

BOOKS IN VIRGINIA

STATE NEAR END OF LIST IN MATTER OF LIBRARIES.

Aggregate Number of Volumes Not
So Great as in One of Boston's Li-
braries—Interesting Historical Facts
In Connection With the Subject.

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An attempt has been made in these imperfect sketches to give a bird's eye view of libraries and of library ideas, as they have existed from the beginning of recorded history. From the ancient sanctuary of books of clay, over whose door was the inscription, "Healing for the Soul," we have journeyed westward, naturally, as over "westward the course of empire takes its way."

We have now come to our own shores and to our own State, after having studied three of the greatest libraries in the United States, the National, of Washington, the Boston, and the New York city libraries.

Virginia and Arkansas are in the end of the line in the march of library interests in the States. Massachusetts leads. The city of Boston has more books in one of her numerous libraries than there are in the whole State of Virginia. Statistics show there are five hundred thousand books in the libraries of Virginia. Virginia has eight general, three school, twenty-three college, five law, two theological, one State, one asylum, four Y. M. C. A., one Masonic, one scientific, three historical and one garrison libraries. The total expenditures of all the libraries for all purposes in 1903 was only \$25,330.

The poor condition of libraries in the South, and particularly in Virginia and Arkansas, is but too evident, and it remains only to note that there are only 548 libraries in the South Atlantic division, as against 3,006 in the North Atlantic division.

These data are humiliating, but facts must be stated before any conclusions can be made. The libraries of the State can be profitably studied in three classes or divisions. The State Library does not enter into these classes, and one article will be devoted to that, as the natural center of library interests in the State. Private libraries will be in the first class, institutional or those connected with colleges, universities and societies, will be the second, and the public libraries will constitute the third class.

If the present status of public education and public libraries in Virginia is discouraging, we have the usual stimulus to our pride and complacency that we Virginians can always turn to and be reinstated in our self-respect—that is our past history. Let us take comfort in the fact that the first library in the new world was established in Virginia by the London Company in 1621, seventeen years before the Harvard library, and though the Virginia library was destroyed the next year, the fact is none the less important and interesting. The Harvard College library is the oldest in this country, having had a continuous existence since 1638. In 1635 the first free school was established in Virginia by Benjamin Bacon. In 1693 William and Mary College and library were founded, and this library is the second oldest in the States, having a continued existence of two hundred and thirteen years.

Bacon says: "The first foundation or plantation is of more noble dignity than all that followeth."

Virginia soil was the "cradle of the republic." Here was the first free school, the first library, the first trial by jury, the first legislative assembly, the first English church, the first English marriage, the first birth of an English child in the new world. What is the matter with Virginia today? Why and how has she lost the position of pre-eminence, which is her historical and traditional right?

Is the "mother of States and statesmen" weak with the birth-throes of her heroic children? Has she pelican-like given of her life-blood that her young may live and thrive in their young youth? Has she added vast empires to the Union and sent forth her best and ablest men to the rearing of her progeny? If we look into the "Who's who in America" we will find that outside

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