

Obituaries

JOSEPH GAVIT

Mr. Gavit never attended a meeting of this Society, but he was as nearly as anyone in his generation the ideal member, drawing on our stores to further his own bibliographical labors, and making our projects his first interest. Born in Albany in 1876, a son of Joseph and Frances (Palmer) Gavit, he attended the public schools and in February, 1896, entered the service of the New York State Library as a junior clerk. He worked up through the grades to that of associate librarian, and in 1938-39 and 1944-45 served as acting director. His genius as a librarian lay in his ability to avoid the shoals of red tape which, inevitable in a public institution, made his job, he used to say, as difficult as that of an old-time Mississippi pilot; but never did he complain without a twinkle or a joke, and never did he criticize an individual. The State Regents commended him for his work in saving library treasures during the fire of 1911, but he never mentioned the subject to us. His work in building up the newspaper collections, particularly, did much to compensate for the fire losses.

In his frustration at political hurdles, Mr. Gavit used to threaten to "steal" library time to engage in the bibliographical work which he loved, but most of the hundreds of letters which we received were written in long hand from his home. Apparently only his duties as a member of the National Guard and as a deacon in the Westminster Presbyterian Church were allowed to impinge on the evenings

devoted to bibliographical studies. Of these his bibliographies of Fourth of July orations and of newspaper reprints were the most important.

About 1913 Mr. Gavit became, he said, "a humble assistant" to the "Dean of American newspaper librarians," Clarence Brigham, and from that day he was practically a slave to our various projects. He never coveted for his own institution a book which would serve scholarship better if placed in some other library, and he assumed that every bibliographer had unlimited claims on his out-of-office time. His retirement from the library in October, 1946, only freed him to serve others.

Mr. Gavit's election to the Society in 1938 could not increase his service to us, but it did lead him, whenever the dew of dividends was heavy, to make astonishingly large financial contributions. As he aided Mr. Brigham with the newspapers and Mr. Vail with Sabin, he helped me in the Evans work with that same gentle wit. During the last few years he was confined rather closely to his home in Delmar. He died in the Albany Hospital on November 28, 1959, leaving his widow, Katherine Hulst Gavit, and numerous descendants.

C. K. S.

FERRIS GREENSLET

Mr. Greenslet was born at Glens Falls, New York, on June 30, 1875, a son of George Bernard and Josephine (Ferris) Greenslet. He was graduated in 1897 from Wesleyan University, where he took an M.A. before proceeding to Columbia, where he received a Ph.D. in 1900. His first interest was historical writing, and his work on Joseph Glanville, which appeared in 1900, was the first of five of his books to appear in a space of nine years.

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