



ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

TRUSTEES

OF THE

NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY.

MARCH 31, 1856.



NEW YORK:

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(CORNER OF WHITE STREET.)

1856.



New York Society Library.

ANNUAL REPORT.

At the annual election by the shareholders in April, 1855, a sweeping change was made, and an entirely new Board of Trustees chosen. They were thus unexpectedly, and without experience, called upon to undertake the duty of administering the affairs of the Library, and executing measures that had been commenced by their predecessors. At the close of their year's service, they now present to the members a report of their proceedings, which, it is believed, will show that the concerns of the Library have been managed with energy and discretion.

The prominent subject which has occupied their attention during the year is the erection of the new Library Building, the plans for which had been adopted, and contracts made by the last Board. The cost of erecting, finishing, and furnishing, exceeded the entire resources that had been laid aside for this purpose. The Trustees have therefore been compelled to practise a close economy in the purchase of books and in the ordinary disbursements, and to strain every nerve to prevent the accumulation of a debt that should fetter hereafter the operations of the Library. In carrying out the plans of the building, the same care has been exercised to avoid all unnecessary expense, while nothing has been neglected that was considered of essential importance. The Building Committee—Messrs. Charles E. Anderson, Benj. H. Field, Wolcott Gibbs, J. P. Giraud Foster, and Robt. Leroy—have attended assiduously to the duty im-

posed upon them, and with a good judgment, which will be best seen and appreciated in its results.

The cost of the new building, as ascertained and estimated, is \$55,560. The estimates have been carefully made, and include, it is believed, a sufficient allowance for extras and contingencies. The following statement exhibits the condition of the finances as connected with the building :

Cost as per contracts and estimates,	\$55,560
Disbursements on account of new building to close of fiscal year,	\$ 30,485.50
Balance in Bank,	4,952.26
On deposit in U. S. Trust Co.,	11,400—46,837.76
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Leaving a balance to be provided for of	\$8,722.24

The Trustees expect confidently to receive the sum of \$5,000 from Messrs. D. Appleton & Co., and will appropriate the same when received to the building fund. In the settlement with Messrs. D. A. & Co. for the purchase of the premises, at the corner of Broadway and Leonard Street, this amount was reserved to meet the taxes for several years which had not been paid by the Trustees on the ground that the Library property was exempt from taxation. The subject was placed by the present Board in the hands of a special Committee, consisting of Messrs. H. Van Schaick, W. H. Anthon and Robert Leroy, who submitted an application to the Common Council for the remission of the tax. The late Corporation Counsel, Robert J. Dillon, Esq., gave an opinion, handed in in January last, in favor of the Library, and a report has been introduced into the Board of Councilmen in accordance with this view. If it should pass, there will remain a balance of about \$3,700. Payments and commutations from fifty-one new members, and commuters of dues which have not been collected at the close of the fiscal year, will reduce the amount. The friends of the Library by proper effort may easily provide for the remainder, and leave the institution in its new home entirely free from debt.

The shareholders will have good cause for gratification if this hope should be realized. The Trustees have had much

anxiety on the subject. At one time they saw no other resort but to raise by Bond and Mortgage on the property the sum of Twelve or Fifteen Thousand Dollars. They instituted an active personal canvass for new members. A public meeting of shareholders was held in Hope Chapel, February 15th, in order to awaken a more general attention and interest, at which Mr. John MacMullen, the Librarian, submitted some interesting and appropriate observations with respect to the value of the Library in its relations to our community. The address was ordered to be printed and widely circulated; subscriptions were opened at the meeting, and a committee appointed, consisting of Messrs. Elias G. Brown, Jacob Harsen and I. Green Pearson, to aid in obtaining additional members. Another meeting was held, under their direction, in the Chapel of the New York University, March 1st. The zealous labors of these gentlemen were highly successful, and tended greatly to strengthen and encourage the Trustees. The results thusfar secured during the year are 131 new members, and 112 commuters of the annual dues. This large accession is not only of great moment in furnishing the moneys that were needed, but constitutes an infusion of new life and indicates the commencement of a new era in the progress of the Library. It is, perhaps, more animating because of the few additions that appear, from the reports of the Treasurer, to have come in during several recent years.

For year ending March 31, 1852, two new members.

“ “ “ “ 1853, one do.

“ “ “ “ 1854, three do.

“ “ “ “ 1855, two do.

The amount of money collected and received into the Treasury, from these efforts, at the close of the fiscal year, is as follows :—

Receipts from new rights (109 new members),	. . .	\$2725
“ “ Commutation of dues, 83 rights,	. . .	6075
“ “ Subscriptions to aid Library,	. . .	295
		<hr/>
Total,	. . .	\$9095.

It was deemed proper to regard the receipts from these sources as capital, and not as available to meet current expenses for the support of the Library. They have accordingly been appropriated to the Building Fund.

The total number of shares outstanding at this date, including those recently disposed of, and not yet entered, is 1193.

The report of the Auditing Committee, to whom were referred the accounts of the Treasurer, Charles E. Strong, Esq., to be audited, accompanies and forms a part of this report. It contains a recapitulation of receipts and disbursements for all purposes. The duties of this officer, for the past year, have been peculiarly important and onerous, and the tribute of praise awarded him by the Auditing Committee is eminently well deserved.

A statement of the receipts and expenditures, for the support of the Institution, for the years ending March 31st, 1854, 1855, and 1856, is submitted, for the purpose of calling the attention of the friends of the Library to the necessity of imparting additional vitality to its operations. The rent to The American Bible Society is not included in either case, the interest on the accumulated fund being more than sufficient to counterbalance this charge, from which the Library will be entirely relieved hereafter, when occupying their own premises:—

Treasurer's Report for Year ending March 31st, 1854.

RECEIPTS.	DISBURSEMENTS.
Annual Dues, \$4174 00	Librarian, \$1021 56
New Members, 75 00	Janitor, 550 12
Commutations, 250 00	Boy, 106 00
Temporary Subscriptions, 201 00	Subscriptions to Periodicals, &c. 645 10
Certificates and Fines, . . 74 50	Books, 930 76
Catalogues sold, 56 00	Binding, 205 86
	Furniture, Repairs, &c., on removal, 544 41
	Fuel, 154 00
	Gas, 99 47
	Gas & Fixtures in Bible-house, 193 06
	Insurance, 225 00
	Sundries, Stationery, print- ing, &c. . . . 162 49
	Commission on collections, 178 10
Total receipts, \$4830 50	Total disbursements, \$5015 93
Deficiency,	\$185 43.

Treasurer's Report for Year ending March 31st, 1855.

RECEIPTS.	DISBURSEMENTS.
Annual Dues, \$3850 00	Librarian, \$ 900 00
New Members, 50 00	Janitor, 570 00
Commutations, 150 00	Boy, 68 00
Temporary Subscriptions, 90 00	Gas, 276 48
Certificates, 8 00	Insurance, 225 00
	Books, 833 97
	Subscriptions, 892 15
	Binding, 318 42
	Covering, 18 65
	Legal Costs, 160 85
	Collector's Commissions, 192 35
	Furniture, Repairs, &c., 31 98
	Extra labor, 42 00
	Sundries, Postage, Stationery, &c., 80 15
	\$4610 00
\$4148 00	
Deficiency, \$462	

Treasurer's Report for Year ending March 31st, 1856.

RECEIPTS.	DISBURSEMENTS.
Annual Dues, \$4626 00	Salaries, \$1596 50
Temporary Subscribers, 232 50	Books, 463 91
Hire of Books, 30 06	Newspapers, Magazines, &c., 532 10
New Certificates, 28 00	Printing, 39 75
Fines, 11 99	Binding, 131 75
Catalogues, 25 00	Stationery, 73 93
Examination Fees, 2 75	Covering Books, 10 02
Sundries (sale of gas pipes, &c.) 47 10	Furniture, Repairs, &c., 46 49
	Postage, 24 04
	Advertising, Stage Fare, Croton Tax, 57 17
	Gas, 210 42
	Insurance (on books and furniture), 450 00
	Commissions on Collections, 371 15
	Sundries, 54 62
	Public meetings, advertising, printing addresses and circulars, 258 57
	\$4320 42
\$5003 40	
Surplus, \$682 98	

The receipts from annual dues, temporary subscribers, &c., it will be seen, are considerably increased during the past year, arising from greater efforts or better success in collecting. There is still a large amount of back dues outstanding, part old arrearages, amounting in the aggregate to \$2434. Those who are in arrears are urged to come forward and discharge the same, or the Trustees will be compelled to enforce existing rules upon the subject.

But the exhibit is presented in order that the shareholders may see how essential it is that a new scale of operations should be at once commenced. This stagnation in the circulation must cease. Without a more liberal expenditure for books, the edifice just erected will stand as the monument of an institution defunct as to vigor and usefulness. The new shares disposed of will afford some increase of income; but as many have paid in full the commutation upon their shares, nothing will be received from them for annual support. There should be an unrelaxing effort to this end, in which the whole body of the shareholders should unite, because they are all equally interested. If the affairs of the Library are once placed in a satisfactory position in this particular, there will be no trouble in the future. The movement will perpetuate itself. The Library becoming more and more attractive, will command a constant augmentation of members and a proportionate increase of the annual income.

It is a favorable moment, when the institution has just removed to its beautiful and convenient new home, to present its advantages to the notice of intelligent readers. The Reading Room is well furnished with journals and periodicals. The Library contains forty thousand volumes, about eight thousand in classic and foreign tongues, and the remainder English books. It is not so well supplied as it should be with books recently published, to meet the wants of the reading public, but its accumulation and selections have been valuable and judicious. It is, on the whole, a very superior collection for its objects, and contains a large proportion of works of standard value.

The Society Library has in the past occupied a prominent rank among the institutions of New York in which the most cultivated of our citizens have taken an interest. Its catalogue of members is quite remarkable in this particular. Its relative influence was formerly more important when it was the only public library. Before the Astor Library was established, and before the Mercantile Library had attained its development as the most successful organization of its character in the world, the Society Library was the literary heart of the city. There is no good reason why it should not be so enlarged and attract around it so large a proportion of the lovers of literature, as again to claim the same position. It is the Family Circulating Library of the City of New York, and its place and work should be to exert an influence upon the general literary character of the city.

The influences of such an institution upon the intelligence and refinement of the family circle are deserving of serious and special examination. These influences are more needed perhaps in our country than in the more permanent social arrangements of older countries. As the sudden rise of fortunes elevates families with a rapidity unknown elsewhere, it is a more difficult object to secure that intellectual refinement that shall keep pace with the progress of wealth. There, the permanency of families in the same position from generation to generation, not only perpetuates an inheritance of literary cultivation and appreciation, but private libraries are in the same way kept up and transmitted. These are considerations which will strike any one upon reflection as entitled to great weight in estimating the value of a general family circulating library in our community. If the father and founder of the new family is absorbed in the busy pursuits of life, and the mother of the household is occupied during her domestic hours with the care of a great establishment, all the routine of which she has to learn by experience and manage for herself, let the sons and daughters who are to represent this opulence be cultivated so that they may grace it by their intelligence. To accomplish this object what means are there among us more available

and more valuable than the Society Library? The young ladies, when they have finished their course in the fashionable school, and the young men, when they have obtained their diploma certifying that they have been engaged during four years in the studies pursued in a college, may here find the means of mental improvement which their education qualifies them to enjoy and turn to advantage. The results upon the character and taste of both, and thus upon the whole tone of society, are obvious. Is not this evidently one of our great social wants, deserving the attention of those who are the leaders of our intellectual progress?

The claims of the Society Library on the favor of the intelligent are not restricted therefore to its uses in furnishing to readers knowledge and pleasant literary recreation, but are based upon the valuable public influence it is calculated to exert. It is a centre for the diffusion of intelligence among all classes of society, adding new charms to the attractions of home, and qualifying men and women for the wide range of social duties we are called upon to discharge.

The thought may occur to the minds of some, that these views present an overstatement of the case. It may be said that the multitudinous issues of the press constitute of themselves the most active and the best circulating library; that they are cheap in price and infinitely diversified in character; that they suit all tastes and supply almost all the wants of ordinary readers; that they meet the current tone of thought and knowledge, and thus form a complete substitute for the old-fashioned collections of large public libraries, except for the purposes of learned reference. It is undoubtedly a task for one to keep pace with the press in any department of literature. But this fact, instead of showing that a good family circulating library is useless, will afford an argument to demonstrate its value in directing the taste of the reader. He requires some competent judge to discriminate for him, or he may cram his mind with the veriest garbage. How shall he separate the kernels of the wheat from among the vast heaps of chaff! The trash is always heralded with the loudest flourish, and the

staring notices issued by publishers in commendation of their issues are the most deceptive of guides. It is impossible to estimate the waste of time and the positive mischief that result from the indiscriminate reading that is stimulated by these appliances. They constitute a species of moral quackery analogous to that which induces the ignorant to tamper with their health, by the use of nostrums warranted to cure all the diseases to which flesh is heir. The reader needs to have his taste and judgment somewhat cultivated before he can make his own choice safely. The good judgment of an intelligent Board of Trustees in such institutions as the Society Library will be a most valuable guide. It will be well for readers to be governed by it to a considerable extent in making their own purchases. For it cannot be doubted that the taste for reading that will be strengthened by a good public library, will lead individuals to surround themselves with books at home, and to purchase more and better ones than they would otherwise do. The public library is by no means an antagonist to the private library, but on the contrary tends to promote their establishment, and materially improve their character.

The internal affairs of the Library during the year, have gone on as usual. The Library Committee have been punctual in attendance upon their duties. The Reading Room has been as well attended, and the Library used to the same extent as for several recent years. In the month of May last, Mr. John MacMullen was appointed Librarian in place of Mr. Philip J. Forbes, resigned, who for so long a period had held that position. Mr. MacMullen is well qualified, and adapted for the place, and has discharged his duties to the satisfaction of the Trustees and Members, and all others with whom he has been brought into intercourse.

It will be unnecessary to furnish any detailed architectural description of the new building. It is now open for the inspection and use of the members, who will doubtless appreciate its simple and appropriate arrangements. The exterior and interior are in harmony with its character and objects, and

evinced the good taste of the former Board of Trustees who adopted the plan. Its location is very quiet, and will no doubt be found convenient by the larger proportion of the shareholders.

The building was commenced in April, 1855, and will be completed in April of the present year. Architects, Messrs. T. Thomas and Sons; mason, Alex. M. Ross; carpenter, Silas Sutton. The lot is 70 feet front on University Place by 104 feet deep. On the street the building is 52 feet wide, the remaining space being left on the sides in order to furnish light by windows to the interior. It has an entire depth of 86 feet, and spreads towards the rear so as to cover the whole width of the lot. The apartments are all well lighted and attractive.

The entrance is particularly easy. On entering, the visitor finds himself in a hall, forty-seven feet long, and twelve feet wide, handsomely laid with tessellated pavement. On the left hand is the Ladies' Reading Room, sixteen feet by thirty. This feature in the arrangements is generally regarded with much favor. It depends upon the ladies themselves to render their Reading Room a pleasant and improving literary resort. The Gentlemen's Conversation Room is a similar apartment opposite. At the end of the hall, folding-doors open into the large Reading Room, thirty one feet by seventy-three, inviting readers by its quiet ease of access and pleasant light, to sit down to its abundant literary entertainment.

In the hall near the entrance to the Reading Room, a wide flight of stairs leads to the Library, which offers to view a noble apartment thirty-five feet high, and extending over the entire width and depth of the building. Two galleries rising above, and receding as they rise, conduct the eye upwards to the ample sky-light covering nearly the whole open space. The books will be contained in alcoves arranged upon the floor and galleries, affording accommodation for 100,000 volumes.

The cost of the premises may be put down at seventy-five thousand dollars. The lot cost \$18,650, and the building

when completed, with its fitting up, is estimated above, at \$55,560.

The Trustees conclude their report with the expression of the hope that at no distant period large accessions of members, and an ample income, may justify and realize their view of the sphere of the Society Library, and be accompanied with a literary spirit, and a busy movement of intellectual life, worthy of its elegant establishment.

By order of the Trustees,

ROBERT KELLY, *Chairman.*

GEORGE C. ANTHON, *Secretary.*

March 31st, 1856

TO THE TRUSTEES
OF
The New York Society Library.

The Committee appointed under the fourth section of Title 1st, Chap. 1st, of the By-Laws, "to audit the accounts of the Society, to make a general inventory of all the real and personal estate belonging to the corporation, except the books, and a general statement of the accounts, funds and affairs of the corporation,"

Respectfully Report :

That they have examined the Treasurer's Accounts of cash received and paid during the year ending, March 31st, 1856, and find the same to be entirely correct ; that proper vouchers have been produced for all disbursements and satisfactory evidence of the amounts received ; and that, on that day, there remained a balance of four thousand nine hundred and fifty-two dollars and twenty-six cents in the American Exchange Bank to the credit of this corporation.

And the Committee furthermore embrace this as a proper and fitting occasion to express their admiration of the manner in which the duties of the Treasurer have been performed.

They consider that the thanks of the Trustees and of the Shareholders of the Society are especially due to the present Treasurer, for the zeal and skill which he has displayed in the management of the financial affairs of the corporation ; and they are unanimously of opinion, that the complicated and detailed accounts of the Society have been kept with a clearness and minute accuracy which is seldom equalled.

From the Treasurer's Accounts they derive the following statement of the receipts and payments during the fiscal year :

RECAPITULATION.

[RECEIPTS.]	PAYMENTS.
Balance in Bank at date of last report, . . . \$ 396 58	New Books, . . . \$463 91
Annual Dues, . . . 4626 00	Newspapers, . . . 256 91
New Rights (109 new members), . . . 2725 00	Magazines, . . . 275 19
Commutation of dues on 83 shares, . . . 6075 00	Maps, . . . 6 51
Temporary Subscriptions, 232 50	Printing, . . . 39 75
Subscriptions to aid Library, 295 00	Binding, . . . 131 75
Investments paid off, . . 37400 00	Stationery, . . . 73 93
Interest on investments, 8097 61	Covering Books, . . . 10 02
Special deposits, N. Y. Life Ins. & Trust Co. . . 23000 00	Furniture, . . . 30 73
Do. do. U. S. Trust Co. . . 4000 00	Repairs, . . . 9 25
Hire of books, . . . 30 06	Postage, . . . 24 04
New Certificates, . . . 28 00	Advertising, . . . 12 88
Fines, . . . 11 99	Stage fare, . . . 35 29
Catalogues sold, . . . 25 00	Croton Tax, . . . 9 00
Examination fees, . . . 2 75	Gas, . . . 210 42
P. J. Forbes (subscriptions for his benefit), . . 170 00	Expenses of Lecture and Shareholders' meetings, 258 57
Sundries, . . . 47 10	Rent, . . . 2487 50
	Insurance on new building, 350 00
	Do. on books and furniture, 450 00
	Salaries—Librarian, . . 950 00
	Janitor, . . . 546 00
	Boy, . . . 100 50
	Commissions on collections, 371 15
	P. J. Forbes, his account allowed, . . . 111 44
	Do., for his bond and mortgage, . . . 1029 60
	Do. expenses on mort. and insurance, . . . 11 87
	New Building—Carpenter's contract, . . . 9000 00
	Do., Mason's contract, . . 20500 00
	Do., Architect & Plans, . . 785 50
	Do., gas fitting, . . . 200 00
	Special deposit, N. Y. Life Ins. and Trust Co., . . 23000 00
	Do., U. S. Trust Co., . . 15400 00
	J. McMullen, to correct error in his account, . . 14 00
	Sundries, . . . 54 62
	Balance in bank at end of fiscal year, . . . 4952 26
Total, . . . \$82162 59	Total, \$82162 59

The Treasurer also exhibited to the Committee the following securities and vouchers, which, together with the furniture, &c., form the complete inventory required by the By-Laws above referred to :—

1.—Deed from A. E. Schermerhorn, for the land in University Place, on which the new building now stands, cost,	\$18650 00
2.—Building thereon. Cost up to the present time,	30485 50
3.—Bond and mortgage of Samuel F. Appleton to the Society, for part of the purchase-money of the old library building and lot; interest, 6 per cent.	5000 00
4.—Bond and mortgage of Philip J. Forbes to the Society, on house and land at Staten Island, on which there is due \$907 92 of principal, with interest, from Dec. 15th, 1855, at 7 per cent.	907 92
5.—A certificate of deposit for \$6000 in the United States Trust Company, bearing interest at 4 per cent. per annum, on which there is due \$2000,	2000 00
6.—A certificate of deposit from the same, at 4 per cent. per annum, with interest from November 6th, 1855,	2400 00
7.—A certificate of deposit from the same, at 4 per cent. per annum, with interest from February 5th, 1856,	7000 00
Cash in Bank,	4952 26
To which must be added the furniture, &c., now the property of the Society, and valued at	2000 00
	<hr/>
Total inventory of the property (books excepted),	\$73395 68

From this Inventory, it will be seen that the cost of the new Library building up to the present time, has been \$30,485 50. The total cost of the building when completed, with additional furniture, gas fixtures, furnaces, etc., is estimated at \$55,560, which will require a further expenditure of about \$25,000. In this sum the cost of moving may also be included. The available funds of the Society to meet these expenses amount to \$16,352 26. The money due on the bond and mortgage of Samuel F. Appleton is payable only in case of the remission, by the city authorities, of the arrears on his property formerly owned by the New York Society Library. A report favorable to such remission has already been presented to the Board of Councilmen, and has been adopted by that body. There is great reason to believe that an equally favorable decision is to be expected from the Board of Aldermen. In the event of the remission of these Taxes, there will remain

\$3,722 24 to be collected. Should the decision of the city authorities, however, be unfavorable, the sum to be raised would be \$8,722 24.

The Committee believe that, in any event, a sufficient sum can be raised by private subscription to pay off the whole debt to be incurred, and that it will not be necessary to borrow money on bond and mortgage.

They would express the earnest hope that both Trustees and Shareholders will use every exertion to raise the remainder of the money needed, as it will clearly be of great advantage to enter the new building entirely free from incumbrance.

The Committee furthermore report, that the new building for the Library is so far completed, that it has been deemed proper to commence the removal of the books. It is expected that the Library will be ready for use by the 1st of May at latest.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

WOLCOTT GIBBS, }
C. E. ANDERSON, } *Committee.*
ROBERT LEROY. }

NEW YORK, *April* 17th, 1856.