

Report of the Council

THE 118th year of the American Antiquarian Society has been marked by more perils and convulsions than any that even our oldest member can recall; and the wisdom of Isaiah Thomas in locating our library and collections at some distance from the ocean is perhaps more apparent now than in any other year of our existence. Dedicated as we are to the preservation of the cultural heritage of the past, we look overseas with pride and sympathy to institutions like the British Museum, the Bodleian and other libraries and learned institutions of the British Isles, whose collections and personnel are daily and nightly under fire, who are serving in the front line of a struggle on whose outcome depends the fate of the civilization that we share with them.

Our own activities have been fortunately untouched as yet by the events that are shaking the world. Most of them have been described in the minutes of the last meeting, or will be described in the Report of the Director.

The position of Librarian of this Society, left vacant by the resignation of Mr. Vail last January, to become Librarian of the New York State Library, has been filled by the Council at its September meeting. Dr. Clifford K. Shipton of Shirley, Massachusetts, has been elected Librarian, to begin his duties on November 1, although for the coming year he will be here on half time. Dr. Shipton, who graduated from Harvard in 1926, and received the degree of Ph.D. in 1933, is best known as "Sibley's Successor," the compiler and author of the *Biographical Sketches of Harvard Graduates* begun by John L. Sibley eighty years ago. His search for items by and about Harvard graduates of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries has given Dr. Shipton a wide knowledge of colonial Americana, and of the principal libraries where they are to be found. Much of his work has been done in the Society's building. His expert knowledge of manu-

script Americana is attested by his appointment in 1938 as Archivist of Harvard University to which post for the present he will give one day a week. The Sibley work, for which he is employed as assistant editor by the Massachusetts Historical Society, he expects to continue on part time. Your Director, who has known Dr. Shipton for ten years, and your President, who has been in touch with him and his work since he was an undergraduate, believe that he is unusually well fitted by character, temperament, and scholarship for this important and responsible position.

A great bibliographical enterprise of particular interest to us has reached completion during the past month, *Cotton Mather, A Bibliography of His Works*, compiled by our associate, Mr. Thomas J. Holmes, has been published, together with a supplementary volume on the minor Mathers. Mr. Holmes came to Worcester early in 1936, operating under a grant from the late Tracy W. McGregor, who had recently purchased from Mr. William G. Mather one of the greatest Mather collections, and who sought to perpetuate in print the record of Cotton Mather's literary labors. Mr. McGregor's sudden death, soon after he had given to the Society a fund of \$5000 to carry on the work of compilation, halted its progress. Mr. Mather immediately provided funds to continue the work, and saw it through to completion. Now that the four impressive volumes, uniform with Mr. Holmes's *Increase Mather Bibliography*, have been issued by the Harvard University Press, with a typography and make-up wholly worthy of so great an undertaking, we can justly praise Mr. Holmes for his scholarship and Mr. Mather for his fruitful example of filial piety.

During the four years of compilation, the Antiquarian Society has administered the fund. In its library, surrounded by the largest existing collection of Mather imprints and manuscripts, the Mather family portraits, and an almost complete collection of the printed works of their New England contemporaries, Mr. Holmes has constantly worked. His presence at Worcester will be so greatly missed that we sigh for more Mathers for Mr. Holmes to conquer.

It is safe to predict that these bibliographies will rank with those of HARRISSE, SABIN, and D. MANUEL II, as among the greatest of modern times. They transcend the limits of bibliography proper by a mass of shrewd and scholarly notes which help us to a knowledge of the men, as well as of their books. As a contribution to American colonial culture, and to the history of a family that was one of the most eminent and certainly the least popular in early New England, the Holmes bibliographies are worthy of the highest praise. The Mathers have too long held the unenviable position of whipping-boys for the presumed sins of the New England Puritans. Mr. Holmes has not hesitated in his notes to give a fresh interpretation of Cotton Mather as a kindly if meddling philanthropist, a learned if pedantic scholar, and a tolerant though excitable minister; one whose courage in the smallpox crisis, and whose attempts to keep his people abreast of the liberal theology and experimental science of his day, should arouse admiration rather than derision.

There have been four deaths in the Society's membership during the past six months. Clarence M. Warner, elected in 1924, prominent for many years as a collector of Canadiana, died May 22, 1940. Matt Bushnell Jones, elected in 1924, one of the leading collectors of early Americana in the country, a contributor to our *Proceedings* and a valued member of the Council of this Society, died July 1, 1940. Howard M. Chapin, elected in 1914, Librarian of the Rhode Island Historical Society, and author of many books of Rhode Island history, died September 17, 1940. The Reverend Herbert E. Lombard, elected in 1913, died July 13, 1940. Mr. Lombard was more active in collecting material for our Library, especially American literature and bookplates, than anyone excepting the chief officers. His great interest in the Society he perpetuated by a bequest under which the Society will receive about \$21,000.

One other important bequest has come to the Society during the year. George Watson Cole, elected in 1918, bequeathed to this Society three-tenths of his residuary estate. To this trust Mrs. Laura W. Cole, who survived her husband only two months,

added the greater portion of her own property. Already from the Cole Trust we have received the sum of \$29,000 in securities, and \$15,000 or more are yet to be received.

These two bequests are much needed additions to the Society's funds, especially in this period of declining interest on investments. Also, we are indebted to the Carnegie Corporation of New York for their grant during the past year of \$2000, the fourth of five instalments of a grant of \$15,000. This generous grant has helped the Society at a time of financial stringency, and has enabled us to maintain activities which otherwise we should have been forced to curtail.

Even with these bequests, the Society will have difficulty during the immediate future in living within its income. The Council proposes to establish a guarantee fund consisting of annual contributions from members, to be continued for a term of years, or as long as they see fit. Without some such method of increasing the Society's income, it cannot continue on its present scale of service to American scholarship.

SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON,
For the Council .

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