

## EDMUND LA TOUCHE ARMSTRONG

# Fifty years of the Public Library: some recollections and some notes

Edited with an introduction by Kevin Molloy

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### Introduction

On his extended trip to Britain and Ireland in 1908, Edmund La Touche Armstrong was given a number of requests by the Trustees of the Melbourne Public Library Board. Armstrong was to travel – partly on extended leave and partly for health reasons<sup>1</sup> – firstly to London to arrange a meeting with Sir Edward Maunde-Thompson, head of the British Library (then part of the British Museum), with a view to discussing some of the finer features of the plans for the Domed Reading Room for the new Melbourne Library building and to get some feedback from the head of one of the world’s great heritage institutions. The Domed Reading Room project, for which Armstrong will chiefly be remembered, was initiated by him and strongly supported by the Trustees. By the time of his trip in 1908, building was well under way. Armstrong’s second major task was to report on the current state of library practice in Britain, Ireland and America, and the trip enabled him to visit some of the great libraries in these countries as well as make an extended visit to European institutions. But the journey was also recreational leave; a large part of the time was spent visiting aunts and cousins in Ireland and Britain and working on the La Touche Armstrong family history, much to the amusement of his mother, then residing at the Public Library,<sup>2</sup> and who had scant curiosity about such things.

Bernard Hall, *E La Touche Armstrong*, c. 1925, oil on canvas, Pictures Collection, H36548



Edmund's maternal grandfather, Major Henry O'Dell, veteran Peninsular War campaigner whose engagements had included Salamanca, Buçaco and the infamous sacking of Ciudad Rodrigo, died in Dublin in 1864, the year Edmund was born in Geelong. Edmund's father, John Simpson Armstrong, had graduated from Trinity College Dublin in 1832 and been admitted to the Society of the King's Inns as barrister in 1837. Being an expert shorthand writer, he was responsible for compiling a number of the Irish Common Law Reports and was present at many of the famous political trials in Dublin during the 1840s. John and his wife, Alice O'Dell, and their first child emigrated to Melbourne in 1858 where John acted as Crown Prosecutor and later a County Court judge in many Victorian rural districts. John and Alice's business affairs in Ireland continued to be handled by the family's legal representatives in Dublin.

Edmund La Touche Armstrong, the sixth child of the ten Armstrong children, entered the Melbourne Public Library in 1881 as a 17-year-old junior assistant. His father died three years later in 1884. By the time he was 20, Edmund's access to family tradition was becoming increasingly tenuous. When the opportunity arose to make the acquaintance of his father's family in Ireland and England and his mother's sisters in south County Dublin, Edmund seems to have relished the opportunity to meet, question and document the family as much as possible. The resulting family typescript – a modest 20-page essay, with family charts, completed sometime before his death in 1946 – is a testament to his continued need to document and to record for posterity his family's history as he heard it firsthand. Armstrong's *The Book of the Public Library* and 30,000-word unpublished typescript, 'Fifty years of the Public Library', set out on a similar path, to document the growth, progression and many permutations of the Library as it evolved into one of the major public institutions in Australia.

'Fifty years of the Public Library', as memoir, is also a very personal and at times idiosyncratic look at the workings of the Library as a public institution within the increasing ambit and overt control of government and all that that meant. It is based on Armstrong's recollections of those years and the memories of others as he heard them. Further, it documents and assesses the personalities of the Trustees, and certainly the staff, their strengths and weaknesses in ways that are both surprising and humorous. Overall it aims to look at the increasing professionalism of library work, the complexity of public libraries as institutions, and the type of professional required by such institutions.

Like all of Armstrong's writings, 'Fifty years' is measured and precise, reflecting Armstrong's knowledge and administrative control of the Library. After almost 30 years as Chief Librarian, Armstrong has no bones to pick. He is at ease with his subject matter, the institution and the staff with whom



Edmund La Touche Armstrong as a young man (right) at about the time he started at the Melbourne Public Library, c. 1881, and (left) in his retirement c. 1940s. Courtesy Armstrong Family Archives

he worked. However, he is acutely aware of the processes of change as he moves chronologically through the decades as he experienced them. There are no shocking revelations or hidden scandals, though he is quite able, as a former chief executive, to assess the strengths and foibles of his peers. As an administrative history, 'Fifty years of the Public Library' covers the import and influence of Trustees and astutely assesses their contributions, or not. There is very little of Armstrong's personal life in this memoir, and what we know of his life outside the Library centres largely on his membership of the Yorick Club, the Metropolitan Golf Club, the Royal Empire Society and the Wallaby Club. Armstrong seems to have been a confirmed walker who loved the bush.<sup>3</sup>

'Fifty years' also acts as a strong antidote to Leigh Scott's at times very acerbic assessment of La Touche Armstrong as a chief executive: someone Scott judged as a considerate man but one out of touch with the staff; a deeply private individual who took part in no public activities; with no family life or responsibilities; someone with a heightened sense of his own importance (because of his two degrees); a man appointed at such a young age to such a degree of responsibility as Chief Librarian and Secretary of the Trustees that he was perpetually in awe of his superiors and ultimately failed to assert his personality in ways that were beneficial to the Library.<sup>4</sup>

As with his previous work, *The Book of the Public Library*, published in 1932, Armstrong wrote his notes for 'Fifty years of the Public Library' in retirement.

Aged 60, he had left the Library in 1925 after 44 years. Twenty-nine of those years were as Chief Librarian and Secretary to the Trustees, a position Armstrong held twice as long as anyone else has ever done. As such, his impact on the Library and its direction was significant, ranging from new staff appointments, the extension of the Dewey decimal classification system to all the Library's holdings, the opening of the Domed Reading Room in 1913, and of course his ability to successfully steer the Public Library through the years of World War I when significant demands were made by the public for instant access to war news, and increasingly for scientific and mechanical information. 'Fifty years of the Public Library' reveals an Armstrong who was undemonstrative and naturally reserved – as was his personality. He was an administrator firmly in control of the direction of the Library and a man who had the full confidence, and full measure, of the Trustees.

*Kevin Molloy*

### Fifty years of the Public Library

The Public Library of Victoria was opened in 1856 in the central portion of the Swanston Street block. In 1859, the building was extended on the south [side] by a room 90 feet [27 m] long and in 1864 a similar extension was built on the north side. The Library itself was contained in a beautiful hall, some two hundred feet [61 m] long and fifty feet [15 m] wide. In the domed roof were skylights and there were large windows in the east and west walls. On each side of these windows were book cases extending towards the centre of the hall and forming bays or small reading rooms. These gave a certain amount of privacy but made adequate supervision impossible. The building was in the classical Corinthian style and was set back from Swanston Street behind sloping lawns, flanked by trees on the north and south sides. In front, on either side of the entrance gates, stood a large elm tree and a handsome flight of steps, second only to those in front of Parliament House, led to the main entrance hall.

### Growth and development of the Library

In 1881 when Dr Bride was appointed Librarian, the Public Library of Victoria may be said to have entered upon the second phase of its existence. Prior to that time it had been carried on in an easy old-fashioned way, under two or three officers and a few attendants. It contained about 100,000 well-chosen volumes and formed an admirable retreat for the student from the noise and bustle of the young and busy city. What Redmond Barry did he did well, and under him,



Charles Nettleton, photographer, The Queen's Hall Reading Room, Melbourne Public Library, c. 1870–1900, albumen silver photograph, Pictures Collection, H4573

the Library which he dominated in its early years, had an excellent beginning. Augustus Tulk, the first Librarian, was a booklover and a learned and capable man. Into the student world the rush and hurry of a claimant democracy had not yet entered. Barry and Augustus Tulk were both dignified, quiet scholarly men and they were excellent friends. Neither of them knew anything of what may be called the technique of librarianship, but both possessed what may commonly be called the love of books, and also the understanding of what they meant for human advancement. In their time general education was only in its infancy, and there was no demand, as in modern days, for quick service and assistance and advice for readers. Scholars were assumed to know the books they needed and general readers could browse at will, until they found something that they could read with pleasure or advantage. But in the seventies and eighties of last century a new spirit was moving in the world. Education in Victoria had been made 'free, secular, and compulsory'.

Barry, despite his leaning towards the higher education heretofore in vogue in England, was in favour of liberal provision for the education of the people. In addition to providing for those who moved in the world of letters he had always agreed to a continuous supply of scientific and technical books and, indeed of all works that would increase the knowledge of the public. Rather doubtfully, he even admitted a certain amount of fiction, limiting it to what might be ranked as classic.

In his later years Sir Redmond foresaw that librarians were to be more than

keepers and collectors and he introduced the system of appointing to the staff of the library young men from amongst the students at the university. The idea was a sound one and to Barry again falls the honour of being the first to see that in some branches of the Public Service men of education above the average were essential. But in a new country like Australia there were better opportunities for young men of this type than in the Public Service. To some of them library work and its associations were congenial enough, but the monetary prospects were not inviting. There were better prospects outside of the Service and it was usual for men with professional or higher educational qualifications to resign just as they were beginning to be qualified for more important duties in the State Library.

Sir Redmond Barry died in 1880, and in the same year Henry Sheffield expressed a wish to retire from his office as Librarian. The Trustees did not think that anyone then on the staff was suitable for the position of Head of the Library. They favoured the appointment of a retired Civil Servant who had shown capacity in another sphere, but he was no longer young. The Government would not accept this nomination and, after some argument, the Trustees agreed to accept the appointment of Dr Bride, then a young man holding the position of Librarian and Assistant Registrar at the university. He had to face a difficult task. Two or three of the senior members of the staff had grown up with the Library and had a good working knowledge of the books at least from the outside. Two of the seniors were men of intelligence and had good memories. The Library on the whole was fairly fortunate, for it must be remembered that the average politician or patron in the early days of the Colony probably thought that for practical purposes there was little to choose between librarians of the standing, let us say, of Tom Pinch and Panizzi.<sup>5</sup> Some of the assistant librarians were excellent in subordinate positions, but none of them had the knowledge and capacity to control and direct the younger men. So, when Dr Bride took office he found several Tom Pinches but few promising Panizzis. However, Sir Redmond had learnt from experience and the new Librarian found one or two capable young assistants on the staff. MF Dowden, then a law student, and FJ Drake, an Arts student, were men of ability and promise. AW Brazier, another undergraduate was transferred to the Library proper and Dr Bride immediately after his appointment, obtained the services of several additional librarians from matriculated students of the University. Amongst these, in addition to the writer, were RB Rennick, Jasper Husband afterwards in practice at the bar, TW Brown, WH Rigby and Harold Irving, who all left the service to qualify as medical men.

RD Boys, a future Chief Librarian, joined the staff in 1883. About the same

time, there were several junior librarians who, later, were destined for high positions outside the service. EHC Oliphant, journalist, critic, and writer and lecturer on Elizabethan literature; JM Kerr, an exceptionally capable man, who resigned to practise law and built up a large practice as a solicitor; JS Batty, who went to Perth as Public Librarian in 1895, and later became Chancellor of the University in that State; Dr Atkinson, afterwards a leader in the Methodist Church in Melbourne; Louis Esson, poet, playwright and critic; RH Croll, who was transferred to the Department of Education, and in later years became a well-known writer on many Australian subjects.

Thanks to the efforts of James Smith, Professor Morris, Dr Leeper and other Trustees interested in education in general and libraries in particular, prospects of service in the Library became slightly better and men like AW Brazier, RD Boys, WJ Vogler, ER Pitt, AB Foxcroft, TF Cooke and WC Baud decided to devote themselves to Library work.

From the staff of the Public Library, were chosen two Librarians of Parliament, P Quirk and E Fraser. The Institution being attached to the Department of the Chief Secretary, nominations to the Board of Trustees were always made by him. Naturally enough members of parliament often obtained such nominations, though they were not unduly represented on the Trust. On the whole little fault could be found with the appointments of Trustees during the first half of the existence of the Library. Members of the Judiciary, Professors at University and other cultured men were well represented. Occasionally an outstanding man of business was rightly appointed and the status of the Board was on the whole a very high one. Sometimes an ambitious, self-seeking man with no qualifications for the office, did receive an appointment. Such happenings are inevitable.

The Trustees for many years fought for and upheld their statutory rights and declined to be subject to any body short of Parliament itself. For better for worse they 'governed' the institution, as provided by law. So strong was their position that, when in 1883 they decided to open part of the Institution on Sundays, even the Premier of the State expressed himself as doubtful whether he could interfere with their decision. Public opinion was divided on the issue at the time and finally the Trustees had to yield to a decision of parliament against the opening. However, though beaten for the moment, their decision was to gain public approval at a later date ... [But] the overbearing weight of the Ministers and Government officials tends to reduce the status and prestige of the Board. Redmond Barry's dream of a great University of the people, governed by properly qualified enthusiasts, is likely to develop into a branch of some government department. This may be administered smoothly enough, but it is



likely to lack the fire and vim necessary to develop a really great institution.

The Trustees at one time had the powers implied in their Act of Incorporation. They had their own architects, their own legal advisers and the power to make contracts. The government was satisfied to have a controlling influence in the power of the purse. In recent years, however, they have been told to employ the government architect, to consult the Crown Solicitor, instead of their own legal advisers, and they are no longer allowed to make contracts as freely as formerly.

The system of dual control, with the powers on neither side strictly defined, sometimes leads to strained relations, which may be serious or merely trifling. The Government of the Institution is still nominally in the hands of the Trustees, but the appointment and control of the staff is not. Thus the Trustees' Executive Officer is sometimes placed in a difficult position. He cannot serve two masters. In carrying out his duty to the Trustees, to whom he must be actually, if not legally responsible, he may have to assume a power as Hamlet advised his mother to assume a virtue. On [one] occasion, when the Trustees employed their own architects, a new building was in course of construction, and the foreman of the works was using blasting power of such force that exhibits in the Art Museum were endangered. The Chief Librarian ordered him to discontinue. He refused and said that he was acting under orders of the contractors. Another blast occurred and the foreman was told that he and his men would be ordered off the premises if he did not stop the blasting. The power to exclude undesirable persons is vested in the chief officer of the Trustees, but whether the foreman could be said to come under that category might be arguable. Fortunately the Architect arrived in time to prevent extreme action and the blasting operations were stopped.

### **The Reading Room of 1913**

The year after this building was commenced I went to England and took with me copies of the plans, which I wished to show to some English and American Librarians and especially to Sir Edward Maunde-Thompson, the head of the British Museum. His son was in Melbourne at the time and assured me that his Father would be interested and glad to discuss with me the plans for the Melbourne building. Since the days of Redmond Barry the British Museum authorities had always been friendly and generous to the Melbourne Library. The Director proved to be very sympathetic. He very kindly gave me most of the afternoon to discuss the plans.

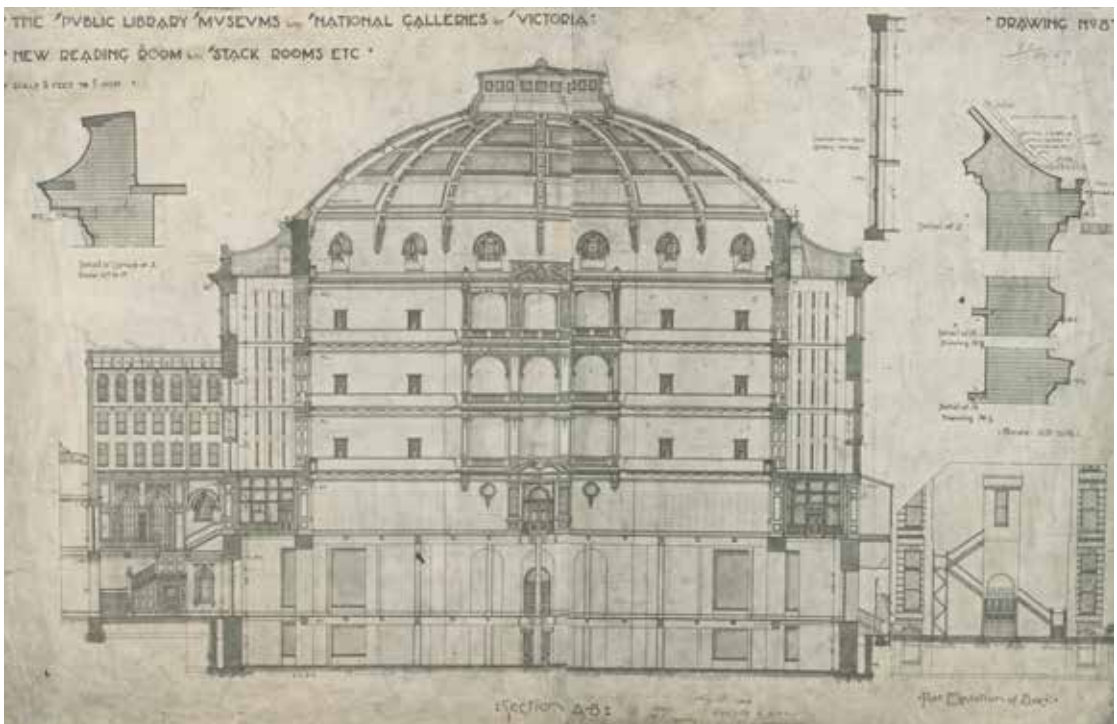
After he had examined them I asked him to give his opinion frankly and assured him that any criticism or suggestion that he might care to make would be very welcome. He expressed great interest in the drawings and approval in

the main, but he did not think the Reading Room could be satisfactorily lighted and he feared trouble in regard to ventilation. As regards the natural lighting, I thought that possibly he did not realize the difference of the daylight in London and that in our more sunny climate. The outcome was that the architect agreed to enlarge the number of skylights but said that in his opinion we would probably have too much light rather than too little. In this he was right. The wonderful old Pantheon at Rome which I saw later, was erected before the Christian era and is still standing in a state of remarkable preservation. It is lighted – and remarkably well lighted – by one comparatively small unglazed aperture in the centre of the Dome. This convinced me that we need not fear want of natural light in the Melbourne dome.

### Classification

The classification of a large Library of books, as those who undertake it invariably find to their cost, is by no means an easy task. Different systems have their merits and in smaller or special libraries they have varying degrees of convenience. The first system used by Augustus Tulk was partly geographical and partly under subjects. It was useful and in many ways convenient, but hardly justified Judge Barry's contention that by it the resources of the Library could be discovered at a glance. Even in the early days a very considerable number of volumes, especially those of the great size such as Audubon's *Birds*, Ebers *Egypt* and other 'elephant' folios, including many of the larger works connected with the study of Art, were kept rather carelessly in a portion of the gallery which was railed off from the public. Still, nearly all the books in the Library were then on the shelves open to the public, [so] the majority of readers were well served. One of Dr Bride's first tasks was to attempt a reclassification by subjects rather than countries, a task that he was soon glad to hand over to Dr Gagliardi. At a later date the Dewey decimal system of classification was introduced. This was first tried in the Lending Library when Mr Boys was in charge of that branch. Whatever its demerits the practical advantages of the system are very great.

When the new Reading Room was about to be built the Trustees agreed, on my recommendation, to adopt it in the Reference Library. The then Sub-Librarian, AW Brazier was opposed to this form of classification and the huge task of applying it in the Reference Library was entrusted to Mr Boys. This led to serious charges being made against me by the Sub-Librarian. He refused to recognize the authority of the Trustees, to whom the matter was referred, and claimed that, legally he was subject only to the Under-secretary or the Public Service Commissioner. A very unpleasant episode ended by his transference to the Lending Library.



Bates, Peebles & Smart, architects, *The Public Library Museums and National Galleries of Victoria. New Reading Room and Stack Rooms Etc, Section A B of the Domed Reading Room, 1909, Architectural drawings collection, H2010.69/58*

### Public records and manuscripts

The Library has obtained the custody of many State documents or public records, but no real attempt to establish a Records Office has yet been made. Public Records have been described as including papers and documents belonging to the King such as State papers, rolls, writs, decrees and so forth. In England such documents are placed under the control of a highly placed civil servant known as the Master of the Rolls, an office of high judicial standing. Victoria, small though it be in comparison, has many public documents of importance but they are scattered in various departments. These should be carefully examined and any of sufficient importance should be preserved, as far as possible in one office, otherwise they are apt to be lost or destroyed. These documents will so increase, indeed have so increased, that the establishment of a Record Office has become essential. Whether that office should be connected with the Public Library is at least doubtful. The main function of a national or state public library is of course to provide books of reference for all purposes required by a genuine student. This purpose should never be overlooked and it is well not to have too many branches, lest the wood should be hidden by the trees.

Nevertheless, apart from what may be classed as public records, no state library should be without a department of manuscripts. Many such writings,



Sears' Studios, photographer, Annulus of domed reading room, under construction, Melbourne Public Library, c. 1913, Pictures Collection, H9214

closely connected with literature, in the widest acceptance of the term, form a valuable adjunct to the printed volumes. The written word is sometimes of intrinsic value, possibly even more so than a first edition. There is a personal touch about manuscripts that has an appeal deeper than mere sentiment. It has also something of the quality of a good portrait and helps to put one in personal touch with the writer. The interest, too, increases with age. So it is well for a library to collect manuscripts of poets, and authors as well as men of real eminence in the world of art or state craft.

A modern library has little opportunity of obtaining specimens of paleography. Even manuscripts a century or two old are not easily acquired. Nevertheless letters of distinguished men do come into the market and are always of interest, more particularly if they have any bearing on matters connected with Australian or local history or literature. The Melbourne Library has a fairly good basis of such a collection, including the Batman deeds, purporting to sell huge tracks [tracts] of land by aboriginal chiefs to a Tasmanian company, the original plan of the first land sale in Melbourne, the La Trobe collection of letters of Victorian pioneers and many historical documents as well as holograph letters and manuscripts of famous literary and historical men of note. Such records will naturally increase in importance.

### Some Trustees

Amongst the notable Trustees appointed after the Act of Incorporation in 1869 were several holding high positions in the public life of the State, some of whom, as regards the Library, merely held office, whilst others took a personal interest in the Institution. Sir Redmond Barry was still President and the active Chairman of the Library Committee. The Rev. Dr JI Bleasdale, at that time a prominent citizen, an ex-member of the Exhibition Commission and to the fore in other ways, was Chairman of both Museum Committees, and Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, Irish writer and patriot, held a similar office on the Committee of the National Gallery. Professors Strong, Nanson and Morris were appointed Trustees in the late seventies, and all three took an active interest in the Library. Professor Nanson persuaded Dr Bride to introduce the system of numbering books as it had been used in the University Library on Professor Nanson's initiative. Professor Strong was a classical scholar of note who in co-operation with his brother Trustees, Dr Pearson and Dr Leeper, found time to publish several classical and educational works.

In the decades between 1870 and 1890, practically every member of the Board had attained a position of distinction in the community and most were scholars or in sympathy with matters educational. Up to this time art and science had no special representatives, but in 1892 John Mather, then President of the Victorian Artists Association, was appointed a trustee and in 1895 Professor Baldwin Spencer was made a member of the Board. At the same time the Labor Party, rapidly attaining prominence in politics, was represented by FH Bromley. In the early years of the century, Edward Carlile, KC was the first member of the Public Service to obtain a seat on the Board of Trustees. In the following years the appointment of politicians became fewer, and artists, professional men of standing and others were appointed by various chief secretaries. It is, of course, a matter of opinion as to the wisdom shown by different Ministers in their nominations, but, generally speaking, the high status of the board was maintained. In later years very few members or ex-members of Parliament accepted appointments. Perhaps their parliamentary duties were too exacting or their sympathies were elsewhere. It may even be that modern politics in the Dominions does not attract men of outstanding culture or wide educational and artistic sympathies.

Whatever the reason, it is somewhat remarkable that in 1891 there were eleven members or ex-members of Parliament on the Board of Trustees and fifty years later there were but four, two of whom were members of the rising Labor Party. Sir George [Verdon] was a tall impressive man who had held many important offices in Victoria ... In later years he was inclined to be somewhat

pompous and overbearing, but he was proud of his position as President and made an excellent chairman of the Board. He was not very popular with the members of the staff whom for the most part he treated with scant courtesy. At one time he caused serious ill feeling amongst the senior officers of the Library by insisting that they should all wear a badge on their coats whilst on duty. This caused much resentment and led to the first open question of the power of the Trustees over their officers. However the matter was only the proverbial storm in a teacup. The order was never really obeyed and the whole affair was soon forgotten.

Sir George Verdon died in 1896 and was succeeded as President by the Hon. Edward Langton who had been a member of the Trust for many years. Mr Langton's interest in the Institution was very genuine and he proved himself a good fighting President. Moreover, having been a politician for many years and a Minister of the Crown, he knew how to fight. On one occasion Sir Thomas Bent, when Premier, sent for the writer in connection with a decision of the Trustees that the Director of the Gallery, Mr Bernard Hall, should go to London on business connected with the National Library and the Felton Bequest. Mr Bent, as he then was, had not apparently been at the Trustees meeting when the decision was made. The Government was not paying the Director's expenses and had not been consulted in the matter. The Premier asked how the matter stood. I explained what the Trustees wanted and told him that Mr Hall as due to leave for London in a day or two. Then, to my surprise, Mr Bent said very emphatically 'he's not going'. When I pointed out that all arrangements had been completed and that it would be very awkward, both for the Trustees and the Director to make any alteration in their plans he said 'I tell you Hall is not to go' and thumped his desk for emphasis. I then said that I would see the President immediately in regard to the matter. He glared at me and said 'Do what you like, but he's not going'. I then saw Mr Langton and told him what the Premier had said and asked for instructions. Mr Langton's comment was brief and to this effect. 'Do nothing; say nothing; our arrangements stand; let Mr Hall go on with his plans.' Bernard Hall duly sailed and the Premier took no action, though he never forgave me.

Mr Langton's successor in the presidential chair was Henry Gyles Turner, banker, historian, and writer on many subjects on the early days of the Colony of Victoria. He was not, like his predecessor a fighting head, but was by nature kindly and patient, though he did threaten on one occasion to 'write out of office' a certain turbulent politician with whom he had a difference of opinion.

Dr [Alexander] Leeper, the Warden of Trinity College, was elected President on the death of Mr Turner in 1920 and held the office till 1928. He had been a Trustee since 1887 and remained a member of the Board until his death in 1934.

A lover of books and a classical scholar, Dr Leeper's interest in libraries generally and in those [classical texts] in particular, was that of an enthusiast. So far back as 1894 he had moved for the establishment of a Library Association of Australasia. This association was duly founded at an Intercolonial Library Conference in 1896. Meetings of the Association were afterwards held in Sydney in 1898, in Adelaide in 1900, and again at Melbourne in 1902. The association was, however, before its time, and like its predecessor in America, it was only a forerunner of a more strictly professional association of librarians to be established some years later.

Dr Leeper's paper on the great Cambridge Librarian, Henry Bradshaw, read at a meeting of the Association in 1900, shows clearly what were his ideas of what a librarian should be. Bradshaw was not only a fine scholar, but also an ardent book lover and so had a double appeal to the Doctor. In England, university librarians and librarians of Parliament were often distinguished scholars and their office was considered to be more or less of a sinecure. Their time was largely given to literary work and as Dr Leeper points out in his paper, the same conception of their office existed in Dublin. Such men of course had always a great knowledge of books, the valuable knowledge of a scholar, but the real work of the Library was left to the assistant librarian. In America technical knowledge of his profession and capacity for organisation, in addition to a certain amount of scholarship, always the more the better, are required for the chief officer of their great libraries. The latter conception is more likely to be followed in Australia, where sinecure offices are always regarded unfavourably and are growing fewer and fewer.

Dr Leeper was always in favour of refusing to put in the Library what he considered sensational fiction, third rate poetry and ephemeral publications. He perhaps forgot that it is not always easy to decide what is third rate or ephemeral. Sufficient examples of all phases of literature, even decadent periods, must be available for the historian of any particular age. A great library should be catholic, taking as Bacon would have liked to do, all knowledge for its province. Books questioning the authorship of the Shakespearean plays were especially anathema to the Doctor, but no great collection would be complete if works on which grave differences of opinion exist were to be barred. Dr Leeper was succeeded in the presidential chair by the Hon. George Swinburne, an ex-minister of the Crown and a public spirited business man of great ability. He was an omnivorous reader with a penchant towards art, though not like many amateurs considering his judgment infallible. Unfortunately, he died suddenly in 1928 after holding the office of President for a very few months.

Sir Leo Cussen, who was appointed to the Board in 1916, followed Mr

Swinburne as President. His position on the Bar and on the Bench was a most distinguished one and later he was to render an immense service to the State by codifying all the existing laws in force in Victoria. He made a valuable report to the Trustees on Copyright Law and gave considerable time and thought to the amendment of all rules and regulations connected with the different departments of the Institution. Whilst carrying out his great work on the codification of the Victorian Acts of Parliament he asked whether the Library contained a very old annotated copy of the English Acts. He had tried, without success, to obtain it from the Supreme Court Library and the Libraries at Parliament House and the University. Fortunately there was a copy in the Public Library, which probably had not been used for half a century or more. Some time afterwards Sir Leo said that his volume was of very great, indeed almost essential, help to him. Judge Cussen's interest in the Institution was like much that was incidental to his career, less spectacular than it was sincere and helpful. His judicial experience made him a patient and understanding chairman, kindly, wise and forbearing, but firm when necessary. He asked Mr Boys and the writer to continue the compilation of the Books of the Library and took the trouble to read the proofs, helping with a friendly note of criticism or advice as occasion demanded.

Apart from those who held the office of President there were at different times many men of note on the Board of Trustees. James Smith, journalist and writer, was Librarian of Parliament for a few years in the sixties and was appointed a Trustee in 1880. Always interested in art and literature he had made a name for himself in journalism in the quarter of a century preceding the date of his appointment as a Trustee. He also did a considerable amount of art criticism but rather on the conservative side, and his criticisms were not appreciated by some of the young artists of his time, several of whom earned a considerable degree of fame in later life. A graceful writer he wrote fluently, *currente calamo*, and he wrote much. He had a considerable knowledge of French, Italian and Spanish. It was therefore no great trouble for him to translate a collection of the lectures on French literature delivered in Melbourne in the nineties by Mdlle. Irma Dreyfus, well known in literary circles at that time. She used the Library constantly during her residence in Victoria, but went back to Paris early in this century, where later she received an honour from the Academy.

In addition to his literary activities he was much interested in spiritualism and believed that he could make contact with the spirits of the departed artists and others. It is sad to record that a literary friend to whom he lent his records of such interviews could only find in them a too remarkable resemblance to the views on art known to be held by James Smith himself.

Smith was a Trustee for thirty years and held the office of Treasurer at the



time of his death in 1910. He took a great interest in the first Library Association and contributed several notable articles to its 'Record'. A critic and collector, it was an easy task for him to write of men like Cardinal Mazarin and his Librarian Gabriel Naude, or Auguste de Thou, historian and keeper of the Royal Library at Paris in the seventeenth century. James Smith was not only a leading journalist of the older generation of pressmen, well informed and widely read. He was also a deeply thoughtful man of letters and a collector and lover of books: an ideal man to be a Trustee of a great Library.

Robert Murray Smith succeeded his namesake as Honorary Treasurer. He felt this office a great responsibility and was perhaps over-anxious because a fellow member of the Board who had filled a similar office at the University had been deceived by the paid accountant of the Council. The University suffered heavy financial loss and Mr Murray Smith took great pains to see that, so far as possible, nothing of the kind could happen in connection with the Library finances.

Sir Henry Wrixon was a member of the Board of Trustees from 1902 till 1913 and was Vice-President for eight years. He agreed to act on the organizing committee of the first Library Conference in 1896 and read a paper on 'Libraries from the reader's point of view'. He was very distressed at the ill treatment of books by some members of the public and was rather in favour of certain limitations to absolutely free access. His wide reading, his dignity, quiet and high qualities shown in varying offices of State would have made him an ideal President had he outlived Mr Turner.

Sir Thomas Bent in some ways was a remarkable man and certainly a remarkable Trustee. A man of somewhat crude personality and little education, his natural ability and strong fighting proclivities had enabled him to attain high positions in the State. He was appointed to the Board in 1894, when holding the office of Speaker of the Assembly, and he remained Trustee until his death in 1909. In regard to matters connected with the Library he was consistent only in his inconsistency. He would not give the Trustees any portion of the then vacant site of the old Melbourne gaol on the opposite side of La Trobe Street and he thought it would be a wise move if the Library were removed from its central position and the site sold. Voicing this opinion he, at the same time, promised favourable consideration to the Trustees request for funds for a new Reading Room on the existing site. Later, as Treasurer he did provide the money. As with the gaol site, so with a suggestion to provide a site in the Domain for purposes of the Institution. His Government, probably very wisely, would not do so, although Sir Thomas Bent thought the convenience of the central site of the Library was secondary to the monetary value of the land on which it stood.

His values were those of the ultra-practical man. He did not understand questions connected with the deeper side of literature, art or science. He once remarked that the Trustees' meetings were often 'too highbrow' for him. But in money questions he was in his sphere. Having on one occasion promised the Trustees at a Board meeting a grant for some purpose for which their gratification was expressed he was in high good humour. He stood with his back to the fire and lit a cigar, at that time an unheard-of occurrence at the generally dignified meetings of the Trustees, enjoying like a child the effect of his beneficence and the reflected glory of a deed well done.

In the first half century of the existence of the Library many very leading politicians served on the Board of Trustees. It is remarkable, in comparison, to note that, when an Act of Parliament was passed in 1944, after it had been decided to appoint separate bodies of trustees for the management of the Library, the Museums and the National Gallery, not one member of Parliament was appointed to any of the new boards. It is also notable that amongst the first appointments to these boards of government there was no member of the judiciary, no barrister, no outstanding man of science, no professor or college head.

#### **Members of the staff**

The first Librarian of the Melbourne Library was the son of an Englishman of means, whose family owned the houses on some of three sides of Leicester Square. Augustus Tulk was therefore enabled to obtain a sound classical education in England and afterwards to travel on the Continent and complete his knowledge of modern languages. His health was not good and he decided to emigrate to Australia in the hope that a more temperate climate than that of his native land would be of benefit to him. Accompanied by his wife and family he came to Australia with the intention of buying land and becoming a squatter. Unfortunately for him, though not for the Library, he lost his money in mining ventures and was glad to accept the position of Public Librarian for which he was selected from some fifty candidates in the year 1854. Tulk held office till his death in 1873 when he was succeeded by the Hendy Sheffield, the sub-Librarian. [Sheffield] was in many ways a good officer but lacked imagination and driving force. He had an excellent memory, a most useful gift in a Library where books were unnumbered and not very definitely classified. Sheffield saw the catalogue of 1881 through the press and after its publication was probably glad to retire and live quietly in the country.

Marcus Clarke hoped to succeed Sheffield as Librarian, but whilst he had attained distinction as a writer, he was not considered to be the man to re-organise the Library, which had drifted into a rather chaotic state under some

years of *laissez-faire* administration. Poor Marcus! A brilliant man in many ways, there was for him only one niche in life that he could fill with success and that was in the goodly company of writers. Sir Redmond Barry was Clarke's good friend as well as patron, though the starched and dignified judge could not always see eye to eye with the brilliant Bohemian writer. Hamilton MacKinnon tells the story of another difference between the Judge and Clarke. The latter as he was leaving the Library one hot morning, came face to face with the Judge on the Library steps. Clarke's dress was not quite *de rigueur* from Sir Redmond's point of view, as he was wearing flannels and a cabbage-tree hat. 'Good morning, Sir', said Clarke. 'I scarcely think your hat, however cool it may be, is exactly suited to the position you occupy in connection with this establishment, Mr Clarke. Good Morning Mr Clarke'.

Robert Curtis who had joined the staff as far back as 1860 became Secretary to the Trustees when Marcus Clarke was appointed as Sub-Librarian. He was a quiet easy going man and his duties as secretary were not exacting. Like Marcus Clarke he had his office in the old Board room. This was a pleasant room on the ground floor, with an outlook over the Library gardens. It was situated on the south side of the entrance hall and formed [a] portion of the hall now used for Ethnological Collections. Across the passage were two small rooms that had served various purposes and were once occupied by Henry Sheffield who was a bachelor, as living rooms. In 1881 one of these rooms was used as an office by the accountant, Alexander Stewart, and the second was an office for the Director of the Gallery. About the beginning of this century all the walls of these rooms were demolished and the space occupied by them was thrown into the Museum. Curtis and Stewart both retired in 1886 due to ill-health. Prior to his [Stewart's] time, an official named Cleary acted as accountant and assistant to the Secretary. He was always in financial difficulties and lost his position in 1873 when he became insolvent. From stories told by the old attendants it may be gathered that he was rather a wild man who had difficulty in avoiding his creditors.

After Henry Sheffield retired in 1881, there was some sparring between the Government and the Trustees as to the proper authority to select the Chief Office of the Library. The appointment was finally given to Thomas Francis Bride, LL.D. who at that time held office as Librarian and Assistant-Registrar at the University of Melbourne. Dr Bride had stood for election to the Legislative Assembly in the electorate of North Melbourne, in opposition to the Government of which Mr Graham Berry was the Head. Nevertheless it was from Mr Berry (afterwards Sir Graham) that he received this appointment as Librarian. There were those who hinted that this was an opportunity to get a young political opponent out of the way, as a civil servant in those days could not

stand for Parliament. It is more charitable to assume that amongst the candidates Dr Bride was the man best qualified for office. He had the advantage of youth, a considerable advantage where reform is necessary. He started the Library on a new phase of its existence and one more in keeping with the growing demands of the time. He was a young man, energetic and capable, a complete contrast to his predecessor. His experiences at the University was of some use to him but he had acquired little knowledge of Library management and its implications, as it was understood in America and as it was beginning to be understood in England. He had the British Museum Catalogue and the famous ninety-one rules and, not unreasonably, based his first attempt at a catalogue on these. The British Museum at that time used a printed slip containing, for each book, an author entry only. These slips were pasted into huge volumes leaving space between each to provide for additional entries as required. Dr Bride commenced a catalogue in this way but very soon gave up for the form of *catalogue raisonne* on cards. This was the first catalogue of the kind that was made in Australia. The work of the Library was naturally increasing every year and the Chief Librarian was not sorry to hand over the task of carrying out the re-classification to Dr Gagliardi. Shortly after Gagliardi's appointment Dr Bride took over the duties of the Secretary as well as those of the Librarian and devoted himself entirely to administrative work.

Dr Bride did much valuable work for the Library, but he was not really happy in office. He lacked the fine feeling for books and letters that was so deeply implanted in Augustus Tulk. He could get no thrill from the acquisition of a rare edition, nor from an exquisitely printed, wide margined volume, such as would have lifted the heart of Tulk or Redmond Barry. He had not the spirit of a collector in its truest sense. [However, Dr Bride] made the magazine and periodicals section of the Library much more useful and added largely to it. In addition to the general catalogue there were manuscript sectional or bay catalogues for the various departments. These also were useful in their way but not satisfactory to readers seeking detailed information as to the resources of the Library. The trail of the amateur was over them all. Dr Bride set to work to remedy many of these defects and did accomplish much needed reforms. But his heart was not really in his work at the Library. He was ambitious and restless and constantly sought for posts in which he thought he would be happier than in the Library. Eventually he obtained the Office of Curator of Intestate Estates, but apparently was no more satisfied in that office than in the Library. He was succeeded for a brief period by Mr MF Dowden, who had been on the staff since 1878. He was one of the first of Sir Redmond Barry's young University men. He only held the office for a few months. He died of pneumonia in February 1896.

He made a special study of the English and American systems of cataloguing and classification and would probably have made a career for himself as a Librarian of the modern school had he been spared to continue his work. He was a man of genial disposition and a zealous worker, not only in the Melbourne Library, but in all matters connected with the advancement of Libraries in the State. He acted for a brief time as Secretary of the Library Association of Australasia which was founded by Dr Leeper and the Public Library Trustees in 1895.

Dr Ferdinando Gagliardi, a graduate of one of the Italian Universities, came to Australia in the eighties of last century and was for a time in the office of the Italian Consul. He had been brought up in rather a scholarly atmosphere and was glad to accept an appointment to assist in the much needed re-classification of the books in the Library. He had a wide knowledge of books and knew much about early typography, a branch of librarianship that was to grow in importance with the growth of the Library. Prior to his appointment there was no one on the staff competent to guide the younger members on the value of bibliographical treasures, and the fine taste of Barry and Augustus Tulk needed reviving. In matters of this kind Gagliardi had an influence.

A quiet little man, bearded and studious looking, he lacked neither courage nor dignity. The story of his encounter with Mr Isaac Isaacs, afterwards to rise to the highest position in Australia, has often been told. One hot night Mr Isaacs, then at the Bar and a young member of Parliament divested himself of his coat in the Reading Room. An attendant told him that this was against the rules. He declined to put on the garment and continued his reading. Dr Gagliardi was appealed to, and went in person to speak to the offender. 'You will please to wear your coat, if you intend to remain in the Library he said to Mr Isaacs. 'Nonsense! It's much too hot' was the somewhat sharp reply. 'It is the rule of the Institution and must be obeyed' said the Doctor. 'Do you know who I am' said Mr Isaacs. 'I am a member of Parliament and I refuse.' 'If you are a member of Parliament' said Gagliardi shrugging his shoulders in continental fashion, 'you should be the first to comply with the regulations. If I allow you to remove your coat, the man in the next Bay may demand to remove his boots. You will please to put on your coat or leave the Library'. 'I will see the Trustees about this' stormed the offender and left the Library in great dudgeon. The Trustees, however, when appealed to, supported their officer and the matter was dropped. Gagliardi died in 1898, stricken by a fatal disease whilst still in the prime of life. Gagliardi's work in reclassification was a distinct advance on anything previously done in the Library and was not superseded till the introduction of the Dewey decimal system at the time of the opening of the new Reading Room in 1913.

AW Brazier, was a member of the Library Staff from 1881 till 1922, when he retired on pension. He was a man of considerable ability and student of philosophy and literature. He published a little volume of parodies and the Fables of Aesop which he afterwards withdrew and a volume of verse – *Music and Light and other Verses*. The latter work he printed himself, with the assistance of a member of the Library staff and turned out a most creditable specimen of amateur printing. He made use of the woodcuts illustrating native flora, originally designed by [La Trobe] Bateman as far back as 1861 as head and tail pieces for one of the early catalogues of the Library.

Brazier was President of the Australian Literature Society in 1902 and the monograph of his address on Marcus Clarke was printed by the Society in that year. He had many of the qualifications for a good librarian, but perhaps modelled himself too much on Marcus Clarke, and found it difficult to place his library duties before his personal inclinations. His reading and his natural ability were great assets for a Librarian and he had a considerable appreciation of what is good in classical literature. He was in charge of the Lending Library for some years before his retirement in 1922.

Robert Douglass Boys joined the Library staff in 1883 after a brief period of service in the Bank of Victoria. He knew much of the value of books, as distinct from the price, from incunabula to the latest technical and scientific publications. His knowledge of prices, however, was also extensive. He understood, too, that incunabula and rare works were essential to the prestige of a great library. Quiet and unassuming, he always did his work thoroughly and he trained his juniors to do so likewise. He was keenly interested in Victorian history, and, after his retirement in 1931 he published a careful study of the *First Years at Port Phillip, preceded by a summary of Historical events from 1768*. This work dealt in detail with the early Colonial years of the state from 1834 to 1842. He also collaborated with the writer, in compiling the second portion of the *Book of the Public Library, Museums and National Gallery* covering the period from 1906 to 1931. At the time of his death in 1942, after a long illness, he was working on some Tasmanian historical records.

Albert Broadbent Foxcroft entered the Library service as a very young man and rose from a junior position to be principal assistant Librarian in the Reference Library. A student by nature, he graduated in philosophy at the University with first class honours, no small feat when he only had time to study after a day's duty in the Library. He was no mere scholar, however, but a man who turned his scholarly qualities to account in the higher branches of library work. He mastered the difficulties of cataloguing and classification, and he was Mr Boys' able assistant in the huge task of classifying the whole

library under the Dewey decimal system. During his long service in the Public Library, Foxcroft had acquired a keen interest in the place in which he had spent most of his working life. He was tempted to accept an offer of librarianship at the University, indeed he had accepted it, but was persuaded by Mr Boys to withdraw. He was working on his researches in fifteenth century printing and was engaged on other important work in the Public Library.

The Trustees readily agreed to give him a special grant to induce him to remain in the service. His knowledge of general bibliography was extensive and in 1911 he published a catalogue of Australian books. This was followed in 1933 by his *Catalogue of English Books and Fragments, 1477-1535, in the Public Library of Victoria* and finally in 1936 the Trustees published his *Catalogue of Fifteenth Century Books and Fragments in the Public Library*. Both latter works were first class bibliography, scholarly productions which would be creditable to any great library. The Sticht Collection of specimens of early typography is the finest in Australia and many of its items are catalogued and noted in these publications. In 1938 Foxcroft was given a Carnegie grant to enable him to visit the great American, British and Continental libraries. At the end of his tour he was stricken with a very serious illness and died at sea on his way home to Australia. His keen appreciation of all matters tending to Library improvements would have made his report on this tour a valuable one, and his loss to the Victorian Library was deeply regretted.

Apart from the senior officer of the Institution there were others, remembered amongst their fellows for various reasons, some of which were decidedly amusing. Sixty years ago the Librarian's messenger and factotum was a man generally spoken of by his initials T.D. He was a simple good natured fellow, very nervous and much given to romancing. Nevertheless (or perhaps, therefore) he was not only tolerated but generally liked. Occasionally if the Staff were short-handed, he sat at one of the junior librarian's desks. One warm evening when the library was nearly empty, he dozed and dreamed. His dream was broken and he started from his chair when he heard a voice close to his ear asking 'where do you keep my cow?' Only half awake he found himself gazing into the face of a huge bearded Irishman and said rather nervously 'what do you mean, I know nothing about your cow'. Then, said the man, with a grin 'Sure, 'tis Mike Howe, the bushranger, whose life I'm wanting'.

The duties of night watchmen, now always filled by trained firemen, require men of strong nerves and little imagination. A candidate for the position before the days of electric appliances, had been taken over the buildings by the resident caretaker and shown the places he had to visit and certain old fashioned alarm clocks which it was his duty to mark at intervals. One of these was in the

Drawing School and placed so high up that a ladder was necessary to reach it. The galleries at night were dreary 'spooky' places which the lanterns of the watchmen rather served to accentuate. The would-be watchman having climbed the ladder and pulled the check string turned his lantern to come down to the floor. To his horror a grinning skeleton reached up with long bony arms to grab him. In the language of Job fear came upon him and trembling and the hair of his flesh stood up. With a wild yell he tumbled off the ladder and rushed to the caretaker's quarters and blurted out his story. 'This blasted place is haunted', he said 'and I'm not going on with the job'.

The caretaker explained that the skeleton was not a ghostly apparition but was merely kept for demonstrating anatomy to the students. The fellow, however, had received such a shock that nothing would induce him to continue the round by himself. Another watchman, less nervous and with a boyish sense of fun, was going on his outside rounds when he stumbles [sic] across the bodies of two dead cats. At the time he was inside the high fence in Little Lonsdale Street, then a place of ill repute. He heard a drunken woman crooning to herself in the street and threw one of the cats over the fence so that it fell just in front of her. She screamed wildly, but as nothing further happened decided to walk towards Russell Street. Possibly ruminating on the strange saying that it sometimes rained cats and dogs, the old dame went on her way, but, when another cat fell from the Heavens it was too much for her. She screamed out 'Mother of God! What is it, what is it at all', and ran back to the comparative safety of Swanston Street.

The position of caretaker at the Library is one of considerable importance. He has to inspect the buildings from time to time and report on requirements for the general upkeep. He is responsible for the issue of stores to the members of the general staff, who are mostly under his control. Under instructions for the Director of the National Gallery he arranges for the hanging and removal of pictures and the placing of statuary and other exhibits. He is rather a superintendent than merely what is usually connoted by the word caretaker. His duties require a strong sense of responsibility, a great intelligence and firmness as well as fairness when dealing with his subordinates. The Trustees at one time tried the appointment of retired constables to fill this position in the hope that their sense of discipline would be of value, but the experiment was not found to be satisfactory. Generally speaking the best solution appeared to be the appointment of one of the senior attendants, not necessarily the actual senior, but an experienced man, possessing knowledge of the Institution combined with a strong sense of responsibility and duty.

Thomas Dober filled this position for many years with tact and firmness. His



intense sense of loyalty and his pride in the Institution which he served so long and so dutifully, made him worthy of remembrance in any records of the Library.

#### **Some visitors and readers: distinguished and otherwise**

The old Public Library was on the whole an attractive place. The people who used it were, owing to the complete freedom of access, a strange medley of real students, kill-time readers and downright loafers. It was customary in the last century to send out to the colonies ne'er-do-wells from all ranks of society. Amongst these, scholarly men, fallen on evil days through misconduct or misfortune, were not uncommon. One bearded old patriarch of distinguished appearance, reputed to be an offspring of nobility and not entirely unfamiliar with the inside of a gaol, was a constant visitor. He spent his time and earned a precarious living by culling scraps for newspaper paragraphs.

Another unfortunate, once a classical scholar of note in a famous University eked out a precarious existence by coaching (at half fees) such pupils as he could get. Rarely quite sober, but never drunk, probably because too proud to beg, he was always wretchedly clad, sad-looking, quiet and pitifully inoffensive. He invariably carried in his pocket a little volume of some Greek or Latin classic, probably an Aldine or some similar text, which he would read unostentatiously on the lawns or, after closing hours, standing beside a coffee stall whilst eating his frugal supper. Occasionally if his earning permitted the poor fellow would, surreptitiously, add a little cognac from a pocket flask.

A tippler of a more brazen kind was another derelict scholar, who bore or used, a name honoured amongst English statesmen and writers. A graduate of Oxford, and possibly he was, he had the voice and speech of a man of culture and could often make an apt quotation. He professed a great admiration for Thomas Carlyle whose works were much in vogue in the Victorian era. There is no doubt that at one time he had been a man of parts, but he had fallen very low. His word was entirely unreliable, but he could sometimes tell a lie convincingly, 'like truth in masquerade'. He would invent a story on the spur of the moment if he thought it would assist him, or he would twist facts to justify whatever purpose he had in view. This habit of perverting the truth he used with considerable success when wishing to impose on those who knew him not. Should a visitor from overseas be unfortunate enough to have his visit notified in the newspapers, he would, before reaching Melbourne, be likely to receive a well composed letter. This would state that the writer had been at school or at the University with the traveller or some member of his family. He had met with misfortune through no fault of his own and would greatly appreciate a small loan, a trifle to assist a fellow scholar in dire distress.

Another constant visitor amongst the scholarly jetsam that drifted to the colonies was a reputed Greek scholar of note who lived in the old Immigrants home on St Kilda Road. He had been attached to one of Melbourne's leading newspapers and it was his boast that he did his best work for many years on a daily allowance of twelve or fourteen pints of beer. He read rather unusual books and in his later days lived soberly. He never forgot his earlier years and was keenly interested in a Greek play that was produced in Melbourne under the aegis of Dr Leeper.

A public library is, of course, a likely gathering place for oddities of all kinds as well as derelicts. One such was prepared to dispute the views of an expert writer in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which he declared were wrong and misleading. In the interests of students of a rather abstruse subject he wished to replace a certain paragraph by one of his own, or if that could not be allowed, at least to write a marginal note, pointing out the error. Truth, not error, he argued should be the aim of the printed word, and a librarian was to blame if he allowed the dissemination of error. It was easy to agree with the first part of the dictum, but on the second 'twas Pilate's question'. Nevertheless the only possible advice was that this searcher after truth should write to the publishers of the *Encyclopaedia*. Less trustworthy readers than the gentleman in question, unfortunately, were apt to add opinions and emendations of their own, without asking for permission. Of another type was a very innocent old lady who asked one of the librarians whether she might cut out a crest, or coat of arms, from some work on heraldry. She thought that there might be no harm in doing so as, she naively remarked, she noticed that others had done so. She was greatly shocked when told that one such had to serve three months in gaol for mutilating the very book from which she wished to make, in the actual sense, an extract.

Apart from derelicts and cranks, most local writers on serious subjects had to use the resources of the Library in connection with their work. Professor Jenks was one of these and in the early nineties he wrote much of his book on *The Government of Victoria* at a table in the cataloguing room, in which several members of the staff carried on their work. The Professor had extraordinary powers of concentration and when at his work appeared to be entirely oblivious of what was going on around him. When sympathy was expressed for the interruptions, caused by people entering and leaving the room, he declared that he was so engrossed that he did not notice them. Professor HA Strong was a constant visitor to the Library in the eighties and many years later his son Professor Sir Archibald Strong used the Library very frequently. The latter was much upset when the new Reading Room was opened in 1913,

as he had become accustomed to working in the semi-privacy of the bays of the old Library. Later on, however, he admitted that he found the 'atmosphere' of the new building congenial and liked working in it. Sir Harrison Moore was another Professor who made frequent use of the Library. He was one of many students and research workers who thought that they should be privileged to borrow books from the Reference Library. We had many talks on the subject and years afterwards he was magnanimous enough to say that he had changed his views, and thought the rule of no special consideration or favouritism was a good one. On this subject it is always difficult to convince the specialist that his case is not exceptional.

The question of lending books from the Reference Library is a serious one and generally speaking, the rule that no book should be lent is sound and should be enforced as rigidly as possible. It was the practice at one time to issue books for use in the Law Courts on a *subpoena duces tecum*, as it was called. Any solicitor working up a case could easily get such an order. The Trustees could not see a way out of this difficulty, but finally agreed to test the question of this right to refuse to comply with such an order, should a suitable case arise. Such a case did arise shortly afterwards when a subpoena was issued demanding the whole of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and all the principal English dictionaries in the Library. I immediately asked that this be made a test case and it was left to the solicitors who acted for the Trustees and myself to take action. The judge decided in favour of the Trustees' right to refuse to produce the books. The case was an important one from the Library point of view and it was no small satisfaction to learn from two of the leading Counsellors, engaged in different sides, that they quite agreed with the decision of the Judge. Books one put in as evidence are guarded by the Court until the case is decided. Previous to this case members of the public were often prevented for long period from obtaining access to books that had been used as evidence in various cases in the Law Courts.

It was usual for State Governors and their wives to visit the institution from time to time, often accompanied by distinguished guests who were staying with them at Government House. From the days of Governor La Trobe, many Vice-regal holders of office have aided the Institution in various ways. Sir Henry Loch assisted the Trustees on many occasions. Lord Brassey lent pictures to the Gallery and frequently showed his interest in the Library. Lord Northcote, when Governor-General lent some fine miniatures to the Trustees, and Sir Thomas Gibson-Carmichael, well-known as a connoisseur and collector, placed many lovers of Raeburn under obligations by a loan of several portraits by the famous Scotch artist. Lady Gibson-Carmichael gave much time and thought to obtaining for the Museum needlework from various counties. The Earl of

Stradbroke unveiled the famous van Eyck Madonna when it was received in 1923. He also unveiled Septimus Power's Mural War Memorial in the following year. The position in which this huge work was to be placed made it very awkward to arrange for an unveiling ceremony, but with the help of the artist and the use of sundry cords and pulleys the difficulty was overcome. Another difficulty the artist had was to obtain a studio large enough to enable him to carry out his work. This was finally overcome by his adopting a suggestion to use the basement of the Reading Room. That the lighting was satisfactory for such a purpose was no small tribute to the way the architect had carried out his instructions to provide natural light in plenty[,] in all parts of the great octagon.

### **The Historical Museum**

In the course of years the Trustees had acquired a miscellaneous collection of portraits of Governors, politicians and other public men prominent in the affairs of Victoria in its early days. They had also collected various objects [of] historical interest, such as models of ships and nuggets, the first printing press used in Melbourne, and other objects illustrating the early settlement of Port Phillip and the State of Victoria. In 1914 they agreed to a suggestion that the time was ripe for instituting a museum in which such objects might be exhibited. They agreed to set aside the former Buvelot newspaper room in the basement of the Buvelot gallery in Little Lonsdale Street for the initiation of the new museum. The outbreak of the first world war, however, prevented new undertakings beyond those of actual necessity and it was found impossible to arrange for the exhibition of historical exhibits until 1929, when the gallery of the Barry Hall was made available for the purpose. Two years later the basement of the McAllan Gallery in La Trobe Street was allocated for the new branch of the institution.

The Historical Society of Victoria was in sympathy with the objects of the Museum and its committee of management from time to time lent or presented many objects of interest. Old colonists and other members of the public also assisted the Trustees by gifts and loans, many, unfortunately, of sentimental rather than real historic interest. A weeding-out process will therefore be inevitable as time goes on and the Trustees become better able to define the objects and limitations of the Museum. The nucleus of an interesting and educational exhibition has been provided and it may reasonably be hoped that the Museum will serve to illustrate many phases of the growth and history of the State since its first settlement in 1835. Its aim should be to do for Melbourne, necessarily in a much smaller way, what the London Museum has done for the incomparable city of the motherland.