

THE PROPOSED NATIONAL LIBRARY BUILDING.

If it be true, as Carlyle has written, that "the true university of these days is a collection of books," all men should rejoice in the growth of libraries open to all the people. Such an educator is the Government Library at Washington. Known as the Library of Congress since its foundation in 1800, this collection was called, in Mr. Jefferson's catalogue of the books which formed the nucleus of the new library, after the British had burned the old one with the Capitol in 1814, "The Library of the United States." It is in fact, though not in name, the library of the United States, because (1) it is the property of the nation; (2) it is the only repository of copyright publications in the United States; (3) it is maintained and recruited by the public treasury; (4) it is open to all the people, without formality or introduction.

Having risen from the ashes of two conflagrations, the last of which, in 1851, spared only twenty thousand volumes, the Government Library has grown with rapid strides, until it counts, in 1881, upward of four hundred thousand volumes, besides one hundred and fifty thousand pamphlets, and several hundred thousand copyright publications, other than books. In the history of this progress, which has raised the collection in thirty years from twenty thousand books to four hundred thousand, the marked sources of increase have been fourfold:—first, a liberal appropriation by Congress, in 1852, of eighty-five thousand dollars in one sum for the purchase of books to repair losses by fire; second, the acquisition of the Smithsonian Scientific Library in 1866, with all its annual accessions since; third, the purchase of the Force Historical Library in 1867; and fourth, the enactment of the copyright law in 1870, making this library the national record office for copyrights, and the depository of all publications to which exclusive right of multiplying copies is secured.

The law of growth of this already large collection, aside from the very modest appropriations for purchase (varying from five thousand dollars to fifteen thousand dollars per annum, for the last thirty years), is such as to give emphasis to the fact that it requires most ample provision of space for its orderly arrangement and preservation. This library not only presents itself as the great conservatory of American letters, but there is added,

by careful and steady annual purchase, a selection of the best literature of other lands and languages. It is, besides, the assiduous gatherer of books, periodicals, documents, and maps relating to America. Its collection of newspaper files extends to over seven thousand volumes, embracing the "London Gazette" from 1665 to 1881; the "Times" from 1796 to date; the German "Allgemeine Zeitung," complete, from the close of the last century; full sets of the "Moniteur Universel" and of the "Journal des Débats," from their origin in 1789; the "New York Evening Post" from the first issue in 1801; with complete sets of every important English or American review or magazine, and an extensive collection of periodicals, scientific, literary, etc., of other countries. This library is also, and should continue to be, the zealous collector and preserver of the documents of foreign governments, of which it already has an invaluable collection from every government of Europe, as well as from British America, Mexico, and the South American and Central American republics. Its assemblage of the transactions of the learned societies of the world, acquired through the exchanges of the Smithsonian Institution, is very large and is constantly increasing. Add to this its function as the copyright bureau of the United States, and the recipient and preserver of the vast number of publications other than books which teem from the press,—including periodicals, musical compositions, maps, charts, engravings, photographs, drawings, and other works of graphic art, many of which require more room for storage than books,—and it will be seen that the continued accommodation of so vast a collection within the walls of the Capitol is impossible.

The suggestion has been made, and has been received with favor by some writers for the press, that the provisions of the copyright law must accumulate in the library a disproportionate amount of rubbish, and that this accumulation is foreign to the proper aims and uses of a national library, which should gather books alone, and should limit its contents to a careful selection of the best literature. This view of the matter overlooks the fact that, in every nation, the guarantee of exclusive rights in literary, musical, or artistic property is, and ought to be, coupled with the receipt and preservation of examples of the

publications so protected. The idea that our national library would be improved by a bonfire, or by the distribution through the country of its accumulated copyright stores, is as reasonable as would be a proposition to despoil the Patent Office, for the sake of room, of the models of inventors deposited to secure and identify their claims; and to scatter them over the country to enlighten benighted regions with illustrations of the progress of American invention. Congress has received every copyright publication as a trust in behalf of the whole people. It is bound by the terms of its own legislation, as well as by due regard for public enlightenment and national honor, to provide for the due care, arrangement, cataloguing, and preservation of all the objects received. Having no right to alienate them, it is bound to provide, in the national archives, space adequate, no matter to what extent, for their custody and preservation. The interest and value of a visit to Washington would be enhanced to multitudes by the exhibition of such a gallery of the graphic arts, and of charts and maps, as could be formed from the heaped piles which only eleven years of the silent and inexpensive operation of the copyright law have accumulated. Those who sneer at the "trash" to be found in the literary, or scientific, or musical, or artistic product of the American mind, should consider that an office of national copyright is no place for a censorship. These collections are not for one generation alone, but they are the invaluable historical memorials which future generations are to receive as the authentic and complete, not the select and partial, representation of the age in which we live.

In the great American library of the future, posterity will expect to find every book which the country has produced. The only way in which this just expectation can be fulfilled is by the steady conservation at the national capital, in a library supported by the whole people, of the entire product of the press, so far as it is protected by copyright. Recent amendments of the copyright law have considerably restricted the field of publications which are lawful subjects of copyright, throwing out labels and designs intended for any article of manufacture, as belonging to the Patent Office. This wise limitation of copyright to literature, musical productions, and the fine arts renders it easier so to administer the law that everything can be preserved. Grant that the National Library will thus become, to a certain extent, a conservatory of the fine arts: this is one of the very objects to be desired. Every great library should have its departments, in which not

only its books, periodicals, pamphlets, and manuscripts should be coördinated and classified, but also its maps, its charts, its musical compositions, its engravings, its autographs, etc. The priceless collections of old engravings and of modern art in the "Bibliothèque Nationale" at Paris, and in the British Museum Library at London, draw hosts of artists and amateurs to profit by their free exhibition.

It has now been several years since the necessity of building accommodations for these great collections has been forced upon the attention of Congress. Controversies and debates as to the necessity or expediency of leaving the Capitol, of adding to that symmetrical pile an appendage large enough to contain the library of the future, or of a proper site for a separate building, have consumed the time of successive Congresses, committees, and commissions. The net result of the protracted debate as to the best thing to do is that nothing has been done. But the great Library has not stood still, although Congress has. Four hundred thousand volumes are crowded and piled into a space not adequate to the orderly arrangement of three hundred thousand. The surplus, after the expedients were exhausted of double rows upon the shelves, temporary cases for storage, and colonization in such dark and distant lower rooms of the Capitol as could be procured, are piled in heaps upon the floors, until books wanted can be produced only through the long experience of custodians who know where they are. Heaps of valuable maps and engravings, duly stamped and numbered, are piled away where they must be completely buried from view. Newspapers and periodicals, in default of room wherein to file them for current reference, are stored in alphabetical order in daily growing piles, awaiting the epoch of binding. But it is not alone the books and other publications which suffer the inconveniences of this overcrowded library. There is not in all its halls a solitary space where a member of Congress can spend a quiet hour in writing or reading. The readers are huddled together in narrow quarters, pursuing their investigations amid discomforts and deprivations as to room and quiet which are enough to appall any but the strongest heads. The multifarious business of the copyright department, with its immense mail openings, has to be transacted in the midst of the readers, and almost under the feet of the sight-seeing public who throng the library and the Capitol.

As the matured opinion of the last Congressional commission on accommodations for the library, aided by three architectural experts, it was reported to Congress, in January,

1881, that a separate building was an immediate necessity. The report says:

"No government library known to the committee except our own is now located in the same building devoted to legislative purposes. It has been found indispensable in each European capital to have separate library edifices for the great collections of books gathered at the public cost and through the operations of the copy-tax. Yet in none of these cases is the library charged, as in the United States, with the custody and keeping of all copyright records of the nation. The buildings belonging to the British Museum Library cover eight acres of ground, and it is expected that the collections of art and antiquities there gathered will ultimately have to remove to a separate building to give space to the growing encroachments of the books. The national library of France covers nearly four acres. The present Capitol covers only three and a half acres, and no additions to it of sufficient magnitude to provide for library growth could be made without greatly marring the beauty and effect of that classic edifice.

"On grounds of public economy, also, a separate edifice is demanded for the Library. The estimates of the architects of the Capitol, Messrs. Walter and Clark, for an extension of the eastern center of the Capitol three hundred and fifty feet, place the cost of such an extension at \$4,500,000, while the estimates for a separate building vary from \$1,500,000 to \$4,000,000, according to the magnitude of the edifice and the style of architecture employed. The reason of this difference is found in the fact that any Capitol extension must be carried out in the same costly style of architecture, as to marble columns and capitals, as the existing wings, while no such expensive condition applies to an independent building erected elsewhere. Besides this, it is demonstrated, by the measurements of the architects and the reports of the librarian, that even this large addition to the Capitol would be completely filled with books in about forty years. It would then be necessary at last to erect a separate building, thus burdening the tax-payers with the cost of two library constructions instead of one."

At the same session of Congress, the Senate passed a bill appropriating \$1,500,000 for the erection of a library building on grounds to be purchased adjoining the park fronting the Capitol on the east, the building to be constructed in accordance with a

plan approved by the commission, and under the supervision of the Secretary of the Interior, the architect of the Capitol, and the Librarian of Congress. The fact that this measure passed the Senate by the heavy majority of thirty-eight to eighteen (the minority favoring a different site or enlargement of the Capitol) shows the strong conviction of that body as to the necessity of a building not only adequate to the emergency, but amply sufficient to provide against its recurrence. Any extension of the Capitol, of sufficient size to contain the library, was felt to be not only an architectural mistake and incongruity, but a temporary make-shift entailing costlier constructions in the future. The bill, however, failed to pass the House of Representatives—not because there was not a heavy majority in its favor, but because, under the despotism of the rules, the House could not get at the bill to consider it during the closing hours of the short session. It will be one of the first matters of public importance to enlist the attention of Congress at this winter's session. It is in all respects an opportune moment for making a worthy and permanent provision to serve as the great repository of a nation's literature and art. The surplus revenue, larger than it has been for years, has enabled us to pay off the national debt so fast as almost to take away the breath of the financial world. It is not to be doubted that the people will sanction any wise expenditure needful to afford an ample fire-proof and permanent home for the treasures gathered under the immediate custody of its representatives. Let us hope that no dissension over mere styles of architecture or collateral issues of any kind will longer postpone the work of laying the foundations at Washington of a library worthy of the American people.

REGRET.

THERE is so little that a man can do,
 Howe'er he quit him, work he well or ill,—
 There is so little, ere Death's hand shall still
 The fitful stir of life in me and you,
 That I, who know the one-half journey through
 And thirst to drink from the Lethæan rill,
 Half question if I have desire or will
 These fruitless labors longer to pursue.
 But yet I mind me when one spoken word
 Had lightened this long sadness of my day.
 The moment passed; the gates of heaven were stirred,
 And shut. Then fled reluctant Hope away,
 And Love, whose glory ne'er about me streams—
 Save in the restless memory of my dreams.