

## REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

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THE Society has suffered the loss of but one member by death since the last meeting. Augustus George Bullock died at his home in Worcester June 22, after a long illness. Brief memoirs of him and of Henry Phelps Johnston, who died February 28, 1923, will be prepared for the Proceedings.

As was predicted at the last annual meeting the delay in the publication of the Proceedings, which has existed since the war, has at last been practically overcome and the records of the last two meetings are now in the printers' hands and will be mailed to the members in a few days. Except for an unforeseen delay in obtaining the paper on which they are printed, both numbers would have been distributed before this. It has been necessary to postpone publication of the concluding section of Mr. Brigham's bibliography of American newspapers until a subsequent number.

The committee to which has been assigned the task of conducting the campaign for raising \$500,000 for the endowment fund, reports progress, but not so much as had been hoped for. A pamphlet, based on the report of the professional experts employed last year, handsomely printed and illustrated with views of the exterior and interior of the library, was prepared last winter and has been distributed to all the members, without eliciting particular comment showing interest in the movement, beyond a few spoken words of approval of the manner of its presentation of the Society's needs. For various reasons it has seemed imperative to raise the first one hundred thousand dollars in Worcester before approaching friends of the Society outside of the city. The committee reports

that the sum of forty-five thousand dollars has been subscribed, contingent on the full sum of one hundred thousand being raised before October 1, 1927 and here, for the present, the matter rests, but it is hoped that the remainder will be subscribed soon and the way made clear for appeals elsewhere. In the opinion of the committee it is neither advisable nor feasible to make a general canvass, but to seek for substantial sums from well known and wealthy friends of education. At the same time the committee would not discourage members of the Society from offering what they feel they can afford, and would have them realize that the need of the Society for an increased income is becoming more imperative every year and that any sum is welcome.

A long deferred work has lately been resumed, which is likely to reveal valuable historical information, hitherto more or less buried beneath a mass of material inconveniently arranged and imperfectly classified. Nineteen years ago a beginning was made in the calendaring and cataloguing of the Society's collection of manuscripts, and for two or three years Mr. Charles H. Lincoln was employed in this task. The work was interrupted, owing to the reduction of the Society's income through the erection of the present library building, and the more pressing needs of other departments of the Society's activities. This year it has been possible to resume the work so long interrupted and Mr. Charles S. Hale, a gentleman peculiarly well fitted for the task and whose services the Society is fortunate to secure, has been engaged since May in arranging and classifying the manuscripts. Already much progress has been made, but it will take several years to complete the work.

Attention is called to the exhibition now in the cases in the upper hall, of maps, manuscripts, books and other objects appropriate to this sesquicentennial year. This was first shown on July first and the attention of the public called to it in the newspapers, in

pursuance of the policy of using every opportunity to impress upon the citizens of Worcester the advantage it is to the city to have the library located here and the value and diversity of its collections. Many visitors have been attracted to the library by this exhibition, which will be more particularly described in the librarian's report and which deserves examination by the members here present.

One of the greatest needs of historical writers in this country is a comprehensive, authentic and well written Dictionary of American Biography. This need is about to be supplied under the patronage of the American Council of Learned Societies, of which this Society is a member, and through the generosity of Mr. Adolph S. Ochs of the "New York Times," who has offered to provide the necessary working capital of \$500,000. All the existing encyclopedias and dictionaries of American biography are either very early publications, not fully revised, or are commercial enterprises which, under the necessity of earning a profit, include the living as well as the dead and too often, catering to the vanity of human nature, have accepted data provided by the subjects themselves. The earlier works are confined mostly to persons prominent in war, politics and the pulpit, while other lines of human effort, such as commerce, science, literature and the fine arts are generally ignored. The new dictionary will be confined to biographies of men and women no longer living, who have been prominent in all lines of human endeavor, written by specialists over their own signature and with a list of their sources of information. The American Council of Learned Societies has appointed a committee of management of which Mr. J. Franklin Jameson, a member of this Society, is chairman, and Mr. Allen Johnson has been chosen editor-in-chief. The headquarters for the work will be in Washington and the English National Dictionary of Biography will be taken as a model for literary form. It is estimated that the work will contain 20,000 biog-

raphies in twenty volumes, which will be published at the rate of three a year, the first volume appearing about 1928.

While Washington is properly selected as headquarters, where the Library of Congress and the several departmental libraries can supply much biographical material, the facilities afforded by this library should not be overlooked. In addition to one of the best existing collections of individual biographies, its collection of genealogies and local histories, its very large number of American directories and its unrivaled files of newspapers offer wide fields for research, but beyond these it possesses three unique sources of biographical information. These are first: the Jennison Manuscripts collected by Samuel Jennison of Worcester who, from his election to membership in 1814 to his death in 1860, was one of the most active members of this Society, serving as librarian from 1814 to 1826 and as treasurer from 1829 to 1860, with occasional services as councillor and corresponding secretary. During a long and busy life he accumulated a vast amount of biographical information which, as it came to his knowledge, he preserved in manuscript. Probably every person of any prominence in the country is mentioned, sometimes briefly but often with much detail and with occasional inclusion of newspaper clippings. The manuscript is in two forms: first, in sixty-one small note books of varying thickness each separately indexed; second, on about six thousand loose sheets of quarto size, alphabetically arranged. This second set seems to have been made in amplification of the first, but not all the names in one set appear in the other. This manuscript should be of much value for the biographies of persons living in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The second source of information is in the collection of newspaper clippings made by Mr. Franklin P. Rice, another enthusiastic member of this Society, serving from his election in 1906 to his death in 1919 as chair-

man of the committee of publication. The collection consists of many thousand newspaper clippings, mostly of biographical sketches and obituary notices, printed since 1860 and alphabetically arranged in small envelopes. Mr. Rice presented the collection to the library in 1917 and added largely to it until his death, which work has been continued since by the library staff, so that today it fills eighty drawers of the card catalogue and forms a valuable supplement to the Jennison manuscripts. It is not confined to single notices, but frequently has many envelopes filled with clippings concerning the same individual, there being, for example, forty-seven envelopes regarding Abraham Lincoln, forty concerning U. S. Grant and sixteen relating to Horace Greeley.

Mr. Alfred S. Roe, a Worcester schoolmaster, also made a collection of newspaper obituaries and memorial clippings printed between 1879 and 1908. These he pasted in nineteen volumes entitling them "A Dictionary of Contemporary Biography." This forms the third unique source of biography owned by the Society, which obtained the set at auction after Mr. Roe's death. A complete index has been made of it containing about ten thousand names, which renders it available for research. With these three sets and the Society's great collection of newspapers it seems proper to urge upon the managers of the new National Dictionary the importance of this library for biographical writing.

In this connection a brief review of the early attempts to supply the want of an American Biographical Dictionary may be of interest. "The New Universal Biographical Dictionary and American Remembrancer of Departed Spirits," by James Hardie, was first published in New York in 1802. A second edition appeared in 1805 and a third in 1808. It was a work in four duodecimo volumes and its title describes it as "containing complete and impartial accounts of the lives and writings of the most eminent persons in

any nation, but particularly of those who signalized themselves in America." It was not therefore limited to America and apparently but a small percentage of those memorialized could be classified as Americans. James Hardie, its author, was born in Scotland about 1750. After teaching for some years in his native land he came to New York and was a tutor in Columbia College from 1787 to 1790, but became poor and dissipated and finally obtained employment with the Board of Health. He was the author of several books published in New York between 1805 and 1827 and died in 1832.

In 1809 John Eliot, D.D., published in one octavo volume of 512 pages "A Biographical Dictionary" containing, as says its title page "a brief account of the first settlers and other eminent characters among the magistrates, ministers, literary and worthy men in New England." Dr. Eliot was a native of Boston and was pastor of the New North Church from 1779 to his death, in 1813. He was a distinguished antiquarian and biographer, one of the founders of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and devoted many years to collecting facts in regard to illustrious persons and preparing sketches of their lives. Many of the articles in his Dictionary are spoken of as "models of character painting." As he was about to publish the results of his labors he was much embarrassed by the appearance of a prospectus of Mr. Allen's Dictionary, but by the advice of his friends he decided not to withdraw from the field, with the result that his book was published the same year, 1809, as the first edition of "An American Biographical and Historical Dictionary" by William Allen of Northampton, an octavo volume of 632 pages containing seven hundred sketches. A second edition of 800 pages was published at Boston in 1832 with 1800 biographies, and a third edition in royal octavo of 896 pages was published in 1857 containing about seven thousand biographies, the title being changed to "The American Biographical

Dictionary." The preface to the second edition claims that the first edition was the first general collection of American biography ever published, acknowledges obligation to Mr. Samuel Jennison of Worcester and Mr. John Farmer of Concord and asserts that the second edition contains one thousand more biographies than Lord's edition of *Lempriere* (published in 1825), and sixteen hundred more than the first ten volumes of the "*Cyclopedia Americana*," publication of which began in 1829. Rev. William Allen, D.D., was born in Pittsfield in 1784 and died at Northampton in 1868, having lived long enough to revise his work for its third edition, forty-five years after the publication of the first edition. Mr. Allen graduated at Harvard College in 1802 and was Regent and assistant librarian of Harvard while preparing his first edition, and one might question with some reason the value of his work on account of his youth. But he was President of Bowdoin College from 1820 to 1839, when he resigned to devote himself to literary studies, which gives one much confidence in the accuracy and value of the two later editions.

"The New American Biographic Dictionary; of Eminent Persons that have ever lived in this or any other Nation," by J. Kingston, was published at Baltimore in 1810 in one small volume of 297 pages and was followed in 1811 by a second edition, the title being changed to "The New Pocket Biographical Dictionary." This is too small in size and too general in subject matter to be of much value for American biography of which it seems to contain very little.

Thomas J. Rogers published at Easton, Penn., in 1813, a small volume of 426 pages entitled "A New American Biographical Dictionary," which treated only of persons distinguished in the Revolutionary War. A second edition was published in 1823, a third in 1824 and a fourth in 1829, but each edition differed considerably from the preceding in the persons memorialized. The third edition was the largest and treated of one hundred and fifty-six individuals. Rogers was

born in Ireland in 1781, came to America as a child of three and died at New York in 1832. He was the editor of a political newspaper and was a member of Congress from Pennsylvania from 1818 to 1824.

Rev. Timothy Alden, who was born at Yarmouth in 1771 and graduated at Harvard in 1794, was pastor at Portsmouth from 1799 to 1805. He then became a master of schools for young ladies, finally removing to Pennsylvania where he founded Allegheny College at Meadville and became its first president, and died in 1839 at Pittsburgh. He published in 1814 at New York in five small volumes a work entitled "A Collection of American Epitaphs and Inscriptions," which has considerable biographical value especially for its "Occasional Notes" which are, sometimes, quite extended.

Lord's edition of "Lempriere's Universal Biography," referred to by William Allen in the preface to the second edition of his Dictionary, was published at New York in 1825 in two octavo volumes. Eight hundred American biographies are scattered through its sixteen hundred pages, furnished by Eleazer Lord, LL.D., who was born at Franklin, Conn., in 1788. He first studied theology, but was obliged to abandon it on account of defective eyesight and became a banker in New York and was founder of the Manhattan Insurance Company. He published also several books on religious subjects.

"A General Biographical Dictionary" with notices of "persons of all ages, nations and professions, including more than one thousand articles of American Biography," by Rev. J. L. Blake, was first published in 1838 and reached its thirteenth edition in 1856. This is a royal octavo volume of over one thousand pages and the notices, in many cases, are necessarily brief. John Laurie Blake, D.D., born at Northwood, N. H. in 1788, was graduated at Brown University in 1812, and died in 1857 at Boston. He was ordained a Protestant-Episcopal minister in 1815 and served as rector for



fifteen years at Providence, R. I., Concord, N. H. and at Boston. During part of this time he was principal of young ladies' schools at Concord and at Boston, and published many school text books. From 1830 to 1855 he devoted his entire time to general literature. His biographical dictionary is spoken of as "convenient and comprehensive, worthy of a place in any library."

Francis S. Drake published at Boston in 1872 "A Dictionary of American Biography" in one royal octavo volume of 1019 pages, which contains, by its title page, "nearly ten thousand notices of persons of both sexes, of native or foreign birth, who have been remarkable, or prominently connected with arts, sciences, literature, politics, or history of the American continent." A valuable work by a careful student, but the sketches are often much condensed. Mr. Drake was born at Northwood, N. H. in 1828 and died at Washington in 1885. His father, Samuel G. Drake, was a bookseller in Boston and author of "The History and Antiquities of Boston." Young Drake succeeded his father in business and emulated him in his fondness for historical study. He prepared, without aid, his Biographical Dictionary for which he was, for twenty years, collecting material. It, and the material for a new edition, is incorporated in "Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography."

Three years after the appearance of Mr. Drake's Dictionary, Franklin B. Hough's "American Biographical Notes, being short notices of Deceased Persons, chiefly those not included in Allen's or Drake's Biographical Dictionaries," was published at Albany in 1875 in one octavo volume of 442 pages. Mr. Hough, who was born at Martinsburgh, N. Y., in 1822, and died at Lowville, N. Y. in 1885, was graduated at Union College in 1843 and at Cleveland Medical College in 1848. He practiced medicine until 1862 and then settled at Lowville where he devoted himself to scientific and historical studies. He published several books on scientific subjects. The Notes which make

up his volume on biography were collected from all sources and preserved on slips of paper much in the manner of the Jennison manuscripts in this library. The edition was limited to one hundred and thirty copies.

After this date the biographical dictionaries published lose the flavor of personality which they have previously had from being the work of one author, from whose character, education and occupation one can form a more or less accurate estimate of the reliability and value of their work. Hereafter the dictionaries are in many volumes, the work of many authors and the sketches vary in quality with the capacity of the contributors, who are usually writing anonymously. The proposed work will remedy this and other faults and it is to be hoped that the forthcoming National Cyclopedia of American Biography will be entirely worthy of the great nation whose citizens it will immortalize.

WALDO LINCOLN,  
*For the Council*

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