

NOTES FOR A HISTORY OF THE LIBRARY COMPANY OF PHILADELPHIA.

(From Waldie's Port Folio and Companion to the Select Circulating Library.)

More than a century may be said to have elapsed since the first idea of establishing a public library in the city of Philadelphia was agitated, and as considerable interest has been expressed to learn accurately the early history of the institution now under consideration, I have employed some research, and considerable time, in throwing together the following notes.

The time is coming when the history of our public institutions will be sought after with avidity, and it may arrive when their records will be lost or destroyed; it seems to be therefore a duty we owe to posterity to preserve in some suitable manner an account, to which the antiquarian many refer in the absence of other data, and the period of a century will not be considered as too early to commence the task, particularly of an institution which continues to maintain the first stand among the literary establishments of the United States, and which has numbered among its members our most respectable citizens, and has on its list of directors the names of Franklin, Rush, T. Godfrey, Charles Thomson, John Dickinson, &c.

Fortunately for our purpose, the early records of the Library Company of Philadelphia have been preserved with a care commensurate with their value, and I shall have frequent occasion to quote from the volumes of the minutes of the directors, carefully "collected, copied and continued by Francis Hopkinson," for a long period their secretary and a devoted friend of letters. These minutes he has recorded from the particular and graphic copy made by Joseph Breintnall, the original secretary whose first entry is in the following words, viz:

"The minutes of me, Joseph Breintnall, Secretary to the Directors of the Library Company of Philadelphia, with such of the minutes of the same directors as they order me to make, begun on the 8th day of November, 1731. By virtue of the deed or instrument of the said company, dated the first day of July last.

"The said instrument being completed by fifty subscriptions, I subscribed my name to the following summons or notice which Benjamin Franklin sent by a messenger, viz:

"To Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Hopkinson, William Parsons, Philip Syng, jun., Thomas Godfrey, Anthony Nicholas, Thomas Cadwalader, John Jones, jun., Robert Grace, and Isaac Penington.

Gentlemen—The subscription to the library being completed, you the directors appointed in the instrument, are desired to meet this evening at 5 o'clock, at the house of Nicholas Scull, to take bond of the treasurer for the faithful performance of his trust, and to consider of and appoint a proper time for the payment of the money subscribed, and other matters relating to the said library.

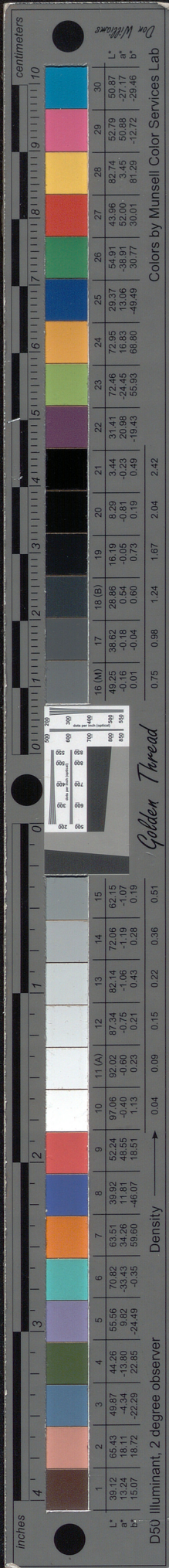
JOS. BREINTNALL, Sec'y.

Philad. 8th Nov., 1731."

At this meeting a treasurer, William Coleman, duly executed a bond with sureties, and Benjamin Franklin proposed that the said Coleman attend at suitable places to receive the subscription moneys, which, says our secretary, "it was the general opinion should not be delayed, lest the directors be disappointed in sending it to England this fall to purchase books, or that other disappointments, prejudicial to the library design, should happen by delays or negligence on any hand."

The price of a share was fixed at forty shillings, and on the first evening of attendance for that purpose ten persons appeared and paid the amount of their subscriptions. Several individuals, however, were dilatory in meeting their engagements, and B. Franklin printed and sent them notice either to pay on a certain evening or signify their determination to relinquish the copartnership; much difficulty and no little forbearance appears to have been the lot of the directors and treasurer, in collecting from some of the original subscribers; but satisfied of the utility of the project, at a meeting on the 29th of March 1732, the sum in hand being "above half" the amount originally intended to be raised, it was concluded to be the interest of all concerned to send for some of the books immediately. Thomas Godfrey at this meeting informed the directors that Mr. James Logan had heard of the plan and would willingly give his advice in the choice of books; the minute on the subject is in these words, "upon this information, Thomas Godfrey was requested to return the thanks of the committee to Mr. Logan for his generous offer—and the committee esteeming Mr. Logan to be a gentleman of universal learning, and the best judge of books in these parts, ordered that Thomas Godfrey should wait on him, and request him to favour them with a catalogue of suitable books against to-morrow evening, which T. G. readily agreed to do."

With the advice of Mr. Logan the list was made out, and Robert Grace, "to expedite the affair," agreed to draw on Peter Collinson, mercer, in Gracious street, London, for "£45 sterling at 65 per cent. advance the current rate," in favour of and to be remitted by Thomas Hopkinson then about sailing for England, with directions to purchase as many volumes as he could for the money. The catalogue of this first effort evinces considerable judgment, and was very carefully prepared with a view to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge in the various departments required by the wants of a young community. Charles Brockden having generously executed the original constitution without charge, the directors unanimously agreed to present him with a share "as some acknowledgment of this and other favours." Joseph Breintnall, Philip Syng, and Benjamin Franklin, were afterwards presented "with the freedom of the company (that is, excused from paying the yearly contribution); Breintnall for his trouble as secretary, six years,



Syng for engraving the seal of the company, and Franklin for printing notices, each two years."

In October, 1732, the first importation of books was received by Capt. Carnock in good order, T. Hopkinson informing the directors that he had received advice from T. Cadwalader and P. Collinson in adding and omitting various books, and that "Peter Collinson who had given great assistance, had moreover made the company a present of two valuable books." His claim is thus established of having been the first donor to the yet infant library. As this gentleman long served the institution as agent in London, it may not be uninteresting to quote his letter.

"LONDON, July 22d, 1732.

Gentlemen—I am a stranger to most of you, but not to your laudable design to erect a public library. I beg your acceptance of my mite, Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy and Philip Miller's Gardener's Dictionary. It will be an instance of your candour to accept the intention and good will of the giver, and not regard the meanness of the gift. I wish you success, and am with much respect,
Yours, PETER COLLINSON."

Benjamin Franklin returned a suitable letter of thanks, and from the date of this importation and first donation, the institution seems to have swept through the succeeding years of its existence with prosperous gales. Its history it will be our next object to trace.

CHAPTER II.

The importance of the step thus taken, although it was on a small scale, can be justly appreciated only by a knowledge of the fact which is stated in the reply to Peter Collinson, that there was no manner of provision made by the government for public education, either in this or the neighbouring provinces, "nor so much as a good bookseller's shop nearer than Boston."

The books were taken "to Robert Grace's chamber at his house in Jones's Alley," and there placed on the shelves, a catalogue made out, and Dr. Franklin undertook to print the blank promissory notes for the librarian to fill up, and get subscribed by those to whom he lent books. The rules and regulations adopted were few and simple. The first librarian, Louis Timothee, gave attendance from two till three on Wednesdays, and on Saturdays from ten till four. He was allowed to permit "any civil gentleman to peruse the books of the library in the library room, but not to *lend to or suffer to be taken out* of the library by any person who is not a subscribing member, any of the said books, Mr. James Logan only excepted." Timothee it appears occupied Grace's house, and he was to receive at the expiration of three months "three pounds lawful money certain," and a further "reasonable reward" as should be agreed on in consideration of services and rent.

In December, 1732, several new applicants presented themselves, and were admitted. Dr. Franklin produced the printed catalogue, which he presented without charge.

At a meeting in January, "it was resolved that the books of the library should be covered with *sheathing paper*, and that Stephen Potts should be spoke to do it, for preservation of the binding."

Rees Lloyd was the first person who forfeited his note of hand for thirty-two shillings, for not returning the *Travels of Cyrus*, in two volumes, in due time. The subject was "largely debated," says the minutes, and without permitting it as a precedent for future offenders, his fine was mitigated on account of his distance from town, &c.

The original number of fifty subscribers was not com-

pleted till 22d of February, 1733, when Joseph Growden signed the constitution, being the fiftieth member.

The simplicity of the establishment and the necessary attention in regard to expenditures at this period, is manifested by the proceedings of the board; and the following notice of the first purchase of a book in America is a proof that the directors were not disposed to part with the money entrusted to them without value received.

"One of the subscribers having some weeks ago brought to the library a book for the directors to see, and buy if they pleased, belonging to a gentleman lately from London, who is a transient person, the committee this night agreed to buy it for the library, and ordered the librarian to pay the price of fifteen shillings for it—that being less than a cent on the first cost, and the book undefaced. To be paid out of money received for forfeitures or penalties from borrowers of books delinquent. 'Tis a Voyage to the South Seas and along the coasts of Chili and Peru in the years 1712-13 and 14, by Mons. Frezier, in folio, with thirty-seven copper cuts, and well printed and bound, on good paper."

William Rawle appears to have been the first American donor, having on the 12th of March, 1733, presented "six volumes or books of the works of Mr. Edmund Spenser." The minutes state that "the directors kindly received this gift for the company," and the secretary quaintly adds, "the famous old English poem called Spenser's Fairy Queen is included in these works."

On the 15th of May, of the same year, it was agreed by a committee of directors to draw up an address to Thomas Penn, proprietor, "in order for his countenance and protection in an affair so useful and well intended as the library, and which the proprietor signified through his secretary, Mr. George, that he approved and designed to encourage." Some of the directors, on the essay being produced, objected to it on account of the language, which, several being members of the Society of Friends, thought should have been such as they were accustomed to use, but as any alteration would have been attended with delay, it was adopted as it stood. It set forth the warmth of their affection for the son of the great and good William Penn, and as these addresses preserve in some measure the manners of the age, I shall be excused for inserting here a few passages.

"Your province of Pennsylvania, sir, happy in its climate and situation, and in the constitution of its government, is thought to be no less happy in the native genius of its people, prone as it is to industry, and capable of every kind of improvement."

It proceeds to lament the want of any provision for public, generous education, and that the library was instituted with a view to obviate in some measure this deficiency, and concludes with the following extensive wish:

"May your Philadelphia be the future Athens of America; may plenty of her sons arise, qualified with virtue, learning and politeness, for the most important offices of life; and as this must be owing to the wisdom and benevolence of your honourable family, which gave being to the province and its happy constitution, may every kind of human felicity attend the proprietary house through all ages to the latest posterity."

Signed by order of the directors,

JOSEPH BREINTNALL, Sec.

Mr. Penn replied that he took the address "kindly," with the assurance that he should be always ready to promote any undertaking so useful. He presented several articles to the institution, and it is to the honour of the

proprietary family that they promoted the design as long as they continued to preserve any influence in the province.

Mr. Timothee having vacated his office, Benjamin Franklin, one of his sureties, offered to take his situation for the current year, in consideration of Timothee's having been serviceable to him: he occupied the station of librarian for three months and a day, and was succeeded by William Parsons. During the period of Franklin's service as librarian, the room was agreed to be opened but once a week, on Saturdays from four to eight, it having been observed that borrowers rarely came on Wednesdays, and four hours was found amply sufficient to supply all applicants. The librarian's salary was then reduced to £6.

The increase of books was supposed to raise the value of a share annually ten shillings, and I find the price gradually increased.

1737. On the 12th of December, 1737, the directors were informed by their secretary that the proprietor was pleased to say, that nothing remained to delay his grant of a lot of ground he intended to bestow on the company for their library. In May, 1738, a letter was received from John Penn, with a present of an air pump. The first paragraph conveys information highly honourable to the company. It is dated London, 31st January, 1738, and begins:

"Gentlemen—It always gives me pleasure when I think of the Library Company of Philadelphia, as they were the first that encouraged knowledge and learning in the province of Pennsylvania."*

A suitable reply and a vote of thanks for the lot and the air pump were ordered to be returned the generous donor. The pump excited considerable curiosity among the citizens, frequent notices of applications to borrow it being minuted; a committee was appointed to provide a case and frame for it, with glass lights in the door, "to look ornamental in the library room."

1738. The first, and I regret to add one of the very few presents of money made to the institution, was from Dr. Walter Sydsere of Antigua, in 1738, who having the sum of £58. 6s. 8d. due him in this country, generously presented it to the company. In his letter he expresses a hope that it may be the means of others being prevailed on "to lend a helping hand to promote so great a good, by which your infant colony will in a few *ages* be ranked the first in the kalendar of all the American settlements." It is impossible to foresee what a few "*ages*" will bring about, but to this time very little money has been bequeathed or given. An idea seems always to have prevailed that the institution was *wealthy*, but that can never be the case until its means enable it to procure a copy of every valuable book which money can purchase.

Mr. Breintnall appears to have had the interest of the

institution much at heart; the following minute made by him is both curious and interesting:

1739. In June, 1739, the number of members had been increased to seventy-four.

"December 4th, 1738. N. B. The library affair has hitherto been many ways fortunate. The books sent for to England have always come safe to hand, and without damage; very few of the books have been lost or defaced; a good agreement has for the most part subsisted in the company, and all the officers have proved faithful in their several trusts as far as hath been discovered. The library has received many benefactions from several benefactors and well-wishers, and increases in its reputation, and not one subscriber is deceased that I have heard of except Joseph Growden, who died the 22d of May last. Another seven years as successful as the foregoing must see the library company in a very flourishing condition, and to be more publicly known and esteemed."

1740. On the 7th of April the books were removed to "the upper room of the westernmost office of the state-house," the use of which had been lately granted to the company by the assembly. In December, of the same year, it was agreed that one dozen sheep-skin covers or cases for folio books be procured, to put on them when they are lent out!

1741. In a catalogue printed in 1741, in my possession, there is a short account of the state of the institution. Shares were then granted at the price of £6 10. In this year John Penn, Esq. presented a microscope and camera obscura, still in the company's possession.

1742. On the 3d of May, 1742, a charter of incorporation was received from the proprietors. On the 13th of December it was "ordered, that the secretary write fairly on a large sheet of paper, to be placed in open view, the names of the benefactors to the library; those who had bestowed great gifts, and those who had bestowed books!"

1743. Peter Collinson having during a period of twelve years acted as agent in London without fee or reward, asks as his compensation, that the directors will admit his friend, John Bartram, an honorary member, without any expense, and to have a free access to the library, which was agreed to, "Mr. Bartram being also in their esteem a deserving man." This is the only instance on record of an honorary member having been admitted, unless Mr. Breintnall's son's share may be considered in that light. After B.'s death, in consideration of his services, the directors voted his wife £15, and a share to his son George.

1746. Samuel Norris bequeathed the company £20.

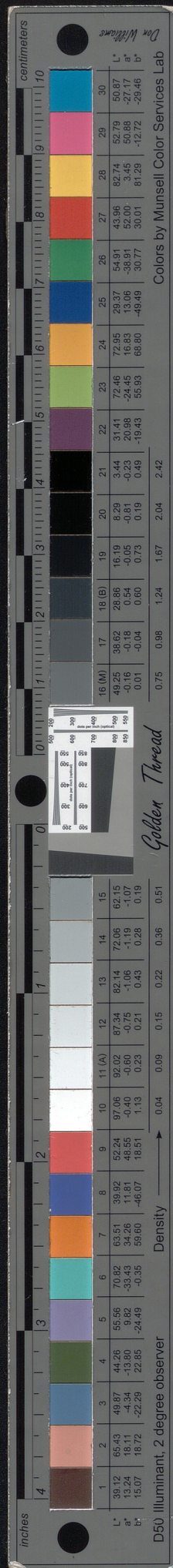
1748 to 1752. About this period many of the minutes are missing, and I have only to note the reception of a telescope and a number of valuable books from Thomas Penn, Esq.

1752. "A noble present of antient medals" was received through Mr. Peters from Mr. Grey, member of parliament for Colchester.

1759. In August of 1759, a letter was received from Peter Collinson, "in which he heavily complains of ill treatment from the directors," and resigns his agency. A vote of thanks was minuted for his past services; he continued to forward books, however, until 1761, when Thomas Beckett, bookseller of London, supplied Collinson's place.

1762. In 1762, Charles Thomson, who afterwards became secretary to Congress, was elected a director, and in April the long expected patent from the Penns for a lot of ground, in Chesnut near Ninth, was received. The lot was enclosed with a post and rail fence, and continued for many years to yield a small revenue. On Dr. Frank-

* This would seem to be erroneous. In the year 1689, only seven years after the foundation of Philadelphia, a public school was established in this city, by members of the Society of Friends, which was incorporated so early as 1697, and received a final charter from William Penn in 1711. James Logan was desirous of founding a college, and to this end offered a lot on Sixth street, free of cost; it appears from his papers in my possession, that the offer was declined, *Fourth street* being considered high enough *up town*. James Logan's reputation seems likely to outlive that of all his cotemporaries excepting Penn and Franklin; his collection of books, still the best made by an individual in this country, will assist to transmit his name to posterity as a learned and generous man.



lin's return from Europe he was unanimously re-elected a director by the board to supply the place of Samuel Shoemaker, resigned.

1763. On the 14th February, the celebrated John Dickinson was elected a director. In an address to John Penn, November 21st, 1763, occurs the following paragraph: "The encouragements the library met with in its infancy have had good effects. Many other libraries, after our example and on our plan, have been erected in this and the neighbouring provinces, whereby useful knowledge has been more generally diffused in these remote corners of the earth."

A museum early claimed the attention of the company, and numerous articles of curiosity, but of small value, are noted as having been received—from Indian fishing-hooks to Chinese slippers; it was long the duty of the librarian to exhibit this collection, and the practice was only recently discontinued, since which the articles have lain neglected, and are nearly all in a state of decay. Among the presents for this department I notice the following in February, 1764: "The secretary reported that Messrs. Michael Hillegas and Daniel Williams, two of the county commissioners, had presented the company with the blade of a sword or cutlass, which they found fourteen feet from the surface of the ground in digging the foundation of the new bridge in Second street between the city and the barracks; this blade is marked T. S. and serves to show how great a body of earth must have gathered in the short time since the Europeans first came into America, which is not more than 150 years." John Edwards proving at this time but an indifferent librarian, Francis Hopkinson, the secretary, was appointed, at a salary of £12 per annum. Some dissatisfaction is noted at this period at the new regulations, by which members were prevented from coming into the library and taking down books, in consideration of which it was "Resolved, that the librarian should prepare a bond, which should be tendered to every member who should desire the privilege of entering the library and examining the books there, at the hours of attendance on Saturdays; by which he should bind himself to be answerable for his proportionable part of the loss that may arise from any books being lost or stole out of the library."

This appears to have had the desired effect; as, however anxious members might have been to consult the books, they could not be supposed willing to join in the librarian's responsibility for losses.

1765. It is noted on the minutes, January, 1765, that a rule was still in force, by which, for the better security of the books (wired doors not having yet been procured), no person, except the librarian, was admitted into the library during the hours appointed for letting out books. The directors were in the habit, about this period, of assisting the librarian by turns.

1767. Mr. Hopkinson visiting England, the directors, in order not to lose his services on his return, was allowed to appoint a proxy. He brought home with him a few rare books, purchased by Dr. Franklin, with the company's money, and a present from Benjamin West, "formerly," says the minute, "of this city, but now of London, historical painter; a woman's hand, taken from an Egyptian mummy, in good preservation." This hand, which has sometimes been called Cleopatra's, is still in the building, and, notwithstanding the length of time which it has been exposed to the action of the air, is in perfect preservation.

1768. On the 20th of February, 1768, a law was enacted for admitting new members for the sum of £10.

1769. At a meeting of the directors, February 13th, 1769, the following gentlemen, viz. George Roberts,

Jonathan Shoemaker, James Pearson, Charles Jervis, David Evans, Anthony Morris, Jr. and Moses Bartram, being a committee of the Union Library Company of Philadelphia, waited on the board, to signify their approbation of the plan which had been some time in agitation, of uniting the two institutions. The directors replied "that they thought such a scheme might better answer the intention of public libraries, than if they were to continue in separate bodies;" and on the 13th of March a law was enacted, giving the directors "full power and authority to admit the members of the Union Library Company; and that each member so admitted, shall, by virtue thereof, be entitled to an equal share of all the estate, both real and personal, belonging to the said Library Company of Philadelphia, in common with their other members, and shall receive, accordingly, a certificate thereof, the Union Company previously assigning over, and delivering possession of, all their books, and other property, subject to all such contracts heretofore made and now subsisting between the said Union Library Company and any of their members, as the directors shall deem proper and expedient."

Of the value of this accession of books I have no data to form a judgment. The Union Company owned the house in Third street where their books had been kept, and it was for a considerable period a source of revenue, until sold. Benjamin Franklin, at this time in London, handed the orders for books to Wm. Strahan for shipment.

At the next annual election some change in the direction was made, it appearing reasonable that some of the members of the Union Company should be complimented with a seat at the board. Francis Hopkinson's place as secretary was supplied by John Hughes, Jr. The institution having now acquired additional consequence by the accession of new members, and an increase of books, the board petitioned the assembly of the province for permission to erect on some part of the state house lot such a building as would prove an ornament to the city, and continue to accommodate their rapidly increasing library. This application was refused; and at a general meeting of the company, convened by advertisement, on the 5th of October, 1771, it was deemed inexpedient to build elsewhere, and the project was for the present suffered to rest. It was not till the 25th of September, 1769, that the room was opened three days in the week; these days were Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, for four hours each, and two librarians were then appointed, viz. Jno. de Maurengault and Ludowick Spraggell, at an annual salary of £20 each.

1771. Another junction was formed, in 1771, with the Association Library Company, but there are no data by which to judge of the extent of this institution, it being only incidentally mentioned in reference to a share being granted to Mr. Wm. Attmore in consideration of his services as its clerk. The Amicable Company, also admitted about this time, is only casually mentioned, and the two collections were probably of no great value.

1773. Early in the year 1773, the second floor of Carpenter's Hall was rented, and the books removed from the room in the state house, which was now too small for their accommodation; the library was then first opened daily, from two o'clock till seven, under the charge of Charles Cist, at an annual salary of £60. The books were here first placed behind the protection of latticed doors. The increase of the cabinet of coins seems to have been a favourite project—a great number are noted as having been presented from time to time. In October, 1773, several specimens of minerals, and 53 curious coins were presented by Edward Pole. Unfor-

unately, the secretary, in reporting the gift, was obliged to add the following memorandum—"but the library being entered by some thief (as supposed) last night, he carried off all the coins and tokens, together with some change which was left in the drawer." Mr. Pole, however, received the thanks of the directors, and the articles were advertised, but never recovered.

1774. On the 31st of August, 1774, it was, "upon motion, ordered that the librarian furnish the gentlemen who are to meet in congress in this city, with such books as they may have occasion for during their sitting, taking a receipt for them." Congress enjoyed this privilege during the whole period of its sittings in Philadelphia, and the members experienced much inconvenience from the want of a similar institution for reference after removing to Washington, before a good library had been collected in the capitol. The members of the legislature of Pennsylvania likewise enjoyed the use of the books for a long period, free of charge.

1776. In May, 1776, an advertisement appeared in the Pennsylvania Gazette, and other journals, requesting a general meeting of the company, in order to consider of the propriety of empowering the directors to remove the books and effects of the company in case any event of the war should make that measure necessary. Two attempts to get together enough members to pass such a law failing, the books remained, and were unmolested.

The British army had possession of Philadelphia from September 26, 1777, to June 18, 1778, but it does not appear that the company sustained any loss from those who composed it. The officers, without exception, left deposits, and paid hire, for the books borrowed by them.

1777. In 1777 the library room was occupied by the sick soldiery, and Messrs. Alison, Jones, and Hughes, were "appointed a committee on the 11th of March to wait on General Gates, commanding officer in this city, in order to procure, if possible, an order for their removal." During the whole progress of the war, the importation of books was of course suspended. The funds thus accumulated were expended, on the conclusion of peace, in a large importation of the standard works which had appeared in the interval. By the will of the Honourable William Logan, the institution received this year a very handsome bequest of books of ancient authors, being a more extensive and valuable gift than any heretofore received. They may all be traced in the catalogue by the *L* attached to each.

1778. In November, 1778, the following minute occurs: "The directors taking into consideration the high prices of firewood, candles, &c., agreed that the library be opened during the winter season only upon Wednesdays and Saturdays, from two o'clock till eight."

1779. Jno. Todd, librarian, received £100 per annum and a share.

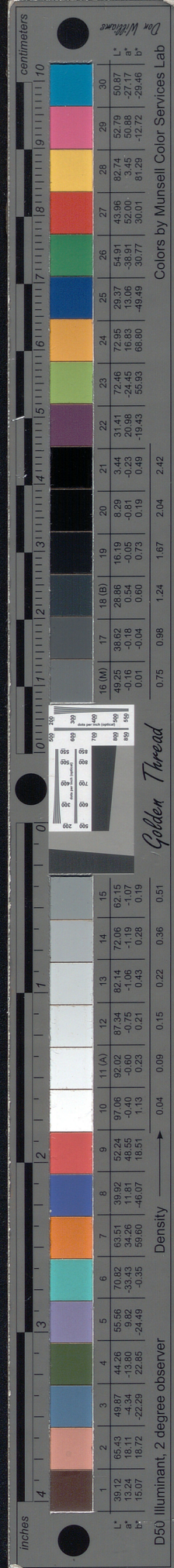
1781. On the 4th of May, 1781, the directors agreed to receive 30 shillings state money in lieu of a bushel of wheat, by which the annual payments were the previous year directed to be made.

1783. The committee on importations remitted £200 sterling to London on the 10th of June, 1783, nine years having elapsed since their last order. Jos. Woods and William Dillwyn were selected as proper agents, from their well known attachment to literature, and knowledge of books; they acted during the remainder of their lives to the satisfaction of the directors, and Jos. Woods's son is now the agent. In their letter the committee of correspondence state, "we shall confide entirely in your judgment to procure us such books of modern publication as will be proper for a public library, and though

we would wish to mix the utile with the dulce, we should not think it expedient to add to our present stock any thing in the *novel* way." This has been the uniform plan pursued, with the exception of a few of the best class of novels and romances; the consequence has been that, with the very great increase of the number of volumes, the shelves are supplied with books of real merit in most other departments, and are not lumbered with the temporary trash so greedily devoured by the sickly taste which procures its mental supplies from circulating libraries.

1783. November, 1783, Dr. Franklin presented six volumes of the natural history of the south of France.

In 1784 the librarian was removed for his inattention to the duties of his office—this is the only record of a defalcation among any of the officers of the company; he was succeeded by John Todd, Jr. In April of this year occurs the first notice of the plan, soon after carried into execution, of uniting, in the same building, the library known by the name of Loganian, an invaluable collection made by the Hon. James Logan, the confidential friend of Penn, and governor of the province. The Philosophical Society having digested a plan for building, determined to petition the legislature for a lot on the state house square. They wished the Library Company to join in the application for a similar site, and appointed a committee to confer with a committee of the library board, and, jointly, a petition was drawn up and presented, in which it is stated that the increase of books, and the union with the Loganian institution, would require a large building to accommodate them. The plan proposed and petitioned for was this, viz. that "the Philosophical Society should have eighty feet front by forty feet deep, on Sixth street, midway between Walnut and Chesnut streets, and to the said library a like space of ground on Fifth street, and directly opposite the former, for the purpose of erecting buildings thereon, at the expense of said societies respectively." The plan contemplated having the two buildings to correspond to each other in an uniform style of architecture as to their external appearances, so as to make them ornamental to the square, without taking any material space from the walks, &c., and it was naturally believed that these buildings, thus commodiously situated, would have a tendency to bring together and unite gentlemen of science, and thereby more effectually promote the respective designs of each institution; and that, moreover, they would be particularly convenient to the members of the legislature for reference, or as a pleasing retreat during the intervals of business, and that such a mark of liberality would not fail to do honour to the state in the eyes of foreigners. The legislature, however, adjourned without taking the prayer of the petitioners into consideration; and a second committee being appointed to unite with the Philosophical Society in another application at the next term of meeting, reported that the petition had been drawn up by the members of the latter society, petitioning to be located on the east side of the square, fronting on Fifth street; that as a committee they could not unite therewith, as it varied from the plan originally proposed. The board were of opinion that the locality of Fifth street was far more desirable for an institution resorted to (daily) by such numbers of individuals, and requested their committee to have another conference with the committee of the Philosophical Society, who reported in January, 1785, that they had met, and were informed that the society adhered to their determination of applying for a lot on the east side of the square; and had since been informed that a petition had been carried into the house, by the said Philosophical



Society, including an application on behalf of the library without being signed by its committee, which the board taking into consideration, the committee first appointed were directed to prepare a petition conformably to the tenor of the first application, to be signed by all the directors. This was executed, and the conduct of the Philosophical Society, in transposing the locality prayed for, was very properly set forth. In this petition it is stated, that before the Revolution the library had been opened daily, but owing to the diversion of the funds for the purpose of buying books published in Europe during the war, it was, for the present, only open every other day. That the company was composed of 400 members, and that there are constantly many other persons who take out books. From some cause, the Philosophical Society procured the grant of a lot on Fifth street, and the Library Company got nothing. If a different course had been adopted by the former, there is no reason to doubt that both would have found equal favour. On the 8th of February, in this year, Zachariah Poulson was appointed librarian, and continued to fulfil the arduous duties of his office to the satisfaction of the public and of the directors, for a period exceeding twenty-one years.

Notwithstanding the treatment from the Philosophical Society, on the 11th of August, a committee of the society made overtures to the Library Company, "in order to know on what terms, possibly, a treaty, either of purchase or joint possession, might with most convenience be effected, or whether any other plan might be deemed advisable." A special meeting of directors, on the 15th, met the committee, who being requested to furnish an account of the expenses already incurred, and the plan to be pursued, and not being prepared, the farther consideration was deferred to the next stated meeting, when no further communication being made, its consideration was postponed, and the committee for a lot to build on continued. No proposals being afterwards received, in October, 1787, the directors say they "conceive the negotiation at an end." In February, 1789, Dr. Franklin, as president of the Philosophical Society, endeavoured to revive the negotiation, but it was feared that the dangers from fire would be greater than if the books were kept in a building solely appropriated to their accommodation.

Much credit has been bestowed upon Dr. Franklin for the efforts he was supposed to have used in promoting the prosperity of the Library; and a general impression prevails, not only in this community, where the institution is frequently called the Franklin Library, but also abroad, that his exertions caused the present handsome structure to be erected. That he was one of the first projectors of the design of a public library in Philadelphia, probably the very first, I am not about to deny, nor would I detract from his merits a particle of the credit justly his due. At the same time, the extracts which I shall make from the minutes, will show how far he is entitled to be considered one of the *greatest benefactors* and friends of this highly useful and prosperous company. We have traced him thus far, from the early projector, the faithful director, the Librarian for three months and a day, the agent in London who passed over to a bookseller the money remitted him, and otherwise performed the duties of a London correspondent, in the same manner as has since been done for a much longer period by gentlemen not members of the company; we have recorded his printing a very small catalogue without charge, and a small donation (1783) of six volumes "Natural History of the South of France," and with one other entry in our brief history, we conclude the list of his services, which, from a sense of justice, I am compelled to say, are

by no means equal to those rendered by several succeeding directors. Without spending much time upon this subject, I shall here insert what is matter of record, in relation to Dr. Franklin. 1786.—At a meeting of the directors, January 5th, 1786, I find the following minute, viz:—"It being intimated to the Board, by the Librarian, that Dr. Franklin is desirous of a communication with the Board, Josiah Hewes, Richard Wells, Joseph Pascall, and Dr. Parke, are appointed a committee to wait upon the Doctor." On the 2d of February this committee reported in the following words: "The committee appointed to wait on Doctor Franklin, report, they had a conference with the Doctor, who appeared to interest himself much in the prosperity of the library, and wished some steps could be taken to procure a convenient lot to build on; and intimated that he had a number of valuable books *which he intended for the library whenever there should be a safe place to deposit them in*, which he did not think was the case at present; they thanked the Doctor for his attention, and informed him it had been often considered by the company, and that an attempt had been made to gain permission from the Assembly to build on the State House Square, and that the Philosophical Society had supplanted them therein. The Doctor made a present to the company of a Chinese clearance, which was given to Captain Green, in Canton, for which he received the thanks of the committee." In 1789 he presented a silver and a copper medal, and the library building being completed, Richard Wells produced the following bequest from "the Doctor," viz: *Eighteen volumes*, Qto. entitled "Descriptions des Arts et Metieres," printed at Neuchatel, in 1771. Here our catalogue of his services and patronage ends, and from the circumstance of all the presents and requests being regularly noted at all the meetings, we have the best reason for believing the whole series has been reported.

The statue of Franklin, in front of the building, has been one of the causes of the institution being called by his name, and continues to perpetuate this erroneous nomenclature. Its history is briefly this:—William Bingham, having heard of the intention of the directors to erect a statue of Dr. Franklin, as one of the founders of the library, in a niche in front of the building, stated that he was willing to furnish it at his own expense, but wishing for instructions, a committee reported that they had understood Dr. Franklin "would approve of a gown for his dress, and a Roman head!" An order was forthwith transmitted by Mr. B. to Italy, and the statue, in due time, arrived. A bust was procured from the Pennsylvania hospital, and sent, together with a drawing of the figure, with the order. The likeness is called a good one by his cotemporaries; in their letter of thanks to Mr. Bingham, the directors call it the "*first ornament of their building*," and "the most finished specimen of sculpture America can exhibit," and further remark that "whilst it will have a tendency to perpetuate in the minds of his fellow citizens, a recollection of the public and private virtues of its original, it cannot fail to remind them of the liberality and taste of its donor." They *might* have said, if circumstances would have justified the expression, "perpetuate the memory of the many and great benefactions to the library, made by the generous original;" but it appears they preferred eulogising the "liberality of the donor." In June, 1792, Benjamin Franklin Bache presented to the company "the machine which Dr. Franklin first used, to make experiments in electricity;" a wheel is all that remains of it.

To return from this digression to regular dates.

1787. Early in the year 1787, the project of erecting suitable buildings seems to have been impressed upon

the directors by the inconvenient situation of the books, and in January, Josiah Hewes, Richard Wells, Thomas Morris, and Dr. Parke, were appointed a committee thereupon, who reported the necessity of some provision for removing the books and property of the company to some more secure place. As large bodies move slowly, the next minute on this subject is dated May, 1789, when another committee was appointed, to procure an estimate of the expense of the contemplated building. They made an imperfect report, and "it was agreed that Richard Wells should prepare a statement of the estimate of the building, and the probable mode of defraying the expenses, and that the Secretary should be requested to open the business at the general meeting of the company called for the purpose, and to point out the importance and necessity of the undertaking." At this general meeting, held June 1st, 1789, a large number of members appeared, either in person or by proxy, and a law was passed, giving the directors power to proceed as soon as one hundred new members should be added to the list—to appropriate the money on hand, reserving sufficient for the current expenses, and to sell the ground rents, and real estate, owned by the company. Bishop White was nominated by the directors, chairman of this meeting, at which he presided.

All the shares requisite, except nineteen, were soon subscribed—many of which were to be paid for in labour—the directors and treasurer and secretary, assuming to themselves to procure the remaining nineteen, the purchase of the lot, and erection of the building, was proceeded in with all convenient speed. The present site was purchased of Mary Norris and Dr. Logan, on ground rent.* A number of plans were submitted for approval, and the one prepared by Dr. William Thornton, with some slight alterations, was adopted, for which he received a share. It may be supposed that this undertaking was not without its difficulties, and I find, that owing to the low state of the funds, the directors, treasurer, and secretary, individually, advanced sums, amounting to two hundred and fifty pounds, of which Josiah Hewes advanced fifty pounds, and the others from ten to twenty-five pounds.

1789. The first stone of the edifice was laid on the 31st of August, 1789; the minutes state, "that upon the suggestion of Dr. Benjamin Franklin, a large stone was prepared, and laid at the southwest corner of the building, with the following inscription, composed by the doctor, except so far as relates to himself, which the committee have taken the liberty of adding to it.

Be it remembered,
In honour of the Philadelphia youth,
(then chiefly artificers)
that in MDCCXXXI,
they cheerfully,
at the instance of Benjamin Franklin,
one of their number,
instituted the Philadelphia Library,
which, though small at first,
is become highly valuable, and extensively useful,
and which the walls of this edifice
are now destined to contain and preserve;
the first stone of whose foundation
was here placed
the thirty-first day of August, 1789."

1790. By the 30th of December, 1790, the books were all removed and ready for delivery, when it was resolved to have the room open daily, from one o'clock to sunset,

* Since paid off.

and Zachariah Poulson was continued Librarian, at one hundred pounds salary. During the progress of the building, more than the stipulated one hundred names were added to the list of stockholders, many apprentices, having been allowed by their employers to give sufficient labour to purchase the privilege of admission; their names are faithfully recorded, and it may, in future, be interesting to their descendants to discover that they are reaping the benefits of literary instruction from the honest labour and the sweat of the brows of their progenitors.

Among the benefactors of the library, occur the names of Robert Barclay, of London, and of Abraham Claypoole, of Pennsylvania; the former repeatedly sent presents of rare or curious books, and till his death continued to correspond with his American friends, and to mention the Institution with interest. The latter left the company, by will, one hundred pounds.

1791. In January, 1791, the directors again tendered to the President and Congress, the free use of the books in the library, in as full and ample manner as if they were members of the company. President Washington, through his secretary, Tobias Lear, returned thanks for the attention, in a very handsome note.

1782. On the 18th of February, 1782, Doctor Parke informed the board, that the heirs of James Logan had made a proposition to transfer to the library company of Philadelphia, the Loganian Library, and also to convey to them, under certain conditions, a lot of ground, in Philadelphia, and certain rents charge, together with the arrearages thereof, now due from estates in Bucks county; on this subject a committee was appointed to enquire into the condition of the property, and the terms intended to be annexed to the transfer.

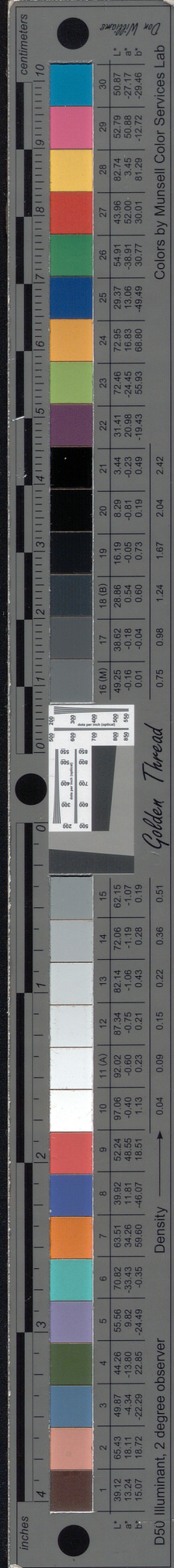
1792. An additional five foot lot having been purchased of Samuel M. Fox, on Library street, a building was erected for the accommodation of the Loganian books, by the library company of Philadelphia, for which the Loganian trustees pay an annual rent.

On the 4th of October, John Fitch's manuscripts, respecting the steam engine, were deposited in the library, under seal, with a request that they might be kept unopened till the year 1823,—this was done, and as they have undergone an examination, I shall not here attempt their analysis.

1793. On the 30th of August, 1793, at a general meeting of the members, the price of shares was raised to forty dollars, at which sum they still remain.

1799. In April, 1799, Henry Cox, of the kingdom of Ireland, presented a large number of manuscript volumes, relating to the history of his native country. They consist of the original correspondence of James First, with the Privy council of Ireland, from 1603 to 1615, inclusive, and a great variety of historical data, the value of which remains unknown. In one of the volumes is an original letter from Queen Elizabeth, dated in 1568. Several valuable printed books are also in this collection.

1804. In this year the institution was greatly enriched by John Bleakly, and the Rev. Samuel Preston. The former left, by will, one thousand pounds to the library, and the latter bequeathed a most valuable collection of rare and curious books, selected with great taste and judgment, together with two shares of United States Bank stock; Dr. Preston was influenced, it is believed, in selecting this library for the reception of his own, by our countryman, Benjamin West, who painted the portrait of the donor, which was, in the succeeding year, presented by Mrs. West, as an appropriate ornament for the library rooms. To appreciate the value of Preston's library, it must be examined in detail. There are in the collection many rare books of plates, &c. of the most



costly description, which the funds of the institution would for ever have forbidden being purchased.*

George Campbell was now elected librarian, an office he filled for twenty-three years, during which long period he was never once prevented by sickness from attending to his daily duties, a circumstance almost unprecedented in the annals of a salary officer. Under his charge the institution continued to flourish, and was again enriched, at the period of his resignation, by the bequest from William Mackenzie, of 500 rare volumes, and the purchase from his executors, of the additional number of 1466.

* In 1830, Benjamin West's eldest son visited Philadelphia, with his father's celebrated picture of Christ Rejected.

He gave the writer the following interesting particulars relative to this bequest. Dr. Preston was an intimate friend of the elder West, whose house, when in London, he frequently made his home. Having no descendants, it was occasionally a topic of discussion at the dinner-table, what would be the best disposition of his valuable books. West pressed upon his notice the library at Philadelphia, and finally obtained his promise to will it to the institution, which promise he faithfully kept. On hearing of this, Mrs. West requested the doctor to sit to her husband for his portrait, which was forwarded soon after the books; bearing on the canvass, "a present from Mrs. West to the Library Company of Philadelphia." It is an admirable painting, and has been twice exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Dr. Preston was a man of great learning.

Since this period about 5000 volumes were purchased, on very favourable terms, from James Cox, an artist since deceased, consisting of many expensive volumes on the fine arts, and miscellaneous books; they supplied a prominent deficiency, and many rarities are among them.

The number of books in the institution is now, 1835, 44,000, making together, decidedly the largest collection in this country; the influence which it exerts on the character of the population of Philadelphia, is highly beneficial; the collection is now so numerous and varied as to have become a library of reference for the literati of all parts of the Union, while the literary taste which it engenders, is highly useful to all classes who enjoy its benefits.

The number of members is now 836, each of whom pays, annually, four dollars, for the support of the institution, and for the purchase of new books, a great proportion of which are imported regularly from London.

The Loganian library attached, was bequeathed and endowed by the Hon. James Logan; its income arises from an extensive farm, occupied by Samuel D. Ingham, late Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, and one or two adjoining plantations.*

* I say "bequeathed," for such was the intention of James Logan, but his signature was wanting to the deed; his sons, William and James Logan, John Smith, and Hannah his wife, the surviving daughter of James Logan, however, complied with his intention, and are entitled to remembrance for the free-will act which they were not necessarily obliged to perform.