

Report of the Director

IT SEEMS quite natural for me to be writing the report of the Librarian of this Society. For twenty-two years I performed this duty, and was relieved only when Mr. Vail came to the Society in 1930. For the past ten months, in the interval between Mr. Vail's resignation and the appointment of Mr. Shipton as the new Librarian, the privilege of administering the Library, as well as directing the affairs of the Society, has devolved upon me. Except for the fact that the working day has averaged about fourteen hours, including Saturday and Sunday, I have enjoyed it. The work of the Society has greatly increased in the last ten years. Research and correspondence have both doubled. A day seldom passes but that forty or fifty letters have to be planned and dictated, which leaves little time for research, the preparation of material for the *Proceedings*, or interviews with visitors. But now that Mr. Shipton is to fill the Librarian's post, I shall have more time to devote to the affairs of the Society.

The number of accessions to the Library during the year have been as follows:

Bound volumes	7,367
Pamphlets	2,943
Engravings, broadsides, maps, manuscripts, &c.	11,000
Unbound newspapers	2,300

The number of bound volumes now in the Library is 245,356, and of pamphlets, 384,084, a total of 629,440 titles.

The number of accessions is less than in some recent years. This is partially due to the fact that we are becoming more discriminating in the material which we accept. By a process of trial and error, we have found that we ought not to acquire or preserve

certain groups of material, and in some cases we should limit the scope of our collections to a definite period. We cannot take everything, and the problem of shelf space, even in such a comprehensive library as this, is very serious.

For many years we have been keeping all printed United States Government documents. But the output during the last decade, with the great increase in Government organizations, has been overpowering. Therefore we have decided to keep all Government publications to the year 1909, the date of the Document Checklist, in which compendious volume all of our holdings are checked. Since 1909 we shall keep only those documents which concern history, bibliography and subjects where we are already strong, and of course the great series of documents issued by Congress and formerly called "the sheep-bound set." The fact that the Worcester Public Library keeps all currently issued Government publications makes the material which we have decided to give up at least available in this city.

In the collecting of newspapers and of periodicals, there are fixed limits to our scope. We keep all newspapers printed previous to 1821, long or unusual files from then through the Civil War, and after that only the files published in a few of the key cities—Baltimore, Charleston, New Orleans, Philadelphia, &c. We keep all American periodicals through the Civil War, and after that only those which relate to history, bibliography and literature.

There are other groups of material that we formerly sought to collect, but which we are now giving up. At one time we acquired all school publications, but we did not realize the vast number of papers published by the thousands of high schools and private schools all over the country. There is little value in loading hundreds of shelves with this seldom used literature, especially when other libraries in New England are doing it more comprehensively. Annual reports of business organizations throughout the country were at one time saved, occupying many shelves and almost never consulted. Yet there would be no reason for our keeping them, when perhaps the largest collection in the country is available at the Harvard Business Library.

In the great mass of currently issued books, we acquire only those titles that relate to bibliography, history, literature, biography and collecting. Even with less pretentious ideas, the fields which we do cover are sufficient. This is a library of historical reference, and we must limit the scope of our collecting, or we could not develop properly along the lines for which we are best known. It is far more important for us to catalogue and make available that which we have, than to branch into new fields of operation.

Our limited income for book purchase is primarily devoted to filling in gaps in our early printed material. There is little money left for the purchase of currently issued books of history and biography. Therefore we were especially pleased during the last year to receive the donation of two sizable collections of such books. Herschel Brickell, of Natchez, Miss., who worked here for three weeks a summer ago on our Mississippi newspapers, more than repaid us for what help we gave him by presenting two hundred volumes of recent American history and biography, some of which we had long wanted to own. Mr. Frederic G. Melcher of New York, editor of *Publishers Weekly*, sent us two large consignments of volumes printed within the last year, all much needed for our secondary source material. Also, large numbers of recent books, as well as standard books of an earlier period, have come to us from Dr. Samuel B. Woodward, who decided to give away some of the volumes in his large and valuable library, when he was able to supervise the operation. These gifts from Dr. Woodward have been coming in all summer, as his library seems inexhaustible.

One of the notable gifts of the year was the first edition of Hawthorne's *Gentle Boy*, the gift of Miss Mabel C. Gage, sister of the late T. Hovey Gage and for many years a frequent donor to this Library, who inherited it from her grandmother, Mrs. Leander Gage. This rare quarto pamphlet printed at Boston in 1839, with its original paper covers and its curious frontispiece, was one of the few Hawthorne titles that we lacked. From Mrs. Roswell Skeel, Jr., we have received her usual contribution of \$200, to aid in acquiring books written by American authors.

Occasionally a cynic questions the collecting of first editions. But in this Library we do not consider our collection as one of "first editions" so much as we consider it a collection of American literature. Of the approximate seven thousand titles in this collection, representing over three hundred authors, about two-thirds never saw the light of a second edition, in which case such books were not only the first editions, but the only editions. But of those books which were published in more than one edition, we have sought primarily the earliest printing—that which was nearest to the author's original manuscript; and after that we have acquired the earliest printings of editions which were revised by the author, or later editions made notable by illustrations or additional material.

I think that little excuse is needed for the collecting of first editions. There is a greater thrill in holding in one's hand a book which was produced in the author's lifetime and was set up in type from his own hand-written copy, than there is in handling a reprint made by some commercial firm, years after the author's death. W. Carew Hazlitt, in his *Book Collector* says: "Who would exchange a second 'Hamlet' of 1604 for a first one of 1603, simply because the former happens to contain as much more, and the latter is little better than a torso." There is more romance in the earliest books. As Richard Curle once wrote: "The book-collector, surrounded by his first editions, finds a refuge from the stress and turmoil of the modern world. His library is a sort of oasis peopled by a living silence; all about him the illustrious dead stand ready to whisper in his ear. Here are the volumes they handled themselves, here are the books in which they first gave to fortune the cloistered thoughts of their creation."

Yet, as I stated above, it is as a collection of American literature that this great assemblage of books has been gathered and is used. Begun as late as 1926, it is today one of the largest collections of American literature in the country, used more for its hundreds of minor authors than for the few highlights to which many libraries restrict their shelves. Only a week ago, I read of the munificent gift of the W. T. H. Howe collection to the New York Public Library,

which puts that fortunate institution in the forefront for the literary rarities of the great American authors. Had Mr. Howe collected reprints, sets and late editions, his collection could as well have gone to any small town library in the United States. As Charles Lamb humorously remarked: "Tenth editions are scarcer than first editions, but nobody wants them."

Many rare examples of early American printing have been obtained during the year through gift or purchase. But except for broadsides or excessively scarce and expensive items, it is not often that we find early imprints before 1800 that we lack. One volume which we have long wanted, came to us through exchange with Georgetown University—the Douay or Catholic Bible printed by Carey, Stewart & Co. at Philadelphia in 1790. This is the rarest of all early American Bibles and was one of the few gaps in our collection.

From our late Council member, Matt B. Jones, we acquired several broadsides, ballads and elegies, printed between 1770 and 1820. For several years past Mr. Jones frequently bought for us scarce items in early American fiction and poetry. His loss means much to the Library, as it does to the Council, where his friendly counsel made him one of its most valued members.

From our fellow member, Dr. Rosenbach, we have received several gifts, notably Webster's *American Spelling Book*, 1803, autographed both by Noah Webster and by Jacob Johnson, who reprinted the volume in Philadelphia; and a rare Philadelphia folio engraving made by James Akin in 1830, entitled "The Holy Alliance, or Satan's Legion at Sabbath Pranks," showing a mail coach halted by Quakers for carrying mails on Sunday.

One more of our gaps in the collection of books owned by the Presidents has been filled by the acquisition of President Fillmore's copy of Jerome Alley's *Vindiciæ Christianæ*, 1826, with his autograph on the title-page and the inside cover. Another Presidential item was a thin visiting-card bookplate used by Rutherford B. Hayes occasionally in books in his library, and not noted in Dr. Rosenbach's *Libraries of the Presidents*, although this omission is more chargeable to me, since I furnished most of the material regarding Presidential bookplates.

Newspaper files, as usual, have played a considerable part in the year's accessions. The most important files acquired are as follows:

San Francisco, *Irish Nationalist*, 1873-1874
 Hartford, *American Mercury*, 1812
 Hartford, *Christian Secretary*, 1824-1827
 Middletown, *Middlesex Gazette*, 1794-1797, 1800-1803
 Georgetown, *Washington Federalist*, 1801-1802
 Hallowell, *American Advocate*, 1818-1820
 Baltimore, *Federal Intelligencer*, 1795
 Boston, *Free Press*, 1831-1832
 Boston, *Saturday Night*, 1887-1897
 Princeton, *The Word*, 1872-1893
 Springfield, *Republican*, 1911-1939
 Stockbridge, *Western Star*, 1800-1804
 Albany, *Argus*, 1814-1816
 Geneva, *Gazette*, 1809-1815
 New York, *Herald of Progress*, 1860-1864
 New York, *Journal*, 1787-1793
 Raleigh, *Star*, 1811
 Wilmington, *Journal*, 1863-1864
 Cincinnati, *Western Spy*, 1805-1806
 Harrisburg, *Oracle of Dauphin*, 1799-1800, 1807-1808
 Philadelphia, *Dollar Newspaper*, 1843-1845
 Philadelphia, *Episcopal Recorder*, 1839-1843
 Philadelphia, *Freeman's Journal*, 1810-1811
 Philadelphia, *Tickler*, 1809
 Richmond, *Examiner*, 1862-1864

Not included in the above list were seventeen volumes of *Trench and Camp*, 1917-1919, a series of newspapers issued by the various encampments in the country during the World War. We already had a fair representation of these files, acquired at the time they were published, but the recent accession helps notably to complete the collection.

A valuable addition to our collection of American book-auction catalogues has come from Mrs. Edward Turnbull of New York,

who has deposited here a complete file of the Walpole Galleries catalogues, 1915-1932, all priced and with names of buyers. Added to our similar files issued by Henkels, American Art, Anderson, Libbie, and other firms, we have an almost complete collection of the catalogues of book sales for the past fifty years. When these have the names of buyers, as well as the prices, they form a bibliographical aid of decided usefulness.

The Bishop Peach collection of psalmody and hymnody has been in process of arrangement during the summer. A specially designed book label has been pasted in the approximately 4400 volumes which we apparently lack. During the winter, the books will be more carefully examined, and then incorporated in our main collection, making it the largest existing collection of American church music. Eventually all of the titles should be checked in Frank J. Metcalf's *Bibliography of American Psalmody*, of which we now have his manuscript copy, and then that valuable work will be ready for printing.

From the material sent to us by the late George Watson Cole, we have finished arranging the collection of over 20,000 American post card views which, added to our own collection, makes a total of about 55,000 views. Apparently unimportant, such a collection assumes historical value because of its size and comprehensiveness, providing views, often photographs, of every city and section of the country during the last forty or more years. Joined with our collection of 50,000 stereoscopic views, taken in the period from 1860 to 1880, a graphic history of the United States is available, which could be found in no other way.

Three portraits have been added to the Society's collection. The portrait of Isaiah Thomas, Jr., painted by Ethan Allen Greenwood in 1818, has been deposited on indefinite loan by Mrs. George R. Minot of Falmouth, Massachusetts, great-granddaughter of Isaiah Thomas, Jr. Also through the kindness of Mrs. Minot, granddaughter of Benjamin Franklin Thomas, the portrait of Judge Thomas, copied by Joseph R. DeCamp from an early photograph, has been similarly deposited by the Estate of Richard Olney of Boston. An excellent portrait of the late Chief Justice

Arthur P. Rugg, president of this Society, painted by Harry B. Chatterton of Lancaster, Mass., has been acquired.

The Director wishes to call the attention of members to an exhibit of sheet music in the upper hall, selected from the Society's collection. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the exhibit are the minstrel songs, especially of the period previous to the Civil War. The exhibit was arranged and the labels prepared by Miss Emma F. Waite.

The entire staff of the Library has cooperated efficiently with the Director, during the period when work was considerably increased, following the resignation of Mr. Vail. One change in the staff has occurred. Mr. James E. Fenner, who had faithfully served as superintendent of the building for thirty-five years, both in the old Library at Lincoln Square and in the present Library, resigned in April last, his place being filled by James E. Zinck. Mr. Thomas J. Holmes, who has pursued his studies steadily in this Library for over four years, is to leave us soon, now that he has finished his great Mather Bibliography, already so well reviewed in the Report of the Council. So constant has he been in his daily attendance and so frequently helpful in the solving of queries which have come to the Library, that we almost consider him a member of the Library staff. The Director looks forward with pleasure and anticipation to the coming of Clifford K. Shipton as the new Librarian, and believes that Mr. Shipton will bring both scholarship and ability to that office.

Respectfully submitted,

CLARENCE S. BRIGHAM,

Director

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