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The Henry C. Lea Library

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THE HENRY C. LEA LIBRARY

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The Lea Library, the entrance to which lies immediately opposite the main entrance of the University Library, is not a mere collection of books bequeathed to the University; nor is it only some thousand historical works, many of them rare, gathered by a great historian. It is a reflection of the great scholar himself. It embodies in a peculiar way Mr. Lea's interests and indicates his methods of work. It is literally the materials and the tools from which and with which he built the noble structure of his historical writings. Useless as they would have been for that purpose without his mental powers, with those powers and from this material in a lifetime of industry he wrote his nine important historical works, in their seventeen volumes and in successive editions. On the same sources he relied, though naturally transformed for his immediate purposes, in writing many of the scores of pamphlets, magazine articles, and book reviews produced during his scholarly, literary, and public life.

Not connected with any university library where he might have gathered the works of which he had need, nor finding at that time in any public libraries the books in foreign languages or of more special character that he required, and possessing abundant financial means for their purchase, he bought, through half a century, whatever he needed. Some of these works were relatively easily procurable, but the booksellers of Europe were often kept busy for long periods searching for and buying for him his rarer requirements. He was disinclined to go abroad, and therefore engaged copyists in many foreign libraries and archives in copying long series of manuscripts which promised to be of value for his purpose. The result is a library rich in materials, both printed and manuscript, for medieval church history, theology, philosophy, and law, and for the legal and ecclesiastical history of some later periods. There are also many encyclopedias, collections of sources, and the principal secondary works in these fields.

The evidences of Mr. Lea's use of his library are everywhere visible, not only in the references in his published writings but in memoranda, in his characteristic fine handwriting, scattered all through the books and manuscripts. It is above all a working library, both for the uses Mr. Lea made of it and for later workers in the same general field. It contains many works probably not elsewhere to be found in America. It includes, in addition to the material which has just been described, about a hundred incunabula, almost doubling the number otherwise possessed by the University Library.

Since Mr. Lea's death there have been many additions to his library. It consisted at the time of the bequest of some 10,000 or 12,000 volumes in addition to the manuscripts. In 1924 Mr. and Mrs. Arthur H. Lea and Miss Nina Lea, in carrying out their father's bequest, built the addition to the University Library in which the books are now placed. In doing this, the building was so designed that the cases of the original library and its rich and dignified walnut lining, ceiling, fittings and furniture could be taken down and placed in the new building exactly in their original positions. Thus the actual room in which Mr. Lea worked was transferred, with its precious contents, from the house at Twentieth and Walnut streets to its present place in the Library building, with only a few minor changes in arrangement that were unavoidable. The books, therefore, now stand on the shelves as he had and used them, and to those who knew the great scholar in his library it partakes of the character almost of a shrine, as well as a place for present-day work.

No library can remain stationary and retain its full usefulness. Additions to knowledge and the appearance of new material are continuous. Fortunately Mr. Lea's family have made it possible to provide such additions to the library. With great generosity Mr. and Mrs. Lea and Miss Lea not only rebuilt and extended the section of the general University Library which had to be removed to allow the plan of reproducing Mr. Lea's library to be carried out, but established a fund of \$10,000 for keeping up the library. On Miss Lea's death in 1928, in addition to endowing chairs of history as a memorial to her father at Pennsylvania and at Harvard, her will provided for the gift of an additional sum of \$10,000, the income of which was to be used for the library. These endowments have made it possible not only to purchase certain additional works which have appeared in the exact line of Mr. Lea's interests, but to extend the library to other branches of medieval history, and thus to make it useful to a wider group of students and scholars. In this way many volumes have been added to the original library as it came to the University. Thus, although the distinction and fame of the Henry C. Lea Library will always lie in the treasures of his collection and in the stamp of his personality and scholarship upon it, it bids fair to become a constantly richer and more useful part of the general University Library. It will become, indeed has already become, a center to which scholars find it profitable and necessary to come in the course of their studies.

*"O blessed Letters, that combine in one,
All Ages past, and make one live with all:
By you, we doe conferre with who are gone,
And, the dead-living unto Councell call."*

—Samuel Daniel