

**The Project Gutenberg eBook of A Classification and Subject Index for Cataloguing and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets of a Library, by Melvil Dewey**

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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A CLASSIFICATION AND SUBJECT INDEX FOR CATALOGUING AND ARRANGING THE BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS OF A LIBRARY \*\*\*

## **DEWEY DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION**

**CENTENNIAL 1876-1976**

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**A  
CLASSIFICATION  
AND**

**SUBJECT INDEX  
FOR  
CATALOGUING AND ARRANGING  
THE  
BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS  
OF A  
LIBRARY.**

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**AMHERST, MASS.  
1876.**

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1876  
MELVIL DEWEY**

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**CONTENTS**

**PREFACE  
CLASSES  
DIVISIONS  
SUBJECT INDEX  
EXPLANATIONS  
SUBJECT CATALOGUE**

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**PREFACE**

The plan of the following Classification and Index was developed early in 1873. It was the result of several months' study of library economy as found in some hundreds of books and pamphlets, and in over fifty personal visits to various American libraries. In this study, the author became convinced that the usefulness of these libraries might be greatly increased without additional expenditure. Three years practical use of the system here explained, leads him to believe that it will accomplish this result; for with its aid, the catalogues, shelf lists, indexes, and cross-references essential to this increased usefulness, can be made more economically than by any other method which he has been able to find. The system was devised for cataloguing and indexing purposes, but it was found on trial to be equally valuable for numbering and arranging books and pamphlets on the shelves.

The library is first divided into nine special libraries which are called Classes. These Classes are Philosophy, Theology, &c., and are numbered with the nine digits. Thus Class 9 is the Library of History; Class 7, the Library of Fine Art; Class 2, the Library of Theology. These special libraries or Classes are then considered independently, and each one is separated again into nine special Divisions of the main subject. These Divisions are numbered from 1 to 9 as were the Classes. Thus 59 is the 9th Division (Zoology) of the 5th Class (Natural Science). A final division is then made by separating each of these Divisions into nine Sections which are numbered in the same way, with the nine digits. Thus 513 is the 3d Section (Geometry) of the 1st Division (Mathematics) of the 5th Class (Natural Science). This number, giving Class, Division, and Section, is called the Classification or Class Number, and is applied to every book or pamphlet belonging to the library. All the Geometries are thus numbered 513, all the Mineralogies 549, and so throughout the library, all the books on any given subject bear the number of that subject in the scheme. Where a 0 occurs in a class number, it has its normal zero power. Thus, a book numbered 510, is Class 5, Division 1, but *no* Section. This signifies that the book treats of the Division 51 (Mathematics) in general, and is not limited to any one Section, as is the Geometry, marked 513. If marked 500, it would indicate a treatise on Science in general, limited to *no* Division. A zero occurring in the first place would in the same way show that the book is limited to *no* Class. The classification is mainly made by subjects or content regardless of *form*; but it is found practically useful to make an additional distinction in these general treatises, according to the form of treatment adopted. Thus, in Science we have a large number of books treating of Science in general, and so having a 0 for the Division number. These books are then divided into Sections, as are those of the other Classes according to the form they have taken on. We have the Philosophy and History of Science, Scientific Compendes, Dictionaries, Essays, Periodicals, Societies, Education, and Travels,—all having the common subject, **NATURAL SCIENCE**, but treating it in these varied forms. These form distinctions are introduced here because the number of general works is large, and the numerals allow of this division, without extra labor for the numbers from 501 to 509 would otherwise be unused. They apply *only* to the general treatises, which, without them, would have a class number ending with two zeros. A Dictionary of Mathematics is 510, not 503, for every book is assigned to the *most specific head that will contain it*, so that 503 is limited to Dictionaries or Cyclopedias of Science *in general*. In the same way a General Cyclopaedia or Periodical treats of no one class, and so is assigned to the Class 0. These books treating of no special class, but general in their character, are divided into Cyclopedias, Periodicals, etc. No difficulty is found in following the arithmetical law and omitting the initial zero, so these numbers are printed 31, 32, etc., instead of 031, 032, etc.

The selection and arrangement of the thousand headings of the classification cannot be explained in detail for want of space. In all the work, philosophical theory and accuracy have been made to yield to practical usefulness. The impossibility of making a satisfactory classification of all knowledge as preserved in books, has been appreciated from the first, and nothing of the kind attempted. Theoretical harmony and exactness has been repeatedly sacrificed to the practical requirements of the library or to the convenience of the department in the college. As in every scheme, many minor subjects have been put under general heads to which they do not strictly belong. In some cases these headings have been printed in a distinctive type, e. g., 429 **Anglo-Saxon**, under **ENGLISH PHILOLOGY**. The rule has been to assign these subjects to the most nearly allied heads, or where it was thought they would be most useful. The only alternative was to omit them altogether. If any such omission occurs, it is unintentional and will be supplied as soon as discovered. Wherever practicable the heads have been so arranged that each subject is preceded and followed by the most nearly allied subjects and thus the greatest convenience is secured both in the catalogues and on the shelves. Theoretically, the division of every subject into just nine heads is absurd. Practically, it is desirable that the classification be as minute as possible without the use of additional figures, and the decimal principle on which our scheme hinges allows nine divisions as readily as a less number. This principle has proved wholly satisfactory in practice though it appears to destroy proper co-ordination in some places. It has seemed best in our library to use uniformly three figures in the class number. This enables us to classify certain subjects very minutely, giving, for example, an entire section to Chess. But the History of England has only one section, as our scheme is developed, and thus the two might be said to be co-ordinated. The apparent difficulty in such cases is entirely obviated by the use of a fourth figure, giving nine sub-sections to any subject of sufficient importance to warrant closer classification. In history where the classification is made wholly by countries, a fourth figure is added to give a division into *periods*. As the addition of each figure gives a ten-fold division, any desired degree of minuteness may be secured in the classing of special subjects. The apparent lack of co-ordination arises from the fact that only the first three figures of these more important heads are as yet printed, the fourth figure and the sub-sections being supplied on the catalogues in manuscript. Should the growth of any of these sub-sections warrant it, a fifth figure will be added, for the scheme admits of expansion without limit.

The arrangement of headings has been sometimes modified to secure a mnemonic aid in numbering and finding books without the Index. For instance, the scheme is so

arranged that China has always the number 1. In Ancient History, it has the first section, 931: in Modern History, under Asia, it has 951: in Philology, the Chinese language appears as 491. After the same manner the Indian number is 2; Egyptian, 4; English, 2; German, 3; French, 4; Italian, 5; Spanish, 6; European, 4; Asian, 5; African, 6; North American, 7; South American, 8; and so for all the divisions by languages or countries. The Italian 5, for instance, will be noticed in 35, 55, 450, 755, 850, and 945. This mnemonic principle is specially prominent in Philology and Literature and their divisions, and in the *form* distinctions used in the first 9 sections of each class. Materials, Methods, or Theory occurring anywhere as a head, bears always the number 1. Dictionaries and Cyclopedias, 3; Essays, 4; Periodicals, 5; Associations, Institutions, and Societies, 6; Education, 7; Collections, 9. In the numerous cases where several minor heads have been grouped together under the head Other, it always bears the number 9. Wherever practicable, this principle is carried out in sub-dividing the sections. For instance, the Geology of North America, which bears the number 557 is sub-divided by adding the *sections* of 970 (History of North America). The Geology of Mexico then bears the number 5578: mnemonically, the first 5 is the Science number; the second 5, Geology; the 7, North America; and the 8, Mexico. Any library attendant or reader after using the scheme a short time will recognize at a glance, any catalogue or ledger entry, book or pamphlet, marked 5578 as something on the Geology of Mexico. Users of the scheme will notice this mnemonic principle in several hundred places in the classification, and will find it of great practical utility in numbering and finding books without the aid of Catalogue or Index, and in determining the character of any book simply from its call number as recorded on the book, on all its catalogue and cross reference cards, on the ledger, and in the check box.

In naming the headings, brevity has been secured in many cases at the sacrifice of exactness. It was thought more important to have short, familiar titles for the headings than that the names given should express with fullness and exactness the character of all books catalogued under them. Many subjects, apparently omitted, will be found in the Index, assigned, with allied subjects, to a heading which bears the name of the most important only. Reference to this Subject Index will decide at once any doubtful points.

In arranging books in the classification, as in filling out the scheme, practical usefulness has been esteemed the most important thing. The effort has been to put each book under the subject to which it would be most useful. The content or the real subject of which a book treats, and not the form or the accidental wording of the title, determines its place. Following this rule, a Philosophy of Art is put with Art, not with Philosophy; a History of Mathematics, with Mathematics, not with History; for the philosophy and history are simply the *form* which these books have taken. The true content or subject is Art, and Mathematics, and to the student of these subjects they are most useful. The predominant tendency or obvious purpose of the book, usually decides its class number at once; still many books treat of two or more different subjects, and in such cases it is assigned to the place where it will be most useful, and underneath the class number are written the numbers of any other subjects on which it also treats. These *Cross References* are given both on the plate and the subject card as well as on the cross reference card. If a book treats of a majority of the sections of any division, it is given the Division number instead of the most important Section number with cross references.

Collected works, libraries, etc., are either kept together and assigned like individual books to the most specific head that will contain them; or assigned to the most prominent of the various subjects on which they treat with cross references from the others; or are separated and the parts classed as independent works. Translations are classed with their originals.

The Alphabetical Subject Index is designed to guide, both in numbering and in finding the books. In numbering, the most specific head that will contain the book having been determined, reference to that head in the Index will give the class number to which it should be assigned. In finding books on any given subject, reference to the Index will give the number under which they are to be sought on the shelves, in the Shelf Catalogue, or in the Subject Catalogue. The Index gives after each subject the number of the class to which it is assigned. Most names of countries, towns, animals, plants, minerals, diseases, &c, have been omitted, the aim being to furnish an Index of Subjects on which books are written, and not a Gazetteer or a Dictionary of all the nouns in the language. Such subjects will be found as special chapters or sections of books on the subjects given in the Index. The names of individual subjects of biographies will be found in the Class List of Biography. Omissions of any of the more general subjects will be supplied when brought to notice.

In arranging the books on the shelves, the absolute location by shelf and book number is wholly abandoned, the relative location by class and book number being one of the most valuable features of the plan. The class number serves also as the location number and the shelf number in common use is entirely dispensed with. Accompanying the class number is the *book* number, which prevents confusion of different books on the same subject. Thus the first Geometry catalogued is marked 513-1; the second 513-2,

and so on to any extent, the last number showing how many books the library has on that subject. The books of each section are all together, and arranged by book numbers, and these sections are also arranged in simple numerical order throughout the library. The call number 513-11 signifies not the 11th book on shelf 513; or alcove 5, range 1, shelf 3, as in most libraries, but signifies the 11th book in subject 513 or the 11th Geometry belonging to the library. In finding the book, the printed numbers on the backs are followed, the upper being the class and the lower the book number. The class is found in its numerical order among the classes as the shelf is found in the ordinary system: the book in its numerical order in the class. The shelves are not numbered, as the increase of different departments, the opening of new rooms, and any arrangement of classes to bring the books most circulated nearest to the delivery desk, will bring different class numbers on a given shelf. New books as received are numbered and put into place, in the same way that new titles are added to the card catalogue.

The single digit occasionally prefixed to the book number, e.g. the 3 in 421-3-7 is the nearest height in decimeters of books too large to be put on the regular library shelves, which are only 2½ decimeters apart. The great mass of the library consists of 2-decimeter books, the size numbers of which are omitted. Books from 2½ to 3½ decimeters in height have 3 prefixed to the book number, and are found on the bottom shelf of each range. The larger sizes are prefixed with 4, 5, &c., and are found on the special shelves provided, in order to avoid the great waste of space otherwise occasioned by the relative location. By this use of the size numbers a close economy of space is secured.

Thus all the books on any given subject are found standing together, and no additions or changes ever separate them. Not only are all the books on the subject sought, found together, but the most nearly allied subjects precede and follow, they in turn being preceded and followed by other allied subjects as far as practicable. Readers not having access to the shelves find the short titles arranged in the same order on the Shelf Catalogue, and the full titles, imprints, cross references, notes, &c., on the Subject Catalogue. The uncatalogued pamphlets treating of any subject bear the same class number and are arranged on the shelves immediately after the books of each section.

In both the Authors' Catalogue and the Subject Index, brevity has been studied because of the economy, but more because of the much greater ease of reference to a short title catalogue. The custom of giving full titles, etc., under authors, and only references or very brief titles under subjects, has been reversed. A reader seeking a book of a *known author*, in the vast majority of cases, wants simply the number by which to call for it, and can find it much sooner in a brief title catalogue. In the rare cases where more is needed the class number refers instantly to all these facts on the cards. On the other hand, a reader seeking books on a *known subject*, needs the full title, imprint, cross-references, and notes, to enable him to choose the book best suited to his wants.

The Subject Catalogue is a full title Shelf List on cards and is for the use of the public. The Shelf List is a short title Subject Catalogue in book form, made of separate sheets laced into an Emerson binder, and is for official use. We thus have without extra labor, both full and short title Subject Catalogues and Shelf Lists. The public Authors' Catalogue is a printed volume; the official Authors' Catalogue or Index is on cards. As a result each of the public Catalogues is checked by an official Catalogue; each of the card Catalogues by a book Catalogue; each of the brief title catalogues by a full title catalogue--an advantage that will be appreciated by all librarians desiring accuracy of administration and catalogues.

The Arabic numerals can be written and found more quickly, and with less danger of confusion or mistake, than any other symbols whatever. Therefore the Roman numerals, capitals and small letters, and similar symbols usually found in systems of classification are entirely discarded and by the exclusive use of Arabic numerals in their regular order throughout the shelves, classifications, indexes, catalogues and records, there is secured the greatest accuracy, economy, and convenience. This advantage is specially prominent in comparison with systems where the name of the author or the title must be written in calling for or charging books and in making references.

Throughout the catalogues the number of a book shows not only *where* it is but *what* it is. On the library accounts the character of each person's reading is clearly indicated by the numbers charged, and the minutest statistics of circulation in any subject are made by simply counting the call slips in the check box, and recording the number against the class number in the record.

By the use of size numbers the greatest possible economy of space may be secured, for the size distinction may be made for every inch or even less if desired, and this without additional labor, as it will be seen that the size figure, when introduced, requires one less figure in the book number, and so does not increase the number of digits as would at first appear.

Parts of sets, and books on the same or allied subjects, are never separated as they are sure to be, sooner or later, in every library arranged on the common plan, unless it be

frequently re-arranged and re-catalogued. The great expense of this re-cataloguing makes it impracticable except for a few very wealthy libraries. In this system the catalogue and book numbers remain unchanged through all changes of shelving, buildings, or arrangement. In addition to its own peculiar merits, this plan has all the advantages of the card catalogue principle and of the relative location, which have been used and very strongly approved by prominent libraries.

As in the card catalogue system, there is room for indefinite expansion without devices or provisions. Space is the only requisite and if the shelf room is exhausted, the floor space is equally good, except for the inconvenience of stooping.

Some prominent opponents of classed catalogues have admitted that the Subject Index, in deciding where to class a book at first, and where to look for it ever afterwards, has removed their strongest objections. Certainly it would be impossible to make an Index more cheaply or more easy of reference, it being a single alphabet, of single words, followed by single numbers.

These class numbers applied to pamphlets have proved specially satisfactory. The number is written on the upper left corner and the pamphlets are arranged either in pamphlet cases with the books on the same subject or on special shelves divided every decimeter by perpendicular sections. As each pamphlet is examined when received into the library, it is the work of a single moment to pencil on it its class number. There is no expense whatever incurred, and yet the entire pamphlet resources of the library on any subject can be produced almost instantly. The immense advantages of this plan over those in common use, both in economy and usefulness, will be appreciated by every librarian caring for a pamphlet collection. A catalogue of authors may be made on slips if desired. The pamphlets themselves are the best Subject Catalogue.

Though designed wholly for library use, the plan has proved of great service in preserving newspaper clippings in large envelopes arranged by class numbers; and more especially in taking the place of the common note-book and Index Rerum. Slips of uniform size are used with the class number of the subject written on the corner. Minute alphabetical headings are used under each class number, the slips being arranged in numerical order like the Subject Card Catalogue. Clippings and notes arranged in this way are at all times their own complete index, and have the same advantages over the common scrap and note-books that the Subject Catalogue has over the Accessions Book, in looking up the resources of the library on any given subject. Those who have tried this method are so enthusiastic in its praise that it seemed worthy of mention in this place.

The plan was adopted in the Amherst College Library in 1873, and the work of transferring the entire library to the new catalogue at once commenced. It was found entirely practicable to make the change gradually, as means allowed, without interfering in any appreciable degree with the circulation of the books. The three years trial to which it has been there subjected has more than justified the claims of its friends, and it is now printed with the more confidence on this account. It has been kept in manuscript up to this time, in order that the many minor details might be subjected to actual trial and modified where improvement was possible. The labor involved in preparing the Classification and Index has been wholly beyond the appreciation of any who have never attempted a similar task. Much valuable aid has been rendered by specialists in many departments, and nearly every member of the Faculty has given advice from time to time. Among the many to whom thanks are due, special mention should be made of Mr. C.A. Cutter, the librarian of the Boston Athenæum, and Mr. John Fiske, of the Harvard University library, for valuable suggestions and appreciative criticism. While these friends are in no way responsible for any remaining imperfections in the scheme, they should have credit for many improvements which have been made during these three years of revision. The essential character of the plan has remained unchanged from the first. Doubtless other improvements are still possible, and it is hoped that users of the scheme will call attention to any proposed change in the naming or arrangement of the headings, or to any omission which should be supplied in the Subject Index.

Before printing, the plan was submitted to quite a number of librarians for criticism. Among the hundreds of points raised as to its practical workings and usefulness there was only one in which it was not shown to be equal or superior to any other system known. This objection applied only to the arrangement on the shelves; not at all to the catalogues or indexes. It was, that in this relative location, a book which this year stands, e.g., at the end of a certain shelf; may not be on that shelf at all another year, because of the uneven growth of the parts of the library. This slight objection inheres in any system where the books are arranged by *subjects* rather than by windows, doors, shelves, and similar non-intellectual distinctions.

In this hurriedly prepared account of his plan, the author has doubtless failed to meet many objections which may be raised and which he could easily answer. He would therefore ask the privilege of replying personally to any such objections, where they arise, believing that it will be possible to answer, if not all, at least a very large

proportion.

In his varied reading, correspondence, and conversation on the subject, the author doubtless received suggestions and gained ideas which it is now impossible for him to acknowledge. Perhaps the most fruitful source of ideas was the *Nuovo Sistema di Catalogo Bibliografico Generale* of Natale Battezzati, of Milan. Certainly he is indebted to this system adopted by the Italian publishers in 1871, though he has copied nothing from it. The plan of the St. Louis Public School Library, and that of the Apprentices' Library of New York, which in some respects resemble his own, were not seen till all the essential features were decided upon, though not given to the public. In filling the nine classes of the scheme the inverted Baconian arrangement of the St. Louis Library has been followed. The author has no desire to claim original invention for any part of his system where another has been before him, and would most gladly make specific acknowledgment of every aid and suggestion were it in his power to do so. With these general explanations and acknowledgments he submits the scheme, hoping it may prove as useful to others as it has to himself.

AMHERST COLLEGE LIBRARY,  
June 10th, 1876.

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Those interested will find fuller explanations and remarks in the Library volume now being printed by the Bureau of Education at Washington.

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## **CLASSES**

### **(GENERAL)**

### **PHILOSOPHY**

### **THEOLOGY**

### **SOCIOLOGY**

### **PHILOLOGY**

### **NATURAL SCIENCE**

### **USEFUL ARTS**

### **FINE ARTS**

### **LITERATURE**

### **HISTORY**

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## DIVISIONS

### **0 (General).**

- 10 BIBLIOGRAPHY.
- 20 BOOK RARITIES.
- 30 GENERAL CYCLOPEDIAS.
- 40 POLYGRAPHY.
- 50 GENERAL PERIODICALS.
- 60 GENERAL SOCIETIES.
- 70
- 80
- 90

### **100 Philosophy.**

- 110 METAPHYSICS.
- 120
- 130 ANTHROPOLOGY.
- 140 SCHOOLS OF PSYCHOLOGY.
- 150 MENTAL FACULTIES.
- 160 LOGIC.
- 170 ETHICS.
- 180 ANCIENT PHILOSOPHIES.
- 190 MODERN PHILOSOPHIES.

### **200 Theology.**

- 210 NATURAL THEOLOGY.
- 220 BIBLE.
- 230 DOCTRINAL THEOLOGY.
- 240 PRACTICAL AND DEVOTIONAL.
- 250 HOMILETICAL AND PASTORAL.
- 260 INSTITUTIONS AND MISSIONS.
- 270 ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.
- 280 CHRISTIAN SECTS.
- 290 NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS.

### **300 Sociology.**

- 310 STATISTICS.
- 320 POLITICAL SCIENCE.
- 330 POLITICAL ECONOMY.
- 340 LAW.
- 350 ADMINISTRATION.
- 360 ASSOCIATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS.
- 370 EDUCATION.
- 380 COMMERCE AND COMMUNICATION.
- 390 CUSTOMS AND COSTUMES.

### **400 Philology.**

- 410 COMPARATIVE.
- 420 ENGLISH.
- 430 GERMAN.
- 440 FRENCH.
- 450 ITALIAN.
- 460 SPANISH.
- 470 LATIN.
- 480 GREEK.
- 490 OTHER LANGUAGES.

### **500 Natural Science.**

- 510 MATHEMATICS.
- 520 ASTRONOMY.
- 530 PHYSICS.
- 540 CHEMISTRY.
- 550 GEOLOGY.
- 560 PALEONTOLOGY.
- 570 BIOLOGY.
- 580 BOTANY.
- 590 ZOOLOGY.

### **600 Useful Arts.**

- 610 MEDICINE.
- 620 ENGINEERING.
- 630 AGRICULTURE.
- 640 DOMESTIC ECONOMY.
- 650 COMMUNICATION AND COMMERCE.
- 660 CHEMICAL TECHNOLOGY.
- 670 MANUFACTURES.
- 680 MECHANIC TRADES.
- 690 BUILDING.

### **700 Fine Arts.**

- 710 LANDSCAPE GARDENING.
- 720 ARCHITECTURE.
- 730 SCULPTURE.
- 740 DRAWING AND DESIGN.
- 750 PAINTING.
- 760 ENGRAVING.
- 770 PHOTOGRAPHY.
- 780 MUSIC.
- 790 AMUSEMENTS.

### **800 Literature.**

- 810 TREATISES AND COLLECTIONS.
- 820 ENGLISH.
- 830 GERMAN.
- 840 FRENCH.
- 850 ITALIAN.
- 860 SPANISH.
- 870 LATIN.
- 880 GREEK.
- 890 OTHER LANGUAGES.

### **900 History.**

- 910 GEOGRAPHY AND DESCRIPTION.
  - 920 BIOGRAPHY.
  - 930 ANCIENT HISTORY.
  - 940 Modern EUROPE.
  - 950 Modern ASIA.
  - 960 Modern AFRICA.
  - 970 Modern NORTH AMERICA.
  - 980 Modern SOUTH AMERICA.
  - 990 Modern OCEANICA AND POLAR REGIONS.
-



**(GENERAL).**

<b>0</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>General Periodicals.</b>
1		51	American.
2		52	English.
3		53	German.
4		54	French.
5		55	Italian.
6		56	Spanish.
7		57	Slavic.
8		58	Scandinavian.
9		59	Other.
<b>10</b>	<b>Bibliography.</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>General Societies.</b>
11	General Bibliographies.	61	American.
12	Special Forms.	62	English.
13	<i>Manuscripts.</i>	63	German.
14	<i>Anonyms, Pseudonyms, &amp;c.</i>	64	French.
15	Special Countries.	65	Italian.
16	Special Subjects.	66	Spanish.
17	Subject Catalogues.	67	Slavic.
18	Authors' Catalogues.	68	Scandinavian.
19	Library Economy and Reports.	69	Other.
<b>20</b>	<b>Book Rarities.</b>	<b>70</b>	
21	Manuscripts.	71	
22	Block Books.	72	
23	Early Printed.	73	
24	Celebrated Printers.	74	
25	Celebrated Binders.	75	
26	Materials.	76	
27	Ownership.	77	
28	Prohibited.	78	
29	Other.	79	
<b>30</b>	<b>General Cyclopedias.</b>	<b>80</b>	
31	American.	81	
32	English.	82	
33	German.	83	
34	French.	84	
35	Italian.	85	
36	Spanish.	86	
37	Slavic.	87	
38	Scandinavian.	88	
39	Other.	89	
<b>40</b>	<b>Polygraphy.</b>	<b>90</b>	
41	American.	91	
42	English.	92	
43	German.	93	
44	French.	94	
45	Italian.	95	
46	Spanish.	96	
47	Slavic.	97	
48	Scandinavian.	98	
49	Other.	99	

**100 Philosophy.**

- 101
- 102 Compendis.
- 103 Dictionaries.
- 104 Essays.
- 105 Periodicals.
- 106 Societies.
- 107 Education.
- 108
- 109 History.

**110 Metaphysics.**

- 111 Ontology.
- 112 Methodology.
- 113 Cosmology.
- 114
- 115
- 116
- 117
- 118
- 119

**120**

- 121
- 122
- 123
- 124
- 125
- 126
- 127
- 128
- 129

**130 Anthropology.**

- 131 Mental physiology and hygiene.
- 132 Mental derangements.
- 133 Delusions, witchcraft, magic.
- 134 Mesmerism.
- 135 Sleep, dreams, somnambulism.
- 136 Sexes.
- 137 Temperaments.
- 138 Physiognomy.
- 139 Phrenology.

**140 Schools of Psychology.**

- 141 Idealistic.
- 142 Critical.
- 143 Intuitive.
- 144 Empirical.
- 145 Sensational.
- 146 Materialistic.
- 147 Pantheistic.
- 148 Eclectic.
- 149 Other.

**150 Mental Faculties.**

- 151 Intellect.
- 152 Sense.
- 153 Understanding.
- 154 Memory.
- 155 Reason.
- 156 Imagination.
- 157 Susceptibility.
- 158 Instincts.
- 159 Will.

**160 Logic.**

- 161 Inductive.
- 162 Deductive.
- 163 Assent.
- 164
- 165
- 166
- 167
- 168
- 169

**170 Ethics.**

- 171 Theoretical.
- 172 State.
- 173 Family.
- 174 Business.
- 175 Amusements.
- 176 Sexual.
- 177 Social.
- 178 Temperance.
- 179 Other.

**180 Ancient Philosophies.**

- 181 Oriental.
- 182 Early Greek.
- 183 Sophistic and Socratic.
- 184 Platonic.
- 185 Aristotelian.
- 186 Pyrrhonist and New Platonist.
- 187 Epicurean.
- 188 Stoic.
- 189 Patristic.

**190 Modern Philosophies.**

- 191 Scotch and American.
- 192 English.
- 193 German.
- 194 French.
- 195 Italian.
- 196 Spanish.
- 197 Arabian.
- 198 Scholastic.
- 199 Other.

**THEOLOGY****200 Theology.**

- 201 Philosophy.
- 202 Compendis.
- 203 Dictionaries.

**250 Homiletical and Pastoral.**

- 251 Homiletics.
- 252 Sermons.
- 253 *Doctrinal.*

- 204 Essays.  
 205 Periodicals.  
 206 Societies.  
 207 Education.  
 208  
 209 History.
- 210 Natural Theology.**  
 211 Theism and Atheism.  
 212 Pantheism.  
 213 Creation.  
 214 Providence.  
 215 Religion and science.  
 216 Evil.  
 217 Prayer.  
 218 Future Life.  
 219
- 220 Bible.**  
 221 Old Testament.  
 222 *Historical books.*  
 223 *Poetical books.*  
 224 *Prophetical books.*  
 225 New Testament.  
 226 *Gospels and Acts.*  
 227 *Epistles.*  
 228 *Apocalypse.*  
 229 Apocrypha.
- 230 Doctrinal.**  
 231 God.  
 232 Christ.  
 233 Man.  
 234 Salvation.  
 235 Angels.  
 236 Death and resurrection.  
 237 Future state.  
 238 Inspiration.  
 239 Apologetics.
- 240 Practical and Devotional.**  
 241 Didactic.  
 242 Meditative.  
 243 Hortatory.  
 244 Ritual.  
 245 Hymnology.  
 246 Public worship.  
 247 Social worship.  
 248 Private worship.  
 249 Religious fiction and anecdote.
- 254 *Practical.*  
 255 *Religion and Science.*  
 256 *Political.*  
 257 *Ordination.*  
 258 *Expository.*  
 259 *Commemorative.*
- 260 Institutions and missions.**  
 261 Church.  
 262 *Ecclesiastical polity.*  
 263 Sabbath.  
 264 Baptism.  
 265 Lord's Supper.  
 266 Missions.  
 267 *Foreign.*  
 268 Sunday schools.  
 269 Revivals.
- 270 Ecclesiastical History.**  
 271 Religious orders.  
 272 Persecutions.  
 273 Doctrines.  
 274 Europe.  
 275 Asia.  
 276 Africa.  
 277 North America.  
 278 South America.  
 279 Oceanica.
- 280 Christian Sects.**  
 281 Oriental.  
 282 Roman Catholic.  
 283 English and Protestant  
 Episcopal.  
 284 Presbyterian.  
 285 Congregational.  
 286 Baptist.  
 287 Methodist.  
 288 Unitarian and Universalist.  
 289 Other Christian sects.
- 290 Non-Christian Religions.**  
 291 Comparative mythology.  
 292 Greek and Roman mythology.  
 293 Norse mythology.  
 294 Brahmanism and Buddhism.  
 295 Parseeism.  
 296 Judaism.  
 297 Mohammedanism.  
 298 Mormonism.  
 299 Other.

---

## SOCIOLOGY.

- 300 Sociology.**  
 301 Philosophy.  
 302 Compendis.  
 303 Dictionaries.  
 304 Essays.  
 305 Periodicals.  
 306 Societies.  
 307  
 308
- 350 Administration.**  
 351 Civil Service.  
 352 *Treasury.*  
 353 *Interior.*  
 354 *Police.*  
 355 Army.  
 356 *Infantry.*  
 357 *Cavalry.*  
 358 *Artillery.*

- 309 History.
- 310 Statistics.**  
 311 Methods.  
 312 Progress of population.  
 313 Progress of civilization.  
 314 Europe.  
 315 Asia.  
 316 Africa.  
 317 North America.  
 318 South America.  
 319 Oceanica.
- 320 Political Science.**  
 321 Patriarchal Institutions.  
 322 Feudal Institutions.  
 323 Monarchic Institutions.  
 324 Republican Institutions.  
 325 Colonies and Emigration.  
 326 Slavery.  
 327 Foreign and Domestic relations.  
 328 Legislative annals.  
 329 Political essays and speeches.
- 330 Political Economy.**  
 331 Capital and labor.  
 332 Banks and money.  
 333 Stocks, rents, and income.  
 334 Credit and interest.  
 335 Communism.  
 336 Public funds and taxation.  
 337 Protection and free trade.  
 338 Production.  
 339 Pauperism.
- 340 Law.**  
 341 International.  
 342 Constitutional and administrative.  
 343 Statute and common.  
 344 Equity.  
 345 Criminal.  
 346 Maritime.  
 347 Martial.  
 348 Civil and Canon.  
 349 Evidence and Forms of practice.
- 359 Navy.
- 360 Associations and Institutions.**  
 361 Charitable.  
 362 Religious.  
 363 Political.  
 364 Reformatory and Sanitary.  
 365 Prisons.  
 366 Secret Societies.  
 367 Trades Unions.  
 368 Insurance.  
 369 Other.
- 370 Education.**  
 371 Teachers, methods, and discipline.  
 372 Elementary.  
 373 Higher.  
 374 Self-education.  
 375 Classical and real.  
 376 Female.  
 377 Religious and secular.  
 378 Schools and Colleges.  
 379 Reports.
- 380 Commerce, Communication.**  
 381 Domestic trade.  
 382 Foreign trade.  
 383 Post office.  
 384 Telegraph.  
 385 Railroad and express.  
 386 Canal transportation.  
 387 River and ocean transportation.  
 388 City transit.  
 389 Weights and measures.
- 390 Customs and Costumes.**  
 391 Ancient.  
 392 Medieval.  
 393 Modern.  
 394 *Europe.*  
 395 *Asia.*  
 396 *Africa.*  
 397 *North America.*  
 398 *South America.*  
 399 *Oceanica.*

---

## PHILOLOGY.

- 400 Philology.**  
 401 Philosophy.  
 402 Compendis.  
 403 Dictionaries.  
 404 Essays.  
 405 Periodicals.  
 406 Societies.  
 407 Education.  
 408 Universal Language.  
 409 History.
- 410 Comparative.**  
 411 Orthography.  
 412 Etymology.
- 450 Italian.**  
 451 Orthography.  
 452 Etymology.  
 453 Dictionaries.  
 454 Synonyms.  
 455 Grammar.  
 456 Prosody.  
 457 Dialects.  
 458 Texts.  
 459 Romansh and Wallachian.
- 460 Spanish.**  
 461 Orthography.  
 462 Etymology.

413 Dictionaries.  
414 Phonology.  
415 Grammar.  
416 Prosody.  
417 Inscriptions.  
418 Texts.  
419 Hieroglyphics.

**420 English.**

421 Orthography.  
422 Etymology.  
423 Dictionaries.  
424 Synonyms.  
425 Grammar.  
426 Prosody.  
427 Dialects.  
428 Texts.  
429 Anglo-Saxon.

**430 German.**

431 Orthography.  
432 Etymology.  
433 Dictionaries.  
434 Synonyms.  
435 Grammar.  
436 Prosody.  
437 Dialects.  
438 Texts.  
439 Dutch and Low German.

**440 French.**

441 Orthography.  
442 Etymology.  
443 Dictionaries.  
444 Synonyms.  
445 Grammar.  
446 Prosody.  
447 Dialects.  
448 Texts.  
449 Old French, Provençal.

463 Dictionaries.  
464 Synonyms.  
465 Grammar.  
466 Prosody.  
467 Dialects.  
468 Texts.  
469 Portuguese.

**470 Latin.**

471 Orthography.  
472 Etymology.  
473 Dictionaries.  
474 Synonyms.  
475 Grammar.  
476 Prosody.  
477 Dialects.  
478 Texts.  
479 Medieval Latin.

**480 Greek.**

481 Orthography.  
482 Etymology.  
483 Dictionaries.  
484 Synonyms.  
485 Grammar.  
486 Prosody.  
487 Dialects.  
488 Texts.  
489 Modern Greek.

**490 Other Languages.**

491 Chinese.  
492 Egyptian.  
493 Semitic.  
494 Indian.  
495 Iranian.  
496 Keltic.  
497 Slavic.  
498 Scandinavian.  
499 Other.

---

**NATURAL SCIENCE.**

**500 Natural Science.**

501 Philosophy.  
502 Compendis.  
503 Dictionaries.  
504 Essays.  
505 Periodicals.  
506 Societies.  
507 Education.  
508 Travels.  
509 History.

**510 Mathematics.**

511 Arithmetic.  
512 Algebra.  
513 Geometry.  
514 Trigonometry.  
515 Conic sections.  
516 Analytical geometry.  
517 Calculus.  
518 Quaternions.

**550 Geology.**

551 Physical Geography,  
Meteorology.  
552 Lithology.  
553 Dynamical geology.  
554 Europe.  
555 Asia.  
556 Africa.  
557 North America.  
558 South America.  
559 Oceanica.

**560 Paleontology.**

561 Plants.  
562 Invertebrates.  
563 *Protozoa and Radiates.*  
564 *Mollusca.*  
565 *Articulates.*  
566 Vertebrates.  
567 *Fishes.*

- 519 Probabilities.
- 520 Astronomy.**  
 521 Theoretical.  
 522 Practical.  
 523 Descriptive.  
 524 Maps.  
 525 Observations.  
 526 Figure of the earth.  
 527 Navigation.  
 528 Almanacs.  
 529 Chronology.
- 530 Physics.**  
 531 Mechanics.  
 532 Hydrostatics.  
 533 Pneumatics.  
 534 Acoustics.  
 535 Optics.  
 536 Heat.  
 537 Electricity.  
 538 Magnetism.  
 539 Molecular physics.
- 540 Chemistry.**  
 541 Theoretical.  
 542 Experimental.  
 543 Analysis.  
 544 *Qualitative.*  
 545 *Quantitative.*  
 546 Inorganic.  
 547 Organic.  
 548 Crystallography.  
 549 Mineralogy.
- 568 *Reptiles and Birds.*  
 569 *Mammals.*
- 570 Biology.**  
 571 Prehistoric Archæology.  
 572 Ethnology.  
 573 Natural History of Man.  
 574 Homologies.  
 575 Evolution.  
 576 Embryology.  
 577 Spontaneous generation.  
 578 Microscopy.  
 579 Collectors' Manuals.
- 580 Botany.**  
 581 Physiological.  
 582 Systematic.  
 583 Ornamental.  
 584 Europe.  
 585 Asia.  
 586 Africa.  
 587 North America.  
 588 South America.  
 589 Oceanica.
- 590 Zoology.**  
 591 Comparative Anatomy.  
 592 Invertebrates.  
 593 *Protozoa and Radiates.*  
 594 *Mollusca.*  
 595 *Articulates.*  
 596 Vertebrates.  
 597 *Fishes.*  
 598 *Reptiles and Birds.*  
 599 *Mammals.*

---

## USEFUL ARTS.

- 600 Useful Arts.**  
 601 Philosophy.  
 602 Compends.  
 603 Dictionaries.  
 604 Essays.  
 605 Periodicals.  
 606 Societies.  
 607 Education.  
 608 Patents.  
 609 History.
- 610 Medicine.**  
 611 Anatomy.  
 612 Physiology.  
 613 Hygiene.  
 614 Public health.  
 615 Materia medica and therapeutics.  
 616 Pathology, theory and practice.  
 617 Surgery and dentistry.  
 618 Obstetrics and sexual science.  
 619 Veterinary medicine.
- 620 Engineering.**  
 621 Mechanical.
- 650 Communication, Commerce.**  
 651 Writing.  
 652 *Penmanship.*  
 653 *Short hand.*  
 654 Telegraphy.  
 655 Printing.  
 656 Navigation and transportation.  
 657 Book-keeping.  
 658 Business manuals.  
 659 Other.
- 660 Chemical Technology.**  
 661 Chemicals.  
 662 Pyrotechnics.  
 663 Wines, liquors, and ales.  
 664 Sugar, salt, starch, etc.  
 665 Gas.  
 666 Glass.  
 667 Dyeing and bleaching.  
 668 Assaying.  
 669 Metallurgy.
- 670 Manufactures.**  
 671 Metals.  
 672 *Iron.*

622 Topographical.  
623 Military.  
624 Bridge.  
625 Road and railroad.  
626 Canal.  
627 Harbor.  
628 Hydraulic and mining.  
629 Instruments and field books.

**630 Agriculture.**

631 Soil and preparation.  
632 Pests and hindrances.  
633 Productions of the soil.  
634 Fruits.  
635 Garden.  
636 Domestic animals.  
637 Dairy.  
638 Bees and silkworm.  
639 Fishing, trapping.

**640 Domestic Economy.**

641 Cookery.  
642 Confectionery.  
643 Food and dining.  
644 Fuel and lights.  
645 Furniture.  
646 Clothing and toilet.  
647 Servants.  
648 Laundry.  
649 Nursery and sick-room.

673 Marble, stone, and brick.  
674 Wood.  
675 Leather and rubber.  
676 Paper.  
677 Textile fabrics.  
678 *Cotton.*  
679 Other.

**680 Mechanic Trades.**

681 Watch and instrument-making.  
682 Blacksmithing.  
683 Lock and gun-making.  
684 Carriage and cabinet-making.  
685 Saddlery and shoe-making.  
686 Book-binding.  
687 Clothes-making.  
688  
689 Other.

**690 Building.**

691 Materials.  
692 Plans and specifications.  
693 Masonry.  
694 Carpentry.  
695 Slating and tiling.  
696 Plumbing.  
697 Warming and ventilation.  
698 Painting, glazing, and paper-hanging.  
699 Car and Ship-building.

---

**FINE ARTS.**

**700 Fine Arts.**

701 Philosophy.  
702 Compendis.  
703 Dictionaries.  
704 Essays.  
705 Periodicals.  
706 Societies.  
707 Education.  
708 Galleries.  
709 History.

**710 Landscape Gardening.**

711 Parks.  
712 Private grounds.  
713 Walks and drives.  
714 Water.  
715 Trees and hedges.  
716 Plants and flowers.  
717 Arbors.  
718 Monuments.  
719 Cemeteries.

**720 Architecture.**

721 Architectural construction.  
722 Ancient and Oriental.  
723 Medieval.  
724 Modern.  
725 Public buildings.  
726 Church.  
727 School.

**750 Painting.**

751 Materials and methods.  
752 Color.  
753 Flemish and Dutch Schools.  
754 French.  
755 Italian.  
756 Other schools.  
757 Portrait.  
758 Landscape.  
759 Collections.

**760 Engraving.**

761 Wood.  
762 Steel and Copper.  
763 Lithography.  
764 Chromolithography.  
765 Line and Stipple.  
766 Mezzotint and Aquatint.  
767 Etching.  
768 Bank Note and Machine.  
769 Collections.

**770 Photography.**

771 Materials.  
772 Ambrotype and Daguerreotype.  
773 Photograph.  
774 Heliotype, Albortype, etc.  
775 Photolithography.  
776 Stereoscopic.  
777 Portrait.

728 Domestic and rural.  
729 Of special countries.

**730 Sculpture.**  
731 Materials and methods.  
732 Ancient.  
733 *Greek and Roman.*  
734 Medieval.  
735 Modern.  
736 Carving.  
737 Numismatics.  
738 Pottery and bronzes.  
739 Collections.

**740 Drawing and Design.**  
741 Free-hand.  
742 Perspective.  
743 Art anatomy.  
744 Mathematical drawing.  
745 Ornamental design.  
746 *Ancient.*  
747 *Medieval.*  
748 *Modern.*  
749 Collections.

778 Landscape.  
779 Collections.

**780 Music.**  
781 Theory.  
782 Dramatic.  
783 Church.  
784 Vocal.  
785 Instrumental.  
786 *Piano and Organ.*  
787 *Stringed instruments.*  
788 *Wind instruments.*  
789 Associations and institutions.

**790 Amusements.**  
791 Entertainments.  
792 *Theatre.*  
793 In-door amusements.  
794 *Chess.*  
795 *Other games.*  
796 Out-door sports.  
797 *Boating and ball.*  
798 *Horsemanship and racing.*  
799 *Fishing, hunting, shooting.*

---

## LITERATURE.

**800 Literature.**  
801 Philosophy.  
802 Compendis.  
803 Dictionaries.  
804 Essays.  
805 Periodicals.  
806 Societies.  
807  
808  
809 History.

**810 Treatises and Collections.**  
811 Poetry.  
812 Drama.  
813 Romance.  
814 Essays.  
815 Rhetoric and oratory.  
816 Letters.  
817 Satire.  
818 Humor.  
819 Miscellany.

**820 English Literature.**  
821 English Poetry.  
822 English Drama.  
823 English Romance.  
824 English Essays.  
825 English Oratory.  
826 English Letters.  
827 English Satire.  
828 English Humor.  
829 English Miscellany.

**830 German Literature.**  
831 German Poetry.  
832 German Drama.

**850 Italian Literature.**  
851 Italian Poetry.  
852 Italian Drama.  
853 Italian Romance.  
854 Italian Essays.  
855 Italian Oratory.  
856 Italian Letters.  
857 Italian Satire.  
858 Italian Humor.  
859 Italian Miscellany.

**860 Spanish Literature.**  
861 Spanish Poetry.  
862 Spanish Drama.  
863 Spanish Romance.  
864 Spanish Essays.  
865 Spanish Oratory.  
866 Spanish Letters.  
867 Spanish Satire.  
868 Spanish Humor.  
869 Spanish Miscellany.

**870 Latin Literature.**  
871 Latin Poetry.  
872 *Dramatic.*  
873 *Epic.*  
874 *Lyric.*  
875 Latin Oratory.  
876 Latin Letters.  
877 Latin Satire.  
878 Latin Philosophy.  
879 Latin History.

**880 Greek Literature.**  
881 Greek Poetry.  
882 *Dramatic.*



- |            |                           |            |                         |
|------------|---------------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| 833        | German Romance.           | 883        | <i>Epic.</i>            |
| 834        | German Essays.            | 884        | <i>Lyric.</i>           |
| 835        | German Oratory.           | 885        | Greek Oratory.          |
| 836        | German Letters.           | 886        | Greek Letters.          |
| 837        | German Satire.            | 887        | Greek Humor.            |
| 838        | German Humor.             | 888        | Greek Philosophy.       |
| 839        | German Miscellany.        | 889        | Greek History.          |
| <br>       |                           | <br>       |                         |
| <b>840</b> | <b>French Literature.</b> | <b>890</b> | <b>Other Languages.</b> |
| 841        | French Poetry.            | 891        | Chinese.                |
| 842        | French Drama.             | 892        | Egyptian.               |
| 843        | French Romance.           | 893        | Semitic.                |
| 844        | French Essays.            | 894        | Indian.                 |
| 845        | French Oratory.           | 895        | Iranian.                |
| 846        | French Letters.           | 896        | Keltic.                 |
| 847        | French Satire.            | 897        | Slavic.                 |
| 848        | French Humor.             | 898        | Scandinavian.           |
| 849        | French Miscellany.        | 899        | Other.                  |
- 

## HISTORY.

- |            |                                    |            |                                |
|------------|------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>900</b> | <b>History.</b>                    | <b>950</b> | <b>Asia.</b>                   |
| 901        | Philosophy.                        | 951        | China.                         |
| 902        | Compendis, chronology.             | 952        | Japan.                         |
| 903        | Dictionaries.                      | 953        | Arabia.                        |
| 904        | Essays.                            | 954        | India.                         |
| 905        | Periodicals.                       | 955        | Persia.                        |
| 906        | Societies.                         | 956        | Turkey in Asia.                |
| 907        | Education.                         | 957        | Siberia.                       |
| 908        | Charts.                            | 958        | Afghanistan.                   |
| 909        | Universal Histories.               | 959        | Other.                         |
| <br>       |                                    | <br>       |                                |
| <b>910</b> | <b>Geography and Description.</b>  | <b>960</b> | <b>Africa.</b>                 |
| 911        | Historical.                        | 961        | North Africa.                  |
| 912        | Ancient.                           | 962        | <i>Egypt and Nubia.</i>        |
| 913        | Modern.                            | 963        | <i>Abyssinia.</i>              |
| 914        | <i>Europe.</i>                     | 964        | <i>Morocco.</i>                |
| 915        | <i>Asia.</i>                       | 965        | <i>Algeria.</i>                |
| 916        | <i>Africa.</i>                     | 966        | Central Africa.                |
| 917        | <i>North America.</i>              | 967        | <i>Guinea.</i>                 |
| 918        | <i>South America.</i>              | 968        | South Africa.                  |
| 919        | <i>Oceanica and Polar Regions.</i> | 969        | Other.                         |
| <br>       |                                    | <br>       |                                |
| <b>920</b> | <b>Biography.</b>                  | <b>970</b> | <b>North America.</b>          |
| 921        | Of philosophy.                     | 971        | British America.               |
| 922        | Of theology.                       | 972        | <i>Canada.</i>                 |
| 923        | Of sociology.                      | 973        | United States and Territories. |
| 924        | Of philology.                      | 974        | <i>Eastern.</i>                |
| 925        | Of science.                        | 975        | <i>Middle.</i>                 |
| 926        | Of useful arts.                    | 976        | <i>Southern.</i>               |
| 927        | Of fine arts.                      | 977        | <i>Western.</i>                |
| 928        | Of literature.                     | 978        | Mexico.                        |
| 929        | Genealogy and Heraldry.            | 979        | Other.                         |
| <br>       |                                    | <br>       |                                |
| <b>930</b> | <b>Ancient History.</b>            | <b>980</b> | <b>South America.</b>          |
| 931        | Chinese.                           | 981        | Brazil.                        |
| 932        | Egyptian.                          | 982        | Argentine Republic.            |
| 933        | Jewish.                            | 983        | Chili.                         |
| 934        | Indian.                            | 984        | Bolivia.                       |
| 935        | Persian.                           | 985        | Peru.                          |
| 936        | Keltic.                            | 986        | New Granada.                   |
| 937        | Roman.                             | 987        | Venezuela.                     |
| 938        | Greek.                             | 988        | Guiana.                        |

939 Other.

989 Other.

**940 Europe.**

- 941 Scotland and Ireland.
- 942 England.
- 943 Germany and Austria.
- 944 France.
- 945 Italy.
- 946 Spain and Portugal.
- 947 Russia.
- 948 Scandinavia.
- 949 Other.

**990 Oceanica and Polar Regions.**

- 991 Malaysia.
- 992 *Sunda.*
- 993 Australasia.
- 994 *Australia.*
- 995 *New Guinea.*
- 996 Polynesia.
- 997 Isolated islands.
- 998 Arctic regions.
- 999 Antarctic regions.

## SUBJECT INDEX

Find the subject in this Alphabetical INDEX. The number following it is its Class Number. The entire resources of the library on this subject will be found under this number either in the Subject Catalogue, the Shelf Catalogue, or on the shelves. Where a class number ends in a cipher, the subject will be found, on reference to the prefixed classification, to be subdivided.

A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z

<b>Abolition</b>	326	Animal magnetism	134
Aborigines North America	970	Animal kingdom	590
Abortion	618	Animals, domestic	636
Abyssinia	963	Animalcula	593
Abyssinia language	493	Annuities	333
Academies	378	Anonyms	14
Academies of science	506	Antarctic regions	999
Accounts	657	Antarctic regions travels	919
Acoustics	534	Anthropology	130
Acrostics	819, 829, 839, etc.	Anti-Masonry	366
Acts and Resolves	328	Antinomianism	234
Acts of the Apostles	226	Antiquities, <i>see</i> subject or country.	
Addresses	815, 825, 835, etc.	Aphorisms	819, 829, 839, etc.
Administration	350	Apocalypse	228
Administrative law	342	Apocrypha	229
Admiralty Law	346	Apologetics	239
Adultery	176, 345	Apoplexy	616
Advent, second	236	Apostles	922
Aeronautics	533	Apostolic church	274-276
Æsthetics	701	Apostolic succession	262
Æthiopia	966	Apothegms	819, 829, 839, etc.
Afghanistan	958	Apparitions	133
Africa--botany	586	Apples	634
customs and costumes	396	Aquariums	590
description	916	Aquatint	766
ecclesiastical history	276	Aqueducts	628
geography	916	Arabia, ancient history	939
geology	556	Arabia, modern	953
history	960	Arabian language	493

statistics	316	Arabian philosophy	197
travels	916	Arboriculture	715
Agricultural chemistry	631	Arbors	717
Agriculture	630	Archæology, prehistoric	571
Air	533	Archery	799
Alabama	976	Architects, lives	927
Alaska	977	Architectural drawing	744
Albania	949	Architecture	720
Albertypes	774	Architecture naval	699
Albigenses	272, 944	Arctic regions	998
Alchemy	540	Arctic regions travels	919
Alcoholic liquors	178, 615, 663	Argentine republic	982
Ales	663	Arianism	281, 232
Algæ	582	Aristotelian philosophy	185
Algebra	512	Arithmetic	511
Algeria	965	Arizona	977
Aliens	343	Arkansas	976
Allegories	819, 829, 839, etc.	Armenia	956
Almanacs	528	Armies	355
Almanacs statistical	313	Arminianism	287, 234
Alphabets	411, 421, 431, etc.	Armor	355
Alphabets ornamental	745-748	Art anatomy	743
Ambassadors	341	Art biography	927
Ambrotype	772	Art education	707
America North--	970	Art schools	753-756
botany	587	Artesian wells	628
customs and costumes	397	Articulates, paleontology	565
description	917	Articulates, zoology	595
ecclesiastical history	277	Artillery	358
geography	917	Artists' lives	927
geology	557	Arts, fine	700
history	970	Arts, fine biography of	927
statistics	317	Arts, useful	600
travels	917	Arts, useful biography of	926
America South--	980	Ashantee	967
botany	588	Ashantee geography	916
customs and costumes	398	Asia--	950
escription	918	botany	585
ecclesiastical history	278	customs and costumes	395
geography	918	ecclesiastical history	275
geology	558	geography	915
history	980	geology	555
statistics	318	history	950
travels	918	statistics	315
American languages	499	travels	915
American painting	756	Asia Minor	956
American philosophy	191	Assassination	345
American revolution	973	Assault and battery	345
Americanisms	427	Assaying	668
Amherst College	378	Assent	163
Amputation	617	Associations	360
Amusements	175, 790	Associations musical	789
Ana, anagrams	819, 829, 839, etc.	Assurance	368
Analysis, chemical	543	Assyria	935
Analysis, qualitative	544	Assyrian language	493
Analysis, quantitative	545	Asthma	616
Analytical geometry	516	Astrology	133
Anatomy, art	743	Astronomical maps	524
Anatomy, comparative	591	Astronomical observations	525
Anatomy, human	611	Astronomy	520
Ancient architecture	722	Atheism	211
Ancient customs, costumes	391	Athletic sports	796
Ancient design	746	Atlases	910
Ancient geography	912	Atmosphere	533
Ancient history	930	Atonement	234
Ancient philosophies	180	Aurora	537, 551
Ancient sculpture	732	Australasia	993
Anecdote, Religious	249	Australia	994
Aneurism	617	Austria	943
Angels	235	Authority	171
Anglican church	283	Authors' lives	928
Angling	799	Autobiography, <i>see</i> Biography.	
Anglo-Saxon history	942	Azores	946
Anglo-Saxon language	429		

<b>Babylon</b>	935	Bleaching	667
Backgammon	795	Blindness	616
Baconian philosophy	192	Block books	022
Ball playing	797	Blowpipe	543
Ballads, <i>see</i> Poetry.		Blue laws	343
Ballooning	533	Boating	797
Banditti	345, 366	Boats	797, 699
Bank Note Engraving	768	Bokhara	959
Bankrupt laws	343	Bolivia	984
Banks	332	Bonds and stocks	333
Baptism	264	Bones	611
Baptists	286	Books	10, 20
Barbary States	961	Book binding	10, 25, 686
Barometer	533, 551	Book collecting	10
Bas-reliefs	731	Book keeping	657
Base ball	797	Book rarities	20
Basque language	499	Booksellers' catalogues	17, 18
Basque provinces	946	Boot-making	685, 675
Baths	613	Botany	580
Bavaria	943	Botany fossil	561
Beauty	701	Botany medical	615
Beer	663	Brahmanism	294
Bees	638	Brandy	615, 663
Beetles	595	Brazil	981
Beets	635	Breviaries	244
Beets sugar	664	Brewing	663
Belgium	949	Bricks	673
Belles-lettres	800	Bridge-building	624
Bell-ringing	785	Brigands	345, 366
Bells	671	British America	971
Bermudas	971	British Columbia	972
Bible	220	British India	954
Bible dictionaries, etc.	220	British Museum	369
Bible in schools	377	Britons	942, 941
Bible societies	362	Bronchitis	616
Bibliographies	11	Bronzes	738
Bibliographies--		Buccaneers	345, 366
Special countries	015	Buddhism	294
Special forms	012	Buenos Ayres	982
Special subjects	016	Building	690
Bibliography	010	Burial	390, 614, 719
Billiards	795	Burmah	954
Biography	920	Business ethics	174
Biology	570	Business manuals	658
Birds	598	Butter	637
Birds palæontology	568	Butterflies	595
Births	312	Byzantine Empire	949
Blacksmithing	682		

<b>Cabinet</b> making	684	Co-education	376
Calabria	945	Coffee	641, 633
Calculators	511	Coinage	332
Calculus	517	Coins	737
Caledonia	941	Coleoptera	595
California	977	Collections, art	708
Calisthenics	613	drawing and design	749
Caloric	536	engraving	769
Calvinism	234	painting	759
Cambists	332	photography	779
Cambria	942	sculpture	739
Cameos	736	Collectors' manuals	579
Canada	972	Colleges	378
Canal engineering	626	Collieries	628
Canal transit	386	Colombia, S.A.	986

Canary Isles	946	Colonies	325
Cancer	616	Color	535
Canon law	348	Colors, painting	752
Capital and labor	331	Coloring	667
Capital punishment	345	Comedy, <i>see</i> Drama.	
Car-building	699	Comets	523
Card-playing	795	Comic works, <i>see</i> Humor.	
Caribbee Islands	989	Commemorative sermons	259
Caricatures	741	Commentaries, Bible	220
Carpentry	694	Commentaries, law	340
Carriage making	684	Commerce	380
Carthage	939	Commercial law	343
Carving	643	Common law	343
Carving and chasing	736	Common schools	372
Cashmere	954	Communication	380, 650
Castille	946	Communion	265
Casts	730	Communism	335
Casuistry	171	Comparative anatomy	335
Catalogues--Authors	18	Comparative mythology	291
Catalogues--Books	12-18	Comparative philology	410
Catalogues--Libraries	12-18	Compass	629, 538, 527
Catalogues--Subjects	17	Compend--	
Catarrh	616	fine arts	702
Catechisms	241	history	902
Cathedrals	726	literature	802
Catholic Church	282	natural science	502
Cattle	636	philology	402
Caucuses	324	philosophy	102
Cavalry	357	science	502
Caves	551	sociology	302
Celibacy	136, 176	theology	202
Celtic language	496	useful arts	602
Celtic literature	896	Composition	815
Celts	936	Composition of music	781
Cements	693	Comte's philosophy	194, 145
Cemeteries	719	Conchology	594
Censuses	310	Concordances of Bible	220
Central Africa	966	Confectionery	642
Central America	979	Confessional	282
Ceramic art	673, 738	Congregationalism	285
Cetacea	599	Conic sections	515
Ceylon	954	Connecticut	974
Chaldee language	493	Conscience	170, 233
Chances	519	Conservatories of music	789
Charades	795	Constitution, English	323
Charitable associations	361	Constitution, United States	324
Charts, history	908	Constitutional law	342
Chasing	736	Construction, architectural	721
Checkers	795	Consuls	327
Cheese	637	Consumption	616
Chemical agriculture	631	Contagion	614
Chemical analysis	543	Contracts	343
Chemical technology	660	Convents	362, 271
Chemicals--manufacture	661	Conversation	177
Chemistry	540	Cookery	641
Chess	794	Co-operation	331
Childbirth	618	Copper	671, 549
Chili	983	Copper engraving	762
Chimneys	693	Coptic language	492
China, ancient	931	Copyright	343
China, modern	951	Corals	593
Chinese language	491	Corea	959
Chinese literature	891	Corn laws	347, 343
Chinese religion	299	Cornices	721
Chivalry	322	Coroners	343
Chloroform	615, 617, 618	Corporal punishment	371
Cholera	616	Corporations	360
Christ	232	Correction, houses of	364
Christian doctrines	230	Correlation of forces	530
Christian fathers	270	Correspondence	816
Christian institutions	260	Corsica	944
Christian sects	280	Cosmetics	646
Christianity, evidences	239	Cosmogony	113
Christianity, history	270-289	Cosmology	113
Christmas customs	390	Cossacks	947

Christology	232	Costa Rica	979
Chromolithography	764	Costumes	390
Chronologies	902	Cottages	728
Chronology	529	Cotton manufactures	678
Church	261	Cotton planting	633
Church architecture	726	Cotton trade	381, 382
Church of England	283	Councils	262, 270
Church fathers	270	Courts martial	347
Church history	270-289	Cousin's philosophy	194
Church music	783	Covenanters	274, 941
Church polity	262	Cows	636, 637
Church of Rome	282	Cranberries	634
Church and state	261, 172, 329	Crayoning	741
Circassia	947	Creation	213
Circumnavigations	910	Credit	334
Citizenship	342	Creeds	244, 280
City transit	388	Cremation	614, 390
Civil engineering	620	Crete	949
Civil law	348	Cricket	796
Civil service organs	351	Crimea	947
Civil service regulations	351	Crimes and punishments	345
Civilization--progress	313	Criminal law	345
Clairvoyance	134	Critical psychology	142
Classical education	375	Criticism--literary, <i>see</i> Essays.	
Classics, Greek 488,	880	Crocheting	793
Classics, Latin	478, 870	Croquet	796
Classification	112	Croup	616
Clergy, lives of	922	Crusades	274, 940
Climatology	551, 536	Crustacea	595
Clinic	610	Cryptogamia	582
Clock-making	681	Crystallography	548
Clothes-making	687	Cuba	979
Clothing	646	Currency	332
Clubs	369	Curvilinear motion	531
Coal	549, 644	Customs and duties	337
Coast survey	622	Customs and manners	390
Coats of arms	929	Cyclopaedias, general	30
Cochin China	951		

<b>Daguerreotype</b>	772	Didactic theology	241
Dairy	637	Die-making	736
Dancing	793	Diet	613
Danish	498	Differential calculus	517
Darwinism	575	Digestion	612
Deaf and dumb institutions	361	Digests	343
Deafness	616	Dining	643
Death	612	Diphtheria	616
Death and resurrection	236	Diplomacy	327, 341
Death penalty	345	Diplomatics	10, 21
Debates	815	Directories	910
Decimal system	511	Discipline, education	371
Decimal weights & measures	389	Diseases	616
Decorative art	745-748	Disinfection	614
Deductive logic	162	Dispensatories	615
Deism	211	Dissection	611
Delaware	975	Dissenters	289, 283
Delusions	133	Distillation	663
Democracy	324	District of Columbia	976
Demonology	133	Divorce	343, 173
Denmark	948	Doctrinal history	273
Denominations, Christian	280	Doctrinal sermons	253
Dentistry	617	Doctrinal theology	230
Depravity	233, 216	Dogs	599, 636
Derangement, mental	132	Domestic animals	636
Descarte's philosophy	194	Domestic architecture	728
Descriptive astronomy	523	Domestic economy	640
Descriptive geometry	744	Domestic and foreign relations	327
Design and drawing	740	Domestic medicine	615
Design ornamental	745-8	Domestic trade	381

Despotism	321	Domestic worship	248
Detectives	354	Dominos	795
Deuteronomy	222	Drainage	631, 614
Development theory	575	Drama, general treatises	812
Devil	235	Drama, English	822
Devotional theology	240	Drama, French	842
Dew	551	Drama, German	832
Dialectics	160	Drama, Greek	882
Dialects--		Drama, Italian	852
English	427	Drama, Latin	872
French	447	Drama, Spanish	862
German	437	Dramatic amusements	792
Greek	487	Dramatic music	782
Italian	457	Draughts	795
Latin	477	Drawing	740
Spanish	467	Drawing-books	741
Diamonds	552	Dreams	135
Dictionaries--		Dress	646
comparative	413	Dress making	646
English	423	Drives	713
fine art	703	Driving	798
French	443	Drugs	615
German	433	Druids	299
Greek	483	Duelling	177, 345, 392
history	903	Dutch language	439
Italian	453	Dutch painting	753
Latin	473	Dutch Reformed Church	289
literature	803	Dutch Republic	949
natural science	503	Duties	170
philology	403	Duties and customs	337
philosophy	103	Dyeing	667
science	503	Dynamical electricity	537
sociology	303	Dynamical geology	553
Spanish	463	Dynamics	531
theology	203	Dysentery	616
useful arts	603	Dyspepsia	616

<b>Ear</b> diseases	616	Epics	811, 821, 831, etc.
Early Greek philosophy	182	Epics Greek	883
Earth	551	Epics Latin	873
Earth figure of	526	Epicurean philosophy	187
Earthquakes	553	Epidemics	614
East Indies	954	Epigrams	819, 829, 839, etc.
Easter	244	Episcopal church	283
Eastern church	281	Epistles, Bible	227
Eastern States	974	Epistolography	816, 826, etc.
Ecclesiastical history	270	Epitaphs	929
Ecclesiastical polity	262	Equador	989
Echinoderms	593	Equestrian exercise	798
Eclectic medicine	616	Equipments of armies	355
Eclectic psychology	148	Equipments of navies	359
Eclipses	523	Equity	344
Economy, domestic	640	Eschatology	236
Economy, political	330	Esquimaux	979, 998
Ecuador	989	Essays, English literature	824
Education	370	Essays, fine arts	704
Education fine arts	707	Essays, French	844
Education history	907	Essays, general treatises	814
Education natural sciences	507	Essays, German	834
Education philology	407	Essays, history	904
Education philosophy	107	Essays, Italian	854
Education science	507	Essays, literature	804
Education theology	207	Essays, natural science	504
Education useful arts	607	Essays, philology	404
Educational institutions	378	Essays, philosophy	104
Educational reports	379	Essays, political	329
Egypt, ancient	932	Essays, science	504
Egypt, modern	962	Essays, sociology	304
Egyptian language	492	Essays, Spanish	864

Egyptian literature	892	Essays, theology	204
Election sermons	256	Essays, useful arts	604
Elections	324	Etching	767
Electricity	537	Etherization	617
Electro-magnetism	538	Ethics	170
Eleemosynary institutions	361	Ethiopia	966
Elementary education	372	Ethnography	390
Elgin marbles	733	Ethnology	572
Elocution	815	Etiquette	177
Emancipation	326	Etruria	937
Embalming	390	Etymologies, comparative	412
Embargo	346, 341	Etymologies, English	422
Emblems	219	Etymologies, French	442
Embryology	576	Etymologies, German	432
Emigration	325	Etymologies, Greek	482
Empirical psychology	144	Etymologies, Italian	452
Enamel painting	751	Etymologies, Latin	472
Encaustic painting	751	Etymologies, Spanish	462
Encyclopædias, general	30	Eucharist	265
Engineering	620	Eulogies	920, 259
Engineering instruments	629	Europe--botany	584
England, history	942	customs and costumes	394
English church	283	ecclesiastical history	274
English dialects	427	geography	914
English dictionaries	423	geology	554
English etymology	422	history	940
English government	323	statistics	314
English grammar	425	travels	914
English language	420	Evidence (law)	349
English literature	820	Evidences of Christianity	239
English orthography	421	Evil	216
English painting	756	Evolution	575
English philology	420	Exchange	332
English philosophy	192	Excise	336
English prosody	426	Exegesis	220
English sculpture	735	Exhibitions, art	708
English synonyms	424	Exodus	222
English texts	428	Experimental Chemistry	542
Engraving	760	Explorations	910
Enigmas	819, 829, 839, etc.	Expository sermons	258
Entertainments	791	Express companies	385
Enthusiasm	137	Eye, diseases	616
Entomology	595	Eye, functions	612
Entozoa	595		

<b>Fables</b>	819, 829, 839, etc.	Flora	584-589
Facetiæ	819, 829, 839, etc.	Florence	945
Fairy tales	813, 823, 833 etc.	Florida	976
Faith	234, 163	Flower garden	716, 583
Family	173	Flowers	580
Family medicines	616	Fluxions	517
Family worship	247	Folk-lore	291-293
Fanaticism	133	Food	643
Farces	828, 838, etc.,	Foreign missions	267
Farming	630	Foreign relations	327
Farriery	682	Foreign trade	382
Fashion	177	Forgery	345
Fasts	244	Form book	349
Fatalism	159	Fortification	623
Fathers of the church	270	Fortune-telling	133
Fauna	590	Fossils	560
Feasts	244	Founderies	671
Federalism	324	Foundling hospitals	361
Female education	376	Fountains	714
Female seminaries	378	Fowling	799
Fencing	796	Fowls	636
Ferns	582	Fractures	617
Fetichism	299	France	944
Feudal institutions	322	Franchise	324



Fevers	616	Franciscans	271
Fiction, <i>see</i> Romance.		Franconia	943
Field books, engineering	629	Franco-Prussian war	943, 944
Field sports	796-799	Free-hand drawing	741
Figure of the earth	526	Freemasonry	366
Filibusters	363, 345, 978	Free trade	337
Final causes	113	Freewill	159
Finances	330	French language	440
Fine arts	700	French language old	449
biography of	927	French literature	840
Finland	947	French painting	754
Finno-Hungarian language	499	French philosophy	194
Fire arms	355, 683	French revolution	944
Fire departments	369	French sculpture	735
Fire engines	621	Fresco painting	751
Fire insurance	368	Friction	531
Fire works	662	Friends, Society of	289
Fishes	597	Friendship	157
Fishes palæontology	567	Fruit culture	634
Fisheries	639	Fuel	644
Fishing	799	Funds and funding	336
Flags	929	Funeral sermons	259
Flanders	949	Funerals	390
Flax	633, 677	Furniture	645
Flemish painting	753	Future life	218
Flies	595	Future state	237

<b>Galleries</b> of art	708	God	231
drawing and design	749	Gold	549, 671
engraving	769	Goniometry	514
painting	759	Good-Friday	244
photography	779	Gospels	226
sculpture, etc.	739	Gothic architecture	723
Galvanism	537	Goths	943
Gambling	175	Gout	616
Game laws	345	Government	320
Games	793-7	Grace	234
Gardening	635	Grafting	634
Gardening Landscape	710	Grains	633
Gas-fitting	696	Grammars, comparative	415
Gas lighting	665, 644	Grammars, English	425
Gas making	665	Grammars, French	445
Gastronomy	641	Grammars, German	435
Gauging	389	Grammars, Greek	485
Gazetteers	910	Grammars, Italian	455
Gem engraving	736	Grammars, Latin	475
Gems	549	Grammars, Spanish	465
Genealogy	929	Granada	946
Generation, Spontaneous	577	Granges	363
Genesis	222	Grape culture	634
Genoa	945	Grasses	633
Geodesy	526	Grasses ornamental	716, 583
Geography	910	Grave-stones	718
Geography Africa	916	Grave-yards	719
Geography ancient	912	Gravitation	531
Geography Asia	915	Great Britain	941, 942
Geography Europe	914	Greece, ancient	938
Geography historical	911	Greece, modern	949
Geography modern	913	Greek architecture	722
Geography N. America	917	Greek church	281
Geography physical	551	Greek commentaries	488
Geography S. America	918	Greek language	480
Geography travels	910	Greek literature	880
Geology	550	Greek modern	489
Geology dynamical	553	Greek mythology	292
Geometry	513	Greek philosophy	180, 888
Geometry analytical	516	Greek sculpture	733
Georgia	959, 976	Greek texts with notes	488
German language	430	Greek texts without notes	880

German language low	439	Greek translations	880
German literature	830	Greenhouses	583, 635
German painting	753	Greenland	998
German philosophy	193	Grounds, private	712
German Reformed Church	289	Groves	715
Germany	943	Guatemala	979
Ghosts	133	Guiana	988
Gipsies	949	Guide books	910
Girondists	363, 944	Guillotine	345
Glaciers	553	Guinea	967
Glass	666	Gun cotton	355, 662
Glass painting	751	Gunnery	355
Glazing	698	Gunpowder	355, 662
Glees	784	Gunsmithery	683
Globes, use of	522	Gutta percha	679
Glossaries	413, 423, 433, etc.	Gymnastics	613
Gloves	646, 675, 677	Gypsies	949
Gnostics	281		

<b>Habeas corpus</b>	343	sociology	309
Hamiltonian philosophy	192	theology	209
Harbors	627	universal	909
Harmony, music	781	useful arts	609
Harmony of gospels	226	Histrionics	792
Harness-making	685	Holy Land	933, 956
Harpsichord	787	Home education	371, 374
Hasheesh	615	Home missions	266
Hats	646	Homicide	345
Health	613	Homiletics	251
Health public	614	Homoeopathy	615
Heart diseases	616	Homologies	574
Heat	536	Honey	638
Heathen religions	290	Horse	636, 599, 357, 619
Heating	697	Horse-racing	798
Heaven	237	Horse-riding	798
Hebrew history	933	Horse-shoeing	682
Hebrew language	493	Horsemanship	798
Hedges	715	Hortatory theology	243
Hegelian philosophy	193	Horticulture	635
Heliotypes	774	Hospitals	361
Hell	237	Hotels	390
Heraclitic philosophy	182	Hothouses	583, 635
Heraldry	929	House-keeping	640
Herbariums	582	Housewifery	640
Hermaphrodites	590, 612	Huguenots	289, 944
Hermeneutics	220	Human anatomy	611
Herpetology	598	Humane societies	361
Hieroglyphics	419	Humor	818
Higher education	373	English	828
Highwaymen	345	French	848
Histology	611	German	838
Historical books of Bible	222	Greek	887
Historical charts and tables	908	Italian	858
Historical geography	911	Spanish	868
Historical societies	906	Hunting	799
History--	900	Hurricanes	533
ancient	930-939	Husbandry	630
biography of	928	Hybridism	590
ecclesiastical	270	Hydraulic engineering	628
fine arts	709	Hydraulics	532
geography	910	Hydrodynamics	532
in Greek	889	Hydrography	551, 627, 527
in Latin	879	Hydromechanics	532
literature	809	Hydrophathy	615
modern	940-999	Hydrophobia	614, 616
natural sciences	509	Hydrostatics	532
philology	409	Hygiene	613
philosophy	109	Hygiene mental	131
philosophy of	901	Hymnology	245

<b>Icebergs</b>	553	Institutions Monarchic	323
Iceland	948	Institutions Musical	789
Icelandic language	498	Institutions of religion	260
Ichnology	560	Institutions Patriarchal	321
Ichthyology	597	Institutions Republican	324
Iconography	730	Instruction	371
Idealistic psychology	141	Instrumental music	785
Idiocy	132	Instruments, engineering	629
Idolatry	290	Instruments, making	681
Illumination	745	Insurance companies	368
Imagination	156	Integral calculus	517
Immersion	264, 286	Intellect	151
Immigration	325	Intellectual philosophy	140-150
Immortality	218, 237	Intemperance	178
Imprisonment for debt	345	Intercommunication	380, 650
Incarnation	232	Interest	334
Income	333	Interest tables	658
Incunabula	23	Interior, administration	353
India, ancient history	934	Intermarriage	136, 618
India, modern history	954	Intermediate state	237
Indian language	494	Interments	614, 390
Indian literature	894	International exhibitions	600
Indiana	977	International law	341
Indians, American	970	Intolerance	272
Indians, American language	499	Intuitive psychology	143
India-rubber	675	Inventions	608
Indoor amusements	793	Invertebrates	592
Induction	161	Invertebrates paleontology	562
Inductive logic	161	Ionian Islands	949
Industrial drawing	744	Ionic philosophy	182
Industrial schools	607	Iowa	977
Inebriate institutions	364	Iranian languages	495
Infanticide	173, 345	Iranian literature	895
Infantry	356	Ireland	941
Infidelity	211	Irish church	283
Inoculation	614, 615	Irish language	496
Inorganic chemistry	546	Iron, bridges	624
Inquisition	272	Iron, manufacture	672
Insane Hospitals	361	Iron, mineral	549, 669
Insanity	132	Iron-clad ships	359, 699
Inscriptions	417	Irrigation	631
Insects	595	Italian language	450
Inspiration	238	Italian literature	850
Instincts	158	Italian painting	755
Institute of France	64	Italian philosophy	195
Institutions	360	Italian sculpture	734, 735
Institutions educational	378	Italy	945
Institutions Feudal	322		
<b>Jacobins</b>	363, 944	Jewelry	646, 671
Jamaica	979	Jews, history	933
Jansenism	282	John	226
Japan	952	Joinery	694
Japanese language	499	Journalism	50
Japanning	698	Judaism	296
Java	992	Judgment and future state	237
Jests	819, 829, 839, etc.	Junius letters	329
Jesuit missions	266, 282	Jurisprudence	340
Jesuits	271, 282	Jury	342
Jesus	232	Justification	234



<b>Macaronics</b>	819, 829, etc.	Methodology	112
Machine engraving	768	Methods of education	371
Machinery	621	Metric system	389
Madagascar	969	Metrology	389
Madness	132	Mexican war	973, 978
Magazines	50, 105, 205, etc.	Mexico	978
Magic	133	Mezzotint	776
Magnetism	538	Michigan	977
Magnetism, animal	134	Microscopy	578
Magyars	943	Middle ages, history, <i>see</i> special countries.	
Mahometanism	297	Middle States	975
Mails	383	Midwifery	618
Maine	974	Military and naval arts	355-359
Malaria	614	engineering	623
Malayan language	499	law	347
Malaysia	991	science	355
Malt	663	Militia	355
Malta	949	Milk	637
Mamelukes	962	Millennium	236
Mammalia	599	Millinery	646
Mammalia, palaeontology	569	Mills, cot., woolen, etc.	677, 678
Man, doctrine of	233	paper	676
Man, ethnography	390	Mill-work	621
Man, natural history of	573	Mind	150
Maniacs	132	Mineral waters	615
Manners and customs	390	Mineralogy	549
Manuals, collectors'	579	Mines, mining, engineering	628
Manufactures	670	Miniatures	757
Manures	631	Ministers	250
Manuscripts	13, 21	Ministers lives	922
Maps	910	Minnesota	977
Maps, astronomical	524	Minstrel	811, 821, 831, etc.
Marble manufacture	673	Miracles	231
Marbles	731	Miscellany, literary	819
Marine architecture	699	English	829
Marine insurance	368	French	849
Marine law	346	German	839
Marriage, customs	390	Italian	859
Marriage, ethics	173	Spanish	869
Maritime law	346	Missions	266
Mark	226	Missions, foreign	267
Martial law	347	Mississippi	976
Martyrs	272	Missouri	977
Maryland	976	Mnemonics	154
Mason & Dixon's lin	326	Modeling	731
Masonry	693	Modern architecture	724
Masonry, Free	366	Modern costumes, customs	393-399
Massachusetts	974	Modern designs	748
Materia medica	615	Modern geography	913-919
Materialist	146	Modern Greek	489
Materials, building	691	Modern history	940-999
Maternity	136, 618	Modern philosophy	190
Mathematical drawing	744	Modern sculpture	735
Mathematical instruments	629	Mohammedanism	297
Mathematical tables	514	Molecular physics	539
Mathematics	510	Mollusca	594
Matthew	226	paleontology	564
Mausoleums	718	Monarchic institutions	323
Maxims	819, 829, 839, etc.	Monasteries	271
Measles	616	Monastic orders	271
Measures and weights	389	Money	332
Mechanical drawing	744	Mongolian language	499
Mechanical engineering	621	Monitors, iron-clads	359, 699
Mechanical trades	680	Monograms	745-748
Mechanics	531	Monopolies	331
Mechanics' associations	606	Montana	977
Medals	737	Monuments	718
Mediæval architecture	723	Moon	523
Mediæval customs, costumes	392	Moral philosophy	170
Mediæval design	747	Moravians	289
Mediæval history <i>with modern</i>	940-999	Moravian missions	266
Mediæval Latin	479	Morea	949
Mediæval sculpture	734	Mortar	693
Medical botany	615		

Medical jurisprudence	343	Mortality	312
Medicine	610	Mortgages	343
Medicine, veterinary	619	Mormonism	298
Meditations, theology	242	Morocco	964
Melodeons	786	Morphology	581
Melody	781	Mosaic painting	751
Memoirs	920	Moslems	297
Memory	154	Mosquitia	979
Mensuration	612	Mosses	582
Mental derangement	132	Mothers	173
Mental faculties	150	Moths	595, 646
Mental hygiene	131	Mouldings	721
Mental philosophy	140-150	Municipal government	342
Mental physiology	131	Mutual aid societies	361
Mesmerism	134	Music	780
Messiah	232	Musical composition	781
Metal manufactures	671	Musicians	927
Metallurgy	669	Mysteries	133
Metaphysics	110	Mysticism	289
Meteorology	551	Mythology, comparative	291
Methodism	287	Mythology, Greek & Roman	292
		Mythology, Norse	293

<b>Names</b>	929	Newfoundland	971
Narcotics	615	Newspapers	50
National costumes	390	Nicaragua	979
National customs	390	Nobility	322
Natural history	550-590	Non-Christian religions	290
Natural philosophy	530	Normal schools	371
Natural science	500	Norman conquest	942-946
Natural selection	575	Normandy	944
Natural theology	210	Norse	498
Naturalization	343, 325	North Africa	961
Nature	500	North America	970
Naval architecture	699	North America botany	578
Naval science	359	North America customs	&397
Navies	359	costumes	
Navigation	527, 656	North America ecclesiastical	277
Navigation laws	346	history	
Nebraska	977	North America, geography	917
Necromancers	133	North America, geology	557
Needle-work	646, 793	North America, history	970
Negroes	573, 326	North America, statistics	317
Nepotism	323	North America, travels	917
Nestorians	281	North Carolina	976
Netherlands	949	Northmen	948
Neuroptera	595	Norway	948
Neutrals	341	Nosology	616
Nevada	977	Nova Scotia	972
New Brunswick	972	Novels	813
New England	974	English	823
New Granada	986	French	843
New Guinea	995	German	833
New Hampshire	974	Italian	853
New Jersey	975	Spanish	863
New Mexico	977	Nubia	962
New Platonists, philosophy	186	Numbers, book of	222
New Testament	225	Numismatics	374
New York	975	Nunneries	362
		Nursery	649

<b>Object teaching</b>	371	sacred	251
Observations, astronomical	525	Spanish	865
		Orchards	634

Obstetrics	618	Orders of architecture	722-724
Ocean transportation	387, 656	Ordination sermons	257
Oceanica	990	Ordnance	355, 683
botany	589	Oregon	977
customs and costumes	399	Organ	786
ecclesiastical history	279	Organic chemistry	547
geography	919	Organic remains	562
geology	559	Oriental architecture	722
history	990	Oriental church	281
statistics	319	Oriental languages	490
travels	919	Oriental philosophy	181
Odd Fellows	366	Origin of language	400
Odontology	611, 617	Ornamental botany	583
Ohio	977	Ornamental design	745
Old French	449	Ornamental work	745
Old Testament	221	Ornithology	598
Oil manufacture	664	Orphans	361
Oil painting	751	Orthoepy	411, 421, 431, etc.
Ontology	111	Orthography, comparative	411
Operas	782	English	421
Opium	615	French	441
Optics	535	German	431
Oracles	133	Greek	481
Oratorios	783	Italian	451
Oratory	815	Latin	471
English	825	Spanish	461
French	845	Ottoman empire	949, 956
German	835	Out-door sports	796-799
Greek	885	Oxford University	378
Italian	855	Oysters	594, 641
Latin	875		
political	329		

<b>Paganism</b>	290	Italian	851
Painters' lives	927	Latin	871
Painting	750, 698	Spanish	861
Palæontology	560	Poets, lives	928
Palestine	956	Poisons	615
Pantheism	212	Poland	949
Pantheistic psychology	147	Polar Regions, geography	919
Papacy	282	Polar seas	998, 999
Paper-hanging	698	Police	354
Paper manufacture	676	Polish language	497
Paper money	332	Politeness	177
Papua	995	Political associations	363
Paraguay	989	Political economy	330
Parchment	10	Political essays	329
Parent and child	173	Political institutions	363
Parish law	343	Political science	320
Parks, public	711	Political sermons	256
Parliament	324	Political speeches	329
Parliamentary law	348	Polity, ecclesiastical	262
Parrots	598	Polygamy	173, 345
Parseeism	295	Polygraphy	40
Partnership	343	Polynesia, botany	589
Parturition	618	customs and costumes	399
Passions	157	ecclesiastical history	279
Pastoral theology	250	geography	919
Patagonia	989	geology	559
Patents	608	history	996
Pathology	616	languages	499
Patriarchal institutions	321	statistics	319
Patriotism	172	travels	919
Patristic philosophy	189	Polyps	593
Patronage	177	Polytheism	290
Pauperism	339	Pomology	634
Pawnbroking	334	Ponds, artificial	714
Peace and war	172	Poor	339
Pears	634	Poor laws	343

Peat	644	Popery	282
Pedobaptism	264	Population	312
Peerage	322	Porcelain	738
Peloponnesus	938, 949	Portrait painting	757
Penal law	345	Portraits, photographs	777
Penance	244	Portugal	946
Peninsular war	946	Portuguese language	469
Penitentiaries	365	Portuguese literature	860
Penmanship	652	Positivism	146
Pennsylvania	975	Postage-stamps	383
Pentateuch	222	Post-offices	383
Perception	152	Potato	635
Perfectionists	289	Pottery	673
Perfumery	660, 646	Pottery manufacture	673
Periodicals, <i>see</i> special subjects.		Poultry	636
fine arts	705	Powder	662, 355
general	50	Practical astronomy	522
history	905	Practical theology	240
literature	805	Practical sermons	25
natural science	505	Practice of medicine	615
philology	405	Prayer	217
philosophy	105	Prayer-meetings	247
science	505	Preaching and preachers	250
sociology	305	Precedents	343
theology	205	Precious metals	549
useful arts	605	Predestination	231
Perpetual motion	531	Pregnancy	618
Persecutions	272	Pre-historic archæology	571
Persia, ancient history	935	Presbyterians	284
Persia, modern history	955	Prescriptions	615
Persian language	495	Press, liberty of	324
Personal liberty	342	Primeval man	571
Personal property	342	Primitive Christianity	270
Personal rights	342	Primogeniture	322
Perspective	742	Printing	655
Peru	985	Prints	769
Pests, agricultural	632	Prison associations	365
Petrifaction	560	Prisons	365
Petroleum	549, 665	Private grounds	712
Pharmacopœias	615	Private worship	248
Pharmacy	615	Privateers	341
Phi Beta Kappa	366	Probabilities	519
Philology	400	Production	338
biography of	924	Productions of the soil	633
Philosophy	100	Progress of civilization	312
Philosophy ancient	180	Progress of population	313
biography of	921	Prohibited books	28
Greek	180, 888	Prohibition	178
Latin	878	Projectiles	358, 531
mental	150	Projection	744
modern	190	Promissory notes	343
moral	170	Pronunciation	411, 421, 431, etc.
natural	530	Property	331
of art	701	Property law	342, 343
history	901	Property tax	336
language	401	Prophecy	231
literature	801	Prophetic books of Bible	224
science	501	Prose composition, Greek	485
sociology	301	Prose composition, Latin	475
religion	201	Prosody, comparative	416
useful arts	601	English	426
Phoenicia	939	French	446
Phoenician language	493	German	436
Phonetic short-hand	653	Greek	486
Phonetic spelling	421	Italian	456
Phonography	653	Latin	476
Phonology	414	Spanish	466
Photographic chemistry	771	Prostitution	618, 176
Photographs	773	Protection	337
Photography	770	Protestant episcopal	283
Photo-lithography	775	Protestantism	283-289
Phrase-books, <i>see</i> Language.		Protestantism and Romanism	282
Phrenology	139	Protoplasm	576
Phthisis	616	Protozoa	593
Physical education	613	paleontology	563



Physical geography	551	Provençal language	449
Physics	530	Proverbs, and quotations	819
Physics molecular	539	Proverbs, Bible	223
Physiognomy	138	Providence	214
Physiography	551	Provincialisms	427, 437, etc.
Physiology	612	Pruning	634, 715
Physiology comparative	591	Prussia	943
Physiology, mental	131	Psalms	223
Physiology, vegetable	581	Pseudonyms	14
Piano-forte	786	Psychology	140
Picture galleries	759	Public accounts	336
Piedmont	945	Public buildings	725
Pig	636	Public charities	361
Piracy	345	Public documents	328
Pisciculture	639	Public education	370
Plague	616, 614	Public funds	336
Planets	523	Public health	614
Plans for building	692	Public houses	390
Plants	580	Public lands	353
landscape gardening	716	Public meetings	360
paleontology	561	Public schools	378
Platonic philosophy	184	Public speaking	815
Platonists, new	186	Public worship	246
Playing cards	795	Pulpit oratory	250
Plays, <i>see</i> Drama	812, 792	Pumps	532
Pleading	349	Punctuation, English	421
Plumbing	696	Punishment	345
Plurality of worlds	521	Puritans	277, 289
Pneumatics	533	Puseyism	244, 283
Pneumatology	150	Pygmies	599
Poetical books of Bible	223	Pyramids	916, 932
Poetry	811	Pyrites	549
English	821	Pyrotechnics	662
French	841	Pyrrhonism	186
German	831	Pythagorean philosophy	182
Greek	881		

<b>Quadrumana</b>	599	Quantitative analysis	545
Quadrupeds	599	Quarantine	614
Quakers	289	Quaternions	518
Qualitative analysis	544	Quotations	819, 829, etc.

<b>Race-horse</b>	798	Revenue	336
Races, history	572	Reviews, <i>see</i> Periodicals	
Racing	798	Revivals	269
Radiates	593	Revolution, American	973
Radiates paleontology	563	Revolution, French	944
Railroad engineering	625	Rhetoric	815
Railroad locomotives	621	Rhetoric sacred	251
Railroads	385	Rhode Island	974
Railways, laws of	343	Rhododendron	582
Rain	551	Riddles	819, 829, etc.
Rank	322	Riding	798
Rationalism	211, 155	Right of search	341
Readers	418, 428, 438, etc.	Rights and liberties	342
Reading, art of	815	Riots	343
Reading courses	15, 16	Ritualism	244
Reading for self-education	374	River transportation	387
Real estate	374	Rivers	551
Reason	374	Roads	625
Rebellion, Southern	973	Rocky mountains	557, 917
Recipe books	640	Rodentia	599
Recreation	790	Roman antiquities	937

Reformation	274	Roman architecture	722
Reformatory associations	364	Roman Catholics	282
Reformatory institutions	364	Roman history, ancient	937
Reformed church	289	Roman history, modern	945
Regeneration	234	Roman literature	870
Regimen	613	Roman law	348
Regulations of armies	355	Roman mythology	292
Regulations of navies	359	Roman sculpture	733
Religion and science	215	Romance	813
Religion and sermons	255	English	823
Religions, Non-Christian	290	French	843
Religious anecdotes	249	German	833
Religious associations	362	Italian	853
Religious biography	922	Religious	249
Religious education	377	Spanish	863
Religious fiction	249	Romanic languages	440-469
Religious institutions	362	Romansh language	459
Religious orders	271	Rome, ancient	937
Religious philosophy	201	Rome, modern	945
Remains	560	Romish church	282
Rents	333	Rope-making	677
Repentance	234, 241	Rowing	797
Reptiles	598	Rubber manufactures	675
Reptiles paleontology	568	Ruminants	599
Republican institutions	324	Rural architecture	728
Resistance of materials	691	Rural sports	796
Resurrection	236	Russia	947
Retribution	237	Russian America	977
Revealed religion	231	Russian language	497
Revelation	231		

<b>Sabbatarians</b>	289	Societies, literature	806
Sabbath	263	Societies, natural science	506
Sabbath reform	263	Societies, philology	406
Sabbath schools	268	Societies, philosophy	106
Sacrament of baptism	264	Societies, science	506
Sacrament of Lord's Supper	265	Societies, secret	366
Sacred biography	922	Societies, sociology	306
Sacred rhetoric	251	Societies, theology	206
Sacrifices	221	Societies, useful arts	606
Saddlery	685	Society	177
Sailors	387	Sociology	300
St. Domingo	979	Sociology biography of	923
Sale catalogues of books	17, 18	Socratic philosophy	183
Salt manufacture	664	Soils	631
Salvation	234	Solar system	523
Sandwich Islands	997	Soldiers	355
Sanitary commissions	364	Somnambulism	135
Sanitary commissions U.S.	361	Songs	784
Sanitary measures	614	Sonnets	811, 821, etc.
Sanskrit language	494	Sophist philosophy	183
Sardinia	945	Sorcery	133
Satan	235	Soul	233
Satire	817	Sound	534
English	827	South Africa	968
French	847	botany	586
German	837	geography	916
Italian	857	South America	980
Latin	877	botany	588
Spanish	867	customs and costumes	398
Savings banks	332	ecclesiastical history	278
Saxon language	429	geography	918
Saxons	943	geology	558
Scandinavia	948	history	980
Scandinavian language	498	statistics	318
Scandinavian literature	898	travels	918
Scepticism	211	South Carolina	976
Scholastic philosophy	198	South seas	999
Schools	378	Southern States	976

Schools Sunday	268	Spain	946
School architecture	727	Spanish language	460
School houses	727	Spanish literature	860
Schools of art	707	Spanish philosophy	196
Schools of painting	753-756	Specie payment	332
Schopenhauer's philosophy	193	Specifications for building	692
Schleswig-Holstein	943	Specters	133
Science, Natural	500	Spectroscope	535
biography of	925	Spectrum analysis	544
Scientific societies	506	Speeches, <i>see</i> Oratory.	
Scientific travels	508	Spherical astronomy	521
Scotland	941	Spherical geometry	513
Scotch language	496	Spherical trigonometry	514
Scotch philosophy	192	Spiders	595
Scriptures	220	Spinoza's philosophy	147
Scrofulous diseases	616	Spiritualism	133
Sculpture	730	Spontaneous generation	577
Sculptors' lives	927	Sports	796
Seamanship	656, 527	Stables	636
Secession	342	Stage	792
Second advent	236	Stained glass	745
Second sight	133	Stammering	616
Secret societies	366	Stamps	383
Sects, Christian	280	Standing army	355
Secular education	377	Starch manufacture	664
Self-culture	374	Stars	523
Self-education	374	State	320
Semitic languages	493	State ethics	172
Semitic literature	893	State papers	328
Sensation	152	State rights	342
Sensational psychology	145	State trials	345
Sense	152	Statesmen, lives	923
Sepulchres	718	Statics	531
Sepulture	614	Statistical methods	311
Sermons	252-259	Statistics	310
Serpents	598	Statuary	730
Servants	647	Statute law	343
Servia	949	Steam-engine	621
Sewerage	614	Steam-fitting	696
Sewing	687	Steam-navigation	527, 656
Sewing machine	687	Steam-transportation	385, 656
Sex in education	376	Steel	669
Sexual ethics	176	Steel engraving	762
Sexual science	618	Stenography	653
Sexes	136	Stereotyping	655
Shades and shadows	744	Stereoscopes and views	776
Shakers	289	Stethoscope	616
Shakesperiana	822	Stipple engraving	765
Sheep	636	Stock, live	636
Shells	594	Stocks	333
Shells fossil	564	Stoic philosophy	188
Shemitic languages	493	Stoneware	673
Ship-building	699	Storms	551
Ship-canal	626, 387	Stills	663
Shipping laws	346	Strategy	355
Shoemaking	685, 675	Strawberries	634
Shooting	799	Stringed instruments	787
Short-hand	653	Study, methods of	371
Shrubbery	716	Stuttering	616
Siam	959	Sublime and beautiful	701
Siberia	957	Submarine telegraph	384
Sicily	945	Succession	323
Sick-room	649	Suffrage	324
Sieges	355, 623	Sugar-cane	633
Sight	536	Sugar manufacture	664
Sight hygiene	613	Sugar planting	633
Signals	654	Suicide	131
Sign painting	698	Sumatra	992
Silk culture	638	Summer-houses	717
Silk manufacture	677	Sun	523
Silk worm	638, 595	Sunda	992
Silver metal	549	Sunday-schools	268
Silver mines	628	Supernaturalism	133
Silver money	332	Superstition	133
Sin	233	Surgery	617

Singing	784	Surnames	929
Sisters of Mercy	362	Surveying	622
Skating	796	Susceptibility	157
Skepticism	211	Sweden	948
Skin diseases	616	Swedenborgians	289
Skye	941	Swimming	796
Slander	177, 345	Swine	636
Slang	427, 437, etc.	Switzerland	949
Slating	695	Syllogism	160
Slavery	326	Symbolism	219
Slavic language	497	Synonyms, English	424
Slavic literature	897	Synonyms, French	444
Sleep	135	Synonyms, German	434
Sleep walking	135	Synonyms, Greek	484
Small-pox	616, 614	Synonyms, Italian	454
Soap-making	664	Synonyms, Latin	474
Social ethics	177	Synonyms, Spanish	464
Social science	300	Syphilis	616
Social worship	247	Syria	956
Socialisms	335	Syriac language	493
Societies, fine arts	706	Syro-Chaldaic	493
Societies, general	60	Systematic botany	582
Societies, history	906		

<b>Tableaux</b>	791	Theoretical ethics	171
Tables, dining	643	Therapeutics	615
Tables, mathematical	514	Thibet	951
Tachygraphy	653	Thirty-nine articles	283
Tactics	355	Thomsonianism	615
Tailoring	687	Thought	153
Takigrafy	653	Throat diseases	616
Tales, <i>see</i> Romance.		Thunder	537
Talmud	296	Tides	521
Tanning	675	Tiling	695
Tariffs	337	Timber	691
Tartary	951, 959	Tin manufacture	671
Taste and criticism	701	Tin mineral	549
Taxation	336	Tithes	336
Taxidermy	579	Tobacco	615, 178, 633
Tea cultivation	633	Toilet	646
Teachers and teaching	371	Tolls	336
Technology, chemical	660	Tombs	718
Teeth	611, 617	Topographical engineering	622
Tehuantepec	978	Topography	910
Telegraph	384	Total abstinence	178
Telegraphy	654	Toxicology	615
Telescope	535, 522	Tractarianism	244, 283
Temperaments	137	Tract society	362
Temperance	178	Trade	380
Temperature	551, 536	Trade marks	608
Templars	366	Trades, mechanic	680
Tennessee	976	Trades, unions	367, 606, 331
Testacea	594	Tragedies, <i>see</i> Drama.	
Testament, New	225	Transactions	106, 206, 306, etc.
Testament, Old	221	Transcendentalism	142
Testamentary law	349	Translation, Greek authors	880
Testimony	349	Translation, Latin authors	870
Texas	976	Transportation	380, 656, 345
Textile fabrics	677	Transubstantiation	282
Texts, comparative	418	Transylvania	943
Texts, English	428	Trapping	639
Texts, French	448	Travels	910
Texts, German	438	Travels scientific	508
Texts, Greek, with notes	488	Treason	345
Texts, Greek, without notes	880	Treasury	352
Texts, Italian	458	Trees	580
Texts, Latin, with notes	478	Trees, ornamental	715
Texts, Latin, without notes	870	Trespass	345
Texts, Spanish	468	Trials	340

Thanksgiving	244	Trigonometry	514
Theater, <i>see</i> Drama.		Trilobites	565
Theater, ethics	175	Trinity	232
Theaters	792	Troubadours	449, 841
Theatricals	792	Trunk-making	685
Theft	345	Trusts and trustees	344
Theism	211	Tungusic language	499
Theodicy	231, 214	Tunnels	625
Theological doctrine	230	Turkey	949
Theological essays	204	Turkey in Asia	956
Theology	200	Turkish baths	613
Theology biography of	922	Turkish language	499
Theology devotional	240	Turning	674
Theology natural	210	Tuscany	945
Theology practical	240	Type founding	671
Theoretical astronomy	521	Typography	655
Theoretical chemistry	541	Tyrol	943

<b>Understanding</b>	153	Universal History	909
Uniforms	355	Universal language	408
Unitarians	288	Universalism	288
United States	324, 973	Universities	378
botany	587	University education	373
customs and costumes	397	Upholstering	645
ecclesiastical history	277	Uruguay	989
geography	917	Useful arts	600
geology	557	biography of	926
history	973	Usury	334
statistics	317	Utah	977
travels	917		

<b>Vases</b>	738	Vertebrates paleontology	566
Vaudois	272, 949	Veterinary medicine	619
Vegetable physiology	581	Villas	728
Vegetable practice	615	Violin	787
Vegetables	635	Virginia	976
Vegetarianism	613	Virtue	170
Venereal diseases	616	Vision	535
Venezuela	987	Visions and dreams	135
Venice	945	Vital principle	576, 612
Ventilation	697	Vocal culture	784, 815
Ventriloquism	133	Vocal music	784
Vermont	974	Voice	784
Versification	811	Volcanoes	553
Vertebrates	596	Voyages	910

<b>Wages</b>	331	West Virginia	976
Wakefulness	135	Western States	977
Waldenses	272, 945	Whale	599
Wales	942	Whale fisheries	639
Walks	713	Wheat	633
Wallachian language	459	Whigs	324
War ethics	172	Whigs English	323
War science	355-359	Whist	795
Warehouses	380	Will	159
Warming	697	Wills	343
Washing	648	Wind instruments	788
Washington territory	977	Wine	663

Watch-making	681	Wisconsin	977
Water, artificial ponds, etc.	714	Wit	819, 829, 839, etc.
Water colors	751	Witchcraft	133
Water cure	615	Woman, education	376
Water wheels	531, 621	Woman, suffrage	324
Water works	628	Wood engraving	761
Watering-places	613	Wood manufactures	674
Wax flowers	745	Wool	636
Wealth	331	Wool manufactures	677
Weather	551	Working classes	331
Weaving	677	Worship	246-248
Weights and measures	389	Writing	651
Welsh language	496	Writing short-hand	653
West Indies	979		

**Xylography** 655

<b>Yachting</b>	797	Yellow fever	616
Year books	313	Young men's association	362

<b>Zend</b>	295	Zoölogy	590
Zend Avesta	295	Zoöphytes	593
Zodiac	521	Zoroaster	295

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