

THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION AT GLASGOW.

THE Library Association held its annual conference this year for the second time in Glasgow, under the most favourable auspices, a joint invitation to revisit the city having been given by the Lord Provost and the Corporation, the authorities of the University of Glasgow and of other colleges, and the Boards of the different Libraries. The local Reception Committee embraced representatives from all these bodies and institutions. In addition to the welcome assured to the Association by such a strong combination, two other factors contributed to make the meetings unusually successful; the choice of Mr. Francis Thornton Barrett, the Glasgow City Librarian, as President, and the ceremony of laying the memorial stone of the new Mitchell Library by Mr. Andrew Carnegie on the opening day of the Conference.

The meetings were held in a fine suite of rooms belonging to the Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts. In the lower galleries of the Institute an exhibition of the work of the late Arthur Melville, R.W.S., A.R.S.A., was being held, and this exhibition Mrs. Melville kindly invited the members of the Conference to visit at their pleasure.

The preliminary routine business having been dis-

charged, the new President was gracefully inducted by Sir W. H. Bailey, the retiring President. Mr. Barrett is the first librarian of a Free Public Library to occupy the presidential chair, and partly on this account, but still more by reason of his well-known qualities of head and heart, he was greeted warmly by the Association.

The Lord Provost and the Corporation had formally welcomed the Association the evening before at a reception held in the civic buildings. When, therefore, the Lord Provost (William Bilsland, Esq., LL.D.) entered the Conference room accompanied by Mr. Carnegie, he at once introduced Mr. Carnegie with a few words, remarking that librarians had no better friend. To many present, who had experience of Mr. Carnegie's gifts, and now saw the donor for the first time, it was a moment of great interest. The address by Mr. Carnegie was packed full of sympathetic appreciation of the work of libraries and librarians, and the short, clear sentences were delivered with a feeling which showed that he spoke from conviction. Many, he said, thought with Dogberry that librarianship, like reading and writing, came by nature. The rapid spread of public libraries, maintained by taxation, wherever our tongue was spoken, *and nowhere else*, for this was peculiarly a race institution, very soon revealed the necessity of a new profession. He referred to the efforts made, especially in America, to place the education and training of librarians on a sound basis. Given a real librarian the future success of a library was certain; given a poor one, it was destined to a future only—to put it mildly—

respectable, and the difference between an active, go-ahead, vivifying library and a respectable one was the difference between a live and a smoky coal. The librarian should rank with the university professor, the minister, and the physician. Confidential, intimate, and solacing as were the positions of both doctor of the soul and doctor of the body, when the proper men arose in the community to fill the posts, the librarian should rank as a third co-operating source of blessing; as leading the masses of the people in the true path, teaching them how to live this life well, and make more of a heaven here and now, on earth, where all our duties lie. Mr. Carnegie then referred to the President, and to Mr. MacLauchlan, the librarian of Dundee, as instances of the type of men he had in mind, and in conclusion said, 'Guard well your profession, and raise it high. Consecrate yourselves to your mission, for it is noble.'

The new President, in his address, reviewed briefly the events of the library year. The number of communities now supporting public libraries is about 600, the number of separate libraries about 1,000. The extension of the library system to the rural districts has barely been begun. The state of Massachusetts, with a population just over three millions, has seven hundred public libraries, while the United Kingdom has only about a thousand public libraries for a population of over forty millions. Referring to the difficult problem of the betting news in newspapers attracting betting men to the Reading Rooms, the President suggested that the Institute of Journalists might consider whether

by conjoint action the publication of such news might be lessened or abolished. After a note on the composition of title-pages, their uninforming, often misleading character, he dealt with the relation of the library to the community, and concluded his brief but admirable address with these impressive words:

Speaking as one whose life has been spent in the service of public libraries, and speaking in the presence of the man who has extended the benefits of libraries to countless thousands of every age and class, I would say to my fellow-members, whether they are entering on their course, or like myself approaching its termination, that the work we are engaged in is a good work; that in the inevitable extension of communal operations the libraries will be more and more extended and developed, and will come to be more and more regarded as helpers in all good causes. May we be enabled in some small measure to carry forward that development, to render that help more effective. Then we may hope to have at our credit in the book of universal account some modest record of worthy service worthily performed.

Two of the papers included in the programme of the first session, 'Notes on Glasgow Libraries,' and 'The organization of the Glasgow District Libraries,' were printed for circulation among members, and were therefore not read at the meeting. The third paper was by Mr. H. R. Tedder, Librarian and Secretary of the Athenæum Club, London, 'The Librarian in his relations with Books.' Mr. Tedder dealt in a humorous manner with the dangers of modern theories of advanced librarianship, as expounded by over-enthusiastic librarians.

We find, he said, a tendency not to bring the librarians into closer contact with books, but rather to take him away from them. It was only when he came into direct association with books that a librarian could claim to belong to one of the liberal professions. The librarian of the future would be equipped with so many technical appliances, that, with a little care on his part, he need never even see a book. The craving for uniformity was not a sign of evolution but of degeneracy. It was a kind of mental socialism. It is impossible in a brief summary to bring out the humour and the usefulness of Mr. Tedder's paper. He, no doubt, over-coloured the picture in order to drive home his lesson, or one would be inclined to break a lance with him, and say that to a librarian whose dealings are wholly with scholarly and leisured readers much is possible which under different conditions cannot be attained. But I am not inclined to argue matters with Mr. Tedder, because his paper was designed to check over-zeal for mechanical appliances, and to point out that intellectual competency must not be overlooked.

At the conclusion of the reading of Mr. Tedder's paper the Conference rose, and the members proceeded to the site of the new Mitchell Library to witness the laying of the memorial stone. The Public Libraries of Glasgow are of quite recent origin, and will be referred to later. A series of libraries public in character, and in most cases free, were, however, in existence before the adoption of a scheme of rate-supported libraries. The oldest of these, Stirling's and Glasgow Public

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Library, was founded in 1791 by Walter Stirling, a merchant and magistrate of the city, and was the earliest library in Scotland to which the public had a right of free access. Baillie's Institution owes its origin to George Baillie, who, in 1863, placed a sum of £18,000 in trust to accumulate for twenty-one years, after which it was to be used for the erection and endowment of one or more free public libraries. At the expiration of the assigned period the fund, amounting to £36,000, was used to establish a free reference library. The same desire to benefit the citizens which moved Mr. Stirling and Mr. Baillie, led Mr. Stephen Mitchell, the head of a large tobacco manufacturing business, to bequeath the residue of his estate, amounting to £66,998 10s. 6d., to 'form the nucleus of a fund for the establishment and endowment of a large public library in Glasgow with all the modern accessories connected therewith.' The sum was to remain at interest until it amounted to at least £70,000. Mr. Mitchell died in 1874, and two years later the conditions attached to the fund were fulfilled. The library was opened as a reference library only, in temporary premises, in 1877, with 14,432 volumes. In 1891 it had grown to 89,000 volumes, and was transferred to a larger building. At the present time it contains over 170,000 volumes, and further provision for the storage of this valuable collection and space for its numerous readers is being provided in a new building carefully planned and designed, estimated to cost £52,000. The noble example of Mr. Mitchell has encouraged other generous benefactions. The late

Bailie James Moir left to the Mitchell Library 3,000 volumes, and the residue of his estate, £11,500, to be applied in the purchase of books. Still more recently the late Mr. Robert Jeffery bequeathed a choice and costly collection of books, stored for the present in temporary quarters. This collection, containing the most valuable monographs and raria in Natural History (especially ornithology), archaeology, and art, all in the choicest condition and superbly bound, will have a room to itself in the new building.

The stone-laying ceremony was impressive and commendably brief. It was followed by a luncheon to over 500 guests, given by the Lord Provost in the fine banqueting hall at the City Chambers.

Work was resumed at an evening session beginning at 8 p.m., when Mr. Samuel Smith, City Librarian, Sheffield, read a brief but interesting paper on a scheme in operation at Sheffield, whereby, for a payment of £35 per annum, 100 volumes at a time are obtained on loan from one of the large subscription libraries, and circulated amongst the readers through the central and branch lending libraries. This method was said to attract to the libraries readers of high class books, and to be very successful. Mr. Smith was followed by Mr. Cyril Davenport, of the British Museum, with one of his lantern lectures, which have become a valuable feature of the Conferences. Mr. Davenport chose as his subject this year, 'English and Scottish heraldry on books.' By the aid of an admirable series of lantern slides, coloured by his own hand, he made the subject both interesting and instruc-

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tive. Modern paper was next treated, also with the aid of the lantern, by Mr. R. W. Sindall, F.C.S., analyst and paper expert, London, the author of a valuable book on the subject.¹ Mr. Sindall dealt more especially with modern printing papers, and the consequences of the demand for cheapness without regard for quality. The enormous increase in the consumption of paper is shown by the figures quoted as to production in England, the quantities being:

1800.	11,000 tons.
1850.	63,000 „
1900.	651,000 „

Formerly paper was made almost entirely from rags. The rapid increase of production in books, magazines, and newspapers, and the development of photo-mechanical processes of illustrating have brought about a complete revolution in the paper-making industry. The quality and constitution of paper has of necessity been varied to meet these conditions, and also to satisfy the often unreasonable demand for something cheaper, until, as the lecturer pithily put it, 'possibly the skill of the paper-maker in manufacturing a novelty which looks like paper, feels like paper, and sells like paper may account for some of the stuff that goes to make a book.' That the outcry about the deterioration of paper is well-founded was clearly

¹ 'Paper Technology,' a book for people who use paper, by R. W. Sindall. Office of the 'World's Paper Review,' 38, Shoe Lane, E. C. 121. 6d. net.

shown. The use of mechanical wood pulp for paper-making is especially bad, partly because the fibres are short and break easily, and partly because of the presence of resinous and non-fibrous constituents which set up rapid decay. Mechanical wood-pulp enters largely into the composition of the cheaper kinds of news and common printing papers. The large majority of printing papers are made from chemical wood-pulp mixed with esparto, while the modern 'art' paper owes its shiny surface to a coating of china clay or similar mineral matter. The light spongy papers so much used to 'bulk' books were carefully described. The following note from the printed *précis* of the lecture explains this part of the subject clearly:

'Many modern books are printed on paper which is very light and bulky, and as such books are pleasant to handle this paper is freely used. The book will not, however, stand the wear and tear of daily use in a public library, for reasons which it will be easy to appreciate. The paper is made from esparto, or from a mixture of esparto and wood pulp, its peculiar characteristics being imparted by special treatment. The material is beaten quickly so as to give a spongy pulp, and the wet sheet of paper passing over the paper machine is pressed very lightly, and dried cautiously. The dry paper is not polished or glazed. The result is a sheet of paper in which the fibres are not compressed closely together, or felted, to use a technical term. In fact, the nice-looking sheet is nearly all air space. The composition of such a paper expressed in terms of volume may be:

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Fibre . . .	28·0
Air space . . .	71·3
Loading . . .	0·7
	<hr/>
	100·0

‘The analysis of the sheet by ordinary methods proved this to be an esparto paper containing 10 per cent. of chemical wood pulp, and 4 per cent. of loading expressed in terms by weight. It is not surprising that a paper containing such a large proportion of air space, and showing the lack of cohesion of fibres, is easily torn, and that in the process of rebinding, the pages of a book are readily split and broken. The disintegration of paper of this kind is obviously to be accounted for by a consideration of physical defects, and not chemical impurities.’

The lecturer made his demonstrations so ably that the causes of decay and discolouration, and the difficulties of binding were obvious. It was apparent that no binder can sew a book made from paper containing 71·3 per cent. of air space, nor can he put stitches which will hold china clay together. ‘Paper-makers can still produce printing paper of high quality, and with every assurance of durability, provided the publisher is willing to pay a reasonable price, and is not too anxious to utilize eccentric substances misnamed paper.’ Mr. Sindall’s remarks and demonstrations were followed with the keenest interest. He showed that the fears for the durability of the books of to-day are based on facts. Unless we can return to saner methods the

problem of preserving our literature from decay will become serious.

Late though it was when the Conference closed on the previous evening, there was a good attendance when the proceedings commenced on Wednesday morning. 'New proposals in regard to Public Libraries by the National Home Reading Union,' was the somewhat unwieldy title of the paper submitted by Dr. J. B. Paton, of Nottingham, Hon. Sec. of the Home Reading Union, and Mr. L. S. Jast, of Croydon, Hon. Sec. of the Library Association. Briefly the proposals were to bring the Reading Union and the Libraries into closer relations, and to embark on a monthly journal to be called the 'Reader's Review,' to be localized for different libraries, with an inset of local library news, book lists, and other matter. The proposals met with approval at first, but a vein of hostile criticism was struck later, and met with support which looked like rejecting the proposals. A fair and lucid reply to most of the objections raised had the effect of bringing the meeting back to the first position, and a resolution approving the proposals for closer relations with the Home Reading Union, and the suggested magazine was carried by a small majority. It is unfortunate that distrust of the Union should prevail in some minds. Closer co-operation upon the lines now agreed upon should quickly dispel all fears.

Mr. Fovargue, Town Clerk of Eastbourne, and Hon. Solicitor of the Association, read a practical paper upon the liability of public libraries to be assessed for rates and taxes. Some years ago it was

settled that a public library is a literary and scientific institution; and therefore exempt. Recently, however, efforts have been made by rating authorities to break away from this decision, and the matter has again become urgent. A clause in the Public Libraries Amendment Bill, introduced last year by Mr. H. J. Tennant, M.P., would dispose of the question finally, but until that Bill passes the uncertainty will continue, and some libraries have to pay in rates and taxes an appreciable amount out of their limited incomes. A resolution requesting the Council to collect information as to the assessment of libraries, and to consider the desirability of taking a case to the Court of Appeal, and, if necessary, to the House of Lords, was carried unanimously.

This concluded the reading of papers, but the programme of work was by no means exhausted. A discussion on the net book question, initiated by Councillor Abbott, of the Manchester Libraries Committee, and Mr. Doubleday, of the Hampstead Libraries, led to a useful interchange of views on this difficult and vexed question. During the discussion Mr. Hansen, a member of the staff of the Library of Congress, Washington, was introduced to the meeting, and dealt with the relations between public libraries and publishers in the United States. A series of brief reports on the work of the different Committees of the Association were submitted, and though relegated to the end of the proceedings, proved to be of great practical value. At future Conferences these reports should occupy a more prominent place, and even take precedence of the reading of papers.

The position with regard to the Libraries Amendment Bill was ably stated by Councillor Abbott, and it would appear that there was every hope of the Bill passing if it could only get a favourable chance. A vote of thanks to Mr. Tennant, for his valuable help in promoting the Bill, was passed by acclamation.

Mr. Tedder reported on the excellent work done in relation to the Education department of the London County Council, and Mr. Baker, Librarian of Woolwich, on the work of the Education Committee in the classes and examinations for library assistants. Mr. E. Wyndham Hulme, Librarian of the Patent Office Library, brought up a further report of the Sound Leather Committee; and Mr. John Minto, Librarian of the Signet Library, Edinburgh, jointly with Mr. Hansen, reported on the catalogue rules. A joint code of rules for the United States and Great Britain has now virtually been agreed upon. Mr. Hansen is the Chairman of the Committee on Catalogue Rules appointed by the American Association, and attended the Glasgow Conference for the purpose of finally discussing and agreeing upon the rules, and practically this stage has been reached. The report of the Publications Committee was given by Mr. Henry Bond, Librarian of St. Pancras, the chief item dealt with being the 'Class List of Best Books and Annual of Bibliography, 1906-7.'¹ This list, begun some years ago in the 'Library Record,' is now issued separately for the third time, and forms an

¹ London, published for the Library Association by the Library Supply Co., 181, Queen Victoria St., E.C. Price 1s. 6d. net.

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invaluable compendium of the chief books in every subject issued in the course of a year. Under the general editorship of Mr. Henry V. Hopwood, of the Patent Office Library (to whom a cordial vote of thanks was passed), a group of some twenty contributors dealt with the best books of 1906-7, classified under subjects, and with a good index. It is a list which ought to be in the hands of every member of a library committee, and every librarian and sub-librarian, while for book buyers of all classes it is a valuable guide.

A visit to the University, where the members were received by Professor Latta, Dr. Murray, and other officers of the University, gave an opportunity of seeing the fine buildings, and also the University Library, the Hunterian Library and Museum, and other points of interest. Soon after the resuscitation of the University in 1577 the Library began to attract gifts to supplement its purchases, notably a donation of twenty volumes made about this time by the great humanist, George Buchanan. Nineteen of these volumes are still in the Library, a fact of which the authorities are justly proud. The Library formerly enjoyed the privilege of receiving a free copy of each work entered at Stationers' Hall, a right surrendered for an annual payment of £707. The total stock is about 200,000 volumes and 550 manuscripts. A catalogue of the manuscripts is in the press. There are a dozen Caxtons, and many examples of Wynkyn de Worde, Pynson, and Julian Notary; the first and second folios and several of the quartos of Shakespeare, and many examples of early Scottish printing.

An afternoon was given up to visits to the rate-supported District Libraries established by the Corporation. The Corporation took special powers with regard to libraries in a local Act passed in 1899. The rate limit of a penny is retained. A central reference library being already provided under the Mitchell Trust, the Corporation decided upon a series of district libraries for lending purposes, with reading rooms attached. There is no central lending library, but the selection of books for the district libraries is made with a view to affording a wide choice, taking the libraries as a whole. The system is linked up by telephone and travelling messengers, and books are transferred from one library to another daily to meet the requirements of readers. The result is that a reader may draw, through the library nearest to him, upon the whole stock. The entire scheme embraces sixteen of these district libraries, fourteen of which are now in operation. A gift of £100,000 made by Mr. Carnegie has enabled the Corporation to erect excellent buildings, while the rate provides adequately for the upkeep. Special provision for children is made in each library. The difficulties with the children's rooms in some districts are considerable, and will require long and patient effort to overcome. They arise from the conditions of child life in Glasgow, conditions which call loudly for this and other efforts at amelioration.

The organization and supervision of these district libraries is very good. I spent an evening as well as an afternoon in examining the system, in order to see the work in full swing, and a fine sight it was.

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A classified card catalogue of each library is kept in the building, and a combined classified card catalogue of all the libraries at the central organizing depôt. If a reader cannot be met by the stock of a library, a telephone message to the central depôt will bring information from the combined catalogue as to the whereabouts of the book required; a second telephone message will arrange for its transfer to the library whence the call arises.

At the annual dinner of the Association the Lord Provost, and other local gentlemen, were the guests of the Association, and the proceedings included a presentation to Mr. H. D. Roberts, Librarian of Brighton, who for ten years rendered good service as Hon. Sec. of the Education Committee. The final day of the Conference was given up to an excursion—train, steamer, and coach—up the Kyles of Bute, a visit to Mountstuart, the seat of the Marquess of Bute, and to Rothesay.

I think it is not too much to say that the thirtieth annual Conference will stand out as one of the pleasantest and most successful yet held, and that all the members who attended came away with the kindest recollections of our hosts, who missed no chance of adding to our comfort.

JOHN BALLINGER.

* * * Since the above article was written I have heard with sorrow of the death of Mr. John MacLauchlan, Librarian of Dundee, referred to on page 423. He took cold during the Conference; a previous illness had weakened his constitution, and he died in Glasgow on the 1st October. He was a man of rare parts, and will be much missed in Dundee, and also by a large circle of friends.