

STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

RAPID GROWTH.

HOST OF LITERARY TREASURES.

(By Fannie E. Hatchford, the Wrenn
Library, University of Texas.)

The literary resources of Texas are naturally grouped round the State University library, since it is this which has given the State its position among the great library centres of America. In point of size it now stands at approximately 300,000 volumes; its value and importance, however, rest upon its nature rather than its size.

It includes the fine collection of books made by Sir Swante Palm, who came to Texas from Sweden in the early days of the Republic; the library of Colonel Ashbel Smith, Minister to England and France from the Republic of Texas; the library of John H. Reagan, successively Postmaster-General and Secretary of the Treasury of the Confederate States of America, who had the unique distinction of serving Texas under three Governments; and the two great gifts of Major George W. Littlefield. The manuscript material in the archives supplies the more intimate and detailed history of the State. Included in it are the Bexar Archives, dealing with the Spanish and Mexican *épisodes* in Texas; the Austin papers, showing the establishment of an Anglo-Saxon State in a Mexican wilderness; the papers of Colonel Ashbel Smith, dealing with affairs of the Republic; and the papers of the successive Governors of the State.

GENEROUS GIFTS.

A history of the growth of the University is a close parallel to the romantic and somewhat spectacular history of the State itself. It is the two gifts of Major Littlefield which have marked the beginning of the rapid growth of the University Library within the last ten years. In 1914, he gave \$125,000 as an endowment, the interest of which was to be used in the purchase of materials for the study of Southern History. From this fund there have been purchased about 15,000 items, consisting of rare books, pamphlets, maps, files of old newspapers, and manuscripts. Four years later, Major Littlefield purchased and presented to the University the magnificent collection of books of English and American literature made by John Henry Wrenn, of Chicago. This collection contains approximately 6,000 volumes, first editions and rare books, ranging in period from 1569 to 1911. Many of these are without duplicates in America, and some are unique. The value of the collection lies, however, in its cumulative character, rather than in its possession of conventional rarities. As it is arranged on the shelves of the room set apart for it, it presents a fairly complete history of English literature from Edmund Spenser to Edmund Gosse.

The gift of the Wrenn Library was followed by the purchase of a similar group of books, the splendid collection of Mr. George A. Aitken, of London. This purchase practically doubled the value of the Wrenn Collection, both in number of volumes and in value, adding to its strength and supplementing where it is weak. In 1921 the gap between the small Wrenn Library and the Littlefield Southern Collection was bridged by the purchase of an American Poetry Collection, containing about 7,200 items of more or less rarity. For the study of English and American literature, the University Library now ranks among the best six libraries in the country. In 1921, the superb library of Genaro Garcia, of Mexico City, was acquired, a collection of about 11,000 volumes, 15,000 pamphlets, 2,000 volumes of Mexican periodicals, many of them unique, and over 125,000 pages of manuscript. The core of the library is South Western History. Indeed, there is hardly a known book on the history of Mexico that is not found in this collection. In addition, there are about 2,000 volumes of pure literature.

Nor is the University of Texas the only institution in the State which boasts notable special collections of books. Baylor University, at Waco, claims the best collection in the world for the study of Browning, and shows in proof of the claim a complete set of first editions of all Browning's publications, except "Pauline"; and collections of original letters written by Browning to Isa Blagden, Sir Frederick Leighton, Professor Jowett and others. The Southern Methodist University at Dallas has a collection of about 2,000 items dealing with the history of religious denominations in America, particularly the South, and another collection of about the same number of pamphlets relating to slavery and other political questions of the south.

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS.

Perhaps the most notable private library in the State from the collector's point of view is that of Mrs. W. H. Stark, of Orange, whose library contains between 10,000 and 15,000 volumes of general literature and about 2,000 volumes of great rarity, including many manuscripts of first rank. Next to it comes the collection of Dr. Alex. Dumas, of Temple, remarkable for its rare early printed books and maps, and its almost invaluable manuscripts and documents. El Paso shows two notable libraries, that of W. H. Burgess one of the most interesting in the State because of its wide range and beautiful balance, and that of his brother, Richard Burgess, which is limited to books on Texas and the South-West.

Mr. Dan Polan, of Houston, has a collection of rare books. Dr. R. H. Griffith, of the University, has a library of about 2,000 volumes, relating to Alexander Pope, Dr. Max G. Handmann, also of the University, possesses about 10,000 volumes primarily devoted to political science, economic history, and nationalism, particularly Rumanian and Catalan nationalism, while Rabbi Henry Cohen, of Galveston, owns 10,000 or more books of Rabbinical and Judaica. Senator Harry Hertzberg, of San Antonio, too, possesses a library which includes collections on the history of costume, the American circus, folklore; books on London, crime, and many more on equally interesting subjects.

One of the discoveries made in the course of the search for private libraries is the large number of remnants of really considerable libraries brought to Texas before the Civil War at great expense and pains, an interesting commentary on the culture of the early settlers of the State. At Columbus is to be found the handsome library of Laurence Washington, brought there at an early date by a descendant of the family. Though the public library has been late in taking root in Texas, the State has not been without its share of books. A gathering of the small family libraries of the State would show a total equal, perhaps, to the public libraries of the older States of the country.