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The Horace Howard Furness Memorial

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THE HORACE HOWARD FURNESS MEMORIAL

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Confronted with the somewhat difficult question, how to house and care for a sizeable addition of books on a specific topic, donated with the proviso that they be kept an integral collection, and a liberal financial provision that suggested a new building, the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania solved this problem by building a new and finely proportioned room, a part, yet an extension, of the present University Library building; and they have so accomplished this that it adequately houses the Horace Howard Furness Memorial collection, allowing for prospective growth, and forms, both outwardly and within, the first section of a plan for the architectural regeneration of the entire Library building.

The Horace Howard Furness Memorial was donated by the late Horace Howard Furness, Jr., and Louise Brooks Winsor Furness, his wife, as a monument to the memory of the distinguished Shakespearean scholar whose name it bears; and it consists of something approaching 12,000 books "relating to Shakespeare and to Elizabethan dramatic literature," a valuable and interesting collection of Shakespeare relics and mementoes of the stage, and the correspondence of the two Furnesses, father and son, both editors of the *Variorum Shakespeare*, with many eminent scholars English, American, and continental, in this most fertile field. It was the wish of the donor that the interior might in some wise follow the design of the interior of Merton College, Oxford; and this has been done, allowing for modern conditions. The room is admirably lighted with four casement windows, it is adequately furnished for the needs of the specific scholarship to which it is devoted, and becomingly decorated with certain of the mementoes alluded to above, among them fine oil portraits of the donors and the elder Dr. Furness. The handsome Gothic exterior suggests, as already stated, what may ultimately transform architecturally the whole University Library building.

The Furness Memorial constitutes no ordinary collection. Private libraries are only too often little more than museums of pleasing antiquities, gathered as trophies of industrial success: testimonies of taste at their best, at their worst mere evidences of the power of the purse. This new acquisition of the University of Pennsylvania is the library of a scholar, a library of scholarship in a specific field, collected through years of loving solicitude to further a definite scholarly project. The value of these books lies neither in their rarity nor in their costliness, though there are volumes both costly and rare among them. Their worth is in their nature as invaluable texts of a

great dramatist and as the contributions of generations of scholars to the understanding of the greatest of our English classics. Out of this library has come the New Variorum edition of Shakespeare, the diligent labor of father and son to one end throughout a period of time exceeding fifty years; and it is the urgent wish of the University of Pennsylvania that under its auspices and in the hands of younger scholars this work may happily continue. For such has been the scholarly activity of editors of Shakespeare since Nicholas Rowe first undertook a scholarly edition of the great dramatist's work that it is no discredit to the activity and the diligence of the two Doctors Furness that they left but half of the plays to those who come after.

As to the many interesting books which constitute the treasures of this collection it is not possible to say much in the space here at command. Prime among them of course are the four precious folios of Shakespeare's collected plays and a number of those priceless original editions of individual plays known as the quartos, the importance of which to our understanding of the Shakespearean text, where they exist, is coming more and more to be acknowledged and understood. As to texts, the Furness Memorial possesses practically a complete series of the earlier editions from Rowe, Pope, and Theobald to the later days of the accepted modern text of the Cambridge editors. The dramatists, Shakespeare's fellows, are here too, with innumerable editions of poets and prose writers his contemporaries, many of them in contemporary editions. And there are the books of Shakespeare sources and mentions, the heavy tomes of history and science down to pamphlet and song-book. The collection is rich in Shakespearean criticism and commentary, in stage history and in the memoirs of eminent actors, and there is a choice corner devoted to that inexhaustible theme, London. Besides all this the collection affords the scholar the necessary apparatus of bibliography, dictionary, biography, without which his labors even among the choicest treasures would go unaided and without a guide. It may be added that in many particulars the general library of the University is able to help out and add to the efficiency of this collection, especially in the line, for example, of original quartos of many of Shakespeare's fellow dramatists, a valuable collection of which of earlier acquisition is conveniently housed close to the hall of the Furness Memorial.

As a library on a specific subject and therefore definitely limited, it is the purpose of the University to continue the collection along the definite lines already set, so far as the means available may permit such a growth. And it is further in the plan that the use of the collection shall be reasonably restricted to such scholars and students as may be fitted to avail themselves of its opportunities. It is the University's earnest hope that, attracted by so precious a nucleus and the attractive housings and conditions that surround it, there may be those who will feel moved to add by gift to this interesting and valuable foundation.