

NOTES

ON KOPITAR'S VISIT TO OXFORD

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Very little is known of Kopitar's visit to England. From his autobiography we learn simply: "da er 1814, obwohl der letzte Beamte der Hofbibliothek, den eben so ehrenvollen als willkommenen Auftrag erhielt die 1809 entführten Bücher und Handschriften in Paris zurück zu übernehmen, bei welcher Gelegenheit er auch eine Excursion nach London und Oxford machte" (Miklosich 1857:12).

He also mentions the excursion in his correspondence. From a letter to Dobrovský, written in Paris on Christmas Eve 1814 (Jagić 1885:390-93), in which Kopitar sets forth his plans for travelling home to Vienna without revealing any intention of visiting England first, we may deduce that his English trip was arranged at very short notice and that it took place in January 1815, for by 5 February that year he was back in Paris and setting out on his journey to Vienna, where he arrived on 14 February (Ibrovac 1953:77).

There may be some significance in the fact that in the letter he speaks of a member of the British Bible Society he had met in Paris ("Disputavi cum membro societatis biblicae, quae est in Anglia ..."). To be sure, this person need not have been an Englishman, but there are in the letters certain other indications of his having met Englishmen in Paris, and there are grounds for supposing that acquaintances made there lay behind his visit to England (Pogačnik 1978:37). However, we know nothing of his connections or intentions in England apart from his vain attempt to visit the already deceased John Livie (Dositej Obradović's host in 1784-5) (Ibrovac 1953:77).

Kopitar was by profession a librarian, and he thus might well be expected during his Oxford visit to have called on other librarians and on libraries. Yet the records of readers and visitors to the Bodleian Library in the period 1810-20 contain no trace of his presence. (I am grateful to Dr. Gregory Walker for having checked the possible sources.) The fact that Kopitar, nevertheless, did

visit the Bodleian is confirmed by a brief dedication written more than ten years later in his own hand on the fly-leaf of a copy of Dobrovský's Institutiones linguae slavicae (1822) which he presumably donated to the Library (Shelfmark 8°. S.216 BS). It reads as follows:

Bibliothecae Bodlejanae/quae est Oxonii--/
grati animi ergo/D.D.D./illius a. 1815 hospes/
Barth. Kopitar./Vindobonâ 27. Sept. 1825.

Who invited Kopitar to Oxford and in what sense he was a guest of the Bodleian Library are questions still awaiting an answer.

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