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CHAPTER I

THE FIRST LAW

THE first law of Library Science, like the first law of any other science, embodies an elemental truth. In fact, it is so self-evident that one may be inclined to say that it is trivial. But, that is an invariable characteristic of all first laws. Take, for example, the first Upanishadic law of conduct (*Satyam Vada*—speak the truth), or the first law of motion.

The first law of Library Science is: BOOKS ARE FOR USE. No one will question the correctness of this law. But, in actual practice, the story is different. The law is seldom borne in mind by library authorities. We may examine the history of any aspect of library practice and we shall find ample evidence of a deplorable neglect of this law.

Let us take, in the first place, the way in which books were kept in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was not uncommon in those days to have books actually chained to the shelves. The books were fitted with brass frames and rings, which were tied to iron chains, whose other ends were safely fastened to the shelves. Such chained books could not migrate from the shelves beyond

the length of the chain. Their freedom was confined to the sphere determined by their chains. Certainly, such chaining was more conducive to the preservation than to the use of the books. In fact, libraries were then regarded, not as organisations for furthering the USE of books, but as institutions for preserving them.

It may be of interest to reflect for a while on this elaborate process of preservation. What must have been the purpose of such preservation? It is difficult to think of any purpose except that of preserving for the use of posterity. No doubt, it is a healthy, or at any rate, an unavoidable trait of human nature, that we think of our children—of our posterity—and that we are even prepared to deny ourselves many things, in order to hand them over unimpaired to posterity. But an inevitable deduction emanates from this practice. Even as we are anxious to hand over our books to posterity, every succeeding generation may be actuated by an exactly similar altruistic motive and in consequence books may have to be for ever in chains and may never be released for use. This aspect of the question seems to have escaped notice for a long time and 'BOOKS ARE FOR PRESERVATION' had usurped the place of 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE'.

This tendency to hoard books must have originated at a time when books were rare and difficult to produce. Before the invention of printing, it took years to copy a book. It is said that the copying of the *Mahabharata* was work for a whole life-

time. Under such conditions, there was justification for forgetting that BOOKS ARE FOR USE and for overdoing the act of preserving them. But this tendency appears to have unfortunately developed into a regular instinct, as a result of long practice. Although the situation was thoroughly altered by the invention of printing, it took centuries to overcome this long-inherited habit. The first step was to declare an amnesty for the books and set them free from their chains. But, even after they were unchained and were permitted to be taken out for use and handled by readers, there was not, for a long time, a generous recognition, on the part of those that maintained and managed libraries, of the right of readers to an unhampered use of books. The restrictions that were placed in the way of books being freely used were many and it is only in recent years that a vigorous movement seems to have set in to eliminate all such handicaps. Such a movement has by no means become universal as yet. There are several countries—and our land seems to have a fair claim to be classed with them—which are still hardly affected by this new movement.

I have heard of a Professor in a College, who ruled over his department for nearly a quarter of a century. The pursuit of his subject slowly narrowed the range of his vision and he became mechanically minded. Trivial details began to loom large for him. Hence he came to attend personally to the meticulous discharge of every item of routine,

from the opening of the doors and windows to the periodical emptying of waste-paper baskets. He was given to getting into a rage if everything was not in its place. Unfortunately, under the force of this inherited tendency, he came to regard the shelves rather than the hands of readers as the proper place for books. The assistants, whose advance in their cadre depended on the good will of the Professor, would rather forego the use of books than run the risk of exciting his rage by drawing the books from the shelves. The students of the first year course, who alone were strangers to his idiosyncrasies, would occasionally ask for the books of the departmental library. He used to dispose of them with this dilemma: "Have you followed the class lectures? If so, you do not want these books." "Were you unable to follow the class lectures? If so, you cannot profit by reading these books." The senior students would not approach him at all, since they had had painful experiences of the futility of such attempts. The result was that, when he retired at long last, his successor had to cut open the pages of several of the books bequeathed to him. In some cases, it was even found that it was not worth while to waste time in cutting them open, since they had gone entirely out of date and had to be discarded. Would such a professorial career have been possible if the College had acted on the law—'BOOKS ARE FOR USE'?

The extraordinary strength and inexorability of this inherited tendency which stands between the

books and their users, is brought out by the case of another Professor—this time a Professor of Philosophy. The Professor was a philosopher not only by profession but also by practice and temperament. He was also one of those that felt an urge for social service. One form of social service that our Professor of Philosophy decided to render was to give a chance for his neighbours to become learned. To this end, he used to invest most of his savings in books. When he had made up a good collection, he built a nice little reading hut to house the books. He used to spend most of his spare time in this reading hut, so that he may serve out the books personally. He was, however, very disappointed at the ultimate indifference of his neighbours. So, one day he took an enthusiastic librarian-friend of his to his reading hut to take his advice. On his way he was waxing eloquent over the excellent books he had bought for the library, the depressing indifference of the people of his locality to the use of books and so on. The conversation that ensued as soon as they entered the charming but desolate reading hut threw a flood of light on the persistence of the long-inherited preserving instinct which could smother even the sincere resolve and the good intentions of an honest philosopher.

"Where are your books, my friend?"

"All these ten almirahs are full of them. I spent a hundred rupees on each of these almirahs. I had them specially made, etc., etc., etc."

"But, my dear Professor, why have you lined their lovely transparent glass doors with these ugly sheets of brown paper?"

"You don't know how these visitors bother me. If I don't stick up this brown paper, they look at the books through the glass door. They ask for this book and that and I have to pull out all the books."

Poor vanquished philosopher! Comment is needless.

While such things are common with us in the twentieth century, we have only to go a century back to find the iron sway of this hoarding instinct over American Libraries. T. W. Koch of the North-western University records a significant but typical story[1] of a librarian of Harvard. The Harvard University Librarian "once completed an inventory of the library and was seen crossing the yard with a particularly happy smile". When he was asked the reason for his exceptionally pleasant mood, he exclaimed with pride "All the books are in excepting two. Agassiz has those and I am going after them".

On the other hand a modern librarian, who has faith in the law that 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE,' is happy only when his readers make his shelves constantly empty. It is not the books that go out that worry him. It is the stay-at-home volumes that

(1) KOCH (Theodore Wesley): *On University Libraries*, page 27.

perplex and depress him. He too will constantly cross the yard to meet his Agassizes. But he will go to them, not to snatch away the books they are using, but to distribute the new arrivals that need to be introduced to them as rapidly as possible.

The different stages by which the force of the law, "BOOKS ARE FOR USE," worked out the gradual removal of the restrictions induced by the aforesaid inherited instinct may be summarised as follows:—The chains were first removed and sold as old iron; but access was limited to the chosen few. Then those that could pay were allowed the use of the books. Then came the further step of making them free to all, but only for use in the premises of the library. Then, lending to the favoured few; then, to all who paid the fee; and at last, lending free to all. Perhaps we are just reaching this stage in our land. But this was by no means the end elsewhere, where the first law had been familiar sufficiently long to lay bare all the implications embedded deep in its bosom. In such places, aggressive methods, which have made other enterprises successful, came to be employed to push forward the use of books. Then branch libraries were opened in the larger cities in order to provide a fair collection of books and an inviting reading room within a few minutes' walk from each home. Then books were sent out for a nominal fee to those who could not conveniently come after them. The latest is that boxes of books are sent free to the homes of those that would offer to get them

introduced in their neighbourhood. What further triumph is in store for the first law, it is difficult to guess. But as stated by J. P. Quincy, one is tempted to adapt a well-known Celtic paradox by saying that a public library is as good as a private one and, for the effective study of books, has decided advantages over it.[1]

LIBRARY LOCATION

The location of a library may, in general, be taken as an index of the degree of faith that the authorities of the library have in the law, BOOKS ARE FOR USE. When I happened to visit a municipal town in the south, the city fathers of the place invited me for a discussion about building a library for the town. The question of site turned up at a very early stage. Practically all of them suggested a place on the outskirts of the town. One of their reasons for suggesting such a remote site was that there was too much dust in the centre and that the books would be spoiled. Another reason adduced was that, otherwise, "all sorts of fellows" would get into the library. It never struck them that the function of the library was to make "all sorts of fellows" use its books and that the dust problem should not be allowed to drive away the library beyond the zone of accessibility and usefulness. On the other hand, they were shocked to hear me suggest a site on the bazaar street running

(1) JANZOW (Laura M.): *The Library Without the Walls*, page 19.

through the heart of the town. I had to cite the example of several of the cities of the West and expound elaborately the gospel of library organisation before they would concede that there was at least something to be said in favour of my suggestion.

In a Kellett Hall lecture of not long ago—before the bus service came into being—a talented speaker humorously fixed the co-ordinates of one of our big libraries as follows:—"Find a place in the city which is at least a mile from any tram-line or any railway station, which has not even a rickshaw-stand within a radius of half a mile, which has the nearest college or students' hostel at a distance of three miles. There is perhaps only one place in the city answering such a description and that is the place chosen for our library." And yet nobody grumbled; because a library was regarded more as an ornament to the city than as an institution whose primary function was to spread the use of books.

On the other hand, in all western cities which have a living faith in the First Law of Library Science, and which vote for and maintain libraries, because they are anxious that books should be used, the main library is usually housed in the centre of the city—at a place to which most of the citizens will be obliged to go daily on some business or other. It also works through several branches and delivery stations in different parts of the city, so that distance may not stand in the way of the free and full use of books. Dublin, for example, has

five such district libraries for her population of 3,24,000. Even thrifty Edinburgh, with its population of 4,20,000, has already established seven branch libraries. Manchester has found the need for thirty branches to get her books fully used by her people, who number 7,44,000. Birmingham, with her population of 9,19,000, does not find her twenty-four branch libraries adequate to spread the use of her books. Toronto, which has only a population of 5,50,000, has already established fifteen branches and intends to build more of them. Cleveland, which is the home of about eight hundred thousand people, distributes her book collection through 25 branches and 108 delivery stations, while 46 branches and 275 delivery stations are found too inadequate for the 3,000,000 people of Chicago.

Once the idea that 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE' is firmly established, once the libraries realise that their existence is justified only by the extent to which their books are used by readers, there will be no difference of opinion about their location. A location, such as the one described by our Kellett Hall lecturer, would never be thought of. A shrewd shopkeeper, who wants his wares to sell, puts up his shop in the *Sannidhi* of a popular temple. A coffee-house owner, who wants his business to thrive, establishes his *cafe* near a big students' hostel like the Victoria Hostel. A betel-vendor, keen on his daily turn-over, pitches his tent opposite to a big and popular hotel. So also a library which is keen about its books being fully used will plant itself in

the midst of its *clientele*. Conversely, the *Sannidhi* of no popular temple is without a shop and the vicinity of all Victoria hostels invariably gets studded with coffee-hotels and betel-shops. The same is the case with libraries. Wherever people habitually congregate, that is a potential site for a library. An extreme but a happy illustration of this deduction from the First Law of Library Science is afforded by the "Garden Library" of Lisbon.[1]

Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, built on Seven Hills like our Tiruppati and comparable to our Madura in size and population, has gained a unique place in the library world. A Portuguese proverb claims "Who has not seen Lisbon has not seen a thing of beauty".[2] Whether such a claim is valid or not, Lisbon has certainly excelled all other cities in her unique Garden Library which is certainly a thing of beauty.

On the flank of one of its Seven Hills, overlooking the blue surface of the Tagus, there is a sunny little public garden with a marble basin in the centre round which flowers riot in rain-bow tints and children shout and run in joyous ecstasy.

At the far end, there is a giant Cedar-Tree spreading like an umbrella defying sun and rain. Inside its intense shadow deep silence prevails; and you find a line of chairs encircling an enchanting collection of volumes in a lovely bookcase. Students

(1) *Wilson Bulletin*, Volume 4, page 65.

(2) RECLUS (Elisee): *Universal Geography*, edited by E. G. Ravenstein, V. I, p. 484.

in their flowing cloaks, workmen white with lime-dust, raw rustics with timid and listless eyes, office and shop employees munching their lunch, soldiers, printers, electricians, sailors and dock-hands, all share the contents of this unique Library, unhampered by any formality but aided by the nimble, sweetfaced Librarian who flutters from end to end with her beaming smiles.

Who conceived this idea? It was a private Educational Society known as the "Free University". Hoping to foster a love of reading among all classes, the Free University founded this Garden Library, supplying the books and the furniture. The Lisbon city-fathers, who were themselves believers in the First Law of Library Science, warmly approved of this venture and lent the services of a Librarian.

There are only less than a 1,000 volumes but they are changed from time to time. They have a little of everything—Classics, Living Authors, Travels, History, Electricity, Chemistry, Shorthand, Book-keeping, Building, Smithy, Navigation and so on. And these are eagerly sought by all the visitors to the Garden. The Library is open daily from 10 to 6. Statistics show that during the first year there were no less than 25,000 readers using this Library. May the shadow of the ancient cedar in the public garden of the city of the Seven Hills never grow less! May it long provide shelter for this patriotic enterprise, in the service of the gospel, 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE'!

In schools and colleges also, the location of their libraries may be taken as a reliable index of the degree of faith which the authorities have in the law, 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE'. The evolution of ideas regarding the location and the size of school and college libraries has been closely parallel to the gradual growth of the belief in that law. In a school, which I knew intimately, the library consisted of a few hundred books made up mostly of specimen copies of text-books given away by the teachers of the school as not worth private appropriation. These few hundreds of books were carefully locked up in a wooden book-case, which was itself locked in a room, ten feet square, and ventilated by a single small window. But the tragic feature of it was that the headmaster invariably held his classes—including his innumerable special classes—in the hall leading to that room, almost blocking the entrance to it. Those that know the mortal dread in which headmasters were held in such schools, twenty-five or thirty years ago, will realise what this meant for the books of the library. For those who do not know, it may be said that the appearance of the headmaster's figure at the street-corner was enough to make a group of school-boys, playing at marbles in the evening sun, fly for their life and take shelter in the darkest corners of the kitchens of the nearest houses, where their timid tell-tale eyes and ways would make the mothers exclaim 'Is the headmaster going to the temple?' Hardly any of the boys would dare to

come out of his hole, until the greatest dare-devil among them made bold to peep out stealthily and announce, in a cheering tone, that the line was clear. With this information, it may be easy to realise how effective such a location for the school library should have been in preventing the library books from being used. Certainly, that school did not believe, in those days, that 'BOOKS WERE FOR USE' and that school was by no means an exception.

Not long ago, the Principal of a big college invited a librarian to pay a visit to his college library and to suggest some improvements. He gladly went. He was received with great kindness and taken through a maze of narrow, dark, ill-ventilated rooms or corridors, which had almirahs along the walls. When the other end was nearing, he asked the Principal where his library was and when he would take him to it. To his surprise he was told that they had all along been passing only through the library. Wondering at this queer provision, in a college, of a place for the boys to play hide and seek during their lunch-interval, the librarian asked the Principal why such an unhappy situation was selected for the College library. The prompt and innocent reply of the Principal was, "These rooms are unfit for anything else and they have to be put to some sort of use." Would such a naive reply have come forward, if the First Law of Library Science had any hold on the authorities of that college?

What now prevails in our schools and colleges obtained some sixty or seventy years ago in the schools and colleges of the West. Speaking at the dedication of the Library of the Colorado College, in March 1894, Mr. Harper, the first President of the Chicago University, said 'A quarter of a century ago, the library in most of our institutions, even the oldest, was scarcely large enough . . . to deserve the name of library...I know of a college, having an enrolment of one hundred and fifty students...and yet in a room ten by twelve having the name of library has not two hundred and fifty volumes . . . So far as it had location, it was the place to which the Professor was accustomed to make his way occasionally, the student never... The place, seldom frequented, was some out of the way room which could serve no other purpose"[1]. Almost the very words of the Principal mentioned in the last paragraph!

But all this changed, the moment the First Law of Library Science came to establish itself in the minds of people. At present, several of the colleges in the West, which believe that 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE' and feel that one of their primary duties is to develop the book-habit in their undergraduates, assign their very best room for library purposes. Not only do they give their best room, they allot quite a number of such rooms for the library. At least in one college of the West, whose "books were

(1) HARPER (William Rainy): *The Trend of Higher Education*, pp. 120-121.

placed in corridors, cellars and attics'' till this law weighed with it, the floor area of the libraries of the college is now nearly half the floor area of the whole college. To quote Harper again, ''To-day the chief building of a college, the building in which is taken greatest pride, is the library. With the stack for storage purposes, the reading-room for reference books, the offices of delivery, the rooms for seminar purposes, it is the center of the institutional activity...A greater change from the old can hardly be conceived...The time is near when the student will do little of his work in the study; he must be in the midst of books. As the scholar, though having thousands of volumes in his own library, must find his way to the great libraries of the Old World when he wishes to do the work of highest character, so the University student, though having hundreds of volumes in his own room, must do his work in the library of the institution...His table must be where, without a moment's delay, without the mediation of a zealous librarian, who perhaps thinks more of the book than of its use, he may place his hand upon that one of ten or twenty thousand books which he desires to use...That factor of our college and University work, the library, fifty years ago almost unknown, to-day already the center of the institution's intellectual activity, half a century hence will, by absorbing all else, have become the institution itself.''[1]

(1) HARPER (William Rainy): *The Trend of Higher Education*, pp. 121-125.

LIBRARY HOURS

The influence of the law 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE' has been no less profound on the Library Hours. So long as the inherited notion about preservation had the upper hand and the concept 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE' had not fully asserted itself, the library was more often closed than kept open. Perhaps it was more frequently opened for the book-worms to be chased out and the books to be dusted than for the readers to enter or for the books to be issued for use. The registers of books borrowed for the decade 1730-40 from the Bodleian library of Oxford are said to show that only rarely were more than one or two books issued in a day. Sometimes a whole week is said to have passed over without a single entry being made. An interesting memento said to be preserved by that library dates from 1806. Finding the library closed, a scholar, angry with disappointment, affixed to the door of the library a scrap of paper containing words which the Muse of Greece supplied him with for the relief of his feelings:—''Woe unto you who have taken the key of knowledge! Ye enter not yourself and hinder those who come''. In his *Story of the University of Edinburgh,* Sir Alexander Grant deplores how, in the early nineteenth century, the hours of the University Library restricted the facilities afforded to the students for making use of the library. Books might be taken out only during two hours on two days of the week. According to Koch, the library of the Amherst College

was open, in 1850, only once a week from one to three in the after-noon. The students of the Princeton University could use its library only for one hour twice a week, while their contemporaries at Missouri were allowed only one hour for two weeks. In the Columbia college, which was started in 1859, for many years, "freshmen and sophomores were allowed to visit the library only once a month to gaze at the backs of books, the juniors were taken there once a week by a tutor who gave verbal information about the contents of the books, but only seniors...could draw from the library during one hour on Wednesday afternoons".

If the library hours were, till late in the last century, of such small magnitude in the land of libraries, one can easily imagine the conditions that obtain at present in our school and college libraries, of course, wherever they exist! The practice of one big college may serve as an illustration. Theoretically, it has 'two issue-days' per week. But, let not the occurrence of the word 'day' by any means mislead one to multiply the 'two' by twenty-four or even by twelve to arrive at the number of library hours per week. In practice, the professor-in-charge, whose displeasure no discreet boy would dare incur, had conveniently interpreted the "two issue-days" as two quarter-hours. One might wonder what takes place in the library during the remaining hours of the week. Well, the books enjoy their eternal undisturbed repose behind locked doors, in a dark, closed room. Another of our libraries experimented

for a long time with its hours. Those people in its locality, who were literate enough to use its books, had their office-hours between 11 A.M. and 5 P.M. on week-days. Saturdays and Sundays were usually holidays with them. During such days, they were accustomed to devote the morning hours to social visits, household-purchases and such other week-end business. After the luxury of a late meal, and a midday nap, they would find themselves fit for study or for a serious visit to the library only in the after-noon. The hours finally arrived at by the library, after its endless experiments and investigations, fitted in with this habit of its *clientele* in an ideally wrong way. It actually decided to keep itself open between 10 A.M. and 5 P.M. on week-days and from 7 A.M. to 2 P.M. on Saturdays and Sundays. Can a more effective decision be imagined for a place where the First Law of Library Science was almost a heresy? In another place, when the authorities of a library were solemnly discussing ways and means to meet a great increase in the issue of books, a veritable Daniel came "to judgment".

"When do you have the greatest rush in the day?" asked the Daniel.

"In the evening, between 4 and 6", somebody said.

"There you are," came forth the solution, "Close the library at four instead of at six. That will end the bother".

Some weak member meekly murmured, "They are the only hours when most of the students and teachers can use the Library".

"Too much reading is no good, you know", retorted the strong-willed Daniel.

Poor First Law! So summarily and unceremoniously thrown overboard! But you must not refuse your clemency to South India; for, all climes and times have an equal claim on you. South India is not alone in showing you disrespect at this late hour. Remember the recent lamentations of a Parisian librarian: "Generally speaking, a school library in France was a closed cupboard opened once a fortnight or once a month".

But the magic of the *Mantra* 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE' has made marvellous changes in the library hours in the other places of the West. Even the Bodleian, groaning under the undiscriminating weight of medieval tradition, has, we are told, recently broken the shackles of an old injunction about lights, which had till now made its hours keep pace with the erratic sun of the north. The long prohibited electric light is now making its hours not only uniform but also fairly long. Other libraries had surrendered to the dictates of the First Law even earlier. According to the recent American Library Association's survey of the libraries,[1] 'the hours, during which the libraries are open daily, vary from ten to fourteen'. The

(1) AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION: *A Survey of the Libraries in the United States*, Volume 2, pp. 94-95 & 159-160.

Amherst college which, eighty years ago, was keeping its library open for bare three hours in a week, now keeps it open for nearly a hundred hours in a week. In fact its daily hours are said to be 8 A.M. to 10-30 P.M. The Cornell University does similarly. The Oregon University opens the library daily at 7-30 A.M. and closes it only at 10 P.M. Even the Madras University Library has fixed 7 A.M. and 6 P.M. as its hours of opening and closing, for every day in the year. God willing, it may soon emulate the Western Universities even in their nocturnal vigils. It is not only the college and University libraries that have responded to the call of the First Law of Library Science. The response of the Public Libraries has been no less eager. The majority of them, which keep BOOKS FOR USE, are open daily from 9 A.M. to 9 P.M., while some, as in San Francisco and Seattle, work even till 10 P.M.

There is no need to multiply statistics. It may be asserted boldly that the *a priori* reasoning about library hours leads only to results that are consistent with practice in the West. In no country, where the concept, 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE', has taken root in the Public Mind, will any library be allowed to close till the majority of humanity go to bed and so cannot use it. Nor can it be kept closed after they rise from bed. Nor will any library be allowed to close on any day of the year,—not even on Sundays, even in Christian Countries. The Public demand long hours and the library authorities appreciate the soundness of this

demand. It is indeed considered criminal to close a library at any time when people can conveniently use it. One might ask, what about the cost of establishment, if it is to be kept open for long hours and on all days. Modern society maintains that any extra money spent on library establishment is legitimately spent and is well spent. After all, what is the proportion of the extra cost of establishment to the enormous benefit that will flow from a wider use of the library. What a large sum of money is locked up in the books of libraries! Is it not penny-wise and pound-foolish to grudge a few rupees more on the establishment and to restrict the full use of such a treasure? Sometimes, wisdom consists in throwing good money after better.

"* * * * * * * * * *; but if you please
To shoot another arrow that self way
Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt,
As I will watch the aim...to find both."[1]

But in the matter of library hours, the palm goes to the University College, London. In the inaugural address to freshmen, which was delivered in my year, by a lucky coincidence, by Dr. E. A. Baker, the Director of the School of Librarianship, he mentioned in proud terms that the University College was a pioneer and a breaker of traditions and cited several facts in support of his claim. I don't remember, however, that he included the

(1) SHAKESPEARE (William): *Merchant of Venice*, Act I, Scene 1.

achievements of the college in the matter of library hours. To put it shortly, the library hours of the University College are not fixed by the college at all. They are left entirely in the hands of each individual student. The fact is, each student is given a latch-key for the library of his or her Department and he or she is at liberty to use the library, at any time he or she likes—day or night—the last word on library hours! This ideal is whole-heartedly endorsed, in its final report of May 1927, by the Public Libraries Committee, appointed in 1924 by the President of the Board of Education of Great Britain. It observes "Inasmuch as there is no hour of the night or day at which a citizen may not feel the need to peruse some book which is not in his possession, the ideal arrangement would be that libraries should always be open to the public."[1]

LIBRARY FURNITURE

Next let us see the effect of the dictum 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE' on library furniture. One may say with confidence 'Show me your library furniture and I shall tell you whether you believe in the First Law of Library Science or not'. To begin with, in the days when the rival dictum 'BOOKS ARE FOR PRESERVATION' ruled, the library racks were built only with a view to preservation. The problem was to accommodate the maximum number of books in the least space and at the lowest cost. The Rule of Least Space left the height of

(1) *Report on Public Libraries in England and Wales*, 1927, page 75.

the book-racks entirely to be determined by the height of the ceiling. Not even an inch of vertical space should be wasted. Hence each rack should begin at the very bottom and go right up to the ceiling. Similarly, another corollary of the Rule of Least Space was that not an inch of horizontal space, beyond the absolute minimum, should be wasted. This required that the gangway between book-racks should be as narrow as possible—just enough for an attendant to pass through—say a foot and a half or two at the most. Again, in the absence of chaining, each rack should be at least provided with doors, locks and keys. The Rule of Least Cost required that the furniture of the reading-room should be as simple and as cheap as practicable. The reader had no business to expect comfort. Other furnishings, the reading-room need not have. No hangings to make the room more attractive. No charming pictures or inspiring portraits on which the tired eyes of a reader may now and then rest and refresh themselves. But the advent of the First Law of Library Science threw on these, Rules of Least Space and of Least Cost a delightful spell which has completely transformed them.

A DIALOGUE

First Law: Your methods are intolerable. They *must* go.

Rule of Least Space: Can you kindly descend to the level of particulars?

First Law: Take your book-racks first. How do you expect the top of these sky-scrapers to be reached?

Rule of Least Space: Use a ladder!

First Law: That is more easily said. It is all-right with the trained nimble library attendants. Perhaps you do not know, that I am going to allow every reader to pick out any book he wants directly from the shelf.

Rule of Least Space: It is news to me. I have never heard of that.

First Law Oh ! I see,....Is it so? Yes, any reader will go to the shelf. Now imagine a corpulent reader climbing a ladder, for the first time in his life, in his enthusiasm for a book. Imagine his fiddling at the top, falling down and breaking his neck. Who is to pay the damages? What will your sister, the Rule of Least Cost, say to that?

Rule of Least Cost: No doubt, it is a matter for serious thought.

Rule of Least Space: What do you suggest then?

First Law: No rack should be higher than what can be comfortably reached by a person of average height, while standing on the bare floor.

Rule of Least Space: A height of 6½ or 7 feet?

First Law: Admirable. That is the right height. You are very reasonable.

Rule of Least Space: Well, I have noted it. Anything else?

First Law: The regulation width of your gangways is too small.

Rule of Least Space: It was fixed for different conditions, you know. We only intended a library attendant to pass through.

First Law: Excuse me if I laugh. So long as it was only an attendant that had to use it, it was open to you to tell the library authorities that they should recruit only slim 'one-dimensional' beings as attendants, if they don't want their staff to get jammed between the racks.

Rule of Least Space: No offence at all. These points have to be made clear. Your admitting the readers to the shelves is quite a novel idea. That makes all the difference. But, dimensions are more my province. Without fear of being considered pedantic, I may say that you seem to contemplate a race of readers who have expanded into all my three dimensions with a vengeance and demand a gangway which should be capable of admitting the biggest of them!

First Law: You are nearly right. I should like however that the gangway should be broad enough to permit two of them to walk along abreast of each other.

Rule of Least Space: Ye-es. I quite see your point. 4½ to 6 feet will be all right?

First Law: Thank you. One word more. Although it is not quite relevant to what we were talking about, I should like to thank you most heartily for the selfless manner in which you took a bold stand against the Library Authorities when they proposed to stop all further purchase temporarily, because the stack-room was choked with books and that there was no more space.

Rule of Least Space: Well, . . .

First Law: I see, from your exchange of smiles with your sister, that there is more behind it.

Rule of Least Cost: Really, it was so good of my sister to have accommodated me and sided with me in that matter.

Rule of Least Space: She just convinced me that if that proposal came to be adopted she would be nowhere, since the cost of old books—and particularly the scientific periodicals and other publications of Learned Societies which are indispensable for research—will increase tenfold in a short while.

First Law: Even then, I am indebted to you. Who, in these days, is prepared to be so very selfless and look to the comforts of a sister in distress?

Rule of Least Space: Thank you. I am so glad we part as friends although you will admit you were almost in a rage at the beginning.

First Law: I am sorry. I crave your pardon. The fault is due to my enthusiasm for my cause. I meant nothing personal. I shall make amends, by giving some cheering news to your sister.

Rule of Least Space and Rule of Least Cost: What is it! What is it!

First Law: I don't want doors, locks and keys for the book-racks. You may save the cost of all of them. . . .

Rule of Least Cost: I am, in a sense, pleased; but what about rats and squirrels? And again, you say all sorts of folk will come into the gangway. What will prevent their passing the books through the windows?

First Law: It is a very intelligent question. But, you need not trouble yourself about it. I am asking the architect to make the room itself vermin-proof and thief-proof.

Rule of Least Cost: And air-proof! Is it?

First Law: No, not necessarily. Will you be good enough, in return not to make the reading-room man-proof?

Rule of Least Cost: I don't quite understand you.

First Law: Just make the chairs cozy and comfortable and the table-space ample. Also, just sanction the necessary sum to make the floor sound-proof.

Rule of Least Cost: That is not much. That is easily done.

First Law: I should also implore you to furnish the reading-room as nicely as possible —like a first class drawing-room, say, like this lovely room of yours, with beautiful hangings, flowers, pictures, fans, lights, etc. Remember the lights particularly since it is my policy to allow the serious students to stay on after sunset, if they are so minded, to continue their study.

Rule of Least Cost: That is an idea.

First Law: One more request. I trust you don't think I am going too far.

Rule of Least Cost: Never mind. It is better to let us know at once all your requirements.

First Law: Just make provision for ample supply of reliable drinking water, for a few W. C.'s, for a bath-room and—I am almost afraid to say it—for the

establishment and maintenance of a refectory.

Rule of Least Cost: Why afraid? We are only exchanging ideas. Be frank.

First Law: Then, I shall add, provide also a retiring room, with perhaps a couple of lounges where the scholars, who come to stay the whole day, may stretch themselves and close their eyelids now and then for a few minutes. Of course, I may assure you that due precautions will be taken to see that such a first-class privilege is not abused by any.

Rule of Least Cost: What novel ideas! Beautiful. . . though costly. But ... per—haps . . . eco—nomical al—so. . .

Rule of Least Space: Costie! . . . Costie! What are you pondering over, with eyes closed?

Rule of Least Cost: Ye—es, Dear Spacie, Meditating . . . Cogitating, if you like. I just got on the 'Time-Machine' to explore what this would mean in the long run. I have seen, Spacie, that, at that distance of time, all this little sum that we may have to spend extra on such things to get the books better used will lead ultimately to real healthy National Economy. Yes, the whole thing is clear to me now. Am I right, Mr. First Law?

First Law: Yes, you have put it correctly and in a businesslike manner.

Rule of Least Cost: To put it in a word you don't want the library to continue any longer as a dead storehouse of books. You want it fitted up as a first-class workshop.

Rule of Least Space: Costie! You remind me of the revolutionary words of Lord Lytton at the inauguration of the Public Library at Manchester in 1851. You remember his words,[1] "A Library is not only a school, it is an arsenal and an armoury. Books are weapons; either for war or for self-defence."

Rule of Least Cost: Yes, I do. But they are the words of a pre-League of Nations-man. Our friend wants us to conceive the library as a regular peaceful workshop, which will prove to be a panacea for the ills of humanity and—what I am more concerned with—eliminate all wastage both in local administration and in the State.

Rule of Least Space: I can never keep pace with you in your *Economic* flights into the Future. Mr. First Law, are you satisfied? That is all that we want.

Rule of Least Cost: I am sure he is.

(1) EDWARDS (Edward): *Free Town Libraries*, p. 73.

First Law: Workshop! Exactly. That is the word. You have caught it. I am sure hereafter we shall always see eye to eye and get on in a friendly way. I am glad of your sympathy and I may tell you at once that, in addition to doing all this, I want the constant help of your watchful eye to save every possible pie to buy the very books, for whose use, after all, I am giving you all this trouble.

Rule of Least Cost: You are a regular missionary, I see. But, now that we have understood each other, may I take the liberty of making one or two suggestions?

First Law: Most certainly. I want them.

Rule of Least Cost: I think, the retiring room, the refectory and the elaborate furnishings of the reading-room—like a first class drawing-room, as you put it—may wait. Perhaps you don't realise how it will re-act in certain quarters. You must remember that, for some time to come, library authorities will consist of persons who spent their earlier days before your advent. You can hardly expect them to develop a library habit at this late stage of their life. In these circumstances, how do you expect them to evaluate properly all such innovations, all so suddenly sprung on them.

First Law: I was not altogether unaware of this difficulty. In fact, in speaking to your sister, it is such considerations that made me reluctantly refrain from asking for space for a 'Lecture Room' and an 'Exhibition Room'. I thought I might rather leave it for my sister, the Third Law, since she is more directly interested in such things.

Rule of Least Space: I have been here for such a long time. I can tell you what will happen. The entire blame will be put on the head of the poor Librarian. All sorts of motives will be attributed to him, such as thirst for cheap popularity, and his life will be filled with worry.

Rule of Least Cost: My sister is quite right.

First Law: I didn't realise that. Perhaps my missionary zeal—as you put it—and my over-enthusiasm have blinded me to such worldly wisdom, which are so natural to you...the shrewd financier that you are...I want the good will of the Librarian and his staff more than anything else, if my mission is to succeed. In fact, he is the person that I am going to see next. I don't want that he should in any way...innocent man...in any way get into disrepute for no fault of his.

> On the other hand, I not only want that *he* should co-operate with me but also that he should have the good-will and co-operation of the library authorities. Otherwise, he can't be of much use to me. I don't want to weaken his position for anything in the world . . . . Thank you for the advice. I thought, I came to teach; but I go back wiser.

Rule of Least Cost: So it is with us. Cheerio!

Rule of Least Space: Wish you good luck with the Librarian!

First Law: Thank you. Good-bye.

LIBRARY STAFF

Let us now pass on from the Library Furniture to the Library Staff. The advent of the First Law has had the most vital effect on the Library Staff. It has affected the question of staff in several ways and we should examine each one of them with the greatest possible care and thoroughness. Whatever be the Library Location, the Library Hours, the Library Furniture and the way in which books are kept, it is the Library Staff that ultimately make or mar a library. In fact, an enormous struggle has been going on for the past fifty years to adjust the Library Staff to the needs of this new concept, BOOKS ARE FOR USE. If the mere number of papers that have been written on librarianship can be taken as a measure of this struggle, one can get some idea of it from the admirable *Bibliography*

of Cannons. Not less than 58 closely printed pages of this book is devoted to the subject of the staff and it must be remembered that the list has been brought up only to the end of 1920.[1]

So long as the preservation of books was the chief concern of a library, all that it wanted by way of staff was a competent care-taker who could fight against the four enemies of books: fire, water, vermin and men. And it was not unusual to make a post in the library the sinecure for persons unfit for other jobs. It was not unusual, for example, for libraries to be manned by the deaf and the maimed, by stammerers and hunch-backs, by the dull and the short-tempered—by never-do-well's of all sorts. The term "Keeper" by which the librarians of ancient libraries are still designated is indeed a significant survival of the pre-First Law days. The parody of a passage in Plato's *Republic* given by Dr. A. D. Lindsay, Master of Balliol College in his Presidential Address of 1928, fits in appropriately with this conception of a librarian.

"Then on which occasions concerned with books is the librarian a more useful partner than another?

In cases of depositing and keeping books safe.

Is not that as good as saying 'When there is no need to read books but only to keep them unread?'

Yes.

Then librarianship is useful in regard to books when books are useless?

(1) CANNONS (H. G. T.): *Bibliography of Library Economy* ...1876-1920, pp. 225-282.

It looks like it.

Librarianship, then, my friend, cannot be of any great moment if it is useful only for books when they are useless.'"[1]

In fact librarianship was not till recently considered to be of any great moment for any purpose.

Indeed, it took a long time even to realise the need for a professional librarian. If there was a librarian's post, it was not known whom to recruit for it and if there was a librarian, it was not known what to do with him. For nearly half a century, even the University College, London, which has now become a centre for training librarians, used to leave its library "to the care of an assistant, sometimes dignified with the title of librarian but never paid more than £80 a year or to that of a library beadle."[2] In his *Story of the University of Edinburgh,* Sir Alexander Grant records, "Between 1635 and 1667 there was a succession of no less than ten librarians; probably none of these persons had a peculiar vocation for the employment." When it finally got a librarian who would not leave it, not knowing what to do with him, it asked him to maintain "the Graduation Book where for a series of years he entered the laureations". Even that not filling all his spare time, he was made to act, in addition, "as Secretary to the College, an office which was henceforth combined with that of Librarian!" So long as BOOKS WERE ONLY FOR PRESERVATION and until it came to be realised that "BOOKS ARE FOR USE," how else could a librarian's time and energy have been utilised? Edinburgh was by no means unique in thus obtaining from the librarian some such miscellaneous work in return for the salary paid to him. Her neighbour Glasgow did similarly. We are told that, until 1858, "Matriculation and enrolment was carried through by the Librarian" in the University of Glasgow.[1]

(1) *Library Association Record (New Series)*, Vol. VI, pp. 237-8.

(2) BELLOT (H. Hab.): *University College, London*, p. 418.

The position in the New World too was not very different. It was only in comparatively recent times that at Harvard or Yale, a librarian was appointed who should give his entire time to the care of the library. When the Kenyon College, a residential institution, was established in 1826, the duties of the librarian fell upon the Principal's wife, Mrs. Chase. But librarian's work was not the only work that was assigned to her. "The chief care of the household affairs fell upon Mrs. Chase. She also kept the accounts of the institution and *looked after the library*"[2] (Italics mine).

According to Koch,[3] "It was not long ago that the library was generally thought of as a place for the semi-retirement of the aged professor or the incompetent instructor. Even now, it is a common occurrence for the librarian to be asked whether

(1) MURRAY (David): *Memoirs of the Old College of Glasgow*, p. 54.

(2) SMYTHE (George Franklin), *Kenyon College*, p. 39.

(3) *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

he has not something to which a broken down scholar can turn his hand. The necessity for training, energy, alertness and specific fitness for library work is still not seen by many who, even from their casual acquaintance with libraries, should know better what kind of help is required to run a library".

William Frederick Poole, who was librarian at Newberry in the closing years of the last century, is reported to have said before his death, "None of the Universities have as yet quite come up to the high standard of having a professor of bibliography, but they are moving in that direction". In 1894, President Harper[1] could only hope "some of us will see the day when in every grand division of the University there will be professors of bibliography and methodology whose function will be to teach men books, and how to use them". The same University President was however convinced[2] that "The equipment of the Library will never be finished until it have upon its staff men and women whose sole work shall be, not the care of books, not the cataloguing of books, but the giving of instruction concerning their use".

Turning to our own country we are yet to get a Harper as the head of any of our educational institutions. The conditions hardly seem to favour even the entertainment by us of such a hope. Most of our Colleges have no doubt begun to include in

(1) SMYTHE (George Franklin), *Kenyon College*, p. 123.
(2) *Ibid.*, p. 124.

their "Annual Staff Return" a post under the dignified title "Librarian". Although the salary shown against the entry may imply a deplorable lack of appreciation of the need for a real librarian, who can get the BOOKS USED, his true status can be realised only by those who have served on the staff of a college for some time.

In most of the degree colleges, the so-called librarian is usually a clerk, and nothing more, by training, temperament and status. He is not given much initiative, nor is he capable of any. His time is largely spent in maintaining the files and in carrying them, now and then, to a far-off room occupied by the dignitary—the Professor-in-charge-of-the-Library—to whom he is responsible and by dancing attendance on whom, he hopes to keep his place. His assistant is usually an attendant whose educational attainments are a little too good for a peon's place. His duty is to dole out books across the barrier at stated hours in the week and otherwise to keep dusting the shelves or trimming the books and the files. There is none on the Library Staff who could link it up with the instructional force of the college, not to speak of following up the course of studies pursued by the college; none who could look up material on request, not to speak of collecting the material in advance, in anticipation of future demand; none who could instruct the ordinary students in the use of the books of the library, not to speak of assisting the research students in the methods of using original sources. The

Professor-in-charge may do such things—there are exceptional professors-in-charge who actually do such things and all honour to them. But the Professor-in-charge is a Professor and not a Librarian and he is ordinarily made to understand his duties to begin with the passing of office-copies and end with the signing of fair-copies. On the other hand, one must be really thankful if the Professor does not succumb to the temptation to keep all good new arrivals in his exclusive private custody thus gaining a temporary advantage over the pupils whom he has to teach. If he does, as it not infrequently happens, the class of librarians to which he can be appropriately assigned has been carefully defined by the Master of Balliol in the parody of another passage of the *Republic*.

"And he is an excellent guard of an army who is clever in stealing the plans of the enemy and all their dispositions?

Certainly.

Then, whoever is a clever guarder of anything is also a clever thief of it?

Apparently.

Then, if the librarian is clever at guarding books, he is also clever at stealing them?

That is certainly the drift of the argument."

The plight of the Intermediate College libraries is still worse in the matter of Library Staff. More often than not, a raw youth, who has just scraped through the School Final Examination is installed in the librarian's *gadi*. The Intermediate Colleges

usually have a populous school department. This department it is that often relieves the Principal from the awkward predicament of finding work for this youth, to keep him from mischief. The daily consolidation of the hourly attendance of the pupils, the monthly writing-up of the nominal rolls in the attendance registers, and the terminal posting of entries in the Secondary School Leaving Certificate books are, as a rule, made his monopoly. If they do not engage him fully, he must assist the Accountant in the collection of school-fees, or, the troublesome task of maintaining the stock of stationery and forms awaits his attention.

But the worst occurs in School Libraries. The School Libraries have not recognised the need even for a librarian-clerk. It is usually the drill master or the drawing master that is asked to look after the library—if there is one. In a school that I knew, the stoutest and cruellest of the staff, who was nicknamed Mohammad of Ghazni in honour of the number of his unsuccessful attempts at Matriculation, was marked out as the guardian angel of the library. And, he proved to be too zealous a guardian. When an inquisitive child of the school picked up courage to approach him and ask for a book for "extra-reading" it was late in the evening and he was dead tired after the day's task of teaching for six hours.

"What do you want?" thundered Mohammad of Ghazni, almost scorching the child with his reddish eyes.

"*Peeps Into Many Lands*: *Japan,* Sir," stammered the child.

"How many marks did you get in the last Quarterly?"

"Fo—Forty-two out of fifty, Sir."

"Go and get the remaining eight marks before you can think of "extra-reading",

came forth the emphatic injunction in company with the right-hand fist of the Mohammad of Ghazni, which settled on the forehead of the quivering child with such painful force, that the child ran away sobbing—never, never to return to the library.

If the school believed that BOOKS WERE FOR THE USE of children, would it have consigned them to the care of such a frightening monster? On the other hand, would it not have put them in charge of a charming Children's Librarian, whose specialised training and sympathetic outlook, would have attracted all the children of the school to what is now rightly called "the heart of the school". Then, how different would have been the reminiscences of the children of the school! Consider, for example, the pleasant recollections of a New World contemporary of our sobbing child. "I can almost say that I owe to the library the greatest mental stimulus of my life. The picture of that Librarian's intelligent grey-eyed face, the very odour of the library room itself are indelibly impressed in my memory. Personally my debt to the library as an institution and to librarians as a

class is a greater one than I can ever hope to pay even with everlasting gratefulness".[1]

LIBRARY STAFF AND SCHOLARSHIP

Even after the First Law had succeeded in convincing people of the need for a full-timed and special staff for the library, it took a long time for library authorities to appreciate the qualities and qualifications that are essential in a Library Staff, if it is to carry out all the mandates of that Law. The struggle experienced by the First Law in establishing proper standards for librarianship was even more strenuous than that experienced in fixing the proper Library Hours. Its predecessor "BOOKS ARE FOR PRESERVATION" had left behind it many a hardened tradition. Tradition, as is well known, is obstinately indifferent to reasoning of any type. She would not easily listen to the arguments of the First Law. Analogy, however suggestive, could not carry conviction to her. A grain dealer, it is conceded, should know about grains of all sorts. A draper should know everything about apparel. An insurance agent cannot be a success if he does not know all about life-tables and their significance. No one would be admitted as a teacher unless he knows the subject he has to teach. But it took a long time to realise that a librarian,—who has to deal with learning, who has to find for each person his appropriate book, who has to persuade people to benefit by the

(1) *Adult Education and the Library,* Vol. III, p. 52.

knowledge treasured up in books, who has, in fact, to help the life-long education of all and not merely that of the beardless urchins,—must have learning, must know his books and must possess scholarship of a wide range.

In his humorous retrospect of the "Early Days," Mr. Frank Pacy, the late Secretary of the British Library Association, refers to certain interesting impressions produced by the scholarship of the early British librarians. "The man who showed us the library knew nothing about anything." "The Westminster Librarian not only looked like a chimney sweep, but was very deaf".[1] Fortunately, those days are gone. Nowadays, nobody in the West questions the place of Librarianship among the learned professions.

But, in our country, few people realise even to-day the need for a scholarly staff in a library. Not long ago, a librarian received, from a high-placed educational officer, a pathetic note of recommendation saying, "The bearer, you will find, is very aged. He appeared for the S.S.L.C. Examination more than a dozen times. There is no prospect of his passing it 'in this *Janma*'. How can he get even a clerk's post? But I am interested in him. Can you take him on your staff? That is the only chance for him". When a big metropolitan library came to be started, one of the first appointments in "the superior service" of the library went to a peon

(1) *Proceedings of the Fiftieth Conference of the Library Association*, p. 57.

of a neighbouring office, for the simple reason that he was an honest fellow and that there was no other way in which his emoluments could be increased. Perhaps, the precedent for this was that the Janitor of the Bodleian Library was made its sub-librarian in 1712.[1] Similarly, when a District Board permitted a Union Chairman to appoint a part-time librarian for his Union Library on a monthly allowance of Rs. 10, the Chairman is said to have promptly given that allowance to his personal attendant, since he was a serviceable fellow and would jealously guard the library. It is reported that not long ago, a learned professor laid down the dictum that the academic qualification of a library clerk need not be even as high as that of an attendant in a Chemist's shop.

But more amusing is the inference that a librarian cannot be a scholar. The embarrassment felt by a prominent official in an up-country town when he was asked to receive a librarian as his guest could only be relieved by one of his junior clerks offering to entertain that librarian in his own house. When, however, quite ignorant of this arrangement, the librarian went straight to the official's house and sent in his card, the appearance of the suffix "M.A.," to the name of the librarian instantly made his feeling of embarrassment give place to one of amazement, and by the time they reached the stage of post-prandial *pan supari*, the

(1) BIRRELL (Augustine): *Collected Essays and Addresses*, Vol. III, p. 206.

amazement had transformed itself into pity and soaked with sympathy the learned official condoled with the Master of Arts for the fate that had overtaken him and cursed the hard times that had driven a man of his ability and scholarship to the predicament of having to mind a library. But this sincere pity was overpowered by righteous indignation when he discovered that the librarian's salary was higher than his own and that the authorities had wasted over a librarian's post not only a Master of Arts of the country but also such a huge slice of its revenue. But, my concern is that this learned official appears to be the type rather than the exception.

The learned official's opinion comes naturally to those that seldom use a library and have never felt the influence of a well-conducted modern library. But every person that makes a frequent and serious USE of a library and "has worked up a subject" once in his life expects to find on the library staff at least one member who "speaks his language" and knows the bibliography and the method of his subject. The President of a Western University once remarked: "Every person in charge of a library must be capable of teaching. Executive ability is no doubt necessary in a librarian, but, unless it is coupled with wide scholarship, it is not at all sufficient."

What kind of a scholar should the library recruit for its staff? Certainly not the scholar pictured in the comic papers as one without common

sense, nor one of the pedant variety who is unduly formal and subtle; nor one of the specialist type who learns "more and more about less and less". The Library requires on its Staff persons who have scholarship in Mark Pattison's sense, *i.e.*, judgment, discipline and scientific habit. Their speciality must be bibliography and their attitude must be that of a student. In the words of the "Public Libraries Committee" of Great Britain they must have a sufficient knowledge of and sympathy with all branches of knowledge to be able to do justice to them in the selection of books, to give the readers the guidance of which they stand in need and to divine in the quickest manner the place where the information sought by the readers can be found. They must be capable of using books as tools not only for the dissemination of knowledge but also for the extension of the boundaries of knowledge.

It is on account of this that a University degree is considered a normal entrance requirement by the library schools of the West and the highest University degrees are required from those who aspire to the highest places in library service. This also explains the recent practice, in go-ahead libraries, of attracting to the Library Staff persons with ripe professorial experience as part-time Reference-librarians. It is from this point of view that Arnold Bennett wrote that if libraries "spent less on books and more on an educated Staff, far better results would be obtained. It is not books

that lack in the libraries; it is the key to their effective employment. That key is the individualities and attainments of Librarians and their staffs".

LIBRARY STAFF AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

But mere scholarship cannot make a librarian. Many people think that, because they can read books, they are qualified to be librarians. Such ignorance is well illustrated by the anecdote of MacAlister narrated by Augustine Birrell[1]:

"Only the day before yesterday, on the Calais boat, I was introduced to a world-famed military officer who, when he understood I had some connection with the Library Association, exclaimed: 'Why, you're just the man I want! I have been anxious of late about my man, old Atkins. You see the old boy, with a stoop, sheltering behind the funnel. Poor old beggar! quite past his work, but as faithful as a dog. It has just occurred to me that if you could shove him into some snug library in the country, I'd be awfully grateful to you. His one fault is a fondness for reading, and so a library would be just the thing."

"The usual titled lady also turned up at the Conference. This time she was recommending her late cook for the post of librarian, alleging on her behalf the same strange trait of character—her fondness for reading."

(1) BIRRELL (Augustine): *Collected Essays and Addresses*, Vol. III, pp. 227-228.

The pathos attendant on such ignorance is only comparable to what was felt when an innocent lad applied for a "Mathematics Reader's" post in one of our Universities, basing his claim on the ample qualification that he had just taken his B.A. (Pass) degree in Mathematics and that he was "fond of reading".

But the superior arrogance of those, who can more than read books, who feel competent to criticise literary style or have gained some acquaintance with a special department of knowledge, is more annoying. They imagine that anything in a library, beyond their scholarship, is manual, clerical and rather beneath their efforts, not knowing that they are yet only good material out of which librarians might be made. Not infrequently one comes across a bumptious upstart, who has the cheek to say, "What is there in *indexing?*" meaning by 'indexing', *Cataloguing*. One only wishes that he was allowed to try his hand at 'indexing' for a couple of months to discover for himself what a mess he is capable of making. Another, a venerable old man, may say "What is the training that is necessary to hand over books across the barrier? In my days, so and so did it so admirably and he had no ghost of a professional training". He has only to be asked "How many volumes did the library of his days have on its shelves? How many of them refused to leave the shelves even once in his long life-time? How many volumes were added to his library in a year? And how many of his learned

contemporaries ever knew of a library or its purpose?'' Another, a specialist quite jealous of the rights of his line of experts, may make a flippant remark, ''That is not the way to classify. This is the way to catalogue. Reference-work is not in your province. It is the preserve of the Professors'' and so on. One has to tell him ''Mr. Specialist, I am a specialist in my line as much as you are, Sir, in yours. If *your* field is clouded in mystery and needs prolonged formal initiation, so is mine. Remember what you will think of any uninitiated Tom, Dick or Harry who attempts to poke his nose into your sphere.''

The fact is that so long as the task of a library was to PRESERVE BOOKS, there was no need for giving any special training to the care-taker-librarian. The moment 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE' stepped into the place of 'BOOKS ARE FOR PRESERVATION', Librarianship was invested with several tasks, which required a well-thought-out professional training, with as much grind and as much technique as that required for any other learned profession, such as Medicine, Engineering, or Law. A Doctor, an Engineer, and a Lawyer will flare up into righteous wrath, if anybody ventures to question the need for their professional training. But the same Doctor, Engineer, and Lawyer would naively question the need for professional training for a librarian. That is due simply to the fact that Medicine, Engineering and Law are *old* professions which have cleanly

forgotten the struggle they had in establishing their need for specialised training while Librarianship is a *new* profession. It is natural for people in a privileged position to fight every inch before admitting a stranger to the same privilege. This fight will not end unless and until the present-day Doctor, Engineer and Lawyer are replaced by those that have had, from their youth onwards, the pleasure and benefit of being served by a technically trained profession of librarians.

This may look like a vicious circle. But with the rousing chorus of the new song 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE' people have already broken this vicious circle elsewhere, and we may take advantage of it. Great Britain had long ago decided:

''(*i*) to educate public opinion to demand that trained librarians should be the rule and not the exception;

(*ii*) to enforce on library authorities their responsibility for giving due weight to training in their selection of candidates, and for giving facilities to their staff to continue their training, both technical and educational, while in their services;''[1]

America has gone ahead and established fourteen accredited institutions for the teaching of Library Science. The Ministries of Education of most of the countries of Continental Europe have taken upon themselves the task of providing the country with librarians of proper professional

(1) *Report on Public Libraries in England and Wales*, p. 88.

attainments. Japan had long ago established its own library school while China has the Boone's School for Librarians. What is more important, in some of the Western countries, the Library Profession has long ago passed the stage of infancy and reached the ripe age of throwing out several branches, which show a tendency to develop such independence and individuality, that, ere long, we shall have several semi-independent library professions, spreading round their primitive stem, even as the pillar roots shooting forth profusely from the branches of the giant banyan-tree appear to be outside the tree but are still of it, giving shelter to thousands of birds.

Our hope is that a small beginning is being made even in our land. A seedling of the species, Summer School of Library Science, was carefully tended for two years in the nursery of the Madras Library Association. When it was fit for transplantation, it has found its way into the fertile garden of the Madras University which can, not only tend it with greater ease, but can also find a market for its fruits. May that seedling grow from more to more and may its harvest of fruits enrich the land from the Himalayas to the Cape Comorin!

LIBRARY STAFF AND STATUS

The next effort of the First Law, on behalf of the Library Staff, had to be directed towards the removal of another incubus bequeathed by the concept 'BOOKS ARE FOR PRESERVATION'. Even after a learned technically trained staff came

to be recruited, the library authorities blinded by tradition would not perceive the need for revising the scale of salary that was originally designed but to attract and retain the care-taker-librarian and the clerk-librarian. It may even be that that scale had become inferior to that of a head-peon, or a *maistry* or a wireman. Though such an anamoly would not prick the conscience of the authorities, it was a matter of serious concern for the First Law. Such a scale would by no means attract the right type of men. Even if it did, the person, that it was able to pull out from the army of the unemployed, would be merely marking time, with his mind and heart elsewhere. Even the little experience he might gather would soon be lost to the library as he would take the earliest opportunity to step out. For a generation or two, in the early days of the First Law, when the library authorities consisted mostly of persons who had never come under the influence of a library whose guiding motto was 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE', when the work of the Library Staff could be neither appreciated nor evaluated properly, it was indeed an uphill task for the First Law to convince the authorities of the need for fixing an equitable scale of salary.

The First Law knew that a discontented staff was a social danger. Even apart from such a general slogan, it realised that an underpaid staff could not work up the enthusiasm necessary for the successful carrying out of its mission. Even if they did, the enthusiasm, the zeal and the

solicitude of a poorly paid staff would not produce the desired result. The words of the poor, however beneficial, are seldom heard.[1] They would be put down as interested officiousness although the contempt induced by their low salary in the reader's mind would recoil on the reader himself. One may say, let the reader hang himself. But to that extent, the use of the books of the library would suffer and *that* is a matter for serious thought, for those who believe in the First Law.

Rightly or wrongly, human society has evolved its Economics on a Money-basis. An unsophisticated scrutiny of the foundations of the Theory of Value may disclose to the embarrassment of many that the feet of Mammon are made of clay. But, what is the good? Are the majority of men guided by the ultimate value of things? "An emphatic no", is the answer supplied by that astute Professor of Worldly Wisdom, Bhartrihari.[2] "On the other hand," says he, "He who has wealth is believed to have the bluest blood running in his veins. He is taken for a scholar. He passes for the most well-informed. He is considered the most discriminate. His power of speech is praised as

1. हेतुप्रमाणयुक्तं वाक्यं न श्रूयते दरिद्रस्य The *Panchatantra*, p. 152, Harvard Oriental Series, Vol. III.

2. यस्यास्ति वित्तं स नरः कुलीनः स पण्डितः स श्रुतिमान् गुणज्ञः।
स एव वक्ता स च दर्शनीयः सर्वे गुणाः काञ्चनमाश्रयन्ति ॥

BHARTRIHARI: *Nitisataka and Vairagya Sataka* (Bombay Sanskrit Series), p. 11 of the text or p. 99 of Gopinath's edition with Hindi and English translations.

unequalled. And his figure is described as the most handsome. It is the gold in his possession that settles the quality of every one of his attributes".

With reason may ye wele se,
That Peny wyll mayster be,
Prove nowe man of mode;

* * * *

He makyth the fals to be soende
And ryght puttys to the grounde.[1]

Thus, money rules the world. It determines the status of men as well as the value of the services rendered by them. Unfortunately, people are prepared to benefit by a service only in proportion to the value set on it by money. Thus, a famished staff will render the efforts of the First Law as futile as paucity of books or paucity of readers. In the trinity of the library—books, staff and readers—the richness of the staff in worldly goods appears to be as necessary as the richness of the other two in number and variety, if the theory 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE' is to be translated into practice. It will have to be so, so long as men's status is left to the capricious and arbitrary rule of Mammon.

An important handicap that is attendant on library service, in getting what it deserves, is that

(1) *Syr Peny*, a 14th century poem, *cf.* COULTON (G. G.): *Social Life in Britain from the Conquest to the Reformation*, pp. 369-370.

the benefits of its service are latent. A doctor gets his fifteen rupees for crossing the threshold once, since people believe that the life or death of the patient at the next moment is dependent on his service. A lawyer gets his hundred rupees for standing on his legs for one hour since people believe that the ownership of property at the next minute is dependent on his service. But the benefit of the service of the library staff, like the benefit of the service of the teacher, is not discernible at the next moment—not even in the next year or decade. Its benefit, although more universal and lasting, will come to the surface only a generation or two later, when the people, that had to open their purse and pay for it, are dead and forgotten. This is a distressing attribute, with which God seems to have invested it, perhaps when in a mood of wilful mischief.

In spite of it, the First Law has already nearly succeeded in the Western countries in overcoming the effects of such a mischief. Western Society is now prepared to agree that a University Librarian must have the status and salary of a Dean of the University, that a College-Librarian must get a treatment similar to that of a Professor, that a School-Librarian is in no way inferior to a Teacher and that the Librarian of a city is entitled to the same pay, the same rights and the same privileges as those of the other officers of the city, such as the Engineer, the Health Officer, the Revenue Officer and the Educational Officer.[1] When will India fall into line with her Western sisters? Will

(1) A NOTE ON THE STATUS OF LIBRARIANS IN MEDIEVAL INDIA.—Some interesting light is thrown, on the place the Libraries occupied in the educational institutions of medieval India, by the *'Inscriptions of Nagai'* published as No. 8 of the Hyderabad Archæological Series.

Nagai is a village near Wadi and it is said to be the site of an old city, which has now disappeared leaving behind it several monuments and inscriptions of great historical value.

A Kannada inscription in the sixty-pillared temple called 'Aruvathu Kambada Gudi' of that village, said to be of the date corresponding to the 24th of December, 1058, A.D., gives an account of the public institutions founded by Madusudana, a famous general and minister of the Chalukya King, Raya-Narayana. One of the institutions founded by him was a residential college called Chati kasala for two hundred scholars studying the Vedas, and fifty-two studying the Sastras. The institute was manned by three Vedic teachers, three Sastra teachers . . . and six librarians (Sarasvati-bhandarikas)'.

If the appointment of as many as six librarians is significant at all, perhaps one may reasonably infer that the Library attached to the college should have been of considerable size and usefulness. One is further tempted to compare this medieval college library with our present-day college libraries which are so notoriously indifferent and grudging both in improving their book-resources and in providing them with the necessary human aids for helping the proper exploitation of their resources by their teachers and students.

A later verse in the same inscription shows that Madusudana was far ahead of us in fixing the status of college librarians. For, his allotment of land to the teachers and librarians in lieu of their salary was as follows:—

48 Units (Matter) of land to the Professor of Prabhakara darsana.

35 Units to the Professor of Bhatta darsana.
30 Units to the Professor of Nyaya.
20 Units to the Professor of Vedangas.
30 Units to each of the six librarians and so on.

This shows that Madusudana has treated the professors and librarians almost equally and it may further be inferred that their

she benefit by the experiences of her sisters or will she close her eyes to them and proceed herself to tread every inch of that old weary path? If she does, her children can never, never, overtake their cousins, in their onward march. Let us hope and pray that she won't take that fatal course but straight-away plunge into the foremost crest of the wave of progress, triumphantly put her librarians on a par with those of other countries and thus add to the chance of the First Law of Library Science bringing the long-neglected children of India, to the same position of vantage as that Law has been able to secure for the other nations of the world. Amen!

LIBRARY STAFF AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITY

Thus the primary task of the First Law was to educate the library authorities, with regard to Library Staff. We have seen that it performed this task step by step in four stages. First it convinced them of the need for a special staff, then for a learned staff, next for a trained staff, and finally for a well-paid staff. Its second task, in this matter, has been to tune the staff itself to the proper pitch. It would, indeed, be a tragedy if the Library Staff themselves forget, Sugriva-

academic qualifications also should have been of the same order.

The present day educational institutions of the West, which make a correct evaluation of the place of libraries, give professorial status to their librarians and, in return, insist upon high academic qualifications in them. It is earnestly hoped that the standard set by our illustrious countryman Madusudana, which is in such close agreement with the present-day practice in other countries, will soon be reached by our Universities, Colleges and Schools.

like,[1] the very noble cause which secured them their scholarship, training, emoluments and status. The plums of office are like the apple of Eden. And those, that are in their enjoyment, stand in need of a periodic searching of heart, in the light of the indignant words of the sons of Kausalya and Sumitra.[2] Every moment the Library Staff should remember that "BOOKS ARE FOR USE". At no time should they lapse into the mood of their ancestor at the Bodleian, of whom it is said "He was a very good librarian in some ways; but he hated anyone getting at his books.[3] They should never forget that in libraries books are collected for USE, prepared for USE, kept for USE and served for USE. The endless technical processes and routine—getting suggestions from experts, acquiring by purchase or gift, accessioning, classifying, cataloguing, shelf-registering, shelving, charging, and discharging—all these are carried on only FOR USE. To fulfil this paramount mission of the First Law to the fullest extent the Library Staff should not only remind themselves of that mission constantly, not only acquire the scholarship and pro-

(1) பெறல் அரும் திருப்பெற்று உதவிப்பெரும்
திறன் கினைத்திலன்; சிர்மையின் தீர்ந்தனன்;
அறம் மறந்தனன்; அன்பு கிடக்க நம்
மறன் அறிந்திலன்; வாழ்வில் மயங்கினன்.

KAMBAN: *Ramayanam*, Kishkindhakandam, VIII, 2.

(2) VALMIKI: *Ramayanam*, Kishkindhakandam, Sargas 33 and 34.

(3) *Library Association Record*: (*New Series*), Vol. VI, p. 237.

fessional training necessary but also develop certain attitudes and interests which are equally indispensable.

LIBRARY STAFF AND READERS

First comes the attitude towards Readers. It may seem rather unnecessary to have to say that Readers form an essential part of a live library's business. But, unfortunately, there are some who cannot get out of the habit of looking upon Readers as a nuisance. Others there are, who would just allow some Readers to step in, provided they remember that they are there by sufferance and have no right to demand anything, least of all, any comfort conducive to study. There are still others who won't mind paying some attention to the needs of the Readers, provided it won't interfere with the meticulous discharge of their administrative routine. Their motto is 'Administration' first, everything else including 'Readers' next. About a century and a half ago, when the First Law was not widely known, a Library with such an outlook would have perhaps been tolerated. In fact it was unfortunately so.

For about half a century from 1763, the Bodleian Library of Oxford was in the hands of the Rev. John Price of Jesus College. Quite early in his library-career, captain Cook's *Voyages* was published in 1771 and there was quite a demand for the work. But our Librarian Price promptly loaned his library copy to a friend of his and asked him to keep it as long as possible, lest he should be 'perpetually plagued by enquiries after it'.

Librarian Price would fain have had a library without readers. In fact, it is said of him that 'he discouraged readers by neglect and incivility'. In spite of this, he was allowed to rule the Bodleian, without any let or hindrance, for full half a century and to instal in his *gadi* his own son-in-law, who was a chip of the old block and managed to keep it with equal thoroughness for another half a century.

But Librarian Price is an anachronism to-day. A modern library cannot exist without Readers. 'The neglect and incivility' have crossed the floor, so to speak. For it is no longer the Reader that has to put up meekly with the 'incivility' of the Library Staff, but, unfortunately, it is the Library Staff that has silently to put up with the incivility that emanates, occasionally, from inconsiderate bumptious Readers.

The library has now to develop the methods of a modern shop. It is true that, in a great many libraries, it may not be possible to have enough assistants just waiting around for someone to come in. They will have queries to look up, letters to answer, catalogue-cards to write and a thousand and one other things to do. But, even so, it must be a rule that the moment a Reader enters the library, whatever is in hand must be stopped instantly and the impression given to the Reader should be one of welcome and attention.

We know it is very annoying if, just as one is in the middle of adding up a column of figures,

someone pops in, and it is more annoying if one finds that he simply wants to browse round and does not want anything in particular. But these are the little things that are sent to try us and we must keep a cheerful outlook and on no account show any discourtesy. It is an excellent thing to remember that the 'Customer loveth a cheerful assistant'.

The conduct of the library assistants should on no account give room for gossip of the following type: "We went into that palatial nice looking library not long ago. There was one human figure with the irritating odour of Eucalyptus oil about him, in charge of the library at the moment, doubled up over the counter table, apparently addressing envelopes. No notice was taken of us at all when we entered and it was quite a few minutes before that figure let us know that it was alive. When it did, its expression so obviously said, "I wish people would not come in when I am obliged to get this job done"; but it actually said "What can I do for you?" without getting up from the seat. By the time we had stated our wants and it was able to say "Sorry, that book is on loan", we were not at all sure that it *was* sorry or even that it knew the book we wanted and we wondered whether the book was not on the shelf all the time".

On the other hand, when the Readers go home, it must be possible for them to say "The young lad who received us at that library had such a bewitching smile that it brightened up the whole room,

and we felt quite certain that we had come in to the right place. Everything is made so comfortable in that library. Any day, I shall prefer to spend my off-time there".

LIBRARY STAFF AND PSYCHOLOGY

Next to being welcomed, the readers must be 'sized up' and humoured. To be successful in this task, the librarian must be a psychologist. To go a step further, every person on the Library Staff must also be a psychologist, if the best results are to be obtained. Does this mean that every person on the Library Staff should take a formal course in the study of the theory of psychology? Far from it, though it may not do much harm. Even a child learns, by observation, the particular kind of tactics that is necessary to have its own way with parents and teachers. So also every person on the Library Staff, who gets innumerable opportunities to observe people, should acquire, by practice, a working knowledge of psychology and the ability to understand human nature. It is the librarian's job to handle every type of reader, not merely just those that are pliant. The really successful librarian must be able to handle difficult readers. Otherwise, his books will be left unused to that extent. How often the librarian attributes his failure to the reader being unreasonable! Knowledge of books is only half the battle. It is almost as fatal not to know the difference between Tom and Dick as not to know that between Newton and Einstein. To handle the difficult reader successfully, one has

to understand him. Does he growl? If so, does he mean it or is it merely a pose? Is he really ill-natured or is only his manner unpleasant? One will be turning away many a potential reader from the counter, if one shirks the problem of the visitor who is unreasonable, unpleasant, fussy or super-critical. Success can be secured by our accuracy in quickly sizing up the easy ones and by the patience and intelligence we show in studying and working with difficult ones.

A few years ago a turbanned Indian happened to be on 'floor duty' in the Reference Department of an English library. A top-hatted Englishman came in with the usual familiarity but was dismayed to find the outlandish figure in the staff-enclosure.

The Indian librarian offered his help carefully suppressing the feeling induced by this look of dismay.

"No, thanks" came out the polite reply, and the Englishman went from shelf to shelf.

After a few minutes, the Indian approached him with another "Can I help you?"

"Thank you. Where are the books on 'Temperance'?" was the only reluctant response.

Then book after book of the 'temperance' region was opened and closed in quick succession. The watch was pulled out every minute from the pocket. He was evidently in a hurry. He had not got his reference and it was already 4-45. Poor man! "If you can tell me what exactly you want about temperance, perhaps I may be able to help

you", thus came another offer from the Indian on floor-duty.

This time, with his head turned the other way, the top-hatted gentleman said, "I have to preside at a temperance-meeting. I want something for my introductory speech. Can you help me? My train is at quarter past five".

Instantly, a volume of the encyclopædia which was in another part of the room, gave him the something he wanted, and he went away with a profusion of thanks scintillating from his smiling lips. "What is this queer behaviour due to?" was the problem raised by the new reference librarian, when the library was closing for the day. "Shyness, my friend, shyness", was the solution given by an experienced colleague, who added, "If you want to be a reference librarian, you must learn to overcome not only *your shyness* but also the shyness of *others*!"

A common situation is that a visitor comes in; you have never seen him before; he states his wants; you show him the books you think will suit him. All the time you must study him to see if your first impression is correct or if you must revise it. Above all, you should not impose your ideas, your likes and dislikes, on him. If you offer him the new large-paper edition of Vanbrough and he says, 'I don't like Vanbrough. He is awful', it is better not to press the point unduly but to endeavour to pass on to the next shelf. Don't argue about it. Alas! we are all human and in try-

ing to prove that we are right, we lose sight of our main object which is to help the visitor in finding out what he can use with pleasure and profit. Work with the reader. Don't work on him. You can lead him. But you cannot drag him. Work with him on his own ground. If he is vain, play that quality. If he talks about himself, listen with respect but don't let him go too far from the point, *viz.*, the choice of books. If he is unreasonable and fussy, show him as early as possible that you can be assertive and that you know your rights and powers. But don't yield to the temptation of settling down in pleasant conversation, for its own sake, however agreeable it may be.

Visitors fall into two groups: those who want immediate attention so that they may be on their way as soon as possible and those that want to make unhurried selection without too much assistance. Errors in diagnosis at this point create an immediate and lasting unfavourable impression. The mistake lies in using a stereotyped greeting to all visitors. An answer should be sought to the question—"Into which group the visitor falls"—and he should be treated in accordance with the analysis.

"A regular Polonius come to advice!", one might jeer. But a slight reflection will show how much disservice would be done to the First Law of Library Science by overlooking some of these apparently commonplace precepts. Any librarian who has had to do with a large staff will recollect

how often, in his career, he has had the necessity to preach them to his colleagues. If there is a doubt that the testimony of such a librarian may be an interested testimony, here are the weighty words which have been deliberately embodied in a Report 'Presented by the President of the Board of Education to Parliament by Command of His Majesty' in May 1927. "Willingness to give help, patience in the face of stupidity, control of temper under provocation must be inculcated in every assistant and attendant in a library; while the higher rank need to cultivate a study of human nature which may almost claim the dignity of a special branch of psychology. The human factor is of such supreme importance in library administration that schools of librarianship and courses of instruction may well be asked to devote a portion of their attention to giving advice on this topic".[1]

LIBRARY STAFF AND PERSONAL SERVICE

The pleasure of understanding human nature and handling difficult cases should not, however, be regarded as the beginning and end of librarianship. They are only means to an end. What is a library? A library is a collection of books kept for use. Librarianship, then, is connecting a user and a book. Hence the very life of a library is in the *personal service* given to the people. At any rate, that is what obtains in the libraries that wholeheartedly believe that 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE'.

(1) *Report on Public Libraries in England and Wales*, p. 88.

This First Law of Library Science is a hard task-master. Once you admit its dictum, you cannot escape the logical conclusion to which it will drag you. It will say, for example, "If the library KEEPS BOOKS FOR USE, the task of the librarian is not to dump down a mass of books and tell readers to help themselves. Nor is it to forcibly feed them on books of *your* choice. It is to help them; and, to help any one is to co-operate with him in carrying out his own plans and wishes—to help him to help himself." That is the kind of *personal service* that the First Law expects of the Library Staff, if they mean to help it in its mission. It is a noteworthy fact that individual requests for such *personal service* are increasing. Books selected to fit individual needs and accompanied by tactful guidance should be the response to such requests. Some may wish to broaden their outlook on life; some may wish to supplement their formal education at school; some may wish to extend it by entry into new fields of knowledge; some may wish to gather data of a particular type; others may wish to read for the pure joy of reading. To such varied individual needs, the Library Staff must attend with equal efficiency. To render such *personal service,* the knowledge and experience of the Library Staff should be such that they will be able to recommend, with due discrimination, suitable books on the same subject to men and women who differ widely in ability, education and purpose. For example, everybody wants to read about

Relativity and we have scores of books on Relativity. Will any and all of these books suit the requirements of any reader whatever? Can Lodge's *Relativity,* Durell's *Readable Relativity,* Haldane's *Reign of Relativity,* Einstein's *Meaning of Relativity,* Russell's *A. B. C. of Relativity,* Whitehead's *Principles of Relativity,* Eddington's *Mathematical Theory of Relativity* and Birkhoff's *Origin, Nature and Influence of Relativity* appeal similarly to all? One may be too trashy for a particular person, but that may be the only book that brings Relativity to the level of the comprehension of some. Another book may be too speculative but that may be the only aspect of Relativity that may appeal to some. A third may be too mystic but there are souls that revel in mysticism. The treatment in yet another book may throw a challenge to the ripest senior wrangler but that may be the very hard nut that the senior wrangler has been longing to catch to exercise his powers of cracking. It is this wilderness of print, confusing in its magnitude even to those who deal with it constantly, on the one hand, and the equally bewildering variety of the tastes and capacities of the readers on the other hand, that make the *personal service* of the Library Staff indispensable to effect contact between the right reader and the right book at the right time and in the right manner. As William S. Learned puts it 'The library of the future will be a community intelligence service. It would require a more highly

specialised personnel which must command all the College teachers' familarity with the literature of a strictly limited field, *plus* the power which the college teacher may and often does lack completely, namely, the power speedily to read his applicant's mental equipment and point of view and to sense intuitively the character of his personal need'.[1] To fulfil the demands of the First Law in this matter of *personal service,* the Library Staff should even be prepared to run to specialists and experts whenever necessary, for advice regarding the books that can be recommended to readers who may be interested in the pursuit or enjoyment of abstruse branches of knowledge.

In addition, they must have personality, tact, enthusiasm and sympathy. In fact, the relationship between the librarian and the reader should be the easiest and the most agreeable, not of a superior telling an inferior what books he ought to read, not of a teacher instructing a child, but of two equals exchanging points of view and information on books. In a word, the librarian should be 'friend, philosopher and guide' to every one who comes to *use* the library. It is such sympathetic *personal service* and "such hospitality that makes a library big, not its size" as the Poet Rabindranath Tagore puts it.[2]

(1) *Adult Education and the Library,* Vol. IV, p. 16.

(2) *Library Movement: a Collection of Essays by Divers Hands,* published by the Madras Library Association, p. 2.

LIBRARY STAFF AND SOCIAL SERVICE

If the logical outcome of the concept 'BOOKS ARE FOR USE' is such a high order of ungrudging *personal service,* it can be easily seen that it is only persons, with an irrepressible inward urge for *social service,* that can prove to be librarians, reaching the high standard set by the First Law. It can be seen that neither scholarship, nor professional training, nor high salary can by themselves make a librarian, however necessary they may be. Scholarship may lead to phlegmatic exclusiveness, professional training may result in arrogant self-complacency, and high salary may engender stand-offishness. They can all be bent to serve the purpose of the First Law if and only if there is that 'mental set'—inborn or cultivated—that mental set which moved our Saint Tayumanavar to burst forth in rapturous strains pleading with Him who is the Greatest of the Great:

"If you but give me the fitness to serve my fellow-beings, the state of happiness will come to me of its own accord."[1]

While such a delight in *social service* is necessary for any librarian, it is absolutely indispensable in one who has to turn the first sod of the library

(1) அன்பர் பணி செய்ய எனை ஆளாக்கி விட்டு விட்டால்
இன்பநிலை தானே வந்து எய்தும் பராபரமே.

TAYUMANAVAR: *Paraparakkanni,* verse 155.

TAMBYAH (T. Isac): *Psalms of a Saiva Saint, being selections from the writings of Tayumanaswamy tr. into English,* p. 36 (Verse No. 76).

movement in any society or country. The following pithy words of Edward Edwards, one of the pioneers of the Library Movement of the 19th Century England, enumerating the difficulties and the rewards of a pioneer librarian will be a source of consolation and encouragement to many a Library Staff of to-day in this part of the world:

"He must find comfort amidst the discouragements of ill-appreciated work... The labour that has to be performed under the direction of men who can neither understand its difficulties, nor estimate its results, is but likely to be at length rendered grudgingly. It becomes increasingly hard to keep in mind that applause is no right aim of work; that the pursuit which is much affected by immediate rewards, or the want of them, must be either unworthy itself, or be unworthily carried on." "But there is ample ground for steady and cheerful perseverance. Every step that is taken to extend the usefulness of a library;—to diffuse far and wide the best thought of the best thinkers;—carries one mine the more beneath the social abuses which have so often placed a prevailing influence over public institutions within the grasp of cunning money-grubs or of noisy stump-orators."[1]

But there is no need to invoke the aid of that fiction of a mine or to hope for a reward, however, remote. The FIRST LAW would say, "Plant

(1) EDWARDS (Edward): *Memoirs of Libraries,* Vol. II, pp. 96-7.

your cheerfulness and perseverance in my words, BOOKS ARE FOR USE. Your duty is to serve with books. Service is your sphere. Not rewards. Falter not. Go forward uninfluenced by any reward, real or fictitious, remote or immediate". To the librarian, the celebrated words of the Lord Sri Krishna have a special appeal:

"Work alone are thou entitled to, and not to its fruit
So never work for fruit, nor yet desist from work."[1]

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूः मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

(1) *Bhagavadgita,* Chapter II, Verse 47—p. 71 of the edition with the text and translation by D. S. SARMA.

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