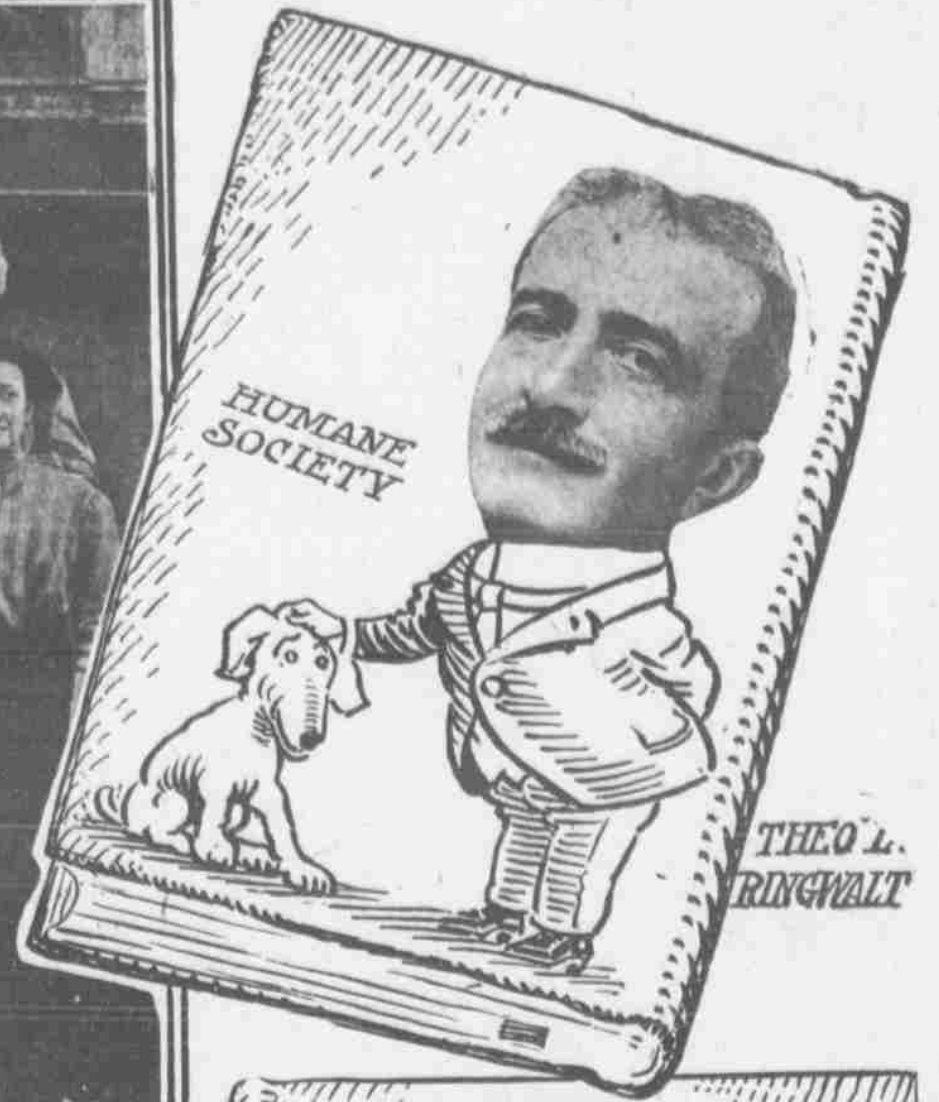


# Some Extensive Improvements Planned for Public Library



MISS EDITH TOBITT, LIBRARIAN, AND HER STAFF.



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**P**LANS now about to be consummated by the Omaha Library board will, it is believed, mean a greatly increased usefulness for that institution. The board has now under consideration a contract for doubling the capacity of the book shelves in the stack room. This improvement would cost \$8,000 and, if carried out, will make the Omaha library a leader in cities of its class. The plans, drawn by Thomas R. Kimball, architect of the board, provide for the raising of the present book stack and the placing of the new one underneath. Handsome stairways and railings and glass floors are to be part of the new work, also an electric passenger and book lift, to facilitate the work of transferring volumes from floor to floor. The new stack will probably be installed by the library bureau of Chicago, which placed the original stack in the library.

The board has also under consideration a plan proposed by the executive committee for the rearrangement of the rooms of the library building, aside from the stack room, that the committee believes would materially improve the facilities. This plan, if approved by the board, would take the boilers into a special building, of small dimensions, outside the library building, on the back of the lot, and afford a chance to install a large reading room in the basement, with an entrance from Harney street.

### Book List Growing Fast.

During the present year some large additions will be made to the number of books in the library, and the development of special departments will be continued. With the prospect of an adequate appropriation to care for the growth of the library, if the new city charter is passed by the legislature, the board is putting considerable thought on the wisest method of extending the efficiency of the library equipment for the benefit of the outlying sections of Omaha, and possibly in the suburban towns surrounding. To provide for the use of the Omaha book plant by these towns a bill is now pending in the legislature, under which their citizens could take cards on payment of a small sum by the governing boards of the various suburbs, to be applied toward the support of the library. Two mills on the dollar is the figure set in the bill. The possibility of establishing city branch libraries has also been receiving some attention from the board, but nothing definite in that line has yet been evolved.

A bill to allow of pensioning library employees after long service, on the same basis as the teachers in the public schools, has received the endorsement of the Omaha board and seems likely to pass the legislature at this session.

Mrs. William Morris, a pioneer woman of Omaha, has presented the library with a very valuable collection of interesting objects, gathered from various parts of the world through a long series of years, and room has been made for the installation of the Morris collection on the museum floor. It will replace an old exhibit, much of which the library people had long de-

sired to get rid of. Mrs. Morris, who is now in Florida, will shortly return to Omaha to personally superintend the installation of her collection.

General C. F. Manderson has purchased the Ryan collection that formerly occupied the room where the Morris collection will be placed. Much of the Ryan material will be thrown out and General Manderson will add to what is left enough new exhibits to make the collection worthy of a place in the museum.

### Special Department at Museum.

In its special features—medical, foreign languages, music, trades volumes, architectural volumes, gardening and household books treating of interior decoration, house planning and the like—the Omaha Public Library is becoming stronger and more complete every

month. But the museum features are likewise proving of increasing interest steadily. In the Savage collection the library has one of the best groups of Shakespeariana in the west, and the Byron Reed collection still holds a place for intrinsic merit surpassed by but few of its like in the world. In the matter of historical curiosities, aside from books, newspapers and coins, the library is excellently supplied.

If one visiting the library museum will take the trouble to investigate he will find a great many most interesting exhibits worthy of study in the museum. Not many, perhaps, know the intimate history of objects like the Aztec god, made of lava rock. This idol was used in the ancient sacrifices of the Aztecs, the victim being held by four minor priests, while the sacrificing priest, with a huge knife of obsidian, cut open

his breast, cut out his still beating heart and offered it to the god, who was supposed to be always hungry for gore. The victim's head was then put between the arms of this lava figure and burned by a fire underneath. The library also has a figure of the sun god of the Aztecs.

The great art glass concerns of the world today are turning out elegant work, but in the Omaha library are specimens of iridescent glass from Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Tyre, all closely resembling the similar glass produced today.

### Story of the Scarabs.

When we mention Egypt library visitors should have their attention called to the Linsinger collection on the museum floor. In this collection the scarabs of the Egyptians command attention from delvers into far-away history. The subjects of the Pharaohs were taught to regard the scarab or sacred beetle as the symbol of eternal life, and when one casts his eyes on the Linsinger scarabs he can draw some satisfaction, if he care to, from the knowledge that no true scarabs were made after the year 500 B. C. Egyptians with bank accounts solid enough to afford scarabs wore them about their necks and on their arms as amulets. When they died the sacred emblems were placed in their tombs and scattered through the wrappings of the mummies. Some have been found which date back to 4,000 B. C., for nearly all of them bore the name and titles of the kings in whose reign they were made; and some of them are even inscribed with an incident in the great man's life.

In these days of the craze for fancy lamps of odd design the Greek, Roman and Egyptian lamps in the library museum are worth a little study; they are all of very antique origin and show originality and skill in the makers; others will find their artistic sensibilities touched by the alabaster vases.

The sports and idle rich of old Babylon had a good many fads that stamp them as people of vital alertness while they lived; they had, for instance, a cylinder mad, of iron ore on which seals were carved, usually with sacred figures, according to their notion

of such things, and inscriptions in the cuneiform characters in which Babylonian scholars indulged. In these the names of the owner and of his particular divinity were coupled, and just to show he stood in with a god the man would impress his seal on anything he found of an impressionable character. Tramps follow something of the same plan today at junction water tanks and way stations, using a knife instead of a seal cylinder.

A great many of the gay boys of old Egypt liked to gamble a bit, and the library museum has some of the dice which they rolled for coin; they are somewhat larger than the dice in use today.

When the untamed Filipinos of this day set about the task of combing their flowing locks they use combs, made of wood, which are almost exact counterparts of those used in Egypt when the world was young and easily satisfied.

You can find here some evidence of the fact that England used to produce schemers about as clever as any credited to Yankee land in dealing with primitive people. A certain kind of shell is found plentifully along the southern coast of Africa, and in the good old days of exploitation English captains used to carry loads of these shells home with them; afterward they would be shipped to India by the generous Englishmen, and the natives would be thus supplied with current coin. They would make the shells into strings, and to tote a string worth a dollar or so meant that the innocent savage had 2,000 shells on his person. The shell money is still used in some parts of India, and used to be in common use in Tripoli. The shell money in the Omaha library is attached to a peculiar bowl, by way of decoration.

Recent acquisitions to the library museum are a chart of the famous battle of Brandywine, which was used by the division under Lieutenant Krynphausen, and a copy of the Philadelphia Gazette of August, 1797. This paper was edited by Benjamin Rush, one of the sturdy signers of the Declaration of Independence. Miss Lucy Bowen of Blair gave the battle plan and Lucien Stevens, a member of the board, the old newspaper.



EDWARD BLACK



COL. JACK RYDER

## The Story of a Library Book

Miss Mary T. Little of the Omaha library believes a good deal in the personality of books, and in line with this belief she has written the following autobiography of a book:

"To be an inanimate object is not at all an uninteresting affair, for I was created to soothe and entertain.

"I am a book. If it were only possible to begin things at the beginning I would tell you how from a vague idea I became a thought, which the author of my being, in his vanity, deemed good enough as the nucleus for his next message to the world, or (perish the thought) his next best seller. I would, if time permitted, dwell on my life in the making, would tell

you of my emotions when relegated to the waste basket, as was often my fate, and of my miraculous recovery. How my spirit recoils from the thought that I might have been the machine-made paper I am printed on! I could tell a thrilling tale of the period of formation when the printer and the binder were doing their best to make me attractive and to please my author and my publisher. Dear reader, am I not pardoned the pride and vanity of that short-lived hour when haughtily I stood, complete, in my dress of cloth-of-gold? Oh, vanity vanitas, thy name is not always woman, or man. Even we, inanimate crea-

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