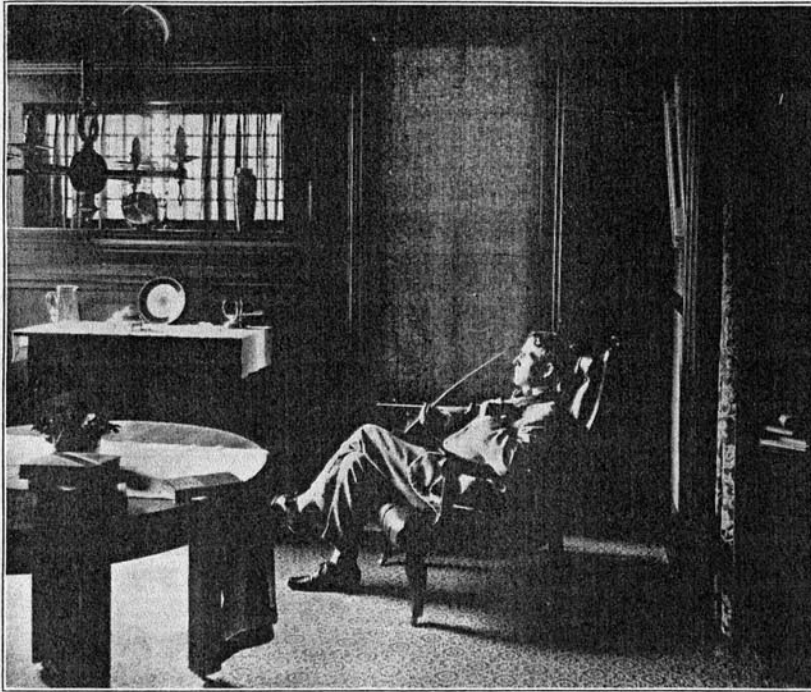


## Alexander Stuart Graham—Gentleman

A Picturesque Member of the Library Staff

By MILTON TUCKER '28



"Sandy" Graham at Leisure in His Home

Since the recent construction of the university library addition, individualism among the employees has apparently been submerged to effect a more businesslike atmosphere. The average student now entering the book-haven passes through the vestibule, turns to the left, and finds himself in the large reading room. And all this is perfectly correct, and just as it should be.

But what if this mythical average collegian should turn to his right? Ah! For him an entire new world would be revealed. He would be stimulated at once by a smiling glance radiating from a charming brunette, a worthy member of the estimable library accession department, which now occupies the left wing of the old building. Farther on, in the heart of the former reading room, he would find himself surrounded by cases of interesting exhibits, previously inadequately located in a room directly beneath President Thomas's new offices.

If our accidental acquaintance, the student, should continue his ramblings, he would discover large filing cases in the ante-room of the right hand Hamilton street entrance. These cabinets contain the history of each Rutgers graduate, and any fact of possible interest to any lover of *The Scarlet*. In the left hand doorway, he would encounter an old cannon, valuable coin-collections, and other exhibits. Then, if our unknown student should happen into the room that once housed the exhibit cases, he would meet

the most interesting possession of the library. He would come in contact with the man responsible for the systematization of all Rutgersensia—the man behind the library museum—Mr. Alexander Stuart Graham, the man who successfully traced back the painters of the chapel portraits, who is always on the lookout for more acquisitions of antiquarian or historical importance to deposit in the library—the gentleman who has devoted twelve years of his life toward making the library interesting and beloved by all students.

"Sandy," as his intimates address him, is thoroughly Scotch, and was born in New Brunswick on Washington's birthday in 1859. His birthplace, opposite the college campus on Somerset street, was situated on the present site of Harding's undertaking shop. His mother wished to christen him George Washington, in honor of the day, but his liberty-loving father refused to "name any child of his after a slave holder."

Mr. Graham has been a man of few occupations. His first position was with a photographer at the age of fifteen. His next was with the old Janeway & Carpenter wallpaper firm, and lasted from 1874 until 1914, when the company failed. Except for the brief interval of 1914-1915 spent on a New England tour, Mr. Graham has passed the time since then in the library.

At the wallpaper plant, Mr. Graham was a print cutter and designer. The work required a skilled eye, an artistic touch

and extreme patience because of the lack of modern, efficient tools. Yet the Scotchman was among the best of the firm, as his record of forty years testifies.

Although Mr. Graham never enjoyed any strict schooling, his education began early through the influence of a sister, who was a governess to the children of Henry L. Janeway, who at that time dwelled in a large house where B. F. Keith's State Street Theatre now stands.

When Alexander Graham entered the library, Rutgersensia records were poorly kept. He discovered clippings and data relating to Rutgers affairs in the dark recesses of the old stone cellars. But under his direction, everything was changed, systematized, and put on a usable basis. He introduced the envelope idea, whereby every item concerning any Rutgers man is kept in a separate folio, where it is instantly available. He also instituted the Rutgers bookcase, in which the works of all Rutgers men are kept. In addition, Mr. Graham is the guardian of all class and athletic histories and of all college publications.

At the present time, because of the new addition, Mr. Graham encounters very few of the students. But back in the good old days a lover of books or antiques was always to be found in his office, now given over to the President. With glowing eyes the Highlander recalls how Louis Ginsberg '18, the poet, used to linger in his den. He will portray to you a glimpse of Maurice Erlich '24 running in and out of his room, when but a short-trousered youngster in high school. Today he retells how he directed Erlich's attention to biography; and undoubtedly Mr. Graham was a big influence in the life of that brilliant boy who has been the recipient of so many honors. Every time Erlich returns from Harvard to visit his family on Easton avenue, he spends a good portion of his stay in the vicinity of "Sandy" Graham.

"Yes," the historian says, as he caresses his books, "I told Maurice: 'If you want to read, read biography—biography. Read the lives of Hamilton, Jefferson, Marshall, and those other fellows.' And he did! Oh, he's a smart one! He'll be a great lawyer some day!"

Other men paused from their studies long enough to benefit from the local philosopher. Among the most notable was Roy Franklyn Nichols, now a professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Graham, steered into books by his sister and father, developed a fondness for collecting which has lasted throughout his life. At his home on Hale street he conducts an informal book-shop, and his shingle is a typical Grahamish one—"At the Sign of the Thistle."

The year 1927 finds Mr. Graham's position fairly formidable. He has the powerful patronage of John W. Mettler '09,

head of the Interwoven Stocking Company; and the combination of the one's finances and the other's knack of ferretting out valuables has brought to the library several rare and expensive objects. The most notable of these are the letter from Washington to Simeon De Witt of the class of 1776; and an expensive collection of portraits of Franklin, Napoleon and Washington, obtained recently.

At present, Mr. Graham has been commissioned by Mr. Mettler to go abroad this summer in search of the first charter of the college, which never has been located. Mr. Graham will first visit members of his family in Scotland, and

then will go to London, Amsterdam and possibly Paris. On his trip, the librarian will also endeavor to uncover information about several old Rutgers graduates, teachers and trustees whose lives have been obscured by the past. Mr. Graham will utilize all such material for his work by revising the book of Rutgers graduates published in 1916—a job, by the way, which he thinks will take at least a decade if completed in his thorough, unhurried style.

Every person, with or without a Rutgers stamp, will find a friend and an educator in this youthful, gray-haired keeper of books.