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HANDBOOK

TO

THE LIBRARY

OF THE

BRITISH MUSEUM:

CONTAINING

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ITS FORMATION, AND OF THE VARIOUS COLLECTIONS OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED;
DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CATALOGUES IN PRESENT USE;
CLASSED LISTS OF THE MANUSCRIPTS, ETC. ;
AND A VARIETY OF INFORMATION INDISPENSABLE FOR THE "READERS" AT THAT INSTITUTION.

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF

THE PRINCIPAL LIBRARIES IN LONDON.

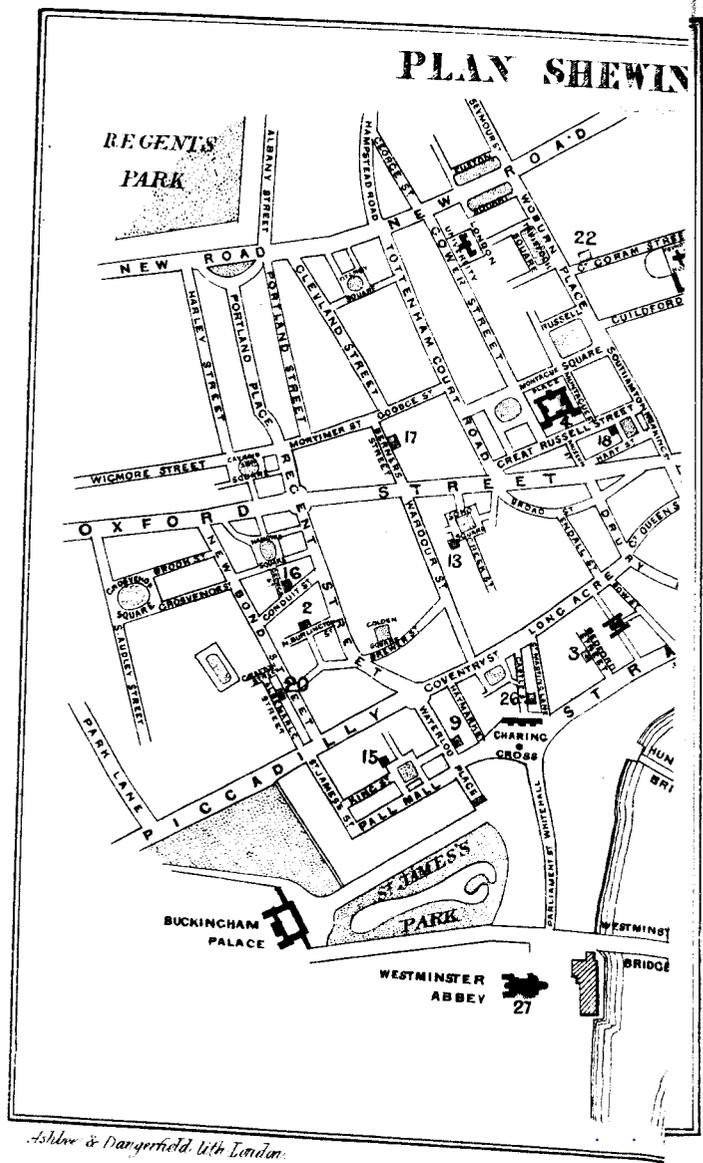
By RICHARD SIMS,

OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MANUSCRIPTS;
Compiler of the "Index to the Heralds' Visitations."

LONDON:

JOHN RUSSELL SMITH, 36, SOHO SQUARE.

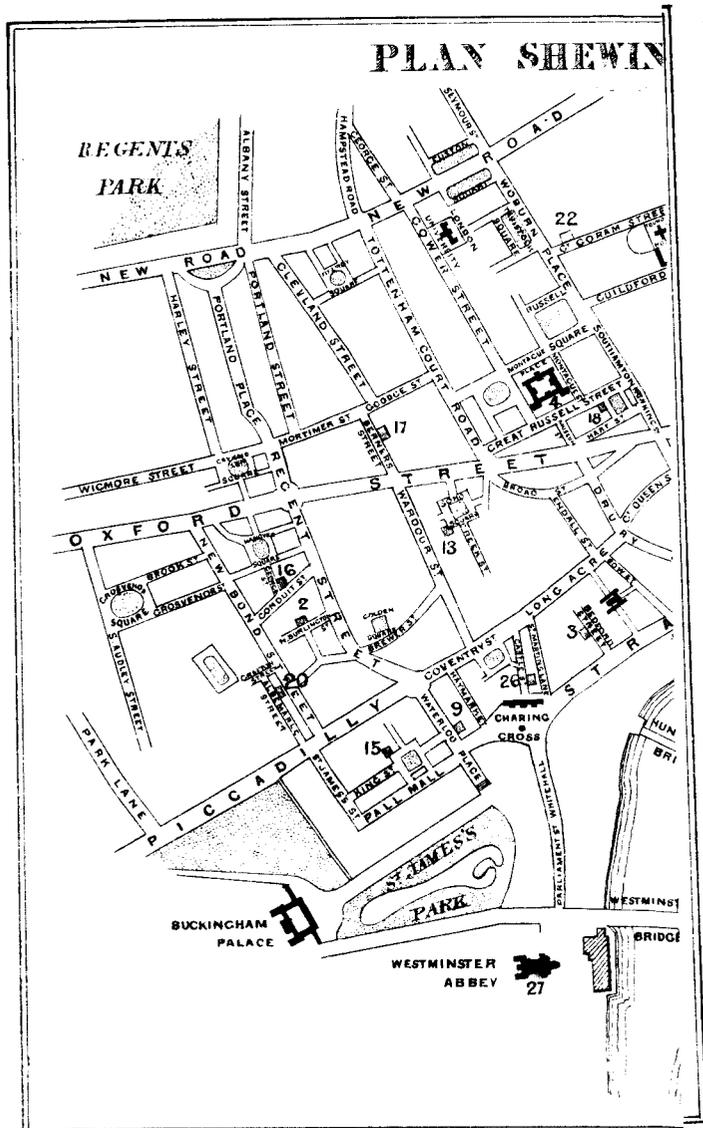
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P R E F A C E.

THE increasing importance of the British Museum, more especially of that portion of it which is devoted to the study of Literature, combined with the great misunderstanding which daily appeared to prevail in the public mind, with respect to the Catalogues and Collections, formed the principal reasons for attempting the present publication.

A further and powerful inducement presented itself in the fact, that the ground upon which the Writer was about to venture was unoccupied, and that, in consequence, his humble attempt to administer to the public need, would not be likely to suffer by comparison with anything that had preceded it. For although the wants of the countless visitors to the more public parts of the Institution, have been well provided for in the very excellent "Synopsis," published by order of the Trustees, and in Mr. Vaux's popular and profusely illustrated

“Hand-Book to the Antiquities;”* as well as in Mr. Jerrold’s instructive work,† and a score of minor publications; no book of a similar description to the present, has yet been produced for the guidance of the frequenters of the “Reading Rooms.”

Two of the greatest difficulties which appear to beset the *literary* student at this Institution are, first, the want of knowing the number and contents of the Catalogues placed for his use,—and secondly, to which of these he can turn, with the best chance of finding the information he seeks; and this more particularly applies to the Manuscript Collections, which are very numerous, with a separate Catalogue to each.

The Author does not presume to assert, that the “Reader” will find *all* the assistance he may require within the pages of this book, nevertheless, he ventures to hope, that some good may result from his endeavours to supply, what to him has long appeared to be, a needful publication.

Nor is there anything absolutely *new* in the information here presented to the public, the whole of the facts having been for some time before them, in the form of

* “Hand-Book to the Antiquities in the British Museum,” &c. By W. S. W. Vaux, M.A., of the Department of Antiquities. Lond. 1851. 12mo.—2d. ed. 1853.

† “How to See the British Museum in Four Visits.” By W. Blanchard Jerrold. Lond. 1852. 12mo.

“Annual” and “Commissioners’ Reports,” “Prefaces” to the Catalogues, &c., and in other works of a like nature. A little industry, combined with some knowledge of a “Reader’s” requirements, has sufficed for the collection of much useful matter, and to mould it into a more tangible form than that presented by Blue-Books and ponderous Catalogues.

With the efficiency or non-efficiency of the existing Catalogues the author does not presume to interfere; he feels however assured, that a more intimate acquaintance with the number and contents of those placed for the students’ use, will greatly tend to diminish the errors into which they continually fall respecting them.

The chief object of the work being to aid the “Readers” in the economy of their time, great attention has been bestowed upon the Classed Lists of the Manuscript Collections; and a Catalogue of such Books of Reference as are indispensable to Students,—copies of the greater part of which will be found in the “Reading Room”—is added at the end of the volume.

In furtherance of this object, and to render the “Hand-Book” more complete, an “Appendix,” containing brief notices of some of the more important Public Libraries of London, has been deemed an appropriate conclusion to the work.

The Author’s sincere thanks are due to those Gentle-
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men who have so kindly assisted him with information and advice during the progress of the Work,—more especially to those, to whose custody the valuable Libraries just referred to are confided, for the very kind manner in which they have replied to his numerous queries.

11, GRAFTON STREET EAST,
LONDON UNIVERSITY,
1st November, 1853.

A LIST

OF

THE PRESENT TRUSTEES, AND PRINCIPAL
OFFICERS OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

TRUSTEE APPOINTED BY HER MAJESTY.

(Vacant.)

OFFICIAL TRUSTEES.

The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.
The Lord High Chancellor.
The Speaker of the House of Commons.
The Lord President of the Council.
The First Lord of the Treasury.
The Lord Privy Seal.
The First Lord of the Admiralty.
The Lord Steward.
The Lord Chamberlain.
The Secretary of State, Home Department.
The Secretary of State, Foreign Department.
The Secretary of State, Colonial Department.
The Lord Bishop of London.
The Chancellor of the Exchequer.
The Lord Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench.