

CUSH17/3.12

Bodleian 1906

It was soon after his going to Oxford, and I presume soon after his being Curator of the Bodleian, that the missing First Folio of Shakespeare, the so-called Turbutt Shakespeare, turned up. I believe that it was a custom of the Curators to read at each meeting the list of books which the library once had and which were missing (look this up), and it was always a matter of chagrin that the First Folio Shakespeare (1623) was missing. As this story is an unusually interesting biographical story, it may be given more or less in full, for W. O. played an important part, perhaps the important part, in instigating people to subscribe for the purchase of the volume an amount equal to that which had been subscribed by an unknown American. Falconer Madan has given a general account of the episode in the publication from the Clarendon Press, 1905. An appeal was sent out for funds from the Bodleian Library in a slip Jan. 1906, which may be quoted in full.

This is signed by E. W. B. Nicholson, Bodley's Librarian. I think there is a private note by Nicholson, dated Nov. 11, 1905, which I saw in the Bodleian.

Osler was very much exercised and not only contributed £20 himself towards the repurchase, but secured £50 from Lord Mountsteven, £25 from Mr. Henry Phipps of New York, and gradually the many contributors mostly of lesser sums brought the amount up nearly to the £3000 which had been offered. It of course was impossible for the library to raise any such sum, the largest sum it had ever given for any volume being £220 10s. for a manuscript collection of Anglo-Saxon charters.

Mr. Turbutt, who himself was interested in the repurchase and who collaborated with Madan in writing up the description of the volume, extended the time for which the money could be raised until March 31st. I suppose, therefore, that it was on the evening of March 30th that the episode I have heard Dr. Osler tell occurred.

They were £500 short of the full purchase price, Mr. Turbutt himself having contributed £200. But to every one's despair it looked as though the volume would be lost. At that juncture W. O. went up to London and interviewed Strathcona, then in his ninetieth (?) year, and told him the story. Strathcona appeared interested but made no comment, though Osler made it clear that the matter would have to be closed the next day, and so rather disconsolately he took the late train back to Oxford. ^{He must have written before} Early the next morning to 13 Norham Gardens came a telegram from Strathcona, enclosing £500. Lady Osler telephoned to Nicholson that she must see him immediately. This was almost before the family were up and ^{she} met the old man on the stairs with her hair down when he hurried over to see what was wanted of him. He was so overcome that he collapsed on the floor and wept.

I find a note that Strathcona's letter to Dr. Osler was of the 29th of March, 1906. It was in Mar. 1906 also that an appeal to Oxford men

appeared in the London Times.

In Osler's volume appears under the date of April 2, 1906 the following note: "Mr. N. told me today the curious sequel. He had a telegram from Sothron that the man who offered the £3000 now wished to offer the Bodleian £1500 if he could have the Turbutt Folio for his lifetime."

I should also add that there is a note signed E.W.B.N., under the date Mar. 28, 1906, paid or promised £2598 13s. 3d. To quote our friend Wendell Holmes, "Victory appears to be the perch on our banners." (Look this up in W.O.'s copy) *Mr. Nicholson - a post card*

Brother, 29 Mar. 1906

My dear Dr. Osler

*You deserve a statue in the Bodleian grounds. I have
written Turbutt. It is late my chance of seeing you later in the
day. I shall write both papers and send out a circular
to the subscribers.*

Yours most sincerely

E.W.B. Nicholson.

*John's letter to the Times. E.W.B.N. says we owe nearly a fifth of the
sum raised to the enthusiastic efforts of Dr. Osler. This must very
easily have equalled W.O. among Oxford people.*

W.O.

Under April 12 1906

*Mr. N. told me today a curious sequel. He had a telegram
from Sothron. That the man who offered the 3000 pounds
now wished to offer the Bodleian £1500 if he could have
the Turbutt folio for his lifetime*

W. Osler.

John's note.

In the Manual for Readers and Visitors of the Bodleian Library issue Dec. 8 1912 a few brief

the chief landmarks in the history of the library.

Statistical items, see further ~~among them~~ the following in chronological order beginning with
what is of significance to this story are the items on the last page of this leaflet.

1906 The original copy of the First Folio of Shakespeare which came to the library in 1623
under the agreement with the Stationers' Company (see sub anno 1610 above) and which had
been parted with after the Restoration as superseded, was bought from W. G. Durbott, Esq., of
Oxford Hall, Derbyshire, for £3,000.

As the story concerns the newly appointed Curator

(The earliest library of the kind was in existence in 1337)

1598 Sir Thomas Bodley a statesman and diplomat high in the favor of Queen Elizabeth,
being weary of state-craft, determined to set up his 'staple' at the Librarian-dore in Oxon,
and once again furnished Duke Humphrey's walls with book-cases, and became, to his
eternal glory, the founder of the Bodleian Library.

Printed by George G. Smith & Co. Ltd. at Oxford.

From about 1860 till 1906 there was little to note in the history of the Bodleian. The story of
the five items of the 1906 decade concern the activity and energy, imagination and initiative
of the new ^{and Bodley} Curator of the