Public Library Movement in Great Britain

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INTRODUCTION.

The history of public libraries may be said to date in England from the fourteenth century. Doubtless, libraries of some sort existed long before that time but it is certain that very little is recorded of those earlier institutions, which belonged to the ages before the revival of learning. Devastated as all Europe was, by its barbaric invasion, learning was not at all regarded and even in the fourteenth century England had very little to boast of in regard to libraries of any kind.

EARLY COLLECTIONS.

About the earliest collections formed were those of the monasteries. Whether the collections thus formed were of any use or not is a question but it is certain that we owe to those old monks, (our earliest librarians) who spent their lives in collecting and illuminating MSS. a debt of gratitude for their laborious and dexterous work. While books were of necessity written by slow and painful labour, large libraries were few and belonged exclusively to these monasteries and a few wealthy corporations.

But every age produced learned and inquisitive men by whom books were highly prized and industriously collected. To Richard D'Aungerville, Bishop of Durham, also called Richard of Bury, belongs the honor of having made the first collection of any consid-
erable number of books, (1333-45). Always an enthusiastic collector
and a great traveler, he succeeded in amassing what in that day
must have deserved to be called a noble collection. His greatest
honor to honorable memory, however, lies in the fact that he not
only collected books but he gave them unstintedly to Durham College
of Oxford to be used by the students. Books were lent freely to
scholars of the Hall but to other students only provided there was
a duplicate copy, in either case, the borrower giving security for
the safe return of the book.

THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY AND THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING.

During the fifteenth century, the monasteries, the universities, a rich guild here and there and the Corporation of London
seem to have been almost the only owners of libraries in Britain.
But the invention and rapid spread of the art of printing with movable metal types, the diffusion of classical learning and the free
spirit of inquiry awakened by the Reformation contributed to the
multiplication and cheapening of books and the enlargement and es-
tablismoment of libraries.

Princes and great nobles began to form collections. Reformers
gathered about them the works of Luther, Erasmus and Melanchthon.
Professional men likewise formed libraries of law and medicine.
Sometimes the owner of a large library would bequeath it to his
church or to his professional brothers to form the nucleus of a
library.

However, up to the time of the Reformation very little had been
accomplished. The most prominent among the secular leaders of the
English Reformation, as well as a few among the clerical leaders
were far more notable for the harm they did to the cause of liter-
ture than the good. The suppression of monasteries during the reign
of the Tudors offered a good opportunity for the establishment of public libraries but none were established. The cause was advocated by church dignitaries but all in vain. When the Reformation introduced new relations between the priests and the people, the churches came to be the libraries of the laity. It was necessary that those whose lives were to be spent in teaching the people, should themselves continue to be taught by books.

A somewhat livelier germ of popular libraries was put into the ground when in 1537 an injunction was passed for the providing of Bibles in every parish church to be freely used by all parishioners. The deep rooted opposition of Henry VIII destroyed this germ in the very beginning but not before the people had a chance to show their appreciation, for they had flocked to the churches to read the Bibles, in such crowds that certain ones were chosen to read aloud to the others.

EARLIEST FREE TOWN LIBRARIES.

In the beginning of the 17th century fellow citizens began to bequeath their private libraries to city corporations and thus formed the earliest free town libraries. One such was founded in 1608 at Norwich and it is the oldest city free library with a continuous history down to the present day. Five years later provision was made by Dr. Toby Matthew, Archbishop of York and by Robert Redwood to establish a city library at Bristol. This library, opened in 1615, at the present day accessible in the Central Free Library of that city. Each of these libraries was limited for a time to the use of a private library society.

Numerous grammar school libraries were also founded late in the 16th and early 17th centuries.
THE FIRST PUBLIC LIBRARY.

The question which was the first public library in England, is a question of much controversy. Mr. John Taylor, chief librarian of the Bristol public library, has taken the defense of Bristol. He says, "Tristol might claim the honor of having founded a public library in her midst two centuries earlier than the date of Chetham's library" and also that, "a second public library was established in Bristol in 1613 or forty years previous to that of Manchester." He adds, "In the upper apartment of an old church which served as a cottage and library of a fraternity of semi-monastics, was committed the custody of the civic archives and they kept records of local and public events and acts." This society was called the Kalendars and was re-established in 1464 by John Bishop of Worcester. On all festival days, from seven till eleven, admission was freely allowed to all students and the prior, who lived in the house and had charge of the books, explained difficult passages and gave a public lecture once a week.

A library founded in London by the famous Richard Whittington and William de Bury, about 1420, also claims to be the oldest public library. If Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, the illustrious book thief, had not carried away this library in 1550, it would have been the oldest municipal library in the country. The destruction of this library by Somerset is but a fair example of what was done in respect to libraries throughout England.

Also we read that the fine old library instituted by Humphrey Chetham in Manchester in 1653 might be said to be the first free library in England. At least it is the first library to have an unbroken record of public use and its store of antiquarian books and valuable MSS. justly make it the pride of Manchester. It is today
almost the identical library it was three centuries ago. Although situated in the heart of the busy city's thoroughfare, yet on entering, its antiquity and quietness take you miles away and centuries back.

EARLY TRACTS RELATING TO LIBRARIES.

A matter of almost equal interest is the discovery in 1892 by the librarian of the Wigan public library of a tract issued in 1699 entitled, "An Overture for the founding and maintaining of Libraries in every Paroch throughout this Kingdom". The author has been identified as the Rev. James Kirkwood, a minister at Minto; so undoubtedly the kingdom referred to is Scotland. In this tract he points out the usefulness of parochial libraries and urges the authorities to secure the establishment of such in each parish, proposing that after a suitable place had been provided and placed under the superintendence of the school master, that the minister should send in all his private books and be paid for the same by an annual tax on the income of the parish.

A second tract, the property of the Advocates' library of Edinburgh, printed in 1702, is entitled "A Copy of a letter annexed a project for erecting a library in every Presbytery or at least County in the Highland". According to the rules, the books were to be kept under lock and key. Some of the books could be lent to approved preachers, school masters and students. Only two books could be drawn at a time and no book could be kept more than six weeks. The borrower was required to deposit a sum, one fourth more than the value of the book, as a guarantee for its safe return. When we read these tracts and learn that the question of libraries was agitated so clearly and forcibly three hundred years ago, we wonder that the wants of the country which were recognized so long ago,
even now have not yet infected more than a comparatively limited number of their country-men. However, these tracts were not without results for in 1704 the General Assembly approved the project and adopted the rules "About the ordering and preserving the libraries in the Highlands and Islands".

EARLY LEGISLATION AFFECTING PAROCHIAL LIBRARIES.

Dr. Bray, founder of the society for the Propagation of the Gospel did much in the interest of libraries in England. It was due to his influence that, "An Act for the better Preservation of Parochial Libraries in that part of Great Britain called England", was passed in 1709. From the year 1704 until his death he established all of these libraries and his work was continued after his death by his associates who added up to 1807, 78 parochial and 35 lending libraries. Not much interest was taken in the matter, however, but the seed they sowed took root later.

EARLY SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARIES.

Subscription libraries began to be formed as early as 1725 in Edinburgh and 1740 in London and other populous places but they were limited to the use of the local gentry, professional men and the more prosperous trades-men, but subsequently they formed models for the Mechanics Institutes which brought the advantages of public libraries to the smaller trades-men and artisans. Many of these subscription libraries still exist under the names of Lyceums and Athenaeums.

THE FIRST TRAVELING LIBRARIES.

In 1817 Mr. Samuel Brown of East Lothian introduced a new feature in library progress, that of traveling libraries. His plan was to provide boxes containing 50 volumes and to allow them to
circulate from village to village, each box to remain two years and to be exchanged at the end of that time. At first the libraries were quite free but financial necessities finally compelled subscriptions. The scheme was a very great success and was copied by many other places and later by different countries, out of which movement, the traveling library system probably originated and grew.

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES.

One of the earliest Mechanics' Institutes was formed by George Birkbeck in London in 1824. At first these institutions were established for the technical education of the mechanics in their trades but the original purpose was soon forgotten and they developed into social institutions, including in nearly every case a collection of books. This movement spread and grew rapidly and in 1849 there were 400 of these institutions possessing from 300,000-400,000 volumes, with an annual circulation of more than a million. In many cases these Mechanics' Institutes formed the nucleus for a public library. The subscription price of the former tended to restrict the membership somewhat.

STATE OF AFFAIRS PREVIOUS TO 1850.

By the middle of the 19th century it was apparent to many that if the public libraries were to be popularized, some new machinery must be employed. The people began to realize that England was more defective than any other country in good libraries. Paris alone, at that time, had more good libraries than all of Great Britain.

Thomas Carte prefixes to one of his works these lamenting words: "There is scarce a great city in those parts of Europe, where learning is at all regarded, that is so destitute of a good public
library as London”.

The British Museum was only patronized by students and the mass of the people looked upon it as a sort of show place. There were also many good private and university libraries but all these were of little moment to the people. Besides libraries for the learned and those who aspired to be learned, other collections were needed for the other class of people to whom such an ambition was unknown. However, there were a few people who were far-sighted enough to realize the want but how to arouse public interest in the matter was a difficult problem.

The attention of the people was again called to the fact, that England was way behind other countries in library progress by a report made by Mr. Edward Edwards, one of the foremost agitators of library progress, on the conditions of public libraries in Europe and the United States. This paper was read before the Statistical Society of London in 1847 and printed in their Journal Aug. 20, 1848.

This report revealed some startling facts. Of the 363 public libraries then in Europe, Great Britain and Ireland claimed 28 while France had 107. Comparing the aggregate number of volumes in those libraries with the aggregate population of the cities which contained them, we find in Great Britain and Ireland, 43 volumes to every 100 inhabitants; in France, 126; in Bavaria, 547; in Denmark, 412; in Wurtemberg, 716; and in Brunswick, 2353. Comparing the number of volumes in the libraries of some of the chief European capitals with their respective populations we find in Weimar, 803 volumes to every 100 inhabitants; in Munich, 750; in Copenhagen, 465; in Stuttgard, 452; in Dresden, 432; in Florence, 312; in Rome, 306; in Berlin, 162; in Paris, 145; in Venice, 142; in Milan, 135; in Edinburgh, 116; in Brussels, 100; in Dublin, 49; and in London, 20.
Thus we see that Brussels is five times better provided in this respect than London; Paris, 7 times; Dresden, 21 times; Copenhagen, 23 times; Munich, 37 times; and the little city of Weimar, 40 times.

An immediate result of this report was the circulation in all parts of the United Kingdom and in the chief cities of the continent, of a series of questions respecting the management, funds, extent and result of public library work, which were responded to by a mass of information that far exceeded all hopes of the seekers, and the facts thus collected were laid before Mr. Ewart's committee in the spring of 1849. This report of Mr. Edwards, followed by the circulating questions, seemed to bring the question to a climax and give the movement a powerful impulse in the right direction.

All these inquiries brought to light some interesting facts, namely: that the number of free public libraries within the United Kingdom was in extreme disproportion to its wealth and resources; that there was a wide spread and growing conviction on the part of the public, that more public libraries were needed and would be largely used; that the rules and regulations of many existing libraries stood in need of revision, in order to make them more freely accessible to the people; that there were some of these libraries, a considerable part of whose funds was already provided by the public. It was very evident from the foregoing conclusions that a revival must take place. These reports aroused the interest of many public spirited men and they began to realize that England was greatly in need of libraries freely accessible to the public.

Mr. Edwards was always one of the most enthusiastic and earnest workers, which the movement has ever known and his name will always be remembered as one of the first to arouse interest in the subject and we owe him a debt of gratitude which can never be paid.
To Mr. William Ewart, whose attention was attracted by this report we owe another debt of gratitude. His name should be enrolled upon the list, as one of England's greatest benefactors. He took up the question of public libraries at a very early date and all his life he was an enthusiastic devotee to the cause. All during his parliamentary career he was ever ready to lend his services to the public good but above all we must remember him as the author of the Public Libraries Act of 1850. His work in connection with this bill was not by any means light and the struggle he had to secure its passage provides one of the many examples of how often the House of Commons has objected to bills, to which, after they have been passed, it has given unstinted praise. Then Mr. Ewart proposed that British municipalities should be empowered to build libraries as well as to make sewers and to supply gas, and to levy a local rate for bringing books within the reach of all, the rich and the poor, he found, as all reformers have found, that his prospect of success lay in dealing piecemeal with the subject.

Mr. Ewart had already conferred eminent service on the public by securing the passage of the Museum Act in 1846, an act closely allied and leading up to the Public Libraries Act. This so called Museum Act enabled town councils, in towns having a population of 10,000 or more, to levy a small rate to establish museums of science and art for the benefit of the public. All that the 1850 bill proposed was to extend the privileges of the Museum Act to the establishment of public libraries also.

**ORIGIN OF THE EWART BILL OF 1850.**

As to the actual origin of the Ewart bill of 1850 there has been some interesting discussion. In one of the class rooms of the Government School of Design in the Royal Manchester Institute, on
a winter's morning in 1844, two friends were talking and warming themselves by the fire. They were Mr. George Jackson and Mr. George Wallis, both employed in the school at that time, Mr Jackson being the honorable secretary and Mr. Wallis, the head master, afterwards keeper of the art collection at South Kensington Museum. Mr Jackson urged Mr. Wallis to prepare a paper on the value of museums as a means of improving public taste. Mr. Wallis urged that Mr. Jackson was the proper person to prepare such a paper and after a friendly contention, it was decided that Mr. Jackson should prepare the paper with the help of Mr. Wallis. The result was a paper, entitled, "The means of improving public taste" and it was read at a meeting held in the Royal Manchester Institute Nov.15, 1844, followed by a discussion. So much interest was manifested that it was proposed to hold a public meeting for further consideration of the subject. Such a meeting was held November 30, 1844 in the theatre of the Manchester Athenaeum, the late Richard Cobden, M.P. taking the chair. Among those present was Mr. Joseph Brotherton, M.P. who was deeply interested and he proposed to draft a bill to empower corporations and governing bodies of large towns to establish museums and to support them by a penny rate and he volunteered to lay the matter before Mr. Ewart. The suggestion was carried out and on March 6, 1845, Mr. Ewart moved in the House of Commons for leave to introduce such a bill, with the result that, "An Act for encouraging the establishment of museums in large towns", was passed. But the act was practically a dead letter and Mr. Ewart repealed this Act in 1850.

THE EWART BILL OF 1850.

Due to the united efforts of Mr. Brotherton and Mr. Ewarts, who had been agitating the question for some time in the House of
Commons, a select committee was appointed 23rd of March, 1849 to consider the best means of extending the establishment of free public libraries, especially in large towns in Great Britain and Ireland. This committee consisted of Mr. Ewart, Viscount Ebrington, Mr. Charteris, Mr. Bunbury, Mr. Disraeli, Sir Harry Verney, Mr. George Alexander Hamilton, Mr. Hilnes, Mr. Goulburn, Mr. Thickenesse, Mr. Mackimon, Mr. Kershaw, and Mr. Cardwell. They held several meetings and Mr. Ewart was the prime mover.

Their report is forcible and suggestive. They referred to Gibbon, who complained that, "the greatest city in the world was destitute of that useful instution, a public library and the writer who undertakes to investigate any large historical subject was reduced to the necessity of purchasing, for his private use, a numerous and valuable collection of books, which must form the basis of his work".

Questions were sent to public libraries in Russia, Germany, and other countries and finally on Feb. 14, 1850, Mr. Ewart moved the House of Commons for leave to introduce a bill for enabling town councils to establish public libraries by levying a rate on the general assessment of the town. The bill was introduced accordingly and reached its second reading March 13.

The opposition which it received goes to show that many of the members of the House of Commons had very little idea of the importance of the question and we can well understand that Mr. Ewart had, not only to overcome the bitter opposition of a few, but also to contend with the apathy and indifference of the many. He had to fight against the stubborn careless indifference as well as the persistent opposition. It was an extraordinary fact that this opposition came almost entirely from the side of the House, which
composed of country gentlemen, a greater part of them, no doubt, having received an education at one of the great universities.

The diffusion of education since the beginning of the century had been great and many had begun to feel the necessity of providing some means for carrying on a higher educational work. Mr. Ewart's effort gave a concrete form to an idea which was widely prevalent in the public mind. We might be surprised that such a bill, backed by the approval of such men as Ewart and Crotherton, should receive any opposition, but, we must remember that the British taxpayer objected on principle to any increase in his rates.

Although this bill of 1850 was simply to give a permissive power to town councils to levy a half-penny rate in the pound for establishment of public libraries and museums, it met with the most persistent opposition. Some of the evidence given is very interesting and amusing. Colonel Sillothorp said he would be happy to contribute his mite towards providing libraries and museums and proper recreation; but he thought that, however excellent food for the mind might be, food for the body was what was most wanted for the people. He did not like reading at all and hated it when he was at Oxford. He felt that the bill would increase the taxation of the people in times when it was not at all necessary. Another said: "They are parochial institutions and as such will not used by the better class of people and the rich would pay for supplying books to the working class. Why should the rich provide libraries for the poor and why educate other people's children. Others will reap the benefits for I have my own books. It is pauperizing the people".

"See Ogle, J. J. The Library, 1877, or, Greenwood, Thomas. Public libraries, ed. 4, 1854."
On the other hand they contended that, only well to do people who had leisure would be able to avail themselves of the use of a library, while the poorest rate payer would have to bear his share of the expense. Others raised the objection that the library tax would bear unequally upon the people. Some people did not care to read and others preferred to buy their own books. Others thought that the government had no legitimate functions except the protection of person and property. Such and other reasons show us the trend of the opposition and it is very singular that such objections should come from men who were intelligent and educated and who held the public welfare in their hands.

The bill went through dozens of discussions and six formal divisions before the opposition ceased and it did not pass the House of Commons until the end of July. In the House of Lords it received better treatment and, be it said to their credit that, it was carried without any opposition whatever and on the 14th of Aug., 1850 it received the Royal assent.

Its chief provisions were as follows: 1. "Town councils were permitted, if they thought it well to do so, to put to the burgesses the question- Will you have a library rate levied for providing a public library? The proposal was however limited to a population of not less than 10,000 inhabitants within the municipal limits and required the affirmative vote of 2/3 of its rate payers.

2. In the event of the rate payers deciding that question in the affirmative the rate so levied was to be limited to a half penny in the pound on the ratable property.

3. The product of any rate so levied was to be applied (1) to the

#See Greenwood, Tho as Public Libraries], ed. 4, p. 69.
erection or adaptation of buildings, together with contingent expenses, if any, for the site; (i) to current charges of management and maintenance.

4. Town councils were then empowered to borrow money on the security of the rates of any city or borough which shall have adopted the Act.

In all respects it was simply a permissive law, inefficient and incomplete but never-the-less containing the germ of much good to be developed in the future. This act of 1615 applied only to England and included only corporate towns. In 1853 similar legislation was provided for Scotland and Ireland. The law for Scotland was altered the very next year by an act dated July 31st., which is notable as the first admission into library law of the "penny rate in the pound".

The act of 1850 only provided for the building and site; the provision for books was to be a matter of future legislation. For their supply of books they depended upon some good philanthropist. There might be a library but it should contain no books bought from the municipal funds. They might even incur a lavish expenditure for buildings and fixtures but not one penny was to be spent for books.

MANCESTER- THE FIRST CITY TO OPEN A PUBLIC LIBRARY.

Manchester, the city of wealth and industry and the fourth place to adopt the Act, was the first to open a public library. It is not surprising that such an influential city should take the lead and if every place had had a public spirited and enterprising mayor like Sir John Potter, they might all have had libraries long before they did.

It was Sir John Potter, who started the large subscription
Fund while yet the bill was pending in the House of Commons. By his own personal exertions, he accumulated 4,300 pounds which eventually grew to be nearly 13,000 pounds, and to Manchester alone belongs the credit of establishing the first popular lending and reference library, which was opened on the 2nd of Sept. 1852 with solemn impressive ceremonies in the midst of a brilliant and intellectual assemblage. The birth and inauguration of a new educational institution was destined to influence the whole country and, priced as it was by the presence of many eminent authors, it was an event to which we may well look back. Among the noted speakers present at the dedication were the Earl of Shaftesbury, Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Richard Monckton Milnes, John Bright M.P. and Charles Knight. Then and there literature was acknowledged to be a power in the land and henceforth Manchester was to lead the way in emphasizing the use and blessings of good books. The Manchester Courier in speaking of the occasion said, "In our remembrance, Manchester has never yet had so rich an intellectual banquet, producing so fair a promise of social amelioration".

RESULTS OF THE 1850 ACT.

Although Manchester was the first town to open a public library under the Act of 1850, Norwich was the first to adopt the Act only two months after its passage by a vote of 150 against 7; a very good beginning indeed and this same year Brighton obtained a local Act. The following year Winchester adopted the Act and in 1852, Bolton, Manchester and Oxford added their names to the list while Liverpool obtained a local Act. In 1853, Blackburn, Sheffield, Cambridge, and Ipswich accepted the Act. In the same year the Act was adopted at Ardrie, the first town in Scotland to take
advantage of the Act. The next year appears to have been a blank but in 1855, adoptions were recorded for Maidstone and Kidderminster and the same year the Irish Act was adopted by Cork, though not until many years later were the rates actually applied to the support of a library. Including the two towns which had established libraries under the Museums Act and the two which had obtained local Acts, there had been in all 17 adoptions up to the middle of 1855, the time of the first amendment, while not more than five places had rejected the Act.

The limitation of the first library Act was universally recognized, for the looked for philanthropist did not come forward in many cases and, unless the town obtained a local Act, it was often useless to even consider the question. The result was that Parliament had again to be appealed to and on the 20. of March 1854, Mr. Bright again moved for leave to introduce a bill to amend and extend the Act, but the new Act, which in its main features is the same as the existing Act today, did not receive the Royal assent until the 30th of July, 1855 and is entitled, "An Act for further promoting the establishment of free public libraries and museums in municipal towns and for extending it to towns governed under local improvements Acts and to Parishes".

The principal changes brought about by the new Act were: 1. Population limit was reduced to 5,000. 2. Province extended (A) to districts having a Board of improvement or any local board of like powers (F) to parishes or combination of parishes. 3. Rate raised from half penny to penny. 4. Took away restrictions as to applicability of product of rates, making funds available for books, newspapers, etc. This Act remained the principal Act of England and Wales until 1892 and was without amendment for more than 11 years.
It is unnecessary to give complete statistics of the libraries established under the new Act. Hereford adopted it two months after its passage making in all 16 free libraries, each with a stock of about 120,000 volumes, and an annual use of about 650,000 volumes. Subscriptions to the amount of 26,000 pounds had been received for providing books for libraries and specimens for museums.

Thirteen out of the eighteen towns which had adopted the Act, had levied rates producing 1,000 pounds for the support of the libraries and museums. In 1856 Birkenhead, Leamington, and the parishes of St. Margaret and St. John at Westminster adopted the Acts. Walsall and Lichfield in 1851 and Canterbury, which had adopted the Museum Act of 1848, adopted the new Act in 1858. In 1860, Bridgewater, Birmingham, Northampton and Stockport all adopted the Act; Ennis also adopted the Act the same year but ever to this day it is without its free public library. The year 1868 added to the list, the name of Jerusalem and 1865 that of Darwick, and Oldham. secured a local Act the same year. In 1866, Dundee, the second place in Scotland adopted the Scotch Act of 1854, while Paisley, the third place, followed in 1867. Sunderland (England) obtained local powers in 1866.

To sum up in a few words the result of these first two Acts, libraries had been established in about 25 different places, not including those established under the Museum or local Acts. About a dozen places had rejected the Acts and some of these reconsidered the question and adopted the Act before 1866.

The development was gradual but it must have been most gratifying to the founders of the movement to watch these institutions spreading throughout the great centres of population. In some of the places they were ready and eager for the adoption of the Acts, while in others they had to fight the most bitter and determined
opposition ever offered to any popular movement. Some people had believed that those libraries were institutions of the most violent sort and that they destroyed decency and self respect. Objections and imaginary fears had to be out lived but the mere fact, that almost every considerable town of any importance in England, had already adopted the Act, is enough to convince any one of the support they received from the public at large.

THE FIRST AMENDMENT AND ITS RESULT.

On the 27th of Feb. 1866, Mr. Evart and Mr. Dunlop introduced the first amendment, which removed the population limit; reduced the needful majority from 2/3 to 1/2; enlarged the power of cooperation among authorities; and authorized meetings to be called upon the requisition of any ten rate payers. This bill passed through both Houses without the slightest opposition and received the Royal assent on the 10th of Aug. 1866.

In 1875 Parliament furnished a return of the free public libraries, which had been established up to the end of 1868, and reported that, 46 adoptions, or local Acts equivalent thereto, had been obtained; 29 places had established 52 libraries, with nearly half a million volumes and a yearly use of 3,400,000 volumes for one year. To compare these figures with the results of a dozen years before, is interesting and instructive, but the progress thus indicated is slow in comparison with that of later years. A considerable cause of the later successes was the passing of the Elementary Education Act of 1870, but of all the Acts ever passed there is none which has done more quiet good, with less burden on the country, than the Public Libraries Act. Public libraries have begun to be a necessity and their establishment was hailed every where with enthusiasm and satisfaction.
Let us see what progress the movement had made up to the year 1870. As yet the movement had made but slight progress in Scotland, Ireland and Wales. In Scotland, Airdrie, Paisley, Dundee, Forfar, and Berwick alone had adopted the Act. As for Ireland, only Cork and Ennis in all that great country had taken a similar course. In Wales the two largest towns, Cardiff and Swansea, had availed themselves of library legislation; and in England, 24 out of the 40 counties were represented by libraries in the different towns. The 16 counties without libraries were: Cumberland, Westmorland, Lincoln, Rutland, Essex, Surrey, Wilts, Dorset, Cornwall, Gloucester, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Luton, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Bedford.

Library Legislation, 1870-1880.

It is unnecessary to deal at length with all of the different library Acts and amendments of which there are a large number. Each successive legislation marked a step in advance and step by step they overcame many of the earlier difficulties with which they had had to contend. One feature marked all the legislations: namely, the limit of the amount to be expended.

After the amendment Act of 1871, good and steady progress was made, although but one English county (Gloucester) was newly conquered, leaving 15 counties at the end of 1877 without a single library. Walford and Darwen dispute the honor of being the first to adopt the Act in that year. Bangor in Wales, Coleraine in Ireland, and Plymouth, Hereford, Bradford, and South Shields in England also adopted the Act that same year. Aberystwyth, Galashiels and Thurso adopted and four other places rejected the Act in 1872. In 1874, seven places declared their acceptances, viz: Bristol, Chester, Macclesfield, Willenhall, Heywood, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and Stockton-on-Tees. In 1875, Drierley Hill, Stoke-on-Trent, Barlas-
ton, Chesterfield and Southport adopted the Act; and in 1876, Portsmouth, Rendsworth, Smithwick, Rotherham, Wednestbury and Wigan joined the ranks. In 1877, Eiderford, Reading and Ashton Manor increased the number; Inverness adopting the Scotch Act.

In 1877 another amendment was passed extending the use of the penny rate; henceforth the penny library rate might be employed in Ireland so as to include schools of music and added to the Irish Act of 1855, the power of borrowing on a mortgage of the borough or town fund. Also the same year another Act was passed providing an alternative method of adopting the Act by "voting papers" and to allow of a limitation of the rate below "one penny" where ratepayers voted to that effect. These and subsequent Acts all passed through Parliament without debate or opposition. The earlier advocates of free libraries met with opposition which would now seem grotesque and ludicrous.

For nearly thirty years free public libraries had existed and as yet they had never been represented by any kind of a national organization. Parliamentary opposition to library legislation had now ceased and the time now seemed ripe to hold an international congress for the benefit of all those concerned in the administration of libraries, with a view of comparing library methods and increasing the usefulness of free public libraries. Mr. E.B.W. Nicholson, at that time librarian of the London Institute, in an article published in the Academy of the 27th Jan. 1877, urged the desirability of such a meeting. This was followed up by a correspondence with many librarians, a meeting and the appointment of a committee, with the result that, the first conference of librarians in Europe was held Oct.2-5, 1877 at London. Nearly every phase of library work was discussed and reference was also made to the formation of the
new Library Association of the United Kingdom, which resulted from this international gathering. Of the 139 libraries represented, Belgium contributed 1, Denmark 2, France 4, Italy 1, U. S. 13, and Great Britain and Ireland 113.

Another Parliamentary return appeared in 1876-'77 showing the progress since the date of the previous return. In the 57 places named there were 89 free libraries with considerably more than a million volumes and an annual issue of more than 5 millions, while the annual rates levied amounted to no less than 70,750 pounds. At the end of 1877, there had been 80 adoptions of the Public Libraries Act; 3 free libraries had been established under the Museum Act and 5 under local Acts, thus making in all 88 places which had acquired the legal right to establish free public libraries.

If it were not for the fact that, failure is often the seed of success, the result obtained during the four years from 1870-1874, might have proven very disheartening to the promoters of the cause. During those five years, 15 rejections were recorded, five of those places having previously rejected the Act one or more times. In many cases, the defeat was due to the fact of the universal dread of taxation; the rate payers were unwilling to willing to make the trifling sacrifice which the establishment of a public library would involve. Even the offer of splendid gifts, provided the Acts were adopted, failed to bring about a successful issue. In some cases political combines killed the adoption, but everywhere there was a vigorous and plucky fight on the part of the leaders of the movement. When the adoption of the Acts was defeated at Hastings, the opponents celebrated their victory by a banquet, at which they congratulated themselves on saving the parish a useless expense.

As a type of the kind of resistance which the friends of free
libraries had to contend with, the rejections at Edinburgh give us a good example. To go back a little in its history, the first attempt to adopt the Act was made in 1868. Although Mr. T.J. Boyd, the Lord Provost, was one of the most earnest promoters of the scheme, opposition was at once manifested and carried on with great vigor, chiefly by the shop-keepers and at the meeting which was held to consider the question, they defied all restraint and order, hissing and jeering at the proposal. Free or fair discussion there was none and when the vote was taken, the result showed 1100 against the proposal and 71 in favor. In 1881 the second attempt was made. Voting papers with "Yes" and "No" printed on them, were issued to the rate payers. Several days before the election was to take place, two huge bills, carried by sandwich-men, appeared on the streets bearing these words. "Rate payers! Resist this Free Library dodge, and save yourselves the burden of 6,000 pounds of additional taxation. Return your cards marked,"No." Be sure and sign your names." The opponents had a committee vigorously canvassing the city, while the friends of libraries had no organization at all. Out of more than 41,000 voters, more than 15,500 did not trouble to even return the voting papers. The result was 15,708 against and 7,619 for.

Returning now to the consideration of the progress of the movement the following adoptions were recorded;

1878, Wrexham, Folkestone, St. Albans, Dudley, Clitheroe, Preston, and Hawick.

1879, Richmond, Worcester, Stafford, and Blackpool.

1880, Devonport, Gateshead, Sligo, and Dunfermline.

1881, Kingston-on-Thames, Tamworth, Newark-on-Trent, Dundee, Halifax, Barnstaple, and Dunbarton.

1882, Tunbridge, Twickenham, Penrith, and Belfast.
1883, Ealing, Wimbledon, Cheltenham, Shrewsbury, Tipton, Portswich, Darlington, and Wandsworth.


1885, Truro, Poole, Yarmouth, Loughborough, Gunstall, Widnes, Hindley and Alloa.

1886, Gosport and Alverstoke, Weston-super-Mare, Laxton, Harrogate, Fulham, Lambeth, Edingburgh, and Douglas.

Thus in the ten years from 1876-86 we have 57 adoptions against the 28 rejections, 8 of which reversed their decisions in a very short time.

Library legislation during these last four years had been extended by the Act of 1884 and the Venx Acts of 1885 and 1886. The Act of 1884 provided that library authorities might accept Parliamentary grants in aid from the Committee of the Privy Council on Education, for purposes connected with the teaching of science and art, and made clear that buildings might be erected for public libraries, museums, schools for science, art galleries, schools for art, or for any of these objects. Where the Acts had been adopted for one of these purposes, others could be added without further proceedings, thus greatly extending the educational scope of the free public library and helping to bring into closer relationship all educational institutions.

THE JUBILEE YEAR.

1887, the Jubilee year, is noticeable for its great activity in library extension. No year witnessed so many adoptions as this year and although the objections numbered 15, they are well outweighed by the 50 adoptions.

The adoptions were, Welshpool, Pontypridd, Carnarvon, Queenborough, Sittingbourne, Southampton, Carlton(North)Leek, Hanwick,
Winford, Bentinck, Haughton, Middleton, Moss Side, Newton Heath (since absorbed into Manchester), Fleetwood, Dewsbury, Millom, Whitehaven, Pattersea, Bromley, Chelsea, Clapham, Clerkenwell, Hammersmith, Kensington, Putney, Rotherhithe, St. Martin-in-the-Field, Pathrores and Pathgar, Grangemouth, and Wick.

It is interesting to note the interest taken by the county of London during the Jubilee year. In no part of the kingdom had progress been so slow. The year 1886 records 1 adoption; 1883, 1; 1882, 2; and 1887, 10. The interest was still further accentuated by the passing of the Act of 1887 which gave power to any district to adopt the Acts on the lines of a parish. Sir John Lubbock said, "That the extension of free libraries in the metropolis had been much checked because the area prescribed under the law as it stood was the parish. Some of the metropolitan parishes were, of course, large and they constituted a very suitable area. Many, however, were very small and in them the parishioner's naturally felt, that if they established a free library, the whole expense would fall on them, while their neighbors would share the benefit".

A consolidating bill for Scotland was also carried that same year and is now the principle Act of that country.

Of course every one naturally felt very generous that year, both in purse and in thought and consequently, there were many noble subscriptions given for the promotion of the cause. It was indeed, a very favorable year for the establishment of libraries, nor is less credit due to the promoters for taking advantage of the state of public feeling and in no way could they more worthily have commemorated the occasion than by giving to and helping along this movement.

At the end of 1884 there had been 130 adoptions in the United
Kingdom. A Parliamentary return printed in 1885 records 251 libraries, 1,910,630 volumes, with an annual income of 120,337 pounds. The annual issues were more than ten millions, three times as many as in 1868. By the end of 1887, 176 places had adopted the Public Libraries Act.

**THE MOVEMENT FROM 1887-1892.**

It is unnecessary to deal at length with the legislation of the many different library Acts, some of which applied to England, some to Scotland and Ireland, and some to the whole of the United Kingdom while others affected particular towns. The history of the public library movement from 1887 down to 1892, the time of the consolidation of the Acts, is in many respects more remarkable than in any other equal period of earlier times. Opposition was encountered here and there, yet no less than 72 adoptions against 17 rejections, 9 of which had been rejected one or more times before, are to be chronicled. This is certainly a rapid and a satisfactory progress and it is very evident that a great forward movement had taken place within those five years. Libraries were no longer regarded merely as store-houses but they were becoming great centres of distribution. Great things had been accomplished already and it is probable that the public libraries had obtained a position and influence scarcely contemplated by their founders.

Each amendment made some improvement but the multitude of so many different Acts and amendments was very confusing and often misleading.

A Parliamentary return of 1890 records that 170 places possessed 468 libraries, 3,056,658 volumes and annually issued 12,380,508 volumes.
CONSOLIDATION OF 1892.

It had long been apparent that the different Acts needed to be consolidated and harmonized and the year of 1892 was a great year in the annals of public library legislation. The subject had often been discussed by the Library Association and matters were brought to a climax, when Mr. J.V.W. Macalister offered a prize for the best draft bill to consolidate and amend the Acts. The prize draft bill formed the basis of a long discussion at the next annual conference of the Library Association in 1890. Mr. Fanshawe, a Parliamentary draughts-man of high repute, was commissioned by the association to prepare a consolidating Bill, which was introduced a little later into Parliament by Sir John Lubbock and received the Royal assent the 27 of June 1892. This Act consolidated all the previous enactments and harmonized the conflicting provisions of the earlier law. Its provisions were restricted to England and Wales. Up to 1892 the Acts could only be adopted by a poll of the rate-payers taken by means of voting papers. By an amendment Act in 1893, this was altered so as to enable any urban district authority, without a poll of the rate-payers, to put the Acts in force, on certain conditions as to notice its being complied with. This Act did not extend to the city or county of London and in 1894, it was extended so as to include Scotland.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT OF 1894.

The Local Government Act of 1894 complicated matters not a little. Briefly some of its main issues were: That the Act could be adopted, (1) in an urban district by a resolution passed by the Urban District Council, (2) in a rural parish by the parish meeting, or, if demanded a poll of the voters by ballot, (3) in the city of
London, a metropolitan district, or a metropolitan parish by a poll of the voters by means of voting papers. The rate was not to exceed one penny except in the City of London, but may be fixed, by voting so, at 3/4d. or 1/3d. in the pound. Two or more neighboring parishes could combine to carry out the Acts.

An amendment Bill for Ireland in 1893, is to be noted, which is practically the same as that in England. Also several corporations, impressed with the insufficiency of a penny rate, obtained local Acts enabling them to levy lighter rates.

LONDON LIBRARIES.

Not-withstanding the general improvement in public sentiment towards free libraries, for a long time London remained most obdurate and unyielding in the adoption of the Acts. Place after place had, up to 1886, tried to carry the Acts and each time had met with failure so utterly disheartening that the movement seemed to have lost all its friends. Up to the end of 1886, only two parishes had adopted the Acts. It is difficult to explain how hard it is in the metropolis to get up any enthusiasm and still more a good subscription list for a special object. Ask a Londoner for a library subscription and he will show you a list, nearly as long as his face, of the yearly subscriptions he must pay. And again the adoption was opposed by many who were entirely ignorant of its meaning. The following conversation which took place in one of the libraries will show the kind of opposition they had to contend with.

Rate Payer- "Anything to pay"?
Attendant- "No, this is a free public library."
Rate Payer- (in amazement) "Good gracious! And can you read those books for nothing?"
Attendant- "All for nothing."
Rate payer— "And to think I was fool enough to vote against the libraries. By I don't believe half the people, who opposed the libraries, had any idea what their vote meant."

Another friend of the opposition party wrote to the Pall Mall Gazette, less than ten years ago, as follows: "I would submit some possible objections to the establishment of public libraries. 1. They are apt to become infectious centres of disease. 2. They are liable to break up the influence of the home. Reading in sullen silence is not the best training for the mind. 3. The well-to-do class can or ought to buy the periodicals they want for themselves."

Other contended that libraries cost fabulous sums and would bring the parish to the verge of bankruptcy.

For many years the friends of the cause had to fight against ignorance, apathy, indifference and prejudices but when the movement once did take root, its growth and development were very rapid and the supporters of the movement had every reason to feel proud of the development after the year 1886, although as yet London cannot compare her free public libraries with those of Paris and Berlin. It is interesting to compare the number of libraries established previous to 1886 with the number established later. The first adoption was in 1856 and 27 years elapsed before another adoption was recorded; then in 1886 there were two adoptions, making in all only four adoptions up to the year 1887. The year 1887, the Jubilee year, gave London a start in the right direction and that year, ten adoptions were recorded. From that time onward the movement made steady progress, each year conquering and overcoming some of the opposition, until, at the end of 1896, 37 out of the 67 parishes had established libraries. In this later day, political factions enter largely into the question and often times, when the mass of the people really
desire the libraries, they can not get them. Such is the case in many of the northern counties.

The London Government Act of 1833 is bound to speed the day when London will be fully equipped with district libraries and will become a great public library centre. According to the new Act, libraries will be administered by a committee of the Borough Councils instead of being governed by a library commission and the Boroughs Councils will also have the power to adopt the Acts. Another prominent feature is the grouping together of small parishes into separate municipalities.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF SCOTLAND.

Of the condition of libraries in Scotland previous to 1853, the date when library legislation came into operation in Scotland, there is not much to say, for public libraries were few and far between. The most important collections, those of the Universities, were only available to students, and the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh, except for reference purposes, was confined to the use of the faculty.

Town subscription libraries date as far back as 1763 but their circulation was very limited. As early as 1791, Mr. Walter Sterling, a merchant, founded a library but it was public only in name. At first the Acts were so limited as to render them practically useless for small towns but subsequent legislation modified the conditions somewhat and in 1866, the year of an important amendment, the movement began to progress more rapidly. Previous to this time there had been only one adoption that of Aidrie in 1856. In 1866, Dundee adopted the Act and after that the progress was more rapid and by the end of 1891, towns had adopted the Acts and only 3 rejections were recorded in the same length of time; a very good record
for bonnie Scotland. She may well be proud of the fact, that she is better supplied with small libraries than any other part of the United Kingdom and in some respects, she is ahead of England in library legislation. The consolidation Act of 1880 simplified matters wonderfully. Excepting the Edinburgh Public Libraries Assessment Act of 1867 and the Act of 1894, it is the only statute in operation in Scotland. In all, 43 Scottish towns have availed themselves of the Public Libraries Act.

The case of Glasgow, the second largest city in the empire, presents a particularly interesting example of stubborn resistance, for in no place in the United Kingdom had the organization been stronger than in Glasgow, yet in no place had the result been more disheartening. After the defeat of 1888, the editor of a very influential paper wrote. "It was again our mission to oppose, in the interests of heavy burdened rate payers, the public library." The absence of Glasgow from the list of adoptions is to be regretted. It is the only instance of a very large and important city, which has no rate supported library. In 1899 Glasgow obtained a special Act enabling libraries to be established. According to their scheme 8 branches, 5 reading-rooms, and 4 delivery stations are to be established at a cost of about 200,000 pounds. But it must not be assumed from this fact that it has no free public library, for such is not the case. They have the Mitchell Library, which is probably the largest of the Modern endowed free libraries in the United Kingdom.

In recording the history of the Public Library movement in Scotland, we must not forget to mention the name of Mr. Andrew Carnegie, who, by his many and generous gifts, has done much to advance the cause of public libraries. His first gift was in 1880 to Dun-
ferline, his native place and ever since then he has shown his
willingness and desire to continue the good work. The principle
places which have benefited by his generosity are Edinburgh (1886),
50,000 pounds; Aye (1890) 10,000 pounds; Dunfermline (1887), 8,000
pounds; Peterhead (1882-98), 4,000 pounds; Inverness (1890) 1,750
pounds; Aberdeen (1892-96), 2,000 pounds; Airdrie (1890), 1,000
pounds; Arbroath (1896) 1,000 pounds; Dumfries (1898) 10,000 pounds;
Tain (1900), 1,000 pounds. He has very recently given sums to
Maxwelltown, Stirling and Tarbat and libraries will soon be opened
in all three of these places.

WALES.

Wales has more municipal rate supported libraries in propor-
tion to its population than any of the other provinces. Statistics
show that while Wales has one municipal library for every 94,937
inhabitants,

England has only 1 for every 103,706 inhabitants.
Scotland 126,612
Ireland 276,764

Her progress has been steady and the movement is rapidly spreading.
The fact that she has no large cities makes the progress slower,
for often in a small town a penny rate will not yield enough to even
stock and maintain a library, to say nothing of the building. Up
to 1900, Wales had adopted the Acts in 25 places.

IRELAND.

Ireland is considerably behind the other countries in the li-
brary progress, but not in library spirit. Their great drawback is
the same as in Scotland, a penny rate does not yield enough to sup-
port the libraries and they have no generous benefactor to help them
alone, hence the movement does not spread very rapidly. In several places the Acts have been adopted but for lack of funds to make a beginning no steps could be taken to put them in operation. Up to the year 1900 they had recorded 23 adoptions.

LIBRARY PROGRESS 1896-1900.

By the end of 1896, between six and seven hundred libraries had been established in 434 different places in the United Kingdom. Every county in England with the exception of two small ones, viz. Rutland and Huntingdon, was represented by at least one library. Glasgow was the only town of any size which remained obdurate and unconquered. Not less remarkable than the increase in the number of public libraries which had been established during those last few years, is the generosity everywhere apparent in the establishment of libraries. The name of Mr. Andrew Carnegie and Mr. Passmore Edwards are to be chronicled as the most liberal of benefactors to the public library cause. Including the numerous smaller sums, the amount of the gifts during the years from 1890-96, will aggregate no less than three quarters of a million pounds.

At the end of 1900 the Acts had been adopted in 400 places in the United Kingdom. England now claims 309 adoptions, Wales 25, Scotland 43, and Ireland 23. Nearly 70 additions within three years is quite a remarkable progress as compared with that of earlier years but most of the obstacles which existed in those earlier days are now swept away and there is no reason why the progress should not be rapid. The fatal lack of funds is about the only barrier left in the way of library progress at the present day and that is often an unsurmountable one. The limitation of the library rate, imposed by Parliament, has forced many towns to rely upon the generosity of individuals. Reasons which existed in 1890-95 for such
legislation no longer hold good. Of course the towns may apply to Parliament for increased rating powers but the expense and trouble of an especial appeal is so great that many towns shrink from such a procedure. Hence it is to be hoped that a new amendment will contain a provision authorizing the local authorities to increase the local rate by a simple vote of the rate-payers.

CONCLUSION.

Great advances have been made in public library progress since 1850. The movement in its infancy progressed very slowly; but that is not always a bad sign and now during these later years, it is reaping the reward due the long and patient labor. The early years were marked by extreme caution and libraries were looked upon as mere store-houses; while now they are considered one of the necessities. It is manifest that in every thing relating to public libraries, their establishment, organization, management and equipment, a great forward movement has taken place.

In conclusion it remains but to congratulate the United Kingdom on its glorious achievements in library progress and to wish it the greatest of success in the future. Not alone is it to be congratulated on the increasing number of libraries but also let us congratulate it on the extent and variety of their work and on the good results which they have achieved in the face of the most bitter opposition. No other educational movement has ever been assailed so bitterly and none has even reached more people and accomplished more good. Later influences have had their share in the development of the public library movement but its early history is wrapped up in the names of Edward Edwards and William Ewart. The founders of the movement had broad views and it is to them that we are indebted for
that grand and ever lasting institution, the Free Public Library, an institution supported by and giving aid to all classes and conditions of people.
READING LIST ON THE PUBLIC LIBRARY MOVEMENT IN GREAT BRITAIN.

CREEEDLAND, W. P.


An interesting contribution to the history of the library movement in Great Britain. A record of the library development in Manchester, dealing with the organization, administration and characteristics of the various libraries.

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Free-Town libraries. 262p. pl. 8vo.

Lond. 1869. Trübner. 21s.

A history of the formation, management, and growth of the free-town libraries in Great Britain, France, Germany, and America.


A very interesting account of the modern libraries of England, Scotland and Ireland, giving the main details in their history, organization and development.

Memoirs of libraries. 2 v. 8vo.

Lond. 1859. Trübner. 48s.
This book is divided into three parts. Part 1, describes the libraries of the ancients.

Part 2, the libraries of the middle ages, their foundation and growth.

Part 3, the earliest public libraries, with detailed account of every considerable public or semipublic library in England up to that time.

STEPHEN, LESLIE, ed.


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Full information on the difficult problem of library
law.

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A valuable hand-book containing the laws relating to
public libraries and technical education in England,
Scotland and Ireland, supplemented by very helpful
notes.

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An interesting pamphlet giving a short account of the
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with statistics and particulars as to each public
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progress and work. 16+345p. ill. 8vo. Lond. 1890. Scott,
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Devoted wholly to British libraries and in general
to libraries operating under the Acts. A record of
library progress and development since 1867, giving
general notes on the establishment and maintenance of
libraries and full statistical tables of the various
kinds of libraries.

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Progress andork. 10 + 323p. ill. o. Lond. 1897. Cassell.
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Public libraries. ed. 4. 31-604p. ill. o. Lond. 1894.
Cassell 2s. Od.

A compilation of facts regarding the origin, organization and management of rate supported libraries in Great Britain.

Hales, S.

Workingmen and free public libraries. 6vo. Ovo. Lond. 1869.

A plea for fuller opportunities of culture with statistical tables of the "Free Public Libraries" then open in London, by the librarian of Toynbee Free Student Library, East London.

Mullins, J.D.

Free libraries and news-rooms. 8vo. Lond. 1868. Sotheran.
1s.

A short account of the formation and management of public libraries. It also contains a resume of the existence up to that time.
OSLE, JOHN J.

(The) free library: its history and present condition. Ed. by Dr. Garnett. 3rd ed. 3vo. Lond. 1897. George Allen, Esq.

(Library series.)

An interesting and comprehensive resume of the development of free public libraries with statistical, historical and descriptive accounts of the most notable free libraries in the United Kingdom from the time of the first library legislation.
QUESTIONS.

1. What was the condition of libraries in Great Britain previous to 1850?

2. Give the history and the chief provisions of the Public Libraries Act of 1850.

3. Trace the growth and development of the public libraries established under the Act from 1850-1900.

4. What was the attitude of Parliament towards public libraries and what was the attitude of the people?

5. In what year was the progress greatest and why?

6. How and when did the Library Association of the United Kingdom originate?

7. What progress did the movement make in London?

8. What is the condition of the public libraries of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales at the present time?

9. Name two important persons connected with the development of public libraries and tell in what way they helped to advance the cause.

10. Why did the movement progress so much more rapidly in some places than in others?