

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL.

ON this sixty-eighth anniversary of this Society, the Council present the report of your interests and operations in the last half-year. The detail of the more important facts will be found in the reports to the Council by the Treasurer and the Librarian, which have been adopted as parts of this report. The lucid statements of Nathaniel Paine, Esq., Treasurer, need no enlargement and little comment, in addition to the merited acknowledgment of his cautious and wise management of the funds, that has given the power to do so much with so limited means, and without incurring any other debt than the debt of gratitude to friends within and out of the society, whose generosity has prevented the necessity of expenditure. The multiplied acquisitions and the activity of the Society and of visitors must require increased labor and expense, and these may be provided for, as in time past by parsimony and forbearance, with the kind aid of friends. But the insufficiency of the Publishing Fund for the duty and profit of putting in print rare and valuable manuscripts, confided for that purpose, demands the constant recognition of the Council and the Society.

Such materials for history will be presented from time to time, as they have been heretofore and in the last six months, but they would be greatly multiplied, if the probability of publication was near. In such a society as this, the pain of insufficient income may be a sign of growth, and if not too severe, it may be healthful and invigorating. It is a lighter affliction than

“The imposthume of much wealth and peace
That inward breaks, and shows no cause without,
Why the man dies.”

The report of the Librarian states that the library, in the last six months, has gained by gift from members and friends of the Society five hundred and two books, two thousand six hundred and fifteen pamphlets, forty-four volumes of unbound newspapers, three volumes of valuable original manuscripts, one hundred and twenty-two maps and other interesting objects; and by exchange of duplicates, one hundred and three books and two hundred and eighty-nine pamphlets were obtained. In all, the accessions of books amount to six hundred and five volumes, and of pamphlets to two thousand nine hundred and four; on these the Librarian gives some remarks that need not be repeated.

The Society will receive with great satisfaction Dr. Haven's account of the desirable and rare books obtained at the second sale of the library of our late associate George Brinley, Esq., in June last. After a careful selection of books noted in the catalogue by Dr. Haven and Mr. Edmund M. Barton, the assistant-librarian, the purchases were made by bids without payment, by Dr. Haven, Mr. Nathaniel Paine and Mr. Stephen Salisbury, Jr. This privilege granted, as it will be remembered, by Mr. Brinley's family, in conformity to his wishes, to several institutions, has been the subject of unfavorable criticism. If he had the right to give these institutions a part of his library, it is not easy to devise a more impartial allotment. It is said, the effect was to increase the cash product of the sale. That is not certain, for the presence of free bidders tended to diminish the number of cash purchasers. Under any arrangement, a library so well known and attractive would command a high price.

The Council cannot pass without a slight notice Dr. Haven's description of the improvements for keeping and consultation of books, in connection with the enlargement of the hall. The changes commend themselves at once and they have increased the visits to the Library and the facility of research. The local knowledge and the love of histori-

cal investigation of the assistants, Mr. Barton and Mr. Reuben Colton, are ready keys to the treasures under their care. The five thousand bound volumes of newspapers are now set in classes, where they can be seen and conveniently handled. The opportunity of examining these improvements at this time makes it unnecessary to pursue this pleasant subject.

It is well to call to mind, what our predecessors have not forgotten, that the society was not founded for its own glory nor for the privileges of membership, but for the promotion of antiquarian research and historical knowledge, primarily in regard to this continent. There are no honorary members, and membership carries with it the obligation of service for the objects of the institution. This service may be rendered by those who meet here and keep up the organization. But many members, as our system requires, are scattered through the whole extent of this continent and beyond its bounds, and are unable to assist in our meetings, or visit our hall. Yet they may receive an appreciable benefit in the encouragement and light, that come from our aggregate labors, for which they may give an ample return in occasional correspondence and contributions, and always in collateral work. This Society has received and is now receiving great benefit from remote members.

It is an appropriate custom in the reports to take some notice of the faithful individual action of members at home and abroad. It must be brief and imperfect, but as far as it goes, it is an act of justice to the deserving and a source of encouragement and strength to all. And first with a reverent eye, we should look for those whose labors are ended. In the last six months, this Society has lost two members. Hon. Daniel Waldo Lincoln, of Worcester, was killed by an accident in a railway car, at New London, Conn., on July 1, 1880, at the age of 67 years, 5 months and 15 days. He was struck down in the fullest strength of

his bodily and mental powers, from a position of great responsibility, which he filled with the highest confidence and the honor of the community. His clear judgment, his integrity and his public spirit, gave him a prominence for trusts and duties in business that were more to his taste than antiquarian pursuits. He acquiesced in rather than accepted membership, in deference to the desire of his father, Hon. Levi Lincoln, expressed in the last days of his life, that one of his sons should be connected with a society to which he had devoted so much liberality and beneficial service. The father and the son emphatically disclaimed the name of scholar in literature or science. But scholars could not associate with either, without gaining much from their intelligent and disciplined minds. Mr. D. W. Lincoln graduated at Harvard University in 1831 and passed through a course of legal study. He was a faithful student, with little ambition for the honors of scholarship. He was never aware of his debt to the humble drill of old times, for the powers of his mind and the readiness and correctness of his language. A college cannot do a better work than training such men of business.

While we are presenting this report, we are informed that this Society has lost an associate distinguished for his personal dignity and the abundance and importance of his labors as an antiquary. Baron Pietro Ercole Visconti, elected to our membership in April, 1865, died at his birthplace and home, in the city of Rome, on the 14th of October, 1880, aged seventy-nine years. His ancestors for several generations were famous as archæologists and architects. His grand uncle, Ennius Quirinus Visconti, who died in 1818, stands out so prominently, and perhaps it is because he was prior, as well as prominent, that he seems to have overshadowed all his family. Several respectful notices of this nephew allude to the uncle as better known. Yet, Pietro Ercole Visconti was honored for his character and scholarship, appointed to laborious and responsible service, and

associated with most learned societies. It is said that he was decorated with more than twenty-five foreign badges of intellectual eminence. But no foreign hand conferred the honor and gratitude that attended him as the author of valuable archaeological books, the wise director of excavations for the discovery of buried works of art, and the successful indicator of interesting sites and localities. In these duties he had been engaged for many years, as the head of the Municipal Archaeological Commission. It is pleasant to remember that Baron Visconti recognized his connection with this Society in 1875, by presenting to our Library, a portrait bust of himself and bulletins of the Archaeological Commission, and some of our associates had personal knowledge of the graceful courtesy and solid worth of this rare old Roman.¹

An Italian notice of the death of Baron Visconti thus expresses the opinion and feelings of those who knew him best. "His great activity in the archaeological field was not manifested so much in his writings as in his incessant labors. Among many chairs occupied by him, was that of Professor of Archaeology and History in the Roman University, to which he gave an archaeological cabinet. He received the title of Baron from Pope Pius IX. and more than thirty orders of merit from the Sovereigns of Europe. We would not pass in silence the fact that our archaeologue was a gentleman, very amiable, religious and faithful to the Pope, but not intolerant. He was also a poet, as occasion prompted, and his sharp epigrams were repeated in the salons of Rome."

The council have now the first opportunity to pay a deserved tribute of respect to a member, whose death in misfortune and exile has recently come to our knowledge. Signor Don José Fernando Ramirez of Mexico was elected to membership in April, 1862. He was born in the begin-

¹A letter from Hon. Robert C. Winthrop giving his personal recollections of Baron Visconti was received after this report was written. The Committee of Publication are happy to print the letter on a following page.

ning of this century in Durango, Mexico, and was educated there in the science and practice of law, and rose to great eminence, and held the highest judicial offices, and other places of honor and trust. He was the head of the National Museum, a post for which he was well fitted by his taste for archæology, while he indulged in the collection of rare books and manuscripts on the history of his country, that were obtained from suppressed monasteries and other libraries. He left valuable fruits of his studies in print and in manuscript. A knowledge of his character and tastes led to his association with us, and, if his life and power had been continued to this time, he might have rendered most valuable aid in the effort to elucidate the archæology of Mexico in which many are engaged. In 1851, President Arista made him Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was so eminent for ability and character, that, in 1864, the unfortunate Maximillian charged him with the duty of selecting his ministry, and made him President of the Board. In this office, he strove for two years against the innumerable difficulties that surrounded the newly established government. As a Mexican patriot, he saw only the degradation of his countrymen, and the possibility that an amiable prince supported by the promised strength of the kingdoms of Europe might give them the happiness of civilized life. When the desired result appeared impossible, and the promises of support were disowned, and the French departed from Mexico, Don Ramirez went to Bonn, in Germany, where one of his daughters married a German gentleman, and he spent the residue of his life with or near these children. Though he was not reputed to be rich, he had property enough to enable him to live at ease, and pursue the studies that made him famous as a Mexican antiquary. It was said that he had discovered the key to the old hieroglyphics, and could decipher two thousand of them. It is reported that the sale of his library, rich in his writings and collections of this kind of learning, brought thirty thousand dollars. He died on the 4th day of March, 1871,

in the 60th year of his age, and his body was brought back and buried in the country to which he had devoted his life.

We have the happy announcement that our earliest elected living member, our Secretary for Domestic Correspondence, Hon. George Bancroft, LL.D., is honoring his eightieth year, with the crowning capital of the chief work of his life. He is sending through the press a "History of the Formation of the Constitution of the United States," and that Constitution is the natural and consummate fruit of the Revolution that he has so well described. We congratulate him on his extraordinary success. We congratulate him on his extraordinary happiness, that he has achieved this success with his native buoyancy unimpaired, and that his powers of construction, vivid description and terse expression, are made more splendid by use. He seems to be ready to say,

"To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new."

It is also stated in the newspapers that our Secretary for Foreign Correspondence, Hon. J. Hammond Trumbull, LL.D., in addition to his great labors as a scholar and a friend of scholars, is publishing a volume entitled, a "List of Indian Names of Rivers, Mountains and other Localities, in Connecticut, with Interpretations." The desirableness and uses of such a work have been repeatedly discussed at the meetings of our Society, with expressions of hope that Dr. Trumbull would undertake a service, that he has extraordinary ability to perform. These names are the records of a victim race and there is some expectation that they may be the keys to their history in their earlier and better days. A poet of that State has truly sung,

"Ye say that all have passed away,
That noble race and brave,
That their light canoes have vanished
From off the crystal wave.
That 'mid the forest where they roamed,
There rings no hunter's shout.
But their name is on the rivers,
Ye may not wash it out.
But their memory liveth on the hills,
Their baptism on the shore,
Your everlasting rivers speak
Their dialect of yore."

Previous reports have informed the Society that our distinguished associate, Hon. Charles Hudson, of Lexington, Mass., has given to our Library his manuscript Memoirs of the "Three Massachusetts Governors from Worcester," Messrs. Levi Lincoln, John Davis, and Emory Washburn; and a similar Memoir of George N. Briggs, another Governor of that State. These are all different, strongly marked, able and honorable men, who made an impression on the history of their time, by qualities which Mr. Hudson well understood. In June last, he gave a similar volume entitled, "The American Trio, or the Characters of Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and John C. Calhoun," eminent statesmen, compeers and compatriots. Mr. Hudson had every opportunity of knowing his subjects, in the long period when he was a leader in the Congress of the United States, and in friendly and constant intercourse with them. Though the temptation to make extracts from these papers must be resisted, it may be permitted to mention that Mr. Hudson takes notice of an interesting fact not often observed, that Mr. Webster "never displayed his powers in presiding," while Mr. Clay and Mr. Calhoun were eminent in that position. In August last Mr. Hudson gave us another of his manuscripts, entitled, "The Lives and Characters of Edward Everett and Marcus Morton as Governors of the State Contrasted." This is a spirited sketch of two strong men, like and unlike in some of their peculiarities, with whom Mr. Hudson was officially associated as a member of the Executive Council of each of them. Mr. Hudson adds to his last gift, his printed pamphlets which are now rare, "A Memoir of Abraham Lincoln," and "A Letter to President Andrew Johnson." His manuscripts are all very neatly and legibly written by his own pen, and handsomely and protectively bound. He presents them, in his letters to Dr. Haven, with deprecatory modesty, and regrets the change of his handwriting, which he imputes to the chill of eighty-five winters. He speaks of his most recent gift as his last contribution of biography.

To this we cannot assent, while he is able to go before successive generations in the activity of his mind, for instruction and counsel, though his power of locomotion is impaired.

A sensation of sorrow and loss was felt by the scholars of this country and Europe, when it was known that the library of Prof. Theodor Mommsen in his house, at Charlottenburg near Berlin, was burned by an accidental fire on the 12th of July last. This incident was more interesting to us, because Prof. Mommsen accepted membership in this Society. His prominence in knowledge of the institutions, the facts and chronology of Roman history, is universally conceded, and the value of his library was supposed to consist chiefly in rare books and unique materials for those studies. A letter to the writer, from a friend, who knows Prof. Mommsen well, thus describes the scholar and his library. "Mommsen has all the qualities of a great historian. He is thorough and exact in research, skilled in construction, deducing in an orderly manner events from their causes, and showing the whole connection of the centuries. He gives the prominent place to the people, the national life. He is a philosophical historian without pretending to philosophy. One great merit of his work consists in his having discovered new sources of Roman history in ancient laws, which revealed the state of society that required them. He is one of the greatest adepts of our time in Roman law, and is fit to-day to be the professor of Roman law in the best university of Germany. In using the early jurisprudence of Rome, and early and late inscriptions, he threw a degree of certainty on epochs which before had been treated mainly from traditions. As to the character of his mind, he has the most prodigious capacity for work. He throws himself at one and the same time upon several masses of labor, each one of which separately would be enough for a superior man.

As to the great loss which the world sustains by the destruction of his library, I apprehend, but have no more

accurate knowledge than you have, that no very important sources of history gathered from libraries are permanently lost. It is a terrible thing for himself, and for the world, to have his collection of inscriptions, made with indefatigable labor, burnt up; for who will collect them again? But the great loss to both hemispheres is that of his own manuscript writings. He has been for many years preparing a history of the early emperors of Rome; I found him busy upon that work when I went to Berlin in 1867. He has been more or less employed in it from that time; and the general expectation was that from the materials which he collected, his acquaintance with Roman law in every stage of its development, his collection of inscriptions, and his profound and energetic mind, he would throw a flood of light on the condition of Rome under the emperors, and on the characters and reigns of the emperors themselves. The destruction of this history is the greatest loss to the world. You cannot estimate too highly the vitality and energy of the man, his capacity at acquiring and arranging knowledge. He is friendly in his nature, an affectionate husband, and a most kind father. Was ever a man struck by such an accumulation of evils by one disaster?"

The proposition was made and was favorably received in this country and in England, that scholars on both sides of the Atlantic should join in raising a fund for replacing the lost treasures of one, to whom so much gratitude was due and from whom so much more benefit was expected. But Prof. Mommsen, in an open-hearted, courageous and independent letter, dated August 3, addressed to Prof. Nettleship, of Oxford University, thankfully declines all such assistance. He says, "It seems that the importance and the value of my library have been considerably overrated. I was, perhaps not fully but fairly insured. My own collections of thirty years to me can never be replaced. Still I am thankful for the preservation of the materials prepared for our great epigraphical work. They have been heavily damaged, and the restitution will cost me much labor already got over."

Of part of it, "I thought to have written the last page, the very night of the disaster." A private letter from Tübingen informs us that the opinion there is, that the accident was caused by leaving a lamp on going to bed, and the loss of the original codices cannot be replaced.

Mr. W. Noël Sainsbury, of Her Majesty's Public Record Office, one of our English members, has sent to our Library the Calendar of State Papers on Colonial Service in America and the West Indies from 1661 to 1668 preserved in that Record Office, and edited by Mr. Sainsbury and published in the present year. This book relates to an interesting period, when the popular element gained strength in England and the ties of duty and dependence were weakened in the colonies. Mr. Sainsbury remarks, "by the light of these state papers, we are able to trace the early history of eleven out of thirteen of the original United States." In the first part of the Volume, attention will be attracted by a spirited letter of Gov. Endecott, addressed in 1661, by the order of the Council to Charles II., to ask continued favor and protection for civil privileges and religious liberties, in which the Governor shows his fluency and skill in the rhetoric of the time. The Volume now received is a continuation of a calendar of similar State Papers from 1574 to 1660, issued by the same office in 1860, edited by Mr. Sainsbury, and presented by him to our Library in 1867. He has familiarity and learning in this department, and many of our countrymen have availed themselves of his willing and valuable assistance in their researches. But these gifts have an interest beyond their intrinsic value in leading attention to the English Public Record Office, that produced them. As this institution is in the highest degree congenial and useful to antiquaries, such an account of its origin and present condition, as we are able to give, may be acceptable.

The preservation of documents concerning nations and rulers is a necessity of civilization, that was provided for in the earliest times. The Book of Ezra informs us, that a

decree of Cyrus, that the Temple should be rebuilt by the Jews, was found among the Treasures in the House of the Rolls at Babylon B. C. 500, in the reign of Darius, by whom it was adopted and carried into effect. It will be remembered that many of the brief sketches of the lives of the Kings, in the Books of Kings and Chronicles in our Bible, refer for "the rest of the acts of the King and all that he did" to the "Book of the Kings of Judah," or to the "Book of the Kings of Israel," or to the "Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel." The Egyptians had such chronicles. A notable instance of the effect of the discovery of a lost record occurred in the reign of Josiah, King of Judah. Hilkiyah the Priest, when he was collecting money in the Temple for the repair of it, as the King commanded, found a "Book of the Law of the Lord given by Moses," and brought it to the King. When the King had read it he rent his clothes, the strongest expression of submission and fear, and sent Hilkiyah and other confidential persons, to inquire of the Lord for himself and his people "concerning the words of the book that is found, for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us." The great prophets, Jeremiah and Zephaniah, were then living, but the commentator, a learned man, conjectures that they were at a distance from the King. Howbeit the messengers went to "Huldah, the prophetess, who dwelt in the College at Jerusalem, and communed with her," and she said, "tell the man, who sent you to me, thus saith the Lord, behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book, because they have forsaken me, and burned incense to other gods." * * * "But to the King of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, because thy heart was tender and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord * * and hast rent thy clothes and wept before me, * * * thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, and thine eyes shall not see all the evil." The brief narrative indicates, with the

highest probability, that the book contained the spirited, eloquent, and it is not too much to say, sublime farewell address of Moses, in which he "charged the people" to keep the important precepts that he had given them. The details of the ceremonial system of Moses could not have been read by the King at one time to an assembly of the people, and were not capable of producing the effect that followed. The system of Moses was overborne and polluted by idolatry, but it did not cease to exist. This was apparent, when the King summoned to aid him in his reform "the priests in their courses," and "the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the Lord." He made an impression on his people, who had been carried away by the showy rites of idolatry, by keeping the well known feast of the Passover with such magnificence as had not been given to it since the days of Samuel the Prophet, not even in the time of the Kings. It appears that Josiah had no disposition to restore ancient and burdensome ceremonies. He said to the Levites, "Put the holy Ark in the House which Solomon * * did build; it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders; serve now the Lord your God and his people Israel." And he directed that worship should be carried on, not after the ritual of the book that was found, but according to more recent documents, "the writing of David, King of Israel, and the writing of Solomon his son." The Psalms of David and Proverbs of Solomon indicate the spiritual character of the worship, which their authors would teach. Yet the discovered document and its interpretation by a wise woman gave to the King courage and strength to suppress idolatry, and to keep his subjects in true worship during his short reign.

To this conservatism England owes the Domesday Book, the Great Rolls and other collections of the highest value. And with these national treasures, important documents concerning countries not now subject to England have a place. The first calendar of the records of the Tower was published in

1743, not for the use of Englishmen but for the defense of the rights of the rich Province of Aquitaine against an attack of Cardinal Fleury. Though the Rolls were intended for public matters, citizens from time to time obtained the right to enter among them their private contracts. This was a step towards the Registry System of England and America, the most important protection of the rights of property from fraud and mischance. These venerable records are sources of various benefit to the successive generations. Of those relating to legal rights, an English reviewer says with much truth. "Among the causes that have produced the government, which we now enjoy, none perhaps has been more efficacious than the forms and technicalities of our jurisprudence. England owes more to the gray goose quill than to the spear, and had it not been for the barriers arising from the rigid technicalities of the Bench and the Bar, it is probable that at this moment we should be either subjected to absolute despotism or to the more bitter and searching tyranny of a licentious democracy." It is no more than justice to England to remember, that in the activity and development of the nation, authoritative documents on public matters were poured out faster than they could be placed in order and safety, and thus it happened that they were left in unsorted and decaying heaps. This *embarras de richesse* was made known long ago. In 1661 William Prynne was appointed by Charles II., for the care of the records in the Tower of London, with an allowance of £500. He performed his duty with the zeal with which he made and marred everything. In his letter to the King, he describes the records, as "a confused *chaos*, under corroding, putrifying cobwebs, dust and filth, in the darkest corner of Cæsar's Chapel, in the White Tower." In attempting "to rescue the greater part of them," he employed successively the "old clerks, soldiers and women," and all abandoned the job as too dirty and unwholesome. Then he and his clerk spent whole days in

cleaning and sorting them. He adds that, as he expected, he found "many rare ancient precious pearls and golden records, relating to Parliament, the Courts, and all the interests and affairs of the Kingdom, and of foreign governments and territory connected with England, besides other records of more private concernment. All which will require Briareus and his hundred hands, Argus and his hundred eyes, and Nestor in his centuries of years, to marshal them into distinct files, and make exact alphabetical tables." The fruits of this labor of Prynne are his "Calendar of Parliamentary writs" and his "Records." Both are valued, though it is said that they contain many errors. In 1800, Mr. Charles Abbott, the popular Speaker of the House of Commons, and on his retirement made Lord Colchester, one of the most energetic and influential men of his time, took the lead in a parliamentary investigation of the condition of the Public Records, which showed how little they had gained in preservation, cleanness and usefulness, in one hundred and forty years. The result of this movement was the establishment of a Record Commission for the custody and management of the Public Records. The first commission appointed by the King consisted of nine members of great distinction and ability, and the Commission was renewed with variations six times before 1831. It was liberally sustained by Parliamentary grants, from 1800 to 1839, amounting to £878,100 sterling. The activity of the Commission was early and chiefly apparent in bringing out and printing important documents. Our library has these three folios issued in 1802 :

1. Ecclesiastical Taxes in England and Wales.
2. Calendar of Patents, open letters of privilege, in the Tower of London.
3. Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library in the British Museum.

These volumes offer a fair example of the variety and the want of connection in these publications. Yet their value

is acknowledged by all students of English history. It was confidently asserted, that since the issue of the first Commission, the duty of rescuing the original records from disorder and destruction had not been neglected, and recently more had been done. Yet public discontent became more clamorous, and the Commission and the government were assailed with reproaches for inefficient administration and wasteful expenditure.

These old documents have been regarded as the dry bones of history, but they have been the occasion of some of the fiercest quarrels of authors. A well known instance is the unscrupulous attack, made by Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas, a learned and useful antiquary, against Sir Henry Ellis, an honored librarian of the British Museum, and also against Sir Francis Palgrave, who, in his duty as Deputy-Keeper of the Records, earned a respected position and the gratitude of scholars. The reply to this assault, which Sir Francis addressed to Lord Melbourne, the head of the Record department, is a model of self-respecting and confident vindication. In 1831 the Record Commission was renewed by the appointment of twenty-five men prominent for character, learning and dignity. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Brougham, Lord Melbourne, Secretary of State for the Home Department, Sir John Leach, Master of the Rolls, Sir James Parke and Henry Hallam, and others worthy to be their associates, were members. They were supplied by liberal appropriations, and from 1831 to 1836, they expended, for cleaning, arranging, repairing and binding Records, not less than £10,000 sterling. They printed many desirable records, and distributed them more freely. The character of the Commissioners, and their doings, availed nothing in removing the general discontent, and in 1836 a select committee of the House of Commons made an unsparing inquiry into the administration of the commission and the condition of the records. The committee mention, among the places of deposit of the Records, a room in the

Tower of London, over a gunpowder magazine, and contiguous to a steam engine in daily operation; a chapel at the Rolls, where divine worship was performed; underground vaults at Somerset House; damp and dark cellars at Westminster Hall; the stables at Carlton House, and the Chapter House at Westminster. Many of the records were placed in such confusion that it was difficult to use them and they were exposed to decay and depredation. This investigation brought out to public view a volume of injurious and incredible testimony, showing difference of opinion, contests and recriminations, in the proceedings of this dignified Commission. Accusations of incompetency and dishonesty were strongly pressed against Charles P. Cooper, Esq., the Secretary of the Commission. Mr. Cooper prepared full comments on this testimony in defence of the Board and himself, which were published by the Board. But the disproof of specific charges could not remove the general dissatisfaction. In the same year (1837) the Commissioners presented to the King their "First Report," in which they gave a very brief sketch of their operations. They remark with satisfaction on the character and number of documents published by their predecessors and themselves. They again bring to notice that the buildings in which the Public Records are stored are inconvenient in situation, ill adapted to their purpose and some of them are crowded to excess. Some of the documents are exposed to the risk of fire, and others are "suffering from damp and vermin." As a relief from anxiety about the risk of fire, these strange suggestions are offered, "We have however found that these particular causes of apprehension were stated as grounds of alarm more than a century ago. And as the explosion of the magazine, should such a disaster occur, would occasion not the destruction of the Records only but of the whole edifice of the Tower, and of every person within its precinct, and of the surrounding neighborhood to a very considerable distance, we are persuaded that

every precaution will always be taken to avert so dire a calamity." This absurdity, that danger is diminished by its long continuance and its obvious and appalling consequences, would be unworthy of notice, if it were not found in a paper signed and sealed by some of the best scholars of England. It is only an unneeded evidence of the absence of responsibility in numerous Commissions. The Commissioners impute their imperfect success to a deficiency in their power over the buildings in which the Records are stored and over the Records, and the want of suitable buildings. They recommend that large suitable buildings should be erected on the Rolls Estate and that the control and direction of the Records should be entrusted to a single person. In concluding, they say, "we have described what we have done and said little of what we intend to do. With more extensive resources and enlarged powers, more might have been done by us and we still venture to indulge the hope that further power may be given to us." The report is signed and sealed by fifteen of the Commissioners. Among the ten who did not sign we find Lord Melbourne, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, soon after the highest officer in charge of the Records; and Sir John Leach, Master of the Rolls, and soon after as keeper of the Records receiving much praise; Lord Althorpe, Sir James Mackintosh and others. Such a want of harmony is not often made public among such associates. Half of the prayer of the report was heard, and in the same year, the care and management of the Records was given to one officer, the Master of the Rolls, in conjunction with the Treasury, with enlarged powers. The new arrangement was hopefully received, and public favor was gained by printing a large number of records, including chronicles and other attractive narratives; these publications were more frequent and liberally distributed. Our library has the earlier folios, but the desirableness of completing our modern series is apparent. Reproaches for the mismanagement and

delay of the government arose again, and continued for fourteen years, till 1851, when the building of "Her Majesty's Record Office" was begun on the large Rolls Estate, in Chancery Lane. A very extensive, convenient and elegant structure, intended to contain the old Records and similar memorials of the passing day, was completed in 1866. The apprehension occasioned by rapid filling of the shelves is relieved by the opportunity of occupying large adjacent land. It cannot be stated here, what proportion of the old Records has been restored and removed from the injurious and undesirable receptacles to the new Record Office. It is enough to know that the business of removing was not censured, and the Record Office has the confidence and the approbation of the nation. It could not be expected that all the record material would be collected in one place. This would be scarcely possible. Guildhall, Fulham, the Universities, and other honored powerful and tenacious institutions, would not give up the historical gems which are their pride and their wealth. Nor is such a sacrifice desirable, for the example of the national repository will insure a wise and liberal policy in the others and the competition will not be injurious. The Record Office has a well arranged room in which every facility is given for reading and copying the original documents, with some restrictions dictated by public interest, particularly in regard to recent State Papers. This is a great improvement in the opportunity of study, in contrast with the obstructions encountered forty or fifty years ago, by our historian Dr. Jared Sparks, when he was aided by the influence of the American Minister and by other scholars, English as much as American.

In this imperfect account of English Public Records, it should be stated that they have produced in the last twelve years a branch that is not less attractive and useful than the parent plant. The valuation of ancient historical authorities gave rise to inquiries for those that are modern, and "the

Royal Commission on Private Manuscripts" had its origin and the centre of its operations in the Public Record Office. In 1869 Queen Victoria appointed Lord Romilly, the Master and Keeper of the Rolls, and five Noblemen and five Commoners, including the Deputy-Keeper of the Rolls, to be Commissioners to make inquiry in institutions and private families, where there are collections of manuscripts and papers of general public interest, a knowledge of which would be of great public utility in the illustration of history, constitutional law, science, and general literature. And they were directed, "with the consent of the owners, to examine such manuscripts and papers, and to make abstracts and catalogues of them, which were to be deposited and preserved in the Public Record Office, where no person shall have access to them without the consent of the owners of such papers and manuscripts." The visitations of agents of this Commission were gladly received, and the owners were gratified by the publicity, and often by the discovery of hidden literary treasures, that gave them new ancestral dignity, and a pleasant opportunity to contribute to the history of their country. The permission to make abstracts and catalogues is subject to a distinct condition that the owner shall consent, and that nothing of a private character or relating to the title of owners shall be divulged. It appears that the work was acceptably done, and with the consent of the original owners of the documents, the abstracts and catalogues have been printed in full in the nine volumes of the Reports of the Commission, which have literary and typographical excellence and cheapness of price, that are not often found in the public documents of America. The Commission on Manuscripts has opened a more attractive field than the Public Records, which commonly show us only the official movements of the machinery of the State. Private diaries and letters discover the hidden springs and the obscure course of events. These terse abstracts have suggestive power, that will awaken antiquarian curiosity in the most phlegmatic minds, that

have any enjoyment from history. A man must be prepared by especial study to enjoy or use the old Records. But every one who has read Shakespeare, or the more accurate and recent teachers of English history, will be excited and pleased by the possible knowledge of the personal motives and family secrets of Kings without their majesty, and of the Warwicks, Percys, Wolseys and Hydes, around and behind the throne. And learned historians, in their most obscure investigations, are receiving new light from this enterprise, that does honor to the Queen and her liberal and enlightened nobility. For it is chiefly among the descendants of those, who made the Kings and made the State, that such personal memorials are preserved. As the history of America and the history of England have been and must be inseparable, the scholars of our country will have a full share of the new treasure, which they have already used for the elucidation of obscure passages of our Colonial and Revolutionary history.

We cannot detain you by inquiring how the historians of England are affected by this wealth of materials and authority. While it must be of the highest value for truth and accuracy, it is likely that it will be brought out to public view more by the critic and the discursive antiquary than by writers of extended histories. Sir Walter Raleigh undertook to write the "History of the World" when he was confined in a vault of the Tower of London. How many scholars, do we find at work on national histories in the British Museum! The smart saying; that partisan histories are the best, will receive the general assent of writers and readers, for such histories are more easily written, and for a time more pleasantly read. The literature of our day is crowded with attacks and skirmishes on points of history, that have demolished respected authors, and made their works "alms for oblivion," and produced "in the common mind" a vague idea of the duties of a professor of history.

For the Council,

STEPHEN SALISBURY.

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