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UNCLE SAM'S BOOKS.

Washington, D. C., Sept. 14, 1897.—I had an hour's chat today with Mr. John Russell Young as to his plans for the new National Library. He had just returned to his home, after going over the various rooms with Mr. Spofford and the chiefs of the different divisions, and had before him a set of plans, showing the floors and just how each part of this great book palace is to be arranged. Mr. Young's home is now on New Jersey avenue, within a few blocks of the library. In going to see him I walked by the front of the national capitol, down the central stairs of which a wooden trough or chute has been built to carry the boxes of books from the old library down into the wagons in which they are to be carried to the new. I saw scores of workmen bringing these boxes on their shoulders out of the Capitol and putting them into the chute. Men stood at the bottom to catch the boxes as they came flying down, and as soon as one wagon was loaded I noticed that there was another there to take its place. Already several hundred thousand books have been moved, and it is expected that long before Congress meets this vast collection of volumes and pamphlets will be stored away in its new home.

Before I give my interview with Mr. Young, let me tell you something about the man. Some of the papers seem to look upon him as a politician rather than as a literary man. This is a mistake. Mr. Young is almost a born literateur. He began to write for the newspapers long before he was out of his teens. He has been a student all his life, and today he has one of the largest private libraries in the United States. His collection of Americana at Philadelphia numbers several thousand volumes, and he has rare editions of nearly all the great authors. His literary work has been carried on all over the world. For years he was the head of the New York Herald bureau in London, and as such spent much time in the British museum library. He has also worked for months in the National Library of France. He has had access to the collections of Spain at Madrid, and there is hardly a great library of the world which he does not know. As a writer he is noted for the purity of his English, and when he talks his language is the purest Anglo-Saxon, so worded that it could be published without revision. He has always received high salaries. I am told he got \$10,000 a year from Mr. Bennett of the Herald. He must have been well paid when he was vice president of the Reading railroad, and I imagine his work today is done more for the love of it than for the \$5,000 salary which he gets from the government.

It has been stated that Mr. Young's appointment was a severe blow to Ainsworth R. Spofford, the old librarian of Congress. This is a mistake. Mr. Spofford himself wrote the Presi-

dent that he did not wish to be continued as chief and in his letter he himself suggested that Mr. Young be chosen as librarian. When President McKinley offered John Russell Young the position, Mr. Young said he could not accept it on account of his friendship for Mr. Spofford. Said he:

"Mr. President, Mr. Spofford and I have been friends for over thirty years. We like each other and I would not for the world do anything that would affect our relations."

Upon this President McKinley showed Mr. Young Mr. Spofford's letter, and some weeks after that Mr. Young accepted the appointment. The relations of the two men are of the best nature. They are working together, Spofford acting as literary assistant and Young as administration head, executive manager and in short as librarian-in-chief.

I asked Mr. Young to tell me something of the size of Uncle Sam's book collection. He replied:

"It is hard to say as yet just what it is. For years thousands of pamphlets and volumes have been stored away in boxes, packed up in bundles and piled up in all sorts of shapes in the basement of the Capitol. We know that we have altogether about 750,000 books and 250,000 pamphlets, making a million in all. We have, I judge, something like 300,000 unbound periodicals, 20,000 pieces of music and at least 40,000 maps. In addition to these there are manuscripts, pictures and a vast amount of material, the value of which can only be known when it is properly arranged and classified."

"But there must be a great deal of trash in such stuff, Mr. Young," said I.

"No, I think not," was the reply. "Almost every bit of it is valuable in one sense or another. You know the trash of one century becomes the classics of the next. Old pamphlets which are thought worthless often become very valuable. The American ones are especially so. The library is the copyright record of what the great American brain is doing. It is the great brain reservoir of the United States, and it should contain everything published."

"But does it do this," I asked.

"Yes, I think so far as the United States is concerned. The law requires that two copies of each book copyrighted must be deposited in the National library. We also get every foreign book registered under the international copyright law, and our additions to the library alone amount to tens of thousands a year. Last year there were over 70,000 books, pictures, and other things copyrighted, and the increase of copyrights seems to be steady from year to year."

"Will not the library soon become full at this rate of increase?" I asked.

"No, I think not," replied the librarian. "We can put all the books in one wing or stack of the new building. We have shelving for years to come.

The library covers about three acres. There are three stories, which gives nine acres for books, machinery, offices and reading rooms. Nine acres is a great deal of space. There are already miles of shelving, and, if necessary, room could be made for more than 4,000,000 books. I doubt whether we will fill the library within the next one hundred years. The greatest library of the world today is that of Paris. It has 3,000,000 volumes, but the books are badly housed. The British Museum library is next, with more than 2,000,000, and I think that St. Petersburg follows. As for us, we stand about eleventh in number; but if Congress is as liberal in providing books has it has been in putting up this book palace, we will soon become third in rank, and we may eventually be first."

"In what features is the library especially strong?" I asked.

"It has a fine collection of American pamphlets and books published in America. It is very strong in law, political economy and history. There are, however, many gaps in our collection of French, German, and Spanish literature, and also in other things. I want to see the gaps filled up. I hope that Congress will give us a big enough appropriation to buy the things which we have have not. Mr. Spofford and myself are now watching the catalogues of sales all over the world, in order to supply our deficiencies. Congress ought to give a good appropriation to the library, and I think the building will cause it to do better as to the book fund than it has in the past. Heretofore the library has had about \$11,000 a year, and one-third of this has gone to the Supreme Court. The new library building cost \$6,000,000. The interest on the investment at 6 per cent is \$360,000 a year. As long as the United States is paying \$360,000 a year for its library, it ought to add the small sum of \$20,000 or \$30,000 more for the purchase of books, which would keep it abreast of the great libraries of the world. As it is, we have a great many good nuggets in the library. We have, for instance, the first folio edition of Shakespeare, a volume which is worth from \$4,000 to \$5,000. I think we should have not only every book, but all the editions of the greater writers that can be found."

"There is one idea that I would like to see grow in the minds of the rich men of the United States," continued Mr. Young, "and that is, that one of the best places to leave their money to is the National library. The British Museum library was founded by the gift of a man named Hans Sloan, one hundred and fifty years ago. It was first kept in one of the ducal palaces and for a time was called the King's library. George IV desired to sell it at one time, when he was hard up, but when he found that he could not do so he gave it to the people. It has since been largely increased by gifts. Just now I understand that there is a fine collection of