The Guildhall Library.

This booklet, "The Guildhall Library and its Work," Mr. Welch, the librarian of the well-known collection, gives some valuable information on the growth and development of the buildings and their valuable contents. As early as 1425 we find mention of provision for a library at the Guildhall, and valuable manuscripts and books were stored there for a century and a quarter, but of these priceless manuscripts and incunabula not one volume is known to be preserved. In fact, bibliographers would be only too glad to trace anything relating to these volumes.

From 1550 to 1824 the library was neglected, and it was not until the latter period that any steps were taken by the corporation to re-establish their library. In this year the report of a special committee appointed to enquire into the matter was adopted, and in 1826 the east wing of the front of the Guildhall was adapted for the purpose, though the obscure and unsuitable apartments devoted to its use had a most unfavorable influence upon its development. At the outset the committee wisely confined their purchases to books relating to the manners, customs, laws, privileges, and history of the city of London and the neighbouring localities. The library was opened in June, 1828, with 1,380 works in 1,700 volumes, and by November in the next year the collection had increased to 2,800 volumes (1,600 of which were donations), and nearly 2,000 prints and 100 drawings, chiefly of London topographical views and portraits of city celebrities.

From this time the growth of the library, though not rapid, was steady and continuous. By June 1850, the number of volumes had reached 10,000, and extensive additions to the premises had been obtained. Continued progress and additions to the library contents were made, bequests and purchases constantly adding to the accumulative value of its contents.

On the question of free public libraries being brought before the public, the committee reported favourably on the subject, believing that the establishment of a free library and a free circulating library would be the means of introducing the works of the most approved authors to the homes and fire-sides of the inhabitants of the city; but, on putting to the test, the proposal to establish a free library in the city was ultimately rejected by the ratepayers.

The foundation for a Civic Museum was made in 1838, and this, added to from time to time, became one of the most interesting features of the library. In 1856, so as to make the books more available to the citizens and corporation, the library was thrown open to readers by ticket.
This necessitated an increase in the staff, and as the acquisition of books continued and the interest in them grew, a new home more suitable to the needs and requirements of the Guildhall Library was required. The straggling series of apartments in which the library had been hidden away were avowedly only a makeshift, and yet had to suffice over forty years.

In 1873 a new library and museum was opened for the admission of readers, at a cost, exclusive of fittings, of £25,000, and it was decided that it should be freely opened to the public without ticket or other formality. Readers accustomed to the old rooms probably somewhat regretted the change; the old apartments were cozy and comfortable, and the score or so who could be accommodated at a time found rather the exclusiveness of a club than the hospitality of a public library.

The new building consists of a library, which will accommodate 150 readers, a newspaper room for journals and handy books of reference, and a committee room on the upper floor; with a museum and strong-rooms on the basement. The old building occupied the site of the corridor which now forms the approach to the present library from the Guildhall porch. The expectations of the future development of the institute have been fully realised; the yearly attendance of readers and visitors rose at once from 14,316 in 1868, the last year of the old library, to 175,559 in 1874, the first complete year of the new.

To briefly summarise the incidents of special interest in the progress of the library up to the present time: In 1880 the library was opened to readers in the evenings and all day on Saturdays, and the staff materially increased. The erection of a new building gave a stimulus to the growth of the museum, for which ample accommodation was furnished in the basement of the structure. This department has been generously supported by the citizens of London, Roman remains, London antiquities, and various old English relics being acquired at various times by the institution. In the medieval section, for instance, the collection of old London signs is of great interest, and includes the famous "Boar’s Head" in Eastcheap, and that of the "Cock and Bottle," which is of unique interest, consisting of Delft tiles of high artistic merit. Already the want of space is being severely felt, so great has been the influx of interesting mementoes. The responsibilities of the committee were further increased in 1886 by the successful establishment of the Guildhall Art Gallery, a portion of which is shown in one of our illustrations.

The lapse of sixteen years since the opening of the new library, years of great progress in all respects, has severely taxed the capacity of the present building. The accommodation for storing books is already exhausted, and as the dimensions of the reading room were soon found to be inadequate, the need for its extension has long been under the consideration of the committee. Even the library itself is often inconveniently filled with visitors, and the museum is hopelessly crowded with antiquities. The total number of visitors in the year 1888 was 336,720, of whom more than 148,000 were readers in the library, the rest being visitors to the reading room and museum. The number of books has been recently counted, and amounts to over 40,000 works, contained in 57,216 volumes, besides 27,075 pamphlets. From a survey of the character of the books read, it is gratifying to observe that fiction amounts to only 16,56 per cent: history and magazines, each 7.04; theology, 6.5; biography, 5.37; useful arts, 5.25; science, 4.59; poetry, 4.49; topography, 4.4; philology, 3.4; foreign literature, 3.25; genealogy, 3.17; "Encyclopaedia Britannica," 2.73; fine arts, 2.64; travels, 2.64; philosophy, 2.57; Greek and Latin classics, 2.30; music, 2.08; archeology, 1.56; politics, 1.56; commerce, 1.23; drama, 1.14; law, 1.1; and bibliography, 1.56.

The constant care and attention paid to the needs of the library by the corporation and its library committee have resulted in making the Guildhall Library more and more worthy of its position, and exceedingly useful to the citizens of London and the general public. There is every indication that its contents will continue to be augmented by the addition of old and valuable works and mementoes of historic interest, and thus the interest and value of the collection will also increase and make it as famous as its well-wishers would desire.

The First Paper-Maker.

A Welsh paper notes that two wasps' nests are on view in a shop window in Carmarthen. In shape they resemble a coconut, the covering being composed of paper. Speaking of the wasp as a paper manufacturer, Lord Brougham said he makes a paper as excellent as any manufacturer at Maidstone, and he held that she has for sixty centuries been acquainted with what was only discovered by man between five and six hundred years ago. His lordship also states that on examining the structure of wasps' nests he found that she makes two kinds of paper—white and brown, the former being fine cambric—and both are glued together by a smooth and durable cement. The white paper took the ink just as well as if it had been sized. As a matter of fact, the wasp is not very particular as to the colour of her nest. A case was recorded of a nest made in successive layers of parti-coloured paper—red, blue, yellow and white. Upon investigation it was found that the wasp had drawn her materials from a number of strips of many-hued paper, which had been suspended over a newly-sown flower bed in order to scare away the birds. The wasp, in tropical countries, is probably a paper-maker proper, using vegetable fibre for her half-stuff, but in England the examination of many nests leads us to believe that the insect is merely a worker-up of old material, and prefers to use ready-made paper without taking the trouble to grind up vegetable fibre into pulp.—Paper Record.

An interesting find is a library of 500 volumes, including seventy manuscripts of the tenth and eleventh, and some with wonderful miniatures of the fourteenth centuries, which were recently discovered in a Franciscan cloister near Rieti, Italy.
ART GALLERY, PRINCIPAL APARTMENT.
(From "The Guildhall Library and its Work")

NORTH END OF LIBRARY.
(From "The Guildhall Library and its Work")