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# Archibald Cary Coolidge and the Harvard Library

*William Bentinck-Smith*

## IV. SPECIAL COLLECTIONS: "THE STRENGTH AND GLORY OF A GREAT LIBRARY"

To reform a catalogue, to get a new building — these would be aspirations and achievements enough for any library director. For Coolidge, a man of vigorous, unremitting energy and of far-ranging curiosity and common sense, they were but two very important pieces in the total effort to manage books, money, and people, so that Harvard's library could more effectively serve a constantly expanding scholarly world and a community awakening to new horizons.

Utterly dedicated to the importance of building the scholarly collections, Coolidge, as a member of the faculty, had for fifteen years preached the gospel of the Harvard Library and backed it with his personal funds. Now, even more, as Director, Coolidge was in the forefront, seeking donors, scouting sources, giving liberally himself.

Despite the handicaps of inadequate housing and servicing, the search for more books went on. It was a constant struggle to match opportunity and donor. The sharp-eyed Potter and his staff pored over catalogues, consulted with Coolidge. Together they — and in the early years, Edgar Wells or various members of the scholarly community — plotted ways to find the money to pay for the books which Coolidge was convinced the Library should have. What difference if a new building were simply in the mind's eye? What difference if the cataloguing were behind-hand and the storage space wholly inadequate? On sheer practical grounds, the quest for needed books must not lag, Coolidge argued in his first report as Chairman of the Library Council:

. . . the . . . difficulties, harassing as they are, should never make us lose sight of the necessity of continuing to build up our collections by every possible means. This is not a thing that can be postponed until we are more com-

fortably situated. The price of old and rare books is rapidly rising. Complete sets of the publications of academies and learned societies, of archives, monuments, and other things of the sort, which the Harvard Library ought to possess in as great numbers as possible, are becoming scarce and will soon be unobtainable . . . There will never be so favorable a time again. The same is true about the building up of collections of old publications, particularly those containing rare pamphlets or early editions. Within a generation, at the present rate, these will fetch prices within the reach only of wealthy private collectors. Every gift that the Harvard Library receives for acquisitions of this sort is as welcome as it is timely.<sup>111</sup>

### *Augmenting the Special Collections*

The whole Lane-Coolidge period was one of spectacular continuous growth of what were then called "special collections." Recognizing that the Corporation's necessarily limited subsidies and the modest income from endowed book funds could not of themselves make the Library great, both Lane and Coolidge continually emphasized to the public the importance and the opportunity which gifts of scarce, important books and pamphlets presented. As Lane wrote in his annual report for 1909-10:

The receipt of repeated gifts for the same purpose and possession of funds the income of which must be used in a restricted field are a welcome source of strength to a library, both because they insure the constant growth of some specialty and because in so doing they lessen the many claims upon the general funds which are the Library's main dependence for purchases in all directions.<sup>112</sup>

Much the same thought found expression in Coolidge's report the following year, his first with the title of Director. Coolidge declared:

It should be remembered that all our collections, with the exception of a very few specially provided for, can be enriched only through the liberality of friends of Harvard. The ordinary resources of the Library suffice at best to meet somewhat inadequately the needs of the various departments for the current scholarly and scientific literature on their subjects. Yet it is the special collections that constitute the strength and glory of a great library, and we must never lose a chance of adding to those we possess, no matter how inadequate may be our present accommodation for them.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>111</sup> *Report of Archibald Cary Coolidge, Chairman of the Library Council of Harvard University, 1910, p. 5.*

<sup>112</sup> *Thirteenth Report of William Coolidge Lane, Librarian, 1910, p. 9.*

<sup>113</sup> *Report of Archibald Cary Coolidge, Director of the University Library, 1911, p. 3.*

It was hard going to find the outside money to make such purchases. There were not many who were willing or able to give so readily and generously as J. P. Morgan, Jr., Coolidge's contemporary and friend, the major donor in the group which made possible the acquisition in 1910 of the Marshall C. Lefferts collection of Alexander Pope's works. This store of treasure — 387 volumes and 128 pamphlets — included all the first editions of Pope's poems, 22 editions of *An Essay on Man*, and 26 of *The Dunciad*. Morgan's part in this acquisition was to be kept anonymous, and even in the matter of a bookplate the Library went to some pains to save money. As Coolidge told Morgan:

Ordinarily we have to put in a rather ugly printed seal in place of an engraved one unless we are fortunate enough to have been given one specially. It so chanced that we had a book-plate made for another collection, which the donor for some reason or other disapproved of. Accordingly we had the inscription on it changed, and you see the result.<sup>114</sup>

Many valuable books came to the Library without solicitation as gifts or as bequests, but what really pleased Coolidge, Lane, and Potter was to raise small sums for those books which could not otherwise be obtained. A little coterie of supporters gave from ten dollars to a few hundred dollars a year on a regular basis. Mrs. Edward D. Brandegee was a faithful donor of funds for classical incunabula to supplement the Weld Memorial gift of the library of Richard Ashurst Bowie which she had made in 1908. John S. Lawrence, A.B. 1901, when reminded, was always good for ten dollars for biographies of successful men. Professor George Lyman Kittredge annually donated \$50 for works on the history of witchcraft. Alexander Cochrane, A.B. 1893, gave repeatedly for Scottish history and literature. James Loeb, A.B. 1888, contributed \$100 a year to buy labor periodicals, and Walter W. Naumburg, A.B. 1889, usually had \$100 ready for works by or about Shakespeare. The historian James Ford Rhodes gave every year for books on the history of the South. The Dante Society and the Saturday Club made annual donations. There were of course many others, like Harold J. Coolidge, A.B. 1892 (A. C. Coolidge's brother), for works on China, Ellis L. Dresel, A.B. 1887, for German drama, John Hays Gardiner, A.B. 1885, for books on Burma, Edwin S. Mullins, A.B. 1893, for folklore, Horace B. Stanton, A.B. 1900, for Molière, Harold W. Bell, A.B. 1907, for numismatics, Professor Roland B.

<sup>114</sup> A. C. Coolidge to J. P. Morgan, Jr., 27 September 1910.

Dixon, A.B. 1897, for Tibet, or J. Lloyd Derby, A.B. 1908, for materials on the Philippines.

The level of giving, however, was relatively low, and it was a special project indeed that could call forth the assistance of a J. P. Morgan, a James A. Stillman or a Robert Bacon. Coolidge had small hesitation in bothering members of the Visiting Committee when he thought the cause was just. For example, in 1912, only eight days before the end of the fiscal year, Coolidge foresaw a "deficit" and turned to Morgan for quick help:

How do you feel about giving me a helping hand at this moment for the running expenses of the Library? The situation is as follows: ---

As you know, I have been changing the size of the cards here, which has included a great many extras of all sorts, and have been undertaking a good many other things, without any subsidy from the Corporation, being less fortunate than the Yale Library, who have been getting a special ten thousand dollars a year for the same sort of work for the last half dozen years. I have begged, borrowed, or stolen all that I could to put the matter through. First came your gift of two thousand dollars. Then I laid my claws on some thirteen thousand dollars given by Amory Gardner, and I have fleeced Radcliffe to the extent of five hundred dollars. In spite of this I can see that I am coming out some two to three thousand dollars short at the end of this fiscal year, that is to say, July 1st. This grieves me, but does not surprise me greatly; in fact I have foreseen it for some time, and if need be I am prepared to face the music myself, but I have already given the Library something like five thousand dollars this year for books. This is also the year of my twenty-fifth anniversary, which is you know an expensive amusement, and I have had various other things, so that my pocket is feeling depleted.

You will ask how much longer I am going to keep up this expensive and unbusinesslike gait. My answer is that the work of getting in the Library of Congress cards, on which we have some six extra people employed, ought to be finished by near the end of the summer. We shall not have a large number of miscellaneous expenses and we hope to be able to save several thousand dollars in various directions, so that, although I do not see how I can get my next year's expenses down to the level of the budget given me by the Corporation, I expect to spend a good deal less than I have in the last twelve months, and shall contrive to push through matters somehow. Perhaps within six months the Sheldon fund may be released enough for me to pick up a trifle from it. As things stand, however, I shall be grateful for any help you feel like giving me.

I think I can say with confidence that, though some mistakes have been made in detail, the work of putting through the card changing and a good many other reforms has been accomplished satisfactorily and economically. A few months more will see us out of the woods on our present undertakings, and before we

try anything more on a large scale, we shall have to wait on developments in connection with the new Library building, etc.<sup>115</sup>

Morgan responded two days later with a check for \$1,000 and sent "a like amount" on 1 August. By 1917 the cost of the tithe exacted by Coolidge reached \$2,500. As Coolidge wrote to him (20 June 1917), Morgan's lot was that of "being bled to the tune of twenty-five hundred dollars a year for the Library."

Much of the serious buying and collecting of scholarly books was carried out with Coolidge's financing by either gift or loan, and a very considerable portion of the Library's regular acquisition activity was inspired and often paid for by him. There was scarcely a year in his association with the faculty when he did not spend \$2,000 to \$5,000 — and sometimes more — on books for Harvard, when he did not finance cataloguing operations, when he did not underwrite some enterprise related to the library. During Coolidge's faculty association the purchasing income for the central library advanced from \$19,000 to nearly \$70,000 but this sum had to cover all Library purchases. Gift income was much less generous (about \$25,000 in the best year, 1927-28), and over the whole period Coolidge's gifts for purchases, particularly in the early years, sometimes amounted to almost half the Library's gift income. Such generosity and ardent interest gave him special force when he appealed to President Lowell to support the recommended appointment of Robert Howard Lord as Instructor in History for 1910-11. With real justification, Coolidge used his contributions to the Library as a partial argument:

Owing to the fact that I have cut down my work in the Department by one half, we are losing that much teaching of history. Unless the deficiency can in some way be made good we must forfeit a part of the teaching in the history of Eastern Europe and of Asia which we have offered for a good many years. This the Department feel would be a serious loss. Not only has the fact that these subjects were taught here helped to bring graduate students to the University but, in the course of the last fifteen years, we have built up extensive collections of books. For the Far East we have perhaps the best working library out of Washington; for Russia and the other Slav countries, the best (not in Slavic languages) in the United States; for the Ottoman Empire and the Near Eastern question, perhaps the best collection in the world. At the present moment three of our recent Ph. D's in history are offering for the Harvard Historical Monographs theses they have written in these fields, and two of the men

<sup>115</sup> A. C. Coolidge to J. P. Morgan, Jr., 22 June 1912.

who come up this year have chosen topics of the same kind. To diminish the attention paid here to Eastern European and Asiatic history would be not only to weaken ourselves in a field which is of great present interest but would mean, to a certain extent, the undoing of much of what we have built up. These are the sentiments, as I understand them, of the whole Department. I need scarcely add that I feel them myself with particular intensity for obvious reasons.<sup>116</sup>

In the face of such powerful support and reasonable argument, Lowell could hardly deny Lord the place, and he served on the faculty for the next seventeen years.

### *Harvard Agent in Europe*

Although Coolidge admitted that Harvard's librarians were "at their wits' ends as to where to house our acquisitions," nevertheless he commissioned Walter Lichtenstein, the Curator of the Hohenzollern Collection, to go abroad again as a purchasing agent for Harvard in the academic year 1911-12. Just at the time of Lichtenstein's departure, E. C. Richardson issued his first version of the "Union List of Collections on European History in American Libraries,"<sup>117</sup> and Coolidge directed a quick but necessarily superficial search to discover which of the 2,205 titles on the Richardson list were held by Harvard. Lichtenstein was authorized to locate as many as he could of the missing items — including numerous sets — and to help eliminate duplications in cases where he recognized them. As a result of Lichtenstein's extraordinary memory of what Harvard did and did not have and his unflagging determination to help Coolidge make Harvard the supreme university library in historical and related fields, the trip of Harvard's agent was an unusual success. Not only did he increase the number of Richardson items at Harvard from 1,509 to about 1,900, he was able to help identify many of the remaining 300 as parts of serial publications which Harvard already owned, while a few others were already in Harvard's possession but had been missed in the original check of the list.

"When the job is done," Lichtenstein wrote to Coolidge on 1 May 1912, "there won't be many libraries in the world that take it all in all will equal the Harvard Library as a place to study European history." A week later, Lichtenstein expressed the hope that Coolidge was not

<sup>116</sup> A. C. Coolidge to A. L. Lowell, 25 February 1910.

<sup>117</sup> Ernest Cushing Richardson (1860-1939), bibliographer and student of the history of religion, headed the Princeton University Library from 1890 to 1923.

"growing impatient" that invoices were not pouring in more rapidly. "You must remember that I have gleaned the German market pretty thoroughly in years past. What we have not got in German history are to a large extent sets and books, which — to put it moderately — are somewhat scarce. Still, I have been finding much, and . . . not paying high prices."

One of Lichtenstein's greatest coups was the acquisition of the great library of the Marquis de Olivart for the Harvard Law School. Containing nearly 7,000 titles (and about twice as many volumes) the library was so extensive that its catalogue was a standard bibliographical reference work for the field of international law. "Rich in original documents, including some cases of importance of which it contains the single known copy," the collection contained the "complete" works of 16th, 17th, and 18th century writers on jurisprudence and public law, documents and pamphlets relating to the international relations of Central and South American countries and to the Spanish War.<sup>118</sup> But obtaining this great collection on what the Law School Librarian, John Himes Arnold,<sup>119</sup> considered "very favorable terms"<sup>120</sup> seems also to have included some personal responsibility for entertaining the vendor. Coolidge recounted the story to Lichtenstein:

One of your letters had led me to hope that the gracious Marquis Olivart might not visit this country after all. You can imagine my pleasure when I found his card in my office and the news that he was coming again within a day or two. He went down to the meeting of the International Law people in Washington and there had a chance to get hold of Professor Wilson [George Grafton Wilson, Professor of International Law, 1910-1936], who survived the ordeal, but with some difficulty. On his return here I walked him around a little and took him to call on the President. The Law School rose to the situation by inviting Olivart to lunch with them at their Faculty Luncheon, which happened to come that day, and at which the President was present. But they played the mean trick on me of asking me to come around at 2.15 P.M. to take Olivart away so that they might go on with their business. I did this and

<sup>118</sup> "Extract from Report of the Dean of the Law School" in *Report of Archibald Cary Coolidge, Director of the University Library*, 1912, p. 29.

<sup>119</sup> John Himes Arnold, A.M. Hon. 1902, served as Librarian of the Law School from 1872 until his retirement in 1913.

<sup>120</sup> Coolidge wrote to Lowell on 5 January 1912 that the total cost of acquiring the Olivart Library was \$14,500, including packing and freight, although the Law School Library was prepared to pay as much as \$25,000 (plus extras) for it. "The saving we have made has been in large measure due to Lichtenstein's zeal and skill." At the instance of Dean Thayer, Lowell decided to pay Lichtenstein \$750 for his work in connection with the purchase.



marched him around some more. He showed me his last written agreements with you and talked of his desire to give lectures here. He also presented us with a catalogue of the latest additions to his library, explaining that it was a mistake to think that they were to make up for any insignificant missing volumes. They were really a friendly, gracious gift. I answered politely, but vaguely. All has gone off well so far. But though I hope our Spanish friend has about reached home by this time, I have little doubt but that he intends to favor us again with his presence before very long. He more or less intimated as much . . .<sup>121</sup>

Lichtenstein was representing several libraries other than Harvard and was entranced with his responsibility. "I am rather glad," he told Coolidge in a letter on 22 May, "that the Boston Public Library doesn't want my services, for I have my hands full as it is. In one week I had 40 letters, 3 cables and 1 postal and that does not include family letters. You see I am coming pretty close to running a bureau . . ." Lichtenstein suggested, as he had on a number of previous occasions, that the resultant value of his trips from 1905 to 1912 was a strong argument for his establishing himself as an American library agent in Europe. Coolidge, however, was unconvinced by Lichtenstein's trial balloons, and told him, "You have never quite been able to convert me about the advantages of having a permanent agent in Europe."<sup>122</sup>

From Paris, Lichtenstein went to Italy and Portugal, and Coolidge expressed pleasure with the results to that point and offered to increase the purchasing funds:

I think we can manage to allow you about two thousand dollars for Portuguese history, in addition to the five hundred dollars already promised for the history of Brazil. Of course if you see any very remarkable chance costing more than that, you can always cable us . . .

Judging by the invoices you have sent or had sent and by the various other ones in the offing, you are having a most successful time as far as we are concerned. If I were not pretty well hardened, I should be almost alarmed at it; instead I merely laugh at the alarms of other people. Altogether the record of the Harvard Library for this year is let us say a progressive one. With an allowance of some forty thousand dollars for wages, etc., I shall have succeeded in spending about fifty-six thousand. As for the purchase of books, — the largest amount ever spent before in a single year has been between thirty and thirty-one thousand. This year it has been forty-seven thousand, and mind you, this means Harvard College alone, not counting other libraries with such details as

<sup>121</sup> A. C. Coolidge to Walter Lichtenstein, 10 May 1912.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

the Olivart collection, but where this Rake's progress of mine will end I cannot undertake to say.<sup>123</sup>

Lichtenstein's persuasions to the contrary, Coolidge was not interested in spending money on "Germanistic literature" at that time. His aim was to move ahead with the Richardson list and greatly increase the Library's holdings of Portuguese and Brazilian material. But his acquisitive instincts rose high when Lichtenstein located an important collection of 175 Italian *statuti* and a library on criminology. Lichtenstein reported that "together with what we have had in the Law School and in the Harvard College Library, this collection gives us nearly . . . every edition mentioned by Manzoni in his great bibliography of Italian *statuti*."<sup>124</sup> Because "the conservative party at the Law School have got the upper hand in the question of buying books on foreign law," Coolidge told Lichtenstein that Roscoe Pound would probably give the *statuti* to the Law School, but, "no matter how wonderful," there was no chance at that time to get consent to purchase the criminology library. Coolidge added:

Accordingly, I have undertaken to buy the library myself on condition that the Corporation lend me the money, to be repaid to them by June 30th next year. This they have agreed to. I shall then tell the Law School that that library is at their disposition until June 1st at cost price, at the end of which time I shall reserve the liberty to sell it for anything I can get to anyone else. You see the thing is a good deal of a gamble, but I feel pretty confident that if the chance is a remarkable one and the Law School finds itself face to face with the prospect of having that collection go to some rival, somehow or other they will find the means to make the purchase . . . My willingness to run a pretty large appearing risk of this kind brings out pretty clearly what my confidence is in your judgment.<sup>125</sup>

As for the *statuti*, Coolidge found the collection "perfectly splendid" and reported on 26 July that he was "bubbling over with enthusiasm about it."

#### *Portugal and South America*

In Portugal, Lichtenstein found "beautiful things for little money," among them "a mass of contemporary pamphlets in Portuguese on

<sup>123</sup> A. C. Coolidge to Walter Lichtenstein, 12 June 1912.

<sup>124</sup> Quoted in the *Fifteenth Report of William Coolidge Lane, Librarian*, 1912, pp. 27-28.

<sup>125</sup> A. C. Coolidge to Walter Lichtenstein, 16 July 1912.

the Seven Years War" which "cost a few cents" and "it didn't take me long to make up my mind about them."<sup>126</sup> All told, Lichtenstein succeeded in spending \$7,550 for the Harvard College Library, \$1,000 for the Law School, and \$350 for the Gray Herbarium out of \$15,500 allowed him by Harvard, Columbia, and Chicago.<sup>127</sup> As to his successes with Portuguese and Brazilian material, Lichtenstein wrote to Coolidge on 15 August: "I wonder what *you* will say. I think that the lot is unrivalled and will make the collections outside Portugal look like 30 cts." He was ecstatic about his successes for Harvard and eagerly asked Coolidge if he could not continue in Harvard's service:

Don't you need an aide-de-camp while your building is going on?!! Northwestern might give me a leave of absence for such a worthy purpose, and probably by the time your building were finished I would be glad to be back at Northwestern. Think it over. Mr. Potter is away and so I might fill a much felt gap *und wer es glaubt wird selig*.<sup>128</sup>

Coolidge saw the merit of Lichtenstein's suggestion and got him a temporary post with the Library until 1 December 1912. For a few weeks, therefore, their regular correspondence lapsed, except when Coolidge was obtaining a non-resident membership for Lichtenstein in the Colonial Club or receiving critical comments from his "aide-de-camp" concerning the design of the new Library.

Coolidge was extremely pleased with his "very competent book-buyer" — and "very loyal Harvard man."<sup>129</sup> He told Lichtenstein, back at Northwestern, that he hoped the next time Lichtenstein went to Europe for Harvard he would have "five rather than one thousand dollars to dispose of."<sup>130</sup>

For the next few months Lichtenstein was much occupied with trying to arrange another cooperative book-buying venture, this time in South America. "Cooperative," for him, meant finding books for Harvard first and then supplying other libraries. "It is almost a platitude to say that the institution I want to serve is Harvard, and not Yale,"<sup>131</sup> Lichtenstein asserted. The irrepressible Lichtenstein went ahead with

<sup>126</sup> Walter Lichtenstein to A. C. Coolidge, 8 August 1912.

<sup>127</sup> Walter Lichtenstein to A. C. Coolidge, 8 September 1912.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* Potter was on leave of absence for the first half year of 1912-13 and later had to extend this because of his wife's illness.

<sup>129</sup> A. C. Coolidge to A. L. Lowell, 5 January 1912.

<sup>130</sup> A. C. Coolidge to Walter Lichtenstein, 13 March 1913.

<sup>131</sup> Walter Lichtenstein to A. C. Coolidge, 4 April 1913.

his arrangements despite Coolidge's deep concern that the proposal might cause a clash with his old friend, Hiram Bingham, then Assistant Professor of Latin American History at Yale and the prime supporter of Yale's library collections in the field. Largely as a result of his unwillingness to tread on Bingham's territory, Coolidge initially decided to stay out of the South American venture. He had had heavy expenses and had had to "fork up" large amounts for the Library, but after Lichtenstein left for South America on 12 June 1913, Coolidge began to have second thoughts, even though he was feeling the pinch financially. As a result, when Lichtenstein found that it was possible to buy the private libraries of Manuel Segundo Sánchez, noted Venezuelan bibliographer and librarian of the Venezuelan National Library, plus the collections of Donato Lanza y Lanza of La Paz, Bolivia — "rich in Bolivian pamphlets and Bolivian newspapers" — and of Blas Garay of Asuncion, Paraguay — "especially rich in the period of the younger Lopez" — Coolidge again stepped forward personally to make the purchases practicable.<sup>132</sup>

Coolidge emptied his own pocketbook as well as the Library's. "I never was in a position where I could do less to turn daydreams into realities," he confided to Lichtenstein on 24 March. "Even my private finances are crippled by the Sanchez purchase and other things, so I have not a cent to spare for you to get anything in Europe." Yet this was before the Lanza, Garay, and other finds came to light. Describing his Lanza treasure, Lichtenstein reminded Coolidge on 23 April 1914:

. . . only a year ago . . . you sent me a copy of a letter of Bingham . . . that has the following statement: 'We can say without unnecessary boasting that we have the best collection of books relating to South American history and geography in this country.' I think that this is past for all countries, except Peru. Harvard with the Sanchez, Lanza and Montt collections has the best working collection for South America in the U.S.A. . . .

Joyfully Coolidge answered Lichtenstein on 15 May 1914:

Your letters . . . filled me with jubilation. You have made a wonderful strike again, and ought to be feeling as proud as I am pleased. It does look as if Yale would have cause to sit up before we get done . . . We have every cause to rejoice . . . If only our luck and your skill hold out to the end . . . Harvard will have not only a good but a great South American library.

<sup>132</sup> The characterization of the three collections comes from William Coolidge Lane's *Eighteenth Report as Librarian*, 1915, p. 14.

*Turner and Western Americana*

One of the most interesting developments bearing on the growth of the special collections in the pre-Widener period was Coolidge's part in bringing Frederick Jackson Turner back to Cambridge. A fast friend of Professor Charles Homer Haskins, Turner had had several terms of teaching at Harvard, but had stayed at Wisconsin as Haskins had not, and was understood to be unhappy with the attitude of the Wisconsin regents toward his preoccupation with research and graduate teaching. In the fall of 1909, Turner wrote, "I had been on the edge of accepting a call to U. of California; — in fact, had practically decided to accept, but had not committed myself, when I was asked by Harvard people to delay my decision."<sup>133</sup> Coolidge was then Chairman of the History Department, not yet officially connected with the Library. As Chairman he wrote President Lowell a long letter about Turner, personally pledging to guarantee Turner's salary for five years (1910-1915) at \$5,000 per year.<sup>134</sup> Coolidge's letter to President Lowell illustrates the vigorous way he pursued every opportunity to strengthen Harvard's scholarly stature and how often he acted as the "banker" to make an improvement possible. Arguing for his financial proposal he wrote:

Busy as you are there is an important matter I must bring up as it will need to be quickly settled if we are not willing to let slip a chance which will hardly occur again. For some time some of us have been very anxious to improve the situation in American history here by getting Turner. Good as both Channing and Hart are there has been a great decline in our graduate students in American history and we have fewer of them than we did ten and fifteen years ago while Turner draws large numbers (he has usually about twenty-five in his seminary course) and draws them from everywhere . . . All Turner's pupils I have ever seen were enthusiastic about him. I believe him to be a very strong man, perhaps the strongest professor in history in the United States outside of Harvard. There is no younger man in American history who has so far really distinguished himself in the subject . . .

<sup>133</sup> *The Historical World of Frederick Jackson Turner with Selections from His Correspondence: Narrative by Wilbur J. Jacobs* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 44-62.

<sup>134</sup> This commitment was conditioned on the Corporation's accepting responsibility for a \$5,000 guarantee Coolidge had made toward the salary of another historian and on the Corporation's agreeing to reduce the Turner guarantee if other funds should come in to help bring him to Cambridge. See also Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner, Historian, Scholar, Teacher* (New York, Oxford University Press), pp. 237-239 and 281-307.

Of course, it is a drawback that Turner has written so little, that he has founded a school rather than produced much himself. Much of what he has done, however, has been brilliant and I know that he is anxious to devote himself to writing in future. In Wisconsin he has been a great figure, constantly appealed to for all sorts of things. At Harvard he could lead a quieter life and produce more.

A consideration that affects me a good deal, though it is not a department matter, is that Turner is widely known in the West and has influence there. He is identified with the teaching of western history and his appointment here would be regarded as a proof that Harvard meant to pay more attention to western affairs. I believe it would be a very good stroke of policy, not only pleasing our western graduates but the West generally, and that it would draw students from there . . .

I am not sure that we can get him in any case and I feel certain that if he once settles in California he is lost to us. The place tempts him and the climate suits his wife who is rather delicate. The Bancroft library [of Western Americana at the University of California, Berkeley] is an attraction and he will not want at his age to uproot himself again a few years hence. It is now or never. He will be here next week and we shall have a unique chance to get at him then, before he has committed himself. We have no time to lose . . .

We now have the strongest history department in the country, but without Gross<sup>135</sup> it will be very seriously weakened. It seems to me that altogether the best thing we can do to maintain our primacy is by getting Turner to put ourselves head and shoulders first in American history, the subject that attracts most historical students . . . By this arrangement the Corporation will get the services of Professor Turner without incurring any expense therefor in the next six years . . ."<sup>136</sup>

Harvard's cordiality and admiration for his accomplishment (Turner received the honorary Litt.D. at Harvard's 1909 Commencement) overcame Turner's inclination to move to California. His decision to come to Cambridge resulted in a scramble on the Library's part to extend its already distinguished collections of American history to include more Western Americana. Turner was in the forefront of this effort, and his chief ally was a remarkable Massachusetts woman, Alice Forbes Perkins Hooper<sup>137</sup> — "a vast lady . . . whose substantial form

<sup>135</sup> Charles Gross (1857-1909), the medieval historian, a member of the History Department since 1888, had served only one year (1908-09) as the first Gurney Professor before being incapacitated. Regarded by Coolidge as "our greatest historian," he died 3 December 1909.

<sup>136</sup> A. C. Coolidge to A. L. Lowell, 28 September 1909.

<sup>137</sup> See Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Harvard Commission on Western History," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, XX:80 (June 1912), 606-611; [Frederick Jackson Turner], *The Harvard Commission on Western History*, Charles Elliott Perkins Foundation, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1912 — a 15-

was not diminished by loose-flowing dresses and a multitude of scarves and veils" — the daughter of Charles Elliott Perkins, builder of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad. Having been informed by Professor Turner that "the collection of material bearing on the history and development of that part of America which lies beyond the Alleghanies [*sic*] is incomplete," Mrs. Hooper decided to increase her annual donation to the Library to \$1,000 a year — "as long as I am able to give it" — for the purchase of Western Americana. She requested the President and Fellows:

That I may be permitted to keep in touch with the growth of this particular collection of books, and when material of value & importance is to be had, beyond the aforesaid sum of one thousand dollars, that I may be given the first opportunity to present such material to the Harvard College Library, if at the moment it is in my power to do so, my wish being to gradually build up this collection of Western history & to make it as complete as possible.

That a Book Plate be designed for this particular collection and that the payment of the fund be made in January & July, five hundred dollars each month.

I do not offer this fund unadvisedly but with the knowledge & approval of President Lowell, Mr. Archibald Coolidge & Mr. F. J. Turner who agree that this addition to the Harvard College Library will be of benefit to young men & I offer it in memory of one, who, in his youth, went into the West alone to make himself, he dedicated the best years of his life to the opening up & development of the Middle & Far West, he took a keen interest in young men & believed that they should first of all, know the history of their own country.

He was Charles Elliott Perkins of Burlington Iowa & if I, as his daughter, can help young men to that end, through the Harvard College Library, I shall indeed be gratified . . .<sup>138</sup>

Mrs. Hooper's generosity resulted in 1911 in the creation of a Harvard Commission on Western History, of which both Coolidge and Turner were members, and Edgar H. Wells, the first secretary.

For several years the commission employed an archivist — initially, Professor Archer B. Hulbert of Marietta College from 1912 to 1916, and then Thomas Powderly Martin, Ph.D. 1922, from 1916 to 1918.

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page pamphlet containing material reprinted from the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, XIV:27 (10 April 1912), 430-432; Ray Allen Billington, ed., with the collaboration of Walter Muir Whitehill, "Dear Lady": *The Letters of Frederick Jackson Turner and Alice Forbes Perkins Hooper, 1910-1932*, San Marino, The Huntington Library, 1970.

<sup>138</sup> Alice Forbes Perkins Hooper to the President and Fellows of Harvard College, 8 November 1910.

Although Coolidge played no large role in the work of the Commission except to give it his blessing and general support, Edgar Wells, Coolidge's money-raising associate, helped push the cause until he left Harvard in 1913. He was succeeded by Roger Pierce, A. B. 1904,<sup>139</sup> and it was Pierce who acted as middleman in the strange negotiations which eventually brought to Harvard from Salt Lake City the Eli Peirce collection of 2,653 books on Mormon History.<sup>140</sup> This was one of a considerable number of acquisitions<sup>141</sup> which came to the Library in Coolidge's time as a result of Mrs. Hooper's enthusiasm and generosity and the work of the Commission. Approximately 1,000 books on western history were purchased or donated in the period between 1913 (when the effort really began) and 1917, when the war hampered the Commission's activities.

The sad aspect of the whole enterprise was that, despite the labors of many and the irrepressible buoyancy of Mrs. Hooper, the campaign gradually slowed to a stop. The objective failed to achieve financial support in the East (in proportion to the energy expended) and evoked real hostility in the West, where numerous prospective donors felt Harvard was trying to wrest local treasure for itself. When the war came, the thoughts of all concerned turned to other things. Ray Billington has remarked that "the Harvard University Libraries could not have attained the important place in western history that they maintain to this day had the Harvard Commission . . . not been conjured into being."<sup>142</sup> Realistically he commented that the Commission's end seemed inevitable. "Most college presidents anywhere encourage prospective donors but few are ready to commit the general funds of their institutions to the peripheral 'pet project' of a donor whose gifts are inadequate." Billington concluded:

<sup>139</sup> Roger Pierce (1884-1959), a graduate of Harvard College in 1904, had married President Eliot's eldest granddaughter, Ruth Eliot. Pierce was an important wartime officer of the University, serving as Secretary to the Corporation (1914-1919) as well as Secretary of the Alumni Association, publisher of the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, Business Advisor and Business Director of the Medical School, and for one year (1918-19) Acting Comptroller. He was later President of the New England Trust Company.

<sup>140</sup> Billington, "Dear Lady," pp. 32-38.

<sup>141</sup> Others were the letter books of Bryant & Sturgis, a hide and tallow firm, the James Hunnewell manuscripts on the Hawaiian trade, the Marshall papers dealing with Hawaii, China, and the Pacific Coast, and the Villard papers and other railroad records. See *Nineteenth Report of William Coolidge Lane, Librarian*, 1916, pp. 9-10.

<sup>142</sup> Billington, "Dear Lady," p. 68.



Mrs. Hooper undoubtedly got her money's worth of amusement and self-esteem out of the Harvard Commission on Western History. President Lowell received the initial suggestion amiably enough, on the standard assumption that it could do no harm, would keep Turner happy, and *might* lead to something genuinely useful to the Harvard Library. But the president's lack of continuing enthusiasm was due not only to obfuscated provincialism but to the fact that a thousand dollars a year was not an important sum in the game preserves that he was hunting, especially when attempts to enlist western alumni had led chiefly to outbursts . . .<sup>148</sup>

A letter from Coolidge to John F. Moors,<sup>144</sup> a member of the Corporation, throws light on the successes and failure of Mrs. Hooper's "American History Crusade":

Turner . . . has come here from Wisconsin and is regarded all over the United States as the best-known authority on the subject. His pupils are to be found in almost every important university where it is taught, in fact, he has been the father of a School. He naturally has been deeply interested in the whole enterprise and has seen much of Mrs. Hooper with whom he is on the best of terms. He, too, sees big possibilities in this connection and feels that the opportunity ought not to be thrown away. On the other hand, temperamentally he is not of the "hustler" type — the kind to put much personal push into the enterprise. He is of the scholarly temperament and resents having to give too much of his own time to correspondence . . . He, therefore, has been — and rightly — keen for somebody who should be paid to look after just that sort of thing. But, that somebody must not be a mere clerk but a man of sufficient standing to correspond on even terms not only with presidents of Western Harvard Clubs but with the heads of Western historical societies, — all of which is right and sound in itself but costs money. Incidentally, Turner and A.L.L. [President Lowell] are not fitted by temperament to understand each other easily . . .

Your humble servant . . . has regarded the whole thing as clear gain but . . . is in no way a specialist about our Western affairs or has any great personal interest in them. I merely see that the idea is a big one and well worth while, but I am not the proper person for an evangelist in this connection. To tell the truth, I am sometimes driven nearly frantic between the various parties in a question which, at bottom, is not my affair.

The story of the Western History Commission which has been organized for this enterprise is about as follows. Mrs. Hooper has regularly given money with which we have bought large numbers of books for the Library with results which, from my point of view, are completely satisfactory. Besides this, there has been a general activity in the way of keeping in touch with Harvard West-

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>144</sup> John Farwell Moors, A. B. 1883, was a close friend of Coolidge and his financial advisor.

ern Clubs, picking up documentary and other material and in general playing the Western game. At one time we attracted a good deal of attention and, in fact, provoked hostility. Western archivists began to feel that it was the intention of Harvard to try to get hold of things which they believed should be left in their hands. There has been some little friction and stir, in fact, I think there is no doubt that the existence of our Commission has tended to stimulate local enterprise in document collecting in the West. The more we have done, or tried to do, the greater has been the correspondence to look after and the things to be done hence by somebody, and that has been the difficulty. Turner can not look after it all and does not want to. The same is equally true of myself. The result is we have had various temporary assistants from graduate students and others, who have been paid with money given by Mrs. Hooper. And so matters have dragged on with ups and downs, some results, and much bother, for several years. The time has now come when most people feel that the thing had better be put on a more permanent basis. Either the larger side of it should be dropped altogether or else money should be found to set it on its legs. Mrs. Hooper has always hoped . . . that if the thing were put in an attractive enough form, some of our Western men would take hold of it and set it going. As for the President, he has been kindly and encouraging in his conversations with Mrs. Hooper, but I am afraid she has exaggerated the interest he has ever taken in the affair.<sup>145</sup>

The seeds planted by Mrs. Hooper, Turner, and others eventually bore fruit in a subsequent generation, and it is possible to suggest that such benefactions as that of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Warren<sup>146</sup> were to some extent inspired by Harvard's failure to stir more interest in American history in the 1920s.

There was, however, in the mid-1920s one more chance to strike for gold to enrich the Library's American collection when Harvard inherited the fortune of the grandson and namesake of General Artemas Ward.<sup>147</sup> Scenting a strong possibility for a major under-

<sup>145</sup> A. C. Coolidge to J. F. Moors, 30 March 1920.

<sup>146</sup> Charles Warren, A.B. 1889, Overseer (1934-1940), and former President of the Harvard Alumni Association, was a lawyer and historian of the Supreme Court of the United States and of the Harvard Law School. He was deeply interested in the promotion of American studies in colleges and secondary schools. His widow, Annielouise Bliss Warren, whose brother-in-law and sister gave Dumbarton Oaks to Harvard, bequeathed to the University the Charles Warren American History Fund which supports chairs in arts and sciences, law, and education, and the American history collections in the Library.

<sup>147</sup> Artemas Ward (1727-1800) was a Revolutionary general whose father founded Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. Ward was prominent in town affairs, served as chief justice of the Worcester County Court of Common Pleas, and was a member of both the Continental and U. S. Congresses. His Shrewsbury homestead came under the University's care by the will of his grandson, Artemas Ward, A.B. 1899, to-

writing, Coolidge wrote to President Lowell on 14 January 1926 to express the hope that when Ward money began to come in a portion of it could be used for purchases in American history. "Since the Western History Commission came to an end, our special purchases in that field have almost dried out. Schlesinger and Merk, and doubtless Channing and Morison, would have liked me to ask for more but I believe in moderation." The Corporation, however, did not relish allowing an unrestricted bequest to escape their clutches at a time when the limited funds of the central university account were so badly needed for other more mundane objects such as salaries. Coolidge was "keenly disappointed" by the Corporation's decision. He wrote to Lowell on 26 January one of those long instructive letters which university officers find necessary from time to time to make sure that their particular situation is clearly understood:

I want to say a word more in regard to my application for money from the Artemas Ward Fund, which has just been turned down by the Corporation. I am doing this not in protest, though I am keenly disappointed by the result, but to make the reasons for my request perfectly clear. I realize, of course, the tremendous financial pressure under which the University is laboring, the innumerable and ceaseless demands for worthy causes from every side, and the paramount necessity of keeping whatever is possible for the payment of salaries in the College. I should, therefore, never have asked for any Artemas Ward money if there had not been such an explicit expression of desire on the part of the testator that the name of his ancestor should be widely commemorated. It has seemed to me that there was no way by which General Ward could be recalled to the minds of large numbers of our students more appropriately and permanently than by devoting a small portion of the bequest to the purchase of works on American history with book-plates that should bear his name.

Another point upon which I wish to touch is your apparent impression that, owing to the Dexter and other bequests, the Library is now in a position to purchase all necessary books. I admit that these bequests have made a difficult situation much easier, but apart from the fact that the cost of many books has gone up more than one hundred per cent in the last few years, we have to struggle with the results of our own enrichment. A generation ago the College Library had perhaps four or five specialties which might be called really first class. Today we have a great number and it is these that put us so high up among libraries. But they have been only in small part due to purchases from any of our regular funds; they have come from a large if uncertain flow of gifts and legacies. Now gifts and legacies will make great collections, but they will not keep them up, and unless kept up to a tolerable extent they soon begin to

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gether with a fund now amounting to more than \$9,000,000 which assists university-wide purposes as well as the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

lose in value. This means that far more kinds of books have to be got than was formerly the case and it is hardly more possible, without a much heavier expenditure than of old, to meet the demands for even the ordinary literature on the vast number of subjects in which the Library is strong and for which scholars consult it than it would be for the University or the College to meet present calls with the income of twenty-five years ago. Even as it is, the Library is not well ahead in a good many respects. Year before last, one of our graduate students went to New Haven instead of coming here because the Yale collection of English literary periodicals in the Eighteenth Century was, and is, so greatly superior to ours. Still, as I say, sorry though I am for the American History people who ought to have more material bought for them, I am not complaining, but merely restating my position which I hope you and the Corporation understand.<sup>145</sup>

Lowell, replying the same day, tried to assuage Coolidge's sense of frustration. "Do not think I do not value the Library or appreciate the need of constant expenditure upon its collections; but we cannot spend the same money in two different ways . . . For the present I feel that keeping up the salary budget in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences is of predominant importance."

Perhaps this decision left the President with feelings of guilt about disappointing the Library. At any rate, Coolidge, with suspicions in that direction, could report his surprise and pleasure to Wells (11 June 1926) when the Corporation decided to allocate to the Library for purchases, with no limitation imposed, the income of the Franklin Temple Ingraham Memorial Fund. This fund, received eight years previously, amounted to \$35,000 with accumulated interest. "An amusing feature of the transaction," Coolidge confided to Wells, "is that I am told the suggestion for this use came from the President himself. Perhaps he wishes to console me for having thrown down my application for money from the Artemas Ward Fund for books on American history. I shall, however, keep this reflection to myself. If the American history people heard of it, they would promptly clamor for the goods."

#### *Acquisitions During the War Years*

It has been seen that the year 1914 was noteworthy for the South American collections acquired as a result of the Lichtenstein expeditions. The next year, 1915, was probably the most important in the history of the Library; it brought the move into the Harry Elkins

<sup>145</sup> A. C. Coolidge to A. L. Lowell, 26 January 1926.

Widener Memorial building and the receipt of Harry Widener's notable library of 3,000 volumes. This included some of the major monuments of English letters — a Caxton, the first four folios of Shakespeare, a first printing of *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, a first edition of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and a particularly strong collection of nineteenth-century British authors and extra-illustrated books, many of them copies associated with the author or remarkable for their former owners. The Harry Elkins Widener Collection became — and still remains — the centerpiece and one of the chief glories of Harvard's library.

The year 1915 also brought to Harvard the theatrical collection of Robert Gould Shaw, A.B. 1869, with substantial financial backing as well. When the 35,000-volume theatrical library of Evert Jansen Wendell, A.B. 1882, was received in 1918 — “the largest gift of books in [the Library's] history,” said Coolidge — it was possible to form the outstanding Theatre Collection, of which Harvard has been so justly proud.

In 1916 came the Frederick Lewis Gay collection of British and American political tracts, over 4,000 separate items, to be added to what Gay, as Curator, had given to Harvard in his lifetime. Many of these were “of utmost rarity,” a total collection of about 6,000 titles. In this period Harvard also received the Lincoln collections of Alonzo Rothschild and William (the “Widow”) Nolen, the Jeanne d'Arc collection of Francis Cabot Lowell, and many, many others.

This is but a sampling of a list which could go on and on. Many of the private libraries were the donations or bequests of members of the Harvard faculty and alumni — such as the Persius collection of Morris Hicky Morgan and the philosophy collection of George Herbert Palmer — and would have been given to Harvard under any conscientious director or librarian; but many were inspired by Coolidge's extraordinary breadth of interest and the enthusiasm of those who gathered, promoted, and purchased for Harvard under his irresistible influence.

In contrast to the memorable gifts that marked these years, the Library's foreign purchases were sharply curtailed after the outbreak of the European war in August 1914. Coolidge soon decided that it was time to call a halt to Walter Lichtenstein's activities. The latter, in South America, had been hoping to continue his acquisitions

in Europe, but Coolidge was then short of money and the situation on the Continent was too chaotic to promise much from further book-buying at the moment. He wrote to Lichtenstein:

This brings me to the important part of my letter . . . our decisions as to book buying, decisions which I am afraid may not be entirely agreeable to you. We are going to draw in sail and straighten our affairs before entering into any new enterprises. I have to announce accordingly that after the receipt of this letter, you may consider your mission in South America as having come to an end as far as we are concerned, except for such things as you may have started upon before receiving this letter, or commissions that have been sent to you from here before this date. The decision, however, is not likely to affect you in reality. I feel confident that before reading these words you will have spent the funds you have for us, but at any rate you can now look on the job as done. I need hardly repeat that we are not complaining of the results . . .

Secondly what will affect you more directly is our decision not to spend any money whatsoever at present on special purchases in Europe even though you may be going there now. I believe that after the war would be a better time than at present, but whether that is so or not we have made up our minds that we are not going into the book buying business in Europe just at present. I fear this will be a disappointment to you, but it is merely repeating what I wrote to you a while ago.

When shall we see you in Cambridge? By the time you return we hope to have the Lanza books so arranged and looked up that we shall know definitely which ones we want to keep, both of them and of the Sanchez. The valuation of what we desire, and the distribution of the booty must wait for your return . . .<sup>140</sup>

Coolidge, with his many friends in Germany and France, felt the war keenly, and kept hoping that it would soon end. But he was too much of a realist not to make a prompt adjustment and concentrate on the digestive process which necessarily had to accompany the treasures of 1915. Internationally, the war had made book purchasing by mail next to impossible. Coolidge commented in his report of 1915:

The Library has suffered . . . as a result of the European war. Comparatively few books have been ordered from abroad, and not all of these have come. One of our regular dealers has been killed, another has had to leave the country where he was settled; with another we have placed 196 orders instead of the usual couple of thousand. The number of European booksellers' catalogues that have appeared has been only a fraction of the ordinary output, though as yet the prices show little diminution and profits made on a more favorable

<sup>140</sup> A. C. Coolidge to Walter Lichtenstein, 31 October 1914.

rate of exchange are counterbalanced by increased cost of transportation and insurance.<sup>150</sup>

And in 1916 the story was the same:

The continuance of the war makes it difficult and often impossible to get books or periodicals from most of the European countries, notably from Germany. We do not even know what is written there . . .<sup>151</sup>

The single foray abroad was a buying trip made by David Heald in the summer of 1916, financed by a subscription fund of nearly \$5,000 from eighteen alumni. With this sum Heald was able to acquire 1,700 volumes, mainly on English local history and topography and on English literature. He also purchased hundreds of English broadsides and Irish books and tracts and made arrangements for the purchase of works of Irish history and of the writers of the Irish "renaissance." He made contacts with British government offices, so that the Library might receive, for example, the Colonial Office's Official Blue Books and other such publications. Most of the Library's purchasing took place in the United States, however, although orders continued to go to Switzerland, Holland, and France, as well as the British Isles.

One of two library developments in which Coolidge took special interest was the opening of the Farnsworth Room on 5 December 1916, dedicated to the memory of Henry Weston Farnsworth, A.B. 1912, who enlisted in the French Foreign Legion in 1915 and was killed in the Champagne offensive on 29 September 1915. The room, intended for recreational reading, was the gift of Farnsworth's parents. The other development was the creation in 1915 of the Justin Winsor Memorial Room in Widener as a center for the Library's fine map collection, which at that time numbered some 30,000 sheets and 1,200 atlases and bound maps, and contained all the cartographical publications of the United States government and the major European ordnance and geological surveys.

As previously noted, Coolidge himself was on war service in 1917-1919, first as a member of "The Inquiry," the study group of academic and government specialists organized at the instance of Colonel Edward M. House to prepare background information for the use of the future

<sup>150</sup> *Report of Archibald Cary Coolidge, Director of the University Library, 1915*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>151</sup> *Report of Archibald Cary Coolidge, Director of the University Library, 1916*, p. 3.

peace conference; later as chief of the American Mission to Vienna and as a member of the Paris Peace Conference staff. He also made a trip to Sweden and Northern Russia for the Department of State in 1918 at a time which coincided unexpectedly with the Allied Expedition to North Russia. These responsibilities, while diverting him from Harvard for the moment, actually greatly helped the Library, for Coolidge always had Harvard on his mind and was constantly on the lookout for opportunities to acquire the documentary record of the prewar and postwar period. He made full use of his wide acquaintance, particularly among European officials, American specialists, and Harvard alumni to assemble as much source material as he could relating to this critical epoch of world history.

Immediately after the war the European money market was greatly upset and Coolidge and his staff suddenly found that the Harvard Library could take advantage of favorable rates of exchange "undreamt of before." Coolidge moved promptly "to make the best use of opportunities not likely to recur" (as he reported to the President in 1919-20) and ordered heavily and profitably in Austria, Germany, Italy, and France despite "violent fluctuations of exchange and . . . the efforts of sellers . . . to counterbalance unprofitable exchange by the imposition of special charges."

He was especially fortunate to find himself on leave from the Library in 1921-22 as a member of the American Relief Administration at a time when it was still possible to buy books and serial publications of the Russian pre-war era. As a result — with the help of associates like Frank A. Golder<sup>152</sup> — Coolidge purchased for Harvard several thousand books on Russian history, literature, and art, as well as priceless runs of scholarly periodicals which were to make the Harvard Library a hardly-rivalled center for Slavic research in the decades ahead.

As might be expected the Russian purchases were conducted under great difficulties, and the benefits which the Harvard Library, the Hoover Library at Stanford, and the Library of Congress gained were often achieved in the face of human turmoil and tragedy. Distinguished

<sup>152</sup> Frank Alfred Golder (1877-1929), Russian-born historian, graduated from Harvard in 1903 and was Coolidge's graduate student until Golder received the doctorate in 1909. Their paths crossed frequently thereafter. Both were members of the Inquiry and the A.R.A. staff. Golder became Professor of History at Stanford and first Director of the Hoover Library on War, Revolution and Peace. Thus he was also a rival collector in Coolidge's favorite field.



professors, confronted with exile and desperate for funds, parted with their scholarly libraries in the midst of an incredible inflation which steadily raised the price of the dollar in relation to the ruble.

Once back in the United States, Coolidge had to rely on Golder and others in the A.R.A. to help him locate through dealers and private individuals the scarce volumes he wanted for Harvard. It was a tricky business dealing in unstable rubles. At the rate of 1.5 million rubles to the dollar, American currency went a long way and Coolidge initially got good values. On 11 May 1922 he informed Golder:

I have written to Adams [Ephraim Douglas Adams, Professor of History at Stanford and Director of the Hoover Library] suggesting that we give each other a first preference on Russian duplicates. He replies that the Library of Congress has a first lien on things bought for the Hoover collection but that he is willing to make an agreement in regard to things bought with other funds. I shall write making this arrangement with him informally . . . I am delighted to hear that our books were due to leave Russia on April 6th . . . The day ours reach this library I shall have the flags put up.

I made out a check for \$210 according to your directions . . .

But the economic chaos in Russia had a quick effect on book prices. Only a month later (10 June) Golder was telling Coolidge:

Prices have gone crazy and you may congratulate yourself on your purchases. The dollar will now bring three millions, and a set of *Starye Gody* were offered me the other day for 600 millions, other books are equally dear and I am not buying. There is not much to buy anyway. You need have no regrets.

To complicate matters, Melgunov, one of Harvard's and Stanford's chief agents, was thrown in prison for two months. This was all a mistake, the authorities claimed, but Melgunov decided to be "done with socialism" and to sell out his socialist collection. He told Golder that "socialism is dead . . . at least the old socialism." "The work on hunting," Golder reported on 13 August, "can still be had if you are willing to pay the price, somewhere between forty or fifty dollars . . . Everything goes up except the dollar. It has been standing in the neighborhood of four millions and does not budge at all . . . Because of the high price of books I am not buying anything except the newer things and they are the most expensive of all."

Coolidge, however, was always willing to risk money for quality and since Harvard's requirements were somewhat broader than those of the Hoover Library he continued to send lists of his wants to Golder.

On 2 October 1922 he wrote:

I wonder if there is any chance that our people at Orenburg could pick up for me a set or any part of a set of the *Trudy Orenburgskoi Uchenoy Archivnoi Komissii*. The thing ought to be distinctly worth having and we have but one stray number (22, 1910). You see my appetite for good books remains unchecked . . . I am afraid I must owe you large sums of money which I shall be glad to pay at any time when I know just how and how much.

The regular contacts between Coolidge and his former student continued until early 1926 when the latter returned to the United States and wrote (in collaboration with Lincoln Hutchinson) his report on his A.R.A. experience, *On the Trail of the Russian Famine* (1927) and in the same year published his bibliographical summary of *Documents of Russian History*. Golder died a year after his mentor.

### *Collecting in the Twenties*

Although Coolidge began in 1922 to be very actively involved in the editing of *Foreign Affairs*, he kept a major part of his time for the Library and its ever enlarging mission. Other than the ubiquitous Edgar Wells, few adherents of the Library were more active and helpful in the 1920s to Coolidge's acquisitions program than James Buell Munn, A.B. 1912. Munn first came to Coolidge's attention when he was still a graduate student. (He received the Ph.D. in philology in 1917.) Through the instance of Kittredge and Greenough, members of the Library Council, Munn was installed in 1916 as the secretary of that body. Although the University's official catalogue listed Munn as secretary for three academic years, in fact he did not serve as such in 1917-18 and 1918-19 because he was on military duty, first in this country and then in France. His interest in and helpfulness to the Library led to his appointment to the Visiting Committee in 1921. For the next six years, until Coolidge's death, the two men had a lively correspondence and many personal contacts.

As a Professor of English at New York University, Munn had a primary interest in strengthening Harvard's holdings in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English literature, but building a great scholarly library transcended, for him, any special interest in book-collecting. The year 1924-25 had been an undramatic one, but still had brought its share of triumphs. "We are living along here much as usual," Coolidge told Munn in thanking him for a rare French edition of an

essay on literature by Gibbon, dedicated to Lord Sheffield. "The Library happens to be worse strapped financially at the moment for the purchase of books than it has been at any time since I have been connected with it, but somehow or other we seem to manage to get things, and things worth while, so I am not complaining too much."<sup>153</sup> Yet the following year was a real sensation — the year in which Harvard inherited the Amy Lowell collection and in which anonymous donors gave Harvard a collection of the works of John Milton and other seventeenth-century poetry in memory of Lionel de Jersey Harvard, A.B. 1915.<sup>154</sup> It was a year of stellar acquisitions through the Clawson sale in New York. All in all, it rivalled in splendor the year 1915-16, in which were received the Harry Elkins Widener collection, the Robert Gould Shaw collection, and the Fearing collection. In the absence of a real Friends organization — then not much more than a hoped-for idea — Wells, Munn, and Coolidge formed an aspiring and tireless triumvirate, locating books, raising funds, and searching for donors. A selection from Coolidge's correspondence in this period provides a record of some of the high moments. Munn was just then in the final phase of completing his Milton collection for Harvard and every shipment of seventeenth-century books and pamphlets relating to Milton's era brought a warm response from Cambridge. Coolidge told Munn on 30 January 1925:

I have just seen the wonderful things which Lowes<sup>155</sup> has brought back here as a gift from you. I have also heard Kittredge burble and declare that they

<sup>153</sup> A. C. Coolidge to J. B. Munn, 2 December 1924. For the small staff of the Order Department, 1924-25 was a particularly difficult year. With Alfred Potter away on sabbatical the burden of running the department fell on "the two Gertrudes" — Gertrude Sullivan and Gertrude Shaw. Miss Shaw, whose responsibility was searching titles and approving purchases, then became Coolidge's right hand in the area of his greatest concern and pleasure. Bright and early every morning and every evening after hours Miss Shaw was kept busy trying to keep up with the flood of queries and recommendations from Wells and Munn in New York. "What are we going to do tonight?" Coolidge would ask Miss Shaw, and then stand by "like an errand boy" while she tried to determine at the highest speed consonant with care if Harvard had the John Milton items in which Munn and Wells were interested. (Interview with Gertrude M. Shaw, 5 November 1973.)

<sup>154</sup> "A beloved alumnus who bore the name of his Alma Mater with true humility and distinction," Lionel de Jersey Harvard (1893-1918) was a lineal descendant of John Harvard's brother. He graduated from Harvard *cum laude* in 1915. As a Captain in the Grenadier Guards, he was killed by shellfire at Arras.

<sup>155</sup> John Livingston Lowes (1867-1945) was Professor of English from 1918 to 1930 and Francis Lee Higginson Professor from 1930 to his retirement in 1939.

were just what we wanted most, "everyone of them a nugget." It is therefore not easy for me to thank you adequately. These days when there is so much foolish outcry about the Harvard of the future being nothing but a Business School, I am rather setting my teeth (though I am on excellent terms with and quite sympathetic to the Business School myself) in the determination to play the game for all I am worth in keeping up certain other sides of the institution with which I am more immediately concerned. We have got a first rate start in many respects and we must not lose it. Such aid as yours is invaluable to us and a real blessing to Harvard. Need I add that I feel a glow of personal pleasure that you are still so loyal to the place . . .

On the same day Munn was writing to Coolidge from his Washington Square office:

Very few of us can do what we would like because of insufficient financial means, but I know that the life-long devotion of men like yourself and Mr. Wells has made Harvard what it is, and I want to help in the library as much as I can. Just recently I wrote Mr. Potter about a campaign in the Elizabethan and Jacobean field for such books. If we lay down a policy for the next twenty years we ought to have a splendid collection, even though we receive no outside gifts, and of course I know your hopes in that regard.

By mid-May Coolidge was full of excitement about the Amy Lowell bequest<sup>150</sup> and wrote enthusiastically to Munn on 21 May, describing a preliminary examination of Miss Lowell's library:

Potter and I went over the other day to look at the Amy Lowell books. The Keats collection is of course superb. There are, besides, a number of interesting manuscripts. Kipling's "Without Benefit of Clergy" (to Mrs. Livingston's delight), Mrs. Browning's "Aurora Leigh," etc., and a large number of autograph letters or things of the sort which we did not have time to look at in detail. There is no list or catalogue of any kind nor is the material arranged in any order except that the most valuable things are in the safe and a good many of the best books are in one corner of the room. There must be a nearly complete collection of first editions of Scott (scattered in two or three places) besides many first Dickens's, Thackerays, Hardys (in great numbers), Masfields, etc. We saw a Milton. Potter thinks it was the eighth title page and that we have it already, but he was not sure. I ran across Johnson's own particular copy of "Rasselas," etc., etc., etc. Even many of the most commonplace looking books are likely to have the signature of the author in them or be interesting for some other reason. The money that we shall get ultimately is to be devoted primarily

<sup>150</sup> Amy Lowell (1874-1925), the poet sister of President A. Lawrence Lowell, died on 12 May, leaving the Harvard Library the privilege of selecting from her personal library any books and manuscripts desired as well as the income from a fund to purchase items related to Miss Lowell's wide range of literary interest.

to association books and manuscripts, particularly of poets. It will amount to quite a tidy sum . . .

On 22 June Coolidge was reporting to Munn a new success in an entirely fresh direction. "We have bought a lot of Bossuet at an auction sale in New York," he told his eager New York friend. "In fact we got so much that the man who got almost all the rest has lost interest and offers to sell us his, which we shall buy if we do not have to give up much more than our original bids. This puts us on the map for another author. We have also ordered a large number of Italian complete sets dealing with things in general, but particularly the Fine Arts . . . If we get them we shall soon be nearly as strong in Italian periodicals as in French and German." Coolidge added the news that John B. Stetson, Jr.,<sup>157</sup> Harry Widener's friend, who had just been appointed to the United States ministry in Helsinki,

tells us to go ahead and order any Portuguese material that we want at his expense. At our own, I have commissioned him to pick up a lot of 16th and 17th century French literature . . . in Paris on the way to his post in Finland. He wanted to do this before but we refused on grounds of poverty. He has, however, been so successful in a previous purchase of this kind and is so important a person to be on good terms with that I told him to go ahead this time. I mean to use Stillman money and perhaps Friends of the Library to help out . . .

On 27 June Munn again sent Coolidge (as he had in a handwritten note of 12 June) intelligence he had gathered regarding alumni support of the Yale Library:

Here is some gossip if I have not already written you. The other day I was introduced at the Brick Row Book Shop as of New York University. In looking over some books I saw one which should have been in the Library and I said to the head man — an Eli — why not put this in Yale? Then he blew up and said that while an occasional man had helped the Yale Library in the past there was no coordination and that it was a hit or miss policy — all of which I took in and hand on to you for what you will, with the addition that we will all play the Dutch game if you want it. I'll be glad to get the early plays as they arise . . . I believe we are going to organize here a very sensible auxiliary for your plans in the friends of the library . . .

Munn had waxed enthusiastic about the Amy Lowell collection and

<sup>157</sup> One of the most steadfast Library supporters in Coolidge's time was John B. Stetson, Jr., A.B. 1906. Though a busy foreign service officer, he was an interested and regular contributor to the Library, working to build a distinguished collection of Luso-Brazilian materials in memory of his Portuguese stepfather, the Count of Santa Fulalia. He frequently served Coolidge as a book scout in Europe.

bequest. On 23 June he told Coolidge, "You could feel justified in spending \$10,000 or more for a Caxton Chaucer if the need arose. Some items we shall not get without paying high for them." Munn informed Coolidge that he had arranged to have his father, Dr. John Munn, give Harvard anonymously a first edition of Milton's *Comus* "in memory of Lionel de Jersey Harvard" on the tenth anniversary of the latter's graduation.

The summer of 1925 passed without appreciable dampening of Munn's ardor. "I've done another fool thing, perhaps," he wrote to Coolidge on 18 September, "in purchasing the Conrad notebooks, but I'd like to start up an interest in the modern field. There are many Harvard collectors of contemporary literature and we want to get them looking our way. I'm against miss. as much as you are, but by this we may swing a fine Conrad library in the near future."

A month later, on 19 October, Munn was giving Coolidge advance warning to expect a package of seventeenth-century poetry. "When it is entered in the Library books, I think it had better be entered not as my gift but as a gift from the Friends of the Library. I am going to try to raise most of the money to pay for this last batch, because I think it will be a good thing to have our Library contributed to in this field by a number of people."

Munn's package of "Caroline poetry," Coolidge told his friend on 22 October, "takes away not only the breath of myself but of all the other people who look at its contents, and hardly have I got over gasping than you begin to talk about Chaucer." Potter's ill health was making it difficult for Coolidge to find someone to help in the ordering, and he commented to Munn "the fact that Mr. Lane remarks without too obvious regret, 'we shall send off much fewer catalogue orders' does not entirely soothe me." Coolidge's delight over Munn's gifts led him to reflect to his friend the next day, "One thing that becomes clearer and clearer to me is that we must somehow or other have a librarian or curator in charge of the Treasure Room and its annexes, that is to say of all the rare books in the Library with the exception of the Widener collection."

On 24 October 1925 Munn sent Coolidge suggestions as to how to organize the effort to advance "our present needs and plans for the library" — more lists of wanted books in the field of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English literature, allocation of special fields to interest graduates and faculty, enlarging the Friends of the Library.

He went on:

Let me again tell you how absolutely correct your idea of the Dutch collection is.<sup>158</sup> I have had occasion to investigate the price of Middle Dutch books, and while they are very reasonable now, I do not believe that they will continue to be so. We ought to make that killing within the next five years . . . I am attempting to get together some money for the Library from friends of mine, the tangible object being to provide \$6,000 to purchase some Elizabethan quartos which we have here on consignment . . .

Mr. Wells . . . remarked to me . . . that one thing he would like to do for the library some day would be to serve as secretary to the Library Council, and help build up the Friends of the Library, the list of Harvard collectors, and our list of desiderata in many fields. Of course, I believe that most Harvard men who are interested in books have a deep admiration for Mr. Wells, and would be glad to help him in this position. But I also realize that his present occupation makes him feel that many people would regard him as rather guileful in taking on such a position.

All the above merely goes to show you that I am deeply, if not intelligently interested. At present, I think the Milton collection is pretty well on toward completion as far as the expensive items are concerned. It shouldn't take more than \$500. a year to clean up everything else. I will work along on 17th century poetry until you get someone else who is deeply interested in it, and then I will be glad to take hold anywhere you want in English literature . . .

Your letters have made me realize the momentum which the library has gained, and we can't afford to lose it . . . I have never been as much impressed with the importance of a great library for a university as I am today, and it seems to me that such a library cannot be built up by the efforts of a few people as thoroughly as it can by the attack of a large number over a large front.

As was his habit, Coolidge responded promptly to Munn's comments in a long letter on 27 October — what he sometimes called "a talkee-talkee letter on a number of subjects."

Your letters are always stimulating and your last is particularly so and suggestive in several respects. I shall begin by taking it up point by point and shall wander therefrom as the ideas happen to come into my head.

<sup>158</sup> The Dutch collections in history and literature were very largely inspired by Coolidge and to a considerable extent financed through him. They were small in size until 1906 when an anonymous gift made possible substantial purchases of historical periodicals, society publications, and local history. The history collection was given in honor of John Lothrop Motley, A.B. 1831, the historian, and Coolidge's dream was to see it solidly endowed as a Motley Memorial. Coolidge also worked hard to build the rather sparse collection of Dutch literature, noted for the plays of the Renaissance dramatist Vondel and the nineteenth-century playwright Dekker (*Multatuli*), and he importuned every Dutch-inclined alumnus he could think of to help with the project.

1. We need lists and a great many of them, the more the better. Years ago I discussed with both Harrassowitz and Hiersemann<sup>159</sup> the fact that their catalogues tended to become less and less use to us owing to the ever smaller proportion of things they contained which we wanted and did not have. They agreed with me but asked what I had to suggest, to which I could make no reply. Lists are the best substitute for the decreasing value of any but the special book-seller's catalogue. The trouble is that they take time and work on the part of an expert. We have no such paid experts and can only grab enthusiastically whenever we can find an amateur who is willing to help us out. Of course one difficulty is the lack of knowledge in our staff. I may have told you that when I went through the list of the personnel of the then Royal Library in Berlin, I counted nearly fifty people who had the title of Ph.D. or something equivalent to it. I have no doubt they were miserably paid and many of them less competent than our Library School graduates but they did represent an impressive mass of available knowledge which could be called upon for all sorts of things. American conditions preclude that.

2. Only a small proportion of the members of the faculty are of any real assistance in ordering books. The others you can't either drive or persuade to do any work for you. The effort is wasted and produces little but vexation of the spirit. This seems to be a matter of temperament more than anything else. Some of the best scholars have no practical interest in building up in their own fields collections beyond what they and their students actually need. For instance in ancient history, Ferguson<sup>160</sup> is a thoroughly competent man and a good fellow with whom I have been on friendly terms for years, and yet though I regard our ancient history as being perhaps the only collection in history in the Library that is second rate, I have never been able to stir Ferguson up to do anything about it and I have ceased trying. All one can hope for is that in each department there will be at least one man who is keen about adding to our resources and when we find such a one we give him all we can. I wonder what the total of books ordered by Kittredge in the last thirty years would foot up to.

3. The institution of curators has been a success even if you admit that several of them have done nothing at all. The principle I have gone on is not that of having a lot of subjects and appointing a number of people who would probably do very little about them, but whenever I have known someone who I thought would take a real interest and be helpful I have created a subject for him. Even as it is, I would cheerfully drop half the curators I have. In some instances they are people who have actually asked for the place and have never done anything about it afterwards. In others my guess has turned out wrong and yet in both cases the men themselves would feel hurt if I were to suggest to them that they merely lumbered up a list which I should like to keep small

<sup>159</sup> Karl W. Hiersemann of Leipzig supplied the Library with European publications in the period from 1890 to 1928.

<sup>160</sup> William Scott Ferguson, then Professor of Ancient History, later McLean Professor of Ancient and Modern History.



in order to give it distinction. In spite of my desire, however, not to have too many names I am always ready to appoint a new curator offhand when a good one turns up. I should not at all object to having several for English literature and would snap at the chance to make you curator for the seventeenth century or anything else if you cared to accept the position. If, however, we had several curators for different periods of English literature, I think the centralization might perhaps be better done by someone like Lowes who is actually in the department and interested.

4. I quite agree as to the necessity of tying up the interests of men who are bookish and who have made collections. If we had what I should like to have, a man here of the right sort whose full time should be devoted to knowing about and looking after the rare books, he would be the person to keep track of all such things.

5. As you know, I am enthusiastic for the scheme for the institution of Friends of the Library but have so far been stumped in finding the right person to head it. I still think he should be a New Yorker, but I have not got much farther than that.

. . . at last the appraisers have released their hold and yesterday and today our portion of the Amy Lowell library has been brought over here. There is certainly some wonderful material in it and I am waking up to new interest and activity . . .

I shall end off with a promising bit of news that is making me quite cheerful. Roland Morris of Philadelphia (a Princeton graduate) has seen Edward Bok<sup>161</sup> as to the possibility of founding a John Lothrop Motley Memorial Collection in the Library of works on Dutch and Flemish history, literature and art. The sum I suggested was \$100,000. Morris writes me that the suggestion met with a very favorable reception but that Bok said he had certain large commitments in connection with the League of Peace and the World Court which tied his hands for the moment, but Morris thinks that after the Senate debate, if all has gone well and if we have joined the Court, Bok will probably come to the point. I am writing to him today. I have told Lowes and Wells about this but don't want the news to go any further.

Munn decided to take the plunge on 23 October and wrote to Coolidge that he had decided to have the Caroline poets charged to his account and to take all the Friends of the Library money that he could get and allocate it to \$6,000 worth of late Elizabethan plays. All this beneficence made Coolidge want to give Munn a curatorship of English literature in the Library but Munn replied on 28 October that he preferred "to be free to do whatever is necessary to do without title." Later in the year, with Coolidge's knowledge, President Lowell

<sup>161</sup> Edward William Bok (1863-1930), Dutch-born editor, author, and philanthropist, came from a family which included a King's minister, an admiral, and a Chief Justice. Derek Curtis Bok, 25th President of Harvard, is his grandson.



PLATE XXI  
ALFRED CLAGHORN POTTER  
1867-1940



PLATE XXII  
J. PIERPONT MORGAN, JR.  
1867-1943



PLATE XXIII  
HENRY WESTON FARNSWORTH  
1890-1915



PLATE XXIV  
JAMES BUELL MUNN  
1890-1967



PLATE XXV  
LIONEL DE JERSEY HARVARD  
1893-1918



PLATE XXVI  
AMY LOWELL  
1874-1925



PLATE XXVII  
JOHN B. STETSON, JR.  
1884-1952





PLATE XXVIII  
JOHN LOTHROP MOTLEY  
1814-1877

made an attempt to woo Munn from New York University for a permanent position with the Library, but here again Munn declined, largely because of his responsibility toward his elderly parents. He hoped "to be useful in a smaller way."

Then on 20 November 1925 there came from Munn to Coolidge a letter which surely now deserves to be on the public record, although during his lifetime Munn kept his great interest in the Library a relatively secret matter between him and those in the Harvard hierarchy who would naturally come to know it.<sup>102</sup>

When I started some time ago to complete, if possible, the Harvard collection of the work of John Milton, I carried it on with my own resources, and thought that little needed to be done. As you know the scope of the collection has grown until it embraces the field of seventeenth century poetry, and probably will take a lifetime to complete, if that is possible. Moreover the means at my disposal would not be adequate to do what is necessary.

You probably are not aware that my parents shared with me a deep affection for Lionel Harvard. Accordingly, when the Milton Collection grew, they offered to help, and the major part of the collection represents their aid. At first I thought that only a few of the minor seventeenth century poets would be needed, but today I have had the pleasure of forwarding to the Library some of the treasures of the period insofar as poetry is concerned.

It is therefore my wish slightly to alter the plan of the collection. As the bookplates have not been placed in the books, I should like the entire collection of Milton, and of seventeenth century poetry to be entered as in memory of Lionel de Jersey Harvard. Mr. Potter designed a beautiful bookplate, leaving off the name of the donor. Please substitute that plate for the one bearing my name, and cause to have entered on the private records of the library that these gifts are made by Dr. and Mrs. John P. Munn and their son James Munn 1912, in memory of Lionel de Jersey Harvard. It is an anonymous gift as far as the public are concerned.

Today, as I looked at the record of these gifts and the great poets they represented, I felt as never before how closely they expressed our affection for Lionel. He seemed to us and still seems the ideal embodiment of English young manhood.

It is impossible to close this letter without expressing to you how much the collection owes to Mr. Wells. It will be an oft repeated tale to you, but it is only a new example of his devotion to Harvard. Without his ever friendly and judicious guidance I would never have been able to undertake the work. It is

<sup>102</sup> So modest was Munn about his affection for the Library that he did not even mention a library connection — not even his membership on the Visiting Committee — in any of his autobiographical comments for the various reports of his College Class of 1912.

my wish and that of my parents that you know of this as a most significant part of the gift.

Four days after this magnificent letter Munn was back at Coolidge with more ideas concerning library strategy. Rare Elizabethan plays on the London market were his particular concern. He believed that with \$10,000 to \$20,000 Harvard could make a great impact in "shaking down" plays "which exist in pockets" in the book market. "Do you know anyone whom you could knock down," he asked, "or . . . anyone whom we could knock down for you."

When I started work upon the Milton and Caroline collections, I saw that two courses of action were possible: to collect a few books a year over a long period, or to make a sudden smash to clean up reserves on the market now, and then buy up slowly whatever came. I believe the second method is preferable and less expensive, although at first you have to spend quite a bit of money. For example, if anything happened to me now, you would have practically all the *great* books of poetry of the 17th century in their original editions. What remains to be added is a long and scattering list of rarities, many of which have little intrinsic value. I would like to see some method of making a similar smash on the play situation within the next two months . . .

In a letter of 30 November Coolidge was quick to take Munn up on his offer to help with a group of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch plays — "stray ones we can look after ourselves but for a considerable batch we might be glad of assistance." Commenting on Munn's strategic suggestions, he agreed:

Of course you are entirely right as to the way in which a great collection of books should be built up under the present circumstances. First get the big essentials and then steadily and patiently fill in till your result is really imposing. The only thing that worries me is how to find the \$20,000. I talked to Harold Murdock<sup>163</sup> about it the other day and though he hemmed and hawed a good deal, he promised to interest himself in the matter and to speak to one or two people . . . I spoke of the need of getting \$12,000 which was the figure given me by Wells, and should not venture at once to raise the amount to \$20,000. Murdock thought we might make good use of a remark of Lowes's the other day that except for our lack of Shakespeare quartos, he thought if we could get the plays now in Wells's hands, we need not fear comparison with the Elizabethan Club at Yale. It would be amusing to equal them on their choicest

<sup>163</sup> Harold Murdock (1862–1934), the scholarly former Boston banker, served as Director of the Harvard University Press from 1920 until his death. He was the father of Kenneth Ballard Murdock, A.B. 1916, Francis Lee Higginson Professor of English Literature from 1939 to 1964.

specialty. To come back to what you say, all I can promise is to keep my eyes as wide open as I can, to jump at any chance I see, and never to despair.

For Munn, in this era of opportunity, one fresh vista simply led to another. Wells reported to Coolidge on 30 November that Munn had ordered all the books in Ellis' List IX<sup>164</sup> which were not already in the Harvard Library, a total of some forty titles. "He is ready to move on the broadest front and it is important that we should enlist other men to advance on other sections of the front," Wells asserted. Coolidge assured Wells on 3 December that he would "begin to worry Charlie Coolidge<sup>165</sup> before long." "My powers of epistolary gratitude are quite used up as far as J.B.M. is concerned," Coolidge confessed.

Overwhelmed by this new evidence of Munn's enthusiasm, Coolidge inquired of Wells just how definite Munn was about keeping the source of his gifts a secret. Wells responded on 9 December that "Munn wishes to preserve his anonymity as far as any public statements go. He certainly does not wish to preserve it from the President of the University, members of the Corporation, or other parties at interest." Accordingly Coolidge wrote to Lowell the following day that he hoped the President would make a point of speaking to Munn when he saw him at the annual dinner of the Harvard Club of New York, and tell him "under what deep obligations we are to him." Coolidge noted, "We shall soon have received from him and his family, which means of course at bottom from himself, something like \$60,000 worth in the last six months and he is full of fiery zeal and the intention of contributing in the future to building up our collections, particularly in English literature of the seventeenth century. It is being done as a memorial to Lionel de Jersey Harvard, but the donors prefer to remain anonymous, at least to the general public. Munn is the most modest person in the world."

### *A Philosophy of Collecting*

In early December 1925 the catalogue for the Clawson sale<sup>166</sup> be-

<sup>164</sup> The London booksellers.

<sup>165</sup> Charles A. Coolidge, the University's architectural consultant and an old friend of the Library, had been appointed chairman of the Visiting Committee as of 1 July 1925.

<sup>166</sup> The sale of the great library of John L. Clawson, distinguished particularly for its books printed in England before 1640, took place at the Anderson Galleries in New York, beginning on 20 May 1926.

came a matter of great concern to Wells and Munn, as well as to Coolidge. The task of going over the catalogue on the evening of 9 December with Edgar Wells inspired Munn to further thoughts about collecting books for a university, which he set down in some detail the next day in a letter to Coolidge:

The wealthy connoisseur usually makes his collection in literature rather than in the literature and history of a period . . . As he wishes to have something to show for his money, he strives for well known items, and for those which are rare because few exist, rather than for those which have intrinsic literary worth. From what I have seen of great collections in the past five years, I feel sure that few connoisseurs really know their libraries, but have them formed for them by dealers or by their own librarian upon the basis of what will make the best show. Between ourselves, if a man intelligently understood his collection and formed it for its intrinsic worth to himself, he would not sell it; it would be part of his life, and would pass from him only with his death.

A corollary of these beliefs lies in the knowledge that dealers artificially stimulate interest in certain periods where first copies of an item exist, and where the item has the value of being well known and rather aged. I have noticed that when there is no other way of keeping up the interest, the edition of an item is divided into "states," as much money being obtained for one state as would normally be obtained for any copy of the edition. This is distinctly unintelligent, to my way of thinking, unless a man is prepared to work out bibliographical details of printing, etc.

A university library ought to be glad to have all the items of a great collection of a connoisseur, but it should [not] stop there, in my opinion, because connoisseurs' collections are not based upon scholarly knowledge, upon a desire for completeness, and upon a recognition of the necessity for uniting history with literature. I will give you a case in point. There is not a connoisseur's collection which I know of which considers that the 17th century poet, Lovelace, has more than two items — namely, the 1649 *Lucasta*, and the 1660 *Posthumous Poems*. On the other hand, I know of at least three books not under the name of Lovelace which contain poetry of his, and which any collection should have to be complete. It would be possible for me to point out many other analogies, and you will of course recall many in the field of history. My feeling, therefore, about the university collections in literature is that we must not merely get the great and showy collections of the connoisseurs, but that we must build up in the other significant history and literature of a period, as we shall be enabled to do through the scholarly researches of our faculty.

A corollary of this belief is that while a connoisseur usually has reprints made of his rare books, you cannot obtain reprints of genuinely significant contemporary material which has not been raised to an artificial value by the connoisseur and the book dealer.

Consequently, in the 17th century, while I propose to get eventually as many of the rare items from the point of view of the connoisseur as possible, I feel

it more significant for the university, and a more unique contribution to get equally significant but less known items which reveal the life of the time and complete our knowledge of the literary work of the period. No private collector does this; every university collector should.

Acknowledging receipt of a "fresh batch"<sup>167</sup> of Munn's "wonderful Christmas present" on 23 December, Coolidge directed himself to comment on Munn's ideas of collecting for a university. Coolidge wrote:

I think we are quite agreed as to the general principles on which a university library ought to be built up. As you know, I have always believed in both quality and quantity, accepting cheerfully everything that comes our way but doing my best to guide carefully the expenditure of whatever funds I control or when I have any influence on the purchases of others. I am at one with you as to the necessity of background and filling in. A collection of a single author, no matter how splendid, cannot give his real significance for this cannot be understood without knowledge of his sources, of the influences which surrounded him and affected him and the results he produced on the minds of others. There is much truth, too, in the fact you point out that writings which are neither great nor fashionable stand little chance of being reprinted even when of considerable value. Therefore the originals are all the more necessary for us.

Munn conceived the not very practical idea that lacking another donor, Mrs. Rice might be persuaded to purchase the Clawson collection en bloc and merge it with Harry Widener's collection.<sup>168</sup> "Her son's collection is significant as an admirable beginning, rather than as a rounded achievement," Munn said. Such a "beautiful and touching memorial" could illustrate what Harry Widener "personally could have done." Coolidge was not about to irritate Mrs. Rice with an approach of this kind. In the end, with a collective effort from New York — backed by \$40,000 in contributions from Munn, William A. White, A.B. 1863, J. Pierpont Morgan, A.B. 1889, Ernest B. Dane, A.B. 1892 and Thomas W. Lamont, A.B. 1892 — the Harvard Library made an impressive showing with the Clawson books, leading Coolidge to reflect on the successes of the year 1925-26 in a letter to Munn on 10 June 1926:

Now that the music and the shouting of the Clawson sale have died, one can look back at the results more calmly. I don't find that time diminishes my ap-

<sup>167</sup> "Some twenty items, including *The Domestic Intelligencer*, eight revolutionary items, a Milton which is being returned as a duplicate and a couple of volumes of Conrad."

<sup>168</sup> J. B. Munn to A. C. Coolidge, 10 December 1925.

preciation of what we obtained there. Considering that we already had half the items in the Clawson catalogue, an addition of 130 represents a very good result, but it isn't merely the Clawson sale we have to look back upon, it is the total result for the last year and this is really big. I have a feeling of wanting to get away and think it over and get it digested in my general conception for the Library in its future, a conception which as you know is capable of limitless extension. Compared with what we have got for seventeenth century England, other acquisitions seem almost insignificant. At the same time Potter's purchases in Italian and French literature are notable in themselves, the additions in the Fine Arts are pretty considerable, and there have been a good many nice things here and there. Did I tell you that I have made a second attempt on Bok for Dutch history and literature and got thrown down very nicely but more decisively than before? I won't say I am discouraged but I am baffled for the time being. The idea of a John Lothrop Motley collection is too good a one to be dropped. Some Dutelman ought to take it up, and there is no one I know in the class with Bok, but there we are. I have had similar dreams in mind on a small scale for Scandinavia but luck has not played my way in that respect . . .

Looking back on a remarkable year, Coolidge could well tell the President in his annual report that the new acquisitions "alone would constitute one of the notable libraries in America." Coolidge declared:

The increase in number of volumes has not been unduly great according to our recent standards, but judged by their money value, which though not a scholarly test gives an idea of their rarity and the way they are sought after, we have had a year which can only be matched by the one in which we were given the Harry Elkins Widener, the Fearing [angling] and the Shaw collections. Besides keeping up with our normal growth in many directions, we have made a number of notable acquisitions in such subjects as early French and Italian literature and the Fine Arts; but everything else is thrown into the shade by the additions which have been made to our already rich possessions in the field of English literature . . .

The result of all these benefactions makes a splendid total for which we are devoutly grateful, but it should be remembered that all such works can come only from benefactions and from a few small special funds . . .<sup>169</sup>

All the while that he was urging on his enthusiastic friends, Coolidge in his quiet way was contributing impressive sums annually to help with purchasing and cataloguing. In 1924-25 came \$7,200 from him for books and \$3,500 for administration. In 1925-26 he gave \$6,400 for books and \$3,850 for administration. The scope of his library gifts ranged from Russian history and fine arts to French local history. In

<sup>169</sup> *Report of Archibald Cary Coolidge, Director of the University Library, 1926*, pp. 1-2.

1926-27 Coolidge contributed \$2,800 for periodical sets, French poetry, and works on Russian art, as well as \$3,550 for administrative expenses. In his final year as Director, Coolidge gave \$2,470 for books on French history and Russian art.

The last two years with the Library were overshadowed by Coolidge's concern for obtaining the Fernando Palha library of Portuguese history and literature and the library of Count Alfred Boulay de la Meurthe relating to the French Revolution and the reign of the first Napoleon.

"My most immediate worry," he told Munn on 8 January 1926, "is the Palha collection. It takes a good deal of assurance on my part to tell Stetson that we can guarantee \$75,000 when I have nothing but pretty uncertain hopes to fall back on, and yet I am terribly tempted." Ever the optimist, Munn urged him on (11 January 1926), emphatically advising, "\$75,000 seems a lot to risk on raising for the Palha collection, but I should *certainly* do so. *The thing to do is to get these collections when they come up*, for they cannot be duplicated. If an emergency arose everyone would help out. I believe that you are in a position now to get such collections and that the graduates will help . . ."<sup>170</sup>

Munn, who had just presented a Bunyan item to the Library, warned Coolidge on 9 January 1927, "Don't let the Ronsard collection get away from you. If you call on a number of people I feel sure they would help. We know that for five years we can get good French books, but we must nail down the 16th & 17th centuries now."

As for the Boulay de la Meurthe library (10,000 volumes and 30,000 pamphlets), this was an opportunity not to be denied. The owner, a grandson of the Minister of Culture under Napoleon I, had been an historian of the Concordat, and his four-room library of religious and political history of the Revolution and Empire contained few duplicates on Harvard's shelves, despite the vigorous collecting which Coolidge had pushed forward. Coolidge wrote to Munn on 10 February 1927:

The chance seemed a remarkable one. The pamphlets alone must have a great mass of valuable material and as our already existing collection of French history deals chiefly with political and military affairs, the duplicates ought not to be too many. The price (80,000 francs) struck Potter and myself as a decidedly low one. We accordingly determined to risk the venture, trusting to

<sup>170</sup> J. B. Munn to A. C. Coolidge, 11 January 1926.



get back a considerable part of the expense by the sale of duplicates and to manage the rest somehow.

In the end Coolidge money helped bring the collection to Harvard, just as Coolidge's generosity had secured two collections of Revolutionary French newspapers some months before. It was thus particularly fitting that in 1931, three years after his death, anonymous gifts made possible the acquisition of the 3,500 volumes and pamphlets of the Aulard library of French Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary subject matter as a memorial to Coolidge.

There were problems other than building the collections which caused Coolidge much concern during the final years of his tenure. The reading rooms were filled almost to the limit of their comfortable capacity, professors were waiting for studies, many graduate students could not have stalls to themselves, top-floor working space had begun to encroach on the "through passages used by sight-seers." The stacks were nearly full. In his report for 1922-23 Coolidge pointed to the fact that "not four percent of the rows are wholly vacant to act as a reserve." He warned that "before many years we shall be in urgent need of making use of our two stack floors in the cellar which, though austere as a place of study and not quite so easily reached from the desk as the floors above the ground, will make an excellent storehouse. Unfortunately, the mere equipping them with shelves and the other requisites will probably cost about \$75,000, a fact we shall have to face some day." This same warning he repeated in his next annual report, 1923-24, and the subsequent one. He hoped that Mrs. Rice (the former Mrs. Widener) might take note of the need and fill it, but he was prepared if necessary to issue a more general appeal. While Mrs. Rice and her family had provided in 1920 a \$150,000 fund for the Library's annual administrative expenses, Coolidge constantly bemoaned the fact that he and President Lowell had never struck a bargain with Mrs. Rice for a maintenance fund. "It costs \$25,000 a year just to keep this place cleaned," he confided sadly to one of his graduate students.<sup>17</sup> But space for people, and especially books, had to take precedence.

"I am puzzling over what I had better put in my report this year," he divulged to Wells on 14 September 1925. "We have been in Widener for ten years and it would seem to be a good moment to in-

<sup>17</sup> Interview with William L. Langer, 31 October 1973.

dulge in smug retrospection at the same time as in piteous appeals for the future. I must touch the heart of the graduate without angering Mrs. Rice."

Was there hope of interesting any other large donors in the Library's physical needs? Coolidge had added William L. Clements to the Visiting Committee with some such purpose in mind, but Clements had not attended the organizational meeting of the Friends of the Library and was spending so much on his library in Michigan "that it is no use looking to him for something large anywhere else," Coolidge told Wells realistically. "The question is now where next to turn, for we need badly as soon as possible a special building for our treasures here. I believe nothing would help us more in the acquisition of just such things as we have been getting lately and confirm us in our superiority to almost all rivals in this field." This special building for rare books and manuscripts eventually came into being in 1942, when the Houghton Library was opened.

*(To be continued)*

## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

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RONALD PRIMEAU, Assistant Professor in the Department of English in Central Michigan University at Mount Pleasant, has contributed articles to a number of literary and philological journals and collections.

MICHAEL WEST has recently moved from Wesleyan University to the Department of English in the University of Pittsburgh; his Harvard dissertation, in 1965, was on Dryden, but American literature has been the subject of most of his published articles.

ROBERT LEE WOLFF, Coolidge Professor of History at Harvard, combines teaching and research on the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires with a long-standing interest in the nineteenth-century English novel; his books on the latter subject include *The Golden Key: A Study of the Fiction of George MacDonald* (Yale University Press, 1961), *Strange Stories*, published by Gambit, Inc., of Boston in 1971, and *Sensational Victorian: The Life and Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon*, which will be issued by the same publisher later this year.