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A Library Is People

A library is people. People borrowing books, people helping with the use of books, people donating books. And books are people too: “True friends that will never flatter or dissemble.”

This issue of the COLUMNS is about three Columbia Library people. James Hulme Canfield was a Director who infected the Columbia Libraries with a passion for democracy. Isadore Mudge was a Reference Librarian who stamped her personality so indelibly on her field that reference work became known to a generation of students as “mudging.” Alexander Gumby was a collector whose whole lifework is bound within the covers of his several hundred scrapbooks on the American Negro, now in the Library.

None of these three are to be found today working on Morningside Heights, but in the articles which follow their personalities come vividly before the eye of the reader. That is well, because as the years pass the library buildings become larger, the staff more numerous—faces dissolve in the crowd.

In spite of bigness, of success, the Columbia Library is still a friendly place. In that labyrinth of steel and concrete there are warm personalities still. They still smile when you borrow a book.

A library is people.
A Librarian’s Creed:  
James Hulme Canfield

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

BEFORE coming to Columbia at the turn of the century, my Vermont-and-New York father had long and variously served the life of the intelligence in our nation. He had been for many years professor of history and economics (he always said that there he occupied a settee, not a Chair) at the State University of Kansas; from there he went to be Chancellor of the University of Nebraska; thence to be President of the Ohio State University; and then—even his fabulous vitality beginning to show signs of wear—he returned, at the invitation of President Seth Low who was a lifetime friend of his, to spend the last decade of his life in his boyhood home town of New York.

Of his years in Nebraska, Alvin Johnson (of the New School for Social Research) speaks thus in his recently published autobiography: “At the top was the Chancellor. A mighty man was he, drawing a salary said to be the largest in the state. We adored Chancellor Canfield. We regarded him not only as a shining representative of the world of culture, but as a true democrat, who used all his influence to abate the snobbishness of the students from the families composing the rising middle-class—that the university might not be cursed with caste formation.”

That passage gave me joy. Exactly so would my father wish to be remembered by one of his old students. He was a Vermonter, and an intensely democratic spirit has been part of the tradition of Vermont ever since the settlement of the state in 1764, when my father’s Canfield forebears came into the Green Mountains.

But in Vermont, as everywhere else, there are many kinds of personalities. Some have enough passivity in their make-up to feel
at ease in the status quo, wherever they go. Not an ounce of passivity in James Hulme Canfield. He felt ardently about everything, and he burned with zeal about advancing the cause of democracy.

Do you ask—a good many people did wonderingly put this question to my father—"But what's a man doing as Librarian in an institution of learning, if what he wants is to advance the cause of democracy?"

I only wish my father were here to answer—once again—that question. From long practice, he could do it much better than I. But the echo of his answers, of his vibrant, persuasive, extremely audible voice is still in my ears, and speaks on this page.

Squaring his powerful shoulders, his brilliant black eyes shining, he carried the war with flame and sword into the enemy's territory, about like this:—"The implication in your question is that there is an innate contradiction between scholarly learning and democracy. Never, never, never! That idea—that scholarly learning can exist only, or exist better, where there are upper and lower classes—came from the Dark Ages, crossed the Atlantic as a stowaway, and never should have been allowed to land. 'A gentleman and a scholar'? Nonsense! The gentry make very poor scholars. They're brought up to ease. Other people do their work for them. You can't be a scholar without the ability to work hard and long. Scholars are needed in a democracy, and they need a democracy to live in. A library, particularly, perhaps, a great University library, is a front-line post in the battle to preserve and give value to the democratic way of life. Only if that way of life survives, will true scholars have a life worth an honest man's bothering with.

"Why do we have institutions of learning anyhow? It is a horror to think—let the thought be ever so secret and unavowed—that they exist to help a part of the younger generation get into a class which thinks itself socially superior." Flames of scorn leaped sulphurously out from the word "socially" when my father pronounced it in speaking of its vulgar presumption in pushing its way into the world of the intellect.
Thus had my Vermont father, for all the years of his life, risen in defense of higher education for everybody, when—by implication—he saw it, as so often in our nation, in any nation, being slyly pushed back on the shelf where only the white, the male, the well-to-do, the well-dressed and the socially acceptable could reach it. Fifty years before President Conant used the phrase, James Hulme Canfield used it as part of his constant militant effort to keep the doors of learning wide open,—“What our nation must have is not a classless but a casteless society.”

It goes without saying that my father always stood firm against special favors for men students as against women, for white students as against Negroes. What burned in his mind was not the injustice to the excluded, but the danger to the nation, which needed every single one of its brainy straight-fibred citizens or there would just not be enough superior people to go around. “No superior class, only superior individuals,” was his slogan, and he could never see that it did not apply to the world of scholarly learning as much as to any other milieu. In fact more there than elsewhere, because he thought the intellectual world the most important, and also because it was at that spot on the battle-front that fervor for the good cause was apt to flag.

It was sixty, seventy, almost eighty years ago that he spoke thus about the new universities of the West where he was professor and president. It was fifty years ago that, stepping up his tempo a little to drown out a new kind of opposition, he spoke out for the libraries of Columbia.

Before I set down another word, I should underline the half-century which has gone by since my father went to Columbia, and remind you that the library world has changed beyond recognition in those fifty years. My father’s attitude, radical then, is taken for granted now. What happiness it would give him if he could think that he had helped along this transformation of moral atmosphere!

I should also say, to begin with, that it was not at Columbia that he encountered opposition from the odd kind of intellectual
“vested interests,” who felt that the prestige of scholarliness would be heightened, if members of the common herd were excluded from it for other reasons than their intellectual calibre. Nobody as late in American history as that actually voiced such an idea, you must understand. They just acted on it—with a silent smothering weight of conservative precedent. There was little of this at Columbia. At least little felt by my father. Seth Low and he were always close friends, had been from their school days. When my father was on his death-bed, Seth Low, then an old man too, came to say good-bye to him, and received one of his last warm smiles. From the time he became President, the then young Nicholas Murray Butler showed to the Librarian of Columbia, his intimate and comrade, a side of his nature which few people saw, unguessed by those who knew him only during the later period of his life—a side idealistic, sensitive, uncertain.

To the experienced older man who loved and esteemed him, and who had twice been through the ordeal into which Dr. Butler was stepping—the incredibly complicated position of President of a great university—Dr. Butler could speak from an open heart of the double-and-twisted tortuous problems in which he was involved, and of his uneasy wonder at seeing that job from the inside. Dr. Butler told me once, when he was as old as my father was in those years, “It was your father's gift of humor as much even as his first-hand acquaintance with what I was going through, that used to heave me out of the Slough of Despond. I remember one story he told me at a time when I was deeply troubled by the clashing conflicts between trustees, faculty, students, and alumni. How could I serve the best interests of all of them? I was bitterly attacked by the other three whenever I acted to help one of the four. Late on a winter evening, alone with your father in his office, I was talking of all this, sure of his understanding, as of no other man’s. He interrupted me to say ‘When I was first become a University President, the great Dr. Eliot was President of Harvard. Talking with him once, I said a little of what you are now saying. He answered me as judiciously as if he were explaining the law of
gravity, that such was the nature of the position. "You'll find, Canfield, that whatever decision you take, some of your faculty will think you a liar." Your father said he was shocked at the idea in connection with such a mighty figure and protested 'But President Eliot, your faculty doesn't think that of you!'

"The Harvard President answered coolly, 'No, they don't think it. They know it.'"

Long after my father's death, I went down to New York to receive an honorary degree from Columbia. Of Dr. Butler's citation I heard only the first phrase, "... Bearer of a name very dear to us here ..." The words took me back so vividly into the loving (the word is not too colorful) relation between those two men of power and heart, that I heard no more.

It was not only through the two Presidents who were two old friends that my father's Columbia decade was brightened. From the staff he secured warm, animated cooperation, not at all by iron discipline, but because he felt with such a hearty sincerity the importance of the service they were all giving to young Americans in the process of becoming superior members of our nation's intellectual life. He was always poised, so to speak, ready to spring forward to help clear away barriers to any student-like efforts. Having, as University President, elsewhere, served a long and often hard apprenticeship at helping non-student-like efforts, such as football, cane-sprees and proms, he thankfully left those to the President. It was one of his joys in his Columbia years that he had there no responsibility for anything save to further intellectual development as far as that could be done by means of books. How reverently he pronounced that great word "books." He carried the staff with him in ardor for this responsibility. Luckily ardor is as infectious a quality as apathy and cynicism, although rather more rare. A yawn can dampen the will-to-act of a whole roomful of people; but a hearty, "Come along, everybody! Now's the day and now's the hour!" can bring them to their feet. Everybody who worked at the library, the janitors too,
were proud of their work because Dr. Canfield made them proud. Among our family treasures is a collection of letters which came in, after my father’s sudden death, from a wider range of Columbia personalities than we had dreamed he knew, all of them aglow with the reflection of his devotion.

No, it was not inside but outside of Columbia that scandalized disapproval was aroused by my father’s idea that librarianship in a great institution of learning is a vital active part of a democracy’s life. I wonder if I might be permitted in an informal sketch like this to use a descriptive analogy of so intimate a quality that in my young ladyhood (fifty years ago) it would have been thought indecorous? Everybody says anything, in print nowadays, I notice. Why shouldn’t an old lady, as well as everybody else, profit by this new license?

When I was young, all women wore corsets. Take it from me who tried one on, once in a while, for a minute or two, the Inquisition had few things worse than some of those “Nuremberg Virgin” contraptions. I never could wear one—finding my breathing cut off to the suffocation point. This was revolutionary. I was often taken severely to task. An acquaintance, also a young lady, exclaimed once, “I don’t see how you can go without! How do you dare dance with a man?”

This took me aback. “Dancing with a man” was, in my youth, one of my great pleasures. “Why—what—?” My face was sincerely blank. I had no idea what she meant. She said, with an expression of fascinated repulsion, “Why, when you stand up with a dancing partner and he puts his arm around you, he must—” she lowered her voice and looked over her shoulder, “feel as if he were touching something alive.”

My guess is that such horror was felt by old-style traditional college and university librarians, when in staid professional conventions and committee meetings and on editorial boards, they encountered my father’s very much alive zeal for clearing away any underbrush of rules, precedents, customs, old traditions, which interfered with getting needed books into students’ hands.
He was quite aware that he was disliked and looked down on by those scholars who preferred the society of incunabula and costly first editions to that of flesh-and-blood students. Well, that was all right. It was only fair. He disliked and looked down on such “mediaeval personalities” as he heartily called them. Honors were even. To him, first editions were worth the money they cost only if there was some genuine significance in their being “firsts”; if some development of the author’s theories or personality could be traced by comparisons made in later editions. But if they were of value only because they were rare, with perhaps a printing error in a word on page 67 which made no difference in the meaning of the book, my father laughed heartily at the idea of paying for them with money which might be used for a valuable reference book for sure-enough study. “Let special millionaires’ libraries purchase them in order to enjoy the pride of possessions,” he said, negligently. Hell hath no fury like a first-edition fan whose special scale of values is questioned. It was a good thing that my father’s shoulders were broad.

At the time when my father gave up being college professor and president in order to promote the use of books, there was, besides first-edition fans and incunabula addicts, a special kind of librarian in many older institutions of learning, who was, by definition, aroused to fury by such ideas as my father’s.

He was an inimitably skillful teller of funny stories, every one chosen because it was aimed at a chink in the armor of the conservative and apathetic. One of his favorite anecdotes was of the college librarian who, looking complacently around the empty reading-room of his library, and at the well-filled shelves, remarked with pride, “Every book is in its right place. Except two, and I know where they are. I'll have them back tomorrow.”

James Hulme Canfield’s ideal of the reading-room of an institution of learning was a crowd of students consulting books which could not be taken out, and standing in line before the loan desk to take home those which could. It was with eager enthusiasm “as if there were something in it for him” (to use the significantly
cynical folk-phrase of surprise at disinterested activity) that he rattled the dry bones of older book-using procedures. He longed to make book-using the tyrannical, not-to-be-resisted reflex-habit of every student.

He spent an immense deal of time in his office as all librarians of big universities do, poring over budgets and publishers' announcements and overhead expenses and salary lists, reading and dictating innumerable letters. He also spent some time practically every day seeing old students of his, who came to New York and could not go away without seeing, this time, once again, the leader of their youth. Some of them had become successful—exactly in the way he would have hoped—men and women of power and distinction—William Allen White of Kansas, Alvin Johnson of Nebraska, Lieutenant-Captain-Colonel-General John J. Pershing, Senator Borah, President Ed. Elliott of Purdue. Many of them were successful in more conventional ways—presidents of banks, heads of big industries, deans of colleges. Some were just hard-working Americans, solvent, useful citizens, who came to show Professor (or President or Chancellor) Canfield their fine children or grandchildren. Some were seedy failures who came to borrow a dollar or two. Every one of them warmed his hands and his heart at my father's welcome. He was in contact too, and delighted to be, with the youngsters who were then undergraduates at Columbia. Alfred Knopf (who became one of the most brilliantly intellectual publishers of the country) told me that his freshman year was darkened by a required course in a science, taught by one of those professors who detested freshmen. When the results of the final examination were published, very few in the class had passed. "I went to your father in a somewhat disturbed frame of mind. I have never forgotten what he told me. He said not to worry; that when he hired a shepherd to drive a hundred sheep from one village to the next, and the shepherd found a few sheep able to set so fast a pace that all the others dropped out by the wayside, he didn't blame the sheep, but the shepherd."

No matter what the day brought he also constantly went in and
out of every corner of the library with his quick, vigorous step, to see how book-using was faring. This was early enough in library-practice so that speed in getting an asked-for book into the hands of a student was by no means taken for granted. At least in the halls of learning. It was all right for the low-caste readers in public libraries. My father expended on ways of getting books rapidly from the shelves of the Columbia Library to potential readers enough energy and ingenuity—his family used to think—to run a transcontinental railway system.

His instinct was to tear down and throw away anything that interfered with the reading by a student. Did a student doze, inconspicuously, over a Columbia Library book? My father, up in arms to nurture the life of the intellect, wanted to know why? Was the Library too hot? Was the book the wrong one for that student or for the phase of intellectual growth attained by him? Or perhaps it was just that the student had too little money to eat properly. Or he might be a non-intellectual who should not be in college at all. Possibly, on the other hand, he might be a potential scholar of value, but obliged to stoke a furnace, or wait on table to earn his food and lodging, so that when he sat down with a book, he could not give it the absolute concentration of attention it deserved. My father considered it part of his job to use his tact and charm and resourcefulness (and he had a great deal of those qualities when he wanted) to look into such situations, and try with humane, discreet, good manners and good intentions to "do something." People with traditional book-mindedness scornfully thought this "undignified for a librarian." That was a joke for my father. What he was doing was what he had longed to see done in the libraries of the institutions of learning where he had been professor, of which he had been president. To do this was one of the reasons why he had accepted President Low’s invitation to come to Columbia.

It was a fortunate decision. He passed there the happiest decade of his life. And possibly one of the most useful.

Is there still, I wonder, anybody at Columbia who remembers
him? Yes, only the other day I saw Harry Norris, who was a lively merry young man when my father was Librarian, now a lively merry old man, retired after a lifetime of usefulness to the University as Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds. He happened to tell me a story about my father new to me, a tiny episode, perfectly in character. One afternoon he saw President Butler and the Librarian together, as they often were, walking slowly down the steps of the library, deep in talk. A sight-seeing bus lumbered around the corner of 116th Street and stopped. The guide stood up, put his megaphone to his lips and began to yell hoarsely into it, that they were now before Columbia University, and that “Down the steps is coming Nich-o-las Murray But-ler, the Pres-i-dent of the—”

Mr. Norris told me with laughter as fresh as though he had seen it only yesterday, that my father instantly swept off his hat and with a grandly theatrical gesture bowed low to the people in the bus, while Dr. Butler, enchanted by the absurdity, collapsed in laughter against the statue of Alma Mater.

Up to the day of his death, this kind of gay, prankish high spirits was part of the sparkle of my father’s personality. It made him much sought after for social doings. He knew everybody in New York, either from old times or new connections; belonged to all the Clubs; went to all the public dinners to “represent Columbia,” a chore which Dr. Butler found tedious and was glad to turn over to my zestful father, who enjoyed it; and an uncountable number of times he was one of the after-dinner speakers, always with a new and lusciously funny anecdote. He was not an especially skillful money-getter. That is, you know, a special gift like an ear for music or a natural sense of balance for skating. But he always spoke up for Columbia’s needs, and many and many a gift of money for books came in from influential men with whom he had been hobnobbing at table.

He liked fun, he liked color, and he loved Columbia where he was so happy. He took part with hearty good-will in all the stately rituals of academic life. Among his honorary doctorates
was one from Oxford (imagine the annoyance of the first-edition, uncut-leaves fans). One of the pleasant memories of my girlhood is the trip to England to see him, in a noble ceremony, wearing his Oxford cap and great flaming scarlet gown, receive the degree with a citation in sonorous Latin, praising him for his enthusiasm for books as tools of students. I hope there are one or two still at Columbia who can remember seeing the old librarian, his thick white hair shining silver under his academic cap, the long scarlet British cloak of antique cut billowing out in the American breeze as, his black eyes shining, he stepped along in the academic procession.

At the Sesqui-Centennial celebration of Columbia, I too marched in that parade, my own hair gray by that time. A spirited brass band preceded the long, colorful academic procession that day, and I was glad to hear it tootling and banging away as enthusiastically for those long-robed elderly workers in the field of the intelligence as though we were athletes. I remembered well that it had been one of my father’s whimsically original ideas thus to enliven academic marches. On the principle of Martin Luther’s objection to letting the devil have all the good tunes, he welcomed everything that would make the life of the intelligence more stirring to the imagination, more quickening to the heart of man.
“God Almighty Hates a Quitter”

AUSTIN P. EVANS

THE sentence which appears as the caption of this brief appreciation of Miss Isadore G. Mudge, Reference Librarian of the Columbia University Libraries from 1911 to 1941, was sent to her by President Nicholas Murray Butler with the request that she find out by whom it was uttered and under what circumstances. For Miss Mudge this was all in a day’s work. As President Butler was never weary of telling, his office constantly taxed her knowledge and resourcefulness in tracking down facts, dates, and quotations. As usual, she came up with the answer. In a typewritten Memoir of some 350 pages now deposited in Special Collections: “Development of the Reference Department of the Columbia University Libraries,” she tells the story of her search for this item, and remarks that the statement might well be prominently displayed in every reference library and serve as the motto of all reference librarians. Nothing more aptly expresses the impression that her character, her will, and her enthusiasm for scholarly exactitude made upon those who as librarians worked with her, or, as students seeking help, came to her with their problems. Nothing less than the best effort was tolerated in herself or in those who worked under her direction; no one who came to her with an honest problem, no matter how immaturely envisaged, was turned away without helpful suggestion and assistance. And that helpfulness consisted not only in finding an answer to the immediate question brought to her, but was extended to aiding the student to learn of the tools and techniques by which he might in future help himself.

One of Miss Mudge’s extracurricular activities which some members of the teaching staff remember with gratitude was the informal introduction to the library and its reference tools which
she gave early in the fall semester to small groups of students, usually seminars, in a personally conducted tour of the reference library. It was with a real thrill of pleasure that in her Memoir I found my own name recorded among those who had availed themselves of that service and had thus afforded my students in successive seminars this early introduction to a master workman and to the tools of her craft. It is a pleasure here to record that that service has been ably continued since Miss Mudge’s retirement by Miss Winchell and her assistants.

What is the key to an understanding of the power and enthusiasm with which Miss Mudge conducted her work? Presumably the answer must be found in the ability with which she was endowed and the natural bent of her mind. But that natural ability had to be trained and directed. Perhaps the explanation lies in a conversation which I had with her a short while ago. Finding ourselves in northern Westchester County with a little free time, my wife and I decided to satisfy a long-felt desire to see Miss Mudge. Of late years she has not been able to come to the University as often as many of us would like. We found her on a wooded hillside, in a home consisting of a remodelled barn, the hand-hewn timbers of which were old, as houses are judged nowadays, when the War of Independence was fought. Much of herself has gone into that remodelling during the twenty-five years that she has owned the place, first as a week-end and summer hideout, but in recent years as a permanent residence. She ushered us into the large livingroom with its fine old oak beams and oak panels. One side of the room consists almost entirely of windows which give out over the tops of trees in the valley below to the distant hills, trees brilliant in their fall dress of yellow and orange and red and brown. Just below the house is an old orchard of apple and pear, beneath which Miss Mudge has naturalized the daffodils which form the basis of the almost legendary stories of the wealth of blooms that she has picked to be sold during the war for overseas relief—up to 15,000 daffodils alone contributed during the course of one season—and latterly for other forms of community service.
It was good to see Miss Mudge in her home. Though arthritis has cramped her movements more than she and her friends would wish, and though she has to use “that thing” in order effectively to carry on conversation, the years have been kind to her. It is hard to believe that she has been retired for more than ten years; her eye is as bright and her mind as eager and questing as when she presided over the central reading room under the dome of the old Low Memorial Library. As we sat in her livingroom, talk flowed rapidly. It went by natural degrees back to a great teacher who had been a decisive factor in the intellectual development of both of us, Professor George L. Burr of Cornell University, under whom she had studied in the last decade of the nineteenth century while I had worked with him in the early years of the twentieth. It was our common enthusiasm for him that constituted the bond that drew us together when I came to Columbia in 1915. We talked about his scholarship and his teaching, his insistence that students should present the evidence for their statements of presumed historical fact, and failing such evidence should remain silent. He had no patience with those who insisted upon “expressing themselves” on the basis of no verified knowledge. It was through his teaching, Miss Mudge avers, that she first sensed the importance of getting back to the sources of knowledge and received early introduction to the problem of seeking those sources through reference guides. This, she said, constituted the start of her career as a reference librarian. We recalled that in his preoccupation with the search for all the evidence, and in his insistence upon imparting to his students his own enthusiasm for painstaking research, Professor Burr had written relatively little, and the question arose whether a great teacher projects himself into the future more fundamentally through his immediate personal contact with his students or through the books which he writes. The question probably has no answer, but we were agreed that Professor Burr, and indeed any great teacher, would live long through successive generations of students, fired by those who had received their original inspiration from him. It might have been
appropriately added that this is quite as true of great librarians!

Miss Mudge's position in the library world is so firmly established, and her service to the scholarly community of Columbia so fresh in the minds of many of us, that it scarcely needs laboring here. Those of my generation who depended upon her expert help know, without discussion, that she was the greatest reference librarian in the country during the period of her active service! Indeed, as one would expect, her fame extends beyond the confines of this country. She herself tells the story of a Major in the English army from whom she received an appeal for information regarding the source of a few lines of poetry. He stated that he had sought aid from "all the libraries" of England and finally a librarian in one of the Irish libraries suggested that he "write to Miss Mudge." He thought the lines were probably taken from an early American poem and hoped that she might be able to find it. Though the point of my story is the appeal for help from overseas, it may be of interest to add that Miss Mudge read the lines, suspected at once that they were from the pen of a recent writer, and found that they were written by an Englishman, Masefield, and published in numerous English editions of his works. She remarks with dry humor that it took considerably longer to compose a diplomatic letter to the Major, apprising him of that fact, than it did to locate the poem! What she omitted to state was that it was her superior knowledge and insight that led her to the work that gave the correct answer.

If we who use the library have for long known by intuition that Miss Mudge is the most outstanding of reference librarians, librarians themselves concede that she gathered the most complete and useful collection of reference works assembled in any reference room in this country. It is but natural that a distinguished librarian, given physical resources such as money to buy the books, would assemble a distinguished collection of reference books. Perhaps the point needs no emphasis. But a factor which contributed to this mutual excellence is a matter of some interest and should be mentioned. Miss Mudge makes it clear in her
Memoir. Shortly before she came to Columbia she had been asked to pick up the work on the *Guide to the Study and Use of Reference Books*, two editions of which had been prepared and published by Miss Alice B. Kroeger, who died in 1909. At the same time she was asked by the Library Association to prepare an annual survey of reference works to be published in its *Journal*. These tasks she assumed, and when she came to Columbia in February of 1911 she brought them with her. For the *Guide to Reference Books*, an indispensable aid to the librarian and research worker (known currently as “Mudge,” just as gathering bibliography in preparation of a paper has been referred to among Columbia students as “mudging”), she compiled a supplement to the second edition and then brought out in 1917 a third edition, a fourth in 1925, a fifth in 1929, and a sixth in 1936. To complete the story there are to this sixth edition four supplements, the first prepared by Miss Mudge and the others by Miss Winchell, who is likewise the author of the seventh edition which appeared, in considerably revised form, in 1951.

Miss Mudge’s work on this *Guide*, together with the annual review of new reference works, strengthened her work as reference librarian by giving her an incomparable knowledge of the literature, while her work as reference librarian afforded constant suggestion for improvement in organization or critical comment in the *Guide*. It helps one to understand how, in the first few years of her work as reference librarian, she was able thoroughly to reorganize and enrich the reference collection in the Library; and at the same time it may help to explain that uncanny sense of where to look for the answer to a given question and that detailed knowledge as to what sort of question might properly be asked of a given reference work, which were the wonder and despair of all who availed themselves of her services.

Not satisfied with the accomplishments indicated above, Miss Mudge taught reference librarianship and bibliography, at first for two or three years in Summer Session and later as Associate Professor in the School of Library Service, from 1927 to 1938 and
during the year 1941–1942. In addition, either alone or in collaboration with others, she published a Thackeray Dictionary (1910) and a George Eliot Dictionary (1924), a volume on Special Collections in Libraries in the United States (1912), and from 1911 to 1930 compiled the Columbia Bibliography, not to mention a few other lesser publications.

Miss Mudge has led a busy life and by her personality and competence has stamped herself indelibly upon the library which she served so well and upon the Columbia community. May she long enjoy a well-earned rest among her beloved Westchester hills, firm in the knowledge that great librarians, like great teachers, live in the memories of those whose pride in workmanship and fidelity to truth they have quickened.

Postscript

Not, we hasten to amend, just in memories! As a sequel to this warm and deserved tribute, let us share our most recent and characteristic bit of Mudgiana. Feeling that our readers would like to know the source of the quotation used as our title, we appealed, somewhat hesitantly, to Miss Mudge. After all, it has been a good many years. She pondered and said, “I remember the incident, but not the details. Let me think and maybe it will come to me.” At 8 o’clock the next morning she called Miss Winchell and said: “I thought and thought, and the word that stuck in my mind was Maine. So I looked up Maine in the Columbia Encyclopedia, and there I found the name Thomas B. Reed. I think this may be your lead.” Miss Winchell looked up W. A. Robinson’s life of Reed, and sure enough there it was!—a reproach heatedly spoken in the course of the presidential campaign of 1896. So the tradition lives on; and to both Miss Mudge and Miss Winchell, once again our thanks!
The Adventures of My Scrapbooks

L. S. ALEXANDER GUMBY

In 1950 Mr. Gumby presented to the Columbia Library his extensive scrapbook collection on the American Negro. When completed it will consist of from two to three hundred handsome volumes, each dealing with a particular aspect of Negro activity. The story of Mr. Gumby’s collection from its inception to its transfer to the Department of Special Collections is one of selfless devotion of a collector to his project. It is a record of hope and failure, of building and rebuilding throughout a lifetime.

MY INTEREST in scrapbooks began in 1901 when I was sixteen years old. My sister and I had gone to live with our grandparents. We started a scrapbook in a sample book of wallpaper left behind by some paperhangers. We made our paste of flour and water, and mounted pictures and newspaper clippings. I recall that the clippings about the assassination of President McKinley in September, 1901, nearly filled our scrapbook.

My grandmother cherished a desire for me to become a lawyer, and made it possible for me to go to Dover State College in Delaware. I entered college in 1902, but I spent only a year there. My preparation was topheavy, and my own lofty impatience further interfered with my studies. While at the public school in Salisbury I had read widely, but I am afraid that I paid too little heed to the need for sound fundamentals such as spelling, grammar, and the like. Realizing my smart dumbness I left college before the final

1 This article is a revision of one that appeared in the Columbia Library World for January, 1951. Since the Library World is sent almost entirely to officers and employees of the Columbia Library, we thought that it should reach a wider group of readers. The original article has been abridged somewhat, and Mr. Gumby has brought his story up to date.—Ed.
examinations of the year. I went to Philadelphia, taking with me
the paperhanger's scrapbook, which my sister had reluctantly let
me have when I left for college. It was packed in an old round-top
trunk, along with several unmounted newspaper clippings,
pictures of my student friends, mementos of my few college days,
several badly spelled class compositions, essays with high-sounding
titles, and poems, too, that had been greatly applauded when
read in the classroom or at some literary club but which invariably
rated no better than zero with my professor.

After remaining in Philadelphia about three years, I moved to
New York City. At once I became a New Yorker in spirit and
principle, for I found here more freedom of action than I had
ever known before. I became familiar with all of the best shows
and most famous actors on Broadway, and I formed the habit early
of enthusiastically collecting all the playbills, pictures, and clippings
I could find about my favorites. Somehow in my journeyings
my old round-top trunk had been lost—and with it the wallpaper
scrapbook. Only my suitcase had come through, but it contained
more clippings and pictures than clothes, for the scrapbook-
making urge was never far from my mind.

During those early years in New York it seemed that a willing-
ness to change jobs was a mark of a youth's ambition. Through a
friend I heard of an opening at Columbia University, waiting on
table at lunch hours. I applied for the job and got it. The table
assigned to me was frequently chosen by Dr. Koo, who usually
came in late. He was very popular with the students, and I soon
became his great admirer. When, later, he became headline news
I clipped everything I could find about him. I also gathered a good
deal of material about Dr. Butler, but I never got around to collect-
ing Columbia University items as such in those days.

It was not until 1910 that I seriously began to do something
about my overflowing collection of clippings. I decided to gather
them into scrapbooks. Without experience in the arranging of such
a vast amount of miscellaneous material, I naturally made a botch
of it in my first efforts. When I finally admitted to myself that it
would all have to be done over, I decided to classify the material into groups. I soon found, however, as my collections continued to grow, that even this arrangement was unsatisfactory, for it was impossible to interfile new material. It was not until I adopted the looseleaf method that I found a satisfactory answer to my problem. That, of course, meant remounting my material once more. After sorting it into master subjects, I found that I had enough Negro items for that subject alone. This Negro scrapbook in turn I divided into master subjects; and because the leaves could be shifted, I was able to break the master subjects into chapters. I arranged chronologically the clippings that were not too badly damaged by their repeated remountings. I soon had a bulging volume of Negro items, whereupon I broke the chapters up into separate books. Thus began my Negro Scrapbook collection.

In the years from 1914 until America went into the first World War, I had the opportunity of going to several large cities and towns in this country and in Canada. I visited public libraries and studied various methods of compiling and mounting scrapbook material. I also searched second-hand bookshops for items for my scrapbooks, and for old and rare books; I soon became better known for my collection of choice books than for my scrapbooks—to such an extent, in fact, that I was registered in the 1922 edition of “Who's Who in Book Collecting.”

With the generous help of a friend who was a partner in a Wall Street firm, I was able to collect rare editions and manuscripts and items for my fast-growing scrapbooks, which had now become an obsession with me. My tiny apartment became so crowded with my collections that I finally had to lease the entire second-floor unpartitioned apartment of the house where I lived, and here I started “The Gumby Book Studio” for my personal use, to entertain my friends, and as a place in which to master the art of making scrapbooks. It should have been called “The Gumby Scrapbook Studio” as it was intended, but at the time I thought the name a bit too long. Soon friends formed the habit of visiting the Studio, and they in turn brought their friends who brought their friends, re-
gardless of race or color—those who were seriously interested in arts and letters. The Studio became a rendezvous for intellectuals, musicians, and artists. I dare say that the Gumby Book Studio was the first unpremeditated interracial movement in Harlem.

The reputation of my Negro scrapbook collection had spread widely, and I was pressed to exhibit it on numerous occasions. It was shown in Philadelphia, Boston, and of course, New York City during various Negro History weeks. However, so many of the finer items were unaccountably missing after certain of these excursions that I was forced to stop this lending regardless of the purpose or how much I would have liked to assist.

In 1929 my wealthy friend’s firm lost millions. The Studio thereby lost its main support, and money was scarce among my friends. The upkeep of the Studio in its usual style was extremely expensive. We had earlier launched a magazine called *The Gumby Studio Quarterly* (see Volume 96 of the Scrapbooks), which was not intended to be a profitable venture. In order to carry on, I reluctantly sold several of my first and rare editions; but even so I finally was forced to close the Studio and its activities, and to send to storage all of the Studio’s trappings and my collections.

The loss of my Studio and fatigue from overwork sent me to the hospital, where I remained for four years. Several loyal friends managed to carry the storage rent for some time, but finally I was notified that my entire possessions must be sold for back rent. I learned of a man who could help me. He would take care of my things in return for certain first editions in the collection. He did not want the scrapbooks or Negro items, but offered to keep them safe for me in his home until I was able to take them over again. I agreed gratefully.

On my first day out of the hospital in 1934 and over the protests of two friends accompanying me, I insisted on going at once to examine my collection.

Even before we were ushered down to the cellar where the collection was stored (I should say scattered), we began to hear excuses reversing the assurances that had been written to me
The Adventures of My Scrapbooks

several times while I was in the hospital. In a low part of the cellar were stored the fourteen or sixteen cases and trunks containing my scrapbooks. I noticed a dried water mark on the two bottom cases. I was hastily informed that a little water had gotten into the cellar but it did not seem to have reached into the cases.

On the contrary, later examination showed the two bottom cases to be practically paper-mud and mildew inside; very few of the items in the books were salvagable. Naturally I was heart-broken. And yet I was grateful that the collection as a whole had been saved from the auction-block.

When what was left of the scrapbooks and books was stacked in my $6-a-week room, I decided to remove all Negro items from scrapbooks that were not essentially Negroic and to add them to the Negro collection, as that part had suffered least damage. As I worked, I kept before me the goal of making this part of the collection a far-reaching historical item of Negroana, with each of its volumes so fine and selective in its make-up that no other collection could even hope to equal it.

I also decided that my collection should be finally placed where it would be safeguarded and where it would be of more extensive use than I could offer, and it was presented to the Columbia Library. In 1950 I became dangerously ill again. When I recovered and could leave the hospital, the Columbia Library gave me grants to sort and complete my material. I worked on it until last summer, when I had gone beyond the set retirement age of the University. Now I am retired.

I have labored toward my goal for more than fifteen years. Whether or not I have succeeded, I do sincerely hope that the collection will be useful for serious historical research, and will remain an abiding incentive to those who try to make scrapbooks on any subject.
IN AN announcement made at the Spring meeting of the Friends of the Columbia Libraries, the University voiced its decision to establish a full-fledged graphic arts program. It will naturally take some time for the envisaged program to reach its fullest stage, but already the announcement has resulted in several gifts of unusual and highly useful graphic arts materials.

Mention was made in the last issue of COLUMBIA LIBRARY COLUMNS of Mr. Frank Altschul's gift of fifty-three hard-to-find items printed at his Overbrook Press. Early in the summer the Sun Chemical Corporation of Long Island City presented a valuable collection covering the first hundred years in the development of the lithographic process since its invention by Alois Senefelder early in the 19th century. The principal part of the gift consists of about a thousand pictorial lithographs, selected to show various applications and techniques, and including a number of very scarce and costly prints. Not only does the collection contain some of the earliest lithographs ever made; it carries the process well into the present, culminating in a full set of Joseph Pennell's superb Panama Canal construction scenes issued in 1912.

The gift also includes nearly two hundred volumes, mainly works on the technical aspects of lithography. Among the many scarce editions and treatises dealing with the early days of the craft are two copies of the first printing of Senefelder's original exposition of his process, published in Munich in 1818, as well as the first edition of the English translation, issued by Ackerman in London in 1819.

The collection was originally formed by the officials of the Fuchs & Lang Manufacturing Corporation, makers of lithographic inks, in order to document the development of the craft. For
several years a special gallery was reserved for the display of the prints. Later, after the company was merged with the Sun Chemical Corporation, the plant headquarters were moved, and the gallery facilities were discontinued. At Columbia the collection will augment notably the resources for study and research in all phases of the graphic arts, and it will share a place with the Typographic Library, the Book Arts collection, and the Epstein Collection on the History of Photography.

Over the years, countless graphic arts students have been inspired by the opportunity of visiting the paper museum that until recently was housed on the top floor of the building occupied by the Stevens-Nelson Paper Corporation. There they were able to watch Mr. Harrison Elliott, an official of the firm, carry through all of the processes of manufacturing hand-made paper. They listened while linen and cotton rags were being macerated into pulp in a “beater.” They saw the pulp aging in a vat, diluted with water to the consistency of creamy soup, in which process all but the basic cellular structure of the fibres is dissolved away. And they watched Mr. Elliott dip a hand-mould into the vat, lift out a thin layer of the ready pulp, shake it gently, and turn out a damp, fully matted sheet that needed only to be sized, pressed and dried to become a finished piece of fine hand-made paper, suitable for use in the handsomest of books.

Recently Mr. Elliott presented his complete apparatus to the University. Steps are now being taken to find a suitable place to set up this equipment in working order, so that students and visitors will again be able to watch the progressive steps in the interesting and instructive process of paper-manufacture.

Mr. Max Nomad, well known as a writer on corporate forms of government, left- and right-wing movements, and similar questions that trouble a large part of our serious thinking during these times, has deposited in the Columbia University Libraries his entire file of clippings, excerpts, and the like, dealing with these
subjects. The collection numbers hundreds of thousands of items, and nearly sixty standard manuscript boxes are required to house it. Each item is carefully documented as to its place and date of publication, and the material is arranged by countries. The prodigious labor which Mr. Nomad has put into the compilation of the collection wonderfully facilitates use by other scholars, and renders further organizational work unnecessary.

Thomas S. Jones, a poet of deep religious insight, died about twenty years ago in New York. His papers, books, and manuscripts were left in the care of his friend, John L. Foley. Within the past few weeks they were presented to the Columbia University Libraries, and they will be available to qualified students and scholars in the department of Special Collections.

A current commentary on Jones calls him “a poet of some importance making a serious contribution to our religious literature.” Examination of the collection of his books and papers encourages a more subjective analysis, suggesting that he was a singularly well-loved personality with a wide circle of intimates, including many of the principal literary figures of his day. He was a generous and conscientious correspondent, judging by the hundreds upon hundreds of letters from his friends and associates which he neatly and carefully filed away in packets. From authors both here and abroad he was the recipient of scores of affectionately-inscribed slim little volumes of poetry, many of them collectors’ items in their own right, and doubly so in their present “association” forms.

One of Jones’s principal preoccupations during his later years was the release of the poetry of the subconscious directly through “automatic writing,” and his files contain a wide range of manuscripts composed by that method. Automatic writing once was used in efforts to communicate with the supernatural, and now is the special tool of psychology in probing the latent recesses of the mind. Serious students of this phase of enquiry will find in this collection a varied, dependable, and fruitful area for exploration.
Other Recent Gifts

Webb, John. Sermon preached . . . November 15, 1772. Boston, 1772. Photograph of the Copley portrait of Dorothy Quincy, one of the former owners of Mr. Webb’s lecture-sermon before the General Assembly, November 15, 1772. Manuscript records of Rocca Antica, 17th and 18th centuries, with printed supplements of the 19th century—three manuscript volumes and unbound printed supplements. From Harry G. Friedman.

Pomponius Mela. De situ orbis [1501]. From Valerien Lad-maraski.


Playbill. Manuscript playbill of a program presented on board the “Theater Royal,” H. M. S. Tribune, as it lay in port at Chinchu Island (off Lima, Peru) February 19, 1857. From Margaret and Richard Bancroft.


Baskerville Bible. Printed by John Baskerville, 1772. From Mrs. Alta Given Williams.

Guerra, Giovanni. Album containing 134 original drawings by Giovanni Guerra, 16th-century Italian painter and architect. From Alice and Constance Ogden.


Berlioz, Hector. Books and manuscripts by and about Hector Berlioz, including five autograph letters from the musician and many others relative to his life. From Prof. Jacques M. Barzun.

Unko sekkutsu. By Mizuno. Volumes I, IV, and VII (texts and plates), continuing a previous gift of volumes in this set. From the Bank of Japan through Prof. Carl S. Shoup.

Architecture. Three original drawings by Richard Upjohn, and 78 books from the professional library of the Upjohn family. From Prof. Everard Upjohn.
The Editor Visits the Medical Library

Our visit the other day to the Medical Library at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center was made at a rather different tempo than visits years ago, when we used to rush in, a harassed medical student, chasing an elusive textbook, or intent on some hasty search of the literature. On this occasion we calmly reserved an afternoon of Librarian Thomas Fleming's time—causing who knows what dislocation in that kindly man's schedule, but gratifying ourself with a luxurious sense of postgraduate leisure.

The stairs leading up to the Library still had their familiar aromatic but businesslike hospital odor, and the Library itself looked much the same. In the high, vaguely Gothic reading-room the white-coated readers gazed at the same fat volumes. The assistant stood as before behind the counter, and students peered over his shoulder to see if Gray's Anatomy or Boyd's Pathology were on the reserve shelves. The Doctors Draper, father and son, still stared with bronze impassivity from their plaque on the east wall, noting the constantly accelerating influx of books, the overflowing shelves—wondering, perhaps, where will it all end?

"Yes, where will it all end?" said Mr. Fleming, as we sat after lunch in his book-lined office. "This library building was opened in 1928 with 49,000 volumes, and with room on shelves for 100,000 in all. Today we have more than 175,000, and the collection is increasing at the rate of about 8,500 volumes a year. We received 785 journals in 1937, the year I began here as Librarian; today we take 2,023 journals. Last year we dropped 32 journals, but added 199 new ones."

"How about a bonfire of some of your obsolete volumes?" we suggested, appalled at this inexorable multiplication of the printed word.

Mr. Fleming smiled wryly. "We have 11,000 items or there-
about which we should like to get rid of. They’ve outlived their usefulness—and it costs us $3.00 to house a book here. That’s $33,000 for the lot. But here’s the rub. It costs money to throw a book away! A trained librarian has to decide about the obsolescence of each item; then, there are three or more cards to be withdrawn from the catalogue, and often other cards have to be corrected because of the changes in arrangement. It costs, we estimate, 36 cents to withdraw a book from circulation, or a total of $3,960 for the 11,000. I wish some kind friends would give us $3,960 in order to make $33,000 worth of book space available!”

In spite of the growth of the collection, the Medical Library can meet only 60% of the literature requirements of research workers, compared with 90% in 1937. This is partly because the literature has grown faster than the Library. “Medical knowledge,” said Mr. Fleming, “increases by geometric rather than arithmetic progression. Fifteen years ago there was only one journal of Anesthesia. Now there are twelve. The use of the Medical Library has increased about 1200% since the opening of the Center. It started as a collection of books and journals primarily for medical students. It has now become the nucleus of one of the world’s greatest centers for medical research.”

“Here’s one of the services we offer,” he continued, leading us to a table loaded with a stack of books. “Dr. X is doing research on cancer of the breast. We scan the literature for him, and when we find a pertinent article we put it on this table. Whenever he has a quarter of an hour or so he dashes in and makes notes. As fast as he gets through the volumes we put out, we feed him more. He pays us one dollar a month and ten cents for each reference found. This streamlined bibliographical service saves valuable time for Dr. X and the thirteen others who are using it.”

As Mr. Fleming demonstrated his overflowing shelves, and told us about the thousands of volumes he had had to transfer to the nearby Deaf and Dumb Asylum, now used for storage, it became obvious that the only solution to his problem was a new building. He said that in fact they had plans for such a building,
The Editor Visits the Medical Library

to be erected on the site of the P. & S. parking lot at 168th Street and Fort Washington Avenue. It would cost more than $1,500,000, but it would be the first modern library specifically designed to meet the requirements of a great medical center. It was an exciting idea, and when we recalled the sums which were being given for medical research, it seemed altogether possible that someday an imaginative philanthropist would kindle at the thought of creating such a library. Without a library to preserve the record of scientific discoveries, and to stimulate the discoveries of the future, the work of the laboratories would be as ephemeral as the fumes from their retorts.

By this time, thoughts of the ever-increasing avalanche of medical literature and of the hectic pace of modern research had given us a slight headache. For relaxation, we asked to see some of the historical items in the collection, and were shown a manuscript, donated by Dr. Dana Atchley, in the hand of a P. & S. medical student of the Eighteen Twenties. It contained notes on the lectures of David Hosack M.D., “Professor of the Practice of Physic.” We looked with amazement at the leisurely handwriting and polished sentences, studded with the Professor’s anecdotes and with the student’s sly comments. There were no abbreviations. It was the perfect antithesis of the hurry and bustle of modern medicine. We thought of our own sketchy notes of fifteen years ago. The student of 1952 probably uses shorthand!

The telephone rang, and we heard Mr. Fleming talking as if he were somehow involved in the arrangements for a beauty contest. “That’s the lighter side of my job,” he laughed. “The Editor of Mademoiselle wants me to find a photogenic Medical Librarian whom they can feature in a forthcoming article.” We left him with this problem—and the problem of where to put his next 100,000 volumes—unsolved.
Activities of The Friends

“Date with a Book”

THE series of readings “Date with a Book,” arranged by Dr. Russell Potter representing the Institute of Arts and Sciences, with the aid of Mrs. Albert Baer acting for the Friends, was opened on Wednesday evening, October 22, in McMillin Theater by Clifton Fadiman. Mr. Fadiman, one of the foremost champions of reawakening an interest in oral reading, was at his best. He was in good voice, and seemed to enjoy the evident rapprochement between him and his listeners.

He opened with Wordsworth’s sonnet “The World Is Too Much With Us,” and followed with Ogden Nash’s “I Will Rise and Go Now” to illustrate the same theme in the current vernacular. He read several short stories from the New Yorker, including Gerald McMillin’s “The Television Helps, but Not Very Much.” He did W. F. Harvey’s “August Heat” in full spotlight in the darkened auditorium, with most spooky effect. He read several other ghost stories, added some aphorisms from Abe Martin, and closed with the opening address to the jury of Serjeant Buzfuz in the celebrated case of Bardell v. Pickwick from the Pickwick Papers. Mr. Fadiman said that there were two geniuses currently practicing the art of reading aloud—Emlyn Williams and Charles Laughton. After hearing Mr. Fadiman, many of his listeners felt that there were three.

Activities of The Friends


The Friends of the Columbia Libraries are interested not only in the acquiring and care of books, but in their reading, their understanding and enjoyment. Accordingly we are glad to cooperate in this renaissance of what has been almost a lost art.

The Council

WE ARE happy to welcome to the Council two new members. Frank Altschul is a known executive with long-standing interest in problems of education, also a student of international relations, a bibliophile of note, and owner of the Overbrook Press, which has produced a number of fine press books, many of which have become collectors’ items. Mrs. Franz Stone, of East Aurora, New York, is a civic leader, wartime director of the Army Anti-Aircraft Volunteers in Washington, D. C. She is deeply interested in library problems and is bringing to the Friends a wide experience in executive and administrative matters.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Dorothy Canfield Fisher, whose father was librarian at Columbia from 1899 to his death in 1909, is a well-known novelist and critic . . . Austin P. Evans is Professor of History at Columbia, and has had for many years a close interest in the library and its activities . . . L. S. Alexander Gumby has devoted a lifetime to his scrapbooks on Negroana.
THE FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA LIBRARIES

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Invitations to exhibitions, lectures and other special events.

Use of books in the reading rooms of the libraries.

Opportunity to consult Librarians, including those in charge of the specialized collections, about material of interest to a member. (Each Division Head has our members’ names on file.)

Free subscription to Columbia Library Columns.

As a Friend of the Columbia Libraries you are asked to assume no specific obligations. We rely on your friendship towards our institution and its ideals. However, if members express their support through annual donations of books or other material, or cash, we shall have a tangible indication that our program to arouse interest in the pressing needs of the Libraries has been successful. The smallest contributions are not the least welcome, and all donations are deductible for income tax purposes.

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