DEATH OF WILLIAM G. MEDLICOTT.

In the death of William G. Medlicott at Longmeadow on Saturday this community loses an old and well-known citizen, since 1846 connected with the manufacture of knit woolen goods at Thompsonville, Ct., afterward at Windsor Locks, and recently with the new company in his name in this city. He was born in Bristol, England, in 1816, his father being a shipping merchant of that city. On leaving school and his early years were spent upon the sea, until at the age of 28 he was wrecked on Rockaway beach, L.I., escaping only with his life and his rough sailor's garb. Although an entire stranger, his intelligent and manly bearing, with the special advantage of a penmanship singularly clear and beautiful, obtained for him at once a business situation in New York, where he advanced with firm and rapid steps, till he became a business grasp and executive ability secured him the Enefield manufacturing company at Thompsonville. Since 1851 he has resided in Longmeadow, having remodeled some buildings there. He was exceedingly fond of his books and attached himself with public spirit to all the interests of the village. Although, by his early training, a member of the church of England, and still retaining a personal preference for the Episcopal communion, his religious catholicity made him a strong supporter of the Congregational church as fairly maintaining its ancient prestige, and the one only needed by a homogenous united people.

Mr. Medlicott combined with his large business capacity a remarkable literary culture. His library of some 20,000 volumes probably surpassed every other in this country in rare books pertaining to the Anglo Saxon and early English literature. Its linguistic treasures were well known and often sought after by professors of Harvard, Yale, Cornell, and other universities. Its sumptuous catalogue printed for the use of buyers, a few years ago, was seized at once by intelligent collectors in London, Boston, Harvard university and other widely scattered places. Meanwhile it still remains a mine of research and apparently undiminished. Far from being a bibliophile in the passing of easily rarities for a market value, Mr. Medlicott loved his books for their own sake. He counted every moment he could snatch from business cares as golden for reading. He knew the value of nature and domestic recreation. Without affection or petulance, he was always impartial in the table talk and the fire-place reading, and by conversation from the unfailing treasure of his favorite books. During the latter days of his life and gradually wasting illness, his indomitable will and cheerful disposition banished every gloomy association, and with his beloved books, old and new, around him, he would solace his mind and delight his friends with quotations from the poets he loved the best. The literary department of his mind was just as methodically arranged and accurately grasped in every detail, as was the business department which controlled and systematized a large and intricate manufacture. Equally at home in each, neither seemed inconsistent with or harmful to the other. To the love of home, and his passion for his books he ascribed the good health of his young son.

The Medlicott Library at Longmeadow.

The catalogue of this remarkable collection of rare and curious books and manuscripts is before us, a slightly volume of some 400 pages, and as it is liable to be scattered through the offer of sale enforced by the financial reverses of its owner, a description of its origin and material will be interesting to many who perhaps have hardly been aware of the existence among us of such valuable literary treasures.

Some 33 years ago, Mr. William G. Medlicott, a manufacturer then at Thompsonville, now at Windsor Locks, and a resident of Longmeadow, promoted partly by his antiquarian tastes, and yet more by his conviction that there would be developed an increasing interest in the study of the English language and literature, began to collect books relating to this object. His first effort was to secure a copy of every work which had been printed in England illustrating the Anglo-Saxon language and literature. He afterward sought to add works as furnished materials for the literature of the periods following. Moving on thus from period to period, when the Elizabethan era was reached, he did not strive so much for the works of its prominent writers in their original editions, as for translations from standard Latin and French authors, and treatises bearing upon the structure of the English language, and for the reason that works of this class would have a higher philological value to a student of English than original works. For instance, the seven successive translations of Virgil and Ovid, showing the gradual progressive movement of the English language as related to the fixed standard of Latin. As a further addition to such lines of study, it was fitting to get the earlier dictionaries beginning with the Promptorium Parvulorum, Ortus Vocabularum, Holioly, and the dictionaries generally of the 16th century. Also Latin and French books in which English was interlined or set upon opposite pages, after the method of the Hamiltonian system so called, which existing manuscripts prove to have been used in England some time before the Norman conquest. In this branch of the collection are several works not probably to be found elsewhere in the country.

The love of English antiques very naturally drew attention to the Church of England and its service books. Hence a gradual collection of missals and other service books both printed and in manuscript, until the total has become of very rare value. Some of these, particularly the MSS have a marked interest for both the chirographer and the antiquarian. For instance, much that relates to the 'Venerable Bede.' One volume, written early in the 9th century, or within a hundred years of Bede's death, contains a large number of his homilies and sermons. It is a massive folio, beautifully written, probably by a Visigothic scribe in Spain, although a former owner regarded it as Merovingian. A lectionary of the 12th century (1230) is interesting as showing how much more limited was the list of cantonnements and saint worship than later. This volume bears the name of the scribe as the date,—A Durandus, written in England in the 14th century. A Lincoln missal for monastic use of about the same date, seems to be identified with Grotseed in some of its features, as showing the veneration felt for him in his diocese, notwithstanding the papal obligation from which he suffered. A manuscript antiphoner, musical service book, is interesting for its unusual size and large number of illuminations, conforming very closely to the Sarum use, in the service books of the English church in the post-Reformation period have several valuable representatives, among them a copy of Edward VIth's second prayer book, and a large paper copy of the present prayer book, authorized and printed in 1662. There are three fine copies.
of the so-called Scotch prayer book of 1587, differing, however, from each other in some of the contents. Other books of common prayer are in the collection here described, and showing variations from or additions to the service as now used.

Liturgy is naturally associated with Bibles, Psalms in meter, and catechisms, and there are many specimens of these of great rarity and antiquarian importance, such as the Codex Salmaticus, the Greek Alexandrian Codex Apol- lornum, Sabatier, Blanchani and Kipling, a Latin Bible owned by Melanchton, a MS Latin Bible of 1538, a very rare copy of the 1556 Latin Bible with small but interesting illuminations, a MS book of Psalms of the 13th century, and a MS copy of the Second Commandment in Greek, written by Hermyninus, who was one of the teachers of Greek in its revival previous to the Reformation.

The English versions of the Bible are represented by volumes ranging from 1538 onward, among them a fine copy of the New Testament, 1588, in Latin and English, and the Geneva Testament of 1567, interesting as being printed abroad during the reign of Queen Mary, and the first printed book in English in which the whole New Testament is translated. This is a copy in the original binding of the Rhemish version of 1562, copies of the Geneva Bibles of 1560 and 1590, the later reworkings on large and thick paper, and the original folio King James version of 1611. Also rare Bibles and Testaments of various sorts are some of the special reference to the controversies called out by the Rhemish Testament. These controversies were engaged in by Fulke, Martin, Wither and Cartwright, whose separate works are also found in this collection.

The Psalms in meter are represented under different forms, and a large number of them, printed in 1526, are of their times, showing the progress of psalmody. Catechisms are in goodly number, comprising the Latin versions of Edward VI, being the first edition of 1553 which was the basis of the catechism of the Church of England, and so on to the Westminster, and representing other religious bodies than the established church.

Literature is a distinguished feature in the collection. There is probably but one other collection of this kind of literature that surpasses it in this country that of Harvard college, gathered by Prof. Child. But the Medlicott library comprises many rare volumes not found in the archives of Harvard, few of which can be duplicated in the United States. Some broadsides date back to 1574. There is a very fine copy of Arnold’s Chronicle, printed in 1569, which contains the earliest printed version of “The Nut Brown Maid.” Another, printed properly to this classification are Byrd’s canticles printed with the music for them in 1589, Watson’s Madrigals of 1590 and Ward’s, 1615. Of great rarity are Song-books and Dolebooks printed just prior to and during the time of the Restoration, and in numbers seldom found in a single library. The collection of old ballads, 1225, of Dyer, Watson and others of the same period are here, together with a good representation of sheet-ballads in three volumes, one or two printed in the reign of Charles the Second.

Chap-books, or the current cheap popular literature of the town or street-vendor, are largely represented in a collection by a son of the Johnsonian Boswell, and bound in 55 volumes. There is a most interesting and valuable unicum of the popular literature of common life, illustrating the current religious and moral as well as immoral phases of English society in by-gone days.

Early English and French literature were so much allied in their mutual influences and inter-action, that it has been sometimes difficult to decide to which language was to be assigned the original of some special work. As a rule, however, the French literature is generally found in the French language. Thus a student of the earlier English will find help and illustration in the French. Governed by this view, Mr. Medlicott gathered many works of a valuable variety in the early French; early printed copies of the Roman de la Rose, with two manuscript portions of similar mystery, miracles and illustrations of the earlier periods of the drama, some in print, and others in manuscript; romances, collections of poems, farces

...and other light literature for which France was noted 300 years ago as to-day. The early French works form, as a whole, an important complement to the early English, that can hardly be dispensed with by a careful student of our language and literature in their earlier forms.

A collector of books whether in print or manuscript finds it as necessary as when he must have "books upon books" (to guide him in various cases, as mechanic needs have suitable tools. The result of this necessity appears in this library in its apparatus of bibliography and paleography formed with reference to the intelligent choice of editions as well as of works. These lists form a suitable foundation upon which to build extensive collections in various departments.

The manuscripts of the collection are also entitled to special notice, such as a MS of Lydgate’s, and other poems from the hand of John Shirley, the friend and contemporary of Chaucer, to whom we are indebted for the preservation of many of Chaucer’s smaller poems; a large and plainly written volume, Life of Christ and other Devout Pieces of the 15th century, and Bracton’s “De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae,” nearly if not quite contemporary with the author.

Facsimiles also of very rare books are here in unusual number, among them the Ashbee Hallwell facsimiles of Shakespeare’s Quarto, 47 in all, of which there are not more than 15 in perfect sets, and this is one of four in this country; “Kynge ApoUon of Thyrre,” of which only 21 copies were made from the unique original special reference to the controversy called out by the Rhemish Testament. These controversies were engaged in by Fulke, Martin, Wither and Cartwright, whose separate works are also found in this collection.

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