

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL.

On behalf of the Council I have the honor to submit the report for the last six months.

Our Centennial Celebration last October was a marked success, and emphasized anew the national character of our Society, attended as it was by the President of the United States, the British Ambassador, the senior Senator from Massachusetts, the Minister from Peru, and an ex-Governor of Pennsylvania, all of whom were members of the Society and took some part in the exercises. A large and distinguished company, from our own membership and as delegates from kindred organizations was present at the various functions and many of them brought greetings and congratulations from their Societies, and all listened with interest to the story of our hundred years of work and progress, so excellently told by the orator of the morning. At luncheon we enjoyed the hospitality of President Lincoln at his house, and in the afternoon the Meeting House of the Second Parish on Court Hill was packed to the doors with members and guests to listen to Senator Lodge and Professor McLaughlin. The exercises of the day closed with a large and brilliant dinner at the Worcester Club, which will not soon be forgotten by those who were fortunate enough to be present. The dignity of President Taft with his keen appreciation of his election to this Society in whose membership his father had taken great interest, the brilliancy, magnetism and historic learning of Mr. Bryce, the wonderful command of the English tongue shown by our South American member, Mr. Pezet, and the speech of Governor Pennypacker who told us of his historic family homestead, all these,

and more, gave a fitting close to our Centennial, and will linger long in our memories.

We may today be permitted to take advantage of the absence of our President, who is on his way home from the West Indies where he has been passing the winter, to say that much of the success of our celebration was due to the admirable arrangements made by him, and to his tact and dignity as a presiding officer. And in all these duties, his associates on the committee, Messrs. Washburn and Rugg, were of the greatest assistance, and to all three of them are the thanks of the members due. The official account of the Proceedings is in print and has just been distributed to members. Besides the regular Proceedings, this contains a complete list of all the members and officers of the Society from 1812 to 1912, a most interesting and instructive list showing, at least in one case, four generations of one family in our ranks. There have been about a thousand members, and the residence and date of election of each have been given, and of all but about twenty of the deceased members, the date of death. These latter have so far eluded us, in spite of the most exhaustive search.

The volume also contains a sketch by our Librarian of the Book of Records of the Council for New England, presented by our associate, Frederick Lewis Gay, the most valuable single acquisition ever received. The Society has no publication now in preparation.

Since October we have pursued the even tenor of our way, quietly adding to our collections of newspapers and early imprints, and our rich stores of Americana have been consulted by scholars either in person or by letter, and fortunate are we in being able to respond to these demands through a Librarian, who not only knows our treasures but has in addition that rare combination of scholarly instincts and a prompt and business-like method of applying his knowledge. The largest gifts received have been the legacy of \$3,000 from the Edward L. Davis estate, a gift of \$1,000 from the widow of the late Rev. Dr. Daniel Merriman, in accordance with a

request left by her husband, and a second gift of \$500, making \$1,000 in all, from the widow of our associate, Deloraine P. Corey. Those of you who visit the new Antiquarian Hall must be impressed not only by the reposeful dignity of the surroundings, but by the accessibility of our books, newspapers and manuscripts, and the opportunities for consulting them.

Splendidly situated as our new building is with broad streets upon three sides, yet we were menaced in the rear by a vacant lot, which might be built upon by an unsatisfactory neighbor, and this, in addition might prevent the Society in the future from being able to expand in the one direction in which it would be likely to need more room, namely, in addition to its stack. Therefore the President has, in accordance with the power given him at our last meeting, bought from the Worcester Art Museum this adjoining piece of about 20,000 square feet of vacant land, and has given a five-year note for \$3,755 in payment therefor. A member has agreed to pay the interest on this note for five years, and it is hoped that before the expiration of that time some one or more members will put the Society into unencumbered ownership of this piece of land. This is one of the opportunities open to someone to be of service.

Our Society being national and our members so scattered over America that many of them are rarely able to attend a meeting, it might be wise for the Society to enter upon some comprehensive scheme for keeping in closer touch with these distant members and enlisting a keener interest on their part in our welfare. The reports of our Proceedings with the papers read at our meetings are excellent, but something more might be done, more frequent and brief communications telling of our treasures, our recent acquisitions, and our needs, possibly some index or brief bibliography to show exactly what we have here, something more in detail than the Hand-book published by our Librarian in 1909, though that was a step in the right direction. These activities, too, would tend to acquaint the public more with our

Society and its work. Committees might be formed to correspond with members at a distance, and get them to collect for our library whatever may be found in their neighborhood of early American books, papers and manuscripts.

Membership in this Society is an honor, and should be prized, and accepted with its obligations to be of service. Many are waiting at our doors and those who are within the gates should take more than a passive interest. All who live within a reasonable distance of Worcester and Boston should make it their duty to attend our meetings and see for themselves what the Society is doing, and those far away should consider themselves as the representatives in their community.

The Council offers these suggestions for the consideration of the members.

Our collections should be strengthened along the lines where they are best, the chief of which are newspapers and American imprints before 1820, and we should use every endeavor to make these complete, and should collect many books printed since 1820.

Hundreds of libraries collect American biographies, genealogies, town histories, and legal and theological books, but we stand among the highest in our two specialties. No other libraries except the Library of Congress or the Wisconsin Historical Library make any large and systematic collection of newspapers, and we alone are the collectors of early American printed books and pamphlets. Our collection of American maps is one of the most complete in the country. We are gathering all American almanacs, institutional and society reports, railroad reports and dozens of other classes of material which no other library in the country attempts to preserve in a comprehensive way. Here again the Council points out to members ways in which they can be useful, either by adding to these collections or putting the officers in funds with which to buy them.

Then, too, we should not neglect valuable American manuscripts, and should take not only all that come our

way, but should solicit them where in so doing we do not trespass upon the chosen fields of any local or sister societies who might have a prior claim upon them. For there must be hundreds of valuable manuscripts which come at some time before the eyes of our members and which they might secure for our library, and that if not taken at the moment might go to no other library, and be lost to history.

It may also be wise to consider that what seems recent and modern to us now, will in a hundred or even fifty years be of historic value. And we might co-operate with other Societies in publishing and giving to the scholarly world our treasures, as we did in the case of the Mather Diaries. Sundry other publications and ways of usefulness occur to the Council, but all of these require means beyond our limits, and for the fulfilment of these desires the Council appeals to the members, and would be glad to confer more definitely and specifically with any who will aid us.

One sad touch which increasing years bring with them is the change in our membership, and in our officers. Since we last met, three members have died. Francis Blake, eminent for his scientific attainments and for his invention of the telephone transmitter; Dr. George Ebenezer Francis, physician of Worcester, skilled not only in his profession but in botany, photography for historic purposes, and in almost any other avocation that he touched; and lastly, Col. John Shaw Billings, eminent as Surgeon, Army officer, builder of hospitals, and director of the great consolidated Library of the City of New York. Obituary sketches of these members will be prepared for the Proceedings by the Biographer. No names of candidates for membership will be submitted at this meeting, as it was thought courteous not to name any in the absence of our President.

The Council, too, has seen many changes, with three new members within a year, and with the loss by resignation of one of its most valued associates, Prof. Franklin B. Dexter. Professor Dexter has given devoted service

to the Board since October 1885, and since October 1897, as Secretary for Foreign Correspondence, journeying from New Haven to Worcester for the meetings and each time taking one or two days from his professional work. The Society owes him much, for he has been constant in his generosity, and his example of service is one we might all follow, for through such devotion of its members in many lines has the Society become great.

HENRY W. CUNNINGHAM,

For the Council.

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