

# Review Articles

## English Libraries

*English Libraries, 1800-1850.* [By] C. B. Oldman, W. A. Munford, and S. Nowell-Smith. London: H. K. Lewis & Co., Ltd., [c 1958]. 78p.

The history of English libraries is part of the Western library tradition, despite the fact that it preserved a native individuality. This fact is apparent in a reading of the three lectures delivered for the School of Librarianship and Archives at University College, London, in February and March 1957, and now published in pamphlet form. Each of the lectures dwells on an outstanding personality of the period from 1800 to 1850.

In the first lecture, Dr. C. D. Oldman, who was associated with the British Museum since 1920, writes on Sir Anthony Panizzi and his work for that institution. Panizzi, as Keeper of Printed Books, reformed the British Museum library's program and modernized its administration. Dr. Oldman concludes that "If the English nation now possesses a National Library of which it can be justly proud, it is Antonio Panizzi, more than any other man, to whom our thanks must go for this."

W. A. Munford, in the second lecture, discusses Dr. George Birkbeck and his interest in the Mechanics' Institutes which were the forerunners of the English municipal library system. Birkbeck's pioneer effort on behalf of the Institutes and their related libraries stimulated adult education, and scientific and technical education in Great Britain as well as in other countries.

Simon Nowell-Smith, who has published widely in the field of literary criticism and bibliography and who has served as librarian of the London Library, presented the third lecture. He outlined Thomas Carlyle's role in the opening of the London Library in 1841 as a lending library, as well as his part in its subsequent development. To illustrate the nature of Carlyle's motivation favoring libraries, a journal entry of 1832 is cited: "What a sad want I am

in of libraries, of books to gather facts from! Why is there not a Majesty's library in every country town? There is a Majesty's gaol and gallows in every one."

All three lectures are presented in a popular style and include bibliographical references for those interested in further study.—*Sidney Forman, United States Military Academy, West Point.*

## Book Reviews

*Reviews in Library Book Selection.* By LeRoy C. Merritt, Martha Boaz, and Kenneth S. Tisdel. Foreword by Maurice F. Tauber. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1958. xv, 188p. \$2.50.

Reviewing is a much too powerful determinant of book sales and the fame of authors not to have been damned by some and puffed up by others. This doubtful reputation of the review has obliged librarians, who in the name of the review buy books unseen, to study the matter for themselves. The latest publication of the results of such inquiry, the book in hand, comprises three studies, each independently conceived and produced. "The Pattern of Modern Book Reviewing" was written by LeRoy C. Merritt, professor of librarianship at the University of California. "The Reviews and Reviewers of Best Sellers" is a version of the Ph.D. dissertation written by Martha Boaz, dean of the library school of the University of Southern California. "Staff Reviewing in Library Book Selection" is a recasting of an M.A. thesis by Kenneth S. Tisdel, associate librarian of the University of Missouri.

Merritt intended to study the dependability of reviews in a more comprehensive way than others have done. But virtually every important finding he makes is impaired by a serious weakness. First, he summarizes the literature of the subject and finds that earlier studies, although isolated and scattered, make a "devastating" picture of the inadequacies of book reviewing. But his rendition and use of previous research