William G. Medlicott (1816-1883): An American book collector and his collection

Citation

Permanent link
http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:42660105

Terms of Use
This article was downloaded from Harvard University’s DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA

Share Your Story
The Harvard community has made this article openly available. Please share how this access benefits you. Submit a story.

Accessibility
William G. Medlicott (1816–1883):
An American Book Collector and His Collection

J. R. Hall
For Alexander G. Medlicott, Jr.

A century ago in the Northeast a number of scholars, booksellers, and librarians would have recognized the name of William Gibbons Medlicott, of Longmeadow, Massachusetts. Not only did Medlicott assemble an impressive library, he published in 1878 a thick catalog of it and offered the contents for sale; and many scholars and librarians of leading institutions took advantage of the opportunity to make extensive purchases. Indeed, Medlicott represents a relatively early instance of a private individual bringing to these shores great treasures that subsequently helped to create great research libraries. Yet an inquisitive reader coming upon Medlicott’s bookplate or autograph in a volume at one of a dozen libraries will not find him identified in reference works. This paper will present the basic facts on Medlicott’s life, discuss the scope and quality of his collection, and detail its dispersal.

William Gibbons Medlicott was born, the eldest of six children, to Mary Ann and William Medlicott, a shipbroker and merchant, on 7 November 1816 in Bristol, England. By the age of nine, he was away at school, learning Latin (among other subjects) and writing articulate letters to members of his family. He left school at sixteen to work in a shipping office, after which he went to sea in 1835. Shipwrecked off Rockaway Beach, Long Island, Medlicott (in the words of family tradition) “swam to America.” The author of Medlicott’s obituary in the Springfield

For furnishing copies of family records and other documents, for the extensive loan of an invaluable annotated copy of the 1878 Medlicott catalog, and for his warm hospitality and amiable correspondence, I am greatly indebted to Alexander G. Medlicott, Jr., former professor of English at the University of Connecticut and now at Deerfield Academy. In Professor Medlicott lives the generosity of his great-grandfather, who cordially welcomed scholars to his library and freely lent his books.

1 Examples of Medlicott’s bookplate or signature can be found on the books listed under his name in the 1878 card catalog at Harvard’s Houghton Library. (The catalog’s list of 16 titles considerably understates the number of such books at Harvard.) To my knowledge, only two reference works mention Medlicott. He is cited a dozen times as a “collector,” Longmeadow,” who published a “Catalogue, 1878” in Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada, by Seymour de Ricci, with the assistance of W. J. Wilson (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1935–1940), I–III (hereafter cited as De Ricci). In Dictionary of American Book Collectors (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 96, Donald C. Dickinson characterizes Medlicott as “an English literary scholar” in discussing Henry F. Durant, who purchased books from Medlicott for Wellesley College.

J. R. Hall is Professor of English at the University of Mississippi. in University, Mississippi.
Daily Republican describes his business career after such an inauspicious beginning as a classic American success story:

Although an entire stranger, his intelligent and manly bearing, with the special advantage of a penmanship singularly clear and beautiful, obtained for him at once a business situation in New York, where he advanced with firm and rapid steps, till his remarkable business grasp and extensive ability secured him the management of the Enfield manufacturing company at Thompsonville [in 1845].

In September 1842 he married Marianne Dean (born in 1808 in Pleasant Valley, New York), who bore him three children before her death in 1849. Following an association with John Gihon & Co., he founded the Medlicott Company, at Wino- sor Locks, Connecticut, for the manufacture of woolen goods. In 1851 he moved to Longmeadow, where, three years later, he married Eliza Bliss Collins (d. 1907), who gave birth to two children, and where, in 1864, he remodeled the Calvin Burr Place, living there until his death on 17 February 1883.

Medlicott's commercial success permitted him to pursue his passion for books. But upon suffering financial reverses in the 1870s (perhaps in the wake of the Panic of 1873), he was obliged to offer an important part of his collection for sale and compiled a catalog for the purpose. The full title indicates many of the major categories of the works included: Catalogue of a Collection of Books Formed by William G. Medlicott, of Longmeadow, Mass. Selected with Reference to Studying or Illustrating Anglo-Saxon Language and Literature, English Ballads and Ballad Literature, Early English and Early French Literature, English Bibles, Catechisms, and Liturgies, Bibliography, Palaeography, and Shakspereiana, with Other Collateral Subjects, Including Many Valuable, Old, Rare and Curious Books and Manuscripts (Boston: Press of Rockwell and Churchill, 1878).

The catalog is arranged alphabetically by author, title or by subject, with nearly two-thirds of the lots under subject headings. It runs to 380 pages, lists 3667 lots, and includes about 4200 titles and 6950 volumes. The oldest work is a mounted and framed Egyptian papyrus dated at 500 B.C. (1709); the most recent date of publication for a book in the catalog is 1876. The manuscript section (2672-2741) consists of 70 lots containing 78 volumes and (by coincidence) 78 titles. Among the manuscripts are 36 from the 10th-15th centuries, 11 from the 16th-17th, 9 from the 18th-19th, and 14 for which no date is given (most of them apparently late). A leading feature of the printed books is a collection of 23 incunabula, comparable

---

1 "Death of William G. Medlicott," Springfield Daily Republican, 19 February 1883, p. 5. The obituary also gives information on Medlicott's shipwreck and later business career.

2 Genealogical information, including dates, in this paragraph and elsewhere is based largely on the Medlicott files, as is the detail that he was once associated with John Gihon & Co. The accompanying picture of Medlicott's house in Longmeadow is reproduced from the plate facing p. 97 in R. S. Storrs and J. W. Harding, eds., Proceedings at the Centennial Celebration of the Incorporation of the Town of Longmeadow, October 17th, 1883, with Numerous Historical Appendices and a Town Genealogy (Longmeadow: Secretary of the Centennial Committee, 1884). Page [7] records that Medlicott remodeled the Calvin Burr Place in 1864, but this need not mean he purchased the residence only then. According to the "Genealogical Appendix," p. 23, Calvin Burr died in 1848, perhaps Medlicott lived in the house from 1851 on, remodelling it in the next decade. (The house was torn down 60 or 70 years ago, on the site two brick houses now stand.) Medlicott, among others, receives (posthumous) thanks in the Preface to Proceedings, p. 4, for sharing in the cost of the publication; p. 302 contains an accolade to him and his library.

3 In the course of the paper I refer to 14 copies of the catalog in various libraries. Six others are to be found at Columbia University, cataloged 9 April 1938; Dartmouth College, Library of Congress, acquired 1879 and cataloged October 1913; Clark University, acquired March 1936; New York Public Library, acquired (by the Astor Library) 22 June 1878; and the University of Michigan, acquired July 1928 from the Worcester County Law Library.

4 Although the last lot is numbered 3667, several factors (e.g., skips in enumeration) combine to make that an inaccurate count; the actual number of lots is 3663. The National Union Catalog Pre-1956 Imprints (hereafter NUC) 373, 245a, reports the number of titles as 3667; but that is to confuse titles with lots.

5 Although the catalog lists The Sanon Mosaic in English (2581) as published in 1879, the date seems a misprint for 1868.
in number to the two other collections also offered for sale in 1878: George T.
Strong's of 22 and Andrew J. Odell's of some 30.8 In addition the catalog lists more
than 300 titles printed in the 16th century, 400 in the 17th, and 500 in the 18th.9
The remaining 2700 dated printed titles, about two-thirds of the total number, belong
to the 19th century. Of these, 254 are identified as being from limited editions, 139
from editions of 50 copies or fewer.10
The two copies of the catalog at Harvard preserve a valuable fact on its compilation.
Written on each title page is what appears to be the hand of Medicott's eldest
daughter, Mary, is the note, "In the preparation of the catalogue Mr. Medicott was

8 The collections of Strong and Odell are mentioned in the
introductory survey by Frederick R. Goff, comp. and ed.,
Biographical American Libraries (New York: Bibliographical
Society of America, 1963), p. x. Like Strong, Medicott
owned a copy of John de Worde's 1485 edition of Hugo
de Saint-Jacques (2137). Not counted in the Medicott
total are various leaves extracted from manuscripts, including
five sets of 9 from Cannon's 1478 edition of the
Cambridge Tales; see ibid. 1531 and 3658-3660.
9 Medicott's collection of 16th-century books somewhat
exceeded the collection of 268 at Georgetown College,
as reported on grounds of size in Public Libraries in the
United States of America: Their History, Condition, and Manage-
ment (Washington: Department of Interior, Bureau of Educa-
tion, 1876), p. 1. Urbana: University of Illinois, [1965],
1 74. Both collections were dwarfed, however, by the col-
lection of 1800 books published in "the Reformation cen-
tury" held by Union Theological Seminary, which
purchased the library of the European Biblical scholar
Leander Van Ess; see p. 153.
10 Many of the books are club or society publications, for
which, as compared to other collectors, Medicott had an
unusual fondness. In "The Medicott Library at Long-
meadow," Springfield Daily Republican, 2 May 1878, Kate
Clark calls club or society books "noticeable in this
library," adding, "There are several hundred of such works,
ranging in numbers printed from ten to fifty, and many
of them procurable in no other form." I came upon Clark's
essay important for supplying some information norhere
available as a part of, along with a copy of the Med-
icott obituary, on the final endleaf and inside-back cover
of the Princeton copy of the catalog (call no. 0513.627.6).
For facilitating my borrowing the copies, I am indebted to
Charles E. Greene, Keeper of the Rare Book Reading
Room. For searching through newspaper files to find the
date of the essay, I am grateful to Saxton W. Fletcher,
Editorial Department, Springfield Union-News. One can
only speculate on how the obituary and Clark's essay came
to be pasted to the Princeton copy. Perhaps they were sent
in the 1880s by Mary Medicott to Frederic Vinton,
Princeton's head librarian (Dictionary of American Biogra-
phy [hereafter DAB], X, 283). Vinton was a special lec-
turer at Columbia when Mary studied library science
there. See Columbia College, School of Library Economy,
Annual Report 1887-8 (New York: Columbia College,
1887), pp. 7 (Vinton) and 10 (Mary Medicott). On Mary's
attending Columbia, see also note 65.

From left to right: the Walcott (formerly Roderick Bart) Place, the
Medlicott (formerly Calvin Bart) Place, and the Hooker (formerly
Burnham) Place (1884). From Proceedings at the Centennial
Celebration of the Incorporation of the Town of Long-
meadow, October 17th, 1883.
CATALOGUE
OF A
Collection of Books
FORMED BY
WILLIAM G. MEDLICOTT,
of
LONGMEADOW, MASS.

Selected with Reference to Studying or Illustrating

ANGLO-SAXON LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE,
ENGLISH BALLADS AND BALLAD LITERATURE,
EARLY ENGLISH AND EARLY FRENCH LITERATURE,
ENGLISH BIBLES, CATECHISMS, AND LITURGIES,
BIBLIOGRAPHY, PALÆOGRAPHY, AND SHAKESPERIANA,
INCLUDING
MANY VALUABLE, OLD, RARE AND CURIOUS BOOKS AND
MANUSCRIPTS.

BOSTON:
Press of Rockwell and Churchill, 39 Arch Street.
1878.
assisted by Frederic Beecher Perkins."\textsuperscript{11} Perkins (1828-1899) was a widely experienced man of letters. Born in Hartford, he attended Yale for two years before leaving in 1848 to study law and teach school. Subsequently he undertook editorial work for a variety of publications (including the New York Tribune, the American Journal of Education, Christian Union, and the Library Journal), wrote a biography of Charles Dickens (1870), and published a novel (1874) and a collection of short stories (1877).\textsuperscript{12} Perkins was accomplished in bibliography. After serving as librarian for the Connecticut Historical Society (1857-1861), he worked at the Boston Public Library as a bibliographer and special cataloger (1874-1879), later becoming the chief librarian of the new San Francisco Public Library (1880-1887). His bibliographic publications include The Best Reading (1872), "which went through several editions and was long a standard reference book in public libraries" (DAB); Check List for American Local History (1876); various essays in the Bureau of Education's Public Libraries in the United States of America, Their History, Condition, and Management (1876); and the American Library Association Catalogue (1879-1880). Although the extent of Perkins's contribution to cataloging the Medlicott library cannot be determined, it is clear that Medlicott enjoyed the assistance of a leading professional bibliographer. Further, Perkins's association with Medlicott helps to explain why several lots were purchased by the Boston Public Library in 1878 and another large number by the San Francisco Public Library in 1880-1881.

Although Medlicott left the lots in his catalog unpriced—which suggests he regarded the volume as more than simply a sales catalog—the prices have come down to us, entered by hand in four surviving copies: one of the two at Harvard, two at the Boston Public Library, and one of two at Yale.\textsuperscript{13} The first three copies are closely related. The prices in the Harvard copy and in one of the two in the Boston Public Library seem to be in Medlicott's own hand; and in all three copies the price totals for each page are written in the bottom margin. The Yale copy, however, has no price totals. The prices in the catalogs were not special to the three institutions. A selectively priced catalog at Princeton, two invoices at Wellesley in Medlicott's hand, and accession records at the Watkinson Library and at Amherst

\textsuperscript{11} One copy (priced) has the call no. B 1654.2; the other (unpriced), B 444.36. The capital in the two inscriptions differ somewhat, but comparison of each with documents in Mary's hand convinces me that she wrote both inscriptions. Another reference to Perkins appears in a letter, dated 31 August (1878), Medlicott wrote to Justin Winsor, Harvard's librarian, regarding Harvard's purchase of several lots. After saying that he has sent three boxes, Medlicott remarks, "Be pleased to note that the Spencers—lots 13335-13338, 13339-13340 & 13341—will be forwarded to you by Mr. Perkins" (University Archives: UA III:50.8.18 [1878-1879], Harvard College Library Letters [hereafter cited as HCL Library Letters]). The biographical information on Perkins comes from the DAB, VII, 467-468; and Bohdan S. Wynar, ed., Dictionary of American Library Biography (Littielton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1978), pp. 393-394. Perkins was unpredictable. "In Civil War days, during the New York riots, he once courageously faced a mob to protect a negro" (DAB), but while head of the San Francisco Public Library he was fined $2,000 "for toughing a noisy child patron" (DAB).

\textsuperscript{12} Although the short stories, Devil-Puzzles and Other Studies (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1877), are strictly period pieces, the novel, Scope, or, The Lost Library, A Novel of New York and Hartford (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874), remains a delight. Bibliophiles will be pleased to find portraits of two historical New York characters, William Gowans and Father Abraham, and will recognize in Mr. Stanley of Hartford a caricature of Hartford's George Brinley. (Like Brinley, for example, Stanley found treasures among books brought to paper mills.) At the end of the tale the villains are punished, the hero and heroine face marriage, and the lost library is found, its books including the First Folio of Shakespeare, Eliot's Indian Bible, and the Bay Psalm Book.

\textsuperscript{13} For taking much time and effort to furnish detailed information on the BPL and Yale copies, I am grateful to, respectively, Roberta Zonghi, Curator of Rare Books, and Fred C. Robinson, Douglas Tracy Smith Professor of English. One of the BPL copies bears the name of William W. Greenough, president of the Board of Trustees, but has no other annotations than prices; the other carries prices (apparently in Medlicott's hand) and several notes seeming to indicate which titles the library owned and which might be purchased. The accession date inscribed in each is 27 March 1878. In one of the Yale copies the only annotations are prices; in the other (unpriced) most lots are marked either S or R. Although I have not been able to determine the significance of the letters, they show that Yale expended great effort in considering possible purchases. One copy bears the date 1878 on its bookplate, the other is undated.
show (with a few exceptions) the same prices for various lots as those in the Harvard, Boston Public Library, and Yale catalogs.\textsuperscript{14} Evidently Medlicott sent out unpriced copies of the catalog to most potential purchasers with a letter saying that prices were available upon request. (This would account for the selective pricing in the Princeton copy, which is not in Medlicott’s or his daughter Mary’s hand.) In the case of at least three institutions from which he expected large orders, however, he supplied hand-priced copies to facilitate purchase.

The sales campaign began in mid-March 1878. Although the date entered in the priced Harvard catalog is 2 September 1878, there is reason to believe that this is the date of cataloging or formal accession and that the copy was available at Harvard several months earlier.\textsuperscript{15} In a letter dated 15 March 1878, Longmeadow, Medlicott wrote to Justin Winsor, Harvard’s librarian, to say that he planned to be in Cambridge on 21 March to spend the afternoon with Harvard’s Francis James Child and would be pleased if he might see Winsor in the morning. “I am desirous,” Medlicott writes, “to consult with you as to the disposition of my books which I am now trying to proceed with as rapidly as I can—and I hope to come prepared so as to state my views as to prices for the various lots of special classes.”\textsuperscript{16} One cannot be certain that Medlicott here refers to giving Winsor a priced copy of the catalog, but the inference seems reasonable and would help account for the close similarity of the Harvard and Boston Public Library priced catalogs as distinct from the somewhat different Yale copy.\textsuperscript{17}

Although R. S. Storrs and J. W. Harding, Medlicott’s fellow-townsmen, wryly noted in 1884 that “the sale of many of [the library’s] choicest treasures, at advanced prices, demonstrated that even judicious book collecting is not always unprofitable,”\textsuperscript{18} the prices are, of course, moderate by today’s standards. More than 2700 lots, or about three of every four, are priced at $5.00 or less, with the sum of all the prices in the catalog amounting to about $27,000.\textsuperscript{19} The prices of even the rarest titles are modest. Of the 23 incunabula, only 9 are listed at more than $15.00.\textsuperscript{20} The two most expensive—an imperfect copy of Duranti’s Rationale Divinorum Officiorum, dated 1459 and “considered by many as the first [work] printed with movable metallic types” (2518), and a finely printed psalter, with musical notation, dated

\textsuperscript{14} The Princeton copy is discussed later. For the Wellesley invoices, see notes 53 and 54, for the Watkinson and Amherst accession records, see notes 60 and 62 respectively.

\textsuperscript{15} It is certain that Harvard had the copy by 16 August at the latest, the date on which Charles Elston Norton sent a letter to Justin Winsor asking him to purchase various lots on his behalf. (HCL Library Letters, 1878–1879 [note 11]). Norton included a list of 36 lot numbers (not counting one crossed out), promising a check for $101.00. Although he did not give the prices for the individual lots, he must have had access to the priced catalog since the total of the lots Norton wished to order comes out, in fact, to $100.75. The unpriced catalog bears the date “1878, Sept. 10.Gratis.” Perhaps Harvard acquired the unpriced copy in late August or early September along with a large number of lots he had ordered.

\textsuperscript{16} HCL Library Letters, 1878–1879 (note 11).

\textsuperscript{17} From the fact that the Boston Athenaeum has a copy of the catalog acquired March 1878, it seems that Medlicott traveled to the Boston area in March with the purpose of promoting book sales, giving a priced copy of his catalog to Harvard, two priced copies to the BPL (dated 27 March 1878), and an unpriced one to the Boston Athenaeum.

\textsuperscript{18} Longmeadow Proceedings (note 4), p. 302.

\textsuperscript{19} Not all the books in the catalog found purchasers, and the sale netted Medlicott and (after his death) his family probably no more than two-thirds the value he placed on the collection listed. But the amount was still substantial. Public Libraries in the United States (note 9) reported in 1876 that Mount Holyoke Seminary (now College) constructed its library building for about $30,000 (p. 90) and that Columbia estimated its entire collection of some 18,000 volumes in the main library to be worth $43,700 (p. 105). Harvard’s librarian, Justin Winsor, in 1877 earned $4,000, a handsome (although not at all extravagant) salary and more than he was paid as head of the BPL; see Walter Murr Whitehill, Boston Public Library, A Centennial History (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 105–108.

\textsuperscript{20} In “A Tale of Two Savannah Collectors: Israel K. Tefft and Alexander A. Smits;” American Book Collector, NS 3, no. 3 (1984), 19. Joseph Rosenblum notes the “generally depressed prices for early printed works" reflected in the Smits sale of 1868. Seven of the 9 incunabula mentioned by Rosenblum, however, sold for more than $15.00. To judge by the prices Medlicott asked, the overall market value of incunabula had not increased in a decade.
at 1480 (2601)—are listed at $75.00 each. The most expensive lot in the catalog is "A Collection of Lithographic Fac-similes of the early Quarto editions [of Shakespeare's works], including every known edition of all the plays issued during his lifetime; by Edmund William Ashbee. 48 vols. 4º, half maroon morocco, top gilt. London, 1862–1871" (3188). Following a list of the individual titles, the catalog adds, "The whole of these fac-similes were made for private circulation only, and limited to 31 copies, of which there are very few complete sets." The lot is priced at $825.00. The most expensive single-volume lot is an 11th-century *hominarium* (2703; see note 46), listed at $650.00. Other remarkable manuscripts are much less costly: for example, a 13th-century copy of Bracton's *De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae* (2684), $75.00; a 14th-century missal from the diocese of Lincoln (2708), $150.00; and a 14th-century copy of the *Roman de la Rose* (2727), $75.00. Apparently Medlicott sold the three manuscripts for less than half of what he paid for them.21

A unique copy of the catalog belonging to Medlicott's heirs affords an invaluable record on the disposition of the library: nearly 2600 lots are initialed, most with dates, in at least three hands. Not all the initials, however, denote purchasers. Two lots are initialed EBM; 38, BM; 225, MM; and 285, WBM.22 Presumably the initials stand for, in order, Medlicott's wife and three of his children: Eliza Bliss Medlicott, Bertha Medlicott, Mary Medlicott, and William Bliss Medlicott.23 The lots are undated and evidently were claimed from the collection sometime after Medlicott's death. When these 550 lots are subtracted from the total number of initialed lots, the remainder is 2046; in other words the annotated catalog records the apparent purchase of about 56 percent of the lots listed. Nearly three-quarters of the lots went to purchasers who can plausibly or certainly be identified.

I begin with purchasers who acquired lots on dates not recorded in the annotated catalog, then take up purchasers whose dates of acquisition are recorded for at least some lots (usually most or all). The first group is arranged according to the number of lots purchased; the second, and much larger group, according to date of purchase.

Undated Lots

1 lot each: Wm. Abbot, B, MCB, AWC, HWH, JPH, FM, ACMcCI, Prof. Raisz, T, EIW, and SDW. ACMcCI may refer to A. C. McClurg, whose Chicago bookstore was, in 1886, the largest west of the Alleghenies.24 The book purchased, Shea's *Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley*, 1852 (223, $1.00), supports a Midwest connection.

---

21 Medlicott purchased the manuscripts from Bernard Quaritch, *General Catalogue of Books Offered to the Public at the Affixed Prices* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1874): Bracton, lot 413, £21 (p. 60); Lincoln missal, lot 31, £22 (p. 10); *Roman*, lot 139, £20 (p. 32). In *The Best Reading*, 4th ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1881), p. viii, Perkins gives the exchange rate between American and British money, "including all expenses, at 50 cents to a shilling." This would make the British pound (plus import duty) equal to $10.00. If the same equivalence obtained half a dozen years earlier when (presumably) Medlicott acquired the manuscripts, he paid $210.00 for the Bracton, $420.00 for the Lincoln missal, and $200.00 for the *Roman*.

22 For the sake of simplicity, here and elsewhere I omit the periods typically used with initials in the annotated catalog. The initials EBM, BM, and MM seem to be in Mary Medlicott's hand, the initials WBM are in a different hand, probably BM's.

23 William Bliss Medlicott (1857–1943) taught at the Harvard School of Business Administration from 1908 to 1918 as a lecturer on insurance. Mary's career as a librarian is mentioned at note 65.


**Paleography.**


"A most important and valuable work, containing several thousand new characters, expressly struck for it, to represent the endless varieties of style, the abbreviations, etc., in the early Greek and Roman writing. They are arranged in form of a Lexicon, explained in the regular Greek and Roman characters, and followed by reverse Indexes."


2907 Libri. Monumens inedits ou peu connus, qui se rapportent à l'Histoire de l'Ornrement chez différents peuples. 60 large plates (full series) in gold, silver and colors, with descriptions in French and English. Large folio, half morocco, gilt edges. London, 1864.
Paleography: Libri.

2898 Paget, J. Hungary and Transylvania. Notes of Travel. 2 vols. 12°, cloth. Phila., 1850. $1.00

2899 Painter, William. The Palace of Pleasure, beautified, adorned and well furnished with pleasant histories and excellent novels. From the edition printed by Thomas Marsh. 1775. Edited by Thomas Haslewood. 2 vols. 4°, Russia. London, 1813. $15.00

Paleography.

2900 Astle, Thomas. The Origin and Progress of Writing. 2d edition with additions. Portrait and numerous Plates in fac-simile from early MSS., etc. Large 4°, half green morocco, top gilt, uncut. London, 1803. $7.50

2901 Chassant, L. Alph. Dictionnaire des Abbreviations Latines et Françaises usitées dans les inscriptions lapidaires et métalliques, les manuscrits et les chartes du Moyen Age. Post 8°, half brown morocco, top gilt, uncut. Paris, 1860. $2.00

2902 —— Paléographie des Chartes et des manuscrits du XIe au XVIIe siècle. 10 planches in 4°. Post 8°, half maroon calf, top gilt, uncut. Paris, 1867. $2.00


2904 Kopp, Ulf. Fr. Palaeographia Critica. Many folding plates of fac-similes of MSS., Charters, Seals, etc. 4 vols. 4°, half calf, neat, top gilt, uncut. Mannheim, 1817-29. $15.00

"A most important and valuable work, containing several thousand new characters, expressly struck for it, to represent the endless varieties of style, the abbreviations, etc., in the early Greek and Roman writing. They are arranged in form of a Lexicon, explained in the regular Greek and Roman characters, and followed by reverse indices."

2905 —— Bilder und Schriften der Vorzeit dargestellt. Plates and fac-similes. 2 vols. 8°, half calf. Mannheim, 1819-21. $4.00

2906 Langlois, E. H. Essai sur la Calligraphie des Manuscrits du Moyen âge. 8°, top gilt, half bound. Rouen, 1841. $4.75

2907 Libri. Monumens inédits ou peu connus, qui se rapportent à l'histoire de l'ornamentation chez différentes peuples. 60 large plates (full series) in gold, silver and colors, with descriptions in French and English. Large folio, half morocco, gilt edges. London, 1864. $50.00
22

2 lots each: L. NO'l'y, S. Prov. Pub. Lib., and Wor. Lib'y. The fourth abbreviation clearly stands for Providence Public Library, which purchased Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript, 4 vols., 1857-1868 (2971, $15.00), and a 30-volume set of Percy Society Publications, 1840–1852 (2972, $110.00). Wor. Lib'y refers to the American Antiquarian Society, of Worcester, which acquired two related rare books, Eden's translation of Martyr's Decades of the newe worlde or west India, 1555 (156, $5.00), and Willes's edition of Eden's History of Travayle in the West and East Indies, 1577 (261, $5.00).

3 lots each: AMC and BW. Perhaps AMC refers to Rev. Aaron M. Colton, of Longmeadow. The titles are on English literature. Possibly BW is the same purchaser as BW&Co. (30 April 1883 below); the titles concern theology or the history of England.

4 lots: HMM. The lots concern the Anglican liturgy.

7 lots: FWM. The purchaser had mixed tastes: along with 5 lots of American history, the titles include one on Marco Polo and one on werewolves.

Dated Lots

18 March 1878: 1 lot to JRL, perhaps James Russell Lowell. Against the identification is the fact that Lowell left the country in July 1877 to serve as Minister to Spain. In favor is the lot purchased, Johnson and Chalmers, Works of the English Poets, 21 vols., 1810 (2998, $35.00). Further, Lowell and Medlicott had a friend in common, Francis J. Child. Lowell probably learned through Child that Medlicott intended to sell his library and may have arranged the purchase before leaving for Spain. Writing to Lowell on 12 August 1878, Child remarks, "I am even proposing to the [Library] Council to buy 3500 dollars worth of Medlicott's books—including some really fine things in the way of old authors More, Erasmus, Spenser, Froissart etc." The casual allusion to Medlicott implies that Lowell had earlier knowledge of the sale.

20 and 28 May 1878: 3 lots and 1 lot, respectively, to AVN, probably Addison Van Name, head librarian at Yale and related libraries (1865–1905). If the identification is correct, it suggests that one or both of the aforementioned catalogs at Yale arrived during May at the latest. The present lots, however, may have been pur-
chased by Van Name for his personal library: 17 vols. of Dugdale's works (including first editions), 1658–1827 (1686–1688, totaling $129.50), and Crapelet's Collection des anciens monuments, 14 vols., 1835 (1808, $50.00).

28 May 1878: 7 lots to EAH. All the lots are devoted to angling literature. Probably at this time or on 17 August 1880 (below) EAH acquired 3 more lots on angling (purchase date unnoted), plus a manuscript in the hand of Egerton Brydges (2731, $1.50).

23 August 1878: 12 lots to CEN, Charles Eliot Norton, Professor of Fine Arts at Harvard. As a member of the Library Council, Norton was well acquainted with the Medlicott sale; letters preserved at Harvard show that he asked Winsor to act on his behalf in purchasing various titles.31 The majority concern art or early literature, the most significant being four manuscripts: a 14th-century Italian copy of Boethius's De consolatione philosophiae (2681, $12.50), now at Harvard (De Ricci, p. 997); a mid-15th-century paper manuscript of German prayers, with early wood engravings (2710, $15.00), now at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (De Ricci, p. 930); a 15th-century "Processionale, cum Musica," with early wood-cuts (2711, $3.00); and a 14th-century copy of Lombard's Liber Secundus Sententiarum (2725, $3.00).32 (See also 7 September 1878.)

30 August 1878: 2 lots to LB&Co., Little, Brown & Company, which at the time sold fine used books in its store.33 The lots, the first of 42 the company was to acquire over the next few years, were major purchases: Silvestre's Universal Paleography, 4 vols. (in atlas folio), 1850 (2914, $100.00), and Taylor's Classical Translations and Philosophical Works, 54 vols., 1787–1834 (3393, $250.00). (See also 17 December 1878 and 3 and 17 March 1883.)

2 September 1878: 252 lots to HC. Harvard College. Although Medlicott spoke with Winsor and Child about his sale in March 1878 and probably gave them a priced copy of the catalog then, records of the Library Council contain no mention of possible purchases until 9 August, when three Council members (Winsor, Child, and Goodale) voted $3500 for Medlicott books. Child, the recording secretary, noted parenthetically in the minutes, "A majority not being present, this vote is to be sent to the absent members for approval, speedy action being required in consequence of an offer having been made for many of the most desirable books."34 Winsor and Child did act speedily. Acknowledging Child's letter of 10 August, Medlicott wrote Harvard three days before the end of the month to discuss details of the sale and apparently visited Cambridge on 26 August.35

The major categories of books purchased include history and antiquity, grammar and philology, art, theology, and literature (with English predominant but

32 This manuscript is perhaps the same as the 14th-century Lombard manuscript, Quaestiones super libros II Sententiarum, given Harvard by Norton (De Ricci, p. 997). If so, 1873, the date assigned, De Ricci for Norton's acquisition, is an error for 1878. I have been unable to trace the "Processionale, cum Musica."
34 University Archives: UA III 50.10.150, Library Council Records, 1858–1898. HCL Library Letters, 1878–1879 (note 11), preserves statements signed by absent members of the Library Council approving the appropriation. The "offered . . . for many of the most desirable books" was made probably by the BPL, to which Medlicott began shipments on 9 September. In a letter dated 31 August, Medlicott wrote Winsor that Perkins (of the BPL) had in his possession the "Spencers" which Harvard had ordered (note 11).
35 HCL Library Letters, 1878–1879 (note 11), preserves letters from Medlicott dated 14, 22, and 31 August. In the second, he mentions his intention of coming to Cambridge on "Tuesday next," which would have been the 26th.
French, especially French drama, well represented. Child's influence on the selection is evident in Harvard's purchase of 26 of the catalog's 108 lots under Ballads and Ballad Literature and 7 lots of rare broadsides. The great strength of Medlicott's ballad collection is remarked on by Kate Clark in her essay on the Medlicott library, published soon after the appearance of the catalog:

Ballads and ballad literature form a distinguished feature in the collection. There is probably but one other collection of this kind of literature that surpasses it in this country,—that of Harvard college gathered by Prof Child. But the Medlicott library comprises many rare volumes not found in the alcoves at Harvard, few of which can be duplicated in the United States. Some broadsides date back to 1574. There is a beautiful copy of Arnold's [sic] Chronicle, printed in 1502, which contains the earliest printed version of "The Nut Brown Maid."

Other notable purchases are a straight run, under Shakespeariana, of 40 lots of J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps books, all from limited editions, 24 from editions restricted to 10 copies (3219–3258, ranging from $2.00 to $15.00 each); 7 manuscripts, including a mid-15th-century copy of works by William Lychefeld and John Lydgate, once thought to be in the hand of John Shirley (2714, $450.00; De Ricci, pp. 966–967); and 6 incunabula, including an imperfect copy of John Trevisa's translation of Bartholomeus Anglicus, De Proprietatibus Rerum, 1495, described in the catalog as "the most magnificant production of Wynkyn de Worde's press, and . . . the first book printed upon paper manufactured in England" (728, $25.00).

4 September 1878: 4 lots to AG, perhaps Arthur Gilman (1837–1909), of Cambridge. As a founder of the Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women (popularly known as the "Harvard Annex," later established as Radcliffe College), Gilman had close contact with Harvard professors and ample opportunity to learn of the Medlicott sale. Interested in history, legend, and medieval literature, Gilman was the first to use the Ellesmere Manuscript as the basis for an edition of the Canterbury Tales (1879). The Medlicott books purchased by AG support the identification, two devoted to historical English lexicography and two to medieval literature.

5 September 1878: 124 lots to BPL, Boston Public Library. Frederic Beecher Perkins, who assisted Medlicott with his catalog and was a bibliographer for the Boston Public Library, probably played a major role in the transaction. The library took the Medlicott sale as seriously as did Harvard; one of the two priced catalogs at the library is copiously annotated (note 13). The library acquired nearly all its lots in four areas: 16 lots of books published or reprinted by J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps, 31 lots of bibliography, 32 of French literature, and 41 of Bibles or Biblical literature. Among the most valuable acquisitions in the last category are copies of the Bishop's Bible, 1572 (785, $30.00), the King James Bible, 1611, 2nd issue (788,
$50.00), the Coverdale New Testament, 1538 (799, $60.00), and the Genevan New Testament, 1557 (800, $50.00). See also 13 December 1881.

7 September 1878: 4 lots to Charles Eliot Norton. In his second purchase Norton again displayed an interest in early literature.

20 September 1878: 121 lots to YC, Yale College. Although evidently Addison Van Name, Yale's librarian, had purchased books as early as 20 May, four months passed before he placed another order. Perhaps a major factor in the delay was the preparatory work his staff undertook in selecting titles; one of the Yale copies of the Medlicott catalog, like the Harvard and Boston Public Library copies, is heavily marked (note 13). Although Yale chose books throughout the catalog, more than 60 percent of the lots in this purchase came from six subject headings: Bibliography, 6; Palaeography, 6; Americana, 7; Art, 8; Antiquities, 10; Ballads and Ballad Literature, 37 (11 more than Harvard selected and more than a third of those listed). Among the most notable titles purchased are two incunabula: an imperfect copy of Hubben's Polychronicon, 1495, described as "one of W. de Worde's most handsomely printed books" (2137, $12.50), and Raynerius de Pis's Pantheologia, 2 vols., folio, 1474 (3055, $75.00). (See also 12 and 22 April 1879, 4 November 1882, 3 April 1883, 4 and 6 July 1885, and 20 August 1889.)

24 September 1878: 4 lots to WHW. This unidentified purchaser acquired titles on philology and grammar.

October 1878: 183 lots to S. Low and 90 to E. Low; November 1878: 129 lots to B. Low. The common surname of the three purchasers strongly suggests kinship. Although I have been unable to identify them, there is reason to think that the Lows were English book collectors. First, after saying that Medlicott was obliged to sell part of his library, the author of his obituary remarks, "The opportunity was seized at once by intelligent collectors in London, Boston, Harvard university and other widely scattered places." The context in which the reference to London occurs implies major purchases: both Harvard and the Boston Public Library acquired several lots. But the only "collector" in London among identified purchasers is the British Museum, which acquired a single manuscript (see September 1879). It would make sense to suppose that the writer had the Lows in mind, the

40 As the titles suggest, virtually all those acquired by the library from Medlicott were rare or scholarly books. It was that kind of purchase that Rev. James M. Hubbard, formerly of the cataloging department, had in mind when, in a letter of 21 November 1880 to the Sunday Herald, he complained that the BPL was neglecting one of its founding principles, the education of the common people: "Great labor is spent in searching sales catalogues, but it is exclusively in the interests of scholars, and a very large proportion of the money available for books is spent for works not intended for general use." See Whitehill, Boston Public Library (note 19), p. 121.

41 It is remotely possible that S. Low refers to Seth Low (1850-1916), a merchant, president of Columbia College, and civic leader. See the DAB, VI, 449-450; and Benjamin C. Low, Seth Low (New York: no pub., 1925; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1971). But I have found no evidence that he collected books; and in Abbot Low Moffett's "Low Genealogy, The Descendants of Seth Low and Mary Potter," an unpublished typescript at the Library of Congress and Columbia University, I have been unable to locate any persons who may be identified plausibly as E. Low or B. Low. (For making different parts of the typescript available, I am indebted to the Library of Congress and to Columbia University.) Possibly S. Low is to be identified as Sampson Low (1797-1866), a London bookseller, publisher, and founder of the Publishers' Circular; see the Dictionary of National Biography, XII, 185-186. But he retired from the book trade in 1875, and I have been unable to discover any persons connected with him who might be identified as E. Low or B. Low. (It is possible but unlikely that B. understood as [B[ll]] is a reference to Sampson Low's son William Henry Low, who "took an active share in the publishing business" in 1871-1881, according to the DAB.) For checking other possibilities in The Post Office Directory of Stationers, Printers, Booksellers, Publishers, and Paper Makers of England, Scotland, Wales, and the Principal Towns in Ireland (London: Kelly and Co., 1872, 1880), I am indebted to Clive Harst, Head of Special Collections, Bodleian Library. Although there is no mention of a Low in William Younger Fletcher, English Book Collector (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1902), the book concentrates on famous collectors and is not exhaustive.

42 "Death of William G. Medlicott" (note 3), p. 5.
only major purchasers for which otherwise I am unable to suggest a plausible identification. Second, on 14 August 1878 Medlicott wrote Child that he planned to depart for Europe on 7 September, leaving his daughter Mary in charge of sales during his absence. Writing to Winsor on 11 September, Mary remarked, in reference to some misunderstanding over Harvard's order, "You can return the other books at any time that suits your convenience. There are two or three, which my father directed to have sent to him, if they reached me in season." Although Medlicott must have had various reasons for traveling to Europe—approaching age 62, he may have wished, for example, to visit his native England a final time while his health permitted—Mary's allusion implies that her father was interested in promoting book sales while there. He probably remained abroad for at least a month; it was Mary, not Medlicott himself, who wrote Winsor on 11 October to say that the books Harvard returned had arrived. The sales to the Lows are dated October and November 1878, when Medlicott may have been in England circulating his catalog and taking orders. Finally, the method of dating the sales to the Lows—month and year only, instead of day, month, and year as typical elsewhere in the annotated catalog for sales dated while Medlicott was alive—suggests that the "day" of the sales was somewhat indeterminate, as it would be if a considerable time elapsed between taking an order and filling it. The only lot that one can be certain was sold to an English buyer, the manuscript to the British Museum, is similarly dated by month and year only.

In any event the Lows appear to have been sophisticated collectors with a strong interest in England. More than three-quarters of the 183 lots purchased by S. Low concern British history, theology, or literature, with concentration in the Reformation and Renaissance. The interest can be seen even in S. Low's purchases in Bibliography, the subject heading under which he bought more lots than any other. Of the 38 lots purchased, 26 concern specifically English books or libraries. E. Low's interests were similar: his 90 lots include 2 manuscripts, 2 incunabula, 47 books printed in the 16th century, and 19 printed in the 17th, with the great majority of the titles devoted to English history, theology, or literature. B. Low's purchases were even more closely defined. Of the 70 lots in the catalog under the subject heading Manuscripts, he acquired 22 (including the costly 11th-century *hominialium; 2703, $650.00), of the 147 under Liturgies, chiefly Anglican; and Liturgical Works, he purchased 91, or 62 percent. These two subject headings account for

---

43 For the letters see HCL Library Letters, 1878-1879 (note 11).
44 ibid
45 In the imitated catalog the Lows' names and dates are in Medlicott's hand. If my reconstruction is correct, he must have taken down the lot numbers in England, then annotated the catalog upon his return when filling the order.
46 Medlicott dates the manuscript to the 9th century, but it is almost certainly to be identified as the 11th-century *hominialium now at the Ruskin Museum, Sheffield, England, as described by Louis Brou, "Un nouvel homialaire en écriture visigothique" _Hypnia Sacra_, 2 (1949), 147-191. Medlicott says that his manuscript is written in Visigothic script, that the script is "beauitul, exact, and uniform," that the book measures 15 x 18 inches, that it is bound in brown morocco, that one of the pages was reproduced in Libri's *Imprinted Monuments*, that former owners thought it to be "Merovingian, Carolingian and Anglo-Irish," and that it contains many homilies by Bede. Brou indicates that the Sheffield manuscript is in a Visigothic hand, that the script is "assez régulière et même élégante," that it is bound in brown morocco, that fol. 130v was reproduced in Libri's *Imprinted Monuments*, that Libri considered it Merovingian, and that it includes among its many homilies 31 by Bede (Medlicott, who owned books on paleography, evidently dated the manuscript on the basis of its hand; Brou, on the basis of its liturgical tradition.) Brou is unable to account for the whereabouts of the Sheffield manuscript between its listing in Libri's sales catalog in 1862 and its listing in Quaritch's sales catalog in November 1880. It now seems clear that during the period it crossed and recrossed the Atlantic. Medlicott purchased it from the Libri sale; then, after keeping it for several years, sold it in November 1878 to B. Low, who sold it to Quaritch. The manuscript passed through Quaritch's hands after 1878 is another reason for believing the Lows to have been English book collectors. For bringing Brou's essay to my attention, I am grateful to Donald K. Fry, the Poynter Institute, St. Petersburg.
all but 16 of the 129 lots B. Low purchased. (For S. Low, see also July 1879; for E. Low, May 1881.)

17 December 1878: 29 lots to Little, Brown & Company. Half the titles are on English literature (nearly all medieval or Renaissance); of the remaining titles, all but two come under the subject headings Americana, Art, or Bibliography, the prices ranging from 50 cents to $50.00.

11 March 1879: 17 lots to NSC. All but four titles concern early American history; all but one are 19th-century books.

12 April 1879: 31 lots to DGF, perhaps D. G. Francis, a New York City bookseller. As Medlicott spent the first few years of his life in America in New York, he was probably familiar with several booksellers in the city and placed orders with them, later bringing his sale to their attention. Of the 31 lots purchased by DGF, 12 concern American history; the rest are miscellaneous (including a parchment deed from the reign of Henry VIII; 3664, $2.50).

12 and 22 April 1879: 26 and 5 lots, respectively, to Yale. In the 22 April purchase, Yale limited itself to Reformation tracts (including a 31-volume set on “Popery” published during the reign of James II; 3006, $50.00). In its purchase on 12 April, however, Yale ranged almost as widely as in that on 20 September 1878, its most notable acquisition being a complete set of Surtees Society Publications, 64 vols., 1835–1875 (3374, $130.00), a lot Child earlier recommended for purchase by Harvard.

17 June 1879: 233 lots to PC, Princeton College. Nearly 90 percent of the lots fall under six subject headings: Dictionaries, 6; Language, 6; French, 10 (all medieval French or French philology); Gothic, 13; Dialects, English and Scottish, 66; and Anglo-Saxon, 105. Under the last three headings Princeton purchased 50, 89, and 58 percent, respectively, of the catalog’s main entries. Obviously most of the lots were selected toward building Princeton’s philological collections, and the Princeton copy of the Medlicott catalog (note 10) shows that most of the labor went into choosing the Anglo-Saxon titles. Virtually all the lots in the area are annotated as to price (probably supplied upon request by Medlicott) or are marked “Have.” The guiding hand behind the purchases is likely to have been Theodore W. Hunt, who introduced the study of Anglo-Saxon and Middle English to graduate students at Princeton in 1878–1879 and who expressed the hope that “the day is not far distant when in each of our leading colleges there will be a Chair of English Philology exclusively devoted to the interests of our own language.”

July 1879: 8 lots to S. Low, his second and final purchase. All but one title is devoted to medieval or Renaissance literature.

---


48 In a letter dated 19 August [1878], Child wrote Winsor, “The Surtees Society books are among those noted. We have two or three of these, the Towneley Mysteries and the Gospels. Those which we have are so useful that I should like to have them kept—though duplicates.” But writing to Winsor on 29 August, Norton remarked, “I thank you for your note. I have shown it to Child [visiting Norton in Ashfield], who hopes to see Mr. Medlicott on Tuesday [26 August] & will have something to say to him about the Surtees Society’s publications & one or two other books among those he reserves.” (The two letters are found in HCL Library Letters, 1878–1879 [note 11]). Evidently Child was unable to prevail upon Medlicott; in the priced Harvard catalog lot 3374 is marked with X, but below that is the note “*no*.”

49 In the priced Harvard catalog, written in a large hand above the heading Dialects, is the note “[lots] 1462-1535, much as we lack.” The note may be in Child’s hand. If so, he decided not to purchase any of the titles.

September 1879: 1 lot to Br. Mus., the British Museum. The lot is a manuscript, "A Lectionary and Lives of Saints, on 360 leaves, by an English Scribe. 'Johannes de Salesburi,' dated 1269, in perfect preservation and fine condition" (2707, $175.00).\(^{41}\)

8 September and 26 December 1879: 5 and 3 lots, respectively, to Princeton. In contrast to the purchase on 17 June, that on 8 September had no philological orientation. The books sent Princeton in December were an adjustment to an earlier transaction, the exchange of a lot (which Princeton may have discovered it already had) for three others. One of the three lots, 273, is a set of Æthic Society Publications, bringing Princeton's final Anglo-Saxon total to 106 lots, the highest number acquired by any purchaser under a single subject heading.

5 April and 16 August 1880: 193 and 10 lots, respectively, to WC, Wellesley College. After founding the college in 1875, Henry F. Durant both donated some 8,000 books of his own and sought opportunities for adding to the library. Upon receiving an unpriced copy of the Medlicott catalog, Durant must have asked for a list of prices for various lots; the Durant copy of the catalog (accessioned by Wellesley on 15 February 1889 and now in the Rare Book Room) contains several prices and notes in Durant's hand.\(^{52}\) Although the lots he acquired were chosen from nearly all parts of the catalog, seven subject headings account for half the lots purchased on 5 April: Dictionaries, 7; Palæography, 8; French, 11; Shakespeariana, 14; Anglo-Saxon, 17; Proverbs, Epigrams, etc., 17 (of 19 in the catalog); and Teutonic, 25 (of 55 in the catalog).\(^{53}\) But the most important titles were among the 10 purchased on 16 August, including these mentioned by Hannah D. French:

The oldest and costliest item of the lot, a large papyrus fragment of The Book of the Dead [1709, $100.00], dated about 500 B.C. was delivered to Wellesley by hand by Mr. Medlicott's son. Three documents of great historical interest were included in the packing cases: a charter signed by Otto III in 996 [2723, $60.00; De Ricci, p. 1069]; a grant of mining rights signed by Charles V in 1521 [not listed in the Medlicott catalog; De Ricci, p. 1069]; and Letters Patent with the great seal of Elizabeth I attached [3169, $125.00; De Ricci, p. 1070]. Wellesley's first illuminated manuscript, an Italian fifteenth-century Gradual [2701; De Ricci, p. 1067], was billed on the Medlicott invoice for sixty dollars. For many years it has reposed open on its special lecturn [sic] in the Rare Book Room. When it was shipped to the Toledo Art Museum in 1952 for display it was insured for an amount almost fifty times that figure.\(^{54}\)

Another title secured on 10 August, a Latin Bible with Melancthon's autograph and notes (855, $25.00), claims a special place in the history of the college. Writing

---

\(^{41}\) For confirming the British Library's possession of the manuscript (Egerton MS. 2569, with a note on the flyleaf saying it was purchased from Medlicott), I am grateful to M. A. F. Barrie, Assistant Keeper of Manuscripts. The British Library's copy of the Medlicott catalog has no annotations.

\(^{42}\) On the annotated catalog, see Hannah D. French, "Rare Books: A Wellesley Tradition," Wellesley Alumnae Magazine, 43 (1959), 205. (The correspondence between Durant and Medlicott mentioned by French cannot now be located.)

\(^{53}\) Preserved at Wellesley is a six-page itemized invoice in Medlicott's hand for the purchase of 3 April (totaling $526.30); save for a few details, the invoice list agrees with the annotated catalog belonging to the Medlicott family. I am grateful to Susan G. Barbarossa, Library Assistant in Special Collections, for supplying a copy of the invoice and of a eleven-page document, "Contents of the Dutch Cabinet, Wellesley College, Oct. 1886," which lists some Medlicott books; and to Anne Amninger, Special Collections Librarian, for permission to examine and cite the documents, which belong to the Rare Books Collection.

\(^{54}\) French, "Rare Books" (note 52), p. 205. For supplying a copy of the Medlicott invoice for 16 August (totaling $404.00) in the Wellesley College Archives and for permission to cite it, I am indebted to Dr. Wilma Slaight, College Archivist. It is noteworthy that some of the lots on the invoice of 16 August (in contrast to those on that of 3 April) are listed at less than in the priced Harvard catalog; e.g., the priced catalog lots 2723, 3169, and 2701 at $50.00, $15.00, and $75.00 respectively, while the invoice lists them at $50.00, $12.50, and $60.00. Perhaps prices were one of the subjects discussed in the letters between Durant and Medlicott (note 52).
in 1923, Ethel D. Roberts pointed out, “From this Bible Psalm 135 has been read at Commencement for at least thirty years.”

17 August 1880: 2 lots to EAH. One book is on angling, the subject governing EAH’s acquisition on 28 May 1878; the other is a copy of Peter Martyr’s Common Places, 1583 (2759, $3.50).

15 December 1880: 21 lots to JWB. Like DGF, JWB may have been a New York bookseller. The description of one of his lots, a 14th-century missal for the diocese of Lincoln with special prayers for the office of St. Hugh (2708, $150.00), resembles that of a manuscript owned by the late Allen Hamilton of La Jolla, California. The Hamilton manuscript is said to have been “Bought in New York, ca. 1880, from an unknown source.” If, as seems almost certain, the Medlicott manuscript and Hamilton manuscript are one and the same, there is reason to believe that JWB was a New York bookseller who sold the lot soon after he purchased it from Medlicott in December 1880. Among JWB’s other notable purchases were a Greek manuscript of the Gospels (2694, $25.00), an incunabulum, 10 lots of 16th or 17th-century books of literature or history, and the most expensive lot in the catalog, A Collection of Lithographic Fac-similes of the early Quarto editions (of Shakespeare), 48 vols., 1862-1871 (3188, $825.00). (See also 30 January 1882, 28 March 1883, 8 January 1884.)

24 December 1880 and 9 March 1881: 65 and 9 lots, respectively, to SFL, San Francisco (Public) Library. After resigning in displeasure from the Boston Public Library in 1880, Frederic Beecher Perkins worked for Melvil Dewey for half a year, then became head of the new San Francisco Public Library. Endeavoring to build the collection, Perkins naturally thought of the Medlicott sale. As befitting the compiler of Check List for American Local History, Perkins in his first purchase selected 23 lots under the heading Americana. Most of the remaining titles came from miscellaneous categories, with books on English history or literature especially frequent. In his purchase of 9 March, Perkins selected all the lots under Oratio Dominica (2878-2886, totaling $56.75), each book providing the text of the Lord’s Prayer in a wide variety of languages. Perhaps it was at this time as well that Perkins made...
an undated purchase of 7 other lots, including all those under the heading Deaf and Dumb (1438–1443, totaling $13.25).

May 1881: 1 lot to E. S. Low. Presumably this purchaser is the same as E. Low, who acquired 90 lots in October 1878, most of them rare 16th or 17th-century books printed in England. The present volume accords with that, a 1st edition of Cocker’s *Arithmetick*, 1678 (507, $50.00).

13 December 1881: 37 lots to the Boston Public Library. In its purchase on 5 September 1878, the library acquired (among others) 32 lots of French literature and 41 of Bibles or Biblical literature. This time the library bought only two more lots of French literature but three of theology and 32 of Bibles or Biblical scholarship.

30 January 1882: 5 lots to JWB. On 15 December 1880 JWB bought several rare lots. Among the diverse titles in the present purchase are two more rare titles, St. Bernard’s *De contemptu Mundi*, 1499 (765, $3.00), and a 15th-century manuscript of Lydgate’s *Fall of Nobles* (2715, $125.00). 58

4 November 1882: 45 lots to Yale. As in two of its three previous purchases, Yale selected titles throughout the catalog. This was the last purchase from Medlicott’s library before his death.

3 and 17 March 1883: 3 and 7 lots, respectively, to Little, Brown & Company. Purchased in the first of these sales were two lots of ballads and a folio edition of Chaucer’s works in black letter, 1542, including an insert of 9 leaves from Caxton’s edition of 1478 (1321, $45.00). The second purchase was of 3 lots of history and four of literature. Finally, in one of its purchases (date unnoted) Little, Brown acquired a collection of ballads, 3 vols., 1725–1727 (601, $25.00).

28 March 1883: 5 lots to JWB. Four of the 5 concern French literature or philology, most notably an annotated 18th-century manuscript of Wace’s *Roman de Rou* (2737, $25.00).

3 April 1883: 2 lots to Yale. One consisted of two rare works edited by Lisle (L’Isle), Ælfric’s *Saxon Treatise*, 1623, and *Du Bartas*, 1625 (331, $3.50).

30 April 1883: 1 lot to BW&Co., perhaps the B. Westermann Company, a bookselling firm in New York City (cf. DGF and JWB above). 59 The lot is Bernard’s *Biographical Dictionary*, 10 vols., 1734–1741 (1156, $20.00). (Possibly BW, listed under Undated Lots, is the same purchaser as BW&Co.)

28 May 1883: 2 lots to JHT; 30 May 1883: part of a lot to WLY. The abbreviations stand for the Watkinson Library of Reference and James Hammond Trumbull, the Watkinson’s librarian. One of the first two lots is Crapelet’s *Collection des anciens monuments de l’histoire et de la langue français*, 17 vols., 1835 (1807, $60.00); the other is a 40-volume set of Roxburghe Club Publications, 1816–1869 (3137, with “for Watkinson” written in the margin; $350.00). The partial lot contained 3 vols. of Abbotsford Club Publications, 1838–1841 (1, totaling $13.00). Since the lots

---

58 Incunabula in American Libraries (note 8), p. 97, B–373, lists only one copy of Bernard’s *De contemptu in America* (at the Huntington Library), but this seems to be a later edition (‘[later 1509?]’). I think it likely that the Lydgate manuscript is the same as the one once owned by Louis H. Silver (Supplement to the Census [note 56], p. 176) and now held by the Newberry Library. Medlicott describes his manuscript as “on vellum, with the initial letters illuminated; handsomely bound in red morocco;” features found as well in the Newberry manuscript (MS 33.3). Medlicott adds, “This was originally a very fine copy of Lydgate’s translation, and written probably in his lifetime: but it was defaced by the fire at Sotheby’s in 1865.” The Newberry Lydgate is dated about 1470 but was once dated about 1450 (to Silver), or near the end of Lydgate’s life (1457). According to the Newberry’s description, “All leaves [are] badly water-stained, with extensive loss of text.” Medlicott may well have had water-damage in mind when he described his manuscript as “defaced by the fire at Sotheby’s.” For providing copies of the card catalog and manuscript catalog description of the Newberry Lydgate, I am grateful to Cynthia Wall, Special Collections.

annotated JHT, like the one annotated WL'y. are in fact in the Watkinson Library, Trinity College. Trumbull evidently bought them for the library itself. 60

18 June 1883: 9 lots to CU, Cornell University. Seven of the lots concern Anglo-Saxon, among them an undated modern manuscript, "Gothic Grammar," including "8 pages of Anglo-Saxon Prayers" (2695, $1.75). Probably the one responsible for the purchase was Hiram Corson, a philologist and Anglo-Saxon scholar who borrowed books from Medlicott. 61

20 June 1883: 44 lots to AC, Amherst College. 62 Although Amherst purchased lots throughout the catalog, a dozen may be classified as history (including 5 under Americana) and more than two dozen as literature (including 6 under Anglo-Saxon).

8 January 1884: 10 lots to JWB, his fourth and final purchase. The most notable lot among this miscellaneous group is a set of the British Bibliographer, 4 vols., 1810-1814, "formerly owned by Haslewood, the Co-editor, with copious MS. corrections and notes by him" (919, $25.00). Finally, in one of his purchases (date unrecorded) JWB acquired a valuable manuscript, an Anglo-Saxon kalendarium, dated ca. 1100, with 24 illuminated drawings representing the signs of the Zodiac and the occupations of the months with a large drawing on [the] last page representing the Annunciation" (2706, $30.00). 63

26 April, May (day unannotated), 15 and 26 May 1884: 1, 1, 1, and 4 lots, respectively, to WIK. Six of the seven lots concern language (including 4 dictionaries). (See also 16 October 1886, 16 and 26 December 1888, and 10 July 1889.)

4 and 6 July 1885: 14 lots and 1 lot, respectively, to Yale. Five of the lots concern history (3 selected from Americana) and 7 literature (medieval or Renaissance).

16 October 1886: 10 lots to WIK. Nearly all the lots are devoted to medieval literature (French, Anglo-Saxon, Gaelic, Welsh)

19 July 1887: 26 lots to SPL, Springfield Public Library. As Longmeadow and Springfield are only a few miles distant, it is not surprising that the Springfield Public Library should have purchased lots from the Medlicott collection on several occasions. What is surprising is that the library made no purchases during the first nine years of the sale. The titles chosen in July 1887 are miscellaneous, with no

60 On Trumbull, see the D48, X. 9-10. For confirming that the lots are in the library, for checking the library's copy of the Medlicott catalog, and for providing a copy of a page from the accession register (1883, entry under May 23), I am grateful to Jeffrey H. Kamowitz, Curator, the Watkinson Library, Trinity College. The register reveals that the Watkinson ordered three more lots (480, 719, and 1560) for which the Medlicott family's annotated catalog records no corresponding note. (Lot 480 is not annotated, lots 719 and 1560 are annotated MM and WBM respectively, for Mary Medlicott and William Bliss Medlicott.) The register also shows that, with one exception, the prices preserved in the priced Harvard copy of the Medlicott catalog were the same as those charged the Watkinson.

61 Corson's acknowledgment of Medlicott is quoted at note 99. My thanks to Frederick M. Biggs, Department of English, University of Connecticut, for consulting the acquisitions catalog at Cornell and for checking Cornell's copy of the Medlicott catalog for annotations. Three of the lots marked CU in the inquired catalog, including the "Gothic Grammar," are not listed in Cornell's acquisitions catalog and may well have been purchased by an individual at the school, perhaps Corson, rather than the library itself. The assumption receives support from the fact that the "Gothic Grammar" is to be found at Columbia (call no. X837.95.M319), the card catalog describing it as "Gift, Provost Carpenter [29 May]. 1917." (Carpenter's source for the manuscript is not recorded.) In a forthcoming paper, Phillip J. Polsans, Villanova University, discusses the immediate source of the Anglo-Saxon prayers as Bodleian MS. Laud 201 (formerly D85), transcribed from a manuscript in the Benner College Library by William Ubel (1579-1637).

62 I am indebted to John Lancaster, Curator of Special Collections, for checking Amherst's copy of the Medlicott catalog for annotations and for consulting accession records for about a dozen titles marked AC in the inquired catalog. The prices in the records (except for three titles for which no prices are noted) agree with those in the priced Harvard copy of the catalog.

more than three falling under a single subject heading; a quarter of the lots, however, concern the early history of England, and half early English or Biblical literature. The most significant acquisition is an early 14th-century manuscript copied by Antonius de Bon(onia) for Rychardus de Anglia, Rationale divinorum officiorum, composed by Durandus (2692, $50.00). In listing the manuscript in his Census, p. [1066], De Ricci notes that it is "priced $85 in an American catalogue, ca. 1887; obtained for the library, July 1887." The "American catalogue, ca. 1887," can now be identified as Medlicott's of 1878: the increase in price from the $50.00 originally assigned by Medlicott to $85.00 is notable. (See also 25 July 1889, 18 April 1893, 28 January 1900, May 1905, 10 October 1912.)

16 and 26 December 1888, 10 July 1889: 1 lot, 10 lots, and 1 lot to WIK. Ten of the 12 lots concern French literature (most medieval or Renaissance). In addition, 6 of the 8 lots acquired by WIK with the date of purchase unrecorded are devoted to French literature or history.

25 July 1889: 12 lots to the Springfield Public Library. Showing an interest similar to that in its purchase on 19 July 1887, the library acquired 3 lots on the early history of England and 8 on early English literature (from the Anglo-Saxon period through the 17th century).

20 August 1889: 8 lots to Yale. The most notable among these miscellaneous lots are a copy of Mather's Magnalia Christi, 1702, containing "two pages of errata, which the late S. G. Drake said were the only ones he had ever seen. The Massachusetts Historical Society's copy has them, but they are very rare" (160, $25.00); and a 13th-century manuscript of Bracton's De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae containing medieval autographs and annotations (2684, $75.00; De Ricci, p. 166).

18 April 1893, 28 January 1900, May 1905: 22 lots, 1 lot, and 1 lot, respectively, to the Springfield Public Library. In 1887 Mary Medlicott enrolled at Columbia to study library science under Melvil Dewey, receiving a certificate in 1889 as one of 23 graduates before the program was transferred to Albany as the New York State Library School. After working briefly as a librarian in New York, she joined the reference staff of the Springfield Public Library in April 1890, a position she held until shortly before her death in 1927. During that time (if not before) she must have been one of the principals in transactions between Medlicott's heirs and the library. In any case the kinds of books purchased remained about the same; three-quarters of the 24 lots in question concern literature, the majority devoted to early English, with Renaissance titles the most frequent.

14 June and 14 September 1906: 1 lot and 15 lots, respectively, to GES, perhaps the New York City bookstore of Gustaf E. Stechert (cf. DGF, JWB, and BW&Co. above). Supporting the identification is the fact that Stechert is listed as one of the

---

44 In Yankee Bookseller (note 33), p. 173, Goodspeed, writing in 1937, remarks of the errata, "I have not seen more than three or four copies. The first edition of Cotton Mather's Magnalia Christi Americana can be bought at almost any time for a hundred dollars or thereabouts; a copy of the two-leaf errata might not be obtainable in many years, if ever, and would bring three times the price of the book itself." Medlicott seems to have owned two copies of Magnalia plus errata, lot 169 in the unnumbered catalogue has a double annotation, "S. Low 10.76" (or for "10.78") and "Y. C. 20.88.89."

special lecturers at the Columbia School of Library Economy when Mary was enrolled in 1887–1888.66 Further, Stechert’s firm specialized in foreign books, and 9 of the 16 lots purchased by GES come under the subject heading Icelandic and Scandinavian, an area germane to the store’s Germanic orientation.

21 December 1906: 2 lots to NJB, perhaps N. J. Bartlett & Company, a Boston bookstore.67 One of the lots is the Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn (1620–1706), 4 vols., 1850 (742, $5.00). Bartlett’s chief salesman, William H. Chase, specialized in 18th-century history and memoirs.68

December 1911: 1 lot (perhaps 2 lots) to E. P. Dutton. The lot is a set of the Ante-Nicene Christian Library, 24 vols., 1867–1872 (456, $36.00). Another lot in the same area, Dods’s translation of Augustine’s works, 14 vols. 1871–1876 (588, $21.00), is annotated “Dutton?”

10 October 1912: 1 lot to the Springfield Public Library. This is the last dated purchase made by the library; however, some of an additional 49 lots marked SPL but with the purchase dates unnoted may have been acquired after this time. Again, a majority of the lots concern early English history or literature, including 12 of rare broadsides (note 36).

March 1917: 1 lot to Child Mem. Ly, Child Memorial Library, Harvard. Another 17 lots are similarly marked Child Lib’y with sale date(s) unnoted.69 With one exception, the lots are devoted to early English literature (including 4 under Shakespeariana).

11 April 1917: 15 lots to G. Goodspeed’s Book Shop, Boston. (Another lot is annotated “Goodspeed” without date.) More than half the lots concern antiquities or numismatics. This is the latest date of sale recorded in the annotated catalog, a sale that extended nearly four decades.

Altogether, the catalog records the sale of 2046 lots to 52 purchasers (counting, as the catalog does, Child Memorial Library and Harvard College separately). Thirty-one purchasers acquired 9 lots or fewer, totaling 70 or about 3 percent of the lots sold; 11, between 13 and 44 lots, totaling 293 or about 14 percent of the lots sold; and 10, between 81 and 252 lots, totaling 1683 or about 82 percent of the lots sold. Of the top ten purchasers, three were individuals and the rest institutions: San Francisco Public Library, 81; E. Low, 91; Springfield Public Library, 112; B. Low, 129; Boston Public Library, 161; S. Low, 191; Wellesley, 203; Yale, 223; Princeton, 240; Harvard, 252.

It is evident that the top ten purchasers (like most of the lesser purchasers) pursued various themes. Indeed, the record of the dispersal of the Medlicott Library suggests that American libraries were not broadly building retrospective collections, that they were instead buying in line with the special interests of particular individuals. The San Francisco Public Library bought heavily in Americana, English literature or history, literature on the deaf and dumb (all 6 lots), and Oratio Dominica (all 9 lots); E. Low, in 16th- and 17th-century books on English literature, history, or theology; the Springfield Public Library, in early English literature or history;

67 For the proposed identification, I am indebted to Joseph Rosenblum, Department of English, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
68 On Bartlett and Chase, see Goodspeed, Yankee Bookseller (note 33), pp. 23-27, 118-119.
69 There is evidence that on 29 May and 4 June 1917 Harvard purchased some thirty lots not printed in the Medlicott catalog (discussed below). Presumably it was at this time—if not in March—that Harvard acquired the 17 lots in question. (In the priced Harvard catalog 16 of the lots are marked Ch. Mem., but, as in the Medlicott family’s catalog, no purchase date is given.)
B. Low, in liturgy (especially Anglican) and manuscripts; the Boston Public Library, in bibliography, French literature, and Bibles or Biblical scholarship; S. Low, in bibliography and in Renaissance and Reformation literature, history, or theology; Wellesley, in French literature, Shakespearean, Anglo-Saxon, proverbs and epigrams, and Teutonic; Yale, in Americana, antiquities, and early English literature (especially Renaissance works and ballads); Princeton, in philology (especially Anglo-Saxon); and Harvard, in English literature (especially Shakespearean and ballads), French literature, and philology. In each case the areas noted account for nearly half to almost all the lots acquired by the respective purchasers. The acquisitions of Harvard, Yale, and Wellesley are notable as coming from practically all parts of the catalog. But this is not to suggest that the other major purchasers proceeded with less circumspection. The annotated catalogs at the Boston Public Library and Princeton demonstrate that the institutions spent considerable time and effort in deciding upon their purchases in well-defined areas.

E. Low, B. Low, and Harvard bought virtually all their lots on a single date, while the other top ten purchasers acquired theirs on more than one occasion. The San Francisco Public Library, S. Low, and Wellesley purchased lots at two different times, in each case acquiring the great bulk on the earlier date. Similarly, although Princeton acquired lots on three separate occasions, the second and third of them accounted for a fraction of the total number purchased. The case was quite different for Yale. After an original purchase of 121 lots on 20 September 1878, Yale returned on seven different dates to procure another 101 lots (not counting an undated lot). Finally, the Springfield Public Library acquired a total of 63 lots on six different dates, and presumably the library acquired its 49 lots unnoted as to purchase date at various times as well. The differing purchase patterns might very well reflect differences in the availability of funds and the decision-making processes among the buyers.

Most of the initialed purchases were made when Medlicott was alive. Of the 2046 initialed lots, 130, or about 6 percent, are undated; 1682 lots, or 82 percent, are dated as purchased between 18 March 1878 and before Medlicott's death on 17 February 1883 (but none was sold during the last three and a half months of his life); and the remaining 234 lots, or about 11 percent, are dated as purchased between 3 March 1883 and 11 April 1917. The latter date—along with the initial G identifying the purchaser of 15 lots on that day—is especially significant. Seven of the lots are listed in a catalog (No. 121) issued by Goodspeed's Book Shop, of Boston, in October of the same year, The Medlicott Library (with Additions) . . . Being the Remaining Portion of one of the most Scholarly Libraries ever Formed in this Country, now Finally Dispersed by Goodspeed's Book Shop. Evidently the sale to Goodspeed's in April 1917 led to the sale to the company later that year of many of the remaining books in the library, including several annotated in the 1878 catalog with the initials of Mary Medlicott or William Bliss Medlicott. Goodspeed's catalog is arranged alphabetically by author or title, includes prices (most higher than those Medlicott assigned), and lists 1149 lots (1136 plus 13 repeated numbers).

Because Goodspeed's added an unspecified number of titles of its own to its catalog of Medlicott books, one cannot determine how many of the several titles listed in

---

60 Among the lots are 17 manuscripts, presumably most or all of which were once Medlicott's. Five of them are held by Catholic University (De Ricci, pp. 455-458, nos. 119, 124, 129, 141, 142)—the first four purchased by Rev. Arthur T. Connolly, of Boston, and given to the university; another is held by the Abbey of Gethsemani (De Ricci, p. 733, no. 11). The picture of Medlicott in the present essay is reproduced from the title page of Goodspeed's Catalog No. 121. In Yankee Bookseller (note 33), Goodspeed does not mention Medlicott.
GOODSPEED'S CATALOGUE.

THE MEDLICOTT LIBRARY

(WITH ADDITIONS)

Comprising Works on Anglo-Saxon and Early-English Language, Antiquities, History and Literature; Anglican Ecclesiastical Law, Ritual, and History; Heraldry; Lives and Works of the Reformers; Public Records; Numismatics; Topography; Nomenclature; Archaeology; Early Versions of the Bible, Etc.

Being the Remaining Portion of one of the most Scholarly Libraries ever Formed in this Country, now Finally Dispersed by

GOODSPEED'S BOOK SHOP
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, U.S.A.

(Courtesy of the Houghton Library)
Goodspeed's catalog but not in Medlicott's once belonged to Medlicott and how many came from Goodspeed's own shelves. It is clear, however, that Medlicott owned a good many volumes not listed in the 1878 catalog. All sources agree that his library once contained 20,000 volumes. Yet the 1878 catalog lists somewhat fewer than 7,000, and the author of Medlicott's obituary remarked that, despite the recent book sales, the library "still remains a mine of research and apparently undiminished." A collection of 20,000 volumes was of considerable size at the time. In its nationwide survey of some 3600 public libraries (including colleges and universities) the Bureau of Education in 1875 found only 101 collections with 20,000 volumes or more (49 being in the range of 20,000–30,000). If Medlicott did own 20,000 volumes, his library surpassed in size those of all but 21 of 356 academic institutions. Even supposing that the figure of 20,000 volumes reportedly owned by Medlicott was chosen as a round number, it seems likely that his 1878 catalog lists not more than half his complete collection. If so, his heirs must have disposed of several thousand unlisted volumes during the three and a half decades between his death in 1883 and Goodspeed's sale of the "remaining portion" of his library in 1917.

On the evidence of the priced Harvard copy of the catalog, some valuable titles were among those not offered for sale by Medlicott. Entered in the copy, chiefly by two hands, are 66 titles in black ink on 24 of the printed pages or on interleaves tipped in for the purpose. Accompanying most of the handwritten titles are call numbers (many still in use at Harvard), and on the verso of the second flyleaf appears the note, "Titles added in MS. were obtained from the Medlicott library Nov. 17, 1894." Following this is another note, "Also some titles received May 29, 1917 / June 4, 1917." Records preserved in Harvard College Library Letters provide additional information on the first of the sales.

Evidently in April or May 1894 Mary Medlicott visited Justin Winsor, giving him a six-page handwritten list of books which she offered for $250.00. The list contains 29 lots with 33 titles, virtually all of them annotated. Two of the three chief annotators were renowned Anglo-Saxon scholars, J. M. Kemble (4 titles) and T. O. Cockayne (11 titles); the third was Frederic Madden (11 titles), another well-known medievalist and for many years Keeper of Manuscripts in the British Museum. Winsor forwarded the list to Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard, for advisement. Eliot responded, with characteristic prudence, in a typed letter dated 9 May 1894:

I am no judge of the value of the books on the enclosed list, so that I cannot give an intelligent opinion on the expediency of buying them for $250. I should think that Mr. Kittredge's opinion would be of some value—decidedly better than that of Professor Norton. Would not Quaritch's catalogues shed some light on the question of the prices? Have we any means of ascertaining in what condition the books are?

---

12 "Death of William G. Medlicott" (note 3), p. 5.
13 Public Libraries in the United States (note 9), p. 79. Some figures on the number of volumes in various private collections at the time are available in The Book in America (note 24), pp. 313-316, 371; Samuel Gardner Drake's library, 12,000 volumes (plus 50,000 pamphlets); Charles Francis Adams's, 17,000–18,000; Thomas P. Barton's, 16,000, and Samuel J. Tilden's, 20,000 (which served as one of the foundations for the New York Public Library).
15 The book-list and correspondence for the 1894 sale are found in HCL Library Letters, 1894–1895 (note 11).
ANGLO-SAXON: ÆLFRIC.


One of 250 copies printed.


One of 30 copies printed.

271 Anglo, Michael, considered as a Philosophic Poet, with Translations; by J. E. Taylor. 8°, cloth, uncut. London, 1852.

See also under Nos. 532 and 541.

Anglo-Saxon History, Language, and Literature.

Adelung, J. C. Mithridates oder allgemeine Sprachkunde, etc. See also Adelung, under Oratio Dominica, 285.3. Three Philological Essays. See Adelung, under Language, 2.793.


272 ÆLFRIC SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS (in part): —


Although there is no evidence that Winsor consulted Quaritch's catalogs—his priced *General Catalogue* (1874) was in fact the source from which Medlicott secured several of the titles two decades earlier—\(^6\) he had his staff check Harvard's holdings to determine which titles the library already owned, using a blue mark to indicate "those we have not." The annotated list shows that Harvard held all but 11 of the 33 and later editions of 5 of the 11; yet Winsor, perhaps on Kittredge's advice, eventually decided in favor of the purchase. A note in Winsor's hand—the second part apparently an excerpt from a letter to Mary Medlicott—reads, "accepted Nov 2, 1894: 'we reserve the right to decline any, which may be found imperfect in text, plates or binding.'"

Library records also preserve this letter from Mary Medlicott dated 3 November 1894, Longmeadow:

Your letter of yesterday is just received, and I shall be very glad to send you the books, and know they are so well placed. But I have not a copy of the list I left with you—it was one of the things I neglected to do, making a copy. Will you kindly let me have it, so there shall be no mistake, although I think the books are all in one book-case. I will return it to you, the same one, if you like, rough list as it is. I enclose stamps, and will get the books off during next week, if I can do so. I suppose you understand that their chief value lies in the annotations & collations, not in choice editions.

Shortly after the arrival of the books, Winsor wrote Child on 14 November, saying, in part, "The books are in my room, and before paying the bill some decision must be reached on the points which are raised." Winsor's reservation concerned the poor condition of some of the volumes—heavily annotated books tend to be worse for the wear—but the purchase was confirmed. Inserted loose in the Medlicott family's annotated copy of the catalog is a handwritten receipt: "Longmeadow Mass. Nov. 12. 1894 / Harvard University Library Dr. / To Mary Medlicott— / Collection of Anglo-Saxon & other books / as per statement $250.00."

"Anglo-Saxon & other books" is an accurate characterization. Two-thirds of the titles purchased by Harvard in 1894 concern Anglo-Saxon literature, with the rest devoted to Middle English literature, the English language, or early French literature. Among the most valuable of the works are a copy of Thorkelin's 1815 edition of *Beowulf*, the *editio princeps*, in which Madden collated the printed text with the manuscript in the British Museum; Robert G. Latham's annotated copy of Kemble's rare 1833 edition of *Beowulf*; a copy of Thorpe's 1855 edition of *Beowulf* in which Cockayne collated the printed text with the manuscript; a copy of Kemble's rare *Salomon and Saturn* with a "Ms. note dated Dec. 1844 by J.M.K. saying the work was not exactly cancelled, but remodelled, and about to appear in the Ælfric Society";\(^7\) and Madden's personal copy of his 3-volume edition of Layamon's *Brut*.

\(^6\) In Quaritch's *General Catalogue* (note 21), see pp. 1544-1545, 1554, 1560, 1572, 1589, 1599.

\(^7\) The description of this and the next title (Madden's *Brut*) is from Mary's handwritten list. On Kemble's abandoned book and its relationship to his *The Dialogue of Salomon and Saturnus*, see Henning Larsen, "Kemble's *Salomon and Saturn*: Modern Philology, 26 (1929), 445-450; and Bruce Dickins, "John Mitchell Kemble and Old English Scholarship," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 23 (1939), 81 n. 2. Only 20 (Larsen, quoting from the DNB) or 24 (Dickins) copies of the abandoned work were printed. Dickins mentions copies at the British Library, Bodleian, and Cambridge University Library. The NUC, 516, 558c, lists only one copy in the United States, at the Newberry Library. Larsen used a copy on loan from Archer Taylor, of the University of Chicago. Taylor's, like Harvard's, may once have belonged to Medlicott, perhaps obtained from Godspeed's Catalogue No. 121 (541, $3.00). Larsen (who is concerned with dating and would have found a dated inscription valuable evidence) mentions no note in referring to Taylor's copy, nor is any mentioned in the Godspeed listing ("Unpublished; supposed to be by Kemble"). In contrast, the copy at Harvard and the one at the Newberry preserve a note by Kemble.
"with Ms. corrections by him, and various papers inserted, including autograph letters of Sir F. Madden, John Gough Nichols, & A. Herbert; also cuttings from Literary Gazette of Mch. 1847." 78 Although the titles include milestones in English medieval scholarship, the "chief value" of these particular copies, as Mary Medlicott remarked, "lies in the annotations & collations." Harvard showed considerable foresight in securing these and the other lots for $250.00—no small price at the time but modest in comparison with their value today.

To judge by the second note on the flyleaf in the priced Harvard copy of the catalog, in 1917 Mary again approached Harvard with an offer of some thirty lots not listed in the catalog as printed. 79 This time only three lots concerned Anglo-Saxon: two manuscripts in the hand of Cockayne—one an alphabetical index of "Celtic, Saxon and Latin names of persons and places in Great Britain" (412 leaves); the other, "Extracts from Anglo-Saxon MSS. and notes on Anglo-Saxon texts" (2 vols.)—and a manuscript containing Madden's translation of the grammars of Ælfric and Twainites, plus a transcription of Judith. Continuity between the sales of 1894 and 1917 is also found in the fact that in the second sale, as in the first, 11 volumes annotated by Madden were acquired as well as some books on Middle English, the English language, or early French literature. Otherwise the titles claimed a wider range, including, for example, Thomas Cranmer's A Defence of the True and Catholique Doctrine of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Our Saviour Christ, 1550; John Clapham's The Historie of Great Britannie, 1606; and John Payne Collier's The Poet's Pilgrimage, An Allegorical Poem in Four Cantos, 1825, with a "Note in Mr. Collier's handwriting on the fly leaf." As a whole, the lots in the 1917 sale were not quite as impressive as those in the sale of 1894. But half of them contain unique annotations or are in manuscript, and they also demonstrate that Medlicott owned some rare or unique works not included in his catalog. 80

Although he probably had a variety of reasons for not wishing to sell such books, one reason stands out in light of the handwritten entries in the priced Harvard copy. More than a third of the 66 entries duplicate titles printed in the catalog. They are not true duplicates, however, because of their annotations. For example, printed lot 315 is Francisca Junius's 1655 edition of a manuscript of Anglo-Saxon poetry once ascribed to Caedmon, Paraphrasis Poetica Genesios ac praeipuum Sacre paginae Historiarum. This particular copy, as the catalog description specifies, has some attractive features: it is "illustrated with 15 curious plates, by Greene, after the paintings in the ancient MS. in the Bodleian Library," and it contains "the autograph of Charles Mayo, and the two leaves of notes printed by James Fletcher, in 1752." 81 Below the title in

---


79 The number of lots is deduced by subtracting the number Harvard purchased in 1894 from the number entered by hand in the priced Harvard catalog. As the note added on the flyleaf seems to indicate, the remaining titles were acquired in May or June 1917. (The titles of the Cockayne manuscripts and the note from the Collier volume, quoted below, are taken from the handwritten entries in the Harvard catalog.) This may also have been the occasion on which Harvard purchased 17 lots marked Child Memorial Library in the initial catalog; see n69.

80 The 66 titles entered by hand in the priced Harvard catalog and purchased in 1894 or 1917 and the 252 lots marked HC in the Medlicott family's initial catalog do not account for all the books at Harvard acquired from the Medlicott library. Of the 16 titles given in the catalogue card catalog as having Medlicott's bookplate or autograph (note 3), I have been able to locate only 9 in the Medlicott catalog. None of the remaining 7 is among the 66 titles entered in the priced Harvard catalog.

81 The copy was purchased by Princeton on 17 June 1879 for $10.00. In the Princeton copy of the Medlicott catalog the lot is annotated NB. As an Anglo-Saxon specialist, Theodore W. Hunt (note 50) would have found notable the opportunity to secure a copy of the rare volume.
the priced copy of the catalog a Harvard librarian added in 1894. "Another copy, interleaved, with notes and collations, and an English translation of a considerable part of the work." Medlicott, then, owned two copies of Junius's edition—evidently the only ones in the country at the time—each with special features. He valued the copy with the notes and translation more than the illustrated copy and did not wish to part with it. Medlicott loved annotated books.

He also loved Anglo-Saxon. Indeed, the most striking and original aspect of his library was the comprehensive collection of Anglo-Saxon works—the beginning and basis of his entire library. As we learn from Kate Clark's article (note 10) in the Springfield *Daily Republican* upon the publication of the Medlicott catalog:

Some 33 years ago [1845], Mr William G. Medlicott, a manufacturer then at Thompsonville, now at Windsor Locks, and a resident of Longmeadow, prompted partly by his antiquarian tastes, and yet more by his conviction that there would be developed an increasing interest in the study of the English language and literature, began to collect books relating to this object. His first effort was to secure a copy of every work which had been printed in England illustrating the Anglo-Saxon language and literature.

From the account we learn further that Medlicott's interest in Anglo-Saxon (Old English) led to his collecting Middle English and that this brought him in turn into medieval French because the two literatures were "so much allied in their mutual influences and interactions." Reaching the Elizabethan period, Medlicott did not focus so much on first editions of great writers as on translations from Latin and French, treatises on the structure of English, and dictionaries, "for the reason that works of this class would have a higher philological value to a student of English than original works." In later periods he concentrated on popular literature—ballads, broadsides, song books, drolleries, and chapbooks—"illustrating the current religious and moral as well as immoral phases of English society in by-gone days.

Collateral with Medlicott's love of literature was his interest in the Church of England. He pursued manuscripts of medieval service books as well as 16th- and early 17th-century Bibles, separate Biblical books, and liturgical works (mostly Anglican), "until the total has become of very rare value." Medlicott's collecting, then, had an interconnectedness, but its origin lay in his devotion to Anglo-Saxon language and literature.

In collecting Anglo-Saxon works, Medlicott had but one American predecessor, Thomas Jefferson. Long interested in the language and political culture, Jefferson painstakingly assembled an Anglo-Saxon collection of twenty titles (later Medlicott had a copy of each) and, upon founding the University of Virginia in 1825,
insisted that the subject be taught as an integral part of the curriculum. The subject spread gradually. Edward D. Sims (fresh from study in Germany) taught Anglo-Saxon at Randolph-Macon in 1839–1842, then at the University of Alabama until his death in 1845. It reached the North at about the same time. Francis A. March, the greatest Anglo-Saxon philologist in America in the second half of the 19th century, recalls William C. Fowler’s classes at Amherst in the early 1840s:

Noah Webster was one of the founders of Amherst College, and the Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory in my day, W. C. Fowler, LL.D., was his son-in-law. The professor lectured on Anglo-Saxon among other things. He had imported Anglo-Saxon books, then curiosities. He held them up and exhibited them to us, as he lectured, exactly as the natural history men did precious shells, or minerals. He said there were only two or three men living who knew anything about the language. He was working on one of the Webster dictionaries, and I became interested in the philological side of English.

Fowler resigned from teaching in 1843. Two years later Medlicott began collecting Anglo-Saxon books—“curiosities.”

The 1850s witnessed the introduction of the subject into four schools: Philadelphia High School, under John S. Hart, 1850–1854; Harvard College, under Child, from 1851; Lafayette College, under March, from 1856; and the University of Mississippi, under William D. Moore, 1858–1861. March’s interest in the language at Lafayette must have inaugurated the college’s collection of Anglo-Saxon books, probably the only one to approach Medlicott’s in the next few decades. In the Bureau of Education’s survey of libraries in 1876, a librarian at the school lists Anglo-Saxon as one of its strengths, describing the collection as “pretty complete.”

Although in the next decade only a few more schools had introduced Anglo-Saxon—Haverford College and Columbian College in 1867, St. John’s College in 1868, Randolph-Macon in 1869—by 1875 the number of schools reported to offer the subject had grown to 23. “There is nowhere in the world,” March observed

---


45 See A. A. Kern, “A Pioneer in Anglo-Saxon,” The Stevenson Review, 11 (1903), 337–344. “Unable to procure Anglo-Saxon text-books,” Sims used the blackboard for lessons and was working on a grammar and dictionary before his death. Sims’s notebooks for the purpose were discovered in a used bookstore in St. Louis in 1890.

46 Francis A. March, “Recollections of Language Teaching,” Publications of the Modern Language Association, 8 (1893), appendix, xxi–xx, Fowler’s reported belief that “there were only two or three men living who knew anything about the language” is provincial, given the number of Anglo-Saxon scholars in Germany and, to a lesser extent, England. It was more nearly true of the United States, in which the first Anglo-Saxon books were not published until 1848–1849. The honor of publishing them (a dubious one, as it turns out) fell to Louis F. Klipstein (1833–1870). Born in Virginia, he attended Hampden-Sydney College, married a wealthy woman in South Carolina, lost much of her inheritance in publishing four Anglo-Saxon books, left home, and turned to drink. Klipstein, desperate and disreputable, haunted Charleston and its vicinity for many years. In 1878 he was begging for food on the streets of the city….” (DAB, V. 447).

47 Medlicott owned three of Klipstein’s works, plus duplicates (372–376).

48 On the first three schools, see March, “The Study of Anglo-Saxon,” Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1876 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1878), p. 478. That the University of Mississippi taught Anglo-Saxon as early as 1858 is not noted by March or by other scholars. It is confirmed, however, by the Catalogue of the Officers, Alumni and Students of the University of Mississippi, at Oxford, Mississippi, Eleventh Session, 1858–59 (corrected by hand from 1859–60) (Jackson, Mississippi: Mississippi Steam Book and Job Print, 1859), p. 46 (“a brief course of Anglo-Saxon, during the entire Sophomore year”) and by subsequent catalogs. The study was interrupted by the Civil War, resumed in 1865–1868 under S. G. Burney, and was taught again in 1873–1889 by J. L. Johnson (an Anglo-Saxonist trained at the University of Virginia). For a summary see Historical Catalogue 1849–1909 in the Bulletin of the University of Mississippi, Series VIII, No. 4 (June 1910), 45–47.

49 Public Libraries in the United States (note 9), p. 116. It should be noted, however, that March is one of the scholars who borrowed books from Medlicott. In A Comparative Grammar of the Anglo-Saxon Language (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1870), p. iv, March thanks Medlicott, who “let me take from his precious collection, and use at my own home, Anglo-Saxon texts not elsewhere to be had for love or money.”
at the time, "so much of this study as in America." Medlicott, who, according to family tradition, could reel off long passages in the language from memory, had been collecting Anglo-Saxon books for more than a quarter of a century before the burgeoning of academic interest in the field in the mid-1870s.

The section in his catalog entitled Anglo-Saxon History, Language, and Literature includes in its 182 lots (272-453) and several cross-references 317 titles. To these should be added 9 titles given as additional cross-references in the catalog's "Notice and Errata" (pp. [ii]-iv), 91 titles (the majority on history) that should have been cross-referenced but were not, 23 titles inserted by hand in the Harvard copy of the catalog, and 2 on Mary's 1894 list not included elsewhere. About 30 percent of the 442 titles (which include 27 apparently true duplicates) may be classified under history and the rest under language and/or literature. The language and literature collection is striking not only for the number but for the rarity of many books. From the 16th century it included Matthew Parker's *Testimonie of Antiquity*, 1566 (430); Parker's *A Defence of Priestes marriages*, 1567 (2940); William Lambarde's *Archaionomia*, 1568 (285, plus another copy entered here in the priced Harvard copy of the catalog); Lambarde's *A Perambulation of Kent*, 1576 (2254); John Foxe's *Gospels of the Power Evangelistes*, 1571 (343); and Vulcanius's *De Literis et Lingua Getarum*, 1597 (1951 and 1966). From the 17th century the collection included 33 titles (counting 5 true duplicates), and from the 18th century 60 (counting 5 true duplicates). In other words, close to a third of the titles in the language and literature collection were published before the 19th century, including 29 of the 35 titles Kemble found notable in his historical survey of Anglo-Saxon philological scholarship.

Medlicott did not hoard his Anglo-Saxon holdings. These books," remarks the author of the "Biographical Note" in *Goodspeed's Catalogue* No. 121, "he was always ready to lend to scholars, and Prof. Child of Harvard, Corson of Cornell, March and Harrison and others freely acknowledged their indebtedness to Mr. Medlicott's generosity in the use of his books." Well might an Anglo-Saxon scholar in need of various titles inquire of Medlicott. For example, one who wanted to trace the changing view of Anglo-Saxon grammar over the centuries would have had available more than twenty grammars, from Hickes's of 1689 (together with the early 18th-century derivatives) to Carpenter's of 1875. In lexicography the holdings

---


90 To this one might add another score of Anglo-Saxon titles listed in *Goodspeed's Catalogue* No. 121, most or all of which probably came from Medlicott's library.

91 The distinction between history and language or literature is often difficult to draw (as with, e.g., the Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle*). On whether a title may be classified as literature, I have been guided by Stanley B. Greenfield and Fred C. Robinson, *A Bibliography of Publications on Old English Literature to the End of 1972* (Toronto, Buffalo, New York: University of Toronto Press, 1980). My interest lies in stressing Medlicott's philological and literary Anglo-Saxon collection; a scholar wishing to emphasize the size of the Anglo-Saxon history collection might, with justice, reclassify several titles that I have taken as literature.


Medlicott's Library

included all the major works, beginning with Verstegan's Restitution, 1605. Among the most notable volumes were three copies of Benson's Vocabularium, 1701—one clean, one annotated by an anonymous hand, and one "interleaved with blank pages and [having] MS. notes by the editor, intended for a new edition of the work"; two copies of Lyce's Dictionarium, 1772, one annotated by Cockayne; a presentation copy of Bosworth's Dictionary, 1838, "with autograph letter from the author inserted, to the late Rev. Dr. A. B. Chapin, of Hartford; also numerous MS. notes"; and a copy of Bosworth's Compendium ... Dictionary, 1855 edition, "interleaved, with notes and additions by T. O. Cockayne." Medlicott also owned two manuscripts from the early period of scholarship: lot 2674, "Glossary of Anglo-Saxon words with explanations in Latin and English. 4°, neatly written in an old English hand. The A. S. words in red ink. In the old calf binding. This volume, which came from the Dering Collection, is probably circa 1636"; and lot 2675, "Dictionarium Anglo-Saxonicum; transcribed by Rev. Wm. Reading, from notes in an interleaved copy of Phillips' Dictionary, or New World of Words, 1662, formerly in Dean Hickes' Library, afterwards in Lord Harley's. Folio, panelled calf. Sac. XVIII." 

In prose the collection was also strong, especially in works by or about King Alfred (including Spelman's Vita, 1678), the writings of Ælfric (including three copies of L'Isle's edition, A Saxon Treatise, 1623), Anglo-Saxon laws (including Lamberde's Archaionomia, 1568, and Perambulation, 1576), and the Anglo-Saxon Gospels (including Foxe's edition of 1571 and Junius's of 1665). A scholar investigating the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle would have found in Medlicott's library virtually every edition published to that time: Wheloc's of 1644 (but not the first edition, 1643), Gibson's of 1692 (two copies, one "a presentation copy from the editor to John Chamberlayne"), Ingram's of 1823 (two copies, one "interleaved with pages of MS. notes, quotations, etc., explanatory of the work, besides many marginal notes, in Sir F. Palgrave's writing"), Price's of 1848, Thorpe's of 1861, and Earle's of 1865 (two copies, one annotated by Cockayne).

In verse Medlicott owned nearly all the major works from the beginning down to the rare Bremen edition of Durham by Johann Oelrichs published in 1799. His holdings in 19th-century editions, although not exhaustive, were also strong, numbering more than three dozen volumes. Among them were the standard works of the period, including the ground-breaking editions of Thorpe, Kemble, and Boutrweck, plus Grein's monumental collective edition, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie, 1857-1864. As for Beowulf, Medlicott owned the editions of Thorkelin, 1815; Kemble, 1833-1837; Schaldenmosse, 1847; Thorpe, 1855; and Heyne, 1863 (plus Heyne's 1864 study). He seems to have lacked, however, Grundtvig's edition of 1861 (but owned Grundtvig's much rarer Danish translation of 1820), Grein's of 1867, Ettermüller's of 1875 (but owned Ettermüller's study of 1840), and perhaps Arnold's of 1876. The absence of these editions was more than offset by Medlicott's possession of two valuable works mentioned earlier as part of Mary Medlicott's 1894 sale to Harvard: Madden's annotated copy of Thorkelin's edition and Cockayne's of Thorpe's.

---

**Footnotes:**

- A list of the lexicographical works to 1878 can be found in Greenfield and Robinson's Bibliography (note 91), pp. 7-8. nos. 52-69. Medlicott lacked nos. 54, 56 (a brief specimen of a work never published), 60, 62 (a letter to a magazine), and 67—true a major work.
- Medlicott sold his copy of Spelman's V. G. (283) to Princeton for $250, a leading American rare book dealer recently listed a copy for $375.00. Mary Medlicott, like her father, was also interested in Alfred, compiling "Alfred the Great: An Annotated List of Books and Articles to Aid in the Study of King Alfred's Life and Times," Bulletin of Bibliography, 3 (1902), 5-7, 23-25. Apart from the Beowulf titles mentioned below, the only surprising omission is Jacob Grimm's Andreas and Elvere (Cassel: Theodor Fischer, 1840). Although Arnold's edition is not listed in the 1878 catalog, Medlicott may well have owned it; the book is listed as lot 75 in Goodspeed's Catalogue No. 121.
With the benefit of these unique copies, an American Anglo-Saxonist could have established a more reliable and complete text of Beowulf than any then available.98

The author of the "Biographical Note" in Goodspeed's Catalogue remarks that the scholars who borrowed books from Medlicott "freely acknowledged their indebtedness" to him. It is hard to imagine a more generous tribute than that paid by Cornell's Hiram Corson in the preface, dated December 1870, to his Hand-book of Anglo-Saxon and Early English: "To W. G. Medlicott, Esq., of Long Meadow, Mass., he [Corson] is under a great obligation, in common with many other students of English in this country, for the long use of valuable books from his extensive Anglo-Saxon and early English library."99

The excellence of Medlicott's collection was also recognized by a British scholar. In an essay entitled "Impressions of Christian Life and Work in America," Josias Leslie Porter (1823–1889), a professor at the University of Belfast and a well-known writer on the Near East and religion, describes a visit to Medlicott's library in which he extolls the Anglo-Saxon collection. The report claims interest as well for the words of praise (here quoted only in part) with which Porter characterizes the town where Medlicott lived the last three decades of his life:

On Friday, the 28th of June [probably 1878], I reached the station of Springfield, Massachusetts, was welcomed by W. G. Medlicott, Esq., to whom I had letters of introduction, and was driven off under a blazing sun to his charming residence four miles distant. I never shall forget Longmeadow. I had often heard of an earthly paradise, but I never saw a spot which seemed to me so very nearly to realize all my ideas of an earthly paradise as Longmeadow. It was one of the earliest settlements of the Pilgrim Fathers; and its old homesteads are still occupied by their lineal descendants. They retain, as a community, that simplicity of life and manners, that high-toned moral purity which characterized the very best Puritan age. To these they have added the culture of this nineteenth century. The library of my friend Mr Medlicott would of itself give celebrity even to a seat of learning. It was with no little surprise that I found there, in a retired New England village, one of the choicest private collections extant of early English and Anglo-Saxon literature.100

Although Medlicott's library might have given "celebrity even to a seat of learning," the fact is that it did not—precisely because it was not donated intact to a school but was so widely dispersed. Its dispersal must have saddened Medlicott; for years he had planned bequeathing it to a college. After surveying his collection as represented by the just published catalog, Kate Clark concludes her essay (note 10) with a wish that went unrealized:

98 The first work to make full and accurate use of the then little-known Thorkelin transcripts (in the Royal Library, Copenhagen), Julius Zupitza's Beowulf: Autotypes of the Unique Cotton MS. Vitellius A xx in the British Museum (London: Early English Text Society), was not published until 1882. Prior to that, Madden's collation of the text in Thorkelin's 1815 edition with the manuscript text would have furnished an American scholar with the most comprehensive and reliable testimony on letters now gone from the manuscript. Cockayne's collation of Thorpe's text with the manuscript would not have supplied any missing letters but, together with Madden's collation, would have helped an editor correct errors of transcription in published texts.

99 Hiram Corson, Hand-book of Anglo-Saxon and Early English (New York: Holt & Williams, 1871), p. x. Corson may have met Medlicott through Child. On 22 October (1870) Child wrote James Russell Lowell, asking him to send a "recommended" to Corson's publisher in favor of the book. For the letter see "The Scholar-Friends" (note 20), p. 156. A supporter of Corson's scholarship, Child may earlier have advised him that he might be able to borrow otherwise unavailable books from Medlicott. For another strong tribute to Medlicott's generosity, see March's statement quoted above in note 88.

100 Porter's essay was published as a single sheet, without date, by the University of Virginia (NUC, 46b, 222b). I have been unable to obtain a copy. (The Harvard copy cannot now be found, and none is available from the University of Virginia or elsewhere.) The quotation is from an undated, unidentified newspaper clipping pasted on the inside cover of one of the catalogs belonging to the Medlicott family. The date of Porter's visit is likely to have been 1878, the year when the catalog was published, when the library was at its height (major sales not beginning until September), and a year when 28 June fell on a Friday.
We wish that some literary benefactor who has the means would take up Mr Medlicott's long cherished purpose, now frustrated by business reverses, of placing the body of this library in the alcoves of Amherst or some other New England college, where it may prove serviceable in aiding the special culture which he has had so long in view during all the years of his assiduous care in gathering it together. Especially do we hope that a lack of appreciation on this side of the Atlantic may not result in remanding to English libraries works which are so eminently needful to our American scholarship.

Although no benefactor stepped forward and the collection was scattered, most of it did not go to England, and one should not underestimate the real, if undramatic, contribution Medlicott made to "our American scholarship." The disposition of his library came at a turning point in America's educational history. From the founding of Harvard in 1636 through the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, original research was little encouraged among American college professors; instead, they were expected to devote themselves to teaching and closely related duties. With a few exceptions, college libraries were modest—the hours limited, budgets restricted, librarians part-time—because there was little demand for them to be otherwise. In 1876 only three colleges had student enrollments of more than 400 (Princeton, Yale, Harvard), and only two had faculties of 40 or more (Cornell, Harvard). Yet the transition in the Northeast following the Civil War from an agricultural to an industrial economy brought with it a transition in higher learning. As Arthur T. Hamlin observes:

Education at all levels was receiving critical comment with a view to expansion and improvement. In short, this was a time to do things, a time to act. And act the few librarians of the country did. This year of 1876 was their annus mirabilis, for it brought a truly remarkable series of events that were to transform library service in the United States and later throughout the world.

Among the events were the launching of the American Library Association and the Library Journal, the designing of new library equipment, the creation of the Dewey Decimal System, the publication of Public Libraries in the United States of America, the founding of Johns Hopkins on the model of German universities—and the demand for research collections of breadth, depth, and quality.

As though by design, American book collectors paved the way for the great scholarly libraries. It was they who, from a modest beginning in colonial times, painstakingly imported books from Europe and assembled collections with several titles rarely found among college holdings. "By the eighteen-fifties," Ruth Shepard Granuiss remarks, "the country had become thoroughly conscious of the joys of book-collecting—so much so that two books appeared on the subject, apparently the first American works of their kind." Beginning in earnest in the last quarter of the 19th century, the leading schools sought to purchase, as finances permitted, private collections brought together in Europe and America.

Although Medlicott's own finances did not permit him to donate his library to a school, he nonetheless eschewed the book auction (an outlet well established in America by then), choosing instead to send out copies of his catalog and to sell

---


102 On industrialization and education, see Holly, "Academic Libraries in 1876" (note 74), 16-18, statistics on student enrollment and faculty size are given in table 2, p. 20.

103 Hamlin, The University Library (note 101), p. 45. On the formative events of 1876, see pp. 22-23, 45-47.

his books privately. This allowed libraries the time and opportunity for prudent selection. Although Medlicott's library, in size, definition, and quality, cannot be compared to those of the greatest (and much wealthier) collectors—such men as Brown, Lenox, and Brinley—it was respectable to excellent in Americana, bibliography, Middle English literature, early French literature, language and philology (especially British dialects), early English history, and Shakespeare and Shakespeariana; and it was outstanding in ballads and ballad literature, Bibles and Biblical literature, and Anglo-Saxon works. Offered for sale in 1878, when many schools and even some public libraries were beginning to experience the need for research collections, Medlicott's library allowed various institutions to fill in many gaps and solidify their holdings with titles they would otherwise have acquired, if at all, probably much later and at higher prices. The disposition of Medlicott's library did not dramatically enrich a single institutional collection. Rather, it spread a wealth of resources among several, enriching each according to its special needs. For eleven decades the fruits of Medlicott's labor and catholic interests have served readers in anonymity.

In his time he was accorded some formal recognition, receiving an honorary M.A. from Amherst College in 1867 and another from Williams College in 1875. But today Medlicott's 1878 catalog stands as the most eloquent testimony to his quiet achievement. "By leaving a printed catalogue of his library the book-collector, no matter what may be its final disposition, confers a benefit to public libraries as well as to all book-lovers. In so doing he leaves a record of what he has accomplished as a lover and conservator of literature." What makes Medlicott's accomplishment the more remarkable is that he had no schooling beyond the age of sixteen and that, as he worked his way up in the world of commerce, he also worked his way through the world of books, becoming, as the author of his obituary affirms, "equally at home in each." It is ironic that Medlicott's library, financed through his business success, had to serve him as a source of funds in a time of business depression. Yet throughout his career Medlicott is said to have regarded his magnificent collection not as a commercial investment but as an investment for the mind and spirit.

Far from being a bibliophiliist in the passion for costly rarities for a market value, Mr Medlicott loved his books for their own sake. He counted every moment he could snatch from business cares as golden for reading. It was his restful pastime and domestic recreation. Without affectation or pedantry, he was always imparting in the table talk and the fireside reading, and by conversation from the unfailing treasures of his favorite books. During the latter days of his long and gradually wasting illness, his indomitable will and cheerful disposition banished every gloomy association, and with his beloved books, old and new, around him, he would solace his mind and delight his friends with quotations from the poets he loved the best.

---

108 Amherst is the school specifically mentioned by Clark (quoted earlier) as a fitting repository for the Medlicott collection.


110 "Death of William G. Medlicott" (note 3), p. 5. At least once Medlicott tried his hand at scholarship. The Widener catalog at Harvard lists him as the author of a manuscript, "[Notes on the Edda Samundar]," cataloged as (Scan 4285 40*).

111 "Death of William G. Medlicott" (note 3), p. 5.