

**LIBRARIES IN THE MEDIEVAL  
AND RENAISSANCE  
PERIODS: THE REDE LECTURE  
DELIVERED JUNE 13, 1894**

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Libraries in the Medieval and Renaissance Periods: The Rede Lecture Delivered June 13, 1894  
by J. W. Clark

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# LIBRARIES

IN THE

MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE PERIODS.



FIG. 1. General view of part of the Library attached to the Church of S. Wallberg at Zutphen.

*Frontispiece*

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IN THE

MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE PERIODS.

*THE REDE LECTURE,  
DELIVERED JUNE 13, 1894*

BY

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*Beabody fund*

*The lecture was illustrated by lantern-slides. A brief notice of each of these is printed in the text in Italics at the place in the lecture where the slide was exhibited.*



## LIBRARIES.

A LIBRARY may be considered from two very different points of view : as a workshop, or as a Museum.

The former commends itself to the practical turn of mind characteristic of the present day; common sense urges that mechanical ingenuity, which has done so much in other directions, should be employed in making the acquisition of knowledge less cumbrous and less tedious; that as we travel by steam, so we should also read by steam, and be helped in our studies by the varied resources of modern invention. There lies on my table at this present moment a *Handbook of Library Appliances*, in which fifty-

three closely printed pages are devoted to this interesting subject, with illustrations of various contrivances by which the working of a large library is to be facilitated and brought up to date. In fact, from this point of view a library may be described as a gigantic mincing-machine, into which the labours of the past are flung, to be turned out again in a slightly altered form as the literature of the present.

If, on the other hand, a library be regarded as a Museum—and I use the word in its original sense as a temple or haunt of the Muses—very different ideas are evoked. Such a place is as useful as the other—every facility for study is given—but what I may call the personal element as affecting the treasures there assembled is brought prominently forward. The development of printing, as the result of individual effort; the art of bookbinding, as practised by different persons in different countries; the history of the books themselves, the libraries in which they have found a home, the hands

that have turned their pages, are there taken note of. Modern literature is fully represented, but the men of past days are not thrust out of sight; their footsteps seem to linger in the rooms where once they walked—their shades seem to protect the books they once handled. What Browning felt about frescoes may be applied—*mutatis mutandis*—to books in such an asylum as I am trying to portray :

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,  
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes  
Till the latest life in the painting stops,  
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains :  
One, wishful each scrap should clutch the brick,  
Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,  
A lion who dies of an ass's kick,  
The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

It may be safely asserted that at no time has a love of reading, a desire to be fairly well-informed on all sorts of subjects, been so widely diffused as at the present day. As a necessary consequence of this the 'workshop' view of a library has been very generally accepted. I