

DESIGNED BY AUGUSTUS ST. GAUDENS.

SEAL OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY, PANEL OVER DARTMOUTH STREET ENTRANCE.

## THE NEW PUBLIC LIBRARY IN BOSTON. ITS ARTISTIC ASPECTS.

**I**S that the new building for Trinity parish?" a Boston lady asked when Richardson's now famous church was about half complete; and then she added, "It is very queer!"

"Yes," replied her companion, slowly, in a reverent tone—"yes; art *is* queer."

Richardson himself happened to overhear these words, and thought them very funny. But they have also their serious and instructive side. They have often recurred to me, with a sort of typical significance, as formulating, in a brief and handy way, what may almost be considered a national attitude of mind. Vaguely silly on the surface, they may be interpreted, if we ponder them a little, as a confession of ignorance combined with a profession of willingness—nay, of eagerness—to admire. And this, considering our people broadly, and not alone in the art-pursuing circles of our largest towns,—this seems to be the present temper of the average American with regard to architectural art, if not, in some degree, with regard to art of every kind.

On the whole, it is not a temper to deplore. It marks a distinct step forward from the time when ignorance was cherished with supreme indifference, and we may hope that it prophesies a time when interest will have engendered

veritable knowledge, true because reasoning appreciation. Nevertheless, it is a temper which may easily lead the mind away from the right—the reasoning—path of development. Sensibly as well as modestly one can say, "These things seem strange or odd to me, yet I am ready to believe that they may be very fine." But if one says, "Many things which must be fine seem odd to me, and so I may consider oddity and excellence the same," then his modesty o'erleaps itself, and turns to a rashness which will lead him far astray; and this is precisely what has happened with multitudes of Americans in our time. Their interest in art has been awakened, and therefore they are no longer content with monotonous ugliness, commonplace uniformity. But because their judgment has not developed, they allow mere novelty as such to impress them, and are most surely overawed by it when it is most eccentrically emphatic. For proof, you need only think of the aspect of Fifth Avenue or of Beacon street thirty years ago, and contrast it with the upper West Side streets of New York, with the Back Bay streets of Boston, or with Michigan Avenue in Chicago.

If, now, you will look at our pictures of the new Public Library in Boston, you will understand why Boston as a whole did not appreciate it fully at first; and you will also understand why, from the very first, good judges of

art, well content with its degree of beauty, were doubly glad because of that beauty's kind and character. It is not an eccentric building; it is not a picturesque building; it is not conspicuously original in design. It has no diversities of mass or outline, no strong contrasts of color, no striking individual features, no showy decorations. Therefore the public, not finding it "queer," needed time to learn that it was very good. It was called cold, uninteresting, severe, unsympathetic, monotonous, and conventional. The tower of Trinity, beautiful, but in a very

of the building as a whole, admirably appropriate to its name and purpose. They did not expect such qualities instantly to please a public which for a generation had been dazzled by architectural pyrotechnics, deluded by showy eccentricities, bewildered by things which were partly sensible and partly "queer," and charmed by the exuberant, romantic spirit of Richardson's really admirable art. But they did expect them eventually to prevail. Their belief has been justified, and this fact means that the architects of the library have won a victory,



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY A. H. FOLSON.

THE BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY. (MCKIM, MEAD & WHITE, ARCHITECTS.)

different way; the showy taller tower of the "new Old South Church"; and the gaudy front of the Art Museum, not beautiful at all, but only gaudy—these also faced on Copley Square, and in the eyes of ignorant observers they seemed to reproach the library for its cold neglect of the rich resources of architectural form and color, and for its reticent refusal to declaim about the millions of money it had cost.

But from the very first a good many other people fitted its qualities with truer names. They praised its dignified simplicity, its symmetrical serenity, its classic calmness and repose, the harmony of its features and proportions, the excellence of its materials and their treatment, the charm of its very pale gray tone relieved by the strong yet not aggressive red tone of the roof, the delicate vigor and good taste of its decorative details, and the noble result of all of these—the stately yet reserved and quiet expression

not only for their own building, but for the general cause of architectural sobriety, dignity, simplicity, and refinement.

Moreover, while a great artist may achieve these qualities, no matter in what architectural style he works, it was well that a Renaissance style should be chosen for a building of such great importance—one of the offshoots of classic rather than one of those of medieval art. Mr. Richardson's vigorous, original, impressive, and often very sensible and beautiful use of Romanesque motives almost convinced America for a time that her true architectural path had thus been pointed out. But the results of recent years have proved once more the old truth taught by the prowess of Ulysses—it is the power of the man that makes a big weapon useful. We are gradually learning now that modern weapons, modern ideas and expedients, are the best for the men of to-day. We are

steadily gaining belief that the art which, in modernized versions, was reborn with the birth of modern civilization, and which is the living art of Europe still, is the one to be adopted by America and adapted to her multiform, thrice-modern needs. An effective exposition of this truth was made on the Chicago Fair grounds, and we may be very glad that Messrs. McKim, Mead & White perceived it some years before the Fair was built.

Despite its simplicity and reticence, the exterior of their library is conceived and adorned in such a way that it can never be mistaken for a building of purely utilitarian purpose. Clearly it is a civic monument, although as clearly it is one devoted to serious intellectual ends. And its builders rightly felt that a greater degree of sumptuousness would be appropriate within its walls, as expressing its erection by a populous and prosperous city, with a past enriched by intellectual achievement, and with fine ambitions for a still broader and more fertile future. In realizing this idea, the architects have worked, inside their building, in ways which recall Italian Renaissance art rather than the French development which is shown by their exterior. But no lack of concord results: we merely feel that different yet harmonizing needs have been met by the use of different yet harmonizing artistic expedients.

A low platform, approached by wide, encircling steps, lifts the library effectively above the level of Copley Square. The three arches of the main portal admit us to a vestibule from which three great doorways open into the entrance-hall. Beyond rises a monumental staircase, branching from its wide landing halfway up into two stately flights that end upon a columned gallery; and from this we enter Bates Hall, the general reading-room, which stretches across the whole front of the building, and is lighted by its main range of windows. The vast extent of this hall, 217 feet in length, 42 feet in breadth, and 50 feet to the crown of its barrel-vaulted ceiling, justifies the magnificent proportions of the staircase, showing what a multitude of readers and borrowers the library must serve, and suggesting how manifold and how spacious its other apartments must be.

This is but a hasty survey. It grants me no time to take you through so large and complex a structure, or even to note the arrangement of its parts, distributed through the four wings which inclose its central court. But we may at least look down into this courtyard from the balcony beyond the door on the staircase landing, or actually enter it through the Boylston street portal. It is encircled on three sides by graceful columnar arcades of marble, above which rise walls of yellowish brick, delightfully warm and rich in tone; and with

its spacious air of dignified retirement, it is admirably expressive as a feature in a place which will be frequented by the public for other than practical business purposes, yet not for purposes of trivial pleasure. Coming immediately upon it from a raw, prosaic American street, our surprise makes but the more impressive and seductively poetic the pure and simple beauty of its shadowy arcades, the solid nobility of its upper walls, the peacefulness of its sunny central area of turf, and its pervading atmosphere of carefully considered art and cloistered quietude. Seats will be provided beneath its arcades and, under protecting awnings, also upon their roofs; and during the long warm months of the year it will be a place without a parallel as yet on American soil—a place owned by the public of a great city, where hours or even moments of repose or study will be doubly fruitful, feeding the most careless or unconscious eye with the food of high artistic loveliness.

And thus I am brought to speak of the fact which, more than any other, has already made this building famous. The most interesting thing about it is that each and every portion of it has been planned with the wish to secure the highest possible degree of beauty, in as many and as varied ways as are consistent with its artistic unity, and with respect for its fundamental character and purpose.

Its projectors knew (another thing that some of us were first convinced of by Chicago's Fair) that architectural beauty cannot be completed without the help of the sister arts, that a worthy house for Boston's books could not be built unless painter and sculptor should give the architect their aid. But they also knew that the building's mission was to spread and encourage knowledge; they felt that an intimate acquaintance with beauty is one of the most precious and fructifying kinds of knowledge; and, realizing that this, in most of its branches, cannot be acquired from books, they determined to reinforce the voice of books with the voice of art itself.

Very magnificent are the materials employed by the architects in their interior work, from the delicate mosaics of the entrance-hall, and the yellow Siena marble of the great staircase, to the carved and colored woodwork, brought from an old French château, which adorns the trustees' room. But these material splendors will be accompanied, enhanced, and refined by painted and sculptured work as exceptional in its way. Puvis de Chavannes, the greatest modern master of decorative design, is already painting pictures which will fill the panels and line the gallery of the staircase hall. Otherwise commissions have been given to American artists only. But need we regret this fact, knowing that St. Gaudens is to model symbolical groups for the great pedestals which, outside the build-



LION ON MAIN STAIRCASE, DESIGNED BY LOUIS ST. GAUDENS.



ENTRANCE-HALL.

ing, flank the main portal, while he has already ornamented the escutcheon above it; that Abbey's "Search for the Holy Grail" (already shown in part in Chicago and New York) is the frieze for the large delivery-room; and that Sargent (whose work is likewise partly complete to-day) will depict the "Religions of the World" in the staircase hall of the second floor? Then the apse-like end of Bates Hall is to receive a painting from Whistler's hand; French is to model a figure of Emerson for the same room, and the bronze doors between the entrance-hall and the vestibule; the lions on the staircase, memorials to the members of two Massachusetts regiments, were made by Louis St. Gaudens; and while McMonnies's statue of Sir Harry Vane already stands in the Shakspeare room, his beautiful Bacchante, bought by the French Government for the Luxembourg, is to stand in duplicate on the courtyard fountain.

Of course there is space for many more artists than these in Boston's Library, and of course

it will be long before the work of decorating it is complete; but no such beginning has ever been made before in a civic structure on American soil. We realize how full a measure of praise this library deserves when we remember that here for the first time the highest possible ideal has been conceived for us, and as regards not only architectural magnificence but artistic completeness in the broadest sense. Nor should we forget that this exceptional monument, destined, we may believe, to raise the standard for public buildings all through our fatherland, has been paid for in the noblest possible way. Individual generousities have bestowed neither the house itself nor its adornments, nor has State or national aid been asked for it. It has been constructed and it will be adorned by the city of Boston for the city of Boston — by those burghers as a whole who, as individuals, down to the humblest and meanest among them, will be equally entitled to enjoy its beauty and to profit by its precious stores.

*M. G. Van Rensselaer.*

#### ITS IDEALS AND WORKING CONDITIONS.

**I**N 1892 25,000 new books were added to the Boston Public Library, and it is likely that henceforth this increase will be maintained

and possibly surpassed. This means, therefore, a million new books every forty years. The enumeration of all books in the library

on December 1, 1894, was 608,466, of which 459,128 are in Bates Hall and in the lower hall. These two collections are to be unified henceforth. The remainder of the volumes are distributed throughout various branch libraries, and will not be disturbed in their present positions.

The new building allows, without disturbing its present plan, for about 2,000,000 volumes, so that in less than one hundred years the good citizens of Boston may, in all probability, find themselves with a still larger problem on their hands, unless, as perhaps may then be feasible, ground in the rear may be secured.

The problem of moving the whole vast "plant" of books, furniture, and catalogues did not lie in the bodily transmission of a large mass of material from one place to another, but in the orderly getting of the whole from one fixed position into another without incurring an immense disturbance of the separate units. Every shelf in the old building was carefully measured as to length and height, and a corresponding shelf in the new one was planned for, so that when the time came every book, so far as ordinary foresight could arrange it, fitted with precision into its new position. Between 80,000 and 100,000 feet of shelf-room are now occupied; that is to say, from twelve to fifteen miles of standing books were to be mobilized, transported, and billeted for another century at least.

It was certainly a great undertaking to be able to say, within a reasonable time, "All present or accounted for" in regard to a number of volumes so great that it would take an excellent pedestrian four hours to walk past them in review. Once safely housed, these books, except those placed in the special libraries, no longer form an important adjunct to the architectural features, or continue to give an esthetic aid to the minds of readers long used to the silent dignity of their presence. They stand in the closely compacted stacks, arranged with reference to light, air, and facility of access on the eastern and southern sides. Ventilation and daylight reach them from the outside windows as well as from those facing upon the large open court, around which the whole building runs in a perfect square. Upon each of the six floors of the stacks are attendants who receive through a pneumatic tube the slips containing shelf-numbers of books applied for and at once transmitted to their proper floor from a central desk. These attendants will see that the books corresponding to the numbers indicated on the slips are found, and will send them, transmitted on the automatic book-railway, to a central point of each stack, and thence up or down, as the case may be, to the floor on which the desk of delivery stands, and to which they will be quickly forwarded. Human

machinery is thus dispensed with as far as possible in this transportation to the waiting reader from the unseen shelves, to which even the employees may no longer have full freedom of access. No books will be delivered directly in the great central reading-room, which is named Bates Hall in honor of the library's greatest benefactor, Joshua Bates of London; thus unavoidable noise and confusion will be confined to a limited space, and proper quiet secured to the ears and minds of readers already at work. However eager may be the wish of library economists to reduce friction and delay incidental to the sending for and delivery of books, it is only too obvious that upon human intelligence and celerity must rest the failure or success of attempts to make artificial devices "go." As books grow in number there must be a slight proportionate increase of difficulty in finding them; an approach, therefore, to a perfect system is all that can reasonably be asked. The British Museum does not undertake to gratify the requests of a reader within fifteen minutes; it may be that the American genius for quick methods can largely reduce this limit. In some of the Continental libraries it is a tolerated practice to inform an applicant that he may have in the afternoon the books for which he asks in the forenoon—a condition of things never to exist in a country where a critical public has a most vivid sense that it owns and supports institutions with its own purse.

In this stately Bates Hall, as free from meretricious or offensive ornament as from noise of book-trucks or whistles for tardy messengers, the readers will have within their immediate reach a much larger number of works of reference than was possible in the cramped condition of the old building. Such books are merely tools,—“books which are not books,” according to the leisurely standard of a Charles Lamb,—but they serve a very present need, and the public should be able to get them without delay.

The larger and more choice a library grows, the deeper becomes the sense of hopelessness to the student, unless, perchance, he can find some true point of contact with the treasures thereof. No one is rash enough to propose seriously to throw open the shelves of a public library to the casual or sporadic whim of readers. Only proprietary libraries may safely do this, because the sense of ownership is more real and binding among shareholders or subscribers than it possibly can be among such vague and uncertain factors as the "public."

Excluded, then, from a common pasturage among the riches which they nominally own, but do not possess, the constituents of public libraries must look for help almost entirely to



THE PERIODICAL-ROOM, ON THE GROUND FLOOR.

the merits of catalogues. As is well known, the Boston Public Library depends in this way mainly upon its enormous card catalogue, begun nearly thirty years since, at a time when it was felt that to furnish complete printed indexes was no longer practicable. This catalogue has grown to such dimensions that it is evidently nearing what may be called in mechanical parlance its "elastic limit." It contains nearly a million cards—a number so large as ordinarily to convey no adequate meaning to the mind. These cards have hitherto occupied about three hundred drawers, and, if removed and placed in a straight line, would reach about a thousand feet! They weigh about five thousand pounds, and though made of the finest cardboard are, under certain topics,

thumbed and soiled to the nauseating point. Lack of space has hitherto compelled the close juxtaposition of these drawers in tiers, by which crowded arrangement one person was able to obstruct the search, for a time, of several others. In the new building the cards will be placed in small, light trays from which dirt and dust can easily be removed. These trays will probably be in charge of an attendant who will deliver them as asked for, and return them promptly when given back to him. The cards, probably somewhat reduced in size, will be fastened by an ingenious hinge of linen to a larger card at the bottom of the tray, upon which the card will play easily backward and forward like the leaf of a book. The titles may by this plan be read easily, without craning over a dark

and heavy drawer. In so large a topic as the "United States" or the "Bible," many of these trays will be necessary, and it may be that dissatisfaction will arise from the difficulty of securing at once just the right tray. Experience will be the only test of this plan, and the public, as usual, will decide the success of the experiment.

A word more in regard to the problem of the card catalogue. A few years ago it was proposed in this library to print its titles as they then stood, and an approximate but safe estimate showed, after cutting the titles down to the minimum of intelligibility and correctness, that such a book-catalogue would fill more than seventeen volumes, closely printed in somewhat small type and in two columns to a page, each volume to be of quarto size and to contain six hundred and fifty pages. By the time this colossal feat could have been done, enough titles would have accumulated to make it desirable to repeat the task at once. Since this estimate was made the type-setting machine, with its speed and economy, has become a revolutionizing element in the printing world. This library is now asking itself how this invention can be used toward solving the catalogue problem. It is proposed — and machines are already made for the purpose — to print the titles of all new books, to use the titles as heretofore in the card catalogue, and then to save the "slugs" on which each title will be cast until enough have been accumulated and alphabetized to form the basis for a general printed catalogue. The slugs will still be saved, and by a constant process of accumulation and alphabetizing new editions will at any time be possible.

Larger libraries in this country may be driven to the method now adopted by the British Museum, which attempts to furnish a complete catalogue of authors only — an admirable plan so far as scholars are concerned. But American libraries have to reckon with a constituency of which they are but the servants and not the masters. The public needs guides to literature on live subjects, not caring much to know or to remember who writes the books. As the world's knowledge grows apace, vast numbers of books of worth and interest get pushed aside by the in-rush of newer ones, and lie upon the shelves, unknown and untouched, for the simple reason that there is no sure method of communication between those who manipulate the books and those who wish to use them. Scholars and men of letters alone have a fair chance to get what they want; and even their knowledge is almost trivial compared with that gained by a trained and clever mind in daily familiar contact with the personality of books. Touch and sight are essential encouragements to book-mindedness. The only solution must

then be either a rapid issue of lists on important topics, leaving to scholars the immense opportunities of a perfected author catalogue, or else a greater dependence of the public upon personal assistance. In the realm of literature even the cleverest mind can grasp but little, and those remarkable persons, to be found in any great library, who know "every book on the shelves," are in reality rather dangerous characters when we consider the power they wield and the large impression they create. Of naturally retentive memory, they do carry a vast amount of general and useful information; but every mind has its process of self-limitation, and its stock in trade, and finally comes to use its old materials of knowledge in a perfunctory and often misleading way. All this is said in no derogation of these phenomenal persons, but to indicate the necessary restriction of knowledge in one brain amid the fearful complexities of a more and more specialized literature. The experiment is now making in this library of printing directly from the card catalogue as it stands special lists on important subjects, thus bringing in compact form timely guides to the relief both of the public and of the over-burdened catalogue, the congestion of which may in a measure be relieved by the removal of titles printed in such lists.

A specialist is one to whom large and necessarily general collections can give at best little satisfaction. The accretions from year to year represent, in the main, a popular demand, or else purchases made in the interests of the entire community. For the solacement, however, of scholars and advanced investigators, in the Boston Library are sedulously guarded several special collections which give luster to the reputation of the institution, and which are veritable Meccas for scholars throughout the country. Under the freer conditions of more space, better air, and an entire absence of the haunting dread of fire, the management has it fully in mind to give these admirable libraries an opportunity equal to their importance. At present the special libraries are eleven in number. The Patent Collection numbers nearly 5000 volumes, and is open to indefinite growth. The Bowditch Mathematical Library of nearly 6000 volumes is enlarged by the yearly income of a fund of \$10,000. The Parker Library of 14,000 volumes was left by Theodore Parker, with the provision that they should be made as accessible as possible. The Prince Library of about 3000 volumes is indeed *facile princeps*, to jest mildly — the most significant if not the largest or most valuable of all public collections of Americana in existence. The Barton Library of nearly 14,000 volumes contains many fine specimens of bookwork and binding, as well as a remarkable Shaksperian





READING-ROOM, BATES HALL.

collection which, if added to the Shaksperiana of the general library, would form one of the best living monuments to the first name of all literatures. The Thayer Library of more than 5000 volumes is interesting for its portraits and plates of historical and literary importance. The Franklin Library of 500 volumes was formed in memory of the great Bostonian, and is aided in part by the income of a gift from Dr. Samuel A. Green, who first conceived the idea of making this memorial. The 600 exceedingly choice volumes from the library of the late John A. Lewis are devoted entirely to early and rare Americana. The Ticknor Library of 6000 volumes was at one time the finest collection of Spanish and Portuguese literature outside of Spain, with the exception of the Holland House collection. The late George Ticknor, one of the soundest and most far-seeing American scholars of his day, left also \$4000, the income of which is devoted to keeping up the high reputation of this noble array of books. Within a year the trustees have been notified that they are to receive in trust the library left to the town of Quincy more than seventy years ago by John Adams, second President of the United States. It is wisely thought by his descendants and by those empowered to act in this matter that the new building of the Boston Public Library

could best store, care for, and make available this priceless reminder of President Adams. Many of the books are full of John Adams's annotations, incisive, sometimes narrow, but always penetrating. Such a gift as this is sufficient vindication of the policy of building a structure commodious enough to receive in a proper manner valuable donations and bequests of any sort, whether they come, as they are certain to do, in the form of books, pictures, statuary, medals, engravings, or of any product of art or literature adapted to the beautification or enrichment of the walls or alcoves.

Another recent gift in line with the Adams trust is that of the Hon. Mellen Chamberlain, librarian of the Public Library from 1878 to 1890, who gives in his lifetime his remarkable collection of autographs and manuscripts, for which a special room has been set apart.

Close upon the Adams trust and the Chamberlain gift follows another most precious and distinctive contribution to the library's treasures in the shape of a collection of musical works, numbering 7000 volumes, brought together by the enthusiasm and fine taste of Mr. Allen A. Brown. Its richness in musical scores is its unique feature.

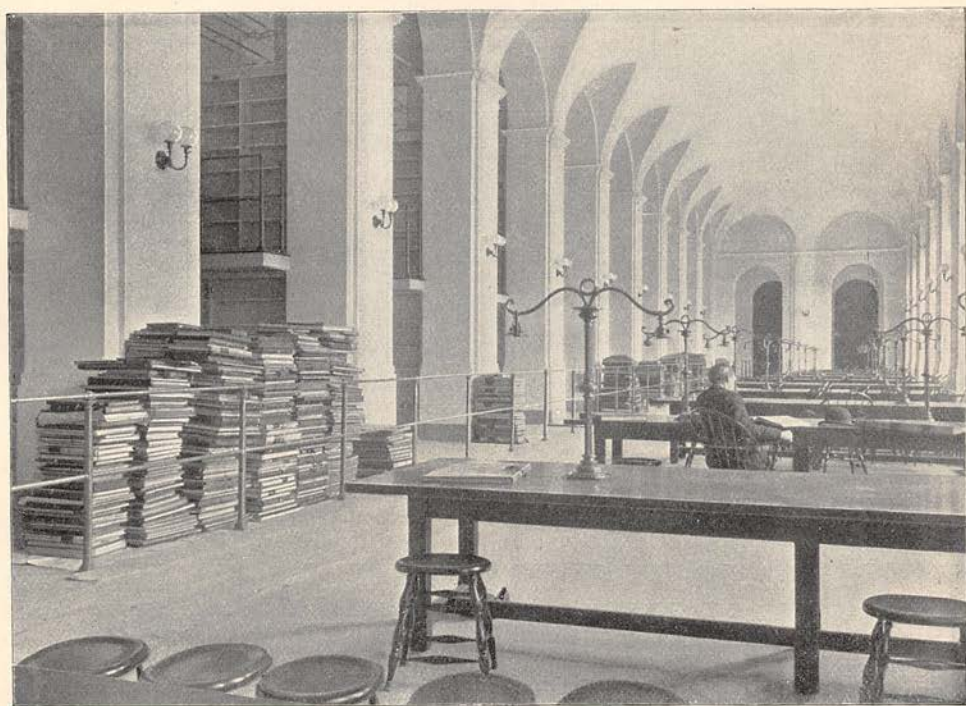
These special collections are to be placed

on the top story, and the space allowed to them will run around three sides of the building. Students will find large accommodations here for the quiet pursuit of particular lines of investigation. It is intended to provide opportunities for particular research in other directions as well. Already a space has been reserved for works relating to architecture and allied and subordinate topics, in which the library is very strong. A photograph-room at the top of the building will much facilitate the labors of those who wish to take negatives of plates or pictures. Careful supervision will render this privilege a safe one to grant, although mistakes in the past have pressed home the need of caution. No tracing from maps or plates, and no use of ink in copying text, are now permitted.

In the future growth of American communities there seems to be no good reason why

remote from the great centers of American life, still keeps its anomalously strong position because it has learned the wisdom of holding fast to, and of further developing, that which is peculiar to itself, and thus far has been enabled to keep the pace in the strenuousness of American life.

The costly investment of public money in this superb, dignified, and characteristic library building was conceived and carried through, in the face of much adverse criticism, in the theory, seldom left out of Yankee calculation, that it would "pay"—pay not only in the sure if indirect return it would bring to the city by proving a magnet to scholars from all directions, but in that surer and better way as an ornament and honor to civic pride, and as an educational aid to all citizens. The solemn rectitude of the building alone is a menace to those who may now or hereafter wish,



SPECIAL LIBRARY FLOOR.

one city should be imitative of the others, or why the dull spirit of emulation should not give way to a higher ideal of original and independent advance in individual directions. There can be, and there needs to be, only one Lenox Library or one Newberry Library. Scholars will naturally migrate from one great institution to another, to their own mental gain, and to the profit of the places which they visit. The Boston of to-day, changed as it is from a provincial town, yet provincially

however remotely, to assail the security of democracy in the first article of its political creed—a common education for the commonweal.

It would be an agreeable task to touch momentarily on some of the other features which are to be introduced as the library enters upon a new era of its life, especially to speak of the enlarged scope of the Patent Department, which has proved already so great an aid to inventors and lawyers from Boston and

other cities. Mention must not be forgotten of the generous gift by Mr. William C. Todd of the sum of \$2000 a year, for the maintenance of a suitable collection of newspapers of high character, from all countries, in recognition of the important and necessary part which the daily press plays in the literature of to-day. Mr. Todd's gift will ultimately be made secure by the income of a gift of \$50,000.

purchasing, cataloguing, shelving, and distribution of books; and lastly, the mechanical, including care of the building, heating and ventilating, proper care of the books merely as property, and the binding, mending, and dusting of them. The real governing power is the board of trustees, five in number, serving without pay, and elected each for five years. Each year the term of one member expires, and



MOSAIC CEILING, ENTRANCE-HALL.

Of the minutiae of the many departments grouped under one roof it would not be possible to write interestingly; yet one has a feeling that these very details excite a keen curiosity. Older, as well as younger, children have a natural and not unhealthy wish to see the wheels go round. No one else has ever told half so well as has Mr. John Fiske, in the "Atlantic Monthly," in his "A Librarian's Work," the story of bibliothecal routine and management. Though written nearly twenty years since, his story still holds true in the main for any large library. Both a duty and a difficulty are avoided by referring once for all to Mr. Fiske's account; for if any one can give interest to mere fact, surely it is he.

The functions of the government of the Boston Public Library are threefold — the executive, whereby the finances and general policy are controlled; the administrative, involving the library work proper, subdivided into the

he is then eligible for reappointment, or subject to retirement, as the mayor of the city decides. The trustees form a corporation, and depend for their annual appropriation, aside from gifts and income from bequests, entirely upon the good will of the city government. The president of the trustees is in reality as well as nominally the highest acting power of the institution, although all transactions and purchases must be sanctioned by a vote of the board, of which three members are necessary to a quorum. Authority and responsibility are thus in theory placed in the most definite way. The direct servant of the trustees is the librarian, who is appointed by them, and has large discretionary power in regulating the purely intellectual policy, while the executive officer who is answerable for the business and administrative condition is perhaps more especially the factor of the trustees than is the librarian.

A happy exemption from outside interference, and a reasonably strict application of the general spirit of civil-service reform ideas, have kept the working force from harmful fluctuations or from political terrorism. This library is in good faith administered for the people. Freedom of access to its treasures is granted to a degree which has excited the fears of those who predict the necessity, in the near future, of a circumspection and restriction approaching in severity to that of European libraries. Pressure of a population fast passing from the homogeneity of an earlier American type may ultimately render it imperative that the library, except in the case of the most usual and inexpensive books, shall cease to be a medium of distributing literature among the homes of Boston. In answer to the charge that the Boston Public Library does not accord large privileges to scholars from other cities and States, it may be said, by way of explanation though not of apology, that the present policy seeks honestly, if narrowly, to recognize the strict democratic principle that to the citizens who support this expensive privilege must be rendered their full

and just dues. The numberless rows of shabby, worn, and perishing volumes, and the absolute equality of consideration shown to all who frequent this library, attest fully the easy, tolerant American genius which animates it. The wealthy classes of the city as a rule do not frequent it, though taking a real pride in its usefulness and its greatness, besides doing much in many ways to sustain it. Never properly to be compared with similar institutions abroad, nor even with its more conservatively administered sister libraries in this country, it has had an experience peculiarly its own. The pioneer of large public libraries in America, it has had to learn much by unlearning more; its experiments have been costly, but not unprofitable, and have given it a spirit of self-dependence as valuable to institutions as to individuals. Its geographical isolation and the reserved temper of New England have served to keep it somewhat aloof from the coöperative tendency of libraries in the United States, perhaps to its detriment and loss of national popularity, but not, probably, to the sacrifice of its individual distinctness or strength.

*Lindsay Swift.*

## ON A SIDE-TRACK.

WITH PICTURES BY THE AUTHOR.



"THE SNOW-FLOW ENGINES."

IT was the second week in February, but winter had taken a fresh hold; the stockmen grumbled, freight was dull, and travel light on the white Northwestern lines.

In the Portland car from Omaha there were but four passengers: father and daughter,—a gentle, unsophisticated pair,— and two strong-faced men, fellow-travelers also, keeping each other's company in a silent but close and conspicuous proximity. They shared the same

section, the younger man sleeping above, going to bed before, and rising later than, his companion; and whenever he changed his seat or made an unexpected movement, the eyes of the elder man followed him, and they were never far from him at any time.

The elder was a plain farmer type of man, with a clean-shaven, straight upper lip, a grizzled beard covering the lower half of his face, and humorous wrinkles spreading from the corners of his keen gray eyes.

The younger showed in his striking person that union of good blood with hard conditions so often seen in the old-young graduates of the life schools of the West. His hands and face were dark with exposure to the sun, not of parks and club-grounds and seaside piazzas, but the dry, untempered light of the desert and the plains. His dark eye was distinctively masculine,— if there be such a thing as gender in features,— bold, ardent, and possessive; but now it was clouded with sadness which did not pass like a mood, though he looked capable of moods.

He was dressed in the demi-toilet which an-