

The Report of the Council

April 17, 1968

THE STATE of the Society is vigorous. The Council has confronted several matters of great importance to the future of the Society; various committees have met to consider subjects germane to their spheres of responsibility; an unusually large number of outstanding books has been added to our collections; and the staff is productive and, I think, reasonably happy.

At its last meeting, the Council considered reports of several Committees which will be summarized below. The Director reported that a joint project with Clark University to serve as the headquarters for the definitive edition of the works of James Fenimore Cooper has met with some adversity occasioned by a lack of funds. It would appear that a grant which was expected from the Center of Editions of American Authors of the Modern Language Association will not be forthcoming during this or the next academic year. The trouble lies in the fact that the Congress has sharply reduced its appropriation to the National Endowment for the Humanities, the body which subsidizes the Center. The National Endowment is a significant development in the national effort to promote activities in the humanities and I hope that the Society membership will support its activities.

During the past six months, progress has been made in implementing the Council's decision that a program of development was necessary in order to permit the Society to meet the challenges of this era and succeeding generations. The Council is concerned that our plans be carefully laid and it

may be well that we proceed deliberately until such time as we are entirely sure of our ground and course. In short, we look forward to a very stimulating and successful venture which will, we are certain, be received with equal enthusiasm by you.

The Publications Committee has acted upon the following matters: the *Proceedings* of the Society have been designed anew by Klaus Gemming, a skillful typographer whose work has frequently been honored by the American Institute of Graphic Arts. The *Proceedings* to appear in the fall will be the first fruit of that decision. You have already received the first issue of the Society's *News-Letter*, and we have been pleased with the many favorable comments which it has elicited from you and others. The next number will be issued early in June.

A general understanding was reached with the Barre Publishing Company for the distribution of the Society's publications, some of which will also be published by that Company for the Society. Among titles to be issued in the near future are *American Penmanship, 1800-1851*, by Ray Nash; an alphabetically arranged short-title list of all items appearing in C. K. Shipton's Readex Microprint edition of Evans; the additions to Evans compiled by Roger P. Bristol; the first two volumes of the *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*; and the bibliography of American children's books by d'Alté A. Welch.

The Library Committee discussed at length the collecting policies of the Society. In general, the practices followed in recent years were reaffirmed. The Committee agreed that greatest emphasis should be laid upon the acquisition of materials printed in America prior to 1821. Materials of the next generation, 1821-1850, are to receive next priority, followed by the period 1851 to 1876. The Committee emphasized the folly of attempting to build collections from scratch, and the Librarian was admonished to cultivate only already strong collections. The Committee was in full agreement that there was no reason for the Society to attempt to

maintain collections relating to the period after 1876 due to the weakness of our existing collections in this area. Materials of this nature will be worked out of the collections to provide both additional space and funds. It was suggested by the Committee that a bibliographer would be of great value to the Society in the preparation of lists of desiderata, in locating needed materials, and in the performance of similar functions.

In addition, the Committee reviewed our admissions policy and adopted the following statement in regard thereto:

Very limited numbers of mature college undergraduates may be admitted to the library, at the discretion of the senior members of the Society staff and upon application by the student's faculty advisor, provided that the materials needed by the student are for a major project, and are not available to the student elsewhere.

Candidates for Masters' degrees may be admitted on the same basis as above.

Candidates for the Ph.D. degree may be admitted at the discretion of the senior members of the Society staff and upon application by the candidate's faculty advisor, provided that the materials needed by the student are not available elsewhere.

This statement has been circularized to a number of institutions of higher learning. We will welcome your suggestions as to other recipients of this announcement.

A Membership Committee was formed by the Council as a means of regularizing the procedures in the nomination and election of new members of the Society. Although this committee has not yet formally met, it has been at work and a meeting will be called to discuss this very important aspect of the Society's affairs.

A Committee on Bylaws was appointed by the President at the October meeting of the Council, and has prepared a

preliminary draft of new bylaws. The Committee hopes to submit a final report to the members at the annual meeting in October.

There have been no recent changes in the staff. Many of you have met James Mooney, the Editor of the Society, who joined us on July first. Through his good offices, the final work of filming the remnants of the Readex Microprint edition of Evans has been completed and he is now editing titles in the year 1807 for the microprint version of the Shaw and Shoemaker bibliography. The last issue of the *Proceedings* was the result of his editorial work and he is now preparing the next issue of the *News-Letter*.

Miss Avis G. Clarke and her cataloguing assistants continue to make inroads into uncatalogued collections. In addition, Miss Clarke is at work on her biographical list of American printers, which we hope will be published in the not too far distant future. Although Miss Clarke has reached retirement age, the Council has extended her appointment for another year. Mr. Richard Anders, now cataloguer of special collections in the Dartmouth College Library, has been appointed Assistant Cataloguer, and will assume his duties here July first. His presence on our staff will mean that we will be able to progress through our collections much more rapidly than heretofore and will be the first step in bringing our post-1820 materials under more adequate bibliographical control.

Miss Mary Brown's department is cheerfully assisting readers in their multitudinous quests for information. Not long ago a truck driver who delivered two cartons of books stayed on for a couple of hours to inquire into his antecedents. This exigency was dealt with as helpfully as was the request by a scholar from Iowa City for materials on early nineteenth-century tune books. Another visitor from Lincoln, Rhode Island, signed our register and stated that his purpose in visiting the library was, 'Tired.' I am not entirely sure how the staff dealt with that.

Mrs. Gordon Marshall is making excellent progress in re-ordering the lithographic collections and has proved to be most helpful in many ways. She manages to take care of the requests marked 'rush' from editors of *Life Magazine* and *American Heritage* with dispatch and accuracy.

Mrs. James Adams plows her way through mounds of newspapers at an amazing rate and is now working on an adequate catalogue of our eighteenth and nineteenth-century periodicals. In addition, Mrs. Adams performs many other tasks with intelligence and speed.

Mr. Kenneth Desautels of the bindery staff has for the past several months been devoting his efforts to the care and repair of the Mather collection. He is making a real contribution by preserving these rare books, and as time goes on he will go through other collections in the same manner. This is a most significant development and I am pleased that our bindery staff is now engaged in this work.

In fact, I am highly gratified by the diligence and loyalty of our entire staff. The members serve the Society to the best of their ability and that is very high indeed. Despite the fact that we are undermanned, the staff continues to stay on top of the work and if it were not for its responsible attitude, we would be in serious trouble in this area of the Society's responsibility.

We have had a great many opportunities to make significant additions to the library's holdings this past six months, and I have made every effort to take full advantage of them. In fact, the book budget now stands in need of a major transfusion of additional funds. Be that as it may, let us not grieve for departed cash; rather let us rejoice over the exciting new books on our shelves.

The great acquisition of this year and it is likely to be so for the next several years, is *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded*, by Samuel Richardson, and published by Benjamin Franklin in 1742-43. It is the only known copy of the first novel published

in America, a book which lay in the collections of a college library in Boston for two generations without coming to the attention of a bibliographer. Its importance as a milestone in American publishing needs no elaboration and I am grateful beyond measure to the Stoddard Charitable Trust for making the acquisition possible.

Another important gift enabled the Society to acquire 398 children's books of the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s. Through the generosity of Mrs. F. Harold Daniels it was possible to search through two large collections from which we selected only the titles which we needed. You are no doubt well aware that the Society's collection of American children's books dated prior to 1821 is the finest in existence, and I suspect that the collection to about 1850 or somewhat later is also one of the best. A final word about Mrs. Daniels' gift; Mr. Daniels until his death was a generous and interested benefactor of the Society, and it gives me great pleasure to record the fact that Mrs. Daniels is carrying on. The Society is very much in their debt.

The officers of the Worcester Historical Society voted to place in our collections a copy of *The History of Sindbad* (Newburyport, 1809). This edition of a desirable children's book is scarce and I am very pleased by this sign of continued assistance from our local colleagues.

Mrs. Kathryn Buhler presented to us a most interesting learning device of the 1820s or 1830s. It is entitled *The Picture Alphabet for a Good Child* and consists of a series of cardboard disks carrying charming woodcut illustrations of the alphabet. The set came in its original circular wooden container with a label on the cap.

Among our purchases of children's material was the first American edition of Grimm's *German Popular Stories* (Boston, 1826), a very scarce book; an unrecorded ABC book in German published in Reading, Pennsylvania, in 1795 by Johann Gruber; and a previously unlocated reading book, *The Newest American Primer* (Philadelphia: Styner & Cist, 1779).

I recall not long ago ordering, too late, a Lexington, Kentucky, periodical, entitled, *The Almoner*, which was published from April 1814 to May 1815. Surprisingly enough, we had another chance at the periodical, and this time landed it. We obtained by exchange in December a complete file of volume one of the Norwich, N.Y. *Anti-Masonic Telegraph*, dated 1829-30. Another important addition to our files were 183 issues of the Charleston, S.C. *City Gazette*, June 1 through December 31, 1802.

Unrecorded or unlocated Vermont imprints continue to come to light, and we now have three more examples in the collection. *Hymns in Prose for Children*, by Mrs. Anna Letitia Barbauld was printed in 1800 by Collier and Stockwell in Bennington. This title had not been previously recorded. Although the title of the following book had been listed in Evans and in Wegelin, no copy had ever been found. The book is: *An Elegiac Poem, on the Death of Mrs. Sarah Branch*, by her widower, Amaziah Branch of Shaftsbury. The book was printed by Haswell & Russell of Bennington in 1789. Imprints from St. Albans are few and exceptionally scarce. *The Youth's Director, or A Series of Miscellaneous Thoughts and Reflections on Conversation and Actions* was published anonymously by Whitney & Willard in 1811. The AAS copy is the only known example of this previously unrecorded title. These three books were all purchased on the Harriette Merrifield Forbes Fund.

A book in the Frank C. Deering Collection which was known only by one other copy, at the Newberry Library, was the Peacham, Vermont, 1806 edition of *The Narrative of the Life and Sufferings of Matthew Bunn*. This title was one of several Newberry Library duplicates which we obtained from the Deering Collection.

We made a major addition to our collection of addresses of news-carriers when we obtained a lot of forty-one examples. These were dated from 1812 to 1876 and most originated in Pennsylvania. In addition, seven others were purchased, the

earliest being the 1805 address to the patrons of the *Newburyport Herald*.

At the October meeting we announced that the Society's collection of the publications of James Fenimore Cooper would serve as the basis for the definitive edition of the works of that very important nineteenth-century author. At that time we had nearly two hundred editions or printings of his books. In the past six months we have acquired an additional seventy-five. The most important of these was the rare first edition of *The Spy* (New York, 1821). Probably the most scarce title obtained was Greenough's *Marble Group of Chanting Cherubs*, in 1831 then exhibiting at the American Academy of Fine Arts in New York City. The pamphlet contains a letter by Fenimore Cooper concerning the statue. The most desirable addition came as a gift from Pierce W. Gaines. This was a copy of the second edition of *The Last of the Mohicans* (Philadelphia, 1826), which has never been bound and thus will be of considerable bibliographical interest to Cooper scholars.

A number of important books were secured at the October Streeter Sale and were reported in the first issue of the AAS *News-Letter*. Similarly, other remarkable rarities were mentioned therein. Since then we have not been idle. Two more eighteenth-century booksellers' catalogues are now in our collection which is surely one of the best in existence. The earlier is *A Catalogue of Books Sold by Noel Garrat, at the Bible in Dock-Street*. This was published in New York about 1755 and is previously unrecorded. The second example is a three-page list of books sold by Henry Knox at his London bookstore, a little southward of the Town-House in Cornhill, Boston. It was issued by the future General not long before the Revolution broke out.

Several years ago a gentleman from Miles City, Montana, wrote us that he had a volume of pamphlets which had descended in his family to himself and which he wished to sell. We had all the pamphlets but one, *Letters of Maj. Genl. Lee*

to the Right Honourable Earl Percy, and Maj. Genl. John Burgoyne (New York: James Rivington, 1775). After negotiation and reminding the elderly owner of our continuing interest, he finally sold us the volume. We extracted the pamphlet which we needed, reminded Mr. Adams of another Revolutionary War pamphlet (already at AAS) which had escaped his net while he was compiling his bibliography of Revolutionary pamphlets, and then sold the remainder to a dealer.

One of the earliest American books on the noble art of fisticuffs is *The Complete Art of Boxing*, published in Philadelphia in 1829. It is now in AAS. Many of you heard Professor Thorp deliver a paper in October on nineteenth-century Roman Catholic novelists. We have obtained another example of this genre which is unrecorded in Lyle Wright's bibliography of American novels and unnoticed by our speaker. It was written by the Reverend Father John McDermott of Salem, New Jersey, and is entitled, *Father Jonathan, or, The Scottish Converts* (Philadelphia, 1853). Earlier I reported that we had acquired an 1848 *Prairie Farmer Almanac* numbered three in the series, and issued from Dubuque, Iowa, although it was published in Chicago. Since then, we have purchased the 1847 *Prairie Farmer Almanac* with a Chicago imprint.

In the purchase of Deering books, already mentioned, we added the narratives of Timothy Murphy and of David Ogden, both rare relations of the frontier era. The former was published in Schoharie, N.Y., in 1839 and the latter in Lansingburgh, N.Y., in 1840.

I wish that I could report that the Society had obtained the Lexington, Kentucky, 1799 edition of the *Account of The Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col: James Smith*, one of the great books of the trans-Allegheny frontier. I cannot. But we did purchase the second edition published in Philadelphia in 1831 and a rare book in its own right:

Two generous gifts have accounted for interesting and significant additions to our materials on American printers.

Roger Butterfield presented to the Society the indenture of Robert Simson, a Scot immigrant, to Andrew Brown, printer of Philadelphia, dated April 2, 1790. With the indenture was a galley proof of an autobiographical article which Simson wrote late in life, long after he had returned to his native heath. From the galley proof we have extracted several new and useful items of information regarding the printing trade of Philadelphia at the end of the eighteenth century.

Mr. and Mrs. Ben Lane, formerly of Burlington, Vermont, gave the Society the ledger, daybooks, and several miscellaneous manuscripts of Ephraim H. Washburn, a printer of Middlebury, Vermont. The material centers about the year 1832 and is a fine addition to printers' manuscripts already here.

I am grateful to these generous friends for their helpfulness to the Society, as I am to many others who have supported the work of the Society with gifts of funds or of research materials.

M. A. McC.

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