

WILLIAM COOLIDGE LANE

William Coolidge Lane, for thirty years librarian of Harvard University, died at Cambridge, March 18, 1931. He was born in Newton, July 29, 1859, the son of William Homer and Caroline Matilda (Coolidge) Lane. When he entered Harvard in 1877 his family came to live in Cambridge, in a house on Oxford street, which was his residence for the remainder of his life. After graduation from Harvard, with the degree of A.B. and with high scholastic honors, Mr. Lane immediately entered upon his career in the Harvard College Library. At first in charge of the ordering department, within a year he became superintendent of the catalogue, and also contributed to the "Bibliographical Contributions" issued by the library. In 1887 he became assistant librarian and in 1893 was elected librarian of the Boston Athenaeum. In 1898 he was called back to Harvard, to succeed Justin Winsor as librarian and here he remained identified with the University for the rest of his life. In 1928 he retired from active duties, to become Librarian Emeritus, but kept a desk in the library, where he could pursue studies in the history of the College.

When Mr. Lane entered the service of the University in 1882, the library possessed 270,000 volumes. When he became librarian in 1898 it contained 365,000 volumes and as many pamphlets. In the thirty years of his administration, its size had increased to 1,380,000 volumes and pamphlets and it had become one of the most important libraries in the country, if not in the world. During his incumbency the Widener Memorial Library was constructed, and since Gore Hall with the old library had been torn down, this involved storing the entire collections in temporary depositories and yet keeping them available, a procedure that would have taxed the resources of any but the most experienced and patient librarian. In recognition of his ability and his services, the University in 1928 conferred upon him the honorary degree of A.M.

Mr. Lane maintained an active interest in many library and historical organizations. He was president of the American Library Association in 1898-1899, and of the Bibliographical Society of America in 1904-1909, and contributed frequently to their publications. He was elected to the American Antiquarian Society in 1908 and read papers before the Society on "Early Harvard Broadsides" in 1914 and "The Letters of Christoph D. Ebeling" in 1925. He was faithful in attending the meetings and was one of the most helpful and generous correspondents.

He was married, May 12, 1903, to Bertha, daughter of Jacob Peabody Palmer of Brookline, who survived him, with two children, Margaret Lane and Rosamond, wife of Milton K. Lord.

C. S. B.

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