do, unless he knows in which volume it is told; for "Clarissa" is not a performance to be read with eagerness and laid aside for ever; but will be occasionally consulted by the busy, the aged, and the studious, and therefore I beg that this edition, by which I suppose posterity is to abide, may want nothing that can facilitate its use.'

If ever a novel needed indexing, Richardson's portentous masterpiece was the one! Novel though 'Clarissa Harlowe' was, Johnson used it to strike the note of the counsel of perfection in indexing. If such a production was to be regarded as a work of reference for the 'busy, the aged, and the studious,' what a world of care should have been bestowed on the indexes of subsequent books of travel, history, biography, and the like.

Johnson's counsel, nevertheless, has fallen flat, for indexing is one of those pursuits in which every man has done that which seemed right in his own eyes; in other words, methods of compilation have run on wholly unscientific lines. Many valuable treatises have been issued from the press without

an index at all. Numerous indexes are made which are indexes to one thing only, namely, a total lack of knowledge of words on the part of the compiler.

A low standard of work blunts popular criticism. If daubs, instead of true representations of men and things were shown in our picture galleries, who would be capable of just appreciation of a highly finished painting? It is the same with indexing. There is so much bad work in existence that good work appeals only to the small minority.

A very strong case in point may be found in the recent lapse in the publication of the 'Review of Reviews Index to Periodicals.' For twelve years this valuable work was the chief means of annually ascertaining all the best that had been written in journals and magazines the world over. From the point of view of internal arrangement of entries it left much to be desired, but in its bibliographical aspect it was practically perfect. 'Poole's Index,' to give that equally well-known production its first and more familiar title, suffered in comparison from the fact that its contents, and those of its successive supplements issued under the editorship of Mr. W. I. Fletcher, covered not one but many years. The advantage to the British compilation of being issued annually was obvious.

As the 'Review of Reviews Index' gradually increased in size, volume by volume, the price was raised from five to fifteen shillings (\$1.20 to \$3.60) annually. Virtue and usefulness are sometimes their sole reward, and this was sadly true of the 'Review of Reviews Index.' So long as the yearly volume

was small and the price was low, librarians and journalists were willing to pay what was asked of them. As the compilation gradually enlarged in bulk till it finally became necessary to treble the price, subscribers dropped off in increasing numbers. Yet this was bad commercial and social economy. It only needed a little self-denial on the part of institutions and individuals to meet the larger subscription in return for greater value to be received in an increased number of references and subject-headings. The libraries could have done without an useless novel or two per annum; individuals could have foregone some equally needless personal expense.

It seems clear, however, that what may be called a national undertaking, produced annually at a heavy cost, needs for its support something more stable than the goodwill of a more or less literary public.

Up to the 30th November, 1902, Mr. Carnegie's gifts to libraries and other educational institutions were estimated as follows:

England and Wales	£376,100
Ireland	£100,600
Scotland	£2,479,250
Canada	\$954,000
Cuba	\$252,000
United States	\$212,882,173 ¹

The conditions of these donations have generally been of a stringent nature, the application of the gifts being limited to the purchase of the site or building of the libraries, or both. In the case of

¹ 'Library,' 2nd ser., 1903, iv. 103-112.

educational institutions more latitude has been allowed. Consequently, a portion of one of these donations has been turned to account in the very direction I have been advocating. In 1902, Mr. Carnegie gave \$10,000,000 to found the Carnegie Institution in Washington, for the encouragement of investigation, research, and discovery. For the last twenty-five years members of the medical profession, and of vocations nearly allied to it, have had the advantage of the publication of the 'Index Medicus.' The plan of this compilation has been consistent throughout its career. It has been issued every month in the form of a classified catalogue of medical and scientific papers in every language, concluding with an exhaustive author and subject index for the year's record. Twice has this undertaking been dropped, in 1884 and again in 1899, owing to want of financial support, this being largely due to defaulting subscribers. It was restarted for the third time in 1903, through the generosity of the Carnegie Institution at Washington, who decided to devote \$10,000 (or upwards of £2,000) per annum for three years to the expenses of compilation and publication of the 'Index.' This amount the Institution has decided to continue indefinitely, provided sufficient interest be shown in the enterprise.

There is yet another instance of the way in which Mr. Carnegie's 'institutional,' as opposed to strictly library, donations have been turned to similar good purpose. At the recent St. Louis Conference, Mr. R. R. Bowker, the editor of the 'Library Journal,' stated that Mr. Carnegie's endowment of the pub-

lishing board of the American Library Association with a fund of \$100,000 had enabled the Association to carry out with a free hand much useful bibliographical and indexing work, foremost among such undertakings being the 'Literature of American History.'¹ This particular venture, it is well known, has been further aided by the generous gift of \$10,000 from its originator, Mr. George Iles.

Now, if all this has been done in America, is it not possible to arouse a similar interest in indexing work in Great Britain? If subsidies are voted to those who guide and control the actual and material ships of commerce, surely the directors of such a ship of knowledge as the 'Review of Reviews Index' is, are entitled to some state aid or munificent private endowment. The capital element of value in a work of reference like this, whether in the direction of art, science and letters, consists in the fact that it is a help towards finding out what has already been said. I have no 'Review of Reviews Index' for the last year or two to consult, owing to its discontinuance. It is impossible, therefore, to tell whether the following proposal, which I now make, has been mooted in the press, and I must therefore call it original, with this reservation. This is an age of great combinations whether in commercial or journalistic undertakings. Would it not be feasible to unite Poole's (or the A. L. A. Index, as it is now called) in one great annual publication with the 'Review of Reviews Index'? It would be a great advantage if Poole's were brought out annually instead of, as hitherto, in supplements

¹ 'Library Journal,' 1904, xxix, 124.

extending over several years' literature. At the same time it were surely waste of labour that two great indexing undertakings should be doing practically the same work.

The great value of Poole's Index lies in the concise arrangement of the sub-entries under the subject-headings. It is possible almost at a moment's glance to find an article on any given division of a subject, or on something akin to it, by means of the ingeniously devised alphabetical arrangement planned by the editors. But its one defect lies in the absence of author-entries. There are many searchers and reference makers who want to know what a particular writer has produced over a given period, and here Poole's Index will not help them. It is just at this point that the 'Review of Reviews Index' steps in so usefully. Though the compilers did not pretend to make annual lists of the productions of every periodical writer, nearly all such authors of importance—and this not to the exclusion of lesser known names—have had their articles recorded in the various issues. What appear to be complete lists of the occasional writings of Mr. Andrew Lang, Mr. Austin Dobson, and Mr. Edmund Gosse for the year 1901, are to be found in that issue.

As I have already pointed out elsewhere, the attempted relative arrangement of entries under subjects in the 'Review of Reviews Index,' does not much help a searcher with little time to spare. But if the united Index I have proposed combined the special excellences of both works, the result would be indeed valuable.

A final word as to ways and means. The time is over for relying on subscriptions to cover the cost of such laborious work, and its publication. If dependent on such chance aid, sooner or later the undertaking collapses.

There are other multi-millionaires, besides Mr. Carnegie, who are not employing any portion of their wealth half so usefully as he. If but one of them can be induced to serve indexes as he has served libraries, the whole situation of the indexing world will be altered for the better.

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