

# *Historical Editing in the United States*

PAPERS READ AT THE 150TH ANNUAL MEETING  
OF THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

## I. THE RECENT PAST

BY L. H. BUTTERFIELD

YOU will remember that Artemus Ward had to remind the elderly Shakeress that men are "a rayther important part of the populashun." Mr. Boyd and I are dealing today with what is generally conceded to be a rather important part of the work of historical societies—the publication of materials documenting the American past, including yesterday's events in Cuba as well as what happened on a neighboring island in 1492. In its hundred and fifty years of activity the American Antiquarian Society has made large, steady, and distinguished contributions to this work. In its series of *Archæologia Americana* that began in 1820, and coming down through its current series of *Proceedings* in more than seventy volumes, it has always devoted a great deal of space to documents. One thinks at once of the Lechford Note-Book, the useful and entertaining Diaries of Isaiah Thomas and C. C. Baldwin, and Clarence Brigham's edition of British Royal Proclamations Relating to America, 1603-1783. The numbers of the *Proceedings* now being issued are at length furnishing scholars with a full and reliable version of that secret weapon of Mr. Shipton, the Reverend Ebenezer Parkman's invaluable journal. And moving forward with large strides under the Society's sponsorship are the gigantic projects to issue all the Evans imprints and all colonial newspapers on microcards. This is a record of accomplishment to be grateful for and proud of.

Any view of documentary publication in the recent past must start with J. Franklin Jameson. In a remarkable article entitled "Gaps in the Published Records of United States History," published in the *American Historical Review* in 1906, Jameson pointed out that although much had been done, much more remained to be done,

and we are proceeding to do it without system or order. Executive departments of the federal government, or clerks of Congressional committees, conceive and execute documentary compilations; but all is casual and miscellaneous. More than half the state governments are publishing or have published historical materials; and no two have followed the same plan. Historical societies are prone to publish what seems at the moment most interesting or most available, provided of course it is of date anterior to 1783, at which date for most of them American history comes to an end; certainly they seldom pay any regard to what other historical societies are doing. Many zealous individuals have added and are adding to the mass of valuable documentary print; but still in a casual manner. The result is chaos. Some parts of our history are relatively oversupplied with original material, while others are in this regard neglected, and therefore remain unwritten, or are left a prey to those writers who do not need documentary material in order to compose historical volumes. Figuratively speaking, we have bought enormous quantities of supplies for our excavations, we have engaged our workers, we have dug deeply here and there; but we have "made the dirt fly" before we have mapped our isthmus.

Much of the progress made in the half century since has emanated from Jameson's own efforts. As director of the Carnegie Institution's Department of Historical Research and concurrently or successively editor of the *American Historical Review* and chief of the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress, Jameson bestrode the historical scene as no one had done before or is likely to do again. His activity as thinker, planner, administrator, money-raiser, and amiable goad in discovering, gathering, inventorying, and publishing historical sources is a well-known story, thanks largely to our fellow-member Dr. Leland's recording of it in a valuable series of articles and reminiscences, some

of them presented before this Society. But the most cursory glance at Jameson's letters as published by the American Philosophical Society in 1956 conveys so vividly his fertility of mind and his persuasiveness of expression and argument that it is tempting to linger over them for a moment or two.

While still at Brown in the 1890's Jameson drew up plans for an Historical Manuscripts Commission comparable in scope with the older British agency of the same name. Appointed the Commission's first chairman in 1895, he proceeded at once to publish, in the familiar stout blue volumes of the American Historical Association's *Annual Reports*, the results of his own and his colleagues' labors, for example, in 1896, Stephen Higginson's letters and the William Clark-Edmond Genet correspondence; in 1899, a 1200-page collection of John C. Calhoun's letters which Jameson edited himself; in 1903, Turner's edition of the correspondence of the French ministers in the United States, 1791-1797; in 1907-1908, three volumes of *Texan Diplomatic Correspondence, 1834-1846*, edited by George P. Garrison; in 1912, Worthington Ford's "Letters of William Vans Murray to John Quincy Adams, 1797-1803," a first dent in the Adams Papers; and so on and on, giving momentum to a publication program that lasted until the mid-thirties, when, under other leadership, the A.H.A. virtually abandoned the publication of documents, eventually excluding them from even its own journal.

Jameson's appointment at the Carnegie Institution of Washington in 1905 gave him great leverage for this favorite activity, and he took full advantage of it. To the present writer, who has spent most of his professional life on two or three editorial projects, the results are awesome, but I will not list them here. If you wish to learn how and why Jameson was effective, read his letters. One morning in 1906 before getting out of bed he realized that "a Check-list of brothers-

in-law in American political history" might help to explain otherwise inexplicable political relationships. For example, Charles Francis Adams and Edward Everett married sisters; Aaron Burr's sister married Tapping Reeve; Albert Gallatin married a sister of Joseph Nicholson. Before the day was over, Jameson wrote a long letter proposing this project to the editor of the *Century Dictionary of Names*, who was evidently not responsive. He had better luck in proposing a *Repertory of Diplomatic Representatives of All Countries since 1648*, did the preliminary bibliographical work on it himself, and lived to see the first of three volumes published in 1936. Reverting to 1906, he proposed in a letter written that year to this Society that it undertake a facsimile edition of John White's drawings of the lost Roanoke Island colony, a project only now being completed by the British Museum, the Institute of Early American History and Culture, and the University of North Carolina Press. He was among the first to look into photography as a means of cheap and reliable copying for scholarly purposes.

Jameson's prominence won him early election to this and other honorary societies in New England. But he tended not to be a very faithful member because he was too far away, was engrossed in other activities, and was skeptical of the value of much that the older historical societies were doing. His conscience troubled him a little on this point, and he gave freely of his advice when called on to do so. In writing C. F. Adams 2d in 1907 about "a director of research and publication" for the Massachusetts Historical Society, he put Worthington C. Ford at the top of a long list, as one who might reverse the "diminishing importance" of the volumes of the Society's *Proceedings*, "in which too much space is given to biographies of deceased members." He also castigated the private historical societies in the East for faults of a sort that Mr. Whitehill has lately found commoner in publicly

supported societies elsewhere—parochialism and the kind of filiopietism that devotes itself to collecting “liberty poles and regimental buttons” on the assumption that little of interest happened in the United States after the Treaty of Paris in 1783. But one solid virtue he did discern and often praise in the work of the older societies—their continuous publication, as he put it in a discussion with Professors Channing and McMaster before this Society in 1910, of “documentary materials, which will have in the future the same original value they have at present.”

Among Jameson's many services to the cause of history, none was more far-reaching than his recommendation of Worthington Ford to the Massachusetts Historical Society. Ford had been virtually weaned in a great private library of Americana (his father's, in Brooklyn), had gone into government service and become as familiar as anyone could be at the time with the vast but scattered accumulations of personal manuscripts and public records there, and had edited an edition of George Washington's *Writings* (14 vols., 1889–1893) for G. P. Putnam's Sons' series of “Letter-Press Editions” of statesmen's papers. Ford's *Washington* represented the best that had been achieved in historical editing up to that time. In 1897 Herbert Putnam brought him to the Boston Public Library as chief of its documents and statistics division, but characteristically Ford during his five years there gave a great deal of attention to bibliographical work and the editing of American historical documents. In 1902 Putnam drew him back to Washington to head the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress during what proved to be one of its most expansive periods and one of its most active in publishing documentary works. Impressive as it may have been before, Ford's output increased enormously after he came to the Massachusetts Historical Society at the beginning of 1909, and it did not slacken for twenty

years. It has been calculated that he saw through the press fifty-one volumes of *Proceedings*, *Collections*, *House Journals*, and other publications of the Society during his editorship, and among those volumes were his own definitive edition of Bradford's *Plymouth*, his *Warren-Adams Letters* in two volumes, and his *Massachusetts Broadsides*. The influence of his orderly mind was apparent at once in the conversion of both *Proceedings* and *Collections* to a single numbering from the time-honored but complicated pattern of two numberings, one for the series and one for the volumes therein. He led the Society out of other old habits. He insisted that its holdings be accessible to all qualified scholars, though here he encountered a stumbling-block in what he called Librarian Samuel A. Green's "masterly inactivity." He put the Society in effective touch with scholars and scholarship elsewhere in the nation and in European centers of learning. In 1915 he had the Society procure a photostat machine, which during its first run he personally operated and which eventually greatly enriched the research materials available at the Society, in neighboring institutions, and in other libraries throughout the country that subscribed to his long series of "Photostat Americana."

Ford's editorial and bibliographical contributions were by no means limited to his work for the Historical Society during his editorship, nor were they ended by his retirement in 1929. This is not the place to describe them or to pay the tribute still owing to him, which might most appropriately take the form of a selection of his correspondence relating to his work as editor and bibliographer. (Such a volume would harmonize well with the long series of M.H.S. *Collections* that he himself edited.) But something must be said here of his relations with the Adams family and their papers. Quite evidently C. F. Adams, then president of the Historical Society, brought Ford to Boston with the intention

(among others) of entrusting him with at least some of the powers of a custodian of the Adams family manuscripts. These had been physically in the Society's building since 1902 but were not part of its collections. In Washington, Ford had made the acquaintance of Henry Adams, who respected his abilities, and at the Boston Public Library he had proved useful to Brooks Adams by furnishing him statistics for his philosophical-historical speculations. The Adams brothers were anything but agreed on what should be done with the family papers or how they should be used, but at least until C. F. Adams' death Ford drew pretty freely on them for communications to the Historical Society, for contributions to the A.H.A. Historical Manuscript Commission's reports, and for other purposes. Within a few weeks of his occupying the third-floor office I am now privileged to occupy, Ford proposed to the brothers his plan of editing John Quincy Adams' correspondence and other writings (excluding the famous diary) from the original manuscripts. They agreed, and he got to work. The valuable but sadly truncated *Writings* of J. Q. Adams followed in seven volumes published between 1913 and 1917. It is an extraordinary performance for a solitary worker and especially for one who was doing so much else besides. Its obvious limitations (apart from its being broken off in midstream, which was the publisher's fault, not Ford's) resulted from the haste with which it was prepared, the failure of the publisher to grasp the requirements of scholarly editing, and an editorial selectivity that was perhaps more discreet than it would have been if Ford had not had temperamental members of the family looking over his shoulder while he worked.

A close observer may detect in Ford's editing, here and elsewhere, a more basic fault than any of those I have so far mentioned. For his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1917 he chose to discuss "The

Editorial Function in United States History," a witty and stimulating address that is all the more valuable because few historians have dealt with the subject. He began with an apology:

If . . . I say a word for an historical agency on which almost no words have been spent, my apology must cover at once the poverty of the subject and the comparatively low rank of the agency. I refer to the editor of original sources for history, the ginning or picking machine which deals with the raw material, the first stage toward the warp and woof of historical writing.

Modesty is never out of place, but as Ford develops his theme it becomes apparent that he did indeed believe the editor is essentially a machine. He failed to recognize the creative effort that went into his own editing of Bradford's *Plymouth* and that is by no means absent from the *Writings* of J. Q. Adams and some other editorial work that Ford did. A little further on I hope to make clear what I mean by the phrase "creative effort." Here I only wish to point out that on the single occasion that Ford talked in general terms about the craft of the editor he treated it as if it were a mere mechanical processing of copy from manuscript to print, divorced from intellectual or artistic judgment, discipline, or skill. I think he knew better. Certainly he often *did* better. But too often the marks of the machine, not always in the very best state of repair, are apparent in the mass of material that flowed across his desk into print.

The third leading figure engaged in mapping our isthmus at the beginning of this century makes a pleasant geographical balance with those I have so far mentioned. Though a New Englander by birth, Reuben Gold Thwaites was a westerner in his base of operations and in his primary interests. Handpicked by Lyman C. Draper to carry on the work of the Wisconsin State Historical Society and to exploit the collections with which Draper had so richly endowed it, Thwaites proved an ideal successor. He was much

less of a pack-rat and much more of a disseminator than Draper; and although he had had scarcely more academic training, he possessed an infinitely more orderly mind and taught himself the professional disciplines that Draper never even understood. Frederick Jackson Turner's memorial tribute in 1914, with its appended bibliography, lists and evaluates Thwaites' documentary work for the Society at Madison, where he quarried for years in the same industrious manner that Ford quarried from the holdings of its older sister in Boston. Even before 1900 a commercial publisher, the Burrows Brothers in Cleveland, discovered Thwaites' energy and talents and launched under his editorship the great series of reprints and translations collectively known as *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, 1610-1791* (73 vols., 1896-1901). This task was scarcely well finished before another Cleveland publisher, Arthur H. Clark, commissioned Thwaites to edit an annotated collection of *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* (33 vols., 1904-1907). In the very midst of this enterprise Thwaites undertook another that was to prove his most creative effort, the editing from the manuscripts in the American Philosophical Society of the *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (8 vols., 1904-1905), thus realizing—or coming somewhere near realizing—the hundred-year-old dream of President Jefferson in sending out that transcontinental expedition for scientific and “literary” purposes in the first place.

The handsome and durable set of the *Original Journals* illustrates well the principle stated by Jameson, that sources edited according to the best scholarly standards have permanent utility. To be sure, additional documents have since been discovered, many of which have been brought together and admirably edited by Donald Jackson in his recent *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (1962), and others of which, found some years ago among the papers of General

John H. Hammond in St. Paul, we are promised will soon appear in print. But while Thwaites' collection, with its careful texts, thorough bibliographical and historical notes, and its volume of maps, will—one can safely say—remain an irreplaceable cornerstone, how many secondary accounts of the expedition of the two captains have followed one another during the past five or six decades into brief notice and obscurity? *Litera scripta manet*. Or, as Jameson declared in his first report on his plans and work at the Carnegie Institution of Washington, "*Melius est petere fontes quam rivulos secari.*"

In the period immediately succeeding I shall point out four great documentary works to which their editors devoted much of their careers, but I cannot take time to do justice either to those works or to their editors.

All four books that I wish to signalize—Farrand's *Records*, Carter's *Territorial Papers*, Fitzpatrick's *Washington*, and Burnett's *Letters of Members*—owed either their inception or their advancement, or both, to J. Franklin Jameson. Earliest among them is Max Farrand's *Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, first issued in three volumes in 1911 and corrected and enlarged to four volumes in the 150th anniversary year 1937. For a generation that has turned with confidence to these volumes to learn what went on in that momentous assembly, it is hard to conceive the handicaps under which earlier students labored. The earliest publication of the secret proceedings of the Convention was in a volume edited by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and published in 1819. Adams toiled long and hard over his task, for which he was ill fitted, and made a serious botch of it. This was by no means wholly his fault, because the original secretary of the Convention, William Jackson, had been ill qualified for his task too, and although he was still living when publication

of the journal was commissioned by Congress, he proved of no help whatever to the hard-pressed editor. Worse than that, Charles Pinckney, a surviving delegate to the Convention, furnished Adams with so heavily doctored a version of the famous "Pinckney Plan" of May, 1787, that it is now considered no better than a fabrication, but Adams printed it in good faith. And, finally, James Madison, who possessed much the fullest contemporary notes on the proceedings and debates in 1787, largely withheld them because he thought they ought not to be published until after his death; and he further complicated matters by going over his notes in later years and revising and "correcting" them according to the *Journal* as faultily edited by Adams in 1819. As the editors of the current edition of *Madison Papers* observe, in a sentence that is a masterpiece of understatement: "Madison's efforts during his years of retirement to assist the future editor of his papers and the future historian of his country were not altogether to their advantage."

John C. Fitzpatrick's preparation for editing George Washington's *Writings* began, one may almost say, the day he began his employment in the newly established Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress. There, from 1897 on, he compiled the Division's *Handbook of Manuscripts* (published in 1918 and not yet superseded), calendared large blocks of the Washington Papers and other Revolutionary collections, edited some of the volumes of the Library's edition of the *Journals of the Continental Congress*, and the complete *Diaries* of George Washington for the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union (4 vols., 1925). The Bicentennial Edition of *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources* (39 vols., 1931-1944) was Fitzpatrick's largest and last editorial undertaking; he did not, in fact, live to see the final volumes and indexes through the press. The blue and gilt volumes of the

Bicentennial Edition form a substantial and appropriate monument to the first President, but a less perfect one of its kind, I think it will be agreed, than the masonry monument on the Potomac. Thanks in part to the starvation budget on which he had to work, Fitzpatrick could not seek and did not find all the materials he should have included, and he not only necessarily (but regrettably) excluded letters written to Washington but all too often (and much less necessarily) failed to indicate their substance and location. Nor did he systematically indicate the nature and location of enclosures, which, especially in official correspondence, are sometimes more important than the letters which transmit them. The calendars that Fitzpatrick compiled for Washington's correspondence with the Continental Congress and the officers of the Continental Army make up for these deficiencies only very partially. From frequent use of the Bicentennial Edition and from reading Fitzpatrick's essays on Washington, one has the uneasy feeling that this devoted editor, like other Washington scholars before and since, was in some degree a victim of Washingtonolatry—the view that Washington was first and the rest nowhere. And so, perhaps, he saw nothing wrong in presenting everything exclusively through Washington's eyes and words: that was the way it *should* be presented. For the materials necessary for a wider view we must await the forthcoming microfilm edition of the complete Washington Papers in the Library of Congress.

If carried through to its proper conclusion, the *Territorial Papers of the United States* may prove the most massive as it unquestionably is one of the most valuable and best conducted documentary enterprises ever undertaken by the federal government. Under prodding from J. Franklin Jameson, planning for the *Territorial Papers* began in the State Department (which then had custody of much of the

documentation) in 1926. In 1934 the first three volumes were brought out under the editorship of the late Clarence E. Carter, who remained in charge until his death in 1961, though his office was transferred in 1950 to the National Archives. Carter's last volume was his twenty-sixth, dealing with Florida Territory, 1839-1845, and published in 1962. Florida, however, was only the twelfth state admitted to the Union among the thirty-two that have passed through territorial status, and with the admission of Alaska and Hawaii the terminus of the work receded almost half a century, the forty-eighth state, Arizona, having been admitted in 1912. What Dr. Carter's thoughts on this were, I do not know, but he was a brave man and an astute editor, and he laid solid ground for his successors. Solid ground too for the constitutional, administrative, political, military, economic, institutional, and social history of that moving frontier which by a process uniquely American became much the largest part of the United States. To suggest his (and our) immensely broadened concept of what history really is, and the skills required to present the sources of history adequately, compare any volume of Carter's *Territorial Papers* with any volume of the colonial records of one of the thirteen original states as edited—"processed" would be a better word—by clerks on a piecework basis and manufactured by a state printer at so much per page.

The fourth editorial landmark I have singled out in the period under discussion demands a still closer look. As Dr. Leland related to this Society some years ago, the initial searches for the materials that ultimately went into Edmund C. Burnett's *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress* (8 vols., 1921-1936) commenced in the earliest years of this century, when Leland himself went to work at the Carnegie Institution of Washington. The excellence of the eight volumes that finally resulted was owing in great part to the

long and careful preparation that preceded the appearance of the first of them. Burnett's central and abiding purpose was to enlarge and elucidate the record of what happened on the floor of Congress from 1774 to 1789. The official record of those proceedings had been published, in part, more or less contemporaneously, had been amplified early in the nineteenth century by the publication of the *Secret Journals* (4 vols., 1820), and, while Burnett was at work on his related enterprise, was being edited according to modern scholarly standards by Ford, Fitzpatrick, and others in the Library of Congress as the *Journals of the Continental Congress* (34 vols., 1904-1937).

But the record in the *Journals* was the merest starting-point for discovering what was said and done during those fifteen formative years. Secretary Charles Thomson, on principle, recorded for publication only *completed actions*. He excluded all speeches and debates, all mention of motions that failed, all deliberations in committees of the whole (where the most important decisions were usually made), and until mid-1777, when Congress ordered otherwise, the yeas and nays of the state delegations on all questions brought to a vote. In practice Thomson also omitted the names of movers and seconders of motions, much to John Adams' disgust when he reviewed the printed *Journals* while writing his Autobiography. The official record was therefore, as Burnett truly says, a mere "skeleton of proceedings." It could give historians very little notion of what was thought and said by members, either "in" or "out of doors," for and against the issues that came before them, trivial or momentous. It gave no indication of members' opinions of *each other*, and thus few clues to the origin and growth of the feuds, factions, and intrigues that are always inseparable from politics. For example, even the exceedingly complicated series of votes, as fully recorded in the *Journals* during the

summer and fall of 1779, on the election of new ministers to represent the United States in foreign courts, does not tell what the issues actually *were*; they simply show that Congress was deeply divided along ominously sectional lines. Somewhat like the diagram of a nearly insoluble crossword puzzle, the pattern of the votes does not suggest the answers sought for; it merely confirms them when ascertained from other evidence.

Burnett set out to find and print as much of the evidence to solve these manifold historical puzzles as he could. His searches through the whole body of printed sources from the Revolution to his own time, in public archives and manuscript collections, and even in auction houses and dealers' shops, were far more extensive than any historical editor had attempted before, and they paid off magnificently. In his eight stout volumes he presented 6125 letters, diary entries, and memoranda written by members (or extracts therefrom), and he not only cited the source of each but listed other versions in print or in manuscript form. He went a good deal further. When the writer of a letter or diary entry discussed any *other* letter or paper, any pamphlet or newspaper communication, any article in a treaty or in a set of diplomatic instructions, Burnett always located and often summarized the item or passage referred to, and on complicated questions that came before Congress he furnished references to specialized literature as well. Thus, while Burnett's texts may not always answer the question in a reader's mind, his notes lead the reader on *toward* the answer desired. Because of the copious and expert guidance he furnishes, he can be called an editors' editor as Edmund Spenser has been called a poets' poet. He sees and treats the documents he prints in the context of the whole body of documentation for the period. He gives the contours of the ice-

berg below the surface as well as the small portion of it visible to the eye.

It is this play of a penetrating and well-stocked mind over the materials he handles that constitutes Burnett's great distinction as an editor and that gave a new dimension to historical editing. No student consulting his book was likely to come away empty-handed; no user of it who afterwards edited sources himself could avoid feeling a larger sense of responsibility toward both the materials he was editing and the unknown readers for whom he was editing them. The editor could no longer be simply a processor of raw materials, a mere "ginning or picking machine."

Yet there were enlargements of the sphere of editorial responsibility still to be made. What if a scholar should set out to apply the same extensive knowledge of the period that Burnett possessed, and the same intensive editorial methods that Burnett employed, to the massive documentation left by a great statesman-writer-philosopher like Thomas Jefferson? Here I tread on delicate ground, for Mr. Boyd has warned me that if I talk about *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* in terms he finds unacceptable, he is, after all, following me, and can either refute me point by point or can discredit my testimony entirely by reminding you that for a time I had a hand in that enterprise and am therefore a biased witness.

I shall therefore make only a few guarded observations on this subject. They require a little background information, to which, since it is purely factual, Mr. Boyd cannot justly object.

It is well known that Thomas Jefferson preserved his papers with exemplary care. The history of their publication has been a series of successively enlarged editions. Jefferson's grandson, Thomas Mann Randolph, printed four volumes

of selections from them in 1829, but with the exception of his grandfather's Autobiography and the highly personal and controversial "Anas," Randolph stuck largely to official or semi-official materials; almost half of the letters Randolph printed belong to Jefferson's five-year period as a diplomat in Europe. But in the 1790's the very letters that tell us most about the beginnings of an opposition party in the 1790's, he omitted. With few exceptions he also omitted Jefferson's sharpest comments on Washington, Marshall, and Adams, sometimes silently from letters and papers that he did include.

The next collection furnished to the public was the so-called "Congress Edition" (because commissioned by Congress after Jefferson's papers were in part purchased by the nation), edited by Henry A. Washington (9 vols., 1853-1854). Though larger, it was worse edited. Washington had not only few qualifications for the task but some positive disqualifications. He could neither transcribe manuscripts nor read proof accurately. He showed poor judgment in selecting materials to print and in organizing those he did print. As a pro-slavery man working in Williamsburg at the height of the great sectional debate, he disapproved of and therefore suppressed documents, and passages within documents, exhibiting Jefferson's doubts and fears on the subject of slavery. And he left substantial batches of Jefferson's original manuscripts sent him from the Department of State lying around, to be lost altogether or dispersed among autograph collectors and thus to make the task of later editors so much the harder.

And yet forty years were to elapse before a better edition replaced Washington's. This was the collection of Jefferson's *Writings* edited by Paul Leicester Ford and published in the Putnam's "Letter-Press" series (10 vols., 1892-1899). Though an even more precocious student of American his-

tory than his brother Worthington, Paul Ford undoubtedly learned some of the higher arts of editing from his older brother. He looked about for materials in many places besides the main collection in the Library of Congress. He collated successive drafts of important committee reports and other state papers with their final versions and printed texts, sometimes printing variant versions in parallel columns. He made widely available for the first time a selection of the major bills in Jefferson's epoch-making Revisal of the Laws of Virginia. He did not always skip, as previous editors had, the complicated, semi-legible, and ciphered items, and he presented something approaching a variorum edition of the *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Nevertheless, Ford's emphasis remained very largely on Jefferson's political career, of which, as a descendant of Noah Webster and for other reasons, he neither wholly approved nor understood, and he availed himself of frequent opportunities to indicate, covertly or openly, his disapproval. His edition hardly more than hinted at whole ranges of Jefferson's intellectual life—his interest in experimental science for example, and in law, education, agriculture, architecture, linguistics, and music.

This situation was improved in some respects and worsened in others by the appearance of still another published collection very soon after Ford's was completed. The "Memorial Edition" prepared by Albert E. Bergh and published in twenty volumes, 1903-1904, is superior to Ford's only in its greater inclusiveness. Bergh evidently used the old Congress Edition, as far as he could, as printer's copy, so that to Henry A. Washington's faulty texts was added another sprinkling of printer's errors. Bergh enlarged on Ford by printing a clump of unpublished letters relating to Jefferson's governorship that had been found in the Virginia State Library, by reprinting another clump from the selec-

tion then recently published from the Massachusetts Historical Society's Coolidge-Jefferson manuscripts, by reproducing in facsimile the "Jefferson Bible," and so on. But the new materials were strung along without discernible order, and Bergh's volumes were almost barren of notes or commentary except for a valuable Jefferson bibliography that the editor did not compile and a series of wholly useless prefatory "tributes" to the third President by then eminent but now mostly forgotten Congressmen and others.

In the following decades successive discoveries of important Jefferson materials were made from time to time and published in piecemeal fashion. Notable among them were Fiske Kimball's edition of the architectural drawings in the Coolidge-Jefferson collection, several volumes of unpublished correspondence and papers edited by Gilbert Chinard from the seemingly inexhaustible quarry in the Library of Congress, and Edwin Betts' edition of Jefferson's Garden Book prepared for the American Philosophical Society. This was how matters stood in 1943, when Mr. Boyd, who was serving as historian for the Thomas Jefferson Bicentennial Commission, proposed publishing Jefferson's papers on a scale and in a manner commensurate with their importance—that is, completely and with full scholarly apparatus. Sixteen volumes of the estimated fifty-two in the Princeton edition have now appeared, carrying Jefferson half-way through the year 1790. The materials for *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, including correspondence both ways, account books, records of his legal practice, architectural and other drawings, and a vast mass of supporting papers, have been gathered in photoduplicated form from several hundred repositories round the world; the texts are scrupulously rendered according to rules that are stated in the introduction; the editorial aids are full and authoritative; and it has for some time been clear that the work is becoming the encyclopedia of its period that was forecast when it was begun.

On the point of what constitutes the special scholarly distinction of the work, Mr. Boyd will perhaps accept a detached observer's opinion more willingly than he will mine. In a review of seven volumes of the *Jefferson Papers* in the *New England Quarterly*, September, 1960, Mr. Bernard Bailyn cites the first sentence of the general introduction to the edition—"The purpose of this work is to present the writings and recorded actions of Thomas Jefferson as accurately and as completely as possible"—and then remarks that "the phrase 'recorded actions' . . . is the key to the uniqueness of the *Papers*. Bringing to print as consecutive documents not only everything Jefferson wrote and that was written to him but everything that bears on his 'recorded actions,' the editors have compiled, and in their annotation have written a running commentary on, an exhaustive documentary biography of one of the two or three most important figures of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries." Mr. Bailyn concludes his observations on this kind of editing of historical documents as follows:

All of these editorial characteristics—the scope of the materials included as the "papers" proper; their arrangement and presentation, particularly the grouping of certain documents into clusters; and the extensive editorial analysis and interpretation in which are included generous extracts from non-Jeffersonian sources—all of this creates a kind of density in the portrayal of Jefferson that no biography, no matter how extensive, could possibly convey. In fact it is the very weakness of the volumes as biography in the ordinary sense—the repetitiousness, the inclusion of false starts, and the lack of overall pattern and organization—that contribute most significantly to an enrichment of the portrait.

Or, one might add, to its verisimilitude.

I should like to detail some examples (with which I as a member of the Jefferson Papers staff had nothing to do) of how the editor's insistence on coping with *all* the documents and his refusal to skip the tough ones have filled gaps that a whole regiment of monograph writers and biographers have

for reasons good or ill left to be filled in by Jefferson's editor. But while this would sometimes be amusing (as in the case of Thomas Johnson's steer, which precipitated a struggle that lasted months between the two houses of the Virginia legislature) and in my opinion often instructive, it would be painful to Mr. Boyd, and I will stop here, with the recommendation that anyone who cares about these matters might compare what has been done by historians and biographers on legal reforms in Virginia during and after the Revolution with what has been done on the Revisal of Laws of Virginia in the second volume of *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*.<sup>1</sup>

The appearance of the early volumes of the Princeton edition of Jefferson's papers did two things, although since these were complementary they are not wholly distinguishable.

<sup>1</sup> This comparison has been made, at least briefly, in the National Historical Publications Commission's Report to President Kennedy (now in draft form and to be published early in 1963). It clinches my point so well that I venture to include it, by kind permission, as a footnote to the present discussion:

"More than half of that volume, over 360 pages, is devoted to the Revisal of the Laws of Virginia, a task which Jefferson undertook in the fall of 1776 and for which he gave up much else in order to frame, as he hoped, 'a system by which every fibre would be eradicated of antient or future aristocracy, and a foundation laid for a government truly republican.' Several of the bills prepared by Jefferson and his colleagues on the Committee of Revisors during the next several years are famous, for example No. 79 ('for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge,' embodying a comprehensive plan for state-supported education), No. 80 (which was designed to convert the College of William and Mary into a university), and No. 82 ('A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom'). These particular documents have been printed and reprinted by editors and repeatedly discussed by biographers and historians, to the neglect of the grand enterprise as a whole. This neglect has been at least partly owing to the inaccessibility of reliable documentation. No text of the 126 bills in the proposed code had been printed since the original *Report of the Committee of Revisors* was published by the General Assembly of Virginia in 1784. But even that publication told virtually nothing of the drafting and legislative history of the bills planned to effect a social and cultural revolution comparable to the military and political revolution then in progress. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, on the other hand, includes not only the complete texts, taken from manuscripts when available and collated with all authoritative versions known, but also a general commentary and ample notes on the composition and legislative history of each bill over the full decade that the work of revision was in progress. This important chapter in Jefferson's life and in the legal and institutional history of Virginia, 'a singlehanded effort to hasten the era of republicanism'—has now at length been filled in, in the form of documents, textual and explanatory footnotes, and commentary. Evidently no other form is quite so satisfactory for the purpose. Certainly no biographical or monographic treatment has been or is likely to be either so comprehensive or so permanent."

First, it put an utter end to the kind of editing of personal papers that had been standard in the nineteenth century and that had lingered on into our own time, whereby the editor selected and shaped his materials according to the properties, rhetorical taste, and modes of political thought of a later time than the original writer's. A British reviewer of the first volumes of the distinguished new Columbia University Press edition of *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton* has admirably summed up the traditional approach of editors to their work by citing Henry Cabot Lodge's preface to his collection of Hamilton's *Writings*, first issued in 1885-1886. Lodge not only pronounced Hamilton the precursor of "Lincoln and other Republican heroes, if not quite of James G. Blaine," and thus converted the papers he was editing into a manifesto of triumphant Republicanism in the Gilded Age, but he also "took a high and mighty line about what was to be included and satisfied himself 'that nothing of any value has been omitted unless by some inadvertence that cannot always be avoided. . . . The work of selection is always difficult in such cases, but the editor's purpose has been to make the edition complete without loading it with material of no earthly importance to any human being.'" The reviewer dryly concludes that "Lodge was not, perhaps, a very good judge of what was important to human beings."

Everyone knows of similar cases of editorial tampering. The late Professor Beale's scrupulous re-editing of the *Diary* of Gideon Welles, Lincoln's secretary of the navy, shows that the text as originally written suffered a series of remodelings not only by Welles himself later in the nineteenth century but by his son and at least two reputable historians before it was published in 1911 with an assurance to readers "that the text . . . has been in no way mutilated or revised." We have long known that Hawthorne's journals were essentially rewritten by his wife before publication, but the current Bel-

knap Press edition of Emerson's *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks* reveals for the first time that the familiar green volumes of the *Journals* as printed in 1909-1914 were similarly (though perhaps less severely) emasculated by pious editors. The editors, being relatives in a younger generation, did not permit anything to appear in print that might deface the image of Emerson as a gentlemanly sage. His allusions to privies, for example, though not frequent, were natural enough in an age before plumbing remade our domestic habits, landscape, and language, but they did not reach print. The diarist's bemusement over a guest's tickling Mrs. Emerson after dinner was suppressed because how could anything like *that* have happened in Concord?

Thanks ultimately, I suppose, to Dr. Freud, whose influence on thought and writing seemed at first wholly pernicious, the public at large as well as the scholarly community are now agreed that we must have *the whole man* or we have nothing—or rather, something worse than nothing, a laundered and denatured version of the man and his way of life. When the federal government purchased Jefferson's manuscripts in 1848, it was fatuously supposed that they could be divided into "public papers" which had value as historical records, and "private papers" which had no such value. The division was made, but it took many years, and it was done badly because it was really impossible to do. Their integrity has now been restored, in photofacsimiled form, at Princeton, and *the whole man* is being re-created, so far as written records can bring him back to life.

The Appalachian enlargement of our understanding of Jefferson and his time that Mr. Boyd's editorial method made possible led to an immediate call for work of the same kind on other subjects of comparable importance. President Truman issued the call in 1950 and was in a position to do something about it. He persuaded Congress to appropriate

funds to place the National Historical Publications Commission at length on an effective footing as an agency to plan, promote, and aid scholarly publication of sources in any or all fields of American history. The recent program of the NHPC is the second of the two complementary effects of the Jefferson enterprise that I alluded to above. I cannot even outline that program here. The Commission has issued public reports and will soon issue another that should and may have momentous consequences for the study of American history. But those consequences are Mr. Boyd's subject in this morning's discussion, not mine, and I confidently leave them to him.

As a nation dedicated to democratic ideals, Americans have always professed that free, full, accurate, and rapid public information is, as the schoolchild says, "a good thing." As early as 1778 the Continental Congress resolved that Ebenezer Hazard's plan to gather and publish the ancient records of the new states was "a good thing." It went further and authorized the payment of \$1000 (in somewhat depreciated money, to be sure) to facilitate Hazard's labors. Elbridge Gerry recalled in old age that at about the same time he had proposed in Congress "a board to consist of a commissioner from each State, to write the history of the revolution, and to support every fact by incontestible documents, or by the best to be procured; and to give them high salaries, with a copy right for the public benefit. The project delighted Mr. Jay, then President of Congress; but parsimony defeated it." Since Secretary Thomson did not record defeated motions, or any discussion thereof, we do not know what was said for and against this scheme, nor do we know how it would have worked out if adopted. In the future, "parsimony" was to take care of many both well- and ill-conceived proposals for recording American history contemporaneously and retrospectively.

Nevertheless, between 1820 and 1860 the federal government, under prodding from enthusiasts for history, actually did finance an impressive number of documentary publications drawn from its own records and other sources. Some of these I have already mentioned, and I hardly need to recall to your minds such works as Sparks' *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, Force's *American Archives*, and the massive series of *American State Papers*. These works, some of which have not yet been superseded, were retrospective in coverage and on the whole more patriotic than utilitarian in purpose, though not exclusively so. At the beginning of the Civil War Secretary of State Seward launched a very different kind of undertaking—the first volumes in the long series now known as the *Foreign Relations of the United States*. His plan was to publish one or more volumes of American diplomatic documents for each year in the succeeding year, and with some exceptions this schedule was maintained until 1898, the year of our war with Spain, the documents for which were not published until some years afterward. Seward's motives in starting the series were doubtless mixed (his instructions to our ministers abroad were sometimes written as much for home consumption as for any other purpose); there was heavy and sometimes arbitrary selection among documents to be published; and the editing was largely done by clerical hacks. But with all its faults the *Foreign Relations* was a bold venture in democratic statesmanship, and its value was never more apparent than when, as in recent years, it fell badly in arrears. The reason for the lag was not parsimony but timidity. As Mr. J. R. Wiggins pointed out in his remarks at the dedication of the Dulles Library at Princeton last spring, when genuine documents are not available, myth and fantasy spring up and flourish in their place, and myth and fantasy can do damage that is sometimes irreparable. The long delay of the government in providing authoritative

documents on our relations with China during the critical years of the recent war is a sad but dramatic example.

However discouraging such incidents may be, this much at least can be said. If we do not always move toward the truth in long, clean strides, we at least lurch in its direction and not away from it. In the United States, records not only get written but are kept and are sooner or later made accessible. Editorial suppressions and alterations are eventually discovered, and the record is filled out and corrected, cost what it may in scholarly effort. Consider the present status and prospects of the papers of the Presidents. If one compares the checkered history and treatment of the papers of any one of the first four Presidents with what is happening to the papers of any of the last four (including the present incumbent), one must surely take heart. Slow as we may have been to do what should have been done long ago, the present combination of publishing the older Presidential collections in the Library of Congress on microfilm, the issuing of annual letterpress volumes of the *Public Papers of the Presidents* (replacing the deplorably incomplete and unreliable compilation by Richardson), and the permanent deposit in Presidential Libraries of all the papers and memorabilia of each retiring chief executive, will guarantee historians the means of re-creating *whole men* and essential keys to the *whole truth* about their periods of activity on the American scene. I know comparatively little about libraries and archives in Soviet Russia, but I have not heard of a library built to house the papers of Joseph Stalin and to make them available in orderly stages to scholarly investigators. Nor would I be inclined to trust any compilation of his papers or biographical or monographic work on Stalin until these things are done.

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