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978-1-108-00305-6 - Scholae Academicae: Some Account of the Studies at the English Universities in the Eighteenth Century

Christopher Wordsworth

Excerpt

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UNIVERSITY STUDIES.



CHAPTER I.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION. LIBRARIES AND LECTURES.

‘Books were there
Right many, and in seeming fair.
But who knows what therein might be
’Twixt board and board of oaken tree?’

The Ring given to Venus.—W. MORRIS.

THE eighteenth century is hardly far enough removed from us to be canonized among ‘the good old times,’ and the tradition of abuses which have been since reformed or partially reformed, is sufficiently strong an *advocatus diaboli* to deter us even from beatifying it.

Nevertheless, if we search into its records, we shall, I believe, find no lack of interest in them, though in form (with the exception of such books as Boswell’s *Johnson*) they are apt to be almost repulsive.

Considering the two great shocks which England had sustained in the preceding sixty years, the last century, or at least the reign of Queen Anne, might be said to have opened hopefully.

Politically there was not sufficient cause for either Jacobite or Whig to despair for the future; the star of the national army and navy was in the ascendant, and our commercial prospects had markedly improved even before the Revolution. The

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Church was improved in temporalities by the Queen, in respect both of her fabrics and of her poverty-stricken clergy: the Lower House of Convocation was making efforts to revive ecclesiastical discipline, and to repress immorality. The venerable *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* had originated in 1699: a branch of it was already doing missionary work in the plantations of Maryland, and received a charter in 1701 as the *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel*. Hammond and Jeremy Taylor were dead, but Lake and Ken both lived, and the works of all of them were keeping alive a secret, but a very clear and strong, flame in the hearts of some of our men and women.

In the province of literature, which more nearly concerns our present subject, matters were even more hopeful, except in the department of amusement, where Steele and Addison had not yet produced their wares as a set-off against the pernicious artificial comedy, nor had the *Spectator* as yet drawn the attention of the public to the charms of Shakespeare and Milton.

Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*, destined to become a source of twofold advantage to his own university, came out in 1702—4; while Burnet's 'romance,' as the staunch Churchmen called it, had reached its second volume.

Sir Isaac Newton had published his *Principia* in 1687, and John Locke his *Essay* in 1689:—which two works were to mould the mind of Cambridge for the coming century.

John Ray had published his important works, and was alive until 1705, two years before the birth of Linnaeus. Robert Boyle had died at the end of 1691.

Among the 'heads' at Oxford the most noted was John Mill, principal of S. Edmund Hall. To him Richard Bentley addressed an Epistle in 1690, and after publishing Boyle Lectures and Dissertations on Phalaris, was installed master of Trinity College, Cambridge, Feb. 1, 1699—1700. To his activity, as much as to the writings of Newton and Locke, we may attribute the revival of Cambridge studies since the Revolution.

When Zachary Conrad von Uffenbach visited the English Universities in the summer of 1710, few things seem to have impressed him so much as the wretched state in which most of the college libraries were kept.

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The great exception, it is hardly necessary to say, was the noble library of Trinity College.

But even here the librarian knew little of his charge, while at the smaller colleges the condition of things was most deplorable. In 'Tschies Collodge,' (*Käse Collegium*) as his servant called the enlarged foundation of Gonville, the librarian was not to be found, and all the books that were to be seen were in a miserable attic haunted by pigeons¹, and so dusty that the German was forced to take off his ruffles².

So of the other colleges, with a few exceptions. In one he noticed that the illuminated initials had been snipt recklessly out of a manuscript of Aulus Gellius. But, alas! 'Pembrocks-Collodge' is not the only place at Cambridge where this barbarity has been committed; nor is the Vatican the only library where the keeper has turned a dishonest penny by selling the paintings from the vellum. We can sympathize with Uffenbach's blunt *abeat in malam crucem talis Bibliothecarius*³! But what should we think now-a-days if Bodley's librarian employed his time as Hudson did in disturbing the readers with a noisy 'he! he! he!' or in making a profit from the sale of duplicates? We should not then be surprised to find that the under-librarians, ill-paid and well-worked like master Crab and Tom Hearne, looked anxiously lest they should lose the expected

¹ In T. Baker's *Act at Oxford* (1704) one of the characters talks of putting up his horses in the College library at Balliol on that festive occasion.

² Uffenbach, *Reisen* III. 13 &c. (Ulm, 1754).

³ *Ibid.* III. 59, 60; ep. 37. 'A great bibliographer relates with glee how by a present of some splendidly bound modern books he obtained possession of the chief treasures of a certain cathedral library. In that library you yet may turn over volume after volume out of which the illuminations have been sliced by the penknives of visitors. In that library you still see *strata* as it were of collections—plenteous ore in one generation from folios to broad-sheets, in the next *tenuis argilla*. . .

Small blame to chapters cut down to four or five clergymen.'—*Quarterly Rev.* CCLIX. 249, 250. In Peterhouse library the gilding &c. of some of the initials of Fust and Schaeffer's Latin Bible (Mentz, 1462) has been scratched and mutilated in days when even choristers were allowed free access to the room, which was in sad disorder when Uffenbach visited it, Aug. 7, 1710. One of the offenders (a freshman or a junior soph) has left not only his name but the date of his indenture in the burnished gold—[Jacques] 'Spearman, 1732'.

Dr. W. Stanley, ex-master of C.C.C.C., printed (at Bowyer's) in 1722, at his own expense, a catalogue of the Parker MSS. which Nasmith improved in 1774.

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douceur. When such days return we may expect to see, as Uffenbach saw them, the country folk staring in amazement at the Bodleian 'like a cow at a new gate'¹.

With Mr W. Dunn Macray's *Annals of the Bodleian Library, Oxford* before us, we cannot complain that there is lack of information about the past history of that institution. Something of the same kind on a smaller scale has been contributed in behalf of the Cambridge University Library by Mr Bradshaw; and it is to be hoped that he will not allow this to remain in so inaccessible a place as the pages of the *University Gazette*² of 1869. In 1870 Mr Luard edited for the university a *Chronological List of the Graces, Documents, &c.* which concern the Library.

In Isaac Casaubon's time (1613) the Bodleian collection was meagre, but was more conveniently open for readers than those of Paris. Its appearance in 1691 is described by Mrs Alicia D'Anvers in *Academia: or the Humours of the university of Oxford in Burlesque Verse* (pp. 20—23). Its arrangement had varied little from what it was about 1675 when David Loggan sketched it for his *Oxonia Illustrata*, the duodecimos on the lower shelves, the folios with chains at the top³.

But in the more important respect of its contents it was in Hearne's time (1714) double what it had been when Casaubon was at Oxford a century before, *i. e.* at the latter date its manuscripts were 5916, and printed books 30169.

Uffenbach spent about two months at Oxford in the autumn of 1710, and some of his impressions of the Bodleian have been translated by Mr Macray from the *Commercium Epistolare*. A no less curious account, to which I have already made allusion, is contained in his German diary⁴, of which professor Mayor's summary is tarrying in the press. Uffenbach seems to have little higher opinion of 'bookseller' Hudson and Crabb than

¹ *Ibid.* III. 88, 'wie eine Kuh ein neu Thor ansahen.' Cp. 157.

² Nos. IX—XV. pp. 69, 77, 85, 93, 101, 109, 117.

³ Cp. the *Guardian*, No. LX. (1713). The books in libraries down to the beginning of last century had no titles on

the back: they were arranged in the shelves with their fore-edge outward, and on it was written the name or class-mark. At Peterhouse a catalogue of each shelf was written on the oaken panel at its end.

⁴ *Reisen* III. 87—179.

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Hearne himself had, but he commends the latter, and notices his great share (and Crabb's) in the new catalogue which came out eventually in 1738 (2 vols.) with no mention of him whatever. Uffenbach includes all three officials in the charge of over-anxiety for fees: but it must be admitted that they were miserably under-paid. After the foreigner had got formal admission as a reader he made his first regular visit, which he describes after the following sort:—I asked the way to the *Baroccian* mss.; Mr Crabb told me that he would bring me any ms. I required; I told him that I wished to go through the principal mss. by the catalogue and make notes of each. At last he agreed to go up with me if I would give him a good present. So I was fain to open my purse and give him a guinea. I preferred giving the profit to him, *diesem armen Teufel*, rather than to the head-librarian *Hudson*; for first I must have given him more, and next I should have seen less; for he does not always stay to the end: whereas Mr *Crabb* is poking about the whole time. Next morning I wished to return to the *Baroccian* mss.; but as Mr *Crabb* was occupied with strangers and had much besides to do, I turned over the register of donations.

It was probably most unfortunate for the library that Hearne, its most devoted worker, was excluded on some paltry charge of Jacobitism in 1715. Between 1730 and 1740 we learn¹ that many days passed without there being a single reader in Bodley, and rarely above two books *per diem* were consulted, whereas about 1648-50 the average was above a dozen. In 1787 complaints were formally lodged against the librarian for neglect and incivility by Dr T. Beddoes (*Pemb.*) the chemistry reader. New rules were drawn up, and matters began to improve² about 1789. In 1794 we find the curators

¹ Macray, 152. The advantage which undergraduates enjoyed of easy access to the Bodleian and other libraries on their tutors' introduction is insisted on by prof. Bentham (*Divinity Lectures*, p. 37) in 1774, and by Philalethes in answer (p. 7) to V. Knox's misstatements, 6 Feb. 1790. Gibbon, as a gentleman-commoner, had a key of Magdalen library in 1752 (*Misc.*

Works i. 53). It was not until 1829 that B.A.s were allowed to have books out of the Cambridge library, after a two years' struggle for the privilege. In 1833 some rules were printed relating to the admission of undergraduates, and in 1834 it was ordered that they should ring a bell before entering the library.

² Macray's *Annals*, 75, 152.

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in consultation with the librarians of the colleges respecting scarce books¹, &c.

Uffenbach had visited the Cambridge public library a fortnight before he went to Oxford. In those days, when the present Catalogue-room was still the Senate-house, our collection of books was, as he saw it, contained in 'two mean rooms of moderate size. In the first on the left-hand side are the printed books, but very ill arranged, in utter confusion. The catalogue is only alphabetical, and lately compiled on the basis of the Bodleian catalogue. It is also local, indicating where the books are to be sought. In the second room, which is half empty, there were some more printed books, and then the MSS., of which, however, we could see nothing well, because the librarian, Dr *Laughton* (or as they pronounce it, *Laffton*), was absent; which vexed me not a little, as Dr Ferrari highly extolled his great learning and courtesy. *Rara avis in his terris.*

'We met here however by accident the librarian of *St John's* library, Mr Baker, a very friendly and learned man, by whose help we saw several other things; for otherwise the maid, who had opened the door and was with us, would have been able to shew us but little.' He describes the Codex Bezae, some Anglo-Saxon MSS., which he saw, and an untidy drawer of miscellaneous coins. The under library-keeper, who was there, gave him a leaf of an imperfect codex of Josephus written with thick ink, as a curiosity to take away²!

We cannot but look with envy upon the donation-book and enriched catalogues of the Bodleian. Although the *Gough* and *Douce* collections did not come in until the present century (1809, and 1834), yet Ri. *Rawlinson's* (including Hearn's curious papers) was acquired in 1755, and the (original) *Godwyn* collection was imported in 1770. But beside these, numerous smaller legacies, &c. came pouring in from Locke, Hody, Narcissus Marsh, South, and Grabe (1704—24), Tanner (1736), J. Walker (1754), and Browne Willis in 1760:—not to mention many other less eminent donors. Mean-

¹ Macray's *Annals*, p. 200.

70—75, 81. Baker, Ferrari and New-

² *Reisen* iii. p. 20 (prof. Mayor's version, p. 140). Also pp. 33—40,

come enriched *St John's* library in 1740, '44, '65.

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while Cambridge came off very poorly, whether because she did not make such graceful speeches to her benefactors, or because the inexorable care with which Bodley kept the books within his walls pleased book-collectors better than the excessively accommodating open-handedness¹ wherewith we lent, and practically *gave away* our treasures,—or from whatever cause, I cannot say. Since Holdsworth's books in 1649 and Hackett's in 1670 Cambridge acquired no considerable collections with one grand exception², and her treatment of that one was not very encouraging to future donors.

In September, 1710, Sherlock received an announcement from Lord Townshend that King George I. was about to present to the University (whether out of regard to whiggish³ rationality or ignorance, the party wits could not agree) the valuable library of the late Bishop Moore of Ely, which he had purchased for 6000 guineas. This collection exceeded the number of thirty thousand volumes (including 1790 MSS.), and was more than double of the existing stock of our University Library.

In the course of fifteen years a new Senate-house⁴ was built in order to set free the present catalogue-room for the reception of this noble gift; but, as Mr Bradshaw says, it

¹ The *convenience* of our system was appreciated by the learned Oxonian, Humphrey Wanley, in 1699. He testifies thus (Ellis' *Letters of Lit. Men*, 289): 'The truth is, the Cambridge gentlemen are extremely courteous and obliging, and, excepting those of Bennet College [where they were bound by sterner laws than the Bodleian], I can borrow what books I please.' The *inconvenient* part of the Oxford conservative system is much relieved by the use of the 'camera,' and the liberty which the curators now have to lend out MSS. and rare books when really wanted; while the peril attending our Cambridge liberty has been diminished of late years by a wholesale draughting-off of the rarer books into surveillance.

² We might mention also the Worts' benefaction (1709), of which a contem-

porary account is given by Reneu to Strype in an appendix to this volume: but it was not until a century later that this part of the fund was applied to this object. It is now worth about a thousand pounds annually to the library.

³ It is curious that in 1718, the year of Bentley's degradation, Philip Brooke (Joh.) the librarian was admonished for neglect in July and resigned under a charge of *want of loyalty* in December, and the V.-C. (Gooch) was inhibited by the proctor Towers on the same plea for his leniency in dealing with him.

⁴ An account of expenses of building the senate-house, 1722—32, is in Caius Coll. Library, MS. 621, No. 10. Also for further completion, 1767—9, *ibid.* MS. 604 (= 339 *red*), No. 53; MS. 602 (= 278 *red*), No. 6; and MS. 621, No. 16.

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was 'upwards of five and thirty years before the new library was ready for use, and during that time the pillage was so unlimited that the only wonder is that we have any valuable books left.' When at last the arrangement was completed (July, 1752) the MSS. were bundled into shelves with no care or order¹, though a respectable inventory was made of them.

At the same period (1748) no less than 902 volumes were reported as missing from the old library, so that our loss was not only from Bishop Moore's collection. Yet in that very year the new 'Orders for the publick library' gave readers freedom of access to the books. Indeed it was not until 1809 that any special restriction was put upon the borrowing of MSS. The result was that at the review of the library in 1772 a large number of rare books were not forthcoming. Graduates were convicted of stealing books in 1731 and 1736; and in 1846 J. Dearle was transported for the same offence.

¹ The following extracts from T. Baker's letters to J. Strype in 1715 and the following years, maybe thought interesting.

Univ. Camb. MS. Add. 10, No. 95. 'Cambr. Oct. 6th [1715] You see our university flourisheth, by the King's Royall bounty. It is indeed a noble gift, I wish we may finde as noble a Repository to lodge it in, wch is much talkt of, and I hope will be effected. In the mean while I doubt it will be some time before I can have the turning of the MSS: otherwise I should hope to have somewhat to impart.'

No. 96. 'Cambridge, Oct. 16. As to a new Library, I have nothing certain to inform. The Law Schools have been spoke of, but as there is hardly roome enough, so they that think of that, seem neither to consult the honor of the Donor, or of the university. The great design wch is likewise spoke of, is a new Building to front ye present Schools on either side the Regent walks, with an Arch in the middle. For this money is wanting, and yet if it were begun, I should hope, such a public work would hardly stick

for want of encouragement! In the mean while that wing of the Library is spoke of for the MSS: in the part of wch the present MSS. are lodg'd already, and the printed Books remov'd.'

No. 98. (18 Feb. 1715—16.) Baker regrets that he is still unable to get at the books.

No. 99. [28 June, 1716.] 'We seem to have come to a resolution, to fit up the Law Schools for the Bp of Ely's Books, but as the execution will be slow, so I am sure that there will want roome for a great part of them.'

No. 100. 'Cambridge, Nov. 9, 1716. 'When the Bp of Ely's Books are opened (wch I doubt they will not be in hast) I shall hope to meet with somewhat worth imparting.'

No. 107, 28 Sept. 1717. 'not one book yet put up; nor one class towards receiving them, and when all is finisht will be a very unequal Repository to so noble a gift.' And the King expected to visit Cambridge.

No. 117. 8 Mar. 1717—18. 'One part ... almost finisht, tho' it will not hold much above half the Books.'

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In 1766 it was agreed to print a catalogue of the printed books, but no trace even of a commencement of the work is known to exist. It was not until 1794 that Nasmith undertook to make a fuller list of the MSS. on the basis of the then existing one. About this time the library hours were from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

In 1740 vols XXIV—XLII of Baker's MSS. were acquired, and the Askew classical MSS. in 1786. Donations are recorded from Mr Worthington (1725), Archd. Lewis (1727), Duke of Newcastle (1759), King Charles III. of Spain (1764), Duke of Marlborough (1782), Earl of Hardwicke (1798), and Sir R. Worsley (1799) for small presents, such as Oxford received in abundance.

From the nature of the terms of admission into the Cambridge library¹ it is impossible to measure the use made of it at any period as was done in the case of the Bodleian, but one of the causes which probably deterred some from frequenting that building in the more studious months, was not wanting here. The severity of cold in winter of which Mr Macray speaks had power to dishearten even the enthusiastic Thomas Baker, whose health was not good². It was not until 1790 and 1795 that fire-places were put into our library, and warming apparatus was recommended in 1823, and 1854—6. About 1797 Marshall, the library-keeper, became perfectly crippled with rheumatism, and his assistants could not stay above three years in the library, which 'was so extremely damp that few persons could pass any length of time in it with impunity'³.

But to return to Uffenbach's visit to England in 1710. The absence of librarians and others for the vacation at Cambridge obliged him to betake himself to other occupations, which he recounts in a no less interesting way. But even in term-time when he reached Oxford it was unfortunate that

¹ In answer to K. Charles' *quaere* in Aug. 1675 the Cambridge heads declared that 'No University members under the Degree of Masters of Arts have admittance to the use of the publick Library, and those upon no other caution but their Matriculation oath, taken at their admission into the

University. If any strangers be permitted the use of the Library, it is by licence given them from the V. Chancellor,' (Dyer *Priv.* i, 370.)

² MS. Add. 10, No. 62 (19 April, 1712).

³ Gunning *Reminisc.* Vol. II. ch. iii.

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when the visitor wanted to go to the Ashmolean museum, the under-librarian had gone off to the Oxford races (*Sept.* 18), whither Uffenbach himself went in a barge to see the ‘Smoak-race¹’, horse races, &c. Still more must we regret that he visited the universities in the long vacation, both for the credit of the country and for the knowledge which we might have gained of the manners of the time:—for though he attended a music party and met some of the celebrities of the day at the *Greek’s Coffeehouse* and elsewhere, yet many of the senior members of the University were not in residence; and of undergraduate-life we hear next to nothing, and that little not from personal observation.

Soon after his arrival in Cambridge,—that wretched town which he described as about the size of Höchst near Frankfurt,—Uffenbach was astonished to hear from his cicerone, the Italian Ferrari, that there were no classes or lectures (*collegia*) in the summer, and in winter only three or four, and those generally delivered to the walls (*die sie vor die Wände thun*). It is possible that he had heard an account of what were at Oxford actually called *Wall-lectures*²—the *sex sollemnes lectiones* of the statutes, ‘read *pro forma* in empty school’ (1773) as a qualification for the degree of M.A., and the ‘ordinaries’ for D.D., which were performed in a slovenly way and to the bare walls, unless some tiresome visitor came in and shamed the student into a more serious exhibition of his proficiency. Ferrari, a foreigner, was not a good person to explain to another the manners and customs of Cambridge, which both in name and thing differed widely from those of the seminaries with which they were familiar. Suffice it to say that if they had made enquiry in term-time they would have found Roger Cotes of Trinity, Daniel Waterland of Magdalene,

¹ Probably a *smock-race*: see *The Scouring of the White Horse* (by the author of ‘Tom Brown’), which illustrates the sports of Thames-country. Compare also Uffenbach’s account of the contest ‘der das garstigste Gesicht dazu macht’ with ‘grinning through horse-collars.’ Also Hearne’s account (*Diary*, 20 Sept. 1720) of a race be-

tween two running footmen who wore even less covering than the athletes of the present day—*braccatos, immò ne braccatos quidem*, as an Oxford proctor called them.

² [Bliss] *Oxoniana* i. 62. Cp. *Consideration on the Public Exercises*, Oxon. 1773. p. x.