

are pretty. But, oh, I do wish you were not blind for something else !”

“What is it ?”

“To see mother. She is such a beautiful mother.”

Gilbert stretched his arm over the grass and gathered the child to him.

“I know that, little one, without any seeing. And shall I tell you something more wonderful? That dear

mother of yours grows more and more beautiful to me every single day of our lives !”

“Flatterers !” she said, happy tears in her eyes, her hand on her child’s brown hair, her head on her husband’s shoulder.

And there was Sydney Hurst’s best - cherished wealth !

THE END.

THE LIBRARY OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

BY RICHARD GARNETT, LL.D., ASSISTANT KEEPER OF PRINTED BOOKS.



THE READING ROOM.—READERS RETURNING BOOKS.

THE State in England has frequently been a good nurse to successful popular institutions — seldom a parent. Private munificence formed the nucleus of the National Gallery and the Victoria University; the University of London was developed out of a college created by a joint-stock company; the Royal Society existed as a club before it was recognised as a corporation; Bodley, Bessemer, Whitworth, Mason, Bampton, were all individual benefactors; even the magnificent foundations of Eton, and Trinity College, Cambridge, were established by Henry VI. and Henry VIII. in their private capacity. That the same should be the case with the British Museum explains at once the comparative insignificance of the Library at its commencement, and its association to this day with other departments of human knowledge not usually found in connection with similar institutions.

Sir Hans Sloane, by whose bequest the Museum

came into existence, in 1753, was a physician and naturalist, learned and cultivated indeed, but of necessity mainly intent upon his own professional pursuits. His library was an appendix to his museum, and for many years remained chiefly connected in the public mind with the study of natural history.

Hardly was Sir Hans Sloane’s munificent bequest made than the Government, partly at the solicitation of the Speaker, Arthur Onslow, gave it a national character by the addition of the Harleian and Cottonian manuscripts. George II. is said to have grudged the money required for this purpose, but, at any rate, he added the Royal Library, collected by his predecessors from Henry VII. to Charles II., sufficiently rich in well-selected volumes, and handsome substantial bindings, to prove that these sovereigns regarded the acquisition and preservation of books as befitting the character of a king. A few years later George III. still more pointedly recognised the national character of the Library by making it the depository of the invaluable Civil War Tracts, col-

lected under Charles I. and the Commonwealth by the bookseller, Thomason—an act the more remarkable as he was himself commencing the formation of the magnificent library which, sixty years later, was itself added to the Museum. The Copyright Act gave legislative sanction to the idea; and the most recent important gift to the literary departments of the Museum is also a recognition of its national significance, for the Grenville Library, bequeathed in 1846, was left in acknowledgment of the income derived by the testator from a sinecure, the proceeds of which—an instance scarcely to be paralleled—were thus returned to the State with ample interest.

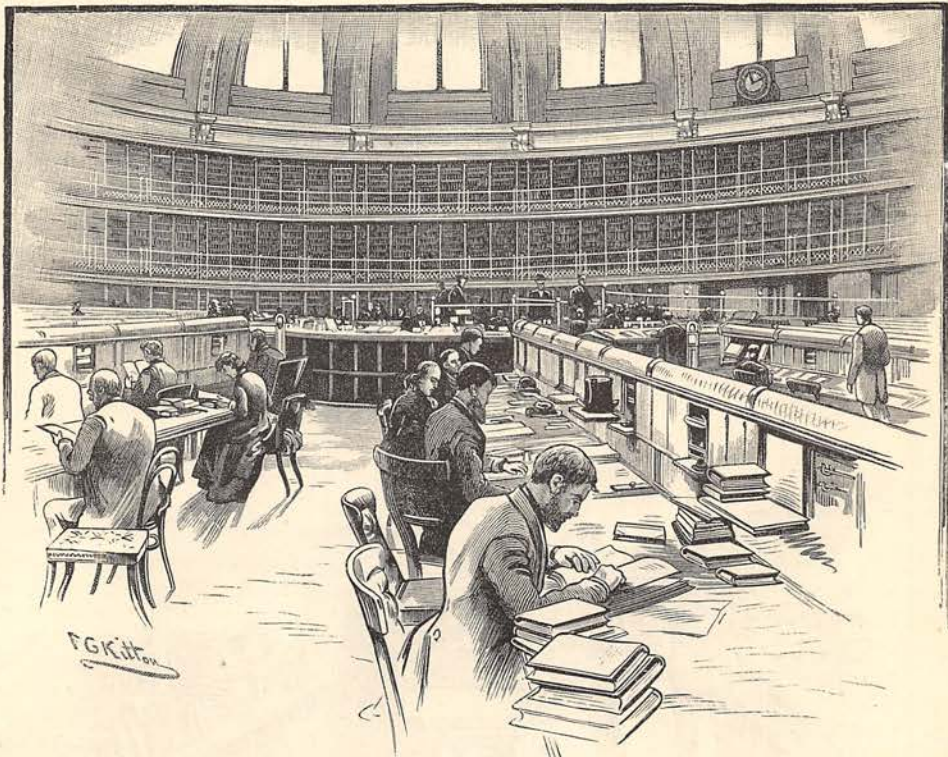
The economy of a great Library necessarily forbids the indiscriminate admission of visitors; and as donations, when kept together, are less subjected to disarrangement than the mass of books, and are, moreover, properly placed in the apartments of most architectural pretension and best adapted to public inspection, it happens that ordinary visitors to the Library see hardly anything else. Passing through the right-hand door out of the entrance hall, the visitor finds himself in the Grenville Library, where the 25,000 volumes bequeathed by Mr. Grenville, more than a fifth of which count among the rarest and most precious in the world, repose behind the glazed doors of the book-presses. The next room is devoted to manuscripts, a large portion also contributed by public or private liberality. Passing into the noble King's Library, the visitor finds himself in presence of the most munificent

gift of books yet made to this nation, or perhaps to any. Including pamphlets—themselves a collection of the highest value—the number of volumes amounts to 84,000. In the show-cases disseminated throughout the whole length of the hall the visitor will find specimens of every variety of printing, from Gutenberg to the modern Japanese press; nor will he be less attracted by its grand and harmonious architectural proportions.

If instead of ascending the staircase on his right, which conducts to the territories of the Antiquities Department, the visitor who has traversed the King's Library were at liberty to pass through the lofty doorway immediately confronting him, he would find himself in the Old Reading Rooms, which served, if they did not satisfy, the needs of students from 1838 to 1857. Considered in the light of the theory which prevailed at the time of their erection, that a library should rather be the resort of scholars than a general literary work-shop, they were, in truth, by no means so inadequate as they appear at the present day. They accommodated about 150 readers, but only by close crowding and consequent discomfort, and the collection of books of reference was limited in extent and difficult of access. The first compartment is, nevertheless, a very fine room, and is now known as the Catalogue Room, from the duplicate copy of the Reading Room Catalogue being placed in it, and many operations connected with the catalogue carried on there. The next, or Music Room, contains the extensive collec-



THE KING'S LIBRARY.



THE READING ROOM.

tion of printed music : while the gallery is devoted to the unequalled assemblage of tracts on the French Revolution, brought together by Mr. Wilson Croker, the counterpart of the Thomason tracts on the English Civil War. Next follows the Great Room, a spacious chamber, well known to readers who wish to consult books deemed too precious for the Reading Room. Two supplementary rooms succeed, and the suite is terminated by the Arch Room, a remarkable instance of the constructive ingenuity of the subsequent designer of the Reading Room. Its great height is spanned at intervals by arches sustaining transverse galleries fitted with book-shelves, so that no particle of space is left unused, and the short and narrow, though lofty, structure is capable of holding nearly as many volumes as the stately King's Library.

Space does not permit us to describe the Cracherode Room, repository of noble bequests, and donations, and choice acquisitions, nor the long low galleries parallel with the King's Library, which, having served as makeshifts for accessions to the General Library, now accommodate the Oriental books. Nor is it necessary to say much of so well-known an apartment as Panizzi's Reading Room, the aspect of which, moreover, is partly shown in the illustration on this page. Our space will be more usefully devoted to an explanation of the chief improvements introduced into the

Reading Room under the administration of Mr. Bond, the present Principal Librarian.

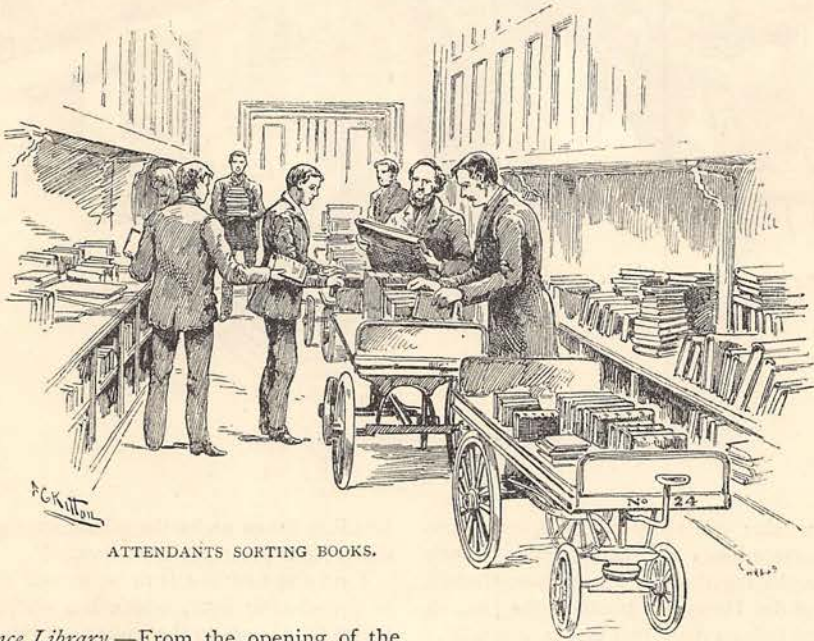
First and foremost is to be named the introduction of the electric light, which has abolished fogs, and added four hours to the winter's working-day. If taken in winter, our engraving would have shown four lamps depending from the roof, by which alone an area equal to the dome of St. Peter's has hitherto been efficiently lighted, though the contemplated addition of a fifth will no doubt be a further improvement.

Next to the electric light must be mentioned the various literary additions to the comfort and utility of the Reading Room. Foremost of all comes the printing of the catalogue. The necessity for this colossal undertaking will appear from the statement that a few years ago the manuscript catalogue of printed books alone filled nearly 3,000 volumes, and the catalogues of maps and music nearly 1,000 more. At least a third of these volumes would soon have required to be broken up and divided, and of this process there would have been no end. Print was accordingly introduced in 1880, and while the additions continually being made were thus greatly reduced in bulk, the whole of the three million titles already existing in manuscript were ordered to be printed. By the present time the three first letters of the alphabet have been almost entirely printed and published, and the latter volumes

from Virgil to the end of Z. The annual expenditure upon the undertaking is £3,000, and the work proceeds steadily at the rate of about thirty printed volumes annually, doing away every year with some 120 volumes of MS. At this rate the printing may be completed early in the twentieth century. So great is the economy obtained by the use of print, that it has been computed that sufficient space has been provided for eighteen millions of titles, or for the probable accumulations of three centuries. The whole of the Map Catalogue has also been printed, and the Catalogue of Music will follow.

Three other important improvements of recent date remain to be mentioned.

Subject-index of Books for the last Five Years.—It is only within the last few weeks that the Museum has possessed a classed catalogue of its own, and this great improvement is a development from the recent resort to printing. By cutting up the lists of additions published since the introduction of print, and re-arranging the titles under their subjects, Mr. Fortescue, Superintendent of the Reading Room, has with well-applied industry produced a work which has not only removed from the Museum the reproach of being without a classed catalogue, but has shown how this want may be supplied for the future. The reader now has all the acquisitions during five years of any utility for purposes of research—novels, plays, and the like



ATTENDANTS SORTING BOOKS.

New Reference Library.—From the opening of the Reading Room there has always been a noble Reference Library on the ground floor, consisting of 20,000 standard volumes, within reach of the readers. Mr. Bond has effected the extension of this library to the lower gallery, thus adding nearly 20,000 more volumes, of which a special catalogue has been made by Mr. Porter, one of the assistant keepers of printed books. Readers cannot, of course, have personal access to the gallery, but the books are thus brought very near them, and they have the use of them during evening hours by the electric light.

Special Bibliographies.—Until the publication of the index of subjects to be mentioned in the next place, it has been the misfortune of the Museum to possess no subject-catalogue. Mr. Bond met the want to a certain extent by placing in the Reading Room an extensive collection of special bibliographies, containing indexes to books in every department of literature. A catalogue of these was prepared, also by Mr. Porter, and by consulting it the reader may ascertain where he can find lists of books containing the particular information he requires.

are excluded—digested under their appropriate headings, and can discover at one view what literature bearing upon his inquiries has within that period come into the Museum. The utility of such a work is inestimable, and must insure its continuance.

These examples of improvement may serve to prove that the Museum is by no means an unprogressive institution—a proposition which might be yet more copiously established if our subject were not restricted to the Library of Printed Books. There is, perhaps, no department of the public service into which more novel features have been introduced of late years. That these innovations partake rather of the nature of developments than of changes is one reason why they have been so uniformly successful. The steady—in some instances, the sudden—increase of the collections must keep the administration continually on the alert, and more and more will probably be done to meet public needs by recourse to scientific agencies—mechanical, electrical, and photographic.

We must not linger more upon the Reading Room, although of all departments of the Library it is the most important and interesting to the public. A word, nevertheless, is needed in explanation of the last of the illustrations accompanying this article. The supply of the Reading Room requires a double labour: the books brought by one set of attendants must be replaced by another. The latter operation is commenced first thing every morning, when the books that have been consulted the preceding day, if not reserved by the student, are sorted, to be returned to their places. Our sketch gives a representation of this lively scene. The average daily attendance at the Reading Room exceeding five hundred, the number of volumes to be thus returned is generally very large.

Our survey has as yet embraced but a portion of the Library, the Reading Room being merely the centre of a still more extensive structure, serving as a repository for the great majority of the volumes acquired since 1845, which are not less than three-quarters of a million.

The arrangement will be readily comprehended if the reader bears in mind that the Reading Room is a circle inscribed in a quadrangle, and occupying the centre only of the inner court of the Museum. After taking out a circular space equal to the dome of St. Peter's, and providing a passage thirty feet wide between the new building and the inner wall of the Museum quadrangle, nearly 50,000 square feet still remained, which have been occupied (we quote from Mr. Fagan's "Life of Sir Anthony Panizzi") :—

(1) By a circular gallery in four tiers, including the basement storey, carried entirely round the Reading Room.

(2) By four corridors in three tiers, each forming a quadrangle parallel with the interior walls of the original Museum structure.

(3) By five apartments of triangular shape, filling up the spaces left vacant between the circle and the quadrangle in which it was inscribed.

The roof is glass, and the flooring of the galleries is formed of open iron gratings, to allow the transmission of light to the basement. We must refer to Mr. Fagan's volumes for further details, both technical and historical, merely remarking that the absence of partitions throughout the building, except those made by the books themselves, allows an economy of space of which there was no previous example, although since frequently imitated, and perhaps destined to be surpassed in the new National Library at Washington, which is to provide room for 3,500,000 volumes.

A few words must be added on the most recent accession of space to the Library. So long ago as 1823, Mr. White bequeathed £50,000 to the Museum, reserving a life interest to his widow, whose remarkable vitality kept the bequest in abeyance for fifty-seven years. On its eventually becoming available, the sum was employed in the construction of the White Wing, the substantial structure fronting Montague Street, on the eastern side of the Museum. In it are located the whole Department of Prints and Drawings, new reading rooms and studies for the Manuscript Department, exhibition rooms for prints and glass, and a large portion of the collection of newspapers, with a reading room where they may be consulted. This has already proved of great service in relieving the pressure upon the principal Reading Room. The building is fitted with the Swan electric light throughout. Access to the Newspaper Reading Room is obtained from the Manuscript Room, and the visitor, as he proceeds between the files of London newspapers, has a good opportunity of studying the system of book-press construction adopted at the Museum.

A GIRL'S STORY.

THE quaint, grey, picturesque old grange
Has seen three hundred years of change
With all their varying seasons pass,
And hours like sands, that through the glass
Of time keep dropping, one by one ;
We live, and lo ! our lives are gone ;
And death and change, and hopes and fears,
Fill up the measure of the years.

Here, in the pleasant gallery,
With carved oak panelled round, I see
A girl's brown eyes, and shining hair
Coiled on the shapely head, and fair,
Sad, musing face, whose charms engage
The heart like some enchanting page,
Where grief and love and tears prevail,
In sweet Clarissa's moving tale !

A wistful, lovely face, and one
It moves the heart to look upon ;
Poor child ! whose eyes through tears of woe
Looked down a century ago,
And saw, one morning bright with May,
Her brave young lover ride away,
When by the casement on the stair
The light of life grew dark for her !

His letter told her, " thine till death !"
He fell in fight, the legend saith,
Covered with glory, and his ears
Were thrilled in death with conquering cheers :
And she strove ever to endure
Her grief, and helped the suffering poor ;
And lived unwedded till she died,
And now in heaven is satisfied.

J. R. EASTWOOD.