

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

THE Council begs to report to the Society that it has filled the vacancy in the Council, caused by the death of Charles G. Washburn, by the election of Mr. Paul B. Morgan of Worcester. Since there is only one vacancy in the membership of the Society, the Council has thought it best to defer the election to fill this vacancy until the annual meeting in October, which will account for the fact that there will be no balloting for members at this meeting.

During the past six months, there has been only one death of a member of the Society, but that was the death of its President, Dr. Charles L. Nichols, who passed away at Worcester, on February 19, 1929. Since this was the most important happening in the recent history of the Society, the Council has deemed it proper to devote the Council Report chiefly to a memorial sketch of its late President.

It also wishes to state to the Society that as a result of instructions given by Dr. Nichols to his heirs, the Society has received his large and important collection of Worcester books, which will augment and make more useful our own collections. Also, by the friendly and generous decision of his three children, Mrs. George A. Gaskill, Mrs. Daniel W. Lincoln and Mr. Charles L. Nichols, the Society is to receive Dr. Nichols' fine portrait, painted in 1924 by Howard Logan Hildebrandt.

Charles Lemuel Nichols, M.D., Litt.D., President of the American Antiquarian Society, died in Worcester on February 19, 1929. He came from pure New England stock on both his father's and his mother's side. Ezra Nichols, M.D., his grandfather, a country

doctor of the old school, "of considerable skill and attainments," practised medicine at Bradford, New Hampshire. He married Waity Grey, by whom he had a son, Lemuel Bliss Nichols, born in that town on October 16, 1816. Dr. Ezra tried to keep the boy on the farm, but Lemuel wanted an education, succeeded in fitting himself for college, and entered Brown University with the class of 1842. Upon graduating he taught for several years in Providence in the Arnold Street Grammar School. Subsequently, Lemuel studied for a year at the Harvard Medical School, and then entered the Philadelphia Medical School, from which he was graduated in 1850 with the degree of M.D. Dr. Lemuel Nichols settled at once in Worcester and there practised his profession as a homeopathist, highly esteemed as man, physician and citizen until his death on September 28, 1883. He was a fine type of the general practitioner of his day and gained and held a large circle of patients in the city and surrounding country. He was one of the founders of the Worcester County Homeopathic Medical Society and became its first President, a position he held for many years.

While teaching in Providence, Lemuel Nichols married Lydia Carter Anthony, the daughter of James Anthony, a cotton manufacturer of North Providence, and a member of the well-known Rhode Island family of that name.

Charles Lemuel Nichols, the only son of Lemuel and Lydia (Anthony) Nichols, was born in Worcester on May 29, 1851. With infinite care he survived a precarious infancy and grew up into young manhood with a fair measure of health and bodily strength. What he lacked through life in physical vigor was more than made up to him by a stout set of nerves and a quiet but unflinching tenacity of purpose. At first he was sent to the public schools of Worcester, but later his parents transferred him to the Highland Military Academy to fit for college. This school was



Charles L. Nichols

situated in a hilly suburb of Worcester, and it was felt that the two-mile walk to and fro daily, combined with the open air drill and regular routine, would build him up in health and body. He never did nor could take part in the more strenuous games of youth, but as he grew up he gained a capacity for work, a physical endurance and a nervous strength that put to shame the efforts of many a man of more robust habit.

In June, 1868, just after his seventeenth birthday, he came down to Providence and passed his entrance examinations to Brown University; and in the September following entered college with the Class of 1872. If not a brilliant student, his work throughout college was of an even excellence that placed him in the upper third of the class and entitled him to a part at Commencement. In chemistry, he led the class, as a result of which the head of that department, Professor John Howard Appleton, during Nichols' senior year made him his assistant in the classroom and the laboratory. His commencement oration reflected his mental outlook in its theme "Lavoisier's Services to Science."

After graduating in 1872, Nichols stayed on at the college for another year as "Instructor in Analytical Chemistry." In the fall of 1873, he entered the Harvard Medical School and was graduated in 1875 with the degree of M.D. For the sake of practical experience he went over to New York and spent the following year as an interne in a hospital on Ward's Island. He was assigned to a ward, all the cases in which were on the "danger list." The more desperate the case the greater the welcome the patient received in Dr. Nichols' ward, which resulted in his becoming known throughout the hospital as "Old Mortality."

With such training and hospital experience of his life-work, Dr. Nichols returned to his native city to enter upon the practice of his chosen profession under the eye and with the ready assistance of his honored

father. Trained in all the lore of the "old school" in its very citadel, the Harvard Medical School, the youthful practitioner threw in his lot with the "new school" and began to practise as a homeopathic physician. Like the broader-minded of his brother homeopaths, he adopted the methods and used the remedies best calculated in his judgment to relieve pain and ease and cure the suffering. It cannot be denied that he and his fellows exerted a profound influence upon the practices of the so-called "old school."

Dr. Nichols was a very prince among physicians. His cheery manner, his charming smile, his encouraging word, his optimistic outlook, his assiduous care, combined with adequate knowledge and accumulating experience, were curatives that hardly needed drugs of high potency to further recovery and restore the patient to normal health. The young doctor was successful from the first in gaining the confidence of patients and gradually carried more and more of the combined load during the remaining years of his father's life. From the day he settled in Worcester his entire life was one of unselfish devotion. With never a thought of self he devoted himself to his parents, to his sisters, to his growing family, to his church and to the social, hygienic and literary life of the city of Worcester. He built up an immense practice which kept him more than busy in that growing city and in the country for miles around. He was at once his patients' physician, friend and counsellor. At the height of his practice he sometimes treated at his office and in his rounds upward of seventy patients a day. Never robust, with the marks of an attack of angina, with overwrought nerves resulting in a nervous breakdown, he carried his load, he never winced, he enjoyed it all. He was as keen to the end of his life, with a few patients left, survivors of the old throng, to treat a new phase of illness with a new method of treatment, as he was in the old days in

the danger ward of the Ward's Island Hospital. One patient, Robert M. Washburn, has said of him: "The characteristic quality of Dr. Nichols was his loyalty to his patients not merely professionally but also personally. He stood close to them in their crises. He was not only a physician but the Good Physician in the scriptural sense. He might easily have lost his zeal for his profession were it not for his zeal for humanity. He was a symbol of refinement."

As early as 1908 Dr. Nichols was the leader in a movement among Worcester physicians to prevent the appalling mortality among children of tender years from infected milk and the ignorance of mothers of proper methods of feeding. The result was the general use of certified milk in the city and the saving of thousands of lives of infant children. At first Dr. Nichols acted as Treasurer of the committee, giving generously of his own means; later he was Chairman of the Medical Milk Commission of Worcester and remained through life a watchful member of its executive committee. He was one of the founders of the Associated Charities of Worcester, a director and for many years its President. He was early impressed by the overlapping of charitable work as well as by the waste of effort and annoyance caused by successive appeals throughout the year to the same generous giver. He, with like-minded persons, founded the Worcester Welfare Federation, whose annual Golden Rule Fund, a blessing to givers, dispensers and objects alike, marks an epoch in wise charity, and affords a highly intelligent example in the art of effective help to the needy and helpless.

Dr. Nichols was for many years a member of the Hughes Medical Club, made up of the leading and progressive physicians of his own school with occasional meetings in Boston. He also lectured at intervals between 1887 and 1907 in the Boston University School of Medicine on the History and Methodology of Medicine, and on the History of Medicine and

Medical Ethics. He was keenly interested as a Trustee of the Westborough Hospital for the Insane, a position to which he was appointed in 1894 and continued to hold through life. He was President of the Worcester County Homeopathic Society, as had been his father before him, as well as of the Massachusetts Homeopathic Medical Society. During the World War Dr. Nichols threw himself with his usual enthusiasm into the local work of the Red Cross, and spared neither purse nor person in effectively promoting its noble work.

Dr. Nichols was born and brought up in All Saints Parish, Worcester. He filled every responsible position in the parish and was a sustaining prop to every successive rector. He was chosen upon the Vestry as early as 1885; he first became Junior Warden in 1902, and succeeded his lifelong friend, Charles G. Washburn, in 1925 as Senior Warden and performed the duties of that office until his death. He was active in the formation of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts, was nearly always if not constantly a delegate from All Saints to its Diocesan Conventions, and was an effective member first and last of every diocesan committee. The diocese sent him as a lay delegate to successive General Conventions of the whole church, the last of which he attended being that held at Washington in October, 1928. He was also a delegate to several Provincial Synods. The Vestry of All Saints Church, in a memorial, described his life "as interwoven with the very fabric of that parish and the diocese, that his grace of spirit bound him intimately to the members of the parish, that aggressiveness was not his, nor did the clash of combat appeal to him, but that he had more effective ways of convincing others of the right; and there was an inner glow in him that radiated gently out and warmed the hearts and spurred the minds of those who met him."

For the first fifteen years of his life out of college Dr. Nichols was too busy in fitting himself for a

physician's life and in caring for his parents and growing family, to say nothing of earning a living, to indulge the bookish instincts that stirred within him or to begin the collecting and the writing that absorbed him so largely in his later years. In a Record of the Class of 1872, published in 1887, he contented himself with saying: "Have lived a quiet, busy, professional life in Worcester ever since my graduation from the Harvard Medical School in 1875." But during the next ten years his literary bent showed itself, for to the Class Record of 1897, after again alluding to his "busy life," he goes on to say: "I have not forgotten the injunction of Oliver Wendell Holmes, in one of his lectures at the Medical School, to have a hobby as well as a profession; and in consequence I have the incurable disease, Biblio-Mania!"

It was in this very year, 1897, that he was elected a member of the American Antiquarian Society. But before this, even from the days of his youth, he had been made welcome to its library, had studied its rich collections, and had become familiar with its aims and dreams. As he became filled with the spirit of Isaiah Thomas, the founder of the Society, his zeal, his interest, his devotion to the Society increased, culminating with his election to membership. The first recognition by the Society of his growing interest and loyalty was when he was made a member of the Committee on Publications in 1909, his service on which lasted until 1919. He was elected a member of the Council in 1911, and continued a Councillor for the rest of his life. During this period he served on the Committee on the Hall, as Recording Secretary, on the Library Committee, and as Secretary for Foreign Correspondence. Finally, at the Annual Meeting in October, 1917, he received at the hands of the Society its highest honor, when he was elected President. His all too brief service in that office was, however, of a quality and promise, fully to merit the verdict in the Council's memorial that "Since Isaiah Thomas no one

of our presidents has undertaken the duties of that office, better fitted to be the head of a learned collecting Society; and it is the Society's misfortune that he has not been spared to guide and encourage its efforts to be the leader in its chosen field."

Worthington Chauncey Ford, an intimate and appreciative friend of Dr. Nichols, than whom there is no better judge of literary effort, describes his private collections in commenting upon the work linking his name with that of the Society:

In a quiet way, guided by a real love of books and intelligently directed enthusiasm, he accomplished something worthwhile in bibliography. He did not essay any large undertaking, like Sabin's "Dictionary of Books relating to America," or Evans' "American Bibliography"; but in collecting and listing he treated minor objects and by his sense of completeness raised them above their real importance. Having at hand the library of the American Antiquarian Society, with its wealth of American imprints and newspapers, he wisely turned to it for foundation material on what would be of greatest interest locally. His first compilation of size was a "Bibliography of Worcester, 1775-1848," privately printed on the press of his friend, Franklin P. Rice of Worcester. A second edition, much enlarged, was printed in 1916. While preparing that volume he was impressed by the issues of the press of Isaiah Thomas, who was the first to set up a printing press in the town. Both in quantity and in quality Thomas stands among the most progressive printers of his day, almost as great in popularizing books as Franklin and Rivington. Dr. Nichols began to collect Thomas' publications and as a result of many years' search he has made the Thomas collection in the Antiquarian Society the most complete known, and to the end of his life Thomas' career interested him. His study of Thomas' diaries, correspondence and account books led to a number of essays which have widened our knowledge of the methods of printing in Massachusetts in the 18th and 19th centuries.

A second interest was that in Massachusetts Almanacs, of which no list or special collection existed. He prepared a full bibliography, 1639-1850, a task of no little difficulty, because of the scarcity of the early issues in spite of the editions printed. That list, with its introduction, at once took its place as authoritative, covering the field so thoroughly as to leave only gleanings to be added. Out of that adventure grew

the reproduction by photostat of the Massachusetts Almanacs issued in the 17th century—sixty-four in number—an achievement not since equalled. With characteristic generosity he gave the money received from the sale of sets to the Antiquarian Society.

What he could do in a minute research is shown by his study of the little tract of the Bible in Verse and the running down of the Boston edition of the Baskett Bible. Whatever he undertook had some useful purpose, either to aid him in his own collections or to indicate to institutions concerned what was required to strengthen them in the particular department treated. As a consequence, the books he had on his own shelves reflected the labor he had given to bibliography. His Thomas books formed a section by themselves; his works of general reading lined his library and living rooms; in a safe in the former he kept his incunabula, not many in number but each one in perfect condition and bought for some special purpose, to round out a small but very select group. It was his original intention to get one specimen of printing for each year from 1460 to 1500, and in each instance, a specimen of an important or significant book. In this he succeeded, for many of the years obtaining additional examples. He knew his books and loved them for their oddity or rarity as well as for companionship. Thus in his own field he had a greater authority that would seem to be his due. Devoted to a few lines of investigation, none of them "popular," he accomplished much. He would follow up minute points, long overlooked or misinterpreted, or even controverted, and he solved the doubts in a satisfying manner. It is enough to call attention to his larger essays in book-lore; the minor instances are too numerous to list.

The more important books and essays written by Dr. Nichols, additional to those mentioned by Mr. Ford, were: "Some Notes on Isaiah Thomas and his Worcester Imprints," 1900; "Isaiah Thomas, Printer, Writer and Collector," 1912; "Justus Fox, a German Printer of the 18th Century, 1915"; "Portraits of Isaiah Thomas," 1921; "Samuel Salisbury, a Boston Merchant in the Revolution," 1926; and "Checklist of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont Almanacs," 1929.

Upon his election to the Massachusetts Historical Society, on March 8, 1917, Dr. Nichols entered its

field of work with his wonted enthusiasm, and, besides contributing to its proceedings and papers, showed his deep interest in its meetings by his constant attendance. The first duty laid upon him was as Chairman of the Committee to examine the Library and Cabinet, reporting at the April Meeting, 1918 (*Proceedings*, vol. 51, p. 334). He presented then an interesting statement of the needs of the Library, and was so much impressed with the extent and value of the large manuscript collection that he then promised himself to contribute something of value to add to it with the hope that other members would follow his example. The opportunity came for him to do this in March, 1922, when he obtained the papers of Gov. William Livingston, of New Jersey, and of his son-in-law Matthew Ridley of Maryland, numbering about 1500 pieces from 1770-1790. These he presented at the March meeting of that year, with extended remarks on their value and contents, and something of the family history, owing to their possession by the late Charles Eliot Norton, a descendant. He served on the Council of the Society for the term 1919 to 1921.

Dr. Nichols read his paper on Isaiah Thomas, which was to be printed elsewhere, at the January meeting, 1923. He read a letter, at the May meeting, 1925, with brief remarks, written from Agawam (Springfield) by William Pynchon to Roger Ludlow, dated January 19, 1638. His last paper, read at the January meeting, 1926, was on the "Various Forms of the Columbus Codex." He paid tributes to the memory of Lincoln Newton Kinnicutt at the January meeting, 1922, and to Granville Stanley Hall, May meeting, 1924. His last active service was on the Committee to Nominate Officers in April, 1926. In October, 1923, he was one of several delegates appointed by the Society to attend the Centenary of Francis Parkman at Montreal on November 13, 1923.

A description of Dr. Nichols' services to the City

of Worcester would be incomplete without mentioning his continued interest in the growth and usefulness of its Free Public Library. He served painstakingly as a member of the Board of Directors of the library for the four years from January 1, 1920, acting as President of the Board for the last year of his term. The librarian says of his services to the library: "It was a great source of satisfaction during all his term for both the librarian and the library staff to be associated with a gentleman of such sound bibliographical learning, and also common sense and judgment in all matters relating to library methods and management. His loss, I believe, is more deeply felt in Worcester than that of any contemporary."

Dr. Nichols was also elected in 1897 a member of that choice band of Collectors and Dilettanti, the Club of Odd Volumes of Boston, and served as its Vice-President during the year 1925, and as its President for the years 1926 and 1927. On the evening of April 15, 1908, he read a paper before the club members on the oldest library in the world, "The Library of Rameses the Great and Some of its Books," which was subsequently published by the Club under the title "The Library of Rameses," and printed by D. B. Updike at the Merrymount Press. "The Isle of Pines, 1668," an "Essay in Bibliography," published by the Club in 1920 and printed at the same press, was dedicated by the author, Worthington Chauncey Ford, "To Charles Lemuel Nichols, Lover of Books, Colleague, Friend."

In 1916 Dr. Nichols was made by the Corporation of Brown University a member of the Committee of Management of the John Carter Brown Library, that choice collection of Americana which is a part of the University. Mr. Lawrence C. Wroth, the accomplished librarian, in a sketch of him for the Brown Alumni Monthly, says that "Dr. Nichols' knowledge of books in the library's field had made him of the greatest use to the Committee of Management and to

the staff," to the latter even more than to the former, as being in a "position to appreciate the value of his services to the institution. His unusual knowledge of books and prices and of the needs of the collection enabled us to turn to him for consultation in our daily problems. If I were asked to say, however, what had been Dr. Nichols' greatest usefulness to the library, I would say that it had been here, as everywhere else, the influence of his personality and his unfailing kindness and understanding."

In 1918 Brown University conferred upon Dr. Nichols the degree of Doctor of Letters, President Faunce describing him in these felicitous words: "Charles Lemuel Nichols, M.D., of the Class of 1872: a beloved physician and a lover of books, skilled in collecting, interpreting, and editing precious manuscripts and rare volumes, whose historic insight and appreciation of beautiful things are constantly at the service of Massachusetts and Rhode Island."

Subsequently and in the same year Dr. Nichols was elected by the Corporation of Brown University a member of the Board of Fellows, and assigned for duty on the "Advisory and Executive Committee" of the Corporation, which acts as its right arm between the infrequent meetings of that body, and is sometimes known as the "Minor Quorum." He served on this committee as well as on various other committees of the Corporation as long as he lived and always with unfailing cheerfulness and faithfulness. President Faunce writes of the debt of the University to Dr. Nichols:

Dr. Charles L. Nichols has in recent years been one of the great intellectual and spiritual assets of Brown University. Trained in the scientific methods of modern medicine, his sympathy and understanding overflowed the boundaries of his profession, and we at Brown knew him chiefly as humanist as lover of all things rare and beautiful, as scholar in realms of literature and history. In every discussion as to the meaning and value of liberal education he was at the front. In the development of our University Library he took the keenest

interest. In the management of the John Carter Brown Library his knowledge and fine taste were of the greatest assistance. By his literary discrimination, his historical scholarship and his spiritual perceptions, he constantly enriched and illuminated our University life.

On June 14, 1877, Dr. Nichols married Caroline Clinton Dewey, the daughter of the Hon. Francis H. Dewey of Worcester. She died on December 23, 1878, leaving a daughter, Caroline Dewey, who is the wife of our associate, George Anthony Gaskill. He married again in 1884, Mary Jarette Brayton, the daughter of the Hon. John S. Brayton of Fall River. There were three children of this marriage, Charles Lemuel Nichols, Jr.; Harriet Brayton Nichols, who is the wife of our associate, Daniel Waldo Lincoln; and Brayton Nichols, an aviator in the overseas army, who was accidentally killed while flying at the School of Aviation at Tours in France, when preparing for service at the front.

WILLIAM V. KELLEN,
For the Council

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