

Report of the Council

THE chief problem confronting all New England cultural institutions is the possibility of enemy bombing and the resulting destruction of their collections. Several libraries and museums have already evacuated selected portions of their possessions, and some have prepared protected quarters in their own buildings. The Antiquarian Society faces a situation rather different from most institutions. Where college and public libraries maintain collections which contain a large proportion of recently issued and replaceable books, this Society considers that the larger part of its three-quarters of a million titles is of the earlier field and comparatively irreplaceable. Consequently evacuation would not mean ten per cent of its collections, but sixty per cent. As a result we believe that safety, or at least a modicum of safety, should be sought in our own building. Fortunately the basement of the main library, except for the section under the central dome, is protected above by three concrete floors. Therefore the outer rooms in the basement have protection against the ordinary bombing attack, and it is in these rooms we shall seek safety if the emergency occurs.

Of course other aids to protection, such as sand and fire extinguishers, are accessible. Also we have taken a blanket insurance policy covering all the glass in the building, comprising nearly three thousand panes. Already the basement is wired against fire, as well as burglary.

During the past few months there has been a noticeable falling off in the number of visitors and researchers. Since most of the scholars who use the library come from outside

of the State and generally from outside of New England, the tire and oil shortage adversely influences travel. Perhaps, as a result, we shall have more time to arrange our collections and make them more accessible. Certainly the books need constant reshifting and reshelving, due to the rapidly restricting limits of stack space. This is becoming more and more a pressing problem.

Two large accessions of the highest importance have come to the Library in the past six months. Alfred L. Aiken, of New York, has donated to the Society his large collection of books, pamphlets, and manuscripts relating to Alexander Hamilton, which subject has interested him for many years. From the New England Historic Genealogical Society has come, through exchange, what volumes we lacked of its collection of newspapers, except for certain Boston files which they are retaining. Although we shall lack only a small proportion of their newspapers, this accession is very valuable to us, in filling in the gaps in files already strong. Both of these acquisitions will be referred to in detail in the annual report of the Librarian in October.

An incidental annoyance has been the frequent trouble in the operation of our elevator, or book lift. Provision was made at the Council meeting last year to install a new elevator, designed for passengers, as well as books, but the war situation has postponed a new installation for the duration.

There have been four deaths in the membership since the last meeting of the Society—Right Reverend William Lawrence, elected in 1899, died November 6, 1941. Wilbur Macey Stone, one of the foremost collectors of children's books in the country, elected in 1931, died December 21, 1941. Daniel Berkeley Updike, internationally known as a printer of fine books, elected in 1904, died December 29, 1941. Samuel Verplanck Hoffman, formerly President of

the New York Historical Society, elected in 1910, died February 23, 1942. Obituary sketches of these members will appear in the printed *Proceedings* of this meeting.

The response to our recent appeal for funds, primarily to aid the Library in book purchase, has been successful, considering the financial situation at the present time. A total of \$6405 has so far been given, constituting about eighty per cent of the amount received at this time last year. This mark of confidence in the prestige and in the conduct of the Society is both helpful and encouraging.

Respectfully submitted,

CLARENCE S. BRIGHAM,

For the Council

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