

THE GEDDES SEMINAR ROOM

by

SAMUEL MONTEFIORE WAXMAN

Professor of Romance Languages

BOSTON UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

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The Geddes Seminar Room

On December 10, 1937, the Geddes Seminar Room was formally opened. After a brief dedication ceremony, tea was served in the Fine Arts room through the courtesy of Professor Bailey. Boston University professors and those from near-by institutions, high school teachers, students of Professor Geddes, past and present, classmates of Harvard College 1880, all came to do him honor. Believing that "the gift without the giver is bare", Professor Geddes graced with his presence the dedication of the room which will eventually house his entire library and which already contains several thousand volumes. There he stood, a part of the audience, still hale and hearty, although close to four score years young, fifty of which have been spent in the service of the College of Liberal Arts of Boston University.

Through the kind offices of Dean LeSourd of the Graduate School, a special room, 509 of the Soden Building, was allocated to house Professor Geddes' library. Adjoining this room is a Phonetics Laboratory which is now in process of equipment through the

generosity of Professor Geddes. Adjoining the laboratory is the office of Professor Merlino who will act as curator of the Geddes Seminar Room and who has installed there an excellent library of Italian books which will be at the disposal of our students. The trustees have equipped these rooms with shelves and Professor Geddes has contributed funds for rugs, hangings, tables and chairs. Now Boston University has a beautiful suite of rooms which will serve as a study and laboratory as well as class room.

Little Priscilla Washburn, daughter of Professor

Washburn, unveiled a bronze portrait executed by Bashka Paeff, one of our foremost American sculptors, who graciously came from New York to her native Boston for the ceremony. This beautiful plaque was presented to the University by colleagues, students, and friends of Professor Geddes in order that we might have a likeness in enduring bronze of our generous benefactor. Professor Waxman acted as spokesman for the contributors and President Marsh, flanked by Deans LeSourd and Taylor, accepted the

gift in the name of the University. In a few felicitous phrases he expressed our deep love for Professor Geddes and our pride in his honors and achievements. He promised that the University would cherish the books of Professor Geddes and the bronze plaque as its most precious possessions.

At one end of the Geddes Seminar Room hangs his portrait, at the other end will be placed in a special case his own works which will form the nucleus of this Romance Language Library, books, articles, addresses, reviews, over one hundred and

fifty printed items, and judging from Professor Geddes' continued activity, we may expect more to come.

The library of Professor Geddes, as might be divined from its size, is without a doubt one of the finest collections of Romance language books in the United States. Its value cannot be determined in terms of dollars and cents. Complete files of journals like *Romania*, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, *Modern Language Notes* cannot be bought in the market today. The English and

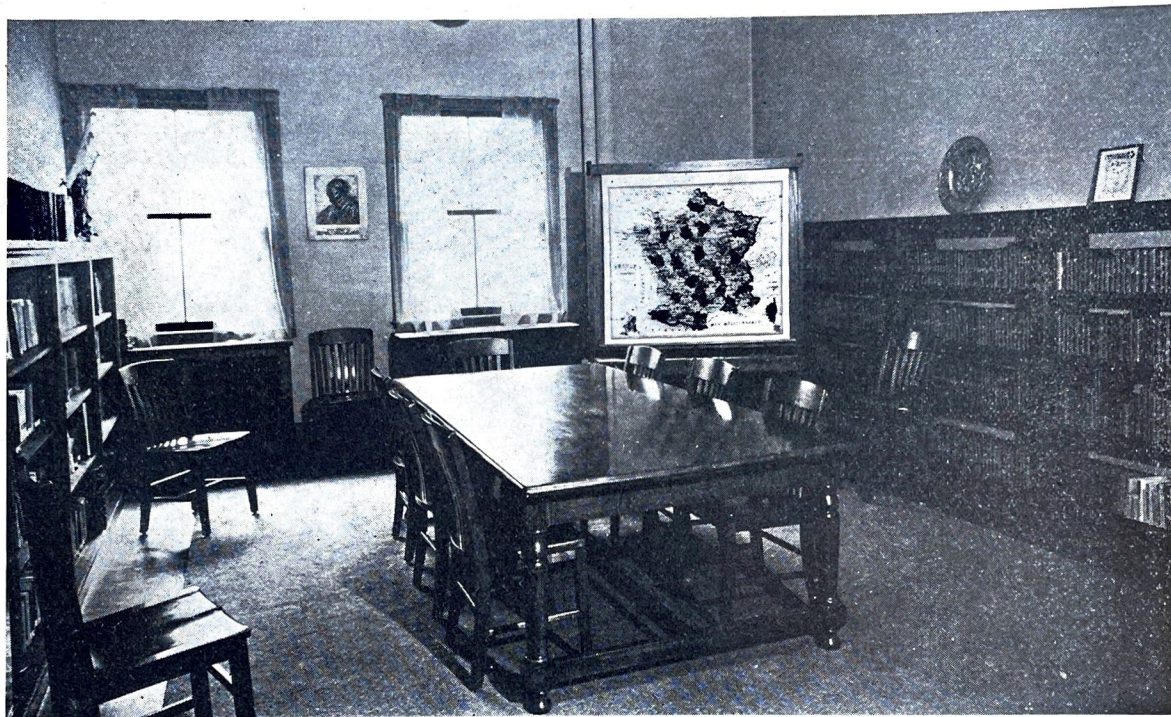


Bashka Paeff

history departments among others will receive books which have no place in a specialized library of Romance Language books such as this will be. The School of Education now owns, thanks to the generosity of Professor Geddes, a complete set of the *Educational Review* in seventy-two bound volumes.

Professor Geddes modestly stated when asked to tell the story of his library that "it is of a heterogeneous character composed of books in foreign languages, largely works of reference, dictionaries, learned journals and encyclopedias . . . My library seems to divide itself into seven sections, French,

enduring fame will come from his studies in that branch of French. For many years Professor Geddes continued his researches in Canadian French and contributed for a dozen years or more to the *Kritischer Jahresbericht über die Fortschritte der Romanischen Philologie* edited by Karl Volmüller. He tells us that "during the World War, one of my contributions, comprising more than a hundred large octavo pages, was on a vessel which had the misfortune to be *spurlos versenkt* by a German submarine." The library is especially rich in this specialized field, containing a large number of dialect dic-



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Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Canadian French, Phonetics, and English . . . It is richest and more varied in French. A library can hardly fail to reflect the character, taste, and interest of the amateur student or teacher who has collected it. So it is with my library. The numerous books of reference point distinctly to a type of research worker rather than to the man of letters." The Romance Language books which naturally make up the bulk of the library will form a permanent separate collection as a part of the library of the College of Liberal Arts. It will be administered by the department of Romance Languages for the use of advanced students in the College of Liberal Arts and the Graduate School.

Because of Professor Geddes' researches in old French occasioned by the preparation of his masterly translation into modern French of the *Song of Roland*, the library is especially rich in philological works and journals which will add precious material for students of old French. In the field of Canadian French in which he wrote his doctoral dissertation, Professor Geddes is an authority and perhaps his most

tionaries, particularly of those provinces of France which during the 17th century furnished the inhabitants that colonized French Canada . . . "With a view to ascertaining what the 'parler populaire' or spoken idiom, really is, I spent several years in the different places in the provinces of Quebec, and in Cape Breton Island comparing Canadian and Acadian French . . . The outcome was finally that I discovered what seemed to me worth while and which to the best of my knowledge had not before been proven, that is that the popular speech throughout French Canada is simply that which had been imported during the seventeenth century by the inhabitants who came over from the various French provinces." Last summer there took place in Quebec the *Deuxième Congrès de la Langue Française au Canada* whose sessions Professor Geddes attended and where he was given a most cordial ovation.

His collection of modern French as well as of Italian and Spanish books takes on a more literary aspect. Occasionally there will be found an autographed presentation copy of some famous production upon which

an editor or commentator has bestowed years of arduous research. Among his proudest possessions Professor Geddes cites books written by his former students which are given a place of honor in his library. A rather unusual section is that devoted to the Portuguese language and literature. "My library in that field shows a serious attempt to bring together the best books available. Portuguese has been taught in the College of Liberal Arts since 1895 whenever there was a call for it, that is perhaps every two or three years."

One of the most valuable sections in Professor Geddes' library is that devoted to phonetics in which study Professor Geddes is again an American authority. In the compilation of his book on *French pronunciation*, and in the many studies he has made in the field of general phonetics, he has found it necessary to procure many books not only on the pronunciation of Romance languages but on English and German as well. Hence the interest of Professor Geddes in this young science which before him Alexander Graham Bell added lustre to the name of Boston University, and in which his pupil and later colleague Freeman M. Josselyn, an outstanding scholar in phonetics, wrote two pioneer books, one on Italian and the other on Spanish pronunciation.

Having served for many years on the Committee of Instruction in the Romance Language Department and on the Committee on Research in Humanities, both of Harvard University, he has an abundance of records, reports, and catalogues pertaining to his alma mater. But of greater general interest are complete sets of the works of his classmates Theodore Roosevelt, Albert Bushnell Hart, as well as of the lesser known Charles G. Washburn, Arthur W. H. Easton and William A. Pew, Jr. This holds true also of Boston University. Yearbooks, Bostonias, Hubs, Reports of Presidents and Deans are found in complete sets as well as works of his colleagues, Buck, Lindsay,

Perrin, Black, Sharp, Josselyn and Newell. Professor Geddes' loyalties have been in the same noble proportions as his generosity.

As Professor Geddes says, his library reveals the character of its owner, "that of a specialist in modern languages approaching the type of the closet scholar where works on the sciences, mathematics, philosophy and music are almost entirely lacking. There are no Elzevirs, no rare editions continually sought by book-lovers, for primarily the purpose of my library has been for research." There are however three sections of Professor Geddes' Library which reveal the man and not the research scholar, books on dogs, finance, and health. For many years Professor Geddes' walking companion was a handsome shepherd dog named Bobbie, and Bobbie's race is well represented in the library. On health and hygiene he has quite a large collection, one of which I must mention, *How to be useful and happy from sixty to ninety*. Has Professor Geddes learned this lesson from life or from books? Certainly I know of no one who is a more noble example of how to grow old usefully and happily.

"My books", concludes Professor Geddes, "have become my friends. If I leave a three dollar umbrella on the bus and it rains, I simply buy another umbrella for a dollar and the incident is closed. If on the other hand, I leave there my copy of one of the *Exemplary Novels* of Cervantes, my feeling is like that of the loss of a friend who is dear to me. When told often times by people 'who know' that it behooves me to have a hobby, it seems to me, possibly, that while they may be right in supposing that I have none, yet the treasure of this friendly association with books comes very nigh unto what is apt to be called a hobby." And because Professor Geddes had this hobby we have a valuable Romance Language Library housed in the beautiful, spacious Geddes Seminar Room.

—SAMUEL M. WAXMAN