

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

SINCE the Annual Meeting of the Society in October we have lost three members by death: Thomas Lindall Winthrop, of Boston, who was elected in 1890, on the sixth of December; Allen Clapp Thomas of Haverford, Pennsylvania, elected in 1901, on the fifteenth of December; and Barrett Wendell, elected in 1910, on the eighth of February.

The subject at present uppermost in the minds of your Executive Officers is the urgent need of a substantial addition to our building. The sum of \$11,000 has been subscribed by generous members and friends of the Society,—an excellent beginning of the campaign to raise the \$75,000 which will defray the expense of the new wing. The present is not a propitious time to embark upon a general movement to this end, especially among wealthy non-members. Furthermore, the Council is unwilling to enter upon any active measures for this purpose in the absence of President Lincoln. But the situation is more pressing than ever before. The Librarian reports that the basement is filled with volumes for which there is no shelf-room, and it is unthinkable for the Society to cease collecting, particularly in the case of valuable newspaper files, which already cover many consecutive years, in some instances, generations. If, however, the present be not an opportune time to make a general appeal for the necessary funds, it is never inapposite in a Report of the Council to call forcibly to the attention of our whole fellowship the handicap under which our faithful officials are working and to express the hope that our members will give our necessities earnest consideration. May we not at

least make the somewhat gruesome suggestion of the desirability of testamentary bequests from any who cannot contribute while living?

It may interest our more recently elected members to hear something of the Society during the early days of its existence. It was organized in Boston, where the Annual Meetings were held for nearly twenty years, the first taking place at the Exchange Coffee House in Congress Square, which was the scene of many social and other occasions in the life of the Boston of those days. Here the Antiquarian Society met and dined until the building was burned in November, 1818. At the second meeting, in February, 1813, Isaiah Thomas presented his Library to the Society. At the same time the By-Laws were amended to provide for three meetings annually,—two in Boston, in June and on the twenty-second of December, and a third in Worcester in September, the latter subsequently being made the Anniversary Meeting, to be held on the twenty-third of October, at which an Oration was to be delivered. The first meeting in Worcester was on the twenty-ninth of September, 1813. A month later, on the twenty-third of October, the Oration was pronounced in King's Chapel, Boston, by the Rev. William Jenks in commemoration of the day on which Columbus discovered America.

In January, 1818, the Society voted to reduce the number of meetings to two yearly,—the Annual Meeting in Boston on the twenty-third of October and one in Worcester on the last Thursday in June. The Boston functions were usually followed by a dinner. In 1819, the meeting was held at Concert Hall, sometimes known, from the name of the inn-keeper, as Forster's Hotel, which stood on the southerly corner of Hanover and Court Streets; in 1820, at the Marlborough Hotel, on the westerly side of Washington Street near the head of Franklin Street; and in 1821, at the Warren Hotel, at the corner of

Merrimac and Friend Streets.¹ From 1822 till 1835, meetings were held in the *new* Exchange Coffee House, which had been rebuilt on a less ambitious plan than its predecessor; that of the twenty-fourth of October, 1831, was memorable, as we learn from the Diary of Christopher Columbus Baldwin, who records that the Society adjourned at five o'clock in the afternoon to assemble again at seven and that in the meantime the members "partook of a magnificent dinner from his Honor Lieut-Gov. Winthrop." During the same year the Society voted to hold the Annual Meeting in future at Worcester on the twenty-third of October and the Semi-annual Meeting in Boston on the last Wednesday in May. On the twenty-seventh of May, 1835, Mr. Baldwin wrote in his Diary, "We were all invited to dine with Mr. Winthrop, President of the Society. The Society always dine with him at the Annual Meetings and he gives a prime entertainment." From 1836 to 1847 the Boston meetings were held at the Tremont House where now stands the Tremont Building, adjoining the Granary Burial Ground.

On the twenty-seventh of May, 1847, an invitation was received from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences which had taken the following action two days previously, at its Annual Meeting:

"On motion of the Vice-President (Edward Everett) it was voted that the American Antiquarian Society be invited to make use of the Academy's room² for such of their meetings as are held in Boston."

The offer was gratefully accepted and the hospitality of the Academy was enjoyed for the first time in May, 1848. Thenceforth, until 1899, its Hall was our

¹The flat-iron shaped lot at the junction of Merrimac and Friend Streets, now covered by the Merrimac House, was probably the site of the Warren Hotel. The open space in front of it, on the East, is still known as Warren Square.

²The Academy's "room" was then (1847) in a building numbered 7½ Tremont Row, which it continued to occupy till 1851. On the twenty-fourth of February, 1852, "the Academy held a special meeting in the northeast room on the lower floor in the Athenaeum Building,"—the room or "Hall" in which the Antiquarian Society met from 1852 till 1899.

Boston home. Upon the removal of the Academy to the Fenway, our Society, in 1900, availed itself of the invitation of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and met in Ellis Hall until 1916, when the Academy, having removed to the present building,³ again extended to us its fraternal greeting. On the ninth of May, 1917, the Council—

"Voted: That the Corresponding Secretary be requested to invite the American Antiquarian Society to resume the holding of its meetings in the Academy's House."

From this relation of events it appears that for fifty-five years,—a period covering more than half of the life of our Society, we have enjoyed the gracious hospitality of our elder sister.

The generous private entertainments inaugurated by President Winthrop were the precursors of those which the Society has enjoyed at Worcester for at least two generations at the houses of President Salisbury, father and son, of President Lincoln and of other of our members. Unfortunately, our records are painfully silent for many years as regards the hospitality dispensed in Boston, and as no one remembered to ask Dr. Hale or Mr. Andrew Davis for his recollection upon this subject, especially during the period of the Civil War, we are, in all probability, destined to remain in ignorance concerning it. We know that there were several dinners or luncheons served to the members at the Parker House and other less well-known hostelrys and at the houses of members, but whether these were regular features of the Boston gatherings of the Society or were spasmodic, probably will never be ascertained. Beginning, however, with the 80's, the Boston members regularly sustained the rôle of host to their Worcester and other out-of-town associates, usually at a hotel or club. One of the most memorable of these occasions was an elaborate

³The Academy's House, which is in reality a memorial of its former President, Alexander Agassiz, is numbered 28 in Newbury Street.

luncheon given at the Parker House by our former associate, Edward Isaiah Thomas, not long after his election to our fellowship. Of late years, however, the members have been the guests of some Boston member at his house.

The older men among us have delightful memories of the old Hall of the Academy in the Athenaeum Building where we met for nearly fifty years: The room was on the lower floor, immediately at the left of the door of entrance. Surrounded on three sides, from floor to ceiling, by books, the aroma of literature and science pervaded the place, while on brackets projecting from the railing of the gallery stood the busts of Cicero, Tullia, Flora and Faustina. There also hung the portraits of Galileo, of Franklin and Count Rumford, which look down upon us this morning from the wall of the room in which we are now assembled. Two other works of art, which hung in the old Hall, are also here, on yonder wall,—the framed engravings of Copley's famous paintings of the Death of the Earl of Chatham, and of the Death, in 1781, of Major Pierson at the battle in the market-place of St. Helier in the Island of Jersey. These prints, esteemed by many as reproducing two of the artist's best canvases, are of peculiar interest, since they were a gift to the Academy from Copley himself, who sent them hither by the hand of his son, the future Lord Lyndhurst, when the young man visited Boston, late in the eighteenth century, in the hope of recovering for his father the Beacon Hill property, "the greatest estate in Boston," the title to which was long in litigation.

There are still more delightful recollections of those by-gone days and of the men who assembled in the old Hall, and gave dignity and prestige to our proceedings. Many there were deserving of mention, but a few stand out preëminently in retrospect: Robert Charles Winthrop, eminent in ancestry and public service, whose dignity of bearing and of diction attracted instant attention; Samuel Foster Haven, scholar and

friend of scholars, whose genial presence was like sunshine wherever he went; George Edward Ellis, theologian and historian, designated by Senator Hoar as "the depository of more delicate secrets than any man in the Commonwealth," a constant attendant and frequent speaker at our meetings; Nathaniel Paine, for forty years our faithful Treasurer, whose devotion to the Society and its every interest ended only with his life; Charles Deane, beloved of all men, a recondite scholar, whose greatest happiness was found in helpfulness to others, especially to young historical students and scholars by whom he was worshipped; and Andrew Preston Peabody, "Saint Andrew," as he was affectionately called, who might have been the prototype of Chaucer's Parson, for—

"Christes lore and his apostles twelve,
He taught; but first he folwed it himselve."

Happy, indeed, will it be for those who constitute our fellowship to-day if, half a century hence, some among us may have left fragrant memories like theirs to "blossom in the dust."

HENRY HERBERT EDES,
For the Council.

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