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# Linwood Library Gazette

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body."

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## GLASGOW'S TREASURE HOUSE OF BOOKS

"It is a good thing to read books, and it need not be a bad thing to write them; but it is a pious thing to preserve those that have been sometime written."

Next year the Mitchell Library, the British Museum of Scotland, celebrates its diamond jubilee.

Recommendations have been tabled which lead to great expansions in the library. Soon Glasgow's famous reference building will be the finest in Britain.

The Mitchell has played a big part in the social life of the city. It was the first free library in the country, with the exception of the Stirling, in Miller Street, which it later incorporated.

The tobacco lords of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been blamed for a great deal that is bad in the city. One of them at least, Stephen Mitchell, benefited the city and Scotland as a whole by bequeathing sufficient money to found what is now the Mitchell Library.

That was in 1874, and the sum was £66,998. When it had accumulated to £70,000 the trustees laid the foundation stone in the Candleriggs. It was completed and opened on the first of November, 1877, with a total of 14,000 volumes, not one of which was a novel.

In the first year of the Library's

existence the Scottish Poetry section was founded; this is now supreme in the world.

### Lack of Facilities

It was not until the sun had set on the old century that the rates contributed a penny to the upkeep of the Library. Then that sum was gained in the face of very strong opposition in the Council Chambers.

In 1895 a newspaper commented on the lack of facilities in the Library. "One determined couple were on their knees on the floor with a large bound newspaper file busily making extracts." Certainly the search for knowledge seemed to be conducted along unorthodox lines.

The party which clamoured for support from the rates quoted the instance of a reader of the Library books who had won in weekly competitions a gold medal, a silver medal, six pianos, two American organs, and over £75 in cash.

The opposition promptly replied that the Town Council could not be expected to lend its support to gambling projects.

The battle was long and bitter, but the liberally-minded carried the day.

The present premises were opened by Lord Rosebery in 1911. There are four hundred thousand books in the reference rooms, and the number is being continually added to.

Among the four hundred thousand there are many rare volumes, particularly in the Jeffrey Collection, which has a big room to itself.