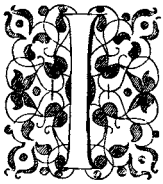


THE CARE OF BOOKS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION. ASSYRIAN RECORD-ROOMS. LIBRARIES IN GREECE, ALEXANDRIA, PERGAMON, ROME. THEIR SIZE, USE, CONTENTS, AND FITTINGS. ARMARIA OR PRESSES. THE VATICAN LIBRARY OF SIXTUS V. A TYPE OF AN ANCIENT ROMAN LIBRARY.



PROPOSE, in the following Essay, to trace the methods adopted by man in different ages and countries to preserve, to use, and to make accessible to others, those objects, of whatever material, on which he has recorded his thoughts. In this investigation I shall include the position, the size, and the arrangement, of the rooms in which these treasures were deposited, with the progressive development of fittings, catalogues, and other appliances, whether defensive, or to facilitate use. But, though I shall have to trace out these matters in some detail, I shall try to eschew mere antiquarianism, and to impart human interest, so far as possible, to a research which might otherwise exhaust the patience of my readers. Bibliography, it must be understood, will be wholly excluded. From my special point of view books are simply things to be taken care of; even their external features concern me only so far as they modify the methods adopted for arrangement and preservation; and I must dismiss the subject-matter of the volumes which filled the libraries of former days with a brevity of which I deeply regret the necessity. I shall point out

the pains taken to sort the books under various comprehensive heads; but I shall not enumerate the authors which fall under this or that division.

The earliest repositories of books were connected with temples or palaces, either because priests under all civilisations have been *par excellence* the learned class, while despots have patronised art and literature; or because such a position was thought to offer greater security.

I will begin with Assyria, where the record-rooms, or we might almost say the library, in the palace of Assur-bani-pal,

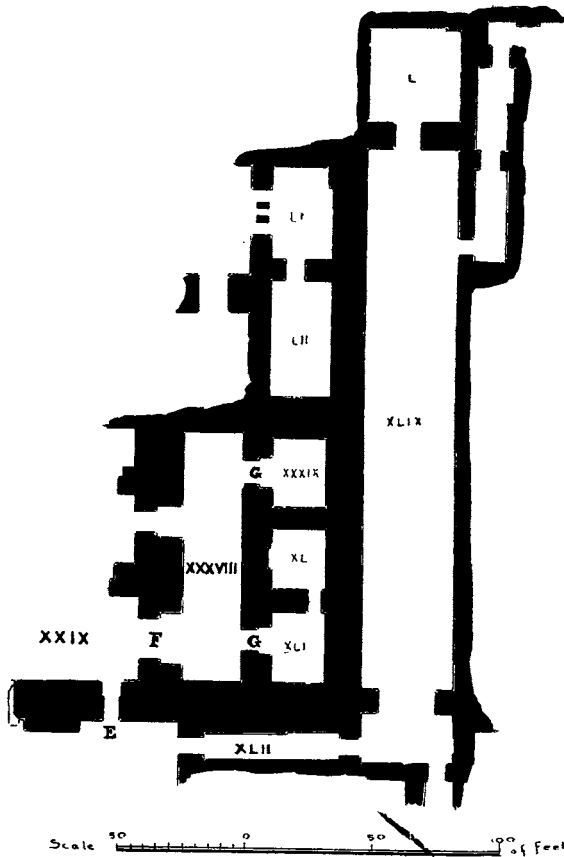


Fig. 1. Plan of the Record-Rooms in the Palace of Assur-bani-pal, King of Nineveh.

King of Nineveh, were discovered by Layard in 1850 at Kouyunjik, on the Tigris, opposite Mosul. The plan (fig. 1), taken from his work¹, will shew far better than a long description, the position of these rooms, and their relation to the rest of the building—which is believed to date from about 700 B.C. The long passage (No. XLIX) is one of the entrances to the palace. Passing thence along the narrower passage (No. XLII) the explorers soon reached a doorway (E), which led them into a large hall (No. XXIX), whence a second doorway (F) brought them into a chamber (No. XXXVIII). On the north side of this room were two doorways (G, G), each “formed by two colossal bas-reliefs of Dagon, the fish-god. The first doorway, guarded by the fish-gods, led into two small chambers opening into each other, and once panelled with bas-reliefs, the greater part of which had been destroyed. I shall call these chambers ‘the chambers of records,’ for, like ‘the house of the rolls’ or records, which Darius ordered to be searched for the decree of Cyrus concerning the building of the Temple of Jerusalem², they appear to have contained the decrees of the Assyrian kings, as well as the archives of the empire.”

Layard was led to this conclusion by finding, in these rooms, enormous quantities of inscribed tablets and cylinders of baked clay. “To a height of a foot or more from the floor they were entirely filled with them; some entire, but the greater part broken into many fragments, probably by the falling in of the upper part of the building...These documents appear to be of various kinds. Many are historical records of wars, and distant expeditions undertaken by the Assyrians; some seem to be royal decrees, and are stamped with the name of a king, the son of Esarhaddon; others again...contain lists of the gods, and probably a register of offerings made in their temples³.” Subsequent researches have shewn that these two small rooms—they were 27 feet and 23 feet long respectively, with a uniform breadth of 20 feet—contained the

¹ *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon.* 2 vols., 8vo. Lond. 1853. Vol. II., p. 343.

² Ezra, vi. 1.

³ Mr Layard gives a view of the interior of one of these rooms (p. 345) after it had been cleared of rubbish.

literature as well as the official documents of Assyria. The tablets have been sorted under the following heads: History; Law; Science; Magic; Dogma; Legends: and it has been shewn (1) that there was a special functionary to take charge of them; (2) that they were arranged in series, with special precautions for keeping the tablets forming a particular series in their proper sequence; (3) that there was a general catalogue, and probably a class-catalogue as well¹.

Excavations in other parts of Assyria have added valuable information to Layard's first discovery. Dr Wallis Budge, of the British Museum, whom I have to thank for much kind assistance, tells me that "Kouyunjik is hardly a good example of a Mesopotamian library, for it is certain that the tablets were thrown about out of their proper places when the city was captured by the Medes about B.C. 609. The tablets were kept on shelves...When I was digging at Derr some years ago we found the what I call 'Record Chamber,' and we saw the tablets lying *in situ* on slate shelves. There were, however, not many literary tablets there, for the chamber was meant to hold the commercial documents relating to the local temple..." Dr Budge concludes his letter with this very important sentence: "We have no definite proof of what I am going to say now, but I believe that the bilingual² lists, which Assur-bani-pal had drawn up for his library at Nineveh, were intended 'for the use of students.'"

To this suggestion I would add the following. Does not the position of these two rooms, easily accessible from the entrance to the palace, shew that their contents might be consulted by persons who were denied admission to the more private apartments? And further, does not the presence of the god Dagon at the entrance indicate that the library was under the protection of the deity as well as of the sovereign?

As a pendant to these Assyrian discoveries I may mention the vague rumour echoed by Athenæus of extensive libraries collected in the sixth century before our era by Polycrates³,

¹ *La Bibliothèque du Palais de Ninive*, par M. Joachim Menant. 8vo. Paris, 1880, p. 32.

² The two languages are the ancient Sumerian and the more modern Assyrian.

³ Athenæus, Book I., Chap. 4.

tyrant of Samos, and Peisistratus, tyrant of Athens, the latter collection, according to Aulus Gellius¹, having been accessible to all who cared to use it. It must be admitted that these stories are of doubtful authenticity; and further, that we have no details of the way in which books were cared for in Greece during the golden age of her literature. This dearth of information is the more tantalising as it is obvious that private libraries must have existed in a city so cultivated as Athens; and we do, in fact, find a few notices which tell us that such was the case. Xenophon², for instance, speaks of the number of volumes in the possession of Euthydemus, a follower of Socrates; and Athenæus records, in the passage to which I have already alluded, the names of several book-collectors, among whom are Euripides and Aristotle.

An allusion to the poet's bibliographical tastes has been detected in the scene of *The Frogs* of Aristophanes, where Æschylus and Euripides are weighing verses against each other in the presence of Dionysus. Æschylus exclaims:

καὶ μηκέτ' ἔμοιγε κατ' ἔπος, ἀλλ' ἐς τὸν σταθμὸν
 αὐτός, τὰ παιδί, ἢ γυνή, Κηφισοφῶν,
 ἔμβας καθήσθω, συλλαβῶν τὰ βιβλία,
 ἐγὼ δὲ δὺ' ἔπη τῶν ἐμῶν ἐρῶ μόνον.

Come, no more single lines—let him bring all,
 His wife, his children, his Cephisophon,
 His books and everything, himself to boot—
 I'll counterpoise them with a couple of lines³.

With regard to Aristotle Strabo has preserved a tradition that he “was the first who made a collection of books, and taught the kings of Egypt how to arrange a library⁴”—words which may be taken to mean that Aristotle was the first to work out the arrangement of books on a definite system which was afterwards adopted by the Ptolemies at Alexandria.

These notices are extremely disappointing. They merely serve to shew that collections of books did exist in Greece; but

¹ *Noct. Att.* Book VII., Chap. 17. Libros Athenis disciplinarum liberalium publice ad legendum præbendos primus posuisse dicitur Pisistratus tyrannus.

² Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, Book IV., Chap. 2.

³ Aristoph. *Rane*, 1407—1410, translated by J. H. Frere. The passage has been quoted by Castellani, *Biblioteche nell' Antichità*, 8vo., Bologna, 1884, pp. 7, 8, and by many others.

⁴ Strabo, ed. Kramer, Berlin, 8vo., 1852, Book XIII., Chap. 1, § 54. πρῶτος ὧν ἴσμεν συναγαγῶν βιβλία, καὶ διδάξας τοὺς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ βασιλέας βιβλιοθήκης σύνταξιν.

they give us no indication of either their extent or their arrangement. It was left to the Emperor Hadrian to build the first public library at Athens, to which, as it was naturally constructed on a Roman design, I shall return after I have described those from which it was in all probability imitated.

But, if what may be termed Greece in Europe declines to give us information, that other Greece which extended itself to Asia Minor and to Egypt—Greater Greece it would be called in modern times—supplies us with a type of library-organisation which has been of far-reaching influence.

After the death of Alexander the Great (B.C. 323) a Macedonian dynasty, that of the Ptolemies, established itself at Alexandria, and a genuine Greek dynasty at Pergamon. Both were distinguished—like Italian despots of the Renaissance—for the splendour and the culture of their courts, and they rivalled one another in the extent and richness of their libraries; but, if we are to believe Strabo¹, the library at Pergamon was not begun until the reign of Eumenes the Second (B.C. 197—159), who died 126 years after the founding of the library at Alexandria (about B.C. 285).

The libraries at Alexandria (for there were two)—though far more celebrated and more extensive than the library at Pergamon—need not, from my point of view, detain us for more than a moment, for we are told very little about their position, and nothing about their arrangement. The site of the earliest, the foundation of which is ascribed to Ptolemy the Second (B.C. 285—247), must undoubtedly be sought for within the circuit of the royal palace, which was in the fashionable quarter of the city called Brucheion. This palace was a vast enceinte, not a separate building, and, as Strabo, who visited Alexandria 24 B.C., says,

within the precincts of the palace is the Museum. It has a colonnade, a lecture-room, and a vast establishment where the men of letters who share the use of the Museum take their meals together. This College has a common revenue; and is managed by a priest who is over the Museum, an officer formerly appointed by the kings of Egypt, but at the present time, by the Emperor².

¹ Book XIII., Chap. 4, § 2.

² Book XVII., Chap. 1, § 8. τῶν δὲ βασιλείων μέρος ἐστὶ καὶ τὸ Μουσεῖον, ἔχον περίπτερον καὶ ἐξέδραν καὶ οἶκον μέγαν, ἐν ᾧ τὸ συσσίτιον τῶν μετεχόντων τοῦ Μουσείου

That the older of the two libraries must have been in some way connected with these buildings seems to me certain from two considerations. First, a ruler who took so keen an interest in books as Ptolemy, would assuredly have kept his treasures under his own eye; and, secondly, he would hardly have placed them at a distance from the spot where the learned men of Alexandria held their meetings¹.

At some period subsequent to the foundation of Ptolemy's first library, a second, called the daughter of the first², was established in connexion with the Temple of Serapis, a magnificent structure in the quarter Rhacôtis, adorned so lavishly with colonnades, statuary, and other architectural enrichments, that the historian Ammianus Marcellinus declares that nothing in the world could equal it, except the Roman Capitol³.

This brief notice of the libraries of Alexandria shews that the earlier of the two, besides being in a building dedicated to the Muses, was also connected in all probability with a palace, and the second with a temple. If we now turn to Pergamon, we shall find the library associated with the temple and *τέμενος* of Athena.

The founder selected for the site of his city a lofty and precipitous hill, about a thousand feet above the sea-level. The rocky plateau which forms the summit is divided into three gigantic steps or terraces. On the highest, which occupies the northern end of the hill, the royal palace is believed to have been built. On the next terrace, to the south, was the temple of Athena; and on the third the altar of Zeus. The rest of the public buildings were external to those three structures, and stood partly on the edge of the hill, partly on its sides.

These architectural splendours, which won for Pergamon the distinction of being "by far the noblest city in Asia minor⁴,"

φιλολόγων ἀνδρῶν· ἐστὶ δὲ τῇ συνόδῳ ταύτῃ καὶ χρήματα κοινὰ καὶ ἱερεὺς ὁ ἐπὶ τῷ Μουσεῖῳ, τεταγμένους τότε μὲν ὑπὸ τῶν βασιλέων νῦν δ' ὑπὸ Καίσαρος.

¹ One of the anonymous Lives of Apollonius Rhodius states that he presided over the Museum Libraries (τῶν βιβλιοθηκῶν τοῦ Μουσείου).

² Epiphanius, *De Pond. et Mens.*, Chap. 12. *ἔτι δὲ ὕστερον καὶ ἕτερα ἐγένετο βιβλιοθήκη ἐν τῷ Σεραπέῳ, μικροτέρα τῆς πρώτης, ἥτις θυγάτηρ ὠνομάσθη αὐτῆς.*

³ Ammianus Marcellinus, Book XXII., Chap. 16, § 12. *Atriis columnariis amplissimis et spirantibus signorum figmentis ita est exornatum, ut post Capitolium quo se venerabilis Roma in æternum attollit, nihil orbis terrarum ambitiosius cernat.* See also Aphthonius, *Progymn.* c. XII. ed. Walz, *Rhetores Græci*, I. 106.

⁴ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, Book v., Chap. 30. *Longeque clarissimum Asiæ Pergamum.*

were in the main due to Eumenes the Second, who, during his reign of nearly forty years (B.C. 197—159), was enabled by the wise policy of supporting the Romans, to transform his petty state into a powerful monarchy. The construction of a library is especially referred to him by Strabo¹, as has been already mentioned, and from the statement of Vitruvius that it was built for the delight of the world at large (*in communem delectationem*), we may infer that it was intended to be public². That he was an energetic book-collector, under whose direction a large staff of scribes was perpetually at work, may be gathered from the well-known story that his bibliographical rival at Alexandria, exasperated by his activity and success, conceived the ingenious device of crippling his endeavours by forbidding the exportation of papyrus. Eumenes, however, says the chronicler, was equal to the occasion, and defeated the scheme by inventing parchment³. It is probable that Eumenes not only began but completed the library, for in less than a quarter of a century after his death (B.C. 133) the last of his descendants bequeathed the city and state of Pergamon to the Romans. It is improbable that they would do much to increase the library, though they evidently took care of it, for ninety years later, when Mark Antony is said to have given it to Cleopatra, the number of works in it amounted to two hundred thousand⁴.

The site of the acropolis of Pergamon was thoroughly explored between 1878 and 1886 at the expense of the German

¹ Strabo, Book XIII., Chap. 4, § 2. After recounting the successful policy of Eumenes II. towards the Romans, he proceeds: *κατεσκευάσασθε δὲ οὗτος τὴν πόλιν, καὶ τὸ Νικηφόριον ἔλσει κατεφύτυσε, καὶ ἀναθήματα καὶ βιβλιοθήκας καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ τσοῦνδε κατοικίαν τοῦ Περγάμου τὴν νῦν οὖσαν ἐκείνος προσεφιλολόγησε.*

² *De Architectura*, Book VII., Præfatio. The passage is quoted in the next note.

³ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, Book XIII., Chap. 11. *Mox æmulatione circa bibliothecas regum Ptolemæi et Eumenis, supprime chartas Ptolemæo, idem Varro membranas Pergami tradidit repertas.* Vitruvius, on the other hand (*ut supra*) makes Ptolemy found the library at Alexandria as a rival to that at Pergamon. *Reges Attalici magnis philologiæ dulcedinibus inducti cum egregiam bibliothecam Pergami ad communem delectationem instituisent, tunc item Ptolemæus, infinito zelo cupiditatisque incitatus studio, non minoribus industriis ad eundem modum contenderat Alexandriæ comparare.*

⁴ Plutarch, *Antonius*, Chap. 57. To a list of accusations against Antony for his subservience to Cleopatra, is added the fact: *χαρίσασθαι μὲν αὐτῇ τὰς ἐκ Περγάμου βιβλιοθήκας, ἐν αἷς ἑκοσι μυριάδες βιβλίων ἀπλῶν ἦσαν.*

Government; and in the course of their researches the archeologists employed discovered certain rooms which they believe to have been originally appropriated to the library. The accompanying ground-plan (fig. 2) has been reproduced from one of their plates, and my description of the locality is abridged from

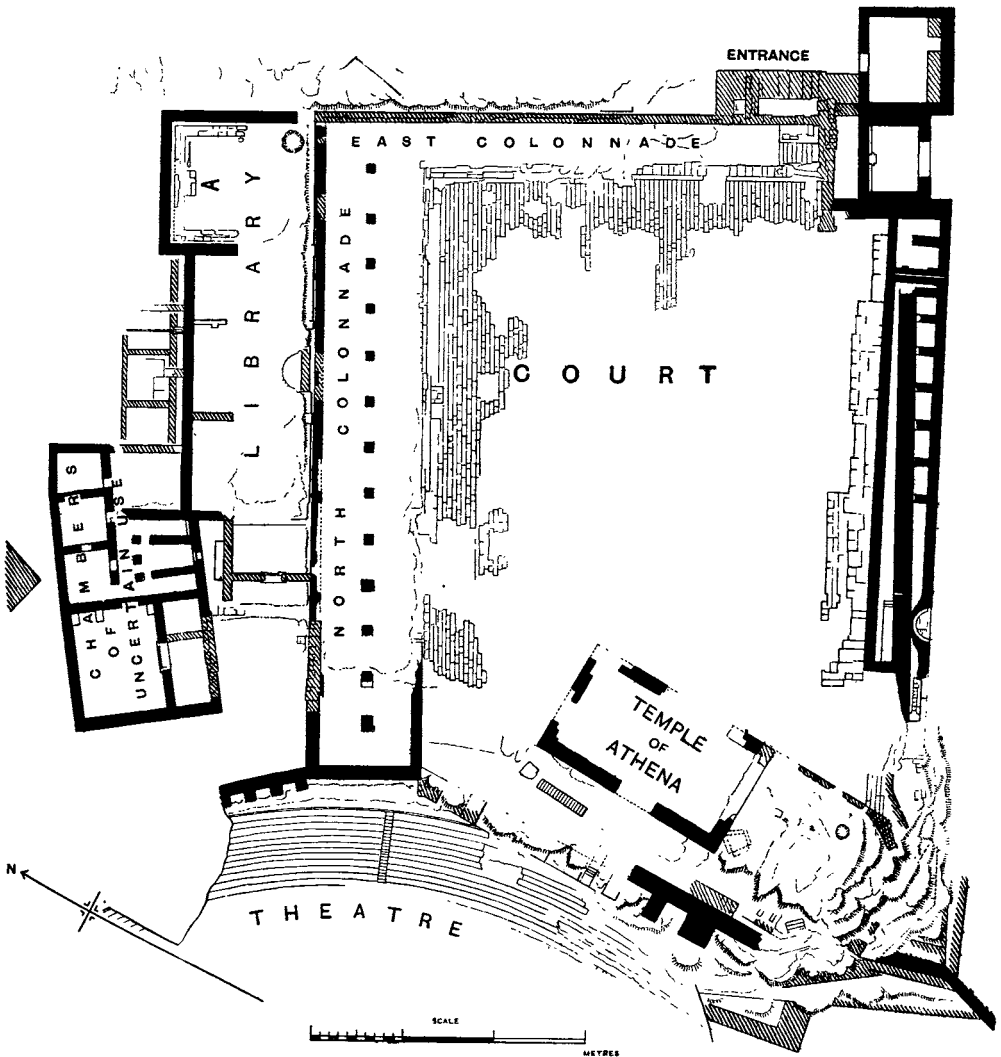


Fig. 2. Plan of the temple and precinct of Athena, Pergamon; with that of the Library and adjacent buildings.

that given in their work¹. I have also derived much valuable information from a paper published by Alexander Conze in 1884².

Of the temple of Athena only the foundations remain, but its extent and position can be readily ascertained. The enclosure, paved with slabs of marble, was entered at the south-east corner. It was open to the west and to the south, where the ground falls away precipitously, but on the east and north it was bounded by a cloister in two floors. The pillars of this cloister were Doric on the ground-floor, Ionic above. The height of those in the lower range, measured from base to top of capital, was about 16 feet, of those in the upper range about 9 feet.

This enclosure had a mean length of about 240 feet, with a mean breadth of 162 feet³. The north cloister was 37 feet broad, and was divided down the centre by a row of columns. The east cloister was of about half this width, and was undivided.

On the north side of the north cloister, the German explorers found four rooms, which they believe to have been assigned to library purposes. The platform of rock on which these chambers stood was nearly 20 feet above the level of the floor of the enclosure, and they could only be entered from the upper cloister. Of these rooms the easternmost is the largest, being 42 feet long, by 49 feet broad. Westward of it are three others, somewhat narrower, having a uniform width of 39 feet. The easternmost of these three rooms is also the smallest, being only 23 feet long; while the two next have a uniform length of about 33 feet.

¹ *Altertümer von Pergamon*, Fol., Berlin, 1885, Band 11. Das Heiligtum der Athena Polias Nikephoros, von Richard Bohn. The ground-plan (fig. 2) is reduced from Plate III. in that volume.

² *Die Pergamenische Bibliothek*. Sitzungsberichte der Königl. Preuss. Akad. der Wiss. zu Berlin, 1884, II. 1259—1270.

³ In my first lecture as Sandars Reader at Cambridge in the Lent Term, 1900, I pointed out that this enclosure was of about the same size as Nevile's Court at Trinity College, if to the central area there we add the width of one of the lateral cloisters; and that the temple of Athena was of exactly the same width as the Hall, but about 15 feet shorter. Nevile's Court is 230 feet long from the east edge of the west cloister to the wall of the Hall; and it has a mean breadth of 137 feet. If the width of the north or south cloister, 20 feet, be added to this, we get 157 feet in lieu of the 162 feet at Pergamon.