

**COLUMBIA COLLEGE LIBRARY:
AN ARTICLE ORIGINALLY
PUB. IN THE UNIVERSITY
QUARTERLY, JANUARY, 1861**

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WILLIAM A. JONES

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WILLIAM A. JONES, A.M., LIBRARIAN.

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THE LIBRARY OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE.

CARLYLE has somewhere said that the best modern University is a Library of books. If well chosen and sufficiently extensive, we do not see how the justice of the remark can be impugned. And yet we have read a programme, on a most liberal scale, of a modern University—including a geological collection, a museum of natural history, and an observatory—which entirely ignored a Library.

Still, of the importance of a distinct, independent, carefully chosen, and judiciously arranged collection of books to every College, it is impossible to speak too strongly. As the most important aid and resource of the Faculty, the fountain whence they themselves must draw living waters of wisdom and science; as an upper lecture-room to the Students coming in aid of the lectures of the Professors, which they may there fill out, illustrate, and confirm, it is of prime importance. Our sister College, Yale, recognized the truth of this, at the outset, and we learn from Mr. Gilman's valuable article, that the first donations of books were regarded as laying the basis, not only of the Library, but of the Col-

lege itself. Under the judicious management of a faithful and competent Librarian, the enlightened use of a collection of this character may effect results at least equally valuable with the teaching of the Professors.

The Library of Columbia College is by no means extensive, but remarkably choice, as the merest glance of an instructed eye may readily perceive. It has been repeatedly sifted and arranged, so that by donations and exchanges, few duplicates of any value, save those of the Greek and Roman classics, remain; and for a Library of its character, so far as we are informed, there is very much less inferior matter than in any similar collection of three times the extent. It now amounts to upwards of 13,000 volumes, with some 2,500 unbound pamphlets, after deducting some 850 volumes that have been removed to the Library of the Law School of the College.

Its character is, for the most part, scholastic, almost strictly a College Library; not a popular town Library for general circulation. Hence, it is deficient in modern and current works of entertainment, and necessarily must exclude some specialities absolutely essential to the attractiveness of a general Library.

The ideal of a College Library, in a large city—a metropolis like New-York, particularly—does not seem to include a vast number of volumes. Selectness, rather than great extent: slight attention to be given to some classes of books, and an exclusion of some departments altogether, appear to us to be the governing

principles.—The number of volumes is never a test of excellence in a Library. Some of the smallest College Libraries in the country are among the most valuable: as, for example, the Libraries of the Universities of Vermont and of Rochester; the first embracing the choice collection of Mr. G. P. Marsh, and the second, the Library of Neander, the Church historian.

New-York City has in her Public Libraries alone, 350,000 volumes; and from Dr. Wynne's book—to say nothing of Libraries to which he does not refer—we should infer the same amount, to be the minimum number of the book-treasures in private collections. The large College Libraries, for instance, those of Yale and of Harvard, are not fair illustrations in point; they are rather the City, and almost State Libraries of their respective towns and States, centralizing and concentrating all the available public, literary resources in New-Haven and Cambridge. Whereas, in New-York City, all that Columbia College Library aims at, is to provide for her Students, Officers, and Alumni, the requirements of a College Library; *not* a circulating, a professional, or a general City Library. All that can be obtained in the country, which cannot be found at the College, may be procured at the Astor, the Society, the Mercantile, the Historical, or at the different Law, Theological, and Medical Libraries, and the less pretentious Institutions, scientific or educational, with which New-York abounds.

The Library of Columbia College belongs to the class of choice, small Libraries before mentioned. Dr.

N. F. Moore, Ex-President of the College, who knew its value, remarked, in an Address delivered in 1844, but published in 1848, that it was then, "in some departments, a better one than any other our City owns." The Astor Library was not then in existence: but even at the present day, we have the evidence of more than one thorough scholar, not intimidated by the 110,000 volumes in that great collection, that valuable works are to be found in Columbia College Library, which are *not* in the Astor; and, for our own part we can furnish a short list of rarities and curiosities, the titles of which are not to be found in the Catalogue of the Astor Library. Our Library has, moreover, a well-balanced character; in it are preserved a just harmony and proportion of the several departments.

The hall in which the books are contained is sixty-five feet long by twenty-eight wide in the clear; and with an adjoining room, shelved on three sides, capable of containing about two thousand volumes, having also a press for the different classes of pamphlets.

The books in the Library are arranged in ten alcoves and as many cases with glass doors, six of which are double and four single. Portraits of all the Presidents of the College—eight in number—that of the second Dr. Johnson, by Trumbull or Stuart—of the Provost, Dr. J. M. Mason, of ten Professors, none now living but Dr. Renwick, Emeritus-Professor—the head of Dr. Cochrane, by Trumbull, of De Witt Clinton, with a fine head of Columbus, a copy from Parmigiano, compose the gallery of the College. The original *iron crown*,

which surmounted the cupola of the old College, in the days of Royalty, now quietly reposes on a bracket. A copy of the *N. Y. Mercury*, (Hugh Gaine,) 1764, hangs framed on the walls, which gives an account of the Commencement in that year, at which John Jay and Rich. Harison were graduated, and held a public disputation. The arm-chair in which De Witt Clinton is said to have died, formerly stood in the Library. A monumental stone, with relieved figures, brought from an island in the Grecian Archipelago, completes the *notabilia* of the Library. In the Chapel, on the first floor of the building which contains the Library Hall, is an arm-chair—filled daily by the President during service—that once belonged to Dr. Franklin.

Ex-President N. F. Moore, who had recently resigned his Professorship, was appointed Librarian in 1837. Previous to that date, there had never been a regular incumbent of the office, devoting himself solely to its duties and to the interests of the Library. Some years before, three different Professors, Drs. Renwick and Anderson, and the Rev. Dr. Vermilye, had each officiated for a time, while in the performance of other duties. Dr. Renwick, when lecturer, before his appointment as Professor, in 1821, and Dr. Anderson, while occupying the Mathematical chair, gave a portion of their time and attention to the Library, and materially improved its resources, especially in the sections of their respective provinces of Physics, the Descriptive Sciences, Mechanics, Mathematics, and Astronomy. Later still, in 1835, Mr. (now Rev. Dr.)