

Franklin and His Friends Choose Their Books

THE books chosen by the directors of the Library Company of Philadelphia in the first decade of its existence represent a unique selection for colonial America. It was unique because it was made by and for a group of merchants, tradesmen, and artisans struggling to gain wealth and position.¹ Benjamin Franklin, pragmatic and intellectually curious, was their leader and prototype. The books these men decided to order for their communal use reveal more clearly than any other evidence their cultural interests, and, in a way, their aspirations.

Other libraries of a different nature had preceded the Library Company on the American scene. Three colleges—Harvard in 1638, William and Mary in 1693, and Yale possibly in 1701—had already established collections of books.² These institutions had been founded by clerics primarily to educate young men for the ministry, although this purpose was not adhered to as strictly by the Virginia institution as by those of New England. Consequently, their libraries, largely formed by the gifts of interested individuals in England and the colonies, were strongly theological in character. The selection of books was essentially determined by what the colleges or the donors thought the professors and students ought to read, rather than by what the readers wanted for themselves. To be sure, these could have been at times one and the same, but the underlying philosophy of the choice was didactic. In this respect, the choice of books by members of the Library Company differed; their choice was autodidactic. The desire for the book stemmed from the reader.

In addition to the college libraries, there were in the colonies a number of private collections—probably more than has been generally supposed—the most famous and largest of which were those of

¹ Francis R. Packard, *Charter Members of the Library Company* (Philadelphia, 1942).

² Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, Ruth Shephard Granniss, and Lawrence C. Wroth, *The Book in America* (New York, 1939), 355–360.

William Byrd of Westover, of the Winthrops, the Mathers, and Thomas Prince of Boston, and of James Logan of Philadelphia.³ The books in these private hands ranged in selection from an overwhelming predominance of theological writings to a cultured English gentleman's choice, typical in the case of Byrd, refined and intellectualized in the case of Logan. Louis B. Wright has noted that in dwelling upon the appetite of the Puritans for works of divinity we sometimes forget the taste of Virginians for religious literature.⁴ In the private Virginia libraries of the seventeenth and very early eighteenth centuries which he surveyed, Wright noted a heavy weighting of theology and law. However, all these collections reflected the interests of an individual rather than a group, and are representative of the highest level of colonial culture, a level where the company was few.

We know much less about the third type of library which existed in the British colonies before the Library Company was organized.⁵ In documents there are records of "a publick library of Boston" as early as 1674, possibly one provided for by Captain Robert Keayne in his will in 1653, but no lists or books survived the fires of 1711 and 1747 which destroyed it. What type of library it was and how it operated are unknown, but Samuel Eliot Morison does not believe it amounted to more than "a small collection of theology."⁶ More information is extant of the various collections which the Reverend Thomas Bray sent to many towns through the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Between 1680 and 1730 the Society established thirty-eight libraries in America, but the books sent were chiefly intended as parochial libraries for the use of missionaries, and hence were almost entirely theological.

Most of these collections were established in churches, but the books sent to Annapolis in 1697 were housed in the State House, and became in fact a public library. In 1698 another Bray collection went to King's Chapel at Boston, and the same year one to Trinity Parish in New York. Others were established at Christ Church in

³ *Ibid.*, 297-304; Carl L. Cannon, *American Book Collectors and Collecting* (New York, 1941), 1-37.

⁴ Louis B. Wright, *The First Gentlemen of Virginia* (San Marino, Calif., 1940), 126-127.

⁵ Lehmann-Haupt, Granniss, and Wroth, 355-358; Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Puritan Pronaos* (New York, 1936), 141-142.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

Philadelphia, Charleston, and elsewhere. The plan was widened in 1700 to provide for "lending laymen's libraries," but these collections never grew and never became a significant factor in the cultural life of any community. One more public library should be mentioned, that founded by the Reverend John Sharp of New York in 1700. He left his own collection of books to a public library, which was organized by the Corporation of the City, but allowed to remain moribund until 1754 when it became the nucleus of the New York Society Library, a subscription library following the pattern of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

It was because there was available in Philadelphia no library of a general nature which would give its readers not only borrowing privileges, but also a choice of books attuned to their wants, that the Library Company was founded, the first of many subscription libraries which were thereafter established to meet the same needs in other localities. Its history is well known.⁷ It was founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin and his associates of the Junto to turn their limited financial resources into the greatest variety of books for their common use. The Company ordered its first books from London at the end of March, 1732, and received its first shipment in October of that year. Thereafter, the library was steadily enlarged, chiefly by purchase, partly by gift, until it became *the* library of Philadelphia, a significant and permanent part of the city's intellectual resources.⁸

An account of the books included in the first shipment in 1732 and of the early printed catalogues of the library was published recently.⁹ Although broadsheet lists of the works available to its members were printed by Franklin in 1733 and 1735, no copies of either have survived. The earliest extant printed record of the books in the collection is the fifty-six-page octavo catalogue of 1741, which lists by size and in no other order, three hundred and seventy-five titles.¹⁰

⁷ George Maurice Abbott, *A Short History of The Library Company of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1913); Austin K. Gray, *The First American Library* (Philadelphia, 1936).

⁸ Its place in Philadelphia life is evidenced by the fact that Franklin in his autobiography speaks of it as "the Philadelphia public library," and that other individuals referred to it variously as the "City Library" and the "Philadelphia Library."

⁹ Edwin Wolf 2nd, "The First Books and Printed Catalogues of the Library Company of Philadelphia," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (PMHB), LXXVIII (1954), 45-55.

¹⁰ *A Catalogue of Books belonging to the Library Company of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1741).

These titles are the subject of the present study. That they represent a popular, democratic choice is apparent from the minutes of the Company, which contain such entries as those of July 15, 1734, "a list of Books was drawn out & made Choice of, from Lists brought by several of the Committee,"¹¹ and of April 10, 1738, when it was ordered "that an Advertisement be put up in the Library Room to acquaint the Subscribers that the Directors would be willingly assisted in the Choice of the next Parcel of Books which they are to send for."¹² The standard procedure for getting books was for a list to be made out and sent off to Peter Collinson, the scientist friend of Bartram and Franklin, who had agreed to act as the Company's volunteer London agent. Sometimes a few of the books specified could not be obtained or were too expensive; sometimes Collinson or a member of the Company who happened to be on the spot made other suggestions. By and large, however, the collection consisted of specific orders which originated from the group in Philadelphia, augmented, of course, by gifts from members and friends.

In selecting the titles for the first order, the Company asked the advice of James Logan, "the best Judge of Books in these Parts"¹³ and the owner of a private library which was probably the best selected of any collection then in America. There is no doubt that his experience and erudition were factors in the Company's choice. In an unpublished history of the Library Company, Miss Dorothy F. Grimm has pointed out that many of the books included were also to be found in a list printed in John Clarke's *An Essay upon Study* (1731),¹⁴ a copy of which was acquired by the library as early as 1735.¹⁵ Other suggestions by other writers including John Locke¹⁶ may also have been used, but basically the selection was that of the directors. One fact of that selection becomes apparent from a comparison of the Library Company list with those of other libraries of the period, including its succeeding sister subscription libraries

¹¹ Manuscript Minute Book of the Library Company of Philadelphia (LCP), I, 43.

¹² *Ibid.*, 73.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴ Dorothy F. Grimm, *A History of The Library Company of Philadelphia, 1731-1835* (unpublished dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1955), 55.

¹⁵ Ordered by the Company, Nov. 13, 1734, and received from England, Apr. 18, 1735. Manuscript Minute Book, I, 46, 51.

¹⁶ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (London, 1699).

throughout the country.¹⁷ A great many of the works must have been recognized as standard texts and indispensable for any collection. A very high proportion of them were to be found in Logan's library, in the collections of both Yale and Harvard, and to an even greater degree in such a later, similar institution as the New York Society Library. The books of the Library Company differed not in individual titles, but rather in the predominance of certain fields of learning to the virtual exclusion of others. In fact, they were essentially the "best sellers" of the first half of the eighteenth century.

The 375 titles listed in the 1741 catalogue¹⁸ can be roughly divided into subjects as follows: history, 114; literature, 69; science, 65; theology, 38; philosophy, 33; social sciences, 28; arts, 13; linguistics, 10; and general, 5. These are, of course, general categories, and a single work could belong in one or another category. For instance, ecclesiastical history could be theological or historical; I have placed such titles where I think they fit best.

It is of more than passing interest that of the 375 titles, eighty-four were gifts, which, subtracted from the main classes, would leave as works actually ordered: history, 91; literature, 55; science, 51; theology, 25; philosophy, 28; and social sciences, 21. It should also be noted that, as in all of the later subscription libraries, almost all the books were in English. There were only thirteen works in foreign languages in the Library Company collection, of which ten were gifts. The only ones apparently ordered were Grotius' *De Jure Belli* in Latin, *Don Quixote* in the original Spanish, and Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales* in the original French, and in each case the Company also owned an English translation.

It is immediately obvious that the readers of Philadelphia, the self-educated citizens, who wanted books for their own general edification, were interested chiefly in history, literature, and science. These subjects accounted for almost two hundred of the two hundred and ninety-one works which they bought. It is also obvious that they ordered theology with an extremely light hand. By comparison, the

¹⁷ A detailed comparison of such catalogues as those of the New York Society Library, the Redwood Library of Newport, the Library Company of Burlington, the Juliana Library of Lancaster, the Union Library Company of Hatborough and others with the early Harvard and Yale catalogues would make an interesting study. My observations are based upon a superficial reading of some of them.

¹⁸ In my article cited above, I made an erroneous count of 372.

1723 catalogue of the library of Harvard College, with its supplements to 1735, shows that approximately two thirds of its books were theological.¹⁹ Yale's collection in 1743 was not so heavy; about one half of the library consisted of theological books.

By way of explanation of the very few theological works in the Company's library it should be noted that of the three hundred and twenty-three imprints listed by Hildeburn as printed in Pennsylvania during the eleven years 1731-1741,²⁰ only fifty-three were not theological tracts, laws and official papers, almanacs or periodicals. Hence, it may be assumed that the Philadelphians who wanted a regular fare of sermons and religious polemics found them easily and cheaply available at every bookstore. They sent abroad for more expensive works not printed here and only occasionally to be bought at home.

Breaking down the largest class—history—we find, as one would expect, that English history forms the largest subgroup. The most comprehensive work was Rapin-Thoyras' *History of England*, a standard Whig text, which was to be found in most libraries in America, both institutional and private. It is interesting that this history, written for the instruction of foreigners by a Frenchman who came to England with William of Orange, remained the best and most popular general history of England until the publication of Hume's. Other standard works were Camden's *Britannia*, Buchanan's *History of Scotland*, Burnet's sturdily Whig *History of his own Time*, Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*, and Sir William Temple's *Works*. The lesser books, including a biography of Oliver Cromwell, who became somewhat of a hero in the colonies, were miscellaneous in character, dealing chiefly with the period from the Commonwealth to the reign of Queen Anne.

European history was fairly well represented. Here the recognized classic of the times seems to have been Pufendorf's *Introduction to the History of the Principal Kingdoms and States of Europe*. But the most sensational, and probably most read, work was the spicy, semifictional survey of European diplomacy, manners, and intrigue, published anonymously by Marana as *Letters Written by a Turkish Spy*.

¹⁹ Morison, 143, counts 2,183 theological titles out of a total of 3,517 in the 1723 catalogue.

²⁰ Charles R. Hildeburn, *A Century of Printing: The Issues of the Press in Pennsylvania, 1685-1784* (Philadelphia, 1885), I, nos. 417-740.

Yale catalogued this title under "Books of Diversion." For a more accurate picture of cities and life on the Continent, the Philadelphians chose Bishop Burnet's objective eyes and pen, his travel *Letters*, as their guide. Indicative of the vast curiosity of these men, as well as the search for more esoteric works, is the large number of histories and accounts of various countries all over the world. There was no isolationist feeling in the colonial city whose prosperity was built on trade. Including the books added as gifts, the lands covered were Africa, Denmark, Holland, France, Hungary, Italy, Persia, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey, as well, of course, as classical Greece and Rome. In addition, there were a few accounts of voyages of discovery and exploration in all quarters of the globe.

Of all these, the histories of the Abbé Vertot seem of particular significance. His name is virtually unknown today, and yet in the first half of the eighteenth century his chronicles of the "revolutions" in Rome, Brittany, Spain, Sweden, and Portugal were best sellers. Technically superficial and romantic, these works expressed a liberal view of history which found a sympathetic audience in an era when the rights of kings were being increasingly questioned. In America, where a search after rights and liberties had been responsible for the settlement of most of the colonies, Vertot's works were ubiquitous. There was hardly a library which did not contain them, and it is interesting to conjecture upon their influence on the revolution in America. The Abbé de Mably, one of the most radical of the mid-eighteenth-century philosophers, said of Vertot, "Je le regarde comme celui de tous nos écrivains qui a été le plus capable d'écrire l'histoire."²¹

Along the same lines, the inclusion of Midon's *The History of the Rise and Fall of Masaniello*, the Neapolitan fisherman who provoked a popular revolt, Molesworth's *Account of Denmark*, *The History of the Revolutions in the Empire of Morocco*, and Krusinski's *History of the Revolutions in Persia* shows that there was available

²¹ Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, *De la Manière d'Écrire l'Histoire* (Paris, 1783), 77. Mably praises all Vertot's writings highly, and, after citing his work on the Swedish revolution as a model to be followed, gives Voltaire's account of Charles XII as a history not to be imitated. *Ibid.*, 180. I am grateful to Professor Caroline Robbins of Bryn Mawr for having called my attention to Mably's praise, and for having most graciously read over the whole paper and made other suggestions which I have herein incorporated.

to colonial Americans a diversified historical background dealing with uprisings and the mutability of kings and states. These works, treating of the subversion of established monarchies, seem to have been in most American libraries, public and private, indicating that the precedent for revolution existed in the most esteemed historical texts. To be sure, they also bought more general and less exciting works: Raleigh's *History of the World* and Helwich's *Chronology*, both one-volume compendiums of all recorded history, Bentivoglio's *History of the Wars of Flanders*, and other books on the Dutch Republic, Comines' *Memoirs of France* in the late Middle Ages, Davila's *History of the Civil War of France*, Maimbourg's *History of the League*, several works on Naples but nothing general on Italy, Mariana's *General History of Spain*, Stevens' *History of Persia*, and Kantemir's *History of the Growth and Decay of the Othman Empire*, all of which, judging from other library lists, enjoyed great popularity.

Actually, about one eighth of all the histories, which include geographies and books of travel, were of some American interest, a high proportion acquired by gift. The large quarto *Atlas Geographicus* in five volumes, Heylyn's *Cosmography*, still current with additions and emendations a century after it first appeared, and an otherwise undescribed "Collection of Maps" provided general coverage. Garcilasso de la Vega's *Commentaries of Peru*, a gift from James Logan, and Solis' *History of the Conquest of Mexico* were the best accounts of the early history of Spanish America they could have secured.

Since the members of the Library Company were in the process of making the history of British America, or were ambitious to do so, they could not look upon the comparatively few major works on the subject as of extreme importance. As a matter of fact, when Franklin later urged Collinson to secure for the library old tracts dealing with the early settlements, the directors soon brought a halt to these—to them pointless—acquisitions.²² In view of Franklin's efforts, the inclusion of Bishop White Kennett's *Bibliothecae Americanae Primordia* among the miscellaneous books of reference is noteworthy. Kennett here compiled the first important bibliography of Americana per se, impelled by his conviction that such a collection of books as his would be valuable for many people concerned in or with the colonies, "especially the Governours and other Administrators of

²² Gray, 25-26.

Justice in her Majesty's Plantations" who would learn from them "what Good Names and sufficient Estates have been gotten by Justice and Moderation, what Examples of Ruin and Infamy to Tyrants and Oppressors, what Credit and Comfort in Governing always and everywhere ACCORDING TO LAW."²³ Unfortunately, the directors of the Company did not take to heart the Bishop's wisdom. However, Benjamin Eastburn, the surveyor, gave them *A short Account of the first Settlement of the Provinces of Virginia, Maryland, New-York, New-Jersey and Pennsylvania*, and David Bush donated to the common use Beverley's *History of Virginia*. And, in addition, the Company did buy Lahontan's and Hennepin's accounts of New France, Esquemeling's exciting stories of pirates in the West Indies, Martyn's *Reasons for Establishing the Colony of Georgia*, and Neal's sober *History of New England*.

By almost any standard of the day, the Library Company's coverage of the field of ancient history was inadequate, although English editions of Thucydides, Polybius, Caesar, Tacitus—widely read for its translator Gordon's prefatory discourses proclaiming straight Whig doctrine, which, Tolles notes,²⁴ was as much a party document as his political writings—Sallust, and Plutarch were to be found. Another Tacitus in Latin and a Livy in Dutch, both gifts, were probably little used. The only comprehensive, modern work on the subject was Echard's *Roman History*, a five-volume set. The Library Company members, most of them, had little Latin and less Greek, and apparently no consuming desire to do much about it.

The same, almost purposeful, avoidance of Greek and Latin classics, which in other libraries, both academic and private, played so large a role, is obvious also in the next largest field—literature. It was overwhelmingly English in character. With the exception of an Ovid and a Plautus, again both gifts, the ancient classics which they possessed were in English translations—Pope's Homer, Croxall's Aesop, Creech's Horace and Lucretius, Dryden's Juvenal and Virgil, Rowe's Lucan, and a few others. The gentlemen and scholars who formed other contemporary collections were proud of their familiarity with the ancient tongues. On the other hand, Franklin in all his

²³ White Kennett, *Bibliothecae Americanae Primordia* (London, 1713), vii.

²⁴ Frederick B. Tolles, "A Literary Quaker: John Smith of Burlington and Philadelphia," *PMHB*, LXV (1941), 319.

suggestions for the curriculum of the Academy of Philadelphia, later the University of Pennsylvania, urged an emphasis on the use and teaching of English instead of, as was customary, on Latin and Greek.²⁵ There was not one book in Greek in the whole library until a good many years later. By comparison, it should be noted that approximately one half of the books in Harvard College Library at this same period were in foreign languages, chiefly Latin, the scholar's *lingua franca*, and that in James Logan's personal collection the percentage was even higher.

When it came to belles lettres in English, the large number of books of a lighter nature was probably the result of the expansion of the membership of the Company beyond the first small group of serious philosophic inquirers. The democratic "popular" taste is evident in the choice which seems based on contemporary popularity rather than on appreciation for or seeking after the great works of the past. The giants of England, Chaucer and Shakespeare, were notably lacking, but they were, of course, not such giants then. Spenser came as an early gift; a few of the late Stuart and Restoration literary lights like Cowley, Waller, and Congreve were present in collected works, as was Milton with *Paradise Lost* and his prose. But it was the Augustans, then gleaming untarnished, who caught the fancy of the Philadelphians.

It should be noted that there were comparatively few plays included and no chapbook romances. This was before the flowering of the English novel. Most of the literature consisted of poems and essays. Dryden was represented only by his *Fables* and by his translations already mentioned, but his successors received more favorable treatment. Pope's *Epistles in Verse* was bought when it appeared; his *Dunciad* came in an augmented edition; both his *Miscellanies* alone and the series issued with Swift found ready readers, as did Pope's *Letters*. The full flavor of the eighteenth-century selection is in the choice of works—not always among the most important—of other members of the dominant factor in English letters, the Scrib-

²⁵ In his "Observations relative to the Original Founders of the Academy in Philadelphia," written in June, 1789, in protest against the priority then being given to the classics, Franklin recalled, "As in the Scheme of the Library I had provided only for English Books, so in this new Scheme my Ideas went no farther than to procure the means of a Good English Education." Albert Henry Smyth, ed., *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1905-1907), X, 9.

lerus Club. Swift was represented fittingly enough by his bookish *Tale of a Tub*, but *Gulliver's Travels* found no place on the shelves until 1743. Arbuthnot, Pope's doctor friend and the host of the club, was represented as a scientist rather than a poet, but both Gay and Parnell's poetry found favor.

Most of the rest of the list of poets reads like—and is, in fact—a roll call of yesteryear's best sellers: Glover's *Leonidas*, raised to fleeting popularity by the critical war which raged about it, Garth's *Dispensary*, a dated but amusing satire of medical interest, Blackmore's *Creation* and *Eliza*, Philips' *Pastorals*, Pomfret's *Poems*, Needler's *Works*, and that perennial eighteenth-century favorite, Thomson's *Seasons*. Except for Butler's *Hudibras*, which seems to have enjoyed a greater popularity among the colonial Virginians than any other poem, Prior's *Poems on Several Occasions*, and Watts's *Horae Lyricae*, the authors and the works in this field are distinguished only by their mediocrity in present-day eyes. As Louis B. Wright observed succinctly, "In general, the most commonly found literary works were not books by the greatest authors."²⁶

Special mention must be made, however, of the inclusion of the three major collections of periodical essays, the *Tatler*, the *Spectator*, and the *Guardian*. Franklin wrote in his autobiography that he had consciously modeled his style upon that of the *Spectator*,²⁷ but it was more than clarity of writing and catholicity of content which would have appealed to the Philadelphians. The essays represented the kind of middle-class English thinking, the intelligent but quizzical attitude to life and manners, and the common-sensical virtues that were almost identical with those of Franklin and his friends. In addition, Addison and Steele were both ardent Whigs whose political thinking would have found a receptive audience among their American readers. How popular these books were with the members of the Library Company is shown by the fact that the original copies, probably read to tatters, soon had to be replaced with other sets, and even these show the physical signs of much use.

In foreign literature, the members were but little interested. They bought Boileau's *Works*, the *Tales and Fables* and the classic, political novel, *Telemachus*, of Fénelon, *Don Quixote*, and Gracian's *Hero*, all

²⁶ Wright, 135.

²⁷ "I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it." Smyth, I, 241.

in English translations. To this meager group of continental writers, Franklin added by gift two of a three-volume set of Montaigne's *Essays*. It is interesting that John Clarke in his *Essay upon Study*, after damning light literature, wrote, "I know but two Romances I can heartily recommend, *The History of Don Quixot*, and the Adventures of *Telemachus*," calling the former "the finest Piece of Invention in the Ludicrous Merry Way, and withal the most innocent, that ever was penned by any Author whatever, I believe, whether Antient or Modern."²⁸ That must have represented the opinion of most, for the only foreign work of literature bought in its original language was a Spanish edition of *Don Quixote*. But more in line with the general radical tone of the whole collection was the inclusion of *Telemachus*, in its day a brave novel, prophetic of the eighteenth century, which had as its moral that kings exist for the sake of their subjects, not subjects for the sake of kings. Professor Howard M. Jones, writing of the second half of the century, found that among Philadelphians of that period, Fénelon was the most popular French author and *Telemachus* consistently one of the most popular works.²⁹

If the small number of theological books was one of the distinctive features of the library, the high percentage of scientific ones was equally so. The collection was begun at the very time when the flowering of the age of scientific inquiry initiated by Descartes had reached so advanced a stage in England that for the first time a scientist—Newton—was being widely hailed as one of the British immortals. The Royal Society, a loosely knit group of amateurs in the seventeenth century, had become a major influence in English life fifty years later. The struggles of the theologians against the natural philosophers were becoming more academic, and although scientists still nodded politely toward religion, they were prepared to carry on their experiments wherever they might lead. In America this spirit of inquiry took root quickly, and its basic principle, knowledge through experience, was Americanized in the much later popular expression, "I'm from Missouri."

The underlying discipline of the physical sciences was, of course, mathematics. The two works chosen for the members of the Library

²⁸ John Clarke, *An Essay upon Study* (London, 1737), 250-251.

²⁹ Howard M. Jones, "The Importation of French Books in Philadelphia, 1750-1800," *Modern Philology*, XXXII (1934), 160.

Company, who, like William Parsons, a shoemaker who became surveyor general of the province, were desirous of teaching themselves fundamentals, were John Ward's *Young Mathematician's Guide* and Ozanam's *Cursus Mathematicus*, translated into English by Desaguliers. To these were added De Chales' edition of Euclid. But for the more advanced, those who may have gotten their grounding in the remarkable scientific collection of James Logan, there were Ozanam's challenging and popular *Mathematical Recreations*, L'Hôpital's standard work on solid geometry, *An Analytick Treatise on Conick Sections*, and Motte's translation of Newton's *Principia*. This last work, the first appearance of Newton's *magnum opus* in English, was supplanted as an authority on the Newtonian theory by Dr. Henry Pemberton's *View of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy*, which was one of the two books that Peter Collinson sent as a gift with the first shipment in 1732.³⁰

The Philadelphians were from the beginning ardent Newtonians. Among them, Thomas Godfrey, the self-taught inventor of the quadrant, had a particular bent for astronomy, and it may be assumed that he was delighted to have available Keill's *Introduction*, which consisted of his astronomical lectures delivered at Oxford, and Gregory's *Elements of Astronomy*, which was donated by the surveyor Benjamin Eastburn. Both Keill and Gregory were followers of Newton, and carried on experiments to advance his theories; their works were the best handbooks of the science available at the time. Gifts of the old-fashioned works of Moxon on globes, Holder on the calendar, and Serle on dials came from David Bush. More useful would have been Leybourn's still valued work on dialing, and *The Celestial Worlds discovered* by the great Dutch horologist Huygens. A willingness to listen to the religio-scientific school was shown by the inclusion of Cotton Mather's *The Christian Philosopher*, a gift, and Derham's exposition of final causes in his *Astro-Theology*, subtitled *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God from a Survey of the Heavens*, which had reached a sixth edition by 1731.

In an allied field the Library Company bought also Derham's companion volume, *Physico-Theology*, but their most comprehensive

³⁰ It is of more than passing interest to note that the nineteen-year-old Franklin met Pemberton in London, and Pemberton promised to give the youth an opportunity of seeing Newton. Unfortunately, the opportunity never arose. Smyth, I, 278.

work on physics was Desagulier's *System of Experimental Philosophy*, which, with its rich mine of "curious Experiments," may have stimulated and guided the scientific inquiry which had been made possible by Thomas Penn's gift of an air pump in 1738. With some of the essential books and, as time went on, scientific equipment as well, the Library Company became in fact the first scientific society in Philadelphia. In its rooms the native natural philosophers proved by experiment what they had read about, and in the field of electricity, particularly, began to make new tests to learn what was still unknown about that phenomenon. Hauksbee's *Physico-Mechanical Experiments* would have helped them, for he first described the rubbing of glass with various substances to produce an electrical glow.³¹ It is frequently forgotten that the "several of us," referred to by Franklin as making electrical experiments in his first letter on electricity to Collinson in 1747, were specifically identified in a footnote: "i.e. of the *Library-Company*, an institution of the Author's, founded 1730."³² Clare's work on the *Motion of Fluids* completed their handful of specialized books on physics.

Of course, they did have a group of books which treated of science generally, the most important of which was a set of the standard abridgment of *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. The Royal Society represented for the Americans the kind of organization that they wished for themselves, and when, two years after the Library Company catalogue was printed, Franklin issued his call to form the American Philosophical Society, he had in mind the success and influence of the English body. Franklin had met its venerable president in London, when the nineteen-year-old printer had been there in 1727, and contributions to the Society's *Transactions* from Americans increased as colonial scientists discovered new natural phenomena in the vastness of their land and as they further developed ideas transmitted from the old world or originated new ones of their own. After all, in 1734 the account of the invention of the quadrant by the Library Company member, Thomas Godfrey, had appeared in the *Transactions*. There was both pride and desire for knowledge in the choice of this set. As a complement, the collection was augmented by a gift of Sprat's standard history of the Royal Society.

³¹ I. Bernard Cohen, *Benjamin Franklin's Experiments* (Cambridge, Mass., 1941), 32-37.

³² *Ibid.*, 169.

Recognition of and respect for Francis Bacon's position as a pioneer in the development of science was widespread in America. His writings were to be found in most of the libraries in the colonies, and he was represented in the Library Company by the three-volume quarto edition of *The Philosophical Works*, edited by Dr. Peter Shaw, which was bought after Francis Richardson had donated a separate printing of the *Sylva Sylvarum*. The progress of the post-Baconian century was evidenced and became available to the members through the collected works of the late seventeenth-century giant of the physical sciences, Robert Boyle, in an edition also edited by Shaw.

To help them with their own written reports of new discoveries, the Philadelphians had a most important attempt to standardize scientific terminology, *An Essay towards a real Character and a Philosophical Language*, written by John Wilkins, the first secretary of the Royal Society, with the help of Ray, Willughby, and others. A more popular work was the *Philosophical Grammar* of Benjamin Martin, instrument maker and ardent Newtonian, who gathered together in simple form an epitome of the theories and findings of the day in the field of the physical and mathematical sciences. However, even Martin's compilation seems to have been too difficult for many of the readers, for two copies were bought of the French naturalist Pluche's *Spectacle de la Nature; or, Nature Displayed*, which consisted of discourses, chiefly on the less erudite phases of natural history, "thought most proper to excite the Curiosity, and form the Minds of Youth." It was diffusely written, did not reflect the tremendous advances of the first part of the eighteenth century, and yet was the single most popular, general work on natural history at that time.

It was not, however, the kind of book which would have proved very useful to a member like Joseph Breintnall, who was an enthusiastic amateur botanist. He needed and found on the shelves such a solid work as Salmon's *English Herbal*, which the Library accepted as the best book of its kind then available, although they chose as well the much earlier flower book, *Paradisus Terrestris* of the herbalist Parkinson. Apparently, James Logan, whose pioneer work on the fertilization of corn had appeared at Leyden in 1731, and John Bartram, who was a friend of many of the members but did not himself become a shareholder until a few years later, exerted little

influence on the selection, for most of the works were more practical than theoretical. It was another botanist, Collinson, who sent as a gift with the first shipment in 1732 Philip Miller's *Gardener's Dictionary*, a massive work which kept its currency throughout the century and which Franklin kept in his room "between the Clock and our Bedchamber."³³ If Collinson had not so kindly sent it, the valuable compendium would certainly have been bought, for it seems to have been a *sine qua non* in its day. Patrick Blair's *Botanick Essays* was the only technical study in the field of botany which the library contained.

The larger number of agricultural works reflected far more the day-to-day interests of the members, and the modernity of the works showed that in farming at least, the Americans were concerned with the latest practical improvements. In England, Richard Bradley's ignorance of the classical languages caused some eyebrows to be raised when he foisted himself into the chair of botany at Cambridge, but he was a well-received, prolific, and enthusiastic writer, and the Americans asked Collinson to buy as many of his writings as he could. Apparently, all that was obtainable was Bradley's *New Improvements of Planting and Gardening*, which reached seven editions between 1717 and 1739. One wonders why Hopkinson and Collinson in 1732 sent to Philadelphia in the place of ordered titles which could not be secured so recondite a work as Switzer's *Dissertation On the True Cythisus of the Ancients*, unless it was because it happened to be bound with the same author's far more down-to-earth *Compendious Method* for raising foreign vegetables like broccoli and celery in a kitchen garden. There was also one vade mecum or country gentleman and farmer's handbook to farming, cooking, home medicine, and so forth—*The Complete Family-Piece*.

The up-to-date character of the library's interests is best shown by the purchase of the works of two of the most important agricultural innovators of the day, Jethro Tull and William Ellis, almost as soon as their books appeared. Tull's *Horse-Hoing Husbandry*, in which the use of the seed drill in combination with the horse hoe was first recommended, was by far the most influential contribution to better farming that had been written perhaps for centuries. The *Gentleman's Magazine* stated what many must have felt, that Tull had

³³ Smyth, III, 396.

"done more towards establishing a rational and practical method of husbandry than all the writers who have gone before him."³⁴ The new methods and theories were immediately picked up and elaborated on by Ellis, and the library bought two of his latest works, *The Practical Farmer* and *Chiltern and Vale-Farming*. It would have been difficult then to have selected better books in the field.

Connecting the areas of husbandry and medicine was a single veterinary text, *Farriery Improved*, by Henry Bracken. Medical works formed the largest single specialized group within the general field of science. The only separate chemical work was almost within this field, for it was written by the great Leyden physician Boerhaave. Certainly, in this category the influence of the Philadelphia doctors Thomas Bond and Thomas Cadwalader, both early members of the library, was strongly felt. The former, just about the time the Library Company was organized, gave his first anatomical demonstrations to a group of local physicians "who had not been abroad." Drake's *New System of Anatomy* became available on the library's shelves shortly thereafter. For the professionals, as well as the self-practitioners, Quincy's *New Medicinal Dictionary* and particularly his *Complete English Dispensatory* and Pomet's *Compleat History of Druggs*, with their wealth of prescriptions, were essential tools. That old faithful of English medicine, Thomas Sydenham, was represented by a collected edition of his works, and the newer school by Shaw's *New Practice of Physick* and *The Art of Surgery* by Daniel Turner, the recipient from Yale of the first medical degree—an honorary one—granted by an American college.

Old opinions on medicine were presented with the new in Allen's *Synopsis Medicinae*, where they were collected and briefed under the heads of the various diseases. Recognition of the validity of some older theories was evidenced by the choice of *Medicina Statica*, containing the aphorisms of Sanctorius—an early edition of which was received by gift—with the recent essays by Keill and Quincy. Another old favorite was Cornaro's *Sure and certain Methods of attaining a long and healthful Life*, a standard work on geriatrics, which was supplemented by the gift of Cheyne's *Essay of Health and Long Life*, which recommended temperance and vegetarianism. An indica-

³⁴ G. E. Fussell, *More Old English Farming Books from Tull to the Board of Agriculture* (London, 1950), 5.

tion of the desire to provide general texts rather than specialized ones is the fact that the only two works dealing with a single phase of medicine were the literary Dr. Arbuthnot's essays *Upon Air* and *Upon Aliment*.

The theological works in the library can be skimmed over quickly, for they show a peripheral interest in the subject, more from a historical point of view than from a sectarian one. Bibles were books for the home, and not for lending, so it is not surprising that the three Bibles, all of antiquarian interest, among them a copy of the Great Bible of 1541, were gifts. The purchase of a verse translation of the Psalms by Blackmore was probably made for literary rather than liturgical reasons.

In spite of the Quaker predominance in Philadelphia—or possibly because individual Quakers owned books on their sect in their personal libraries³⁵—the only works dealing with that group were the two-volume edition of the collected works of William Penn, which, of course, contained much of a political nature, Sewell's standard *History of the Quakers* in the edition a section of which was Franklin's first printing on his own, and the *Discourses* of Logan's good friend and correspondent, Thomas Story. Such apparently indispensable sets as Fox's *Acts and Monuments*, a gift from Robert Grace, and Burnet's *History of the Reformation Of the Church of England* gave the members as much coverage as they wanted for the history of the Anglican Church. And the works of Richard Hooker and Archbishop Tillotson, both considered excellent reading, provided them with representative theological thinking as background.

It was perhaps inevitable that the members of the Library Company, more freethinking than orthodox, should have chosen much of their little controversial theology on the subject of the argument between the proponents of natural and revealed religion. The *Discourse concerning the Being and Attributes of God* by Samuel Clark, the translator of Newton's *Optics* and the founder of the "intellectual" school which deduced the moral law from logical necessity, found nothing in science to controvert religion, and Wollaston in his *Religion of Nature Delineated* strongly upheld that theory. The scientist Ray's *Wisdom of God*, the demand for which had sent it into edition after edition, attempted to conciliate the two schools. And

³⁵ Tolles, 312, states that Smith's own library was "well stocked with the writings of Quaker preachers and controversialists."

Bishop Berkeley's *Alciphron*, written while he was in America, may be said, in view of his strong attack on freethinkers, to represent the old-fashioned school.

The Philadelphians were broad-minded, perhaps at an earlier period than a similar group in New England or the South would have been; their interest was intellectual and not blindly partisan, although they shared the general English suspicion of popery politically tied to Stuart tyranny. They did not hesitate to buy such varied works as two of the mystic William Law's most widely read treatises, Trapp's bitterly anti-Catholic *Preservative against Popery*, and Pascal's *Mystery of Jesuitism*, the English translation of his famous *Lettres Provinciales*. To these were added standard histories of older forms of religion: Josephus, Prideaux, and Godwin for Judaism and the Jews, a *History of the Heathen Gods* for Greek and Roman mythology, Boulainvilliers for Mohammedanism, Cracanthorp's account of the old Greek Church, Platina's *Lives of the Popes* (given by James Logan), two editions of Sarpi's history of the Council of Trent, criticizing papal power, and Limborch's *History of the Inquisition*, condemning persecution. Without any attempt to secure all the voluminous tomes with which every theological student was expected to be familiar, the members were able to get a Protestant-slanted picture of what many different peoples at many different times had believed.

Less sectarian philosophy was more to their taste. Stanley's *History of Philosophy* was their one-volume guide to the various classical schools. Xenophon's *Memorable Things of Socrates*, which so charmed the boy Franklin that he "dropt my abrupt contradiction and positive argumentation, and put on the humble inquirer and doubter,"³⁶ Plato's *Works*, translated from the Dacier edition, an old edition of Plutarch's *Morals*, "Englished" by Philemon Holland and donated by Breintnall in 1733, and the then fashionable *Morals* of Epictetus, translated by Dean Stanhope, were their legacies from Greece. However, Rome's wisdom was considered plumbed with Cicero, whose *De Finibus*, *Tusculanae Disputationes*, and *De Natura Deorum*, all in translation, were the only works they owned of the later age.

In the more modern era lay two thirds of the library's strength, and, one would assume, most of the members' interest. With the exception of a handful of minor works and two books on logic—one

³⁶ Smyth, I, 244.

by the Dutch philosopher Burgersdijck and the other by the Port-Royalist Nicole³⁷—and two titles by Locke, all given by Franklin in 1733, all the other titles represented the readers' own choice. To balance the Port-Royalist, the members selected, perhaps because of Clarke's repeated high recommendations,³⁸ De Crousaz's *New Treatise of the Art of Thinking*. These were the times when logic, as a system of proper rules and directions for the conduct of understanding in its inquiries after truth, was hailed as the invention by which "have the Moderns been chiefly able to outstrip the Antients in Knowledge, so prodigiously as they have done."³⁹ Crousaz's system of logic and Locke's substance in his *Essay upon Human Understanding* were paramount in the field. It is interesting to note that the only editorial comment in the whole printed catalogue of 1741 follows the entry of the latter work—"Esteemed the best Book of Logick in the World."

It was Locke who apparently dominated the speculative thinking of the Philadelphia group as he did that of all England in the first half of the eighteenth century. Except for Pope and Abbé Vertot, the library contained more titles by Locke than by any other author. Besides the *Essay*, there were the massive three-volume edition of his *Works*, *A Collection of Several Pieces*, and *Two Treatises on Government*. Locke's economic and humanitarian interests and his liberal views, his thoughts on education, toleration in a broad sense, the constitution of Carolina, currency reform, and state responsibility for the poor, approached from the viewpoint of scientific psychology, were a major influence on the thinking and government of the British colonies, and later of the independent nation which evolved from them. In 1776, when Jefferson was first concerned with what later became his famous Bill for Religious Freedom, he copied out pages of notes from Locke and Shaftesbury to buttress his own thinking on the subject.⁴⁰

³⁷ Pierre Nicole, *Logic; or, the Art of Thinking* (London, 1717). This book, with Franklin's signature on the title page, is still in the Library Company, and may be the only book that Franklin owned in Boston which has survived. In his autobiography he mentions having read it when he was about sixteen years old. Smyth, I, 243.

³⁸ Clarke, 143, 222.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁴⁰ Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton, N. J., 1950), I, 544-550.

A train of followers—the revolutionaries in America, the Encyclopedists in France, and the political economists in England—borrowed from Locke, but others, stimulated by him, opposed his ideas. The Library Company included some of their works too. *A Collection of Papers which passed between the late learned Mr. Leibnitz and Dr. Clark* was one of the results of the intellectual ferment which Locke created; Leibnitz supported his theories, Clark opposed them. The Earl of Shaftesbury, whose tutor Locke had been, later criticized him, yet his work was strongly colored by the spirit of his preceptor. Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, as the first work to elaborate on the doctrine of "moral sense," found a sympathetic audience in the city whose founding and development had been a groping attempt on the part of William Penn to build a community which would function morally. That Shaftesbury was a deist would not have bothered most of the Philadelphians, and they were more in sympathy with his supporters than his attackers, Hobbes and Mandeville. No work by either of these men was purchased before 1741, but Hutcheson's major contribution in defense of Shaftesbury, *An Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, and his *Essay on the Conduct of the Passions* were secured. Hutcheson's phrase "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" can almost be said to have inspired the Declaration of Independence.

Perhaps it was symptomatic of the members' position in society—not yet in the higher ranks, but determined to rise—that they chose a comparatively large number of books on behavior and manners. Halifax's *Miscellanies*, with political as well as personal commentary, La Bruyere's *Works*, and Nicole's *Moral Essays* treated of the proper way of life on a high moral and philosophical level. *The Manners of the Age*, written "to expose the vicious and irregular Conduct of both Sexes," was on a somewhat earthier plane, and *The Ladies Library* and *The Gentleman's Library* contained specific suggestions for polite deportment.

However, there was as serious an interest in the government of states as in that of individuals. There is no doubt that many of the colonials expected something to develop in the American governments closer to utopian ideals than had been possible in England, and the two great English works, More's *Utopia* and Harrington's

Oceana, were to be found in most of the early libraries of this country. As Michael Kraus wrote, "Onto America was projected the blueprint of a society far removed from the European reality."⁴¹ More and Harrington were the chief architects of the blueprint as far as the Philadelphians were concerned, and the former was a favorite among the Quakers on account of its advocacy of the principle of religious toleration.⁴²

In contrast, they also bought the *Works* of the realist Machiavelli, and found a model for political reasoning in Acherley's *Britannic Constitution*, which set forth a justification of the accession of William III and the Hanoverian succession. The absolutism of the Stuarts was unpopular in America, and the fact that Algernon Sidney's *Discourses on Government* was as highly esteemed as it seems to have been was possibly due as much to his position as one of the martyrs of Stuart tyranny as to the profound liberal views of his work. To a great degree Sidney's advocacy of republicanism was reflected in the thinking of the leaders of the Revolution, and his firm belief in political freedom was widely quoted. Toward the end of his life Benjamin Rush, writing to John Adams, recalled that he had read "Sidney upon Government" when a young man, and cited his opinion against slavery.⁴³ In much the same vein, although more polemical in style, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon's *Cato's Letters*, another thoroughgoing Whig work which popularized the philosophy of representative government, was read eagerly throughout British America, and was ordered by the Library Company in 1732.

When it came to the wider plane of the principles of nations and international law, the members bought the two works of unchallenged primacy in the field, Grotius' *The Rights of War and Peace*, both in English and in Latin, and Pufendorf's *Law of Nature and Nations*, through which, as Locke noted, they might be "instructed in the natural Rights of Men, and the Original and Foundations of Society, and the Duties resulting from thence."⁴⁴ They seemed less interested in the philosophy of English common law, which was a part of their daily lives, and they bought basic, general works which

⁴¹ Michael Kraus, *The Atlantic Civilization: Eighteenth Century Origins* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1949), 216.

⁴² Tolles, 319.

⁴³ Lyman H. Butterfield, ed., *Letters of Benjamin Rush* (Princeton, N. J., 1951), II, 997-998.

⁴⁴ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 330.

would serve as reference books rather than texts for reading: Jacob's *New Law Dictionary*, Molloy's *De Jure Maritimo & Navali*, a practical handbook for the Philadelphia merchants "such as trade and have any Dealings at Sea," Godolphin's *Orphan's Legacy*, a guide to the intricacies of wills and estates, Wood's standard *Institutes of the Laws of England*, Duncomb's *Trial per Pais* on juries, *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, and a few others.

More valuable in our eyes are two American legal items. The first was a manuscript collection of the three fundamental documents of Pennsylvania—Charles II's Charter to Penn, Penn's Charter of Liberties for Pennsylvania, and Penn's Charter of the City of Philadelphia. It is interesting to note that they were first gathered together in print by Franklin the year before the Library Company catalogue was printed. The second, a gift from Henry Pratt, was *A brief Narrative of the Case and Tryal of John Peter Zenger*. The account of the Zenger trial, at which the principle of freedom of the press was established for the American colonies, was the only work on the contemporary American scene in the library at this early date. In 1741 the Philadelphia lawyer Andrew Hamilton, who had conducted the brilliant and successful defense of Zenger, was admitted to membership in the Library Company.

The willingness of the members to buy books for study and serious reading did not exclude the purchase of books on the useful arts to meet more immediate needs. They were, after all, not scholars, but merely ambitious men who wanted to use their leisure to improve themselves. No more complete mirror of their philosophy could be found than Defoe's *Complete English Tradesman*, a didactic book of advice which glorified the small tradesman's life and offered moral—yet very practical—guideposts to the way to wealth, which Franklin made his own when he wrote as the sage Poor Richard. Since the thrifty eighteenth-century tradesman was a jack-of-all-trades in his shop or home, the members felt that Price's *British Carpenter* and *The Builder's Dictionary* would be useful "do-it-yourself" books.

They matched this utilitarian concern with an interest in architecture as such, for Philadelphia was, as men like these succeeded in life, becoming a city of fine homes. They bought Palladio's *Architecture*, the single work which had the greatest influence on English style during that period, and Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus*, which also reflected the neoclassical Palladian tone of Christopher

Wren's London. The Philadelphians did not, however, have a leisured gentleman's interest in art from a collector's point of view, and they added nothing in this field except a few books on classical antiquities, including Montfaucon's seven-volume *Antiquity explained*. But again, they supplemented these few books on a down-to-earth level with Dubreuil's *Practice of Perspective*, an introduction to drawing and draftsmanship. Closely allied and possibly bought at the request of the professional scribes Breintnall and Brockden was Bickham's *Penmanship*, the most popular of all the writing books of the period when the round cursive English hand, used by men like Franklin and Washington and the model for Spencerian forms, was supplanting the earlier seventeenth-century script.

Three works on useful arts seem rather specialized for the group, but two of them were gifts, and the other may have been suggested by Franklin. This last was the typographically handsome *A General History of Printing* by Samuel Palmer, the London printer under whom Franklin worked in 1725. The others were Sutherland's *Ship-Building unveiled*, given by Godfrey whose interest in navigation made him famous, and Gauger's *Fires improved*, given by Robert Grace. The latter dealt with the construction of fireplaces and chimneys, and it is significant that, when Franklin invented his improved Pennsylvania stove, Grace manufactured the product.⁴⁵ One wonders if this volume did not provide the two men with the information necessary to design and build their stove.

One more basic discipline was covered by the collection—linguistics. English grammar was the members' primary concern, as it had been that of young Franklin, who mentions having used Greenwood's *English Grammar* to improve his mastery of language.⁴⁶ In addition to this widely used text, the Library Company secured Brightland's similar work. Their dictionary was the best of the period, Bailey's *Universal English Dictionary*, upon which Dr. Johnson based his later massive work. These were the essential tools for a thorough reading and writing knowledge of good English, an asset highly esteemed by the ambitious tradesman.

There was probably no other library of the same size in the colonies which, like the Library Company, included only one Latin grammar. They did buy *A rational Grammar* by the dramatist James Shirley,

⁴⁵ Smyth, I, 370.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 243–244.

modernized by Phillips, but showed the same lack of interest in classical studies that had been shown in their other choices by not bothering about anything more advanced than this beginner's text. Franklin said he was able to pick up Latin through his study of the romance languages. He noted that in 1733 he began studying languages with French, which he easily mastered.⁴⁷ Perhaps, because he had already bought himself French textbooks which he was willing to lend, the Library Company at first did not buy any. However, they did get Veneroni's *Italian Master* and Altieri's Italian dictionary, together with Stevens' Spanish grammar and dictionary, so that Franklin and others might progress to other tongues. Of more utility to most of the members, living as they did in a heavily German-settled region, would have been Beiller's German grammar and Ludwig's dictionary.

Finally, the collection contained a few works of general reference, the most significant of which was Clarke's *Essay upon Study*. It was a reflection of the universal acceptance of the texts which Clarke recommended that so large a proportion of those on his list of the best books in various fields of learning were chosen by the members. It is not surprising to find that in 1751, when Franklin wrote his *Idea of the English School*⁴⁸ for the trustees of the Academy of Philadelphia, almost all the books that he mentioned were among those praised by Clarke and already owned by the Library Company. Two other purchase guides which the members had available, in addition to booksellers' trade catalogues, were the *Historia Litteraria*, a periodical list with critical comments of "the most Valuable Books Published in the Several Parts of Europe," and the *London Magazine*, which had only begun publication in April, 1732, with its essays, news, and valuable book reviews, both of which were subscribed to and received as issued.

Literally the weightiest set, and the most expensive purchase the members made, was Bayle's six-volume folio *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, the most scholarly encyclopedia of the age, which to the anger of some clerical critics was written from a tolerant, rational point of view, preparing the way for Diderot and the Encyclopedists. To complete its reference material, the library bought Chamber's *Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, a more practical *omne*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 347.

⁴⁸ Appended at the end of Richard Peters, *A Sermon on Education* (Philadelphia, 1751).

gatherum, which remained a current authority until later in the century when Rees expanded Chamber's work into his once highly regarded *Cyclopaedia*.

Here then was the collection which the members of the Library Company gathered for their own use in the first ten years of their co-operative venture. While the number of books grew from 375 titles in 1741 to 2,033 in 1770, the general character of the collection remained as it had been. An interest in history remained predominant, but more and more contemporary American political pamphlets were purchased as they came out, reflecting the members' rise in status from onlookers to participants in the government of the province. In literature, the policy of buying the most popular current books continued, and Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, Gray, and Johnson made their due appearance in the library. In science, new books, including that of Franklin himself on electricity, were added to keep the Philadelphians abreast of new discoveries, men like Linnaeus, Musschenbroeck, Haller, and Pringle replacing their predecessors as authorities. However, as strictly scientific institutions like the Pennsylvania Hospital and the American Philosophical Society began to function and form their own libraries, the proportion of scientific books does not seem to have been necessary, and was not maintained. Yet, the three major, distinctive features of the earliest choice were constant: comparatively few theological works were added, almost no books in a language other than English were bought, and the radical, Whig tone of selection was continued.

As the years went by, other subscription libraries, modeled on the Library Company, were organized throughout the colonies. The same kind of clientele apparently demanded the same kind of books, and it is more than coincidence to find that existing printed lists of the other early libraries include a high proportion of the identical works which the Philadelphia library chose. The choice reflects the basic character of American colonial middle-class culture. As the 1789 cornerstone of the new Fifth Street building of the Library Company stated, that institution founded "by the Philadelphian Youth (Then chiefly Artificers) . . . which tho' small at first, is become highly valuable And extensively useful."