

## REPORT OF THE COUNCIL.

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“There has been nothing of especial moment happening at the Library for the past six months which would call for extended comment in a Council Report. The usual number of accessions have come in, including a large number of early newspapers, and the Society has taken every opportunity within its means to procure whatever early imprints or other important Americana have come up at sales, or have been offered by dealers.” This statement, at the hands of our Librarian, takes no account of the losses sustained through death by the Society during the year, nor indeed are these losses above normal, so far as numbers go.

FREDERICK LEWIS GAY of Brookline was elected in 1906. He died March 3, 1916. He was well known as a collector of Americana and had upon the shelves of his library a choice collection of rare books. He was keenly interested in the bibliography of American history and his knowledge and his judgment on disputed points were recognized as being almost actual authority. Generous, genial and liberal, we profited by his membership.

ANSON DANIEL MORSE of Amherst, elected in 1903, died March 13, 1916. He was well known as an educator and an author, and was a Professor in Amherst College. A quiet, unobtrusive man, he was the servant of duty rather than the slave of ambition. His publications were characterized by thorough knowledge, careful thinking and sound judgment.

JAMES BURRILL ANGELL of Ann Arbor, Michigan, was elected in 1890. He died April 1, 1916. A suc-

cessful educator, honorary degrees were showered upon him. An illustrious diplomat, there was probably no name of greater distinction on our rolls than that of Dr. Angell.

STEPHEN DENISON PEET of Salem, died May 24, 1914, but the news of his death was only recently brought to the attention of the Society. He was for many years the editor and publisher of the *American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal*, and was elected to this Society in 1882.

Brief notices of these members will be prepared for the Proceedings by our Biographer.

If we recur to the language of our Librarian already quoted, we find that we are so fortunately situated in many respects that it would seem as if there might be grave danger of our activity being curtailed by the monotony of our prosperity. Our affairs are intelligently administered with admirable fidelity; our collections steadily grow in quantity and with their growth their value increases in even greater proportion than their size; with the result that the reputation of the Society among students becomes of more importance day by day.

Under such circumstances there is always danger that self complacency and content may degenerate into stagnation. From this we are to a certain extent guarded by the limitation to be found in the language quoted above—"the Society has taken every opportunity within its means." Since the days when Christopher C. Baldwin wrote in his Diary, "I found some hundreds of vols. which I much wanted, that could be purchased for a mere trifle. I had only \$15.00 of the Society's money to expend, and this I laid out as advantageously as I could," down to the present time, the same limitation has operated to prevent our collections from assuming either in quantity or in character what might have been hoped for at the hands of a permanent collector in a fruitful

field during a long period when there were few competitors.

The chagrin that naturally arises from a survey of lost opportunities is somewhat alleviated when we contemplate the generous activities of some of our members. Conspicuous among these was our late associate Frederick L. Gay, whose gift of "The Records of the Council of New England" placed upon our shelves one of the most valuable American manuscripts now in existence, and whose constant flow of contributions and ever ready response to the suggestions of our President that a certain nugget might be rescued from the auction room for the Society if a few liberal and generous members would come to the front, bore testimony to his continued interest in the Society and at the same time cheered the hearts of those who were depressed at the slow growth of our endowment fund. Sympathy and encouragement of this sort enable our officers to face courageously the proposition staring them in the face that our rapid accumulation of newspapers demands an enlargement of the stack, at a period much earlier than had been anticipated.

On the whole then it may be said that, even though prosperous, we are not likely to be lulled into contented complacency by the uniform tone of well doing which characterizes our reports of condition, but that we find much that should stir us to action in the actual situation and the impending demands upon our Society. There is much to be gratified for, but discontent at some of the features of the outlook is not only justifiable but is actually imperative and ought to be stimulating.

There is one subject to which the Council wishes to call the attention of the Society and that is the geographical distribution of the membership. In 1907 the Society increased its numbers from 140 to 175, the object being to secure representation, if possible, from each of the States, so that we might

justify the claim which had already been made many years before, that we were national in all our objects and concerns. Prior to this extension of the numbers of our members, efforts were made to secure from those who were thought to be best qualified to judge upon the subject the names of suitable candidates for membership residing in states then either not represented at all in our ranks or if represented, inadequately so in proportion to the numbers of their population interested in our affairs and in our work. The result of these inquiries was a list of possible candidates for membership which far exceeded the vacancies at our command. That list was at the service of the Council in filling vacancies until it was practically exhausted.

In 1909, the Society issued a "Handbook of Information" in which this statement is made: "The membership is strictly national in its scope. But although Massachusetts is largely represented and the City of Worcester provides a disproportionate number of members in order to administer the Society's affairs, yet nearly one-third of the membership live outside of New England."

Being a Massachusetts corporation, and having our home in Worcester, we must as a measure of policy have what would seem to be a disproportionate representation in that city. Moreover, the need of an adequate attendance at our meetings compels a larger representation from the region within which members might be expected to make an effort to be present, than from the far distant states from which we can only hope for an occasional visit from a member. On a basis which took these facts into consideration, our membership was distributed when we increased our numbers by thirty-five and deliberately set to work to secure representation from states the names of which did not appear among the residences given by our members. In carrying this out, while we did succeed in securing several members from new states, we did not accomplish much more than a beginning

at the work. The Handbook of Information dealing with our affairs in 1909, discloses the fact that after the vacancies created in 1906 had practically been filled there were twenty-five states still unrepresented. If we turn to the list of members published by the Society in 1914 we find that five years later the number of unrepresented states was twenty-six. The statement made when the "Handbook" was published that one-third of our members only were to be found outside New England still remained true. The same statement may, of course, be made of the geographical distribution of the membership today.

It is evident that the task that we then set ourselves is not one that will perform itself automatically. The various motives that influence us in selecting candidates for membership: distinction in historical work, probable attendance at our meetings, or local prominence, evidently bring constantly to our attention the names of persons whom we desire to honor with membership from the older and more settled states, while from the far West, except upon the Pacific Coast, it is clear that, if there are possible candidates, there is but one way that we can find them, and that is by deliberate search.

If we assume that the present Constitution of our Society is on a good working basis and that the representation is properly adjusted to our normal conditions, the question naturally arises, how can the Society place itself in position to welcome new members, when they shall be found, hailing from the unrepresented states? Can anything be done which will bring before us knowledge of such historical students as are permanent citizens in these states?

It has been suggested that we might increase our membership to two hundred, and that we might hold the twenty-five memberships thus created to be filled only by representatives from states at present unrepresented. Add to these twenty-five one from the existing vacancies and we should have at our command



unrepresented states. In fact, we should be grateful for contributions of knowledge bearing upon the subject, which would help us to fill any of these vacancies. The recital of a list of these states in this report would be tedious, but it would be an easy matter to make provision for the reception of such a list by each member of the Society. Upon receipt of such replies as may come in, and upon such other knowledge as may be acquired by the Council, future action on the subject can be determined. Meantime the Council merely appeals to the Society for aid in acquiring information on which to base such action.

Reference has already been made in this report to the arrest of the centennial endowment fund midway in the growth of the sum which it was hoped to accumulate, a sum which seemed moderate to those familiar with the needs of the Society and absolutely essential for the successful conduct of its affairs. So also reference has been made to a new and unexpected need which has been developed, the enlargement of the newspaper stack, an improvement which involves the expenditure in the near future of a sum fully equal to the present size of the centennial fund. Our President, ever keenly alert to the needs of the Society and equally ingenious and active in seeking to provide for them, has suggested that perhaps the proprietors of the newspapers, recognizing the thankless task which we have assumed of storing their voluminous publications, might be willing to join hands in providing for their storage. When newspapers sell for one and two cents each, and single editions sometimes reach forty-eight pages and upwards, it is evident that the cost of storing such masses of printed material is a serious proposition and it seems as though the wealthy proprietors of newspapers, if desirous that their publications should be preserved, might respond to such an appeal. The incapacity of the Society itself to make provision for this impending need is set forth by our President in the following words: "The Society has

but 175 members and as most of them are possessed of very limited means, the burden must fall upon a few." Only an optimist of the most hopeful temperament could thus hint at the possibility of that "few" being willing to assume the burden. The lesson of the centennial fund teaches to the contrary, and the wisdom of our President in seeking for help outside the Society needs no expression of approval at our hands. Whether appeal to professional or to local pride will of themselves be successful may well be doubted, but it is not wise for us to leave any stone unturned, the turning of which might reveal the crock of gold. We have but little to offer to any benefactor outside the Society, except a grateful "Thank you!" As a rule, public spirited men who make large benefactions for philanthropic or educational purposes desire to have their own names or that of some relative associated with their benefactions. We hear of Carnegie libraries and Carnegie institutes; of Rockefeller foundations and Peter Bent Brigham hospitals. There is a Leland Stanford Jr. University, a Jonas G. Clark University and a Harry Widener Memorial Library. The New York Public Library recognizes on its letter heading the Astor, Lenox and Tilden foundations, while the Boston Public Library calls the great reading room at the front of the building Bates Hall. What have we done in this line to show our gratitude and to perpetuate the memory of the names of our most conspicuous benefactors? It is true that two tablets on the front of the building mention the names of Isaiah Thomas and Stephen Salisbury, 3d, but the building itself is known only as Antiquarian Hall, there are no special rooms named for prominent donors, and we have no special membership to offer to a benefactor, no privileges that we can tender to him which are not open as well to any deserving student. Until we can devise some scheme by which we can give to the newspaper millionaires and the Worcester capitalists some distinct, permanent recog-

dition and perhaps also a qualified right of participation in our affairs, it is not likely that they will hasten to our aid.

If, however, some scheme productive of these results can be evolved, it would seem not unlikely that the feeling of ownership which might thus be fostered, would come to our rescue and the spirit of generosity thus kindled might redound to the benefit of ourselves, of our givers and of the city in which our possessions are. No action at this meeting is recommended by the Council along this line of thought. Deliberation on such subjects is essential and cooperation on the part of the Society is sought for. In the hope that suggestions may be received from members along the lines of the propositions herein submitted, the Council submits them to the Society for consideration.

ANDREW McFARLAND DAVIS,  
*For the Council.*

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