

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 bearing 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 his early years were spent upon the sea, until at the age of 20 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 his remarkable business grasp and executive ability secured him the management of the Enfield manufacturing company at Thompsonville. Since 1851 he has resided in Longmeadow, having remodeled and enlarged one of the old mansions there. He was exceedingly fond of his home and attached himself with public-spirited generosity 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 staunch supporter of the Congregational church as fairly maintaining its ancient prestige, and the only one needed by a homogeneous and united people.

Mr Medlicott combined with his large business capacity a remarkable literary culture. His library of some 20,000 volume 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 by the professors of Harvard, Yale, Cornell, and other universities. Its sumptuous catalogue printed for the use of buyers, when a few years ago business reverses made it necessary to dispose of a part of it, is a remarkable literary curiosity. The opportunity 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 passion for costly 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. It was his restful pastime and domestic recreation. Without affectation or pedantry, he was always imparting in the table talk and the fireside reading, and by conversation from the unfailing treasures of his favorite books. During the latter days of his long 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. His love for home, and his passion for his books sequestered him from general society so much that he was too little known apart from his immediate domestic and business circle and his library visitors. His memory, however, will be fragrant with many genial associations, generous deeds and honorable recollections, while in this city it will be perpetuated by the manufacturing company that will continue to bear his name under the management of his youngest son. He leaves a wife and five children.

The Republican.

BOOKS, AUTHORS AND ART.

A RARE COLLECTION OF BOOKS.

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, prompted 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 such works as furnished materials for the literature of the periods following. Moving on thus from period to period, the Elizabethan era was reached. For this 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, there are several 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 adjunct to such lines of study, it was fitting to get the earlier dictionaries beginning with the Promptorium Parvulorum, Ortus Vocabulorum, Huloet, 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 this country.

The love of English antiquities 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 churchman 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 13th century (1269) is interesting as showing how much more limited was the list of canonizations and saint worship than later. This volume bears the name of the scribe as well 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 Grosteste in some of its features, as showing the veneration felt for him in his diocese, notwithstanding the papal obloquy from which he suffered. A manuscript antiphoner, or musical service book, is interesting for its unusual size and large number of illuminations, conforming very closely to the Sarum use. 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 1637, differing, however, from each other in some of the contents. Other books of common prayer are in the collection having different features, and showing variations from or additions to the service as now used.

Liturgies are 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 Sinaiticus, the Alexandrian Codex, Hearnes's Acta Apostolorum, Sabbatier, Blanchini and Kipling, a Latin Bible owned by Melancthon, a MS Latin Bible, in very minute characters, with small but interesting illuminations, a MS book of Psalms of the 13th century, and a MS copy of the Gospels in Greek, said to be written by Hermonymus, 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, 1538, in Latin and English, and the Genevan Testament of 1557, interesting as being printed abroad during the reign of Queen Mary, and the first printed book in English in which the chapters are divided into verses. There is a copy in the original binding of the Rhemish version of 1582, copies of the Genevan Bibles of 1560 and 1602, the latter a remarkable copy on large and thick paper, and the original folio King James version of 1611. Also rare Bibles and Testaments of various dates, some having 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 dates from 1562. Several have the music 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 cate-

chism of the Church of England, and so on to the Westminster, and representing other religious bodies than the established church.

Ballads and ballad literature form 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 alcoves of Harvard, few of which can be duplicated in the United States. Some broadsides date back to 1574. There is a beautiful copy of Arnolds's Chronicle, printed in 1502, which contains the earliest printed version of "The Nut Brown Maid." Belonging properly to this classification are Byrd's songs printed with the music for them in 1589, Watson's Madrigals of 1590 and Ward's, 1613. Of great rarity are Song-books and Drolleries printed just previous to and during the time of the Restoration, and in numbers seldom found in a single library. The collection of old ballads, 1725, of Duffey, 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 sold by chapmen or street-hawkers, are largely represented in a collection by a son of the Johnsonian Boswell, and bound in 55 volumes. This series is a most interesting and well-nigh unprocurable medley 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 interactions, 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 originals were more generally found in the French language. Thus a student of the earlier English will find help and illustration in the French versions. 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 manuscripts of the same; moralities, mysteries, 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 as noted 300 years ago as to-day. These 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 to have "books upon books" to guide him in his choice, as a mechanic needs to have suitable tools. The result of this necessity appears in this library in its apparatus of bibliography and palæography, 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 Angliæ," nearly if not quite contemporary with the author.

Facsimiles also of very rare books are here in unusual number, among them the Ashbee Halliwell facsimiles of Shakespeare's Quartos, 47 in all, of which there are not more than 15 perfect sets, and this is one of four in this country; "Kynge Apollyn of Thyre," of which only 21 copies were made from the unique original; Tyndall's New Testament, executed in facsimile by Francis Fry from the only known copy, and illuminated after the original; also interesting facsimiles by pen of early printed French books upon vellum.

There are rarities, specially so termed. One of these is a volume with 110 leaves out of 160 of the Durandus, which is judged to be the first volume printed with movable metallic types on vellum, and issued in 1459,—it is a striking illustration of the perfection reached by the earliest printers. Decretals of Gregory printed in 1473 by the printers of the Mazarin Bible; a fragment of Caxton's first edition of the Canterbury Tales; several of Wynkyn de Worde's books, among them copies of Lyndewoode's "Constitutiones" 1499; the Ordynary of Crysten Men, 1506, and Fisher's Penitential Psalms, 1509, with others of earlier date though somewhat imperfect are contained here. A unique Broad-side letter of Indulgence printed by Pynson in 1513; Pynson's edition of Berner's Froissart, 1525; Roy's Satire against Wolsey, 1527; early printed volumes of Chaucer, Lydgate and Gower, with the early editions of Piers Plowman, 1550-1561.

There are some articles in the collection of large historic interest, such as a Charter of Otho the 3d, dated 996, from which he seemed to exercise authority in the city of Rome, his Holiness the pope notwithstanding; a papyrus 500 years older than the Christian era; the Great Seal of Queen Elizabeth, and volumes marked and annotated by distinguished scholars and theologians.

Not to mention particularly an interesting collection of Shakespeareiana, one other class of books is noticeable in this library, viz: works issued by various societies and clubs and private presses. There are several hundred of such works, ranging in the numbers printed from ten to fifty; and many of them procurable in no other form.

It is greatly to be regretted that such a library, the object of such long and loving enthusiasm on its owner's part must be parted from him, and that as a community, we must lose the consciousness of having such a treasure in our midst.

The longing eyes of many literary institutions and scholars, some of whom have long known and profited by this collection, are being directed to it, and Mr Medlicott's admirable catalogue, a model in its line, and an interesting and instructive volume in its literary information, is widely diffusing the knowledge of these signal treasures. We wish that some literary benefactor who has the means would take up Mr Medlicott's long cherished purpose, now frustrated by business reverses, of placing the body of this library in the alcoves of Amherst or some other New England college, where it may prove serviceable in aiding the special culture which he has had so long in view during all the

years of his residence here. Especially do we hope that a lack of appreciation on this side of the Atlantic may not result in remanding to English libraries works which are so eminently needful to our Anglo-American scholarship.