

REPORT OF THE LIBRARIAN.

THE present report covers six months of unusual activity though not of remarkable occurrences in the history of the library. The daily routine has not been unlike that of other periods, but in connection with it special work has been done with more or less success in several new directions. The plan for the distribution of our duplicate newspapers, outlined in your Librarian's last report, has been carried out, and as a result we are no longer concerned about an over-weighted newspaper attic. At least one-half of this duplicate material has been sent away on exchange account, where it will be the most useful. In this way the Library of Congress, for instance, has received from us nearly fifty cases of American newspapers, while various State, city, town, college and historical society libraries have filled not a few of their local newspaper gaps from the same source. That both our desire to dispose of the balance of this material and at least a partial knowledge of what we have to offer may appear together, a rough alphabetical list of the larger lots remaining is given.

Boston: Advertiser, Centinel, Christian Register, Chronicle, Courier, Gazette, Journal, Mercury, Messenger, New England Farmer, Palladium, Patriot, and Repertory.

New York: Chronicle, Harper's Weekly, Herald, Independent, Iron Age, Nation, Post, Round Table, Scientific American, Spectator, Times, Tribune, and World.

London: Illustrated News.

Providence: Journal.

Springfield: Republican.

Washington: Intelligencer.

Worcester: Gazette, Home Journal, National Ægis, Palladium, Press, and Spy.

Correspondence in relation to this duplicate material is solicited, and the suggestion ventured that such an opportunity is not often likely to occur.

And here it seems an important question to consider whether newspapers shall be preserved, in the interest of American history, and if so what is the duty of this Society and that of kindred institutions in relation thereto. To the first query we may hear answers varying from an absolute no on the one hand to an unqualified yes on the other; and they may come from persons of equal intelligence. Without undertaking to state the views of either party, is there not a middle ground which we may safely take, and from which we—as an American society founded by an American editor and printer—may urge the preservation of at least carefully selected representative newspapers? That ground is, I submit, their importance not only on account of the multitude of facts they contain but because of the varied treatment which the same subject receives as viewed from different sides. May not a judicial mind of a later and calmer period thus have at hand party statements which he may wisely examine, carefully weigh and fairly use? If, then, the importance of this great work is admitted, the question arises, how shall it best be accomplished? It will generally be conceded that the collection in the National Library at Washington should be the largest and broadest of all; and doubtless in the new library building Mr. Spofford will see that its rapid growth is abundantly provided for. Our own contribution to that end has already been mentioned, and the example may well be followed. Two very important factors in an attempt to solve the newspaper problem, namely, money and space, are there most likely to be found.

We are justly proud of our well-filled newspaper room,

though comparatively little has been added to the invaluable eighteenth and early nineteenth century collection as left by Dr. Thomas. It should be remembered that the large unbound portion of this collection has been bound at the charge of the Bookbinding Fund. Is it too much to hope that a newspaper fund, bearing some honored name, will some day be established, and that by its judicious use gaps even in the revolutionary and pre-revolutionary period, as well as during the war of the rebellion, will be filled? Our newspaper files begin with the first number of the first continued newspaper in America—that of the Boston News-Letter of Monday, April 24, 1704—and end with this morning's issues. Is it not possible that our special mission in this direction is the perfecting of our early files, or perhaps as well the carrying forward our collection not indefinitely but through the second century of American newspaper life, say to the opening of the twentieth century? And yet we are constantly met by the querist who wonders, as we have so fair a start, why we cannot "go on forever," and asks "who will undertake the great work if you do not?" Perhaps the newspaper collections of the future are to be arranged and preserved by States, each State placing its own leading newspapers in charge of its State librarian or in the absence of such an official, in the care of the State historical society. In any event each city or town provided with a public library should preserve in binding its own newspapers, and it would be well also to send files to the State library or the State historical society and the National Library. In the absence of a library in the city or town of publication and the existence of one at the capital city they should most certainly there be preserved. The advantage of having these authorities at home is suggested by the fact that we have just finished transcribing from an Eastern city's newspapers of 1780-1800, in our possession, all the local musical and dramatic material therein contained

for use in preparing a chapter of the history of that city. Senator Sumner's last visit to the library was on a fruitless search—while preparing his works for the press—for one of his stirring addresses reported in but one of his city papers, and that not preserved where printed. And so once more your Librarian earnestly pleads for the preservation of representative American newspapers, either by the nation, by States, by municipalities or by private corporations. Since writing the foregoing I have read in Mr. S. N. D. North's Census Report on the Newspaper and Periodical Press of the United States—to which it will be remembered we contributed as Appendix D, a list of the bound files of our American newspapers—the following pertinent paragraph from the pen of Mr. Ainsworth R. Spofford, Librarian of Congress, and thus by virtue of his office custodian of by far the largest collection of newspapers in America. He says :

“While no one library, however large and comprehensive, has either the space or means to accumulate a tithe of the periodicals that swarm from a productive press, there are valid reasons why more attention should be paid by librarians to the careful preservation of a wise selection from all this current literature. The modern newspaper and other periodical publications afford the truest, the fullest and, on the whole, the most impartial images of the age we live in that can be derived from any single source. Taken together, they afford the richest material for the historian or the student of politics, of society, of literature and of civilization in its various aspects. What precious memorials of the day even the advertisements and brief paragraphs of the newspapers a century ago afford us! While in a field so vast it is impossible for any one library to be more than a gleaner, no such institution can afford to neglect the collection and preservation of at least some of the more important newspapers from year to year. A public library is not for one generation only but it is for all time. Opportunities once neglected of securing the current periodicals of any age in continuation and complete form seldom or never occur. The principle of selection

will, of course, vary in different libraries and localities.

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This collection should embrace not only newspapers, magazines, etc., but a complete collection of all casual pamphlets, reports of municipal governments, with their subdivisions, reports of charitable or benevolent societies, schools, etc., and even the prospectuses, bulletins, etc., of real-estate agents and tradesmen. Every library should have its scrap-books (or series of them) for preserving the political broadsides and fugitive pieces of the day which in any way reflect or illustrate the spirit of the times or the condition of the people. These unconsidered trifles, commonly swept out and thrown away as worthless, if carefully preserved and handed down to the future, will be found to form precious memorials of a bygone age. * * *

And that library which shall the most sedulously gather and preserve such fugitive memorials of the life of the people among which it is situated, will be found to have best subserved its purpose to the succeeding generation of men."

These are weighty words from high authority, and no apology is offered for quoting them at length.

Our book of accessions shows the following additions to the library and cabinet since our last report: By gift four hundred and sixty-six books, thirty-eight hundred and seventy-nine pamphlets, one bound and one hundred and twenty-six unbound volumes of newspapers, seven framed and two unframed engravings, seven manuscript volumes, six photographs, four maps, four arrow-heads, two drawings, two coins, a Mexican bridle, an historic cane, a lottery ticket, confederate currency and postage stamps. By exchange three hundred and twenty-two books and four hundred and eleven pamphlets. From the binder forty-seven volumes of periodicals; making a total of seven hundred and ninety-eight books, forty-two hundred and ninety pamphlets, one hundred and twenty volumes of newspapers, *et cetera*. The sources of increase are two hundred and ten in number, as follows: From forty-three members, ninety-one persons not members and seventy-six societies

and institutions. It seems best to make a very few special acknowledgments under each of these heads. Hon. Horace Davis has sent his friendly tribute to Mr. Alexander S. Taylor, who, with Mr. Davis, for many years represented this Society on the Pacific coast. The difficulty in procuring the facts desired for his paper was so great that the material, though intended for the Council report of October, 1884, was first printed in the *Overland Monthly* of May, 1886. An exhaustive list of Mr. Taylor's works is appended to the paper. Hon. P. Emory Aldrich's gift of temperance literature is large and fills many gaps in a department not over supplied, at a time when material for the history of the temperance reformation in all its phases is much sought for. Receipts of this class have not been so large as might have been expected when we remember that the Society has had some earnest advocates of the cause among its earlier and later members. Vice-President Salisbury's donation of historical material in print and manuscript, is large and includes the ledgers of Messrs. S. and S. Salisbury, 1757-1783, and of Daniel Waldo, 1820-1844. He has answered trans-atlantic and other calls for his Yucatecan reprints, and the publishing fund has thereby been increased. Hon. J. Carson Brevoort has made a further addition to his valuable Japanese collection. Mr. J. Fletcher Williams, librarian of the Minnesota Historical Society, has added to our very complete set of the territorial and State documents of Minnesota, the rare Revised Statutes compiled by Wilkinson and printed in 1851, copies of which, he assures us, are "scarcer than honest politicians." William Harden, Esq., has set an excellent example by using his camera for our benefit in the photographing of an interesting specimen of pottery now in his possession. It is an Indian burial urn found on the island of Ossabaw, near the coast of Georgia. Henry W. Taft, Esq., has not only presented his Judicial History of Berkshire, but as one of the Directors of the Pittsfield Athenæum has trans-

ferred to us a box of early publications. We have to acknowledge from William S. Barton, Esq., about twenty volumes of historical, scientific, political and educational pamphlets. Hon. J. Hammond Trumbull has presented a copy of the Memorial History of Hartford County, Connecticut, of which he was the editor and to which he has in various ways contributed. It is perhaps enough to say that it is largely patterned after the Memorial History of Boston. Others of our members have been called and will be called to like important work, and thus the body be duly honored by the good deeds of its members. Mention is made of the receipt of your Librarian's short paper upon the First Conference of American Librarians, read before the American Library Association at Milwaukee in July last, simply that the fact may be indexed in the Proceedings of a society which had so large an interest in it. The convention was held in New York in October, 1851, twenty-five years before the birth of the present energetic association. It is to be hoped that the beautiful tribute paid at Milwaukee by President Poole to one of America's ablest and most genial librarians, the late Mr. Lloyd P. Smith of the Philadelphia Library Company, may be followed by discriminating sketches of other deceased members of the convention of '51. Mrs. Samuel H. Colton has made an important addition to our already large collection of Horticultural periodicals; and one of our younger donors has brought us from Michigan a few choice specimens of Indian arrow-heads picked up by him on one of Tecumseh's camping-grounds. Mrs. Elijah Dudley has, at our request, sent her imperfect war file of the *Worcester Transcript* to aid us in completing our own. Two large, miscellaneous lots of pamphlets and newspapers have come to us; one from the family of the late Hon. Peter C. Bacon; and the other from the family of the late William E. Green, Esq., through Hon. Andrew H. Green of New York and Mr. Martin Green of Worcester. We have

received copies of the centennial number of the *Hampshire Gazette*, Northampton, Mass., from Mr. Henry S. Gere, the proprietor. To this interesting issue we were able to contribute the third number for reproduction. No copy of the first number is known to be in existence, and our number two, is slightly soiled. George S. Taft, Esq., has placed in the library a copy of his compilation of Senate Contested Election Cases, the material for which work was chiefly drawn from our shelves; and Rev. Samuel May has not forgotten to forward his supply of college and benevolent society pamphlets with which he has favored us for many years. Through the liberality of Mr. William A. Banister we add another orderly book to our collection. It covers the period from July 29, 1775, to January 12, 1776, and the entries were made at Roxbury and Cambridge. The catalogue of the Boston Public Latin School, received from the Rev. Henry F. Jenks—the compiler of the catalogue and author of the *Historical Sketch*—will be of constant value to us for biographical purposes.

We acknowledge the annual reports of the Brooklyn Library—for a much longer period known as the Mercantile Library Association—and of the newly christened Buffalo Library for long years called the Young Men's Library of Buffalo. In heartily commending these changes of names, we are reminded of the importance of properly naming institutions as well as persons, places and things. We have good authority for believing that "a good name is better than great riches," and this may be true in the long run, of a library. The great library of a great city or town, unless privately endowed and named, should—other things being equal—bear the name of the place where it is located. If "Public" can be added thereto, so much the better. Is it not partly, at least, for this reason that, for example, the Chicago Public Library was for many years more widely known than the St. Louis Public School Library, now known as the St. Louis Public

Library? How little "The Library of the Surgeon-General's Office" would indicate its size and value but for Dr. Billings's great catalogue of it, and how imperfectly "The Library of Congress" suggests our National Library, or, as its librarian has already been quoted as calling it "The Library of the United States." As "The Library of the General Court" has entirely given place to the "Massachusetts State Library," so "The Library of Congress" should be known by some name more clearly indicating its national character when transferred to its new quarters. That our members of this national society may need to help on this desirable change appears from the fact that boxes sent by us to the National Library remained in the freight house until the rail-road company was notified that they were intended for the Congressional Library. While endorsing the quaint saying in the Wits Academy of 1635, that "As in sweet oyle, ointment and wines; so in books, antiquity doth add estimation and price," may we not admit that in so far as even our own name suggests to the careless that we do not collect works of the present, it may be misleading.

We have been informed, though not officially, that part four of the American Library of the late George Brinley is nearly ready for sale by Leavitt and Company of New York. For this and the final sale we have to our credit an unexpended balance of about one thousand dollars. At the suggestion of our Treasurer, the accumulated files of newspapers have been left unbound, that the Bookbinding Fund might be allowed to increase. The putting our magazine literature into covers as soon as volumes are completed, is undoubtedly a more expensive way than to buy bound sets for our periodical alcoves, but the condition of the Collection and Research Fund has not encouraged such an expenditure as would be required for that purpose.

Our continued interest in the effort of the Department of the Interior to gather and redistribute United States

public documents has been still further shown by the sending for that purpose of nearly a thousand additional volumes from our duplicate room,—a total contribution of nearly three thousand volumes. It was my privilege also to introduce a resolution at the Library Conference of 1886, which committed the Association to the principle of redistribution as well as to an approval of this particular plan which Mr. Ames is working so successfully. It is of course well known that many village and private libraries are burdened with this government material which now that it is to be made permanently useful might properly be returned to the place whence it came, that it may be sent where it is needed. Mr. John G. Ames, Superintendent of the Document Room, United States Department of the Interior, will supply free transportation labels, and postmasters will furnish mail bags. We would gladly act as forwarding agents, especially for our members and correspondents, but under the circumstances the double handling does not appear to be necessary. Your individual interest in this matter is urged, as it is really of national importance. Having been strongly impressed with the easy and wide adaptability of this plan of redistribution, and the possibility of grafting it upon our exchange system, and feeling moreover that we are in a truly national sense a “society for the diffusion of knowledge,” I have ventured to take for you the lead in this larger and more inclusive movement. It has so far been a labor of great satisfaction and our returns, while not always immediate, are sure to be abundant. Our associate, General Francis A. Walker, President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but echoes the sentiments expressed by various States, municipalities, societies, colleges, schools, etc., when he writes that “the scheme you have undertaken to forward is a most useful one. In the present case it has given us the use of pamphlets greatly desired.”

Mr. Colton's well-earned and much-needed leave of

absence during the months of May and June allowed him a hasty trip to England and Scotland, which was alike profitable to himself and to the Society. Let me add in closing that such a measure of success as your Librarian may have achieved in the administration of library affairs, is largely due to his faithful assistants and to the Library Committee of the Council.

Respectfully submitted.

EDMUND M. BARTON,

Librarian.

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