

The Bevan-Naish Library

THE Bevan-Naish Library was a private collection of books originally begun by Joseph Gurney Bevan (1753-1814) at the end of the eighteenth century. The collection was developed by his relative Paul Bevan (1783-1868), and virtually completed by Arthur John Naish (1816-1889). A few books and pamphlets have been added since, but the principal part of the collection was made before 1890.

These Friends over a period of about ninety years collected all the early works concerning Quaker thought and history that they could obtain, and the collection is most valuable for the study of Quakerism. Few books were added after 1890. There are about 4,000 pamphlets, which far outnumber longer works. There is also a most valuable collection of Broadsides made by Paul Bevan, some of great rarity, and probably unique.

Among the more valuable works may be mentioned first editions of Pastorius's *Primer* with an autograph dedication to William Penn¹, and *An Historical and Geographical Account of the Province and Country of Pensilvania* by Gabriel Thomas, 1698. These two are deposited in the custody of the Library at Friends House, London.

On the death of Arthur John Naish in 1889, Birmingham Preparative Meeting, realizing that a most valuable collection of early Quaker literature was in danger of being dispersed, bought the collection in 1890. The Naish family most generously let it go for a sum (£225) far below its estimated value. A subscription was opened and nearly £300 was raised; the surplus above the purchase was spent on book-cases and compiling a catalogue. The Library was then placed in a small room adjoining the Friends' Reading Society, 8 Dr. Johnson's Passage, and there it remained for forty-eight years, and was largely overlooked and unused.

In 1937 Henry T. and Lucy Cadbury, at that time Wardens of Woodbrooke (the Quaker College in Selly Oak), realized the value of the collection for research, and to make it more accessible to students they suggested its

¹ For this inscription see an earlier account of the Library in this *Journal*, ii, 91 (1905).

transfer and generously offered to build an extension to the existing Woodbrooke library to house the Bevan-Naish collection and to create a special Quaker Library. This was completed and the transfer was made in 1938, including the original Victorian, glass-fronted book-cases which still house the collection.

At the same time a new and more detailed catalogue was felt to be necessary, as the original catalogue was very brief and not too accurate. This work was undertaken after World War II by Leonard Jolley, then librarian of the Central Library of the Selly Oak Colleges. Unfortunately for the catalogue he left Selly Oak before the work was completed, and to finish the work the cataloguing of the pamphlets was undertaken by a former librarian of the Woodbrooke Library. It was not till then that the vast number of pamphlets and the complex nature of some of the cataloguing problems they raise was realized. Work which was originally expected to be completed in six months in fact took two years.

A sheaf catalogue according to subjects has been provided. Each entry gives a complete transcript of the title-page of the work catalogued; sometimes these entries run to as much as three pages. All bibliographical details and editions are noted. Copies not entered in Joseph Smith's *Descriptive Catalogue of Friends' Books* (2 vols. 1867) are specially noted, as also are known locations of other copies in libraries in this country and in America. There is a brief author catalogue arranged in alphabetical order.

There remain some items that have not yet been sorted or catalogued, including several volumes of manuscripts, some volumes of photographs and a curious collection of memorial cards.

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