

## EARLY PRIVATE LIBRARIES IN NEW ENGLAND.

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Our notions of early New England and its intellectual and social condition are perhaps unduly affected by a conviction of the hardships and discords of frontier life; and it may be worth while to aim at some discovery of the counter-vailing elements; and, confining myself for the present to one particular, to ask what sort of literary baggage the original settlers brought with them, and what printed books their children and grand-children fed on. The inquiry might be variously undertaken; but I have preferred, as the most sure, if not the most picturesque way, a scrutiny of some of the more detailed inventories filed in the Probate Courts in connection with the settlement of estates.

In such a day of small things the majority of estates were so slender that it was natural in these to register somewhat minutely the several items; and thus we may be prepared to find in many instances a separate entry of every book included in an estate, with the value at which it was appraised, side by side with the like enumeration of household goods and farm utensils.

In most cases of course the inventory betrays an utter absence of books and book-learning. And equally, of course, where one book only is named, that is invariably in such language as "a Bible," "an old Bible," "a great Bible," or "a small Bible." Occasionally the appraisers are more emphatically descriptive, as in the case of John Smith, a respectable miller of Providence, dying in 1682, where out of an estate of upwards of £90, the only literature made note of is "An old Bible, some lost and some of it torne," which is assessed at 9d.

It should also be said that it is not uncommon to find two, three, four, five, six, or in one case (John Kirby, of Middletown, Connecticut, 1677) nine Bibles, enumerated as the property of an otherwise bookless testator.

Next in frequency to the Bible, in such unlettered estates, is "A Psalm book," by which I suppose is generally meant in the earliest time Ainsworth's metrical version, first printed at Amsterdam in 1612, which the Pilgrims brought with them, or after 1640 the "Bay Psalm Book," only a shade less barbarous in poetry and rhythm. But the ordinary run of single volumes, owned by a Puritan householder, apart from his Bible or Psalm-book, was almost inevitably some doctrinal or practical treatise in religion, by a popular author, such as Ainsworth, or Goodwin, or Perkins, or Preston, or Sibbes; but occasionally a Catechism, or more rarely a Concordance.

In our annals the seventeenth-century instances are very infrequent, in which a short list of books contains any sample of a different sort from these. Of such exceptional cases a fair instance is the inventory of Deacon George Clark, of Milford, Connecticut, in 1690, where "Record's Arithmaticke" appears; or that of Deacon George Bartlett, Lieutenant of the train-band of Guilford, who left in 1669 two books of "Marshall Discipline;" or, less remarkably perhaps, that of Dame Anna Palsgrave, of Roxbury, in the same year, a physician's widow, in which besides ordinary medical books is found Pliny's "Natural History," undoubtedly in Philemon Holland's noble translation; or, most outstanding of any case in my knowledge, that of William Harris, one of the strong men of early Rhode Island, compeer and rival of Roger Williams, whose scanty library of about 30 volumes in 1680 contained such unusual treasures as no less than eleven law-books, headed by Coke upon Littleton; "The London Despencetory," besides two other more commonplace medical works; a "Dixonarey;" Richard Norwood's Trigonometry; Gervase Markham's "Gentleman Jocky;" Lambarde's "Perambulation of Kent," the prototype and model of English county histories; Morton's "New England's Memorial," that foundation-stone of Pilgrim

history; a treatise on "The Effect of Warr;" with only a faint sprinkling of theology, and that enlivened by such a standard piece of literature as Sir Matthew Hale's "Contemplations, Moral and Divine."

But, most generally, in the ordinary lists of estates, the entry is apt to read, "Some old bookes;" or, with still more inglorious uncertainty, as in the case of Mr. John Wakeman, of New Haven, a layman of distinction, who died in 1661, leaving an estate of £300 (equivalent to perhaps six or seven thousand dollars with us), of which one item is "three shirts and some old Bookes, fifteen shillings;" or in that of Nathaniel Bowman, of Wethersfield, who possessed "Books, bottles and odd things," grouped in value at 12 shillings; or in that of Robert Day, of Hartford, progenitor of a notable line, who died in 1648, leaving in an estate of £143, "one pound in bookes, and sackes, and ladders;" or in that of Joseph Clark, of Windsor, 1655, who died possessed of goods valued at £44, in which one item ran, "For bacon, 1 muskett, and some bookes, £2. 12s."

When we come to details, we must remember at the outset that many of the largest libraries are not itemized, but simply entered in bulk; and passing on to some of the larger collections of which we have fuller particulars, I select for analysis ten inventories, of such as are most conveniently at hand. Of these it happens that a bare majority belong to the old Plymouth Colony,—which is not to be taken as a proof that that short-lived, unprosperous Pilgrim community was especially well supplied with cultivated men, for the exact opposite was the fact; but rather, as already suggested, that poverty of resources led to a more minute enumeration of such goods as they had, and has thus preserved more details than comparative abundance elsewhere deigned to furnish.

Of our ten specimen cases the first from the New Haven Colony is that of one Edward Tench, who died in 1640, a substantial layman, of whose history and occupation nothing distinctive is transmitted. Here, out of an estate of £400, one thirty-second part, £12½, is accredited to books, 53 volumes of which are enumerated; and the contents of the

collection are sufficiently typical. There are six Bibles, namely, "1 Geneva Bible, with notes," "1 Bible, Roman letter," and 4 small ones; a Concordance; some 40 volumes of commentaries and practical religion—the writer chiefly represented being Dr. Richard Sibbes, an intimate friend of John Davenport, the testator's pastor; two or three medical books; one law-book, Dalton's "Country Justice;" one book of cookery and household economy; and two standard works in agriculture—Markham's "Husbandry" and Mascall's "Government of Cattle;" but of general literature, ancient or modern, and of the whole domain of science as then understood, absolutely nothing.

The only other collection of books in the New Haven Colony of any importance to be noted in this connection is the library of over 100 volumes belonging to the Rev. Samuel Eaton, colleague pastor of the New Haven Church from 1638 to 1640. This collection, left behind as a gift to New Haven when the owner returned to England, and catalogued while in the town's possession,<sup>1</sup> is a representative working library of an educated theologian, to whom Latin was as familiar as English; but outside of theology and scholastic philosophy, it contains barely a dozen titles. Of these the more notable are a few classical authors, such as Plutarch, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Virgil, Ovid, and Justin, and two modern Latin classics, More's "Utopia" and the "Proverbs" of Erasmus; in history and geography, Raleigh's "History of the World," Foxe's "Book of Martyrs," and Peter Heylyn's "Cosmography;" a couple of second-rate medical hand-books; Keckermann's Manuals of Mathematics and of Logic; and a book of Military Discipline. The nearest approach to literature is the Ovid, which was George Sandys's poetical version of the Metamorphoses; and the entire list of inventories entered in the New Haven Probate Court down to 1700 affords nothing to rival this one poetical attempt in the line of belles-lettres.

In the neighbor Colony of Connecticut I have found few detailed inventories, and so far as I can gather, the records

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<sup>1</sup>New Haven Colony Hist. Society's Papers, VI, 301-13.

of the original Probate District, that of Hartford, exhibit nothing of literary interest. The only collection of books within the Colony of any extent which is even in part recoverable is that of Governor John Winthrop the younger, traveller, physician, and diplomatist, who died in 1676. About 300 volumes from his library (a fraction only of the whole) were given many years since by a descendant to the New York Society Library, and form an exceptionally interesting collection. Among them are representatives of all the then known sciences, and of almost every department of knowledge; and the lines displaying special strength are distinctly unusual. For instance, nearly one-fourth of the whole is made up of books dealing with the occult sciences, magic, alchemy, astrology, etc. Besides these should be emphasized many rare and notable works in Mathematics, Astronomy, and Medicine, and a valuable collection of helps to the study of numerous languages. There is besides an unusual number of works written in the leading modern tongues—French, German, Dutch, Italian, and Spanish being all well represented.

To name a few of the notable authors, there are two of Tycho Brahe's astronomical works, Machiavelli's "Prince," Mercator's Atlas (1610), Napier's work on Logarithms, Pascal's "Provincial Letters," and Ronsard's Hymns.

In Massachusetts Bay a pendant to Samuel Eaton's library is that of John Harvard, who immortalized an undistinguished name by bequeathing his estate to the infant college in Cambridge at his death in 1638. The list as entered on the college records<sup>2</sup> seems to imply about 440 volumes. As might be expected, a considerable majority fall under the regular designation of theology and philosophy,—the next largest division being those in classical and modern Latin literature, about one-tenth of the whole; of these, the principal classical texts in Greek are Aesop, Epictetus, and Isocrates, and in Latin, Horace, Juvenal, Lucan, Persius, Plautus, Sallust, and Terence. In the domain of history there are hardly a dozen volumes; in

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<sup>2</sup> Bibliographical Contributions to Harvard University Library, No. 27.

medicine and law, three or four each. The most outstanding individual works are Chapman's inspired translation of Homer and Holland's Pliny; the Colloquies of Erasmus and the Letters of Roger Ascham, both in the original Latin, Minsheu's "Guide into Tongues," that most wonderful of seventeenth-century dictionaries; Camden's "Remaines concerning Britain;" Bacon's "Advancement of Learning," his Essays, and his Natural History; Feltham's "Resolves," and (to represent English poetry) one volume of Francis Quarles and one of George Wither.

With this bequest of John Harvard one is tempted to compare briefly three other lists of seventeenth-century gifts to the same college, which are extant, namely, forty volumes from Governor Winthrop the elder, about twenty from Governor Bellingham, and nearly forty from the Rev. Peter Bulkley. In the Bellingham list<sup>3</sup> there is nothing outside the usual lines of philosophy and theology, except a copy of Grotius *de jure belli*. Governor Winthrop's<sup>4</sup> gift is, like its donor, distinctly less commonplace, comprising such comparative rarities as a French version of the Bible, a Book of Common Prayer, and a Life of the Virgin Mary. There is one book in the field of modern history—Polydore Vergil's *Historia Anglicana*, and among the items on the classical side so useful an acquisition as a Greek lexicon.

The last of the Harvard gifts to be mentioned is that from Peter Bulkley, of Concord, whose inventory at his death in 1659 includes as one item £123 in books. Of these certain are specifically mentioned as bequests in his will; and combining these with his earlier gift to the college we get about 60 titles from a working Massachusetts pastor's library. Of these at least three-fourths fall under the usual class of theology and philosophy, while the remainder are mainly historical. The volumes most worthy of special notice are Father Paul's "History of the Council of Trent," a copy of the *Pontificale Romanum*, Camden's *Descriptio Britanniae*, and a tract of King James I. against demonology.

<sup>3</sup> Harvard Library Bibliographical Contributions, No. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Winthrop's Life and Letters, II, 438-39.

For the sake of comparison, it may be worth while to glance also at the inventory of the stock in trade of Michael Perry,<sup>5</sup> a Boston bookseller, who died in 1700. This list foots up apparently about 6000 separate volumes, though of these many are insignificant in size and unimportant in contents. Of the entire number nearly three-fourths would be classed as theology; about 300 volumes belong to classical literature; and about 50 to mathematics. So far as I can distinguish there is but a single volume to be credited to belles-lettres—Fairfax's translation of Tasso's "Jerusalem Delivered." But there are 34 copies of a popular astrological work, nearly 1500 "Assembly's Catechisms," 3 copies of the "Pilgrim's Progress" with cuts, 6 Common-Prayer Books, 170 Bibles or parts of Bibles, and upwards of 300 Psalm Books.

If we turn now to Plymouth Colony, we find accessible the inventories of six collections of books, which deserve comparison with those already named,—those of William Bradford, William Brewster, Samuel Lee, Ralph Partridge, Thomas Prince, and Miles Standish.

Taking first the clergymen, Ralph Partridge, of Duxbury, died in 1658, leaving a library of upwards of 420 volumes, which was appraised at £32. 9s.—an average of 18 pence a volume. The titles, however, of only a small number are spread upon the records, and these indicate a preponderance of theology, with a special leaning to the Church Fathers and to ecclesiastical history in general, and little else of importance.

A generation later, "the Reverend and learned Mr. Samuel Lee," of Bristol, died in 1691, on a return voyage from America; and the Catalogue of his library, which was exposed for sale in Boston, was printed there by Samuel Green in 1693.<sup>6</sup>

About 1300 volumes are recorded, of which fully four-fifths are in Latin. With the usual experience Divinity, including Ecclesiastical History, absorbs 30 per cent; and the next largest list, that of secular History, is less than half the previous division in extent. Of classical authors,

<sup>5</sup> Dunton's Letters from N. E. (Prince Society), 314-19.

<sup>6</sup> Mass. Hist. Society's Proceedings, 2d series, X, 540-44.

mainly in what seem to be school editions, there is an almost equally large representation; and after these comes another numerous division, comprehending Medicine, Chemistry, and Alchemy—about 125 volumes. There are smaller groups in Mathematics and Astronomy (including Astrology), about 60 in all; about 20 in Geography; and only 8 or 10 in Law,—but among them works of such note as Justinian's Institutes, the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, and Grotius *de jure belli*.

Judged by quality instead of quantity, the somewhat obscure entries indicate a library strongest in divinity and the classical tongues, and including in these lines some unusual treasures, such as the Works of the Venerable Bede, Casaubon's *Epistolae*, Barclay's *Argenis*, and Selden's account of the Arundel Marbles. On the side of natural science the selection was a good one, as may be judged from such specimens as a part of the Royal Society's "Philosophical Transactions," Evelyn's *Sylva*, and Harvey's epoch-making book on the circulation of the blood. In philosophy we find Bacon's "Advancement of Learning;" in history such an uncommon book as Ashmole's account of the Order of the Garter; but in pure literature only a single volume, and that probably not chosen by the owner from its literary interest,—Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*.

Of the Plymouth laymen whose libraries we have in detail, two were Governors of the Colony—William Bradford and Thomas Prince.

Bradford, also its historian, died in 1657, leaving about 100 volumes,<sup>7</sup> the appraised value of which was £15.3; substantially the same volumes reappear in the inventory of his widow, Mistress Alice Bradford, thirteen years later; and an entry of identical amount appears for the third time in the estate of their son, Major William Bradford, in 1704. About half the books only are entered by title, and of these but half a dozen are outside the usual theological routine. Of those in theology but one is at all unfamiliar, Jeremy Taylor's "Liberty of Prophesying;" while the balance includes one medical treatise, Barrough's "Method of Physic,"

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<sup>7</sup> Mayflower Descendant, II, 232-33; III, 146-47; IV, 147.



the most popular of its kind in that generation, judging by the frequency of its recurrence in these lists; a copy of Guicciardini's "History of Italy;" and Jean Bodin's treatise on government, which was far from advocating the principles of the Plymouth Compact. Frequent reminders appear of the owner's sojourn in Holland; as in the inclusion of a "History of the Netherlands," of four separate books of John Robinson's, and three of Henry Ainsworth's, of one at least of the books printed in Leyden by Elder Brewster, and of "Calvine on the epistles, in Duch, with Divers other Duch bookes."

Governor Thomas Prince, who died in 1673, left 187 volumes,<sup>8</sup> valued at £13. 18. 8, out of a total estate of £422; of this number, however, 100 are "Psalme books," worth 18 pence apiece, and 50 "Small paper bookes to be distributed bound up." The remaining volumes are almost all of a theological cast. There are, however, three law books; a copy of the "London Dispensatory;" a Hebrew Grammar; Laud's "Account of his conference with Fisher the Jesuit," and Prynne's "Account of Laud's Trial;" Morton's "New England's Memorial;" and finally a single volume which may without violence be classed as English literature, the "Essays" of Sir William Cornwallis, a feeble seventeenth-century imitator of Montaigne.

Next comes the library of Miles Standish, the military leader of the early Colony, who owned a collection<sup>9</sup> of upwards of 50 books at his death in 1656, appraised at £11.13 in a total estate of £358. Of the titles on record, two-thirds are books in theology and kindred subjects, but a few of the others are somewhat notable. Such are, Raleigh's "History of the World," and half a dozen other equally solid historical works; Chapman's Homer's Iliad; Caesar's "Commentaries," undoubtedly in English, with one other military treatise; Gervase Markham's "Country Farmer;" Dodoens' "Herbal;" single law and medical books; and a translated volume of French essays.

Standish has been claimed as a concealed Roman Catholic, but the inventory of his books, so far as it affords any argu-

<sup>8</sup> Mayflower Descendant, III, 208-09.

<sup>9</sup> N. E. Hist. and Geneal. Register, V, 337.

ment, is certainly on the Protestant side. It is hard to imagine a Romanist, acquiring and retaining such an array of Protestant theology as is here, including some distinctly anti-Catholic works, as Thomas Sparke's "Answer to a Discourse against Heresies," and Calvin's "Institutes."

Last of all we come to the very remarkable private library of Elder William Brewster,<sup>10</sup> who died in 1664, leaving an estate of only £150, of which nearly one-third, about £43, was in books, comprising over 400 volumes, one in every six of which was in the Latin tongue.

When we come to analyze this extraordinary collection, certainly appraised much below its value, we find that four-fifths come under the head of distinctively religious literature; while the next largest division, perhaps two dozen volumes, is that of history. Perhaps a dozen volumes—an altogether unprecedented experience in these summaries, may be credited to English literature; and the rest are scattered over the entire field of knowledge,—including, for instance, five or six books pertaining to the science of government, two on the art of Surveying, two in Medicine, and one (Dodoens' "Herbal") a masterpiece in Botany. There are Latin and Hebrew Grammars and lexicons; but very few texts or translations of classical authors, Lodge's Seneca being the chief example.

Among the more striking single items may be specified, Hakluyt's "Voyages," John Smith's "Description of New England," Rich's "Newes from Virginia," Camden's "Britain" (both in Latin and English), Brooke's "Catalogue of the English Nobility," and Machiavelli's "Prince" (in the Latin version).

Among the works to be included under English literature, there is none of the first rank, except Lord Bacon's "Advancement of Learning;" for poetry, two volumes of George Wither's must stand at the head; and I fear that there are specimens of no other author whose name is even faintly remembered at the present day, save Richard Brathwait's Description (in verse) of a Good Wife, and Thomas Dekker's

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<sup>10</sup>Mass. Hist. Society's Proceedings, 2d series, V, 38-81.

account of a magnificent entertainment given to James I. on his reception in London.

In studying these lists one thing perhaps worth notice is the frequent recurrence of certain volumes, which are not now remembered as anywise remarkable, but which seem to have enjoyed a reputation now outgrown. Such a book, for instance, is "The French Academy," a collection of essays translated in 1586 from Pierre de la Primaudaye, a copy of which is found in one after another of the libraries here chronicled. The title is borrowed from Plato's "Academy," and the book is concerned with the study, by way of dialogue, of manners or ethics. It is now hard to see whence this popular work, of which large editions must have been printed, so often does it still appear in second-hand catalogues, derived its charm.

Still more worth notice is the deduction already anticipated, of the absolute dearth in these lists of all that we have learned to regard as the glories of Elizabethan literature. A master in these studies has told us<sup>11</sup> that "before 1700 there was not in Massachusetts, so far as is known, a copy of Shakspeare's or of Milton's poems;" it does not need so sweeping a statement to convince us of the narrow horizon and the limited interests of our forefathers of that generation. We should recognize, however, in partial explanation of this dearth, the inherited prejudice against the drama which made Shakespeare an impossible element in most of the collections we have noted; and the same Puritan temper counted much else in contemporary letters frivolous which later generations have agreed to honor.

Another fact to be remarked is the strange lack of books in some houses where better things might be expected. One such surprise is in the estate of Governor John Haynes, of Hartford, an early Connecticut leader in character and lineage as well as wealth, who left property amounting to upwards of £1400, but whose only literary baggage is included in the entry, "1 greate bible and 1 gilded looking glass, 16 shillings."

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<sup>11</sup>Mellen Chamberlain, Address at Dedication of Brooks Library, Brattleborough, 1887, 26.

It would be only fair to compare with these lists such libraries of the Southern Colonies as come within our knowledge. Such an one is the library left by Colonel Ralph Wormeley, of Middlesex County, at the mouth of the Rappahannock, in Virginia, once a student of Oriel College, Oxford, who died in 1701. About 400 volumes are mentioned in his inventory,<sup>12</sup> and of these, as in our previous instances, theology is still the largest factor; but works in civil history and law form a very considerable part of the whole, and there is what would be a most unusual proportion for New England of books which may be classed as literature.

The English drama is represented, among other authors, by the Works of Sir William Davenant, by Beaumont and Fletcher's "Fifty Comedies and Tragedies," and by Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour;" English Poetry by Hudibras and the poems of Herbert, Quarles, and Waller; while among the many exponents of the best English prose are such masterpieces as Lord Bacon's "Essays," Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy," Fuller's "Worthies" and "Holy and Profane State," the "Golden Remains" of John Hales, Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity," Howell's "Familiar Letters" and Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying." The most striking items in foreign tongues are Montaigne's "Essays" and Don Quixote.

Another library of which we have particulars is one of over 200 volumes brought in 1635 by the Rev. John Goodborne,<sup>13</sup> bound to Virginia, who died upon the voyage. In this case there is nothing to distinguish the Southern minister from his Northern brother. Roughly speaking, two-thirds of the whole are theological, and the rest is mainly given up to editions of classical writers or helps to classical study; but nothing can be detected of a literary flavor, except so far as that is represented in Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity," and in versions of Plutarch's Lives or Virgil's Aeneid. Of smaller collections a typical one is that of Captain Arthur Spicer<sup>14</sup> of Richmond county, Virginia, who died in 1699,

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<sup>12</sup> William and Mary College Quarterly, II, 169-74.

<sup>13</sup> Amer. Hist. Review, XI, 328-32.

<sup>14</sup> William and Mary College Quarterly, III, 133-34.

leaving about 125 books, valued at £10. Of these towards one-half are to be accredited to law,—theology following as a faint second. The only really noticeable items are Lord Bacon's "Advancement of Learning," Sir Thomas Browne's "Religio Medici," and the "Eikon Basilike" attributed to Charles the First.

The materials are too scanty for safe generalization, but so far as any can be suggested they imply, as we might expect, a freer commerce in the Southern Colonies with London bookshops than in our less fertile and less opulent New England, and a more catholic taste, unhampered by austere prejudices.

For New England the fact remains, and can hardly be stated too baldly, that the early settlers and their children lived without the inspiration of literature. It was "plain living and high thinking," and that their lives and their work were worthy of reverence is all the more to their credit.

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