

May 22nd, 1908.

Mr. H. G. Stott,
No. 600 West 59th Street,
New York City.

3168

My dear Mr. Stott:

I enclose herewith copies of the following letters bearing upon the library question:

Letter of Edward Caldwell, May 15, 1908,

Letter of Edward Caldwell, March 26, 1908,

Letter of Edward Caldwell to Miss Hammett, March 26, 1908, together with copy of Miss Hammett's reply to same, dated March 27, 1908,

Miss Hammett's explanation (original), dated May 19, 1908, in response to my oral request.

I have examined the rather voluminous correspondence between Miss Hammett and Mr. Caldwell, bearing upon various library matters, but find in it very little that will aid you in reaching a decision. It appears to me that we have been undertaking to cover too much ground with our limited force. The librarian, with her assistant, is, and should be, fully occupied in keeping current work up to date, which adds to the value of the library from an engineering standpoint. The assorting of old trade ~~catalogues~~ and completing files of periodicals which are in some cases obsolete, while important from the biblio-

files view-point, and of historical apparently, interferes with current work. I do not feel that we can reasonably expect a librarian to meet all the requirements of a technical historian and collector. It is my impression that this is more properly a special division of the work, and it is for us to decide whether the Institute should incur the expense of continuing it. The criticism of our former librarian, Miss Bragg, seemed to be based largely upon the fact that she did not carry on the work of the bibliography in addition to the ordinary duties of a librarian. It will be remembered that she had no assistant, and that two years have elapsed since her displacement, during which time the work of the bibliography has been taken up by specialists, which is an indication that the task is beyond the capacity of an ordinary librarian. It seems to me that the trouble about the inventory may have arisen from a similar cause, and that Miss Hammett has considered the library "paramount", while Mr. Caldwell has aimed to perfect the "collection." I have felt that this library work required that special knowledge of the subject which is the chief function of the Library Committee, and therefore, until recently, have not given the matter much thought, if any, as you are aware that other more important matters which it was necessary for me to decide, claimed my attention. When the library was more closely associated with the other Institute work it was my experience that

the almost universal demand was for current engineering literature. For this reason I am inclined to agree with Miss Hammett that special assistants be engaged to bring the work up to date. Unless this be done, any change in librarians might be simply a make-shift. Proper attention to visitors prevents that persistent work that is necessary to produce good results in properly classifying and arranging miscellaneous material, which needs technical knowledge, for the reason, as it appears to me, that almost every pamphlet requires special treatment. It is not unusual for antiquated matter to be referred to as "junk", but so long as it is properly treated, I do not think that mere casual slang should be considered seriously. It also appears from the correspondence that errors have been made in the classification of literature, which in some cases may have been due to ignorance, and in others to carelessness. In talking over this matter with Mr. Hutchinson, he stated his opinion that it would be a very simple matter to prepare a suitable form with instructions showing the different steps to be taken upon the receipt of a book in the library, which might be made in duplicate and checked off by another person and thus obviate any errors.

In my relations with the library during the past few years I have felt that so much stress was being laid

upon the general bibliography that the library, in its bearing upon the engineering practice of the day, was being to a certain extent neglected. There are probably other matters in connection with this subject which it will be best for us to discuss personally.

Yours truly,

Secretary.