

A PAGE FROM THE LIBRARIAN'S DIARY.

(By his kind permission.)

“ My library

Was dukedom large enough.”

It may be of some interest if I here place on record a few lines recounting my experience as Librarian of the Bangabasi College. The work of a Librarian is tame enough in all conscience, and perchance, not a little trying at times. Week in, week out, he goes through the monotonous round of his duties of having books issued and stowed. He has also to keep a sharp look out, dealing as he does with students of different tastes and temperaments. In the midst of all these worrying details, however, he has ample opportunities of watching the trend of the times as revealed in the kind of books that our students generally go in for and the degree of earnestness they bring to bear upon their studies.

Our College Library is not a big affair. But thanks to the keen interest evinced by our venerable professor Lait Kumar Banerjee our library has a goodly collection of books on English literature. Our Botany Section may also boast of many rare and valuable books on Botany—a subject of which our esteemed chief, Principal G. C. Bose, is a recognised authority.

The College Library opens to the First Year students in the second week of August. For this reason the month of August is a busy month for the Librarian. The new collegians are full of dash and go, and as they come trooping into the Library, their thoughts turn to the sunny vista of the future and the proud share which they fancy they will one day take in moulding the body-politic of India. It is a pleasant sight watching the super-abundance of their vivacity as they besiege the Librarian and bombard him with requisitions for books. Many of them would not even care to turn over the pages of the catalogue with a view to selecting a book;

they would get fidgety and scramble for any book they can lay their hands upon, no matter whether it is the works of Æschylus or the Essays of Bacon. Attractive titles of books, such as 'Dramatic Essays' by Dryden, "King's English" by Fowler, 'Shakespeare—His Mind and Art' by Dowden, "History of the English Language" by Fowler, "The Development of the English Novel" by Cross, "Travels with a Donkey" by Stevenson and "Romance of Words" by Weekly, lure them most. As however, they get used to the new life, they would take their cue from their seniors. They would then requisition for the works of Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Maurice Maeterlinck, Knut Hamsun and other Continental writers. As a matter of fact, the Cinema Houses of Calcutta seem to play an important part in shaping the choice of our students for the kind of books that they read. This will be abundantly clear from the fact that the Librarian received requisitions from a large number of students for "Les Misérables," "Last Days of Pompeii" "Oliver Twist" and "Notre Dame De Paris" whenever these famous books were shown in the Picture Houses of Calcutta. As time rolls on their enthusiasm wanes. They become more particular in their choice. They would then go in for lighter stuff and prefer having the works of Dickens, Thackeray, Scott and Marie Corelli. David Copperfield, Pickwick Papers, Vanity Fair, Esmond, Ivanhoe and The Vicar of Wakefield, are some of the daily requisitions I receive. In the department of Natural Science and Mathematics the books generally sought after by the First and Second Year students are mere textbooks such as Glazebrook's 'Heat,' 'Light' and 'Magnetism, and Electricity,' Jones' 'Examples in Physics,' Hall and Knight's 'Elements of Trigonometry,' Tod Hunter's 'Algebra' and Lowson's 'Botany.'

The Third Year students seem to show an eclectic tendency in the selection of books as they have had two years' experience of College life. It is the Honours students who generally make the best use of the Library. On many occasions, however,

they have to wait till the return of books by the Fourth Year students. Commentaries on Shakespeare are always in demand, the favourite book being Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*. The students often press for a second copy of this book. The students of Economics would always like to have a text book and none would interest themselves in useful books like 'Local Government in Ancient India', "The Indian Constitution," "The Spirit of Russia" by Masaryk, and "Principles of Social Reconstruction" by Russell. It is only the earnest and sincere students who submit their requisition for books on Natural Science which they can do only through their professors concerned. Students of Botany are often found to take a great interest in the Library but they are in most cases Third and Fourth Year students.

The Honours students seem to feel a limited interest in the Sanskrit books. The Librarian very scarcely receives any requisition for a Sanskrit book. History is a neglected subject. The students seem to have a dread of this subject. It is, however, pleasing to record here that Carlyle's 'French Revolution' is much in demand.

It is seldom however that a student is found to evince any interest in reading the works of great poets—poets who, in Tennyson's words, "enrich the blood of the nation"—nor would they go in for such books as would go to help them to think freely. "Plain living and high thinking are no more." How I wish that I could impress upon all our students that the place that contains books, their best companions, is a glorious court, where they can converse with the old sages and philosophers, and place before them the memorable lines of Milton which ring in my ears whenever I think of books :

"A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life."
