



Celtic books at Harvard: The history of a departmental collection

Citation

Robinson, Fred N. 1947. Celtic books at Harvard: The history of a departmental collection. Harvard Library Bulletin I (1), Winter 1947: 52-65.

Permanent link

<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:41650135>

Terms of Use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA>

Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.
Please share how this access benefits you. [Submit a story](#).

[Accessibility](#)

Celtic Books at Harvard: The History of a Departmental Collection

THIS is an appropriate time for the publication of an account of the Celtic collection in the Harvard Library. For it is just fifty years since the establishment of Celtic instruction in Harvard University, and with the introduction of Celtic as a subject of study and research began the systematic effort on the part of the Library to acquire books in the field. Of course many important works relating to the Celtic languages and literatures were already on the shelves in 1896. In fact the history of the collection illustrates admirably the advantages of building up such a special department in a rich and long established library.

Of these previous acquisitions, due largely to the generosity of alumni or to the ordering of scholars in departments related to Celtic, the number is very large. It includes the general philological journals, to which many early studies on Celtic were contributed; long sets of archaeological and historical publications such as the *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, the *Revue Archéologique*, the *Revue de Bretagne et de Vendée*, the *Rolls Series*, and the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*; and the *Revue Celtique*, the one general organ of Celtic scholarship then in existence; also the *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, received, I think, by exchange from the time of the founding of the Academy. In the great folklore collection, first assembled by Professor Child and continued under the guidance of Professor Kittredge, the popular tales and songs of the Celtic countries were very fully represented, as was also the literature relating to Arthurian romance. The Library also possessed before 1896 many of the most important of the older separate works in the Celtic field. Such are Lhuyd's *Archaeologia Britannica* (1707); the collections of Irish poetry by Charlotte Brooke (1789) and Hardiman (1831); the *Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales* (1801-07); the foundation stone of Celtic philology, Zeuss's *Grammatica Celtica* (1853, 2nd ed. 1871) — to which Whitley Stokes wittily applied the line, *Zeὺς ἀρχὴ, Zeὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ' ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται*; Lady Guest's translation of the *Mabinogion*; the works of O'Donovan, O'Curry, and Todd; and the earlier publications of Stokes and Windisch.

Many of these older possessions of the Library came in most casually from donors who probably never conceived of building up a special Celtic collection. One of the most interesting is a copy of Davies' Welsh Dictionary, *Antiquae Linguae Britannicae . . . et Linguae Latinae, Dictionarium Duplex* (1632), given by the great eighteenth-century patron of the Library, Thomas Hollis. It is one of the books personally selected by the donor ('ex dono ipsius') and bears the characteristic inscription:

A fine copy of a rare work. It cost a guinea. T. H. is fond of sending Lexicons and Grammars to Harvard College, in honor of those *first-rate* Scholars, possibly half a dozen, the noblest of all men, who, he trusts, are now forming there.

Another gift from a source to which one would hardly have looked for a contribution to Celtic literature is a series of very rare Breton chap-books from the library of Charles Sumner. And another item of especial personal interest is the Welsh translation of the Book of Mormon, the gift of Brigham Young.

It will be apparent from what has been said that the Library already possessed in 1896 a valuable nucleus of a Celtic collection. But the books had been given or ordered in haphazard fashion and, except for those in Folklore and Linguistics, they were widely scattered among the shelves of various departments. In fact it was not till a number of years after Celtic books began to accumulate that the early acquisitions were brought together and shelved with the rest. At present most of the books in the field are to be found in three divisions of the stacks. Works of a strictly linguistic nature — grammars, dictionaries, philological treatises, and the like — are in the Department of Languages, in the Celtic subdivision. There has been no exact census since 1934, but by a rough count these now appear to number about 600. Works on popular tales and songs, proverbs, customs and superstitions, numbering about 600, have been left in the Folklore Collection. The great body of the books, including periodicals and other serial publications, have been assembled in the general classification Celtic (shelf-mark 'Celt'), and now number about 5000. Rare books and manuscripts, photographs, and other items most valuable or most difficult to replace, of which there are a large number in the collection, are kept in the Houghton Library. And of course there are many works classified under History (Irish, Scottish, Welsh, and French), Church History, Place

Names, Archaeology, Linguistic Periodicals, and English Literature, which though not included in the Celtic collection have nevertheless an important bearing on Celtic studies.

If these subdivisions of the collection are combined and allowance is made for the books classified elsewhere, the total number of works in the Library available for Celtic scholarship must be in excess of 8000. They include practically all the productions of the scientific age of Celtic philology — the period since Zeuss. In acquiring them the Library had the advantage of starting its Celtic buying while the science itself was fairly young. The collection, so to speak, grew up with the subject. Stokes, Atkinson, and Rhys, Windisch and d'Arbois de Jubainville, who belonged in the nineties to the elder generation, still had years of production ahead of them, and Thurneyson, Zimmer, and Kuno Meyer were at the height of their powers. In the following decade or two an active group of young Celticists came along, especially in the English, Welsh, and Irish universities. To the *Revue Celtique*, which had been in existence since 1870, there were added in rapid succession other technical or critical journals, the *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, the *Celtic Review* (Edinburgh), *Eriu*, the *Bulletin* of the Board of Celtic Studies, *Y Beirniad*, *Y Llenor*, *Eigse*, the *Scottish Gaelic Studies* — to mention only those which have contained the more substantial contributions to Celtic scholarship. These publications, together with the numerous separate works of two active generations of Celticists, have been acquired by the Library as they appeared, so that the collection is very fully representative of the output of scientific Celtic philology.

The first interest of the scholars I have mentioned was not unnaturally in the older stages of the Celtic languages and literatures. It was Gaulish, Old Irish, and early Brythonic that chiefly concerned the linguists in their researches in comparative grammar, and similarly the students of comparative literature found more profit in early Irish saga or the old bardic poetry of Wales than in the modern Celtic literature. So most of the learned publications of the period had to do with grammar or lexicography or the editing of ancient texts. But during those same decades there developed, especially in Ireland, an active movement for the revival of the Celtic vernacular. This led to considerable fresh literary production and to the publication, often for the first time in print, of many authors of the past two or three centuries. The Irish Texts Society, founded in 1898, has devoted itself mainly to the litera-

ture of the modern period, and its publications now number over forty volumes. Many other editions of Gaelic writers were produced, stimulated largely by such organizations as the Gaelic League and the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, and while most of the works in question were issued in very inexpensive form for popular circulation, not a few of them — notably the works of J. H. Lloyd, Tomás O'Máille, and the Reverend Fathers P. S. Dineen, J. S. MacErlean, Peter O'Leary, and Michael Sheean — contained valuable contributions to Irish scholarship. The Library is very fully supplied with the Gaelic publications of the period in question. Special personal interest attaches to a number of books received from the bequest of Jeremiah Curtin of the Class of 1863, the distinguished collector of Gaelic folk-tales and, so far as the present writer knows, the first Harvard graduate to concern himself seriously with Celtic studies.

Alongside of the voluminous publications of native writings, new and old, there has been an intense activity, especially during the past twenty years, in the translation of foreign literature into Gaelic. Scores of works, great and small, ranging from ancient classics like Lucian's *Vera Historia* through Spanish, French, and Slavic literatures to Stevenson, Rider Haggard, and Jerome K. Jerome, are now available in Gaelic versions. This work of translation, stimulated by government subsidies, has been part of the effort to restore Irish to general use and to give the language a literary status. There is an interesting parallel, it may be observed, between this movement (which has its contemporary counterparts in Wales and Brittany) and the effort of the Elizabethans to put the great classical and continental writers into English. But whereas North's Plutarch, Florio's Montaigne, and other Tudor translations have held a place as English classics, many of the current Gaelic translations have been criticized as poor specimens of language and style. Moreover a very large proportion of the works chosen for translation have been English, and though a Gaelic speaker might well find it convenient to read Lucian or Cervantes in Irish, it is hard to believe that he would prefer a Gaelic version to the original of *Treasure Island* or *Three Men in a Boat*. Nevertheless the whole undertaking represents a significant aspect of the movement for revival of a language, and the Library has therefore obtained a full collection of the translations.

It is safe to say that in the period under consideration — roughly speaking, the last fifty years — more Irish literature, early and modern,

was published than in all the previous time since the invention of printing, and the Library was able to acquire nearly all of it as it appeared. During the long period from the Protestant Reformation down to the middle of the nineteenth century comparatively little Gaelic literature found its way into print. Even the composition of it was gravely restricted by the antagonism of the ruling class toward the Catholic religion and education. A few Protestant works, like the translations of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, were issued in the vain hope of converting the Irish. A number of Catholic books of edification were printed, chiefly on the Continent, out of the reach of the penal laws. But the great mass of Gaelic writings, religious and secular, including the very extensive productions of the Bardic Schools, circulated in manuscript, and this mediaeval form of publication continued to be the prevailing practice down to the eve of the recent Gaelic Revival.

The earliest Irish prints seldom appear on the market today. The total number of them is small, and the Harvard collection still lacks some of the most important. But those available at Harvard include the New Testament of 1603 (John Baskerville's copy), perhaps the premier treasure among printed books in Irish; the New Testament of 1681; Bedel's Old Testament of 1685; MacAinghil's *Scathan Shacramuinte na b-Aithridhe* (Louvain, 1618), an imperfect copy; Molloy's *Lucerna Fidelium* (Rome, 1676); Bonaventura O'Hussey's *An Teagasg Criosduidhe* (2nd ed., Rome, 1707), followed by a tract on the Santa Casa at Loreto; and the Book of Common Prayer (*Leabhar na Nor-naightheadh Ccomhchoitcionn*, London, 1712). With these older books of devotion or religious edification may be listed also the translation of the *Imitatio Christi*, *Searc-leanmhain Chriost*, by Domhnall O'Sulliobhain (Dublin, 1822). Two linguistic works also deserve to be mentioned among the early prints: MacCurtin's *Elements of the Irish Language* (Louvain, 1728) and Shaw's *Galic and English Dictionary* (London, 1780), of which the Library has General Vallancey's copy, interleaved and elaborately annotated. While Vallancey's etymological notes would not commend themselves to the Celtic philologist of this generation, they nevertheless bear ample testimony to his linguistic learning.

For manuscript materials, either the original documents or photographic reproductions, the Library is much better off than for early Irish printed books. Of course the great mediaeval codices which con-

tain the main body of Old and Middle Irish literature have long since been unobtainable. Nearly all of them have found permanent resting-places in European institutions; very few are in private hands, even in Europe, and not one of any importance is in an American library. But many have been published in facsimile editions, with which the Library is fully supplied. Thus the voluminous contents of the great 'books,' the Book of the Dun Cow, the Book of Leinster, the Book of Ballymote, the Book of Lecan, the Yellow Book of Lecan, the Book of Ui-Maine, and of a number of manuscripts less familiar by name, the Würzburg copy of the Pauline Epistles, the Milan Commentary on the Psalms, the Annals of Inisfallen, Trinity Coll. MS H. 2.15 (portions of the *Senchus Mór*), MS Rawl. B. 502 (*Saltair na Rann*, *Annals of Tigernach*, etc.) — all these are accessible on the Harvard shelves. And in addition to the published facsimiles the Library has a large number of photostats of manuscripts or of single texts, including the whole series of Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy, now being issued by the Academy.

Besides this photographic material there is now available at Harvard a small but representative collection of modern Gaelic manuscripts, about forty in number. The most important is the *Leabhar Branach*, or Tribal Book of the O'Byrnes, acquired in 1905. This was copied between 1720 and 1726 and contains, in addition to bardic poems on the O'Byrnes, documents dealing with the history of the family in the time of William III. The Harvard manuscripts range in date from this and a few other eighteenth-century specimens down to the most recent item, a poem on the Rocky Mountain Indians, written in 1916 and copied in 1923 by Eóin Cathail (John M. Cahill) of Pentwater, Michigan, an immigrant from Inis Bán, County Limerick. This interesting manuscript was the gift of Professor Tom Peete Cross of the University of Chicago. Other manuscripts with a special personal association are a holograph copy of a Christmas play by Dr Douglas Hyde, recently President of the Irish Free State, and several specimens of the calligraphy of Patrick Stanton, a recent scribe who tried to keep alive the Irish tradition of ornamental writing.

The number of texts in this shelf of modern manuscripts is very considerable. Among them are many familiar pieces of which copies are common in Irish miscellanies — the *Dialogue of Patrick and Ossian* and other ballads of the same cycle, prose tales like the story of Deirdre and the *Feis Tighe Chonáin*. The *Ceisniombh Inghine Guill* seems to be

of less usual occurrence. There are also numerous poems of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One whole volume is taken up with a devotional treatise, the *Trompa na bhFlaitheas*, which according to the title-page was translated in 1715, by Tadhg O'Conaill from the French of Antoine Yvan. The Harvard copy was made in 1836 by Finghin O'Hallúráin. Until an analytical catalogue is made of the contents of all the volumes it will be impossible to say to what extent they supplement the much larger collections of manuscripts in the Irish libraries, and the preparation of such catalogues of the Harvard collection and of two or three others in this country is a research project under consideration by the Celtic Group of the Modern Language Association.

It is manifest that the Harvard manuscripts and photographs taken together supply a vast body of unpublished material for the study of the Irish language and literature. Except for the *Leabhar Branach* the manuscripts are not likely in many cases to furnish important textual authorities. But one can never tell when a stray version will be of interest to a scholar. This is illustrated by a slight incident in connection with one of Professor Kittredge's articles on Arthurian romance. He had occasion to analyze the *Feis Tighe Chonáin* and compare it with other parallel tales. In the printed text which he used he argued that a certain missing feature should be supplied, and it was afterwards found in the copy in one of the Harvard manuscripts.

Mention should perhaps be made here of one valuable item, though it concerns local history and nomenclature rather than literature. That is the typewritten copy of the letters written by John O'Donovan and others, while at work on the Ordnance Survey, 1834-1841. A limited number of reproductions were made under the direction of Father Michael O'Flanagan, and the Library acquired a set (35 vols.)

In the closely related field of Scottish Gaelic the Library has far fewer books than in Irish. In the older mediaeval period the two countries had practically a common language and literature, and in modern times there has been less production in Scottish than in Irish. Still the number of volumes in the Scottish section, largely editions of the poets of the last three centuries, runs to more than three hundred, not including periodicals. Of the works of the scientific period, in Scottish as well as in Irish, the Library has a relatively complete supply. The early prints are very few, and of these the collection boasts only the Bible of 1690 — really Irish Gaelic reprinted for the Scots — together with a second copy of the New Testament which belonged to

the great folklorist, J. F. Campbell. Carswell's version of the Book of Common Prayer (1567) it owns only in the modern reprint (1873). It still lacks most of the first editions of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century bards, but is well supplied with later issues of their work. Of the rarer books in this field in the Harvard collection perhaps the periodicals, the *Cuairtear nan Gleann* and the *Teachdaire Gaelach*, are as deserving as any of special mention. The Library has the first edition of MacPherson's *Ossian* and most of the publications relating to the Ossianic controversy. It also possesses, classified under English Literature, a collection of several hundred volumes illustrating the vogue and influence of the pseudo-Ossianic writings all over the world.

In collecting Scottish Gaelic the Library has not overlooked the interesting Gaelic-speaking communities in Nova Scotia, and has made a good beginning in acquiring their publications. Of the men who have given friendly assistance in the search for this material special acknowledgements are due to Mr J. G. Mackinnon, long the editor of *Mac-Talla* in Sydney, who gave the Library a file of a considerable part of the journal; the Right Reverend Monsignor P. J. Nicholson, of St Francis Xavier College, Antigonish, who supplied a copy of the rare early print, *Companach an Oganaich*; and the Reverend Mr Donald M. Sinclair, who made it possible for the Library to get a photostat of the precious Maclean manuscript in the library of his father, the late A. Maclean Sinclair, one of the principal men-of-letters of Gaelic Canada. It is a tradition of the family that the manuscript was seen by Samuel Johnson when he met Mary Maclean at her father's house in 1773.

The third Goidelic language, the Gaelic of the Isle of Man, has only a few literary remains, all from the modern period. Of the one important early monument, the Book of Common Prayer, the Library has Rhys's edition, with Bishop Phillip's translation of 1670 and that of the Manx clergy in 1765 in parallel columns. It also possesses a copy of the edition of 1765, the treatise on the Lord's Supper published by Bishop Wilson in 1777, and the New Testament of 1810, the last having been the gift of the British Bible Society in 1814. The other scattered publications relating to Manx — grammars, dictionaries, editions of carols, folk-songs, and other short pieces are mostly on the shelves. A large part of the material, both in English and Gaelic, relating to the island was collected in the publications of the Manx Language Society, of which the Library has a set.

The living Celtic languages, it will be remembered, fall into two main

groups, the Goidelic or Gaelic and the Brythonic or British. We have been considering thus far the Gaelic group. To pass now to the Brythonic division, which is made up of Welsh, Cornish, and Breton, the Welsh is by far the most important for the student of language and literature. It has very early linguistic monuments, though not so numerous or extensive as those in Old Irish, and it has had a continuous and copious literary production which began shortly after the Saxon conquest and is still going on.

In Welsh, as in Irish, the older documents have been the main concern of the modern scientific school of philologists, whose works are fully represented in the Harvard collection: grammars and linguistic treatises from Zeuss and Rhys down to Jones, Pedersen, and Lewis; the stately editions of the great mediaeval manuscripts that gave Gwcnogvryn Evans the reputation of being a letter-perfect editor; and most recently the texts and learned commentaries of Ifor Williams and Henry Lewis and the critical and historical writings of W. J. Gruffydd and the other native scholars. The Library is well supplied with their separate publications and the periodicals to which they have contributed.

The history of printed literature in Welsh is very different from that of Irish. In Ireland, as has been already pointed out, by reason of the religious division after the Reformation, Catholic education and publication were severely restricted. In Wales no such influence, either religious or political, was at work. The Welsh felt a special proprietorship in the Tudor line, and their bards celebrated Elizabeth under the name of Sidanen, the Silken Lady. The Welsh clergy produced distinguished scholars who participated in the translation of the King James Bible, and earlier still Welsh scholars, both lay and clerical, made a Welsh version of the Scriptures which has had a popular influence comparable to that of the English Bible or of Luther's German version. For centuries the Welsh have had their colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, and have not been shut off from the intellectual life of Britain. As a result of such conditions as these the Welsh language was continuously in educated use and was freely printed. The number of books published between the age of Elizabeth and the present day was very large. There are more than two thousand, exclusive of periodicals, in the Harvard collection, of which they form by far the largest section.

In this representative general collection of Welsh literature there are not many volumes which for their rarity or other features deserve to be singled out for special mention. Of the earliest prints, which are

perhaps even harder to obtain than the Irish, the Library possesses only a very few. The most precious is William Salesbury's *Kynniver Llith a Ban or Yscrythur* (1551), the Epistles and Gospels for each Sunday and Festival in the Church year — the earliest publication of any considerable portion of the Bible in Welsh. There are also in the collection copies of the Welsh Bible of 1620, of Dr Sion Dafydd Rhys's *Cambrobritannicae Cymraecaeve Linguae Institutiones et Rudimenta* (1592), a valuable early treatise on Welsh grammar and prosody, and (very recently acquired) of William Middleton's *Psalmae y Brenhinol Brophwyd Dafydd* (1603), the first printed metrical version of the Psalms in Welsh. Except for these four items the Library is dependent on reprints for the oldest Welsh books. It has the careful edition by Gwenogvryn Evans (1902) of Salesbury's *Oll Synwyr Pen Kumbero ygyd* (1546?), and excellent reprints of Sir John Prys's *Yn y Lblywr hwnn* (1546), supposed to be the first printed book in Welsh; of Morgan's Bible (1588); and of such works of Maurice Kyffin, Henry Parry, Huw Lewis, William Middleton, and Gruffydd Roberts as have been reissued. Salesbury's *Dictionary in English and Welsh* (1547), of which it has not yet been able to acquire the original, is available in the excellent reprint of the Cymmrodorion Society (1877). In that *Dictionary*, dedicated to Henry VIII and compiled in order to help his Welsh subjects learn English, Salesbury showed himself a forerunner of Samuel Johnson as a lexicographer not incapable of a joke. He defines an onion as that herb which widows apply to their eyes to induce weeping after their husbands die. It is the old jibe, of which the application is shifted to the widower in the consolatory speech of Enobarbus to Antony (*Antony and Cleopatra*, I, ii, 176).

In the later period of Welsh literature the Harvard collection has most of the outstanding works, some of them of moderate rarity. Such are the first editions of Dafydd ap Gwilym (1789); the 1792 edition of Llywarch Hen (Robert Southey's autographed copy); the first Welsh translation of *Pilgrim's Progress* (1688), together with a number of the seventeenth-century translations of Bunyan and of other English religious writers; Evans's *Specimens of the Poetry of the Ancient Welsh Bards* (1764); Hugh Jones's *Diddanwch Teuluaidd* (1765) and *Dewisol Ganiadau yr Oes Hon* (1779); *Gardd o Gerddi*, by Twm o'r Nant (1790); and the rare periodicals the *Cambrian Register* (1795–1817) and *Y Greal* (1805–07). With these rarer or choicer items may be listed the recent specimens of fine printing from the Gregynog

Press, in so far as the books are in Welsh. Of these there are at Harvard the reprints of Bishop Morgan's text of the Psalms and Ecclesiastes, the *Penillion Omar Khayyam* by Sir John Morris Jones, the *Caneuon Ceiriog*, the *Caniadau* of W. J. Gruffydd, and *Detholiad o Ganiadau*, by T. Gwynn Jones.

But the value of the modern Welsh collection lies not so much in these special items as in the extensive representation of the literature of the period, both prose and verse. It is especially rich in poetry, of which several hundred titles were acquired from the library of Llew Tegid (L. D. Jones), the poet and Eisteddfodwr. It contains more than a hundred pieces of Welsh drama. It has long sets of the principal literary periodicals such as *Y Traethodydd*, *Y Genynen*, *Cymru*, *Y Drysorfa*, and *Yr Haul*. There is also a special section of some two hundred volumes of the proceedings and other publications of the Eisteddfod which, though far from complete, exhibits very well the history and operation of that most characteristic Welsh institution. An interesting item in the section is a collection of manuscript or typescript contributions and adjudications acquired from the Library of Llew Tegid, who was for a number of years director of the Eisteddfod. The modern Welsh division also contains many specimens of the memoirs (*cofiantau*) in which Welsh literature abounds. The observant lady who has catalogued most of the Harvard Celtic books, Miss Jessie Whitehead, once remarked to the writer that these memoirs would afford a rich field for the researches of the descriptive sociologist, for there must be very few countries in which so many rather inconspicuous persons, ministers of country parishes, small-town professional men and tradesmen, are commemorated in biographies. The reason may be that there are few countries in which men of that economic and social status devote themselves so seriously to literature and music. Whatever the explanation, the *cofiant* is one of the literary forms most employed in Wales, and there are many specimens on the Harvard shelves. But the Library has confined itself in general to the memoirs of men definitely connected with literature or the arts.

Very few persons not directly concerned with Celtic studies realize that a large amount of Welsh has been published in this country. The Library has naturally wished to include this in the Celtic collection and has brought together a good many Welsh Americana. But there are many gaps still to be filled. These publications seldom appear in the general book market, and the Harvard acquisitions have actually come

mainly from family libraries. Among the donors to whom the Library has been specially indebted have been Mr David R. Thomas, Mr Humphrey Lloyd, Mrs Daniel P. Harries (books from the library of the Reverend David Harries), and the family of Robert Everett.

From this account of the Welsh books, necessarily in brief and general terms, it will be apparent that the Library is amply stocked, not only with the scientific philological productions, but also with materials for the study of the modern literature. In surveying its possessions there is pleasure in recalling that Harvard owes a real debt to the friendly assistance of Sir John Ballinger, the distinguished former Librarian of the Welsh National Library at Aberystwyth. He followed with sympathetic interest the building up of a Welsh collection in an American university, and indicated from time to time the sources from which valuable books might be obtained.

There remain to be considered two other languages of the British group, Cornish and Breton.

The Cornish language passed out of use about the end of the eighteenth century, and the extant literary material is not extensive. There are a few early linguistic monuments, which have been studied by the Celtic philologists. The chief literary documents are religious poems and miracle-plays of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Library is well supplied with both the philological treatises and the editions of Cornish texts. It also acquired recently a photostat of the Gwavas Manuscript (British Museum Add. MS 28554), which contains most of the unpublished material in the language. Within the last few years there has developed a movement for the revival of Cornish, and though the undertaking can not be said to be promising, the Library has tried to obtain such literature as it has produced.

In Breton, as in Cornish, the older literature is small in quantity, as compared with that in Irish and Welsh. In age and character it is similar to the Cornish, though considerably more extensive. Mysteries and miracle-plays, as well as religious poems and manuals of devotion, continued to be written until the nineteenth century. Both the language and the older literary documents have been made the subject of study by several very active scholars, especially Joseph Loth and Émile Ernault, and their works are nearly all on the Library shelves. But Breton, unlike Cornish, has remained a living language, still spoken by over a million persons, and there has been a steady output of publication down to the present day. Indeed, the literature of the past hundred

years is in many respects the most interesting in the history of the language. In place of the older religious productions, largely derivative and unoriginal, the nineteenth-century writers turned to the rich store of popular tradition. Great collectors, like Luzel, published the native tales and folksongs, and in the enthusiasm of the national revival there was produced a large body of original poetry of high quality.

As a result of the fact that until recently no instruction in the language was offered at Harvard, the collection of Breton books, except for the scientific works mentioned above, was more casual than in other parts of the Celtic field. But in this unsystematic way a very considerable Breton library has been picked up, and the volumes either in Breton or relating to the language, literature, or folklore of Brittany, now number about a thousand. Some of them, like the chapbooks received long ago from Charles Sumner, have been declared by a Breton bibliographer to be almost *introuvable*. The Library is just now making a special effort to fill the gaps in the Breton section and bring it up to date.

It would be a service to scholars if a complete catalogue of the Celtic books at Harvard could be published, and it is the hope of the Library that such a bibliographical contribution may sometime be issued. Meanwhile the present account, briefly descriptive and historical, will indicate in a general way the resources of the collection. It lacks, and must lack, the ancient manuscripts which give their supreme distinction to the European libraries. But it is richly stocked with the facsimiles and other photographic reproductions of those manuscripts, and is constantly acquiring more photographs of unpublished materials. There are many gaps, too, among the early printed books, and since these 'museum pieces' are often of great value for research, the Library is endeavoring to obtain them as opportunity offers. In the field of modern printed literature, both scientific and general, the collection is very rich. It differs in one respect from most of the other great Celtic libraries. They have often been the product of national or patriotic enthusiasm, and have been devoted to the cultivation of a single language or literature. It is natural that the National Library of Wales should be primarily concerned with Welsh, and the Dublin libraries with Irish. Each of these has in its special field resources which the Harvard library can not expect to equal. But the Harvard collection, having been designed for the use of a general department of Celtic studies, has tried from the beginning to cover the whole Celtic territory. Even the Welsh of Patagonia has not been left out of account! The purpose of the col-

lection has been to provide the amplest possible resources for instruction and research in all branches of Celtic philology. Since there is active production today in both scholarship and general literature in all the countries where Celtic survives, the Library must plan for many new acquisitions in time to come. But up to the present the purpose of the collection has been measurably fulfilled.

FRED N. ROBINSON

List of Contributors

- KEYES D. METCALF**, Professor of Bibliography, Director of the Harvard University Library, and Librarian of Harvard College
- HAMILTON VAUGHAN BAIL**, Hartland, Vermont
- FRED N. ROBINSON**, Gurney Professor of English Literature, Emeritus, Harvard University
- PHILIP HOFER**, Curator of Printing and Graphic Arts in the Harvard College Library
- WILLIAM A. JACKSON**, Professor of Bibliography and Assistant Librarian of the Harvard College Library in charge of the Houghton Library
- ETHEL B. CLARK**, Honorary Keeper of Rare Books, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library
- CLIFFORD K. SHIPTON**, Custodian of the Harvard University Archives; Librarian of the American Antiquarian Society
- DAVID McCORD**, Honorary Curator of the Farnsworth and Poetry Rooms of the Harvard College Library, Executive Secretary of the Harvard Fund Council, and Editorial Chairman of the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*
- I. BERNARD COHEN**, Instructor in Physical Science, Harvard University
- HAROLD S. JANTZ**, Associate Professor, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Princeton University
- WILLIAM H. BOND**, Houghton Library
- WILLIAM VAN LENNEP**, Curator of the Theatre Collection in the Harvard College Library
- JOHN H. BIRSS**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, University College, New York University
- HYDER E. ROLLINS**, Gurney Professor of English Literature, Harvard University
- ELMER M. GRIEDER**, General Assistant in the Harvard College Library