

Report of the Council

THE Society has had an active winter. The Library has welcomed scores of visiting writers and scholars who stayed from a few days to a few weeks, conducting research in special collections. Probably the greatest amount of time given both by the Librarian and the Director has been devoted to the search for books needed to complete our various collections. The resulting correspondence amounts to many thousands of letters a year. For recently published books, especially in genealogy and local history, every review or mention of a publication is noted, and hundreds of letters are sent to the authors of books not published through regular channels. It is surprising how much material comes to the Library due to the friendliness and interest of authors.

The careful examination of second-hand book catalogues is a time-consuming chore, but it pays. The method of buying books has changed considerably during the last few years. Twenty or thirty years ago, in fact back to 1908 when a new régime affected the Society's activities, more books were bought at auction than from catalogues. At least five prominent auction houses in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia held book sales every week from October to the following June—about one hundred forty sales each season, with about one hundred thousand books sold over the auction block. Today there is only one large auction firm selling continuously, and that mostly for art objects, and very seldom for books. Therefore books are bought

from catalogues, or more from book-dealers who specialize along certain lines.

This Library has been both active and successful in such buying. In early American printing, we have had access to important collections, especially the books owned by the late Lemuel A. Welles, whose library bristled with rare imprints. Many of our gaps in early Connecticut printing were filled. But specific acquisitions must await the Librarian's report in October. Newspapers seem seldom to come to the Library. This is due chiefly to the fact that years ago we completed most of our files to 1820, and from there to 1870 files now come mostly from libraries which discard newspapers because they take up so much shelf space, or transfer their short files to us to facilitate research.

In children's books we have had numerous and important acquisitions, due to the disposal of two large private libraries, and to the opportunity to obtain the duplicates of the Albert C. Bates collection given to the Connecticut Historical Society. American literature, which has been prominently mentioned in our reports for the last year, has occupied much of our attention and we have bought largely in this field. By next October we shall be in a better position to know how largely our collections have been completed. It is sufficient to say that already it is seldom that we find titles lacking in our two collections of prominent American authors—what we used to call the "Foley Collection"—or in the field of American fiction of 1851-1875.

The present-day practice of calling upon us for microfilms and photostats, both for libraries and for individuals, has brought upon the staff greatly increased work. Calls come mostly for the reproduction of newspapers, early imprints, and prints for illustrations. We turn the material over to photographic firms to transact the business inde-

pendently from the Library. Although it takes much time to get the books and prints out of the stacks, we should continue thus to aid American scholars in their researches.

The subject of American political caricature has in recent years much interested the American Antiquarian Society. Thirty or more years ago several private collections drifted in to the Library, such as the prints gathered by Nathaniel Paine during the Civil War, by Dr. Samuel B. Woodward, and especially by Charles H. Taylor whose tastes were as catholic and varied as they were numerous. Then in 1934 was purchased the Percy Sabin collection, one of the best formed in the country, including the cartoons published in England, France, and Holland during the American Revolution, followed by the caricatures issued in this country from the early nineteenth century to the end of lithography after the Civil War. Since the Sabin purchase the Society has bought liberally to obtain what it lacked.

A book has recently appeared which is of great interest to us since it attempts to list all political caricatures published in this country from 1787 to nearly the close of the nineteenth century. It is entitled *Political Caricature in the United States*, compiled by Frank Weitenkampf, retired chief of the print department of the New York Public Library, and published by that Library late in 1953 in a book of 184 pages. The volume lists 1155 cartoons. Of this number the New York Historical Society has 673 entries; the American Antiquarian Society 555; the Library of Congress 368; Harvard, due chiefly to the recent gift of the William B. Osgood Field collection, 262; and the New York Public Library 210. Many libraries were reported by smaller holdings. It is probable that some of these libraries have larger holdings, as the count has been made only from the locations given. The Harry T. Peters collec-

tion, which is one of the largest in the country, was only partially reported.

The great value of the list comes from the annotations by the compiler describing each cartoon, identifying the characters, and the historical references. Cartoons, perhaps more than other sources, show the attitude of the people toward any movement or project that enlists popular interest. They give an insight into the vehemences and animosities of the times, and reflect popular opinion on controversial subjects in no uncertain terms. The splendid subject index which accompanies the checklist makes much of the information quickly available. Such names as Jackson, Clay, Van Buren, Webster, Buchanan, Lincoln, and Jefferson Davis, and such subjects as Bank of the United States, Brother Jonathan, Uncle Sam, Free Soil Party, Loco Focos, Know Nothings, and Slavery furnish the historian with material he can find in no other place. It is only ten years ago that Mr. Weitkenkampf united with Allan Nevins in writing *A Century of Political Cartoons*, from 1800 to 1900, with its hundred reproductions of caricatures, furnishing to the historian of the nineteenth century an admirable textbook on the subject.

There have been five deaths in the Society's membership during the last six months. George Crompton of Worcester, elected in 1928, died November 16, 1953. George Albert Zabriskie of New York, elected in 1940, died January 2, 1954. James Melville Hunnewell of Boston, elected in 1927, and a member of the Council for eighteen years, died March 22, 1954. Philip Howard Cook of Worcester, elected in 1949, died March 25, 1954. Albert Carlos Bates of Hartford, elected in 1910, died March 27, 1954. Obituary notices of these members will appear in the printed *Proceedings* of this meeting.

The financial condition of the Society is excellent, due chiefly to the receipt of the Henry F. DePuy bequest last year. Without this addition to our income, we would have had a sizable deficit last October. Expenses increase for everything that we do or buy, but income remains the same. Only through gifts and legacies do we advance.

Respectfully submitted,

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For the Council

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