



*The Press and the Book in Eighteenth Century Philadelphia **

BEFORE political separation from the parent stem had become even a debatable concept in the continental American colonies, and long before the appeal to arms, a society distinct and different from that of the motherland had come into being on New World shores. The vagaries of climate and topography, the new values imposed by pioneer conditions, and the powerful alchemy of rapid growth, all contributed to its shaping. When that society became aware of its separateness and of the completeness of its divergence from the ways of Europe, conditions were ripe for revolution. But a thorough understanding of its own nature, and exhaustive discussion of the extent and character of its differences were necessary preludes to that full awareness, and to that end considerable contribution is to be found in the reading habits of literate populations, fostered and served by a vigorous colonial press.

* This article forms part of a larger work which will undertake to demonstrate the cultural achievements of the Philadelphia contemporaries of Benjamin Franklin. Thus, Franklin's activities as printer and founder of the Library Company are deliberately subordinated in order to bring out in bolder relief the work of his fellow citizens.

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In Philadelphia, where the press was unusually active in the generation preceding the Revolution, and where the machinery for Independence was later to be forged, this process of intellectual maturation can readily be observed. As producers, purveyors, defenders and aggressive propagators of enlightenment by the printed word, the forty-two printers who labored in the city from 1740 to 1776 played a prominent role. From their ranks, of course, came the colonies' leading citizen, Franklin, in the shadow of whose preeminence the importance of many of his fellow craftsmen has been obscured. Socially, politically and culturally, the printers of Philadelphia, and of the colonies in general, constituted a unique class, and yet a class that more than any other typified the spirit of their day and of the future. Skilled craftsmen, they belonged by interest and training with the mechanics and artisans, but the superior education which practice of their profession required placed them in the growing middle class, and the widening market for their wares occasioned by the increasing literacy of their times brought them material prosperity that often placed them economically at the head of it. Many of them had received their training in England or Scotland, and their views were thus imperial rather than provincial in scope; in religion, they were generally in the dissenting tradition, opposed to traditionalism, authoritarianism and establishment; and as the continued existence of their profession depended upon a free press, unhampered by censorship or laws of libel, they tended to ally themselves with radical movements and later with the patriot cause. Business brought them into contact with the colonial aristocracy, whose prejudices and psychology they soon learned to divine, at the same time that they were becoming every day more skillful at taking the public pulse, speaking for the commercial middle class, and inspiring the respect and trust of artisans and workers. They understood the art of propaganda, having had long experience in religious and social controversy before the Revolutionary movement began, and as the university extension lecturers of their day they had already hastened the achievement of a social revolution before any political upheaval had taken place. They were known and had connections in all the colonies, were continental rather than parochial in outlook, and before politicians or statesmen had a sort of intuitive understanding of America's mission in the world. Above all, to the best of them, printing was not only a trade, but a calling.

Two leading families, the Franklins and the Bradfords, dominated

the printing trade of Philadelphia and trained most of the local apprentices in these years. William Bradford was in many respects as prominent a Philadelphian as Poor Richard. Beginning in 1742 he conducted as good a newspaper, better printed, and a superior bookstore. He founded the city's leading coffee house in 1752, brought out two of the best colonial magazines, founded an insurance company, and became a leader in the Sons of Liberty. His aunt, Cornelia, was the first woman to operate successfully as printer and bookseller in Philadelphia, and his son Thomas ably carried on the family tradition as bookseller, proprietor of a circulating library, and partner to his father in the printing business. For a span of one hundred and forty years, from 1685 to 1823, the Bradfords were the most distinguished and influential family of printers on the continent.¹

From Scotland came Robert Bell and Thomas Aitken, and from Ireland Andrew Steuart of Belfast and John and William Dunlap of County Tyrone; these men with Bradford were responsible for most of the literary output of the Philadelphia press. A Connecticut Yankee, William Goddard, gave the city its finest newspaper. Anthony Armbrüster and the scholarly Henry Miller produced in Philadelphia, after 1760, fifty-four per cent of the German imprints of the province, while in nearby Germantown the Christopher Sowers, elder and younger, accounted for the bulk of the remainder. In 1769 Goddard lent encouragement to American infant manufactures by printing his *Chronicle* on a mahogany press made by Isaac Doolittle of Connecticut, "equal if not superior to any imported," and in 1775 Enoch Story and David Humphreys began the publication of the *Pennsylvania Mercury*, "the first Work with American Types," cast by Jacob Bay of Germantown. Three years earlier William and Thomas Bradford had sought to encourage their craft in rural areas by the sale of "The New Universal Portable Printing Presses."²

The printing trade expanded to keep pace with the city's growth and the eight shops of 1740 had become twenty-three by the eve of the Revolution. Conservative calculation estimates the total output of the Philadelphia press, 1740-1776, at over 11,000 issues of all kinds; of

¹ John William Wallace, *An Old Philadelphian: Colonel William Bradford; D. A. B.*, II. 564; *Antiques* (Aug., 1930), 144.

² Charles R. Hildeburn, *A Century of Printing. The Issues of the Press in Pennsylvania, 1685-1784*; *Newport Mercury*, Aug. 21, 1769; *Pennsylvania Journal*, Nov. 4, 1772; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Dec. 5, 1774; *Pennsylvania Mercury*, April 7, 1775; F. B. Dexter, ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, I. 549.

these about fifteen per cent were in the German tongue. Naturally, as in our own day, the majority of items were of an immediate or utilitarian nature, serving the commercial or political demands of the community—business and legal forms of all varieties, handbills, tickets, catalogues and various types of government printing. A smaller, but by no means unimportant body of imprints suggests the vital role played by the printers in the cultural life not only of Philadelphia but of the colonies as a whole. Nearly every press annually sent forth its almanac—Poor Richard's is only the best known—which sold widely in city and country, in rural stores in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, the Lower Counties, and Maryland, and in the southern back country as far as Georgia. In addition to their pages of needed information about the vagaries of nature, these little booklets contained the usual homely sayings and essays often of some instructive or cultural value. Armbrüster's German Almanac for 1756, for instance, carried a very good account of the American Indians.³

Religion and religious controversy provided the colonial printer with a lucrative source of income. Quakers, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Lutherans and German Sectarians, all had their popular divines whose sermons were regularly published by favorite printers and eagerly read by the faithful. The 1740's witnessed a deluge of sermons from the pens of George Whitefield and Gilbert Tennent, and from those of their supporters and opponents. Religious zeal among the Germans, pietist and orthodox, accounted for many more. Some of these theological essays dealt with doctrine and piety, almost more, it appears, with sectarian or internecine controversy. Many were well written, others too often failed to rise above mere bickering and drivel. But to the people of the day this pulpit literature served a cultural purpose in presenting fodder for both mind and spirit, and in reviewing vital and current issues, as frequently political as religious, for none can tell where the line between the two may be drawn. Minds unexposed to more liberal influences became from this intellectual diet at least accustomed to the perusal of exposition and argument. A considerable number of these sermons went into second editions, and many were translated into another language, where they played their part in the interchange of cultures.

Second only to the sermons, and increasing in importance as the period advanced, were the pamphlets, floods of which poured from

³ Hildeburn, *op. cit.*, *passim*; American Antiquarian Society, *Proceedings*, XXXI. 191.

the presses whenever a debatable issue arose. The Great Awakening, the perennial struggle between Assembly and Proprietors, the French menace and the question of frontier defense, Judge Moore's libels on the Assembly, the Paxton affair, the debate over an Anglican Episcopate, and like questions evoked arguments pro and con which Philadelphians avidly devoured in pamphlet form. Many were witty, others satirical; some were bumptious, others scurrilous; a small number were fair, a few were dignified, but all appealed because they were partisan in a partisan age, and because they dealt with matters of immediate import and general interest. A surprising number prove to have been written in an able controversial prose style worthy of authors who had been schooled in the golden age of English pamphleteering. They were the editorial, or better the columnistic writings of their day. Constant reading of such tracts accustomed people of all classes, but especially of the middling and lower estates, to the examination and discussion of controversial issues of all sorts. It is a grave mistake to assume that the Pennsylvania audience for the great political polemics of Dickinson, Galloway, Dulany and Jefferson was confined to the intellectualized gentry. When a conservative of 1775 observed with alarm that "the mob begins to reason," he was only discovering what had been slowly and inexorably developing for three decades, what the printers had long known, and controversialists at least suspected.

The most influential of the social and cultural services performed by the printers was to be found in the fifteen newspapers issued from their presses prior to the Revolution. In 1740 there were only two news-sheets published in the city—Franklin's *Pennsylvania Gazette* and Bradford's *American Weekly Mercury*. Andrew Bradford died in 1740, but his newspaper, under the editorship of his wife, Cornelia, survived him by a decade, while in 1742 his nephew, William Bradford, commenced publication of the *Pennsylvania Journal*. For many years Franklin and the Bradfords monopolized the English newspaper field in Philadelphia. Regarded by its publishers, Franklin and David Hall, primarily as a business enterprise, the *Gazette* successfully straddled religious and political issues. William Bradford and his *Journal*, on the other hand, tended toward definite support of the Proprietary party. In 1767, therefore, Joseph Galloway and Thomas Wharton, seeking an organ for the Assembly, set up William Goddard as proprietor of the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*. Increasing business, an ever-

widening circle of readers, and the insatiable demand for news in the exciting period of the 'seventies saw the establishment of four more English newspapers by 1776.⁴

Thus far Philadelphia's journalistic history merely parallels that of Boston and other seaboard cities, but the presence of a large and increasing German population of considerable economic and political importance led publishers to try to cater to their audience by means of an urban newspaper. But between 1743 and 1755 no less than five attempts to publish a German or bilingual newssheet failed, either from the political hostility of the German public, or from the difficulty of competing with Christopher Sower of Germantown. His variously titled publication was first issued in 1739 and held the field until 1762.⁵ In June, 1755, William Smith and supporters of the German charity school movement purchased a press from Franklin and began publication of the *Philadelphische Zeitung* under the editorship of Franklin and Anthony Armbrüster, his partner, with the avowed purpose of counteracting Sower's incessant and very effective propaganda against the charity schools. This paper never enjoyed more than 400 subscribers, while at the same time Sower's had a circulation of over 4,000. It remained for a German printer of marked ability to found a permanent newspaper for his people in the city. Henry Miller, a Moravian, with printing experience acquired in Germany, France, Holland and the British Isles, who knew both English and German, city and country, began in 1762 publication of *Der Wöchentliche Philadelphische Staatsbote. Mit den neusten Fremden und Einheimisch Politischen Nachrichten; Samt den von Zeit zu Zeit in der Kirche und Gelehrten Welt sich ereignenden Merkwürdigkeiten*. Frankly conducting his sheet in opposition to Sower, Miller made it a successful venture by supplying the Germans with a better paper. He had a good eye for business and secured many English patrons by offering free translations of news items and advertisements. As early as 1764 he reported that the *Staatsbote* circulated "not only through all Pennsylvania, but likewise goes to Georgia, South and North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, the Jerseys, New York, Albany, up to the Mohawk River, Nova Scotia, and the West Indies," in short, wherever in

⁴ *Ibid.*, XXXII; William Goddard, *The Partnership*. . . (1770).

⁵ *Der Hoch-Deutsch Pennsylvanische Geschicht-Schreiber*, 1739-1743; *Hoch-Deutsch Pennsylvanische Berichte*, 1743-1745; *Pennsylvanische Berichte*, 1745-1776.

the New World settlements of Germans, however small, might be found. Miller eagerly espoused the patriot cause, and to his paper may be attributed much of the influence which brought the Germans of Pennsylvania and the Shenandoah Valley to the side of the revolting colonists.⁶

Philadelphians of 1776 had access to seven newspapers. Five of them were published so that at least one came off the press every weekday morning except Wednesday; the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* appeared every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evening, and the *Staatsbote* every Tuesday and Thursday. Constituting about one-seventh of all newspapers printed on the continent, editions of from two to three thousand were published and widely circulated, not only in town and province, but throughout the colonies. Goddard of the *Chronicle* had some twenty-two subscription agents at work throughout Pennsylvania, some as far west as Carlisle and Bedford, three in Delaware, six in New Jersey, six in Maryland and one in Virginia, while all continental and West Indian printers and booksellers received copies of his paper. Bradford sent his *Pennsylvania Journal* to seven persons in Jamaica, eight in Barbados, four in Antigua, four in St. Kitts, eighteen in Dominica, three in England and one at Bordeaux, as well as to a wide list of subscribers in the continental colonies. Ezra Stiles of Newport, R. I., regularly received and read several Philadelphia papers. In 1765 Bradford received at one time a request to add twelve new subscriptions to the eight he was already sending by the Lancaster Post to York, Pa., and in 1775 eight gentlemen of Northampton County raised a fund for a post rider "for his pains in carrying each of our newspapers from Philadelphia." In estimating the influence of a colonial newspaper it must be borne in mind that many more readers used the same copy then than now. To taverns and coffee houses in the city, and to country stores and inns people flocked to read the news themselves or to hear it read. As a practical and political force for the molding of opinion these little sheets exerted an almost incalculable influence in town and country. "However little some may think of common News-Papers," wrote "Providus" in a *Pennsylvania*

⁶ American Antiquarian Society, *Proceedings*, XXXI. 200; *Pennsylvania Journal*, June 12, 1764; Oct. 17, 1765; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 3, 1765; *Philadelphische Staatsbote*, Jan. 18, 1762; July 12, 26, 1774; John Walter Wayland, *German Element in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia*, 141.

Gazette of 1768, "to a wise man they appear as the ark of God, for the safety of the people."⁷

These same agencies exerted a profound influence, often overlooked, in the formation of a colonial culture. The writer just quoted mentions in his praise of newspapers their "fulness of general Entertainment, small bulk and price." Most printers defined "general Entertainment" broadly, while adhering to the principle, now often ignored, that "generally speaking, the little concerns of individuals ought not to fill up the useful pages of a newspaper." Often they seem to bring a sense of cultural mission to an otherwise very practical business. William Goddard aimed to make his *Pennsylvania Chronicle* "useful, instructive and entertaining," with the result that he published far and away the best sheet in the Middle Colonies. Benjamin Towne, desiring to present by way of the public press a complete history of the commerce, politics and "Literature of the Times," founded Philadelphia's first evening and tri-weekly paper in 1775, and as token of his sincerity offered to publish without cost, in addition to the usual literary contributions, any advertisements of useful inventions in agriculture or manufactures. Most publishers volunteered their columns for the support of civic and humanitarian projects. All at one time or another carried political and moral essays, often expressed in skillful and highly competent prose. Controversies on all subjects, often running tandem in more than one paper, sharpened the wits of readers, while ubiquitous advertising columns informed them of the services of schoolmasters, painters, musicians, and other practitioners of the arts and crafts. Much of the medical and scientific production of the city first reached a wider audience through the public prints.⁸

In both consumption and production the newspaper press stimulated the literary tastes of its subscribers. Like other colonial papers Goddard's *Chronicle* carried frequent reprints of current English verse. Bradford's *Journal* in 1767 instituted a "Poet's Corner" for the productions of local bards, masculine and feminine, and the *Mercury* began another in 1775 which is significant for the number of verses contributed by "females." The supplement to the issue of the *Packet* for October 28, 1771, was devoted almost exclusively to scientific or liter-

⁷ *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, Aug. 17, 1767; Oct. 28, 1771; Nov. 1, 1773; Wallace, *op. cit.*, 315-318; *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XIV. 445; XXXIX. 495; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 7, 1768.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Aug. 3, 1785; *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Jan. 24, 1775.

ary advertisements and contributions, including proposals for publishing several solid works in these fields and an essay on "Inducements to Natural Philosophy." Anonymous appearance in this same paper during March and April, 1772, of the "Letters of Tamoc Caspipina" occasioned much speculation as to their authorship. Perhaps the most conscious of the cultural potentialities of the newspaper press was Henry Miller, who as a patriotic Pennsylvanian and an apostle to his people, consistently employed the columns of his *Staatsbote* in an effort to stimulate the cultural and educational development of the Germans in Pennsylvania. Hoping to Anglicize his people by his emphasis on English ways and ideas, he also sought to better their position in the colony by interpreting them to the larger English-speaking public. In 1762, as a contribution to solution of the language problem in business, he began the weekly publication of English lessons in his paper, and pioneered in the use of phonetics. After 1768 the *Staatsbote* carried an increasing amount of verse, chiefly of a religious nature.⁹

Philadelphia printers also pioneered in the publication of magazines. In January of 1741 there appeared in close succession the two earliest American periodicals, Andrew Bradford's *American Magazine* and Benjamin Franklin's *General Magazine*. Despite their prompt demise, the idea of a literary periodical carried on, and in 1757 William Bradford began issuing a really first-rate publication, the *American Magazine and Monthly Chronicle*, edited by a "Society of Gentlemen," chief among them the Rev. Mr. William Smith. With an initial subscription list of over 850, this magazine might have commanded wide patronage, had not its editor got himself imprisoned as corollary to a political squabble and been forced to cease publication after one year. From Bradford's press also, in 1769, issued another important periodical, *The American Magazine or General Repository*, edited by Lewis Nicola. Its brief nine months of existence were remarkable for the large number and significant quality of its scientific contributions. The outbreak of the Revolutionary War cut short the life of Philadelphia's fifth magazine of the period, Robert Aitken's *Pennsylvania Magazine, or American Monthly Museum*. This was launched in January, 1775, under the editorship of Thomas Paine,

⁹ *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, Feb. 29, 1768; *Pennsylvania Journal*, Jan.-Oct., 1768; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Oct. 28, 1771 (suppl.); *Pennsylvania Mercury*, Apr. 7, 1775; *Philadelphische Staatsbote*, Jan. 18, May 4, 1762; Mar. 22, 1768.

and came to an end with the publication of the Declaration of Independence in the issue of July, 1776. During their abbreviated lifetimes these little magazines offered a varied literary fare, often as imitative as the tastes of their readers and as unoriginal as their titles. Yet they furnish an accurate reflection of cultural fashions among a large section of Philadelphia society, and offered publication outlets for a considerable variety of local creative efforts.¹⁰

As the century advanced book publishing came to be an important factor in the printing trade. Prior to 1750 most books from Philadelphia presses were reprints or simple piracies of English works of a practical or religious nature. Ready reckoners, treatises on farriery or family medical books early found an assured market. But with the development of leisure and the expansion of reading tastes enterprising publishers, unhampered by any law of copyright, began to bring out American editions of the current best sellers of England and Europe. Franklin reprinted *Pamela* in 1744; Bradford brought out an edition of Pope's *Essay on Man* in 1748; while from the press of James Chattrin issued More's *Utopia* in 1753. With the mounting demand in the '60s for reprints such as these, certain publishers began to specialize in this type of work. Between 1768 and 1776 the shrewd Scotsman, Robert Bell, published such standard works as Johnson's *Rasselas*, the *Letters* of Montaigne, Robertson's *Charles V*, in three volumes, Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, the first American edition of Blackstone's *Commentaries*, in five volumes, Ferguson's *Essay on Civil Society* and Lord Kames' *History of Man*. Bradford's 1769 edition of the poetical works of Charles Churchill, issued in conjunction with Rivington of New York, had over 2200 advance subscribers. In 1774 James Humphreys published the first American edition of an author's collected works, those of Lawrence Sterne, which he followed with four volumes of Chesterfield's *Letters*.¹¹

Among authors similarly honored with American reprints were Defoe, Goldsmith, Gray, Locke, Priestley, and Young, but the reproductive activity of Philadelphia presses was by no means limited to serious and "highbrow" literature. In response to growing interest in the theater after the successful appearance of the American Com-

¹⁰ Lyon N. Richardson, *History of Early American Magazines, 1741-1789*, 17, 98, 148-149, 156, 174.

¹¹ Hildeburn, *op. cit.*, *passim.*; *New York Mercury*, Nov. 21, 1768; *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, Aug. 2, 1773; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Apr. 25, 1774.

pany, Andrew Steuart undertook the reprinting of popular plays for American readers. Among the eleven published under his imprint in 1762 were such ephemera as *Edgar and Emmeline, a Tragedy*, *The Old Maid*, and *The Double Disappointment; or, the Humours of Phelim O'Blunderoo, Esq.* Reprints of current favorites in the theater, works of Cumberland, Garrick or Goldsmith, also found a ready sale. Local publishers supplied the tastes now satisfied by pulp magazines or drugstore fiction with such titles as *Life Truly painted in the History of Tommy and Harry, Jacky and Maggy's Courtship*, *The Man of Sensibility*, by Sarah Scott, or *The School for Husbands, A Sentimental Novel*, while John Dunlap appealed to the worthy desire to be both entertained and entertaining with *The Wits of Westminster*, a new "Select Collection of Jests, Bon Mots, Humorous Tales, Brilliant Repartees, Epigrams, and other Sallies of Wit and Humour, Chiefly New and Original. Being an agreeable and lively companion for the parlour, or wherever such a companion is most necessary and pleasing."¹²

The move to encourage local manufactures, though inspired by political rather than intellectual considerations, greatly stimulated the publication of American reprints. In announcing his edition of *The Vicar of Wakefield* to the "Lovers of Literary Amusement, and the Encouragers of American Manufactures," in 1772, William Mentz urged its purchase because it was "neatly bound," gilt and lettered, printed on Pennsylvania-made paper, and would sell for four shillings sixpence, whereas the English edition cost eight shillings. The absence of a copyright enabled American printers to undersell their British competitors. To Robert Bell belongs the credit for introducing to Philadelphians numbers of reprints in "home-made garb" of good current literature at greatly reduced prices. While the Quakers debated reprinting in America the works of English Friends, Anthony Benezet in 1771 wrote to George Dilwyn by way of argument that "Several Books have of late been printed here, such as the History of Charles V, Tissot on health, Foundation of Laws, &c., which have sold considerably cheaper than in England."¹³

A large part of the printers' cultural activities consisted in the publication of school books. Spread of education brought an increasing

¹² Hildeburn, *op. cit.*, *passim.*; *Pennsylvania Packet*, July 12, 1773.

¹³ *Pennsylvania Packet*, Nov. 2, 1772; Jan. 26, 1773; George S. Brookes, *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 282.

demand for textbooks, and it is probable that in actual number of copies printed this category exceeded all others combined. Edition after edition of Dilworth's speller issued from Philadelphia presses, usually in printings of from 2,000 to 4,000 copies, although Dunlap published one printing of 10,000 in 1772. Between 1749 and 1766 Franklin and Hall printed 36,100 copies of their primer, and Henry Miller published the Moravian speller in frequent editions of 2,000. Dissatisfaction with imported schoolbooks and their frequent inapplicability to conditions in Philadelphia led many local pedagogues to write their own. Theophilus Grew was author of *The Description and Use of the Globes*, for use at the Academy in 1753, and in 1761 Andrew Steuart published Thomas Abel's *A Treatise of Substantial [sic] Plane Trigonometry, applied to Navigation and Surveying*, which was adorned with seven plates. Also from the press of Steuart in 1763 came a Latin Grammar for the College, which is of more than passing interest, since the satirical pamphlet it evoked in criticism, *Errata, or the Art of Printing Incorrectly*, which pointed out 151 errors in 137 pages, so incensed the faculty that they excluded its author, Francis Hopkinson, from musical participation in the next commencement. Peter de Préfontaine produced *A New Guide to the French Tongue* (1757), and William Thorne, writing master, compiled *A New Set of Copies . . . for the Use of Schools* (1763). J. Bachmair's German Grammar passed through three editions, and Christopher Doch's famous *Schul Ordnung*, through two. Of romantic interest, at least, was David Zeisburger's *Delaware Indian Speller* of 1776.¹⁴

Philadelphia early became a center of medical publication in America, and by 1776 at least eighteen important medical works had issued from its presses. Of these only three were reprints; the rest came from the pens of local physicians. The most notable were Thomas Cadwalader's *Essay on the West India Dry-Gripes* (1745), Adam Thompson's *Discourse on the Preparation of the Body for the Small Pox* (1751), and *Observations on the Angina Maligna, or putrid sore throat* (1769) by John Kearsley, Jr., as well as four dissertations by graduates of the first class at the Medical School in 1771.

Publication between 1750 and 1770 of about fifty pieces best classified as *belles lettres* indicates that virtually any effort in poetry

¹⁴ Hildeburn, *op. cit.*, *passim.*; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Nov. 4, 1771.

or prose that merited public notice found its way into print. Philadelphia authors did not lack a vehicle of expression nor did they languish for want of public appreciation, for local newspapers willingly offered them a trial in their columns and the printers saw to it that all worthy performances were issued separately. At least one native author suffered the compliment of seeing himself pirated; Francis Hopkinson was forced to advertise in the newspapers that Dunlap's authorized edition of his *Science, a Poem* (1762), for sale by Dunlap, Hall and Bradford in Philadelphia, and in Boston and New York by Rivington, had been secretly reissued by Steuart "in a very incorrect Duodecimo Pamphlet in order to undersell the first edition,"—"a common trick by this printer."¹⁵

Virtually all printers, whether publishers or not, operated bookstores in conjunction with their business. In addition, shops devoted exclusively to the sale of books were opened from time to time, with the result that there were over thirty such establishments in the city of the 'seventies, where only five had existed in 1742. The better bookshops carried a fairly complete stock of books in current demand, works published in Philadelphia and other colonial cities, maps, charts, prints, and often stationery, but the bulk of their volumes they imported from England, Germany or France. Philadelphia booksellers also sent frequent special orders to their English agents for specific works or for subscriptions to English periodicals. Some dealers tended to concentrate on one line of publication: James Chattin, as printer to the Society of Friends, lined his shelves principally with Quaker tracts and commentaries; Sparhawk and Anderton in 1768 displayed "a very great choice of books adapted for the instruction and amusement of all the little masters and mistresses in America." The 1772 catalogue of William Woodhouse featured "many uncommon books, seldom to be found," while Charles Startin specialized in fine editions, Bibles, and the works of Milton, Terence, Catullus, Lucretius, Juvenal, Horace and Virgil "printed by Baskerville, of Birmingham, and bound in an elegant manner." High prices for these collector's items enabled their purveyor to move in genteel circles, and along with such other Philadelphians as the Biddles and the Redwoods, he was an early summer colonist at Newport. The larger firms of Aitken, Bell, Bradford, Dunlap, Franklin and Hall, Miller, and Rivington maintained extensive

¹⁵ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 18, 1762.

stocks of history, biography, travel, general and polite literature, theology, jurisprudence, surgery and medicine, in addition to household works and volumes on the practical arts. In the 1770's one-fifth of the city's booksellers, chief among them Henry Miller, dealt in local and imported works in the German tongue, while other shops handled a wider variety of French titles than might be found in other colonial cities.¹⁶

The problem of book marketing is as old as the trade, and Philadelphia booksellers demonstrated considerable ingenuity in its solution. Elaborate advertisements appeared in all newspapers, listing current offerings at great length—Hall and Bradford often filled whole pages—or stressing titles on a particular subject. It was not alone to the city buyer that these notices appealed; considerable country custom was thereby attracted to the shops of Philadelphia book merchants. Edward Shippen of Lancaster maintained an account with David Hall, but for special items he was wont to commission his nephew, Edward Burd, then in Philadelphia for his schooling. In response to his request for certain French newspapers young Burd wrote him in 1770: "I went to Church Alley and could not observe any Printer's Shop or Books at the Windows any where near that place except at Stewart's Old Shop, where I could get none. Mr. Hall, Mr. Bradford, Mr. Dunlap, Evitt, Sellers and Cruikshank are all without them." Many Marylanders found Philadelphia book stores more amply stocked for their purposes than those at Annapolis. "I should be obliged to you to forward any new Books or Productions of Genius to me, such as Pamphlets, &c.," the Rev. Mr. Philip Hughes of Coventry wrote to Bradford in 1768, and he concluded with the somewhat inadequate assurance, "You shall be payd with thanks." Many in the trade sold by wholesale as well as retail, and published catalogues of their lists. James Young announced in 1772 that "Considerable allowances will be made those who may take quantities, and orders from town or country [will be] carefully and expeditiously executed," and James Chattin urged his

¹⁶ *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, June 20, 1768; Sept. 19, 1772; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Dec. 27, 1773. For German booksellers, see: Franklin, *Works* (ed. Bigelow), II. 297; *Philadelphische Staatsbote*, June 10, 1772; Dec. 20, 1774; Hildeburn, *op. cit.*, for the years 1769-1776. Wallace, *op. cit.*, 90-93; *Modern Philology*, XXXII. 157-177.

reasonable prices upon "Shopkeepers, Hawkers, &c., who buy . . . Books to sell again" in rural communities.¹⁷

Foremost among the booksellers and publishers of colonial Philadelphia was the Scotsman, Robert Bell, an exceedingly witty man of "doubtful" religion, who in the sober Quaker capital openly kept a mistress and fathered an illegitimate child, but nevertheless made good in business. By production and sale of numberless current English works in cheap reprints, Bell not only taught his fellow citizens to buy and read good literature, but forced his competitors to adopt the same tactics. Advertising was to him no prosaic listing of titles to be sold, but a humorous adventure, a game he played with his potential customers, bullying, flattering, cajoling, and appealing to their native snobbery. The sign before his shop read "Jewels and Diamonds for Sentimentalists," and his newspaper advertisements addressed variously the "Sons of Science," the "Sentimentalists of America," or more inclusively, "The Lovers of literary entertainment, amusement and instruction." Announcing the third volume of Robertson's *Charles U*, Bell asserted that all gentlemen who "possess a sentimental taste" will wish to participate in this "XENOPHONTIC BANQUET" at three dollars a copy. He was moreover a pioneer in "national" or continental advertising, buying large amounts of space in nearly every colonial newspaper for announcing his first American editions of such works as Blackstone's *Commentaries* and Robertson's *Charles U*.¹⁸

Because he became the first important buyer of private libraries and dealer on a large scale in secondhand books, Bell succeeded in developing the book auction to its colonial apogee. This institution had been known in the city since 1744, but increase in publishing activity rendered it more useful and necessary. To meet the costs of paper, binding and manufacture a publisher had usually to print about 3,000 copies of a work, and if, after a year or so, he found he

¹⁷ Lewis Burd Walker, ed., *The Burd Papers. Selections from Letters Written by Edward Burd, 1763-1828*, 46, 57; J. T. Wheeler, "Literary Culture in Eighteenth Century Maryland" (Ms. Thesis, Brown University), 17, 181, 265, 283; *Pennsylvania Journal*, Feb. 26, 1754; Dec. 4, 1760; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Nov. 23, 1772.

¹⁸ *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XXVIII. 376; American Anti-Quarian Society, *Proceedings*, XXXI. 176; *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, Feb. 11, 1771; Mar. 28, 1768; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Sept. 6, 1773; Apr. 25, Sept. 5, 1774.

had overcalculated the market, was accustomed to dispose of the surplus at auction. By selling below cost, one printer explained, he could realize "dead stock into live cash, and may again attempt the work of some celebrated author whose writings will diffuse knowledge throughout America." None knew this better than Bell, who in 1772-1774 led his colleagues in an attack on the decision of the Assembly to include books along with other classes of merchandise, auctioneering of which should be confined to officially appointed vendue-masters. The fight was successful in time to permit him to dispose by his favorite method of the books of William Byrd of Virginia, of which "Perhaps as many as 40 waggon loads" were reported to have been sent to Philadelphia.

But Robert Bell seldom took any loss when disposing of a parcel of books in this fashion, for those who attended his sales reported he sold higher at auctions than over the counter in his shop. This desire to sell at as "exorbitant a price as he could command" undoubtedly furnishes the key to the unorthodoxy of his methods. He was "full of drollery, and many, going to his auction for the merriment, would buy a book from good humour. It was as good as a play to attend his sales. . . . There were few authors of whom he could not tell some anecdote, which would get the audience in a roar. He sometimes had a can of beer beside him, and would drink comical healths. His buffoonery was diversified and without limit." With irresistible gusto he urged the public into his sales, where "the Provodore to the Sentimentalists will exhibit food for the mind, where he that buys may reap substantial advantage, because he that readeth much ought to know much." Bell's competitors were no match for him, even the firm doing business under the euphonious name of Honey and Mouse. He institutionalized the colonial book auction, and more than any one else in these years laid the solid foundations for book publishing in America.¹⁹

The purchasing of books and the building of private collections lay within the province of the rich alone, but the urge for self-improvement through reading was strong among mechanics and tradesmen, and led them to pool their resources to accomplish their

¹⁹ *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, Apr. 11, June 13, 1768; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Jan. 26, Nov. 1, 1773; *Votes of Pennsylvania Assembly*, VI. 369, 504; *Pennsylvania Statutes at Large*, VIII. 389; *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Nov. 23, 1775; American Antiquarian Society, *Proceedings*, XXXI. 129, 225, 232.

desires. At the instigation of Benjamin Franklin and with patronage from James Logan, a group of Philadelphia tradesmen together with a few gentlemen had organized the Library Company upon which the Proprietors conferred a plot of land and a charter in 1742. The acquisitions of this organization during its first two decades of existence reflect the outstanding desire of its middle-class members for serious books and volumes of instruction on a variety of subjects. Peter Kalm reported in 1748 that "there is already a fine collection of excellent works, most of them in English; many French and Latin, but few in any other language," and that "Several little libraries were founded in the town on the same principle or nearly so."²⁰

Because membership in the Library Company was limited and somewhat expensive, other subscription libraries sprang up to meet the broadening demand. In 1747 a group of twenty-six professional men, tradesmen and artificers, among them Benjamin Price, attorney and possessor of one of the best law collections in the colonies, Joseph Chattin, printer and publisher, George Heap, mapmaker, William Ranstead, private school teacher, and William Savery, creator of exquisite furniture, opened the Union Library Company in a room on Second Street. Its first catalogue, printed by Chattin in 1754, contained 317 titles. In 1755 this library moved to a room on Chestnut Street, and in 1759, with membership limited to one hundred and fully subscribed, it received its charter from the hand of Governor Denny. The Union's catalogue of 1765 reveals a broadening of its collection from purely utilitarian works to include such items as *Joseph Andrews*, *Chinese Tales*, *Cibber's Lives of the Poets*, *Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem*, and finally *How to Govern a Wife*; at least, these titles had proved so popular that the librarian had to advertise for their return the preceding year.²¹

In 1757 two libraries appeared to provide for would-be readers not included in the limited memberships of the Library and Union Companies. Quakers and successful artisans made up the original forty-six who subscribed twenty shillings each to found the Association Library; included were John and Benjamin Mifflin, James and Thomas Wharton, Benjamin Betterton and Owen Biddle; also, William Bradford and David Hall, printers, James Gillingham,

²⁰ Austin K. Gray, *Benjamin Franklin's Library*; Per Kalm, *Travels in North America* (ed. A. B. Benson), I. 25.

²¹ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 9, 1754; May 6, 1756; Nov. 8, 1759; Apr. 12, 1764.

cabinetmaker, Christopher Marshall, apothecary, and Thomas Stretch, clockmaker. In less than ten years the limit of 200 members had been reached, necessitating a consideration of its enlargement, and its collections, housed in a new room on Chestnut Street, totalled 570 volumes.²² A few weeks after the Quaker gentry and craftsmen had combined to father the Association, a group of "humble" men founded the Amicable Company, more nearly a workingmen's library. Too poor to assemble a large collection or to issue a printed catalogue, but none the less eager to enjoy the fruits of reading, the members struggled along for nine years in their "Library Room" on Third Street. In 1765 these artisans somewhat expanded the original purpose of their association when at their annual meeting they treated themselves to "a lecture on Electricity, accompanied with Suitable Experiments." This departure was in a sense their swan song, for the next year the subscribers voted to add forty shillings to the value of each share to enable them to unite with the Union Library Company.²³

Gradual realization of the folly of maintaining a number of small libraries with similar aims and purposes came to a head about 1764, when both the Union and Association Companies were debating the enlargement of their memberships. The Union reduced the price of its shares in 1766, which enabled it to absorb the poorer Amicable Library Company, and two years later it negotiated a similar merger with the Association. Finally, in 1768-9 the Union members were asked to consider "the Utility of conveying their Estate to and becoming Members of the Library Company," a movement which resulted in the emergence of the original Library Company of Philadelphia as a single strong institution with a large membership, excellent collections and ample financial support. With this series of mergers, undertaken because "it appeared more conducive to the interests of literature to be possessed of one large, than of several smaller collections of books," Benjamin Franklin had nothing to do, as he was throughout these years serving the colony as its agent in England. It is not fanciful, however, to regard this consolidation of libraries as part of the larger movement for colonial unity proceeding in many fields at this time; especially does it seem to bear an intimate relationship to the union of the two philosophical societies which was accomplished concurrently.

²² *Ibid.*, Apr. 14, 1757; Apr. 20, 1758; June 14, 1764; Apr. 10, 1766.

²³ *Ibid.*, Apr. 21, 1757; Apr. 27, 1758; Apr. 24, 1760; Apr. 8, 1765; Apr. 10, 1766.

The American Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge met in the rooms of the Union Library Company, and certain of its leaders, Owen Biddle for one, were members of both. In the face of rising opposition to imperial Britain, many Philadelphians in these years sensed the need for scrapping local differences and class prejudices and the achievement of a single library organization was but one manifestation of the general trend.²⁴

As an independent unit the Library Company had greatly extended its influence during the decade of the 'sixties. In 1764, when Francis Hopkinson became librarian, the general public began to be admitted to its rooms in the State House for reading, and in 1768 reduction of the price of its shares from £21 to £10 currency made membership easier to attain. After the merger the policy of general usefulness continued, the library rooms being kept open on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings from four until eight. It remained essentially a middle-class library, emphasizing useful and instructive rather than merely entertaining reading; in 1764 one-half of its collection was classified as history, while works on either philosophy or theology outnumbered those in polite literature. Under the gentlemanly influence of Hopkinson, and in keeping with the drift of the times, there was some tendency to broaden the scope of the collections beyond their original utilitarian purposes, and orders for works of poetry, drama and fiction somewhat increased. Yet Jacob Duché reported in 1772 that "The librarian assured me, that for one person of distinction and fortune, there were twenty tradesmen that frequented this library," and of the 8,000 titles it possessed in 1774 only eighty-one were listed under the classification, "Fiction, Wit, and Humour." More than a trace of the "mechanick's" influence may be seen in the fact that when in 1773 the Assembly refused permission to erect a building on the State House grounds, the library was withdrawn to Carpenter's Hall, where it was kept open daily from two to seven P. M.²⁵

The finest private library in the Middle Colonies and by all odds the best in science and the classics, belonged to James Logan, who

²⁴ *Ibid.*, June 14, 1764; Apr. 3, 1766; Jan. 14, 1768; Jan. 19, Feb. 16, 1769; *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, Dec. 26, 1768; Jan. 9, Feb. 13, 20, 1769; *Pennsylvania Journal*, Apr. 27, 1769; *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XXXIV. 488; LX. 463.

²⁵ *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, Mar. 21, 1768; Feb. 5, 1770; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 24, 1768; July 13, Aug. 28, Sept. 28, 1769; Sept. 8, 1773; *Votes of Pennsylvania Assembly*, VI. 155, 166; *Charter, Laws, and Catalogue of Books, of the Library Company* (1764); Jacob Duché, *Observations on a Variety of Subjects* (1774), 11.

freely permitted its use for purposes of consultation by any properly introduced citizen, and generously lent his books to such serious young students as Thomas Godfrey and John Bartram. In 1745 he housed his collection in a one-story brick building at the corner of 6th and Walnut Streets, which at his death he bequeathed to the Corporation, along with an endowment of £35 per annum for a librarian's salary and the purchase of books "solely . . . for the use of the public, in order to prevail on them (having such assistance) to acquaint themselves with literature." Political animosities among the trustees named by Logan, and other difficulties, postponed the opening of the Loganian Library until November 8, 1760, when a catalogue was printed, and Lewis Weiss, the librarian, announced the collection available for public use every Saturday from three to seven in summer, "and so long as one can see to read in the Winter." Further political disputes, some of them impossible of accommodation among the trustees, men of such diverse views as William and James Logan, Benjamin Franklin, John Smith, Israel Pemberton, William Allen, and Richard Peters, led to the sad neglect of this library. To the collection of "near 3,000 volumes" few additions were made, and many books were stolen. Pierre du Simitière, perhaps the most consistent user of the Loganian collections, found that because the building, which was "neither elegant nor Convenient," was located close to a dusty street, its windows had to remain closed during the hot Philadelphia summer. Furthermore, it was a specialized and erudite collection, many of the books dealing with "subjects out of the reach of the generality of people." Consequently, visitors to the Loganian Library were few, though significantly Du Simitière adds, "Most of that small number [is] composed of obscure mechanicks who have a turn for mathematics."²⁶

Thus, by 1770, Philadelphia possessed an excellent subscription library and a good public collection, but their contents were almost wholly in the field of serious literature and their use confined to the masculine citizenry. Increasing leisure among certain classes in the city, as well as among the ladies, and a desire to fill it with light and entertaining reading, paved the way for the establishment of circulating libraries, whence booksellers dispensed to subscribers "a considerable List of Novel Writers, whose depictive Talents," as expounded

²⁶ Charles P. Keith, *The Provincial Councillors of Pennsylvania*, 13, 15; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 7, 1751; Oct. 16, 1760; Du Simitière Mss.; *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XLII. 209-212; Gray, *op. cit.*, 75-79.

by the canny Robert Bell, "tends to dignify the human Mind, by an Abundance of recreative and instructive Entertainment, calculated to guide the Youth of both Sexes through the dangerous Whirlpool of agitated Passions." Lewis Nicola first ventured in this field, opening his "New Circulating Library" on Second Street in September, 1767. His rental collection contained two or three hundred volumes of history, poetry, plays and voyages, plus a recent importation of over a hundred new titles, such as *Female American*, *Emera, or the Fair American*, *Pittsborough*, Hogarth's *Cuts, with Explanations* and *Neck or Nothing*. The library was open daily, and subscribers, by depositing £5 and paying three dollars a year might withdraw one volume at a time. In 1769 Nicola moved to Spruce Street, in the more fashionable Society Hill neighborhood, rechristened his establishment the "General Circulating Library," and announced the enlargement of his collection to 700 volumes and a reduction in his prices. In 1771 his library of "general Entertainment" contained over 1,000 volumes, including "some few well-chosen French books." Nicola's success encouraged Thomas Bradford to open another circulating library near Second and Ann Streets in 1769, which was doing a good business as late as 1773. In 1774 Robert Bell entered the field with his "Universal Library" in the old Union Library Rooms on Third Street, introduced with the characteristic Bell flourish quoted above.²⁷

In addition to its general collections Philadelphia acquired at least eight specialized libraries in this period. Members of the Carpenter's Company began as early as 1736 to assemble a fine collection of books on carpentry, engineering and architecture, the 316 volumes of which came eventually to be housed in a room designed for a library in Carpenter's Hall in 1771. It is probable that the Friendship Carpenter's Company began a similar collection in 1769. After 1745 the Assembly maintained a "well chosen" library of legal works and statutes at the State House, for the use of its members and qualified citizens. Both the American Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge and the American Philosophical Society commenced collecting books, especially on scientific and philosophical subjects, in connection with their museums in 1768, but it was not until 1775 that David Ritten-

²⁷ *Pennsylvania Journal*, Sept. 10, 1767; Sept. 21, 1769; Jan. 18, 1770; *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, Sept. 14, 1767; Mar. 21, 1768; Dec. 4, 1769; Jan. 8, 1770; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 21, 1769; Jan. 3, Mar. 7, 1771; June 23, 1773; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Dec. 23, 1771; Mar. 14, 1774.

house was appointed librarian for the combined organizations, with instructions to lend books "on the same regulations as those of the City Library." Although all of these libraries were privately maintained for the benefit of their respective institutions, it is evident that properly introduced and qualified readers found no difficulty in consulting, and even in some cases borrowing their books.²⁸

Another group of specialized collections was devoted to education and pedagogy. A library room in the new Friends' School in 1744 housed Peter Collinson's large gift of Quaker writings and a classical collection later assembled and gradually augmented for use of scholars in the Latin School. A gift from Richard Peters, chiefly of titles in theology and Old English literature, was used to found the Academy library in 1749, but later additions to this collection were so heavily classical as to inspire the heartfelt disgust of Benjamin Franklin. Whether this library was included with the later collections of the College is not clear. The College library was initiated by a gift of books in 1762 from William Dunlap, printer, of Philadelphia, and by donations secured by Provost Smith from interested persons in England. Richard Peters and Jacob Duché, the committee on the library after 1764, so built up the collections that by 1776 the College could take pride in some 2,000 volumes.²⁹ After Dr. John Fothergill had presented a copy of William Lewis' *Materia Medica* to the Pennsylvania Hospital "for the Benefit of young Students in Physick," the staff became inspired in 1763 to plan a medical library according to "the Custom of most of the Hospitals in Great Britain," to be supported by appropriation from students' fees. This collection was the first of its kind in North America, and grew rapidly, the later generous gifts of Dr. Fothergill and many Philadelphians making it soon really remarkable for its time. Individual accessions of importance were the medical library of Dr. Lloyd Zachary in 1767, consisting of forty-three volumes and some pamphlets, and the gift by Deborah Morris of the

²⁸ *Reminiscences of Carpenter's Hall of Philadelphia*, 4-8; *Act to Incorporate the Carpenter's Company of Philadelphia*, 21; *Votes of Pennsylvania Assembly*, V. 509; *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XLII. 217; *Minutes of the American Philosophical Society*, 92, 95.

²⁹ James Mulhern, *History of Secondary Education in Pennsylvania*, 54, 55; Thomas H. Montgomery, *History of the University of Pennsylvania*, 336; J. T. Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, II. 1194.

fifty volumes acquired by her dead brother, Dr. Benjamin Morris, while a student at Leyden.³⁰

Three religious denominations maintained collections of books for the use of their ministry and members. The oldest parochial library in the city was that of Christ Church, founded in 1728, enriched by the gift of Lodovico Sprogell in the 'thirties and by purchases made by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. In 1753 it numbered 950 volumes. As librarian during the 'sixties and 'seventies Francis Hopkinson reorganized and catalogued the Christ Church collection. A bequest of 111 volumes from Thomas Chalkley in 1741 formed the basis for the Friends' library, for many years under the care of Anthony Benezet who kept it in his house. Later it was moved to the new meeting house at Fourth and Chestnut Streets, and James Todd of the Quaker School began in 1765 to conduct it systematically as a function of the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting. From this fine repository of periodicals collections of bound magazines and pamphlets were forwarded by the post riders to readers at considerable distances, so that as a circulating library it exerted a wide influence on Quakers throughout the colonies. In 1772, for instance, it dispatched a parcel of books to Clemment Willet on Long Island. In 1755 a group of philanthropic Presbyterians of Dublin, Ireland, sent a collection of books "for the benefit of public schools, the use of students, and the encouragement of learning in this infant church" to the Philadelphia Synod, which decided thereupon to found a library for the use of the denomination. Under control of the trustees of the Presbyterian Ministers' Fund, headed by Francis Alison, this library made a practice of loaning books suitable for use in country districts to schoolmasters who agreed to assume responsibility for possible losses. The remainder they lodged in a city collection, from which any minister might withdraw one volume at a time, or, if he did not live beyond the Potomac River, have it sent to him by the post.³¹

Not only did Philadelphians found libraries for their own devices,

³⁰ Thomas G. Morton and Frank Woodbury, *History of the Pennsylvania Hospital, 1751-1895*, 269-277.

³¹ *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XLV. 296; Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, II. chap. CLXXIX; George Hastings, *Francis Hopkinson*, 70; Brookes, *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 58, 236; *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, I. 124; *Records of the Presbyterian Church*, 219-220.

and in some cases allow their books to be loaned out of the city, but they provided the impulses that led to much general reading in rural and surrounding areas. In the district from Chester on the south to Trenton on the north, and as far west as Lancaster, nine subscription libraries were established in the years between 1743 and 1769. It was a handsome gift of 500 volumes by Dr. Thomas Cadwalader, a founder and director of the Library Company of Philadelphia, which established the Library Company of Trenton in 1751; the Shippens of Philadelphia supplied the impetus for the founding of the Juliana Library Company by seventy-seven residents of the frontier town of Lancaster in 1759; and Joseph Galloway and Amos Strickland headed the list of subscribers to the Newton Library of Bucks County at Thornton's Tavern in 1760. Residents of Germantown had established a German library there as early as 1745.³² Abraham Redwood of Newport, R. I., paid a visit to the Library Company of Philadelphia some time in the 1740's, and, according to Peter Kalm, "when he had the opportunity of examining this institution he liked it so well that when he returned home he persuaded some gentlemen in that state to build a house for a library, to which he made a gift of 500 pounds sterling for books." The Pennsylvania institutions all purchased their books in Philadelphia from such merchants as William Dunlap, who pointed out in his Catalogue, No. 2 (1760), his ability to furnish books for "all public Libraries that are already established, or those intended to be erected."³³

Acquisition of books which, whether they were read or not, would adorn the libraries of their country seats became a fashionable means of investing profits and achieving the reputation of gentility among gentlemen merchants of Philadelphia in these years. But it appears that many of these men were genuine lovers of reading, and one or two even fell victim to the collector's disease. Many wealthy Quakers built up remarkable collections, second only to that of James Logan. Isaac Norris, Senior, began to assemble books at Fair Hill as early as 1722, when he sent specially to England for a copy of *Paradise Lost*. His

³² Other subscription libraries were: Darby Library (1743); Union Library of Hatboro (1755); Merion and Blockley United Library, a merger (1762); and Chester Library (1769).

³³ *Pennsylvania Journal*, Mar. 29, 1759; Dec. 4, 1760; *Charter, Laws and Catalogue of the Juliana Library Company*; W. W. H. Davis, *History of Bucks County*, 241; *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XXVII. 272; XLII. 219; Kalm, *Travels*, II. 638; *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, Sept. 19, 1772.

son, the Speaker, a man of scholarship and taste, built up this collection by careful purchase and selection, and at his death it passed into the possession of his son-in-law, John Dickinson. Here it met the honest approval of critical John Adams, who pronounced it "a grand library" in 1774. Years later Dickinson presented the entire collection of "about 1500 volumes upon the most important subjects" to the new college which bore his name. While pursuing his medical studies in France and England, Thomas Cadwalader, Quaker physician, bought so widely in general literature, as well as of scientific works, that he later felt able to spare 500 volumes for the library he was founding at Trenton. Friend Robert Strettel, Mayor of Philadelphia in 1749, brought together a selected little library of Greek, Latin and French literature at his Germantown estate, and the young Quaker lawyer, Miers Fisher, treated John Adams to a view of his collection which the Bostonian described as "clever." With Quaker bibliophiles, apparently, "plainness" did not extend to the purchase of books, and they spared neither effort nor expense in the gratification of their tastes.³⁴

Wealthy Anglicans were no less active than the Friends in building up their libraries, and several of them are numbered among the earliest American bibliophiles. Joshua Maddox owned a choice collection of books, and when in 1745 William Peters began construction of his beautiful estate at Belmont he erected a separate little building adjoining the mansion to house his library. His brother, the Reverend Richard Peters, possessed a collection surpassed only by those of Logan and Norris in the city. On the eve of the Revolution the private library of Dr. John Morgan was one of the most catholic in all the colonies, including besides an unequalled medical and scientific collection, works on archaeology, art, architecture and general literature—Ariosto and Boccaccio in Italian, Hume in French, Voltaire's *Tamcred*, and some Italian manuscripts. Samuel Powel's books, nearly all purchased in Europe, included works on similar subjects in French and Italian, as well as in English and the learned tongues. That Francis Hopkinson was a true booklover his devoted services as curator of the Library Company and the Christ Church collections attest. His own collection of rare and fine books so charmed certain Hessian officers

³⁴ Thompson Westcott, *Historic Mansions in Philadelphia*, 484; John Adams, *Works*, II. 369, 379; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 27, 1784; *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XXVII, 264; Keith, *op. cit.*, 197.

that they strove to save them from destruction when Bordentown was burnt at their command in 1776.³⁵

Members of the middle class, though unable to indulge their taste for reading and acquisition to such an extent, still succeeded in building up a few large libraries and many smaller ones. Franklin's own collection is, of course, well known. That of David James Dove was large enough to require a special auction at the hands of Robert Bell in 1768, and Francis Alison's "valuable" library also went under the hammer after his death in 1780. Among members of this, or any other class, however, the library of the relatively poor Pierre Eugène du Simitière stood supreme. It comprised, among other things, the first important assemblage of Americana, printed and in manuscript. Its significance is sufficiently evident from the fact that it now forms the major portion of the notable collection of books, newspapers and pamphlets belonging to the Library Company of Philadelphia.³⁶

Ample evidence exists to show that books in these collections were not only carefully read by their owners, but widely lent by them as well. Indeed, much casual borrowing must have been indulged, to judge from the newspaper personals. One Philadelphian advertised in 1772, for example, that "Altieri's Italian Grammar, of an old edition, bound in parchment, was a few years ago lent to some person of this city, by a Gentleman from Jamaica, who borrowed it of the owner. As it is a book very scarce, and was purchased on that account at a very high price, and the owner having now a particular occasion for it, he will gratefully thank the person . . . for delivering it to the Printer." When Dr. Alexander Hamilton of Annapolis visited Philadelphia in 1744, he frequently borrowed books for reading in the moments when he was alone, among them *Timon of Athens*, "which tho' not written according to Aristotle's rules, yet abounds with inimitable beauties, peculiar to this excellent author." Alexander Graydon ranged widely in his reading, and so devout and prominent a Quaker as John Smith (of Burlington) haunted book auctions, and treated himself to such varied indulgences from the offerings of the Library Company as *Don Quixote*, Steele's *Conscious Lovers* and *Grief à la Mode*, *Tom Jones*, *Paradise Lost*, Thomson's *Seasons*, and Anson's *Voyages*. He

³⁵ Montgomery, *op. cit.*, 54; Scharf and Westcott, *op. cit.*, II. 873; John Morgan, *Journal from Rome to London, 1764*, 239-240; O. G. Sonneck, *Francis Hopkinson*, 8.

³⁶ Hildeburn, *op. cit.*, Nos. 2426, 4003; *Descriptive Catalogue of the Du Simitière Papers*.

also withdrew "several volumes" of the works of Bayle, the skeptic, about whom he probably felt as did Friend Samuel Morris about Rousseau, writing to thank a nephew for a gift of his works in 1763, "He's a fine writer, I wish he was as much a Christian." Their respective reading produced a "curious conversation" between the Presbyterian James Allen and the Quaker George Emlen concerning the works of the German mystic, Jacob Boehme, which, noted Allen, "I looked into and which he pretends to understand, tho' he acknowledged some parts a little crabbed; particularly how to make human Nature to be compounded of Sulphur, Mercury and Salt. I promised him Peter Millar the Dunkard's Book of God-femality in the Stile of Behmen."³⁷

One characteristic of the ladies of Philadelphia which astonished visitors from Europe was that, while they possessed great beauty, natural ease and the usual charms expected of members of their sex "they are still anxiously attentive to the more important embellishments of the mind." Brought up among books and permitted a good secondary education, Philadelphia women did not hesitate by continued reading to carry it to the higher levels that were formally denied them. Excluded from the masculine confines of the Library Company or the Loganian Collection, and from consultation of law-books at the State House or scientific treatises at the Hospital, "female booklovers" supplied much of the patronage for the circulating libraries that flourished in the town. During her leisure moments Sally Wister devoured current literature, including a number of French titles, and rejoiced when a friend sent her *Joseph Andrews*, *Julie Grenville*, *Caroline Melmouth*, and some "Lady's Magazines." Thomson's poems were the favorite reading of Sarah Eve, fiancée of Benjamin Rush, but she also enjoyed *The West Indian*, and frequently quoted from that other "prodigious fine comedy wrote by Cumberland," *The Fashionable Lover*. Elizabeth Sandwith often spent a day "at home reading." Her taste in literature ran from Pope's *Homer*, through Rabelais and other French authors, to the newspapers which she regularly perused. Many a time she "bought

³⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 31, 1748/49; Feb. 24, 1757; *Pennsylvania Packet*, June 15, 1772; Nov. 29, 1773; Alexander Hamilton, *Hamilton's Itinerarium: Being a Narrative of a Journey from Annapolis, Maryland. . . .* (ed. A. B. Hart), 235; Alexander Graydon, *Memoirs of a Life Chiefly Passed in Pennsylvania*, 92-98; *Balch Papers*, 234; A. C. Myers, ed., *Hannah Logan's Courtship*, 86-253; 303; *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, IX. 179; VII. 21, XV. 379.

little Books at Rivington's," and one of her first outings, on a visit to New York in 1760, was to "walk out" in the morning "to a Number of print-Shops and Booksellers."³⁸

The men of Philadelphia easily became accustomed to, and gradually learned to appreciate, the company of well-read young women. Occasionally one of them broke into verse "On seeing a young lady weep at reading *Clarissa*," or, like Amy Horner's admirer, sang praises of his lady's learning:

You must allow that it's my duty
To praise her sense as well as beauty;
And, if I am inform'd aright,
In reading she takes much delight.

At the height of the movement for home manufactures which preceded the Revolution, "Anglus Americanus" published in the *Pennsylvania Chronicle* his opinion that "could our Philadelphia ladies, who are at least equal in their endowments, both of body and mind, to those of any other part of the world, be prevailed with, instead of debauching their morals, and turning their heads with the impious rants of plays and romances," to stick, quite literally, to their knitting, America might be saved. But this gentleman clearly opposed the trend of the times. As early as 1744 young William Black of Virginia, who seems to have preferred his women beautiful and acquiescent, spent an evening along with three other gentlemen in the company of five of Philadelphia's then-debutantes. After some customary polite give and take, the girls turned "artfull enough to criticising on Plays and their Authors," and poor Black and his companions soon found themselves well beyond their depth. "Addison, Prior, Otway, Congreve, Dryden, Pope, Shakespeare, &c. &c. &c., were names often in question; the words Genius— and no Genius—Invention, Poetry, Fine things, bad Language, no Style, Charming Writing, Imaginary [*sic*] and Diction, . . . with many more Expressions, which Swim on the Surface of Criticism, seem'd to have been caught by those Female Fishers for the Reputation of Wit, at last they Exhausted this Subject, and gave Time to their Tongues a little. . . ." Apparently, the Virginian found it hard to take, and would have heartily concurred in the judgment of John Adams, though without his modifications in

³⁸ William Eddis, *Letters from America, Historical and Descriptive, 1769-1777*, 113; *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, V. 22-23, 201; IX. 473; Elizabeth Drinker, Mss. Diary, Dec. 4, 1759; Apr. 3, May 23, July 23, Sept. 19, 1760; A. C. Myers, ed., *Sally Wister's Journal*.

favor of some "education in women," expressed to Abigail from Philadelphia in 1776: "The *femmes savantes* are contemptible characters."³⁹

In the course of the four decades prior to 1776 Philadelphians of all walks of life, male and female, may be said to have learned to read, first for instruction, and later also for enjoyment. Spread of elementary and secondary education created an expanding market that was assiduously cultivated by a group of enterprising printers and booksellers. Newspapers, pamphlets, foreign reprints and books of domestic composition poured from native presses, and along with continued importations lined the shelves of private libraries and bookstores. The range of private collections was greatly augmented by the services of subscription libraries, taverns and coffee houses. By means of the printed word the propaganda of enlightenment reached all citizens, as would soon the propaganda for political change. A significant feature of this development was the availability of reading matter even to members of the "inferior sort" who desired it. Even laborers had leisure for reading, too, when employers such as Enoch David, tailor, promised in 1761 to workmen of good character "the same wages for five Days a Week as is common in the City for six." As curator of the Library Company Francis Hopkinson was severely criticised for ceasing to leave the books in open stacks, "as formerly for the inspection of all" who wanted to use them, but Francis Alison, a Director, supported the new policy, contending its necessity "while we allow the whole town, and even as many strangers to attend." Apparently, at both the Library Company and the Loganian, anyone who wished to might consult the books, and when officers of the former body discovered in 1748 that John Bartram could not afford £21 for the purchase of a share, they accorded him, without application, "free access to the library" and permission to withdraw books for study at his home in Kingsessing. "The poorest labourer upon the shore of the *Delaware*," wrote Jacob Duché, with reason, in 1772, "thinks himself entitled to deliver his sentiments in matters of religion or politics with as much freedom as the gentleman or scholar. Indeed, there is less distinction among the citizens of Philadelphia; than among those of any civilized city in the world. Riches give none.

³⁹ *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, Mar. 27, 1769; *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Feb. 23, 1775; *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, I. 46; John Adams, *Familiar Letters*, 218.

For every man expects one day or another to be upon a footing with his wealthiest neighbour. . . . Such is the prevailing taste for books of every kind, that almost every man is a reader; and by pronouncing sentence, right or wrong, upon the various publications that come in his way, puts himself upon a level, in point of knowledge, with their several authors."⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 12, 1761; Scharf and Westcott, *op. cit.*, II. 1175; G. S. Klett, *Presbyterians in Colonial Pennsylvania*, 218n.; Duché, *op. cit.*, 29-30.