

PROCEEDINGS.

SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING, APRIL 12, 1916, IN ELLIS HALL AT
THE MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY BUILDING,
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

The semi-annual meeting of the Society was called to order by President Lincoln, in Ellis Hall at 11 a. m.

The following members were present:

Samuel Abbott Green, Samuel Swett Green, Andrew McFarland Davis, Reuben Colton, Henry Herbert Edes, William Eaton Foster, Charles Pickering Bowditch, Francis Henshaw Dewey, William Trowbridge Forbes, George Henry Haynes, Arthur Lord, Charles Lemuel Nichols, Waldo Lincoln, Edward Sylvester Morse, Austin Samuel Garver, George Lyman Kirtledge, Albert Matthews, William MacDonald, Clarence Winthrop Bowen, Daniel Berkeley Updike, Clarence Saunders Brigham, Lincoln Newton Kinnicut, Franklin Pierce Rice, Worthington Chauncey Ford, Henry Ernest Woods, Julius Herbert Tuttle, Charles Grenfill Washburn, William Vail Kellen, Wilfred Harold Munro, Justin Harvey Smith, Henry Winchester Cunningham, Frank Farnum Dresser, George Francis Dow, Homer Gage, Henry Ainsworth Parker, Livingston Davis, Samuel Eliot Morison, Grenville Howland Norcross, Thomas Hovey Gage, John Whittemore Farwell, Lawrence Waters Jenkins, Leonard Wheeler, Alexander George McAdie.

After the call for the meeting had been read by the Secretary it was voted on motion of Mr. Morse to

dispense with the reading of the records of the last meeting.

The report of the Council was then read by Mr. Andrew McFarland Davis and it was voted that the report be accepted and be referred to the Committee of Publication.

The next business being the election of new members, Messrs. T. Hovey Gage and Lawrence W. Jenkins were appointed by the President to collect and count the ballots for that purpose.

The Committee reported the election of the following persons:

William Crowninshield Endicott, of Danvers, Mass.
Nathaniel Thayer Kidder, of Milton, Mass.
L. Bradford Prince, of Santa Fé, N. M.

There being no further general business, the Society listened to the subjects presented for their consideration.

The first paper was "Vocabularies from the Northwest Coast of America" by Franz Boas, of New York, N. Y. This paper was read by title in the absence of Mr. Boas, and Mr. Brigham told of the recent acquisition of the manuscript which, upon investigation, was found to be of considerable value.

A paper was read by George Francis Dow entitled "Crimes and their punishment in Colonial Times," in which he gave examples of the earliest crimes committed in Essex County, and the punishments selected for them by our ancestors. He showed in particular that the so-called ignominious punishments remained upon the statutes of the Province and of the State and were in actual use until a very recent day. He also presented a table of statistics of crime in the seventeenth century compared with today, which seemed to prove that in proportion to the population more "crime" existed in the early days than at present.

In the discussion which followed, Judge Forbes stated that in the early Massachusetts Colony, stubbornness—which meant violent conduct, or roughness—was included in the capital crimes and on complaint of parents was subject to the Mosaic punishment of death. Professor Kittredge in answering the question why women were punished so severely for the crime of poisoning stated that in his opinion this was due to her subordinate position and the fear of mankind from earliest times, lest because of this position, they accomplish their revenge by craft, as force was impossible. Mr. Andrew McFarland Davis stated that before the codification of laws the magistrates in the new country were governed by caprice rather than the common law or precedent of England. He felt that the codification was opposed by the ministers until the customs of America had been established.

A paper on "Cotton Mather's Scientific Communications to the Royal Society" was presented by George Lyman Kittredge, who discussed the subject in a general manner, stating that this method would probably be more acceptable, in the case of a mass of details, than the formal reading of the whole.

Mr. Kittredge said that during the years from 1712 to 1724 Cotton Mather prepared for the Royal Society about eighty memoirs, most of which are in existence, although few have been printed. He has catalogued these, stating when they were written and where the copies are to be found at the present day. Mr. Kittredge said that in his earlier years he considered Cotton Mather to be hypocritical, inaccurate and credulous. Later reflection, however, taught him that Mather was no more credulous than the men of his time and that he endeavored to be exact and accurate in his descriptions, taking great pains to verify his authorities. He did not regard Mather's articles as scientific memoirs, but rather as records

of observed phenomena. Mr. Kittredge spoke of the alleged credulity of earlier times and compared it with our own, showing that in all periods men have been credulous concerning those facts and appearances of nature which they do not understand. In the discussion which followed, Mr. Morse spoke of the "Amphisbæna" as existing today in South America and Mr. Morison noted some parallel cases of credulity and inaccuracy of description at the present day.

It was voted that these papers be referred to the Committee of Publication except the one by Mr. Dow, which he prepared for oral communication only.

Mr. John W. Farwell presented to the Society several contracts of Robert B. Thomas connected with the Old Farmer's Almanac.

The President notified the Society that luncheon would be at the Harvard Club, and the meeting was then dissolved.

CHARLES LEMUEL NICHOLS,
Recording Secretary.

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