

# Adventures With A Card Catalogue

Thomas Abrams

**I**t was the last day of final examinations, and my head was glutted to the ears with a thousand and one facts. I had one more test to take, and then I was finished for the semester. My mind reeling, I descended the steps to the library stacks in hopes of securing a few moments of rest and quiet in that murky lair of learning. The library was empty, and I had little trouble enlisting the solace of a solitary table located in a shadowy corner. Secluded behind massive metal shelves, I cradled my head in my arms and slept.

"What in the name of fury is this?"

"What a singular looking creature."

In a state of semi-consciousness I detected the faint rumble of voices.

"I say it's a mortal!"

"What? A mortal? In here and at this hour?"

I awoke to find myself surrounded by ten hoary old men. One of them, a man with a most godly and righteous demeanor, stared at me appraisingly.

"What is your religion, mortal son?" He intoned solemnly.

"I have no particular religion," I answered.

"What?" he bellowed wrathfully. "If you have no religion you are not welcome here."

He turned abruptly and merged with the shadows, and as he did so, I observed that a large number 200 was printed on the back of his flowing white robe.

Next, a dainty old man with a precise, foppish gait stepped forward. He was followed by several slaves who gaped at him in adoration. He picked up my notebook which lay on the table and perused it.

"Bah," he growled. "Your style is atrocious."

As he turned, I perceived that his number was 800. The ancient who wore the number 500 seemed to remain aloof from the group. After throwing a few contemptuous glances my way, he turned and strode arrogantly away.

Number 900 was certainly the most handsome of the group. Although his face was old and wrinkled like the rest, his clothes were bespangled and gay, and he flaunted a gorgeous multi-colored periwig. For all that, he seemed diffident and shy; for when I surveyed his dazzling garments, he turned and dashed precipitately into the shadows. Following him were 600, 700, and 300, who was a mere child compared to the rest.

They had all left but one. He walked over to the table and sat down. He too was old and grey, but there was such an appealing quality in his eyes that I felt I was meeting an old friend.

"Well, what do you think of them?" His voice was kind.

"They certainly aren't very hospitable," I replied.

"Don't let them bother you," he said. "They are all children despite their age. Did you notice number 200? He's been haunting libraries longer than any of us here can remember. He was very useful at one time, but as he grew older, he became a bit senile and forgot that even mortals can resent too much abusive treatment. Ever since the 17th century, his influence has been negligible."

"Number 800 certainly thought little of my literary endeavors," I said, despairingly.

Literary people are always eager to despise unliterary people," he said after some thought. "Did you notice the slaves that followed him? They were all famous writers at one time. Writers are damnably independent fellows, you know.

They're above hell or heaven and follow their precious deity even after death.

"Speaking of independence," I said. "Number 500 was certainly above mingling with the rest of the group."

"Oh, yes," replied my friend. "Ever since a fellow named Darwin wrote a theory, 500 has been absolutely insufferable. He thinks that he is a world in himself, separable from all other 'numbers'."

"Number 900 was a handsome fellow," I observed.

"He's no better than the rest of us," the old man responded. "You mortals have just habited him in such finery that he seems to be much more magnificent than he actually is."

"And who are you?" I finally inquired.

"I'm a little bit of all of them," he mused. "I'm 900 stripped of all his gilded superfluities. I'm 800 stripped of his vanity and precision. I'm 200 stripped of his fanaticism; and like 500, I give knowledge; but unlike him, I also give wisdom." With that he turned and departed, and I saw that his number was 100.

The bell rang, and I rose to go to my last class of the semester, greatly relieved of the mental confusion which had driven me to that secluded spot. Needless to say, from that time on I have never regarded a card catalogue as a dull and colorless object.

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## On Losing One's Illusions

Connie Jenkins

Everyone has probably lost an illusion at least once before he leaves college, and it is probable that college itself is a major cause of disillusionment. Take the case of the brilliant English student who graduates from high school with nothing lower than an A on his written work. Small wonder, though; anyone who cannot write an adequate paper on "My Favorite Sport" or "The Best Movie I Have Ever Seen" must be a first class moron. Nevertheless, the would be genius thinks to himself, "College will be a cinch."

His first disillusionment comes during the first week of school, when his English professor, with a wicked gleam in her eyes, announces the topic for theme number one: "Why Reading Shakespeare is Preferable to All Other Forms of Recreation." "But is it?" the student wonders, as he sits waiting for inspiration to come or possibly praying for a bolt of lightning to strike him dead before the papers are collected.