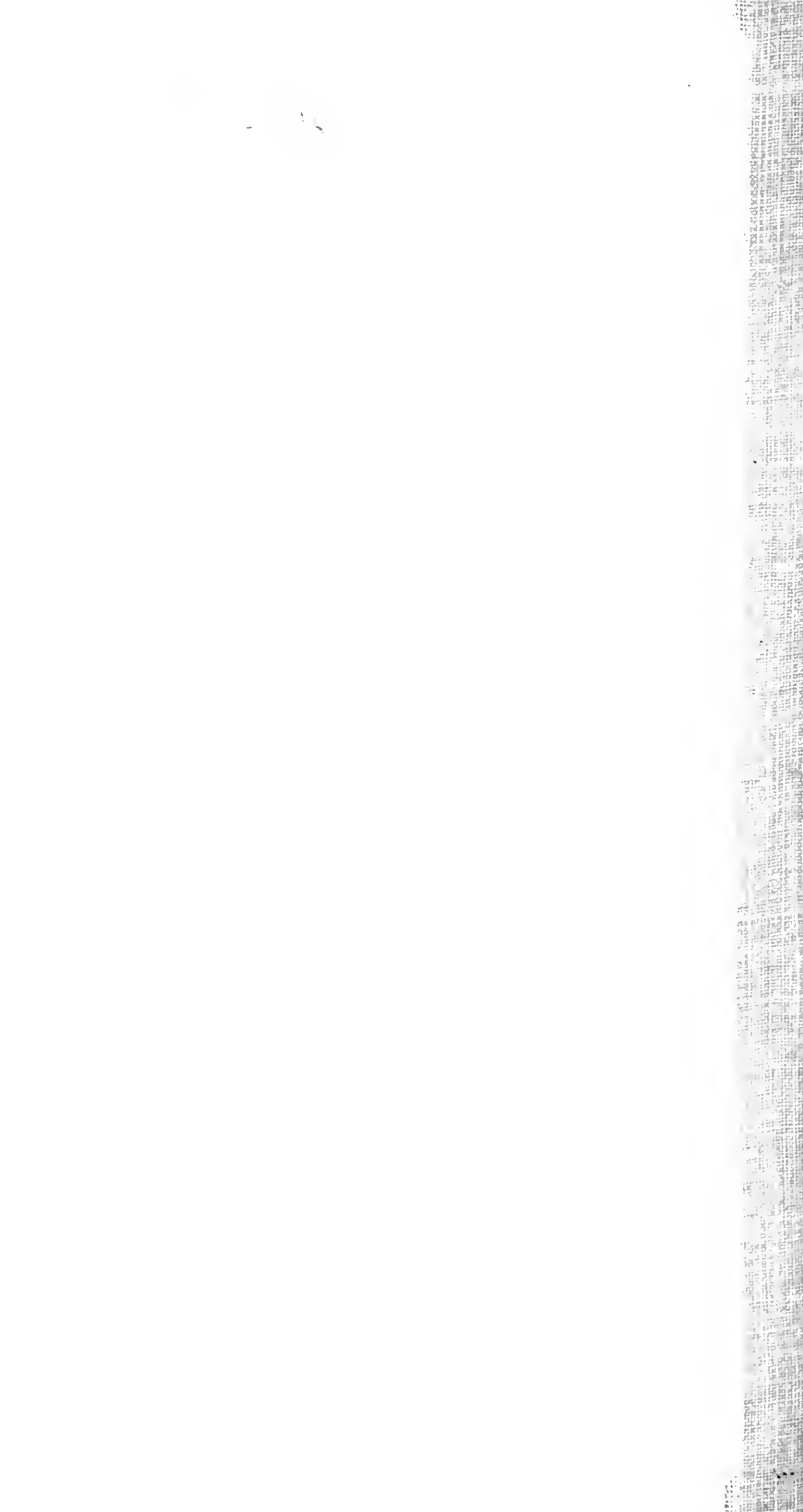


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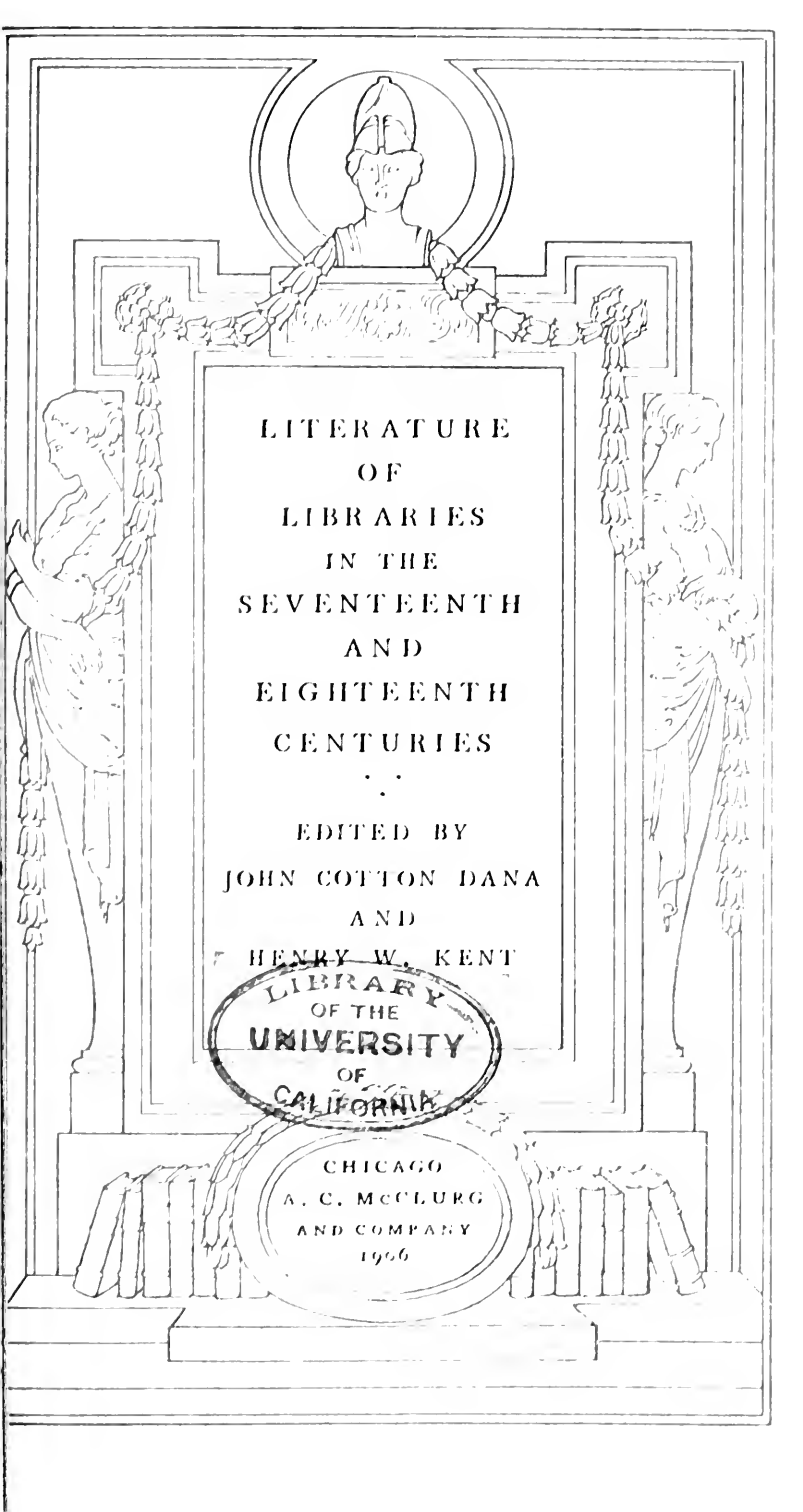
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LITERATURE
OF
LIBRARIES
IN THE
SEVENTEENTH
AND
EIGHTEENTH
CENTURIES

EDITED BY
JOHN COTTON DANA
AND
HENRY W. KENT

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF
CALIFORNIA

CHICAGO
A. C. MCCLURG
AND COMPANY
1906

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THE DUTIES
AND QUALIFICATIONS OF
A LIBRARIAN

*An Edition of two hundred and fifty
copies in this form and of twenty-five
copies on Large Paper were printed
at The Merrymount Press, Boston, in
July, 1906*

THE
DUTIES
&
QUALIFICATIONS
OF A
LIBRARIAN

A DISCOURSE PRONOUNCED IN
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE SORBONNE
DECEMBER 23
1780

BY
JEAN-BAPTISTE COTTON
DES HOUSSAYES



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MDCCCXVI

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L. C.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE



BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

THE following address was originally spoken in Latin, and when first printed bore the title: "*Oratio habita in comitiis generalibus societatis sorbonicæ die 23 decembris 1780 à D D. Joan. Bapt. Cotton des-Hous-sayes doct. th. pariensi, soc sorbonico, bibliothecæ, sorb. præfecto, sct. Parisiis, proelio Philippi Dionysii Pierres regis typographi ordinarii, 1781.*" Brunet is the authority for the statement that only twenty-five copies were issued.

The learned bibliophile, Pierre Alexander Gratet Duplessis, recognizing the value of the paper,

10 BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

and desiring a larger audience for it, translated it into French, and gave it to Jacques Joseph Techener for the "Bulletin du Bibliophile, Petite Revue d'ancien Livres," where it appeared in the number for January, 1839 (No. 11, 3^e série). It occupied the first place among the bibliographical, philological and literary notices which were under the editorship of Charles Nodier; and the title now appears as, "Discours sur les qualités et les devoirs du bibliothécaire, prononcé dans l'assemblée générale de Sorbonne, le 23 décembre 1780, par J.-B. Cotton des Houssayes; traduit du latin en françois par un bibliophile." The initials "G. D."

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are signed at the end.

In 1857, Aug. Aubry reissued this translation exactly as it stood, among the "Variétés Bibliographiques" of his "Bulletin du Bouquiniste" (17^e numero, 1^{er} Septembre), but with the addition of a preliminary note signed "G. Duplessis." We may assume that the paper aroused the interest it deserved, since it was reissued the same year as an octavo pamphlet of thirteen pages, limited to one hundred copies. The title-page reads as follows:

Des Devoirs | Et Des Quali-
tés | Du Bibliothécaire | Discours
prononcé dans l'Assemblée générale
de Sorbonne, | le 23 décembre
1780, | Par J.-B. Cotton

Des Houssayes; / Traduit Du Latin En Français, Avec Quelques Notes / Par Gratet-Duplessis. [Printer's mark.] Paris / A. Aubry, Libraire-Éditeur, / 16, Rue Dauphine. / 1857

In this form the text is the same as before; but Gratet-Duplessis's connection with the work being explained on the title-page, his name is dropped from the "Préliminaire," and his initials from the translation; and the whole is prefaced by an "Avertissement de l'éditeur," whose name does not appear, but who, we may fairly suppose, was Aubry.

While our chief debt of gratitude must always be due to Duplessis for his perpetuation of so

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE 13

valuable a contribution to library literature, which otherwise might have been lost to us, we are under no small obligation to the editor of "The Philobiblion, a Monthly Bibliographical Journal," published by George P. Philes & Co., of New York (vol. ii, March, 1863 [number 15]), for a translation of the "Discours" as it appeared in the "Bulletin du Bouquiniste."

This translation was afterwards used, with a slight introduction, under the title "What a Librarian should be" in "The Bibliographer" (vol. iii, December, 1882), "a Journal of Book Lore," published in London by Elliot Stock, and in New York by J. W. Bouton. We find it again under

14 BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

the title "The Librarians Duties" in "Book-Lore, a Magazine devoted to Old-Time Literature" (vol. ii, June, 1885–November, 1885), London, Elliot Stock, but with the introduction somewhat altered.

The text here presented conforms to the reprint of 1857, and thus includes what "The Philobiblion" omitted, Aubry's note. The translation is partly that of "The Philobiblion" and partly new.

PREFACE

“NOTICE BY THE EDITOR”

THE Discourse on the Qualities and Duties of a Librarian has already been edited by our colleague, J. Techener, in 1839.

The rarity of this treatise is not the only motive which induces us to publish it again, the charm we felt in reading it makes us believe that we ought to share with others the reading of a masterpiece, almost unknown, or at the best forgotten.

The author of the translation, Mr. Gratet-Duplessis,* has given a very happy rendering of the

* *Gratet-Duplessis (Pierre-Alexandre)*
was born at Janville (Eure-et-Loir)

Discourse of Cotton des Hous-sayes. It is impossible to give to his version a more graceful or original turn, or to render with more delicacy the grand and in-

on December 16, 1792.

Although very young, he showed so much intelligence in teaching that he attracted the notice of the government. He was appointed successively principal of Angers' college, inspector of Caen university and rector of the Lyon and Douai academies. Everywhere he proved himself an experienced administrator, everywhere he knew how to make himself loved and obeyed by his loyalty, his independence and his justice.

He early abandoned his university career, in order to give himself up entirely to study. It would be impossible in so short a notice to enumerate the forty-nine productions of Mr. G.-Duplessis;

genious thoughts of the librarian of the Sorbonne.

La Bruyère has said: "Scarcely ever till now has a masterpiece of the intellect been seen which has been the work of several

we will only mention his "Bibliographie parémiologique" (1 vol. 8vo, Paris, 1847), his edition of the "Maximes de La Rochefoucault" (1 vol. 18mo, Paris, 1853), and the "Livre des Miracles de N.-D. de Chartres" (1 vol. 8vo, Chartres, 1855).

Mr. G.-Duplessis died of an apoplectic stroke in 1853. He was unanimously regretted. "He was," says Mr. Sainte-Beuve, "the most indefatigable and most disinterested professor of this time, and also the most obliging to every one. Amateur of books in the true sense of the word, he did not only know them thoroughly, but also knew the peculiari-



people; collaborated work and translations have never revoked this condemnation. Indeed, genius demands unity, great minds understand alone their own thoughts, alone they possess the admirable secret of expressing them in an unparalleled manner. Corneille would probably have translated Shakespeare very badly, and Schiller could never

ties which distinguished them. He was different to most amateurs in this, that he desired rather to know than to possess them."

We will add nothing to this praise. Mr. G.-Duplessis still continues to live with us; we all remember his affability, and no one in the republic of letters can fail to know that he was as much a man of intellect as a man of courage.

have shown the beauties of Corneille. However, these are three tragic writers of the highest order.

To this singular incapacity, which is caused by the diversity of our sentiments, one can only add what Fontenelle said in speaking of our features: "What secret can nature have had to enable her to vary in so many ways so simple a thing as a face."

This apparently insurmountable difficulty has not even been perceived by Mr. Gratet-Duplessis, because in him the Abbé Cotton des Houssayes lives again. He possesses the same modesty, the same urbanity, the same literary erudition. That which the

learned librarian expressed with so much grace and affability has been thought and practised by Mr. Duplessis without other models than his own instincts. This is the secret of this charming treatise, of this translation, which has not even the appearance of one.

We will say nothing of des Houssayes' Discourse; the reader will appreciate it. We can only wish that all the principles which he here includes should become the rule of conduct of all librarians. They would lose nothing by it, and the public would gain much.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

THE short discourse of which we here offer to our readers a translation, has never received a great degree of publicity. Delivered in Latin, before a grave meeting of learned doctors, it was designed, undoubtedly, for none but the friendly ears of the venerable assembly to which it was addressed. A learned printer,—of a class sufficiently numerous in times past, and of which we are fain to believe, without, however, venturing to affirm, there may even yet be found a few, *rari nantes*,—a printer to the King, Monsieur Pierres, divined

the merit of the tract, and was unwilling that so elegant a composition should be wholly condemned to forgetfulness: and in this he manifested both good taste and discernment. He therefore obtained the author's permission to print a few copies of it, solely for the use of those who were friendly to bibliographical studies. The number of these privileged amateurs was quite limited, and we are nearly certain that there are hardly more than twenty-five copies existing of this original edition of the *Discours de l'Abbé Cotton des Houssayes*. It makes a small octavo pamphlet of eight pages, printed with great care on beau-

tiful fine paper. The copy before us, which we have used for this translation, was presented to the celebrated Abbé de Saint-Léger by the publisher, whose *envoi* and signature it bears.

The author of this little almost unknown *chef-d'œuvre* is scarcely known himself except to the literary profession; since he belonged to the race, almost wholly extinct at this day, of modest and laborious scholars who cultivate learning for its own sake, and find more pleasure in adorning and strengthening their minds in the silence of the cabinet, than satisfaction in taking the universe into confidence in their smallest labours

or most insignificant discoveries. The Abbé Cotton des Hous-sayes was born near Rouen, November 17, 1727, and died at Paris, August 20, 1783. The greater part of his life was passed at Rouen, in the employment of teaching; and he was uniformly distinguished as one of the most active and enlightened members of the Academy of the Palinods. He came to reside at Paris and the Sorbonne about the year 1776.

The Abbé Cotton des Hous-sayes conceived the project of a grand bibliographical work, which was to appear under the title, *Histoire Littéraire Universelle*, or *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*,

the plan of which may be found in the *Année Littéraire* for 1780, and in the *Journal des Savants* for 1781; but the project was never executed. The Abbé has left behind him only some eulogies and a few poetical pieces, which are contained in the printed collections of the Academy of Rouen.

The following discourse is perhaps the most finished of his works. It seems, in fact, scarcely possible to bring together more happily so many thoughts in so limited a space, and not less difficult to present them with greater precision and elegance. We have endeavoured to make our translation worthy of so perfect an original.



DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE
ON THE
DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS
OF A LIBRARIAN

TO receive a public testimony of esteem from an assembly of illustrious personages, whose merit places them above eulogium, has always appeared to me the highest and most glorious of distinctions. On learning that your suffrages had designated me as the guardian of your library, I experienced some difficulty, I must confess, in subduing a slight feeling of presumption; but reflection soon gave me to understand, that what you desired by this circumstance to honour and reward in me was

not successes, which my labours had not obtained, but some feeble efforts which you had deigned to appreciate.

When I reflect, indeed, on the qualifications that should be united in your librarian, they present themselves to my mind in so great a number, and in such a character of perfection, that I distrust my ability not only to enumerate, but also to trace a true picture of them; for it cannot be denied, gentlemen, that the Society of the Sorbonne, so justly celebrated in all Europe, or, more properly, throughout the world, for the depth no less than for the extent of its erudition, ought, as it has hitherto done, to present to the learned



world, in the person of its librarian, none other than one of those privileged men, capable of proving himself, upon occasion, instructed to the same degree in profane as in sacred learning,—familiar with the researches of the highest erudition, and with the productions of a more ephemeral and less elevated literature.

Your librarian, gentlemen, is in some sort your official representative. To him is remitted the deposit of your glory. To him is intrusted, as a duty, the important mission of maintaining, and even of increasing, if that be possible, and as far as his ability will admit,—of increasing, I repeat, your brilliant reputation when-

ever a stranger, illustrious by birth or his scientific merit, or doubly illustrious, perhaps, by both of these titles, comes to the Sorbonne with a curious, a learned, or even with a jealous eye, to examine the precious theological and literary treasures of your library, and to draw from it wherewith to increase his own riches. Thus, therefore, your librarian should be, above all, a learned and profound theologian; but to this qualification, which I shall call fundamental, should be united vast literary acquisitions, an exact and precise knowledge of all the arts and sciences, great facility of expression, and, lastly, that exquisite politeness which concili-

ates the affection of his visitors while his merit secures their esteem.

A librarian truly worthy of the name should, if I may be permitted the expression, have explored in advance every region of the empire of letters, to enable him afterwards to serve as a faithful guide to all who may desire to survey it. And though it is by no means my intention to give the preference above all other sciences to the science of bibliography, which is nothing more than an exact and critical acquaintance with the productions of the intellect, it will nevertheless be permitted me to consider this science as the forerunner of all the others,—as their

guide, who is to light them with his torch,*—nearly as a devoted and dutiful son precedes his father, to secure and facilitate his progress by throwing light upon his path. Thus the superintendent of a library, whatever be its character, should be no stranger to any department of learning: sacred and profane literature, the fine arts, the exact sciences, all should be familiar to him. A diligent and indefatigable student, ardently devoted to letters, his sole and abiding aim should be to make sure their advancement. Especially should the superintendent of such a library as yours,—which is not, by right, designed for the public,—if he desires to increase the

reputation of the illustrious society which he represents,—if he also desires to give proofs of its devotion to learning—receive all its visitors whether scholars or the simply curious, with an assiduous attention so polite and kindly, that his reception shall appear to each one the effect of a distinction purely personal. He will never seek to steal away from the notice of all into some solitary or unknown retreat. Neither cold nor heat, nor his multiplied occupations, will ever be to him a pretext for evading the obligation he has contracted to be a friendly and intelligent guide to all the scholars who may visit him. Forgetting himself, on the contrary,

and laying aside all occupations, he will lead them forward with a cheerful interest, taking pleasure in introducing them to his library; he will examine with them all its parts and divisions; every thing precious or rare that it may contain he will himself put before them. Should a particular book appear to be even of passing interest to one of his guests, he will quickly seize the occasion, and obligingly place it at his service; he will even, moreover, have the delicate attention to lay open before him all the books relating to the same subject, in order to make his researches easier and more complete. When parting from the stranger whom he has just

received, he will not fail to thank him for his visit, and to assure him that the institution will always feel honoured by the presence of a man whose labours cannot but contribute to its renown. The custodian of a literary deposit should especially guard himself against that unfortunate disposition which would render him, like the dragon in the fable, jealous of the treasures entrusted to his keeping, and lead him to conceal from the inspection of the public riches which had been brought together solely with the view of being placed at its disposition. What, moreover, would be the object of these precious collections, gathered at so great expense by for-

tune or by science, if they were not consecrated, according to the intention of their generous founders, to the advancement, the glory, and the perfection of science and literature?

But that a library may fully attain the end of its foundation,—that it may be in reality useful, and useful with equal certainty and facility,—it should be administered by a librarian distinguished for soundness of judgment no less than for the readiness and accuracy of his memory. Men would love to find in him, not that vain and imperfect bibliographical knowledge that attaches itself merely to the surface, much less the narrow preferences inspired by the spirit

of party, or those exclusive predilections that border upon mania; but an erudition at once ample and considerate, which has solely in view the advancement of knowledge, and which is ever able to distinguish, with equal taste and accuracy, original works that are worthy to be proposed as models, from those equivocal productions justly condemned to forgetfulness for their mediocrity. He will therefore not admit indiscriminately every book into his collection, but will select such only as are of genuine merit and of well-approved utility; and his acquisitions, guided by the principles of an enlightened economy, will be rendered still more valuable by

the substantial merits of an able classification. It is impossible, in fact, to attach too much importance to the advantages resulting from an intelligent and methodical order in the arrangement of a library. Of what utility would be the richest treasures if it were not possible to make use of them? Wherefore this complete arsenal of science, if the arms it keeps in reserve are not within reach of those who would wield them? And if, as is said, books are *the medicine of the soul*, what avail these intellectual pharmacopoeias, if the remedies which they contain are not disposed in order and labelled with care?

In thus considering, gentlemen, all the various attainments

that should characterize a librarian, will any one now wonder at the consideration which has ever been, and still is, accorded to men honoured with this title? Will he wonder to see at Rome, at the head of the Library of the Vatican, a learned Cardinal, equally distinguished for his immense erudition, and for superior merit in every department? Will he be surprised, in short, that in all ages, and even in our own time, the greater part of the scholars charged with the administration of libraries have shone with so much brilliancy in the empire of letters? And if I wished to give to my words the authority of example, I should have to name here only a few

of those who have preceded me in the walk that has just been opened to me; I should content myself with citing the name of the venerable man whose place I supply, and whose retirement, caused by infirmities, inspires you with such poignant regrets. But for fear of exposing myself to the reproach of adulation,—though my praise would be but the expression of truth,—I shall endeavour to be silent. I shall not attempt further to lay open before you, as Naudé formerly did, the particular catalogue of librarians who rendered themselves distinguished; but you will at least permit me to recall to you the names of the illustrious Cardinals Quirini and

Passionei; † that of Naudé, ‡ who deserves particular mention, that of Muratori, § that admirable prodigy of learning, whose writings in every department of learning would of themselves alone form a library; and, finally, the name of Franck, || whose *Catalogue of the Library of Bunau* has always seemed to me the first and most perfect of all the works devoted to bibliography.

Thus, gentlemen, when the numerous duties of the librarian, and the consideration habitually attached to that title, present themselves to my mind, I have been surprised, as I still am, at having been the object of your suffrages; and my surprise is

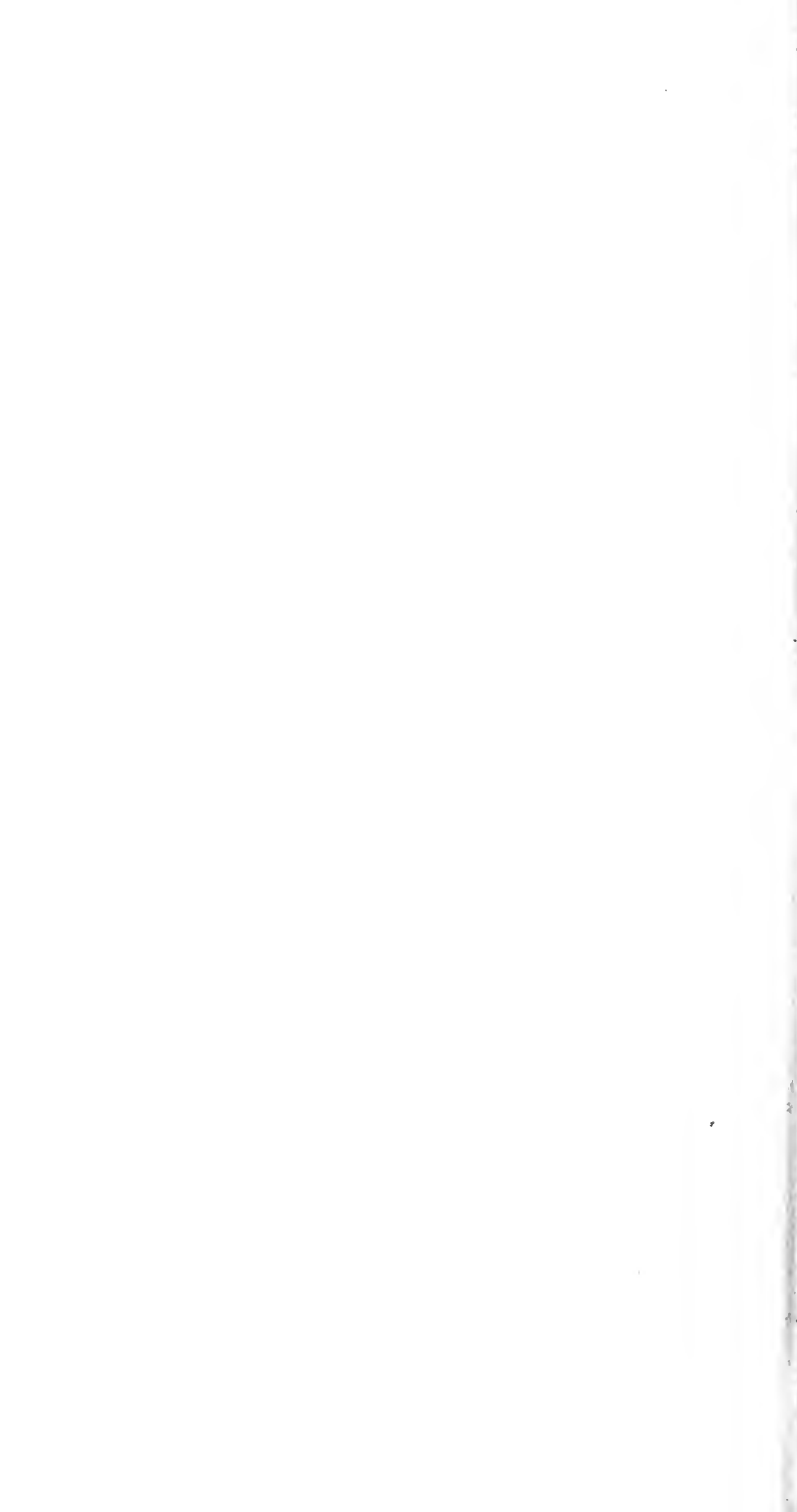
increased when I reflect that a single circumstance was the cause of the honourable preference which you have been pleased to accord me: I mean the assiduity with which I visited your library, during a spring and summer, for the purpose of silently selecting from it the documents needed to conduct to their conclusion some theological and literary labours, which I shall consider brought almost to perfection if they result in causing me to appear even in a moderate degree worthy of the honours which you have been pleased to confer upon me.

I therefore truly appreciate, gentlemen, all the honour of the glorious burden which you have

just imposed upon me ; but I feel, at the same time, how much it is beyond my strength, as well by its own nature as by the duties which circumstances may further add to it. But I venture to hope that your kindness will sustain my weakness; I shall have to support me your counsels, which I shall ever make it a duty to follow. Your spirit, your hands even, I am fain to believe, will aid me in arranging, in ornamenting, in maintaining, in enlarging your library; and what remains to me yet of vigour, what remains to me yet of a life which is advancing rapidly to its decline, I have firmly resolved shall be devoted to the task of proving my-

self in all respects worthy of the honours which you have been pleased to confer upon me, and the confidence you have placed in me, of which I trust you will never have cause to repent. Thus, gentlemen, all my cares, all my efforts, all my studies, will be devoted to the sole object of proving the deep gratitude with which your goodness has inspired me, of which I shall never lose the remembrance.

NOTES



NOTES

* *Notitia librorum est dimidium studiorum, et maxima eruditionis pars exactam librorum habere cognitionem.*

“*An acquaintance with books abridges by one-half the path of knowledge; and he is already well advanced in learning who knows with exactness the works that contain it.*” — Gaspar Thurmann, quoted by the Abbé Rive, “*Prospectus d’un ouvrage publié par souscription,*” page 59, notes.

† These two Cardinals were both librarians of the Vatican, and both foreign members of the French Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-lettres.

Quirini, or rather Querini, was born at Venice, March 30, 1680, and died January 6, 1759. His eulogy, by Lebeau, may be found in volume xxvii of “*Memoires de l’Academie des Inscriptions.*”

Passionei (Dominick)—born December 2, 1682, deceased July 5, 1761—succeeded *Querini* in the office of librarian of the Vatican. He was a man passionately devoted to letters, and somewhat vehement in character. At the conclave of 1758, he was on the point of being elected Pope: he had obtained eighteen votes; but the fears inspired by the inequality of his temper caused him to be set aside. His eulogy may be found in volume xxxi of "*Mémoires de l'Académie.*"

‡ *Naudé (Gabriel)*, a learned bibliographer, who may be regarded as in fact the creator of the Mazarine Library, was born at Paris, February 2, 1600, and died in the prime of his life, July 29, 1653. Some particulars concerning him, equally curious and reliable, may be found in a work by *M. Petit-Radel*, entitled "*Recherches*

sur les Bibliothèques Anciennes et Modernes" (Paris, 1819, 8vo). Naudé was the dearest and most constant friend of the learned and caustic Guy-Patin; and, such an intimacy existing, it is difficult to explain how he could be the eulogist of the Saint Bartholomew. "Le Sage dit, selon les gens, etc."

§ *Muratori* (Louis-Antoine) was born October 21, 1672, in the duchy of Modena, and died January 23, 1750. This indefatigable scholar left sixty-four works, which form a collection of thirty-six volumes quarto, published at Arezzo, 1767-80; or a selection of forty-eight volumes octavo, published at Venice, 1790-1810.

|| *Franck* or *Franke* (Jean-Michel) was born in 1717, in Upper Saxony, and died June 19, 1775. His "Catalogue de la Bibliothèque du Comte de Bunau," Leipsic, 1750-6, in seven vol-

umes quarto, is a masterpiece of patience and bibliographical learning. Unfortunately for science, this work was not wholly completed. Franck merits in every respect the praise bestowed upon him by the author of the Discourse; and it would be gratifying if all the editors of catalogues—though it would be too much to exact of them the power of this able bibliographer—would at least take him for a model before commencing their work.







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