

Report of the Librarian

EACH year as I sit down to compile for you the report of the stewardship of the staff of the Library, I am troubled by the problem of choosing the information which will interest the greatest number. Through the year I keep a record of questions which you, and others, ask about the Library and its work. The commonest question is, "What have you acquired in my field?" But, because your interests are very diverse, a long discussion of accessions in any one field would bore many. I shall, therefore, touch but lightly on a number of topics, and shall omit from the reading of this report a good deal of bibliographical detail which will appear in the *Proceedings*.

No one who looks over the exhibition of rare books and pamphlets which have been acquired this year will fail to be impressed by the number of them which relate to the problem of freedom of thought and speech which is so greatly troubling our own generation. By far the most important of these accessions is the long-sought and now-discovered first edition of Peter Folger's famous poem, *A Looking Glass for the Times . . . Printed in the Year 1725*. Because the poem is dated April 23, 1676, and relates to the troubles of the New England Quakers in that year, it was long supposed that there was an edition published at that time; but it is quite impossible that such an attack on the magistrates would have been permitted to come from the contemporary Boston press. It is now agreed that the poem must have been circulated in manuscript form like the contemporary copy owned by the Nantucket Historical Association. Hitherto the earliest-known printed edition was that issued

in 1763, which we now find to be a reprint of the 1725 edition which we have acquired. Surely the rage of Peter Folger against the Bay magistrates would have been softened had he known that it would be our friend, Mr. Stephen W. Phillips, who would make the very generous gift which permitted us to acquire this copy of the poem.

In Boston itself an attempt to introduce a tighter ecclesiastical system as a means of controlling the unorthodox gave rise to the Brattle Street controversy and drew from Cotton Mather a tract on *The Old Principles of New England*, of which we have just acquired the second reported copy. Mather, although tempted to use institutions as a means of thought control at home, was keenly aware that liberty of thought and speech was being dragooned from France. In 1698 he published a letter from a Boston Huguenot who had been seized and imprisoned in that country. Evans missed this tract entirely, and Holmes described it from a copy which lacked the title page. We have acquired a copy with an original binding and a near-perfect title page. This reads: *Present from a farr Countrey, to the People of New England. I. A Great Voice from Heaven, to these Parts of the Earth: In an Excellent Letter full of Divine Rarities, Lately Written from a Terrible Prison in France; by a Pious Confessor of the Reformed Religion, once an Inhabitant of this Country. [With some late Remarkables, of the Persecution, upon the Reformed in that Kingdom.] II. The Golden Bells of the Great High Priest, Heard from Heaven, through the Land. Or, Meditations upon the Methods of Grace, wherein a few faithful Persons may be the Happy Instruments of Delivering a Land, from all its Iniquities & Calamities. Boston, Printed by B. Green, and J. Allen, for Michael Perry, at his Shop, under the West End of the Town-House. 1698.* The title page does not tell that the second part of this volume is a discourse delivered to the Great and General Court on November 21, 1697.

When the spirit which had persecuted the Quakers died out, "some of Boston's Old Planters," in the person of Joshua Scottow, published a famous tract, *Old Men's Tears for their own Declensions, Mixed with Fears of their and Posterity's further Falling off from New-England's Primitive Constitution*. With the breakup of the conservative front in Connecticut some years later, this tract became apt again, and was reprinted at New London by Timothy Green in 1769. We have acquired a copy of this edition.

The Rogerenes were the Connecticut equivalent of the Quakers in Massachusetts history, and equally at odds with the orthodox. To the best collection of works relating to them we have added a copy of John Rogers' *The Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Boston, 1720, in superb condition in original covers. Eliphalet Adams, the Congregational minister of New London, patiently suffered the abuse offered to him by the Rogerenes, and when John Rogers was in jail sent him a bottle of wine to offset the cold of the prison. In Adams' sermon, *God Sometimes Answers His People, by Terrible Things in Righteousness. A Discourse Occasioned by that Awful Thunder-Clap which Struck the Meeting-House in N. London, Aug. 31st, 1735*, one can detect a puzzlement that it was the Congregationalists and not the Rogerenes who were struck. We have acquired a fine copy printed at New London in 1735.

In those days, as now, subversives got into the colleges and legislatures sought to get them out. We have recently purchased a fine copy of John Graham's *Letter to a Member of the House of Representatives on the Colony of Connecticut, in Vindication of Yale-College* [New London], 1759.

The Puritan colonies were not alone in their fumbling efforts at thought control, for one of the most extreme and least known cases occurred in New York in 1707. We now have a perfect copy of the *Narrative of a New and Unusual*

American Imprisonment of two Presbyterian Ministers: and Prosecution of Mr. Francis Makemie one of them, for Preaching one Sermon at the City of New-York [New York], 1707. In the two decades after the Revolution the struggle for freedom of speech flared again, particularly because of political heresies. One of the remains of this struggle which we recently acquired has some bibliographical interest, being the edition of Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* published at Windsor, Vermont, in 1788.

Of our acquisitions relating to the Revolution, one appears to be unique. This is a broadside, *A Poem, Spoken Extempore, by a Young Lady, on Hearing the Guns Firing and Bells Chiming on Account of the Great and Glorious Acquisition of their Excellencies Gen. Washington and the C. de Grasse, by the Surrender of York-Town . . . Printed by E. Russell . . . Boston.* Among the most interesting is *An Address to Major-General Tryon, Written in Consequence of his late Expedition into Connecticut, 1779.* Of equal news value at the time were *The Last Words and Dying Speech of Ezra Ross, James Buchanan and William Brooks, who were Executed at Worcester on Thursday the 2d day of July 1778, for the Murder of Mr. Joshua Spooner, of Brookfield.* Although not recorded in Nichols, this broadside was in all probability printed on the Isaiah Thomas press in the hall above us. Mr. George S. Barton presented us with another not-in-Nichols item, this one unique. It is Isaac Lane's, *Christmas Anthem, Worcester, 1795.* A fit companion for the Spooner item is *A Brief Narrative of the Life and Confession of Barnett Davenport. Under Sentence of Death, for a Series of the most Horrid Murders, ever Perpetrated in this Country, or Perhaps any other, on the Evening following the 3d of February, 1780* [Hartford], 1780. Another shocker is a very large coffin broadside by Jonathan Plummer, Jr., *The Awful Malignant Fever at Newburyport, in the year 1796.*

The same factors which make these accounts of tragedies rare collectors' items today, make equally desirable and bibliographically interesting the funny-books of early days. The best items in this category which we have acquired this year are *The Care-Killer; a Collection of Pleasing Tales, Choice Stories, Smart Repartees, and Good Things*. By Jonathan Jolly, New York, 1809, and *The American Jester, or, the Seamen & Landsmen's Funny Companion*, New England, 1807. For amusement of another color are *A Bundle of Myrrh, or Rules for a Christian's Daily Meditation and Practice*, Boston, 1766, and *The Parlour Companion, Containing the Game of Draughts . . . with . . . the Laws of the Game of Whist*, New York, 1801. For those who failed to master the laws of whist we have Samuel Moodey's *The Debtors Monitor . . . or, the Way to Get and Keep out of Debt*, Boston, 1715. Those who could not keep out of debt might find useful another tract which we acquired, Nathaniel Crouch's *Journey to Jerusalem . . . To which is Added, a Description of the Empire of China*, Poughkeepsie, 1794. For those who did not have to go so far is *An Address to the Inhabitants of the New Settlements in the Northern and Western Parts of the United States*, New Haven, 1795.

In 1778 Robert Bell of Philadelphia, finding his store overstocked with literature, gathered up some of his stock of pamphlet essays and poems, such as Freneau's "American Independence," and bound it into volumes under the title *Miscellanies for Sentimentalists*. If many such sets were bound, most of them have been split up. We were happy to acquire a copy which evidently survived because of its unusually sturdy contemporary binding.

Another literary find was a set of the three-volume *Dramatic Works of Willam Dunlap*, Philadelphia and New York, 1806-16. So rare is this set that it is not included in Oscar Wegelin's bibliography of Dunlap or in Frank P.

Hill's *American Plays*. Oral S. Coad mentioned but did not locate a copy in his book on William Dunlap.

A bibliographical question which has troubled several institutions and dealers in recent years was solved when we acquired a copy of *A Scientific Descriptive Catalogue of Peale's Museum*, Philadelphia, 1796, in original wrappers. Each of the several copies reported hitherto ended with the catchword on page 44, leaving a gnawing doubt as to their completeness. In our new copy page 44 is tied to the blank leaves which complete the signature by a pattern of foxing.

An even rarer item of the sort acquired this year is the *Catalogue of Books for Sale by W. Pelham, No. 59, Cornhill*, Boston, 1802. An unique and hitherto unreported work is *The Builders' Price Book. Carefully Revised and Corrected by the Carpenters and Joiners' Society of Alexandria*, Cottom and Stewart, Alexandria, 1812.

To the common enquiry, "What newspaper files have you acquired recently," we have little to answer. Two of the most important are the Norwich, Connecticut, *True Republican* for August 8, 1804, to April 23, 1806, and the New London *True Republican* for July 1, 1807, to February 24, 1808. The 1808 issues are unique and have enabled Mr. Brigham to revise the information in his bibliography. Another unique item acquired is the prospectus for the *Virginia Gazette and Hobb's Hole Advertiser*, January 1, 1787. We have also obtained the *Quebec Gazette* for November 1, 1764, to October 31, 1765, and for May 29, 1766, to September 21, 1769, being the only file for these years in the United States. We have added one item to our collection of wallpaper newspapers, the Opelousas, Louisiana, *Courier* for April 24, 1863.

Among the many files of modern newspapers offered to us this year, we have chosen as useful enough to justify the

space which they will take the *Chicago Tribune* for 1863-67, the *Cincinnati Gazette* for 1837-40 and 1863-67, and the *New York Daily Express* for 1840-41.

Our collection of American juvenile literature printed before 1821 is, like our collection of early American newspapers, quite without a rival; but it is different in that it is growing very rapidly. New titles appear every week, a large proportion of them bibliographically unknown. The following are some of the more interesting items acquired this year: *Ali Baba; or, the Forty Thieves*, New York, 1818; *The Blind Child*, Philadelphia, 1795; *The Brother's Gift*, New York, 1800; *The Caterpillar and the Gooseberry-Bush*, Philadelphia, 1808; *Ditties for Children*, Philadelphia, 1813; *The Hermit of the Forest*, Boston, 1798; *History of the Holy Bible*, Philadelphia, c. 1798; *History of the Holy Jesus*, Boston, 1796; *History of Little Goody Two Shoes*, Charlestown, 1797; *History of Little Jack*, Hartford, c. 1800; *Industry and Idleness*, Philadelphia, 1816; *Juvenile Budget, or Little Stories for Children*, Boston, N. Coverly, 1812; *Little Truths Better than Great Fables*, Philadelphia, 1800; *The Lily, a Book for Children*, Philadelphia, 1809; Benjamin Sands, *Metamorphosis*, Philadelphia, 1807; *The Mountain Piper*, Windsor, 1810; *New Instructive History of Miss Patty Proud*, New Haven, 1805; *Instructive History of Industry and Sloth*, Hartford, 1802; *Renowned History of Valentine and Orson*, Haverhill, 1794; *Two Babes in the Wood*, Poughkeepsie, 1796; *The Silver Penny*, New Haven, 1805; *The Story of Joseph*, Philadelphia, 1799; *Virtue in a Cottage*, Hartford, 1795; and *Wisdom in Miniature*, Hartford, 1798. Among the most interesting are the toy books, rich with caricatures and engraved illustrations, issued by William Charles of Philadelphia. This year we acquired no less than eight of his beautifully illustrated miniature juveniles published in the early part of the nineteenth century. We now have

forty titles in this series. Among those recently acquired are *Jack in the Beanstalk*, 1809, *My Brother*, 1810, *My Childhood*, 1816, *My Father*, 1817, *My Grandmother*, 1817, *My Sister*, 1816, and *Pompey the Little*, 1812.

At quite the opposite extreme in the field of book illustrations is a folio volume of sixteen engraved plates of street vendors and merchants, by Léon J. Frémaux, entitled *New Orleans Characters*, New Orleans, 1876. The plates were all drawn and colored by Frémaux, and have a genuine Creole atmosphere. The subject reminds one of the numerous little books such as *The Cries of New York*, issued early in the century, except that the folio volume of colored drawings is far more pretentious and is the most attractive publication of the sort ever produced in the United States. Mr. Tinker, who gave us this work, discovered Frémaux's own copy some thirty years ago, and copied from it the author's description of the characters portrayed.

An equally rare and desirable gift from Mr. Tinker was a pamphlet published at New Orleans in 1825 entitled *Visite du General La Fayette á la Louisiane*. It contains an engraved frontispiece portraying a monument to La Fayette, designed by J. B. Fogliardi, and engraved by J. Belaumé of New Orleans.

Another gift from Mr. Tinker is a collection of 200 letters of William Dean Howells, covering correspondence with Harper & Brothers from 1903 to 1914. These are invaluable for a study of the works of this author.

Reverting for a moment to the graphic arts—this year we acquired a hitherto unreported bookplate engraved by Nathaniel Hurd for William Browne, probably "Foolish Billy Browne" of Folly Hill in Salem. The fact that a Hurd engraving has so long remained unknown may be explained by the fact that his books went south with his portraits and descendants.

Our total accessions for the year amounted to 3,063 bound volumes, 2,135 pamphlets, and 35 broadsides and maps, bringing the official total in the Library to 285,113 bound volumes and 428,853 pamphlets. The fact that we have this year received such very generous gifts and bequests earmarked for the purchase of books causes me to raise a point which greatly troubles librarians. In the ordinary American library the cost of ordering, accessioning, cataloguing, and shelving a book about equals the sum paid for the volume. I have described some expensive books today but have said nothing about the thousands which, although bibliographically important to us, had a first cost of only a few dollars. In this Library we have been able to keep the overhead cost per item far below the American average by certain expedients, and by the incredible efficiency and productiveness of our staff; and I would like to speak to this for a few minutes in order that you may better understand our problems.

The time required for the selection of purchases is a very serious matter. For years I spent several hours a day reading catalogues, eventually to come to the reluctant conclusion that a morning's work which resulted in the purchase of only a half-a-dozen five-dollar books, was not efficiently spent. The checking of the apparent wants in the booksellers' catalogues is another time-consuming task. In almost every catalogue of old books there are typographical errors creating ghosts which, if ordered, have to be returned to the dealers with explanations. So, when I have made the preliminary selections from a catalogue, the next step is to check various bibliographical tools to see whether such a book exists, or is at least probable. Miss Mary Brown of our staff is a genius at laying such ghosts, and saves us hundreds of unnecessary returns in the course of a year. But still the total time involved in the ordering process is considerable.

If the books purchased were printed in America before 1821, they are subjected to a cataloguing far more detailed and complete than employed, so far as I can find, by any other library. The only reason why our cataloguing costs for this type of book are not astronomical is the efficiency of Miss Clarke and Mrs. Bastian of our staff. For recent books we have devised a system of classification and cataloguing which, although particularly suited to our needs, is so simple that any bright assistant can learn quickly to process such material.

Once a book has been purchased and catalogued, it is put on the shelf where it occupies space which cost us a dollar to build. And if we are financially honest with ourselves, the book costs us in every subsequent year the interest on one dollar, and its share of the Library bill for light, heat, cleaning, and service. If we used the ordinary American library figures to calculate such costs, the result would be frightening; the fact is that here, as in cataloguing, our costs are far below the national average. Only this fact enables us to continue to grow.

Since the building of the new stack our expenditures for cataloguing have been running higher than formerly, not because of decreased efficiency, but because we have been disposing of a vast backlog of work which accumulated when we did not have space enough to function. Three years ago there were forty uncatalogued collections on our shelves. With the aid of college girls during the summers, we have processed all of this material except for one collection which is awaiting sorting. The old alcove collection has been depleted by recataloguing to the point where we have moved it to the farthest corner of the building without inconvenience.

The most remarkable progress of all has been made in the cataloguing of books printed in America before 1821. When

it became apparent that we were going to have a new stack, I went through the old alcove collection, book by book, taking out 8592 volumes to be catalogued for the Dated Book collection. To these were added 7916 located elsewhere through the catalogue, and a backlog of 5481 which were uncatalogued. The whole 21,889 have been in three years processed with all the refinements of our imprint catalogue.

In spite of these incredible achievements in bibliography, the staff has continued through the year to afford our customary service to visitors and correspondents. Regretfully we must turn away many who come seeking help and information because we cannot put time into projects of little value or promise. There are many incompetents who want assistance in tasks they are incapable of performing. Perhaps the most startling was a request from an American candidate for the Ph.D. at the Sorbonne, whose dissertation had been rejected for lack of documentation. The candidate gave us the title and asked us to supply the documentation.

Interlibrary-loan requests are another serious problem. Every day there are requests for rare or irreplaceable volumes. We exist to serve, but we must not be so generous as to dissipate our collections. Even the moderate interlibrary-loan policy which we follow constitutes an expensive drain in terms of both time and money. We receive almost no return in kind, for we rarely have occasion to borrow from other libraries.

Another serious problem is the cost of publication. The last issue of our *Proceedings* cost us \$7.50 a copy, even with a strong assist from our printers, the Davis Press, Inc. It may be that we shall have to cease regular periodical publication and resort to occasional volumes like the *Proceedings* of the Massachusetts Historical Society. We now have in press Cotton Mather's "Angel of Bethesda" on which Dr. Shryock

read such an interesting paper at the last meeting. It has been with a great deal of pleasure that I have this year seen through the press this work which Mather prepared for the printer in 1724. It has suffered an exceptional delay, even for our publications.

Mather is by no means the only ancient worthy whose work we are carrying on. Not long ago I answered a query which came addressed to "Mr. Isaiah Thomas, Worcester."

This then is a sketchy accounting of the work of the Library during the year past. If I have answered all of the questions which you have in mind, I shall be disappointed, for it will mean that I have not sold you on the importance of our work and the progress which we are making in it. Your interest is essential, for the American Antiquarian Society is an association of men devoted to the furthering of history, each according to his special talents.

Respectfully submitted,

CLIFFORD K. SHIPTON,

Librarian

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