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The Bodleian Library

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THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY

(Address delivered by Bodley's Librarian, Dr. H. H. E. Craster, before the Friends of the Library of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, September 27, 1934.)

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am under obligation to your Librarian for the opportunity which he has afforded to me of meeting your society, and desire to make use of it by saying a few words to you about the Bodleian Library at Oxford of which I have the honour to be Librarian, and the activities of a Society, analogous to your own, which we name the Friends of the Bodleian.

The Bodleian is the library of a great University. It is one of the oldest libraries in the world. It is a national library and the second in size in the British Empire. It is a home of learning and research. I will speak briefly about it under each of these heads.

The University of Oxford needs no introduction to such an audience as this. Oxford has struck its roots so deep in the cultural history of England, which is also your history, that it forms an element—indestructible, even if unfelt—in our common civilisation. One does not need to have seen its spires and towers in their magic setting of remote mediævalism and perennial youth, to realise its potent spell. The Bodleian, which takes its name from its second founder, Sir Thomas Bodley, is the library of that University, the pulsing heart in a great body of learning.

But though it is a University library, endowed by the University until recently without any subvention from the State, it is also a public library. In its early days it was commonly called the Library of the University of Oxford, but even more frequently it was styled the Public Library at Oxford. Its doors have always been open throughout the year to all persons in pursuit of learning, and admit scholars not merely from Oxford or from England but from all parts of Europe and of America. Terms end and Colleges are closed, but readers pursue their studies within its walls in the dead of the Vacation. Enter its Old Reading Room in July, August, or September, that room which bears the name of its first founder, Duke Humphrey; walk down its alley beneath its famous painted roof, and look on either side into the alcoves which still shelve the ancient folios set there by

Sir Thomas Bodley, and you will find that many of the readers seated there have come from overseas; that perhaps not one half are members of the University of Oxford.

Perhaps one of the things that will most strike with surprise the American visitor to Bodley, accustomed as he is to the very different conditions which maintain in your university libraries, is the small use which is made of ours. I put it bluntly. You may find our main staircase thronged with sight-seers, but never with readers. The explanation of this is that the needs of our undergraduate students are mainly provided elsewhere. It may startle you to hear that, vast as are the contents of Bodley, and they number approximately a million and a half bound volumes, the sum of the contents of other libraries in Oxford is no less. There are as many books in Oxford libraries outside Bodley as there are in Bodley itself. These libraries fall for the most part into two categories, namely what we call College libraries and libraries of University departments.

Colleges at Oxford, as in its sister University of Cambridge, are halls of residence. But they are very much more besides. They are self-governing corporations, each with its own endowment. Every undergraduate student is a member of a College, and he can only matriculate to the University if he first enters into a College by passing a College entrance examination. Members of the teaching faculties are, generally speaking, Fellows of a College, members of its governing body, incorporators in it. Each College is, as it were, a cross-section of the University, or—to put it differently—is, except for the absence of the privilege of granting degrees, a University within the University. Each has its library to which its undergraduates resort, but even the use which they make of that is less considerable than that which American students make of their university libraries. Our men buy their own text-books and so accumulate little private libraries of their own. It may frequently happen that a man may have entered his fourth year and become what you call a senior student before he enters the walls of Bodley.

Among the libraries of University departments the chief for size and importance is the library of the Taylorian Institute, which serves our department of modern languages and is independent of the Bodleian. Students of modern

languages carry on their researches within it and seldom require to have recourse to the library of the University. Most of the science departments have their separate libraries, but there is a large general library for the natural sciences, medicine, and mathematics, which is called the Radcliffe Library. This was brought seven years ago under Bodleian administration. It is lodged in a separate building in the University area assigned to science laboratories and museums, and we have just completed a considerable extension to it. Similarly, Rhodes House, well-known to the later generations of American Rhodes Scholars, contains a fine library of American and British colonial history and is a sectional library of the Bodleian under whose administration it falls.

I have spoken of the Bodleian as a University library, and have endeavoured to show some of the salient points in which it differs from university libraries in this country. And now as to its antiquity. I have said already that it is one of the oldest libraries in the world. It has had a continuous existence since the 8th day of November, 1602, when Queen Elizabeth yet sat upon the English throne. The room in which Sir Thomas Bodley placed his library, and which still forms its central reading room, was no new building for it had been erected in the fifteenth century to house an earlier library of the University. Reared in perpendicular Gothic above the richly carved stone vaulting of the Divinity School, it stands an allegory in stone of the middle ages, of an era when all human knowledge found in theology its basis and support. Begun about the year 1440 and finished by 1480—for it took forty years in building—it had been completed at a time when the Old World was still unconscious of its age, for it had not yet discovered the New. And even that building does not mark the beginning of the library of the University of Oxford. Its erection was our earliest library extension, rendered necessary by the large accession of books received from Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. For the remoter origins of our University library one has to go back six centuries from now.

Take your stand in the centre of the Bodleian Quadrangle and look towards the west. On all sides there is the simple severity of Jacobean Gothic, for Arts End in front of you, built in the lifetime of Sir Thomas Bodley, screens Duke

Humphrey's Library from your view. Behind and on either side of you are the Old Schools of the University, constructed within a few years of our founder's death, and now all serving the purpose of his library. Viewed from outside, nothing is changed, nothing is altered. It stands as your Pilgrim Fathers might have seen it had they passed through Oxford on their way to Plymouth to board the Mayflower.

Viewed, I have said, from outside. Its frame is old and venerable, but its heart is young. Its aim, in carrying out the scheme of extension of which I will presently come to speak, is, in the considered words of a recent University decree, to keep abreast of modern library requirements. Nowhere in the world can the means of meeting these be better studied than in the States, and that is why I am with you today. Nevertheless I would ask your leave to point out certain ways in which Bodley has given a lead to the libraries of the English-speaking world. It was the first of those libraries to publish a shelf catalogue and the first to publish an author catalogue. Its earliest librarian produced the first subject catalogue and the first union catalogue. In more modern times it has been the first library to substitute for fixed location a subject classification based on a numerical system, for the classification which it has followed for the past fifty years is expanded from one adopted in 1850, and so is anterior in origin to the systems of Dewey and of the Library of Congress. In the present century the Bodleian has been the first library to give trial to the rolling book stack, and the first to create a Society of Friends.

It was also the first of English libraries to establish itself as a library of deposit. That certain libraries should be entitled to receive a copy of every book published in the country, and so be officially recognised as archives of the nation's literature, is a principle which has since been adopted in most of the countries of the world. Sir Thomas Bodley had only one example before him, that of the Royal Library in Paris. But, being a man of foresight and a statesman, he saw the advantage that such official recognition would win for his foundation. Consequently in the year 1611 he negotiated with the Stationers' Company of London, the institution through which all books were then published in England, a covenant that the company should present and that his library

should receive a copy of every book entered on the books of the company. That great privilege, since confirmed by a succession of copyright acts, made our University library a library of deposit, and until the foundation of the British Museum in the middle of the eighteenth century it may be said that the Bodleian was the national library of England.

It is to this fact that it owes its great resources. The covenant with the Stationers' Company was the first, but the first only, of a long series of benefactions. These benefactions have been not of money but of books. The Bodleian has always been poorly endowed, as you may reckon endowment. Its annual income at the present day is under £30,000 (\$150,000). Except in the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries it has never been in a position to make extensive purchases. Its riches are its books. Its world-famous collections are donations. On our roll of benefactors, inscribed on marble at the library door, one may read the names of great statesmen like Archbishop Laud and Oliver Cromwell, of men of great learning like John Selden, of great book-collectors like Richard Rawlinson and Francis Douce. It is their donations that have given the Bodleian its position among the world's libraries and have made it *par excellence* a library for research.

And now I have tried to explain to you the causes that have given to Bodley its unique character of being at once the library of a University and the library of a nation, a library of deposit and a library of research. It remains to me to tell you of its last and greatest benefaction, the gift of a citizen of the United States. [At this point the Librarian gave a brief account of the Bodleian Extension scheme, the Rockefeller Foundation's benefaction, the progress so far made, and the visits of himself and the Secretary of the Library to Continental and American libraries.]

I must not conclude without saying a word about the Friends of the Bodleian, an organization so similar to yours that anything I say about it must sound trite and familiar. But it may be new to you to hear that the originator of the conception of a group of friends of a library was Sir Thomas Bodley himself. Amongst the three conditions which he laid down as essential for the prosperity of his library was "*a good store of friends.*" His library has never been without

its benefactors. Nevertheless it took us over three hundred years to act upon our founder's advice and organize good will. All that I can say in our defence is that when on June 16, 1925, we founded, on the lines of our National Art-Collections Fund, a Society of Friends of the Bodleian, we were the first in the field. Ours was the first society formed with the object of providing a permanent income for the purchase of rare books and manuscripts for a particular library. I rejoice to think that our example has been followed here in Philadelphia, and elsewhere. We were the first to cross the line. Let our race be run hereafter without protest, in a spirit of emulation and of mutual esteem.

Our membership is approximately 600. We allow it to grow or not as it pleases, for we do not tout for members. The minimum annual subscription is ten shillings. Our annual regular income is something over £600 (\$3000), and is supplementary to the amount allocated by the library to the purchase of rare books and manuscripts out of ordinary library funds. How exiguous are these last will become obvious when I tell you that the total sum that can be set aside annually out of ordinary income for the purchase of manuscripts is £300 (\$1500), that our allocation for second-hand books is £600 (\$3000), and that not all second-hand books are rare.

I have been reading through your *Library Chronicle* and would like to take this opportunity of congratulating its editor, your Librarian, upon the excellence of its contents. Bodley also has its library journal, the *Bodleian Quarterly Record*, and it too has its Librarian as editor. But I must hasten to disclaim more than a general responsibility, for the *Record* is really edited by another member of the staff, who is also Secretary of the Friends. The magazine is older than the Society, for it was initiated by my predecessor, Mr. Madan, in 1914. But since the Society was founded in 1925 it has been decided that every Friend should receive a free copy of the *Record*, as well as being entitled to an illustrated *Annual Report*.

The Society is an unofficial organization, having an existence independent of library authorities, but to provide the necessary contact with library policy the Librarian is an *ex officio* member of its council. It appoints its officers and its council at annual meetings, usually presided over by the Vice-

Chancellor of the University, at which the gifts collected by the Friends during the year are exhibited and are formally handed over to the library. The council is an advisory body, and we are taking steps to provide for its meeting at regular intervals. Purchases are made by the Secretary, after consultation with the Council, with the approval of the Librarian. But it would be a mistake to think that the activities of the Friends are limited to the purchase of rare books out of the annual income of the Society. The Society is a channel for more extensive subscriptions. I may mention one anonymous one of £1000 (\$5000) for the publication in facsimile of the most famous of our illuminated manuscripts, the *Romance of Alexander*. The gifts of books made by its members exceed in value the books purchased out of members' subscriptions. So we have acquired by gift from one of your countrymen, Mr. William Buckler, a collection of 146 fine sepia drawings of buildings in the City of Oxford, made between 1820 and 1830. At our last annual meeting we were able to hand over as a gift a copy of Euripides owned by John Milton and profusely annotated by him. We have bought a note book containing the autograph *Juvenilia* of Jane Austen; nine note books in the handwriting of Christina Rossetti, containing all her poems written between 1845 and 1856; the valuable Thorn-Drury collection of annotated seventeenth century poetical texts; and the first American edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

I have entered into these details because they concern a Society upon which yours is in some respects modelled, and in wishing all prosperity and long life to yours, conclude with the words of our printed circular: "The Secretary will be glad to give any further information that may be desired about the Society or its work."

[The visit to the University last September of Dr. Craster and of the Secretary of the Bodleian, Mr. Hill, was a most enjoyable occasion, and in connection with the privilege of printing Dr. Craster's address it is a pleasure to acknowledge the recent receipt of several gifts from him, together with a most courteous expression of friendly regard. Among the gifts is a splendid view of the interior of the Bodleian, a reproduction of the drawing by Henry Rushbury; and a copy of *Letters of Sir Thomas Bodley to Thomas James, First*

Keeper of the Bodleian Library. From the Bodleian comes too, as an "exchange," the valuable *Strawberry Hill Accounts kept by Mr. Horace Walpole*, handsomely printed at the Clarendon Press, with beautiful illustrations in collotype from contemporary prints and drawings.]

SOPHIA BURNEY MSS.

By DR. JOHN C. MENDENHALL

For all lovers of the eighteenth century the name Burney has many peculiarly delightful associations. For although she lived a great part of her life as Madame D'Arblay and is always described under that name in dictionaries and library catalogues, the author of *Evelina* is still remembered by the world as Fanny Burney, as the cross-references prove. Her father, the Doctor of Music, was a man of great personal charm; her brothers, Charles, the Greek scholar, and James, the rear-admiral, who brought home Captain Cook's ship; her nephew, the amiable and learned Archdeacon of St. Albans and Colchester, further endowed the name with lively distinction. They were a numerous brood, gifted, all of them, with personality and the art of self expression, either in their own right or by the dramatizing pen of the talented Francis, and their history is the history of an age, whose charm, indeed, vanished in the whirlwinds that beat upon it, but whose loyal conservatism, so well exemplified in them, brought it through its troubles still alive.

An interest naturally attaches to any discovery concerning so remarkable a family. It seems fitting, therefore, to describe for the Friends of the University Library a little sheaf of manuscripts written by one of the name which was recently purchased as an addition to the Godfrey Frank Singer Memorial Collection. They are contained in a leather-backed case, made up like a small quarto volume, lined with old-fashioned brown paper, and neatly labeled on the back, in gold on red, *Works of Sophia Elizabeth Burney*. Written on a fine quality of gilt-edged paper in a late eighteenth century hand, they comprise about thirty leaves in all. Several of the pieces, and notably the two little dramas, are copied out a second time more clearly on larger paper but without noticeable alteration. The bulk of them are bound up as a