

here reproduced, with the addition of about nine hundred new catchwords which were found desirable in practice; for some of the latter I am indebted to Mr. F. B. Perkins' *Rational Classification of Literature* (San Francisco, 1881), which reached me as these sheets were passing through the press. *The alphabetical class-signs in my system are placed alongside of the numerical class-signs in Mr. Dui's system.* The reason for adopting an alphabetical instead of a numerical designation of the several classes and sub-classes was simply to prevent confusion in calling for a book by its number, it being thought that the number of the class might be mistaken for the number of the book. This, of course, is a matter of detail which may be changed without affecting the system.

Whether the classification itself is more or less logical than that of others who have attempted this hard and thankless, but needful task, it is not for me to say. It has at least the merit of not being made out of nothing, but rather of having been evolved from a pre-existing system which has the approval of the best bibliographers of Europe, and which has been tried for centuries, and not found wanting. *Nolimus leges Angliæ mutare.* I believe the groundwork of the system to be good, but I know very well that the building I have raised upon it can be improved; and therefore any one who thinks of making use of either would do well to study—among others—the *Table Méthodique* of Brunet, and the classification—which, however, is rather crude—of the British Museum. The latter can be consulted in Henry Stevens' *Catalogue of the American books in the Library of the British Museum* (London, 1866). Mr. Dui's and Mr. Perkins' highly original systems are also full of valuable suggestions, though the former is, to my thinking, not sufficiently worked out in detail, while the latter, with its six thousand classes—ten times as many as are used in the British Museum—is, if anything, too much so. The reference alphabet—first used by Mr. Dui—gives their systems of classification, in point of practical utility, a decided advantage over others; and Mr. Dui's decimal division brings in an element of simplicity which has, in theory at least, some obvious advantages. It is also steadily making its way into practice, and I understand there are more American libraries now using that plan than any other. Mr. Perkins "believes that his system accomplishes some good things which Mr. Dui's does not, and cures some defects in it:" and I agree with him. If I did not think that mine was on the whole better than either, I should not publish it. Nevertheless, I am free to say that in working out the details I consider Mr. Perkins' arrangement in some respects better than my own, and if I had seen it in time I could have improved mine in several ways. Mr. Swartz's Mnemonic System, and that of Mr. Cutter—described in Vol. IV. of the *Library Journal*—are also worthy of the highest consideration. Doubtless the true Classification of Books, at once rational and convenient in practice, is a thing yet to be established, but at any rate the materials for it exist; and if the present System with its Index—on which I have been working more or less for the past four years—contributes in any degree to make the labors of those who follow me more easy, it is all that I expect.

I have only to add my thanks to our excellent Secretary for his kindness in undertaking the publication of the work, and to say that its profits, if any, are to go to the American Library Association.

