

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

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THE death of but one member has been recorded since the annual meeting in October last. Hannis Taylor, formerly United States Minister to Spain, and a writer upon the constitutional history of this country, died December 26, 1922. He was elected to this Society in 1890 and was one of our oldest members. One of the notable features in his career was that he received the degree of LL.D. from ten institutions of learning.

At the last meeting of the Society the decision of the Council to proceed with the erection of an addition to the stack was approved. The contract has been awarded to the Central Building Company, of Worcester, and work upon the foundation was started last week. The immediate plans call only for the construction of the shell of the building and for the necessary heating appliances. The erection of the steel stack within the building will depend upon the amount of money available. The building fund in hand and subscribed for amounts to about \$41,000.

The Librarian reports that the accessions to the library have been both numerous and valuable; and that several opportunities to acquire rare books and files of newspapers have been taken advantage of. To the collection of New England primers, already the largest known, there have been added fourteen editions. But this and other points regarding the year's acquisitions will be covered in the Librarian's Report in October.

In spite of the severe winter and of the anxieties and difficulties due to the coal shortage, the Society's building has been kept open and reasonably well

heated and the library of the Society appears to have been used by students, especially visitors from a distance, more than ever before. Among the subjects about which information has been sought were Witchcraft in New England, Civil War Posters, Blackstone Canal, Early Alaskan newspapers, early Catechisms, the writings of Elihu Burritt, the letters of William Shirley, early Ohio Valley newspapers, the writings of John Taylor of Caroline County, Virginia, Indian place-names occurring in manuscript deeds, political caricatures, the history of colonial printing presses and the bibliography of American algebras. These are only a few of the many subjects which have been asked for and upon which the Society's Library can furnish much valuable material.

In connection with the last item, the bibliography of American algebras, the attention of the Society has been several times directed to its remarkable collection of American school books. In addition to early text books, the Society has a very considerable collection concerning American Colleges and especial effort has been made during the past year to fill in the gaps in this collection. Reports, catalogues, class histories, necrologies, magazines and doctoral dissertations afford material for the study of the educational history of our country and are of special value in the study of American biography. This is particularly true of the Yale collection, which was given to the Society four years ago by the late Professor Franklin B. Dexter, where nearly every College class for a century produced a body of biography regarding its members, most of which is to be found in no other place.

Dean West, of Princeton, in a monograph on "The American College," classifies these institutions into five groups; first those established before the American Revolution, of which there are eleven; second those established from the American Revolution to 1800, of which there are twelve; third those established from 1800 to 1830, of which there are thirty-three; fourth

those established from 1830 to 1865, of which there are one hundred and eighty; and fifth those established from 1865 to 1900, of which there are two hundred and thirty-six. These figures show the intense interest of the American people in higher education.

Then there is that peculiarly American institution of secondary education, known as the Academy. A few of these institutions ante-date the Revolution, but it is believed that none of them was incorporated until after the Declaration of Independence. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, excluding the Province of Maine, prior to 1800, there were fifteen incorporated academies and between 1800 and 1820 eighteen more were established. This form of secondary education was the dominant form during the first century of American independence.

This Society has about fourteen hundred volumes and twenty-four thousand pamphlets relating to these institutions. Nearly every college in the country is represented. New England colleges naturally lead numerically, but the colleges of the far west and south are included in great numbers, largely because of the recent exchange made with a western university, which brought over two thousand items. We have about twenty-seven hundred pamphlets relating to secondary schools and academies.

In this connection I should like to refer for a moment to some early correspondence between Jesse Appleton and Ebenezer Adams, which is to be deposited with this Society.

Jesse Appleton was the second President of Bowdoin College; Ebenezer Adams was a distinguished professor at Dartmouth College. Both were elected members of this Society in 1813. They were both born in New Ipswich, N. H.; Adams graduated at Dartmouth College in 1791, became Preceptor of Leicester Academy and taught for a few years at Philips Exeter before he joined the faculty of Dartmouth College. Appleton graduated at Dartmouth College in 1792,

taught school at Leominster and Dover and was settled over the church at Hampton, N. H. previous to accepting the Presidency of Bowdoin College in 1807. He was not the first choice of the authorities for the presidency of that college; Isaac Parker, afterwards Chief Justice of Massachusetts, was elected by the Trustees, but his election was rejected by the Overseers of the College. Then Eliphalet Nott, afterward President of Union College, was elected and he in turn was rejected by the Overseers of the College. Mr. Appleton was the third choice and succeeded President McKeen, the first President of the College, who had presided over its destinies for the first five years of its existence.

The correspondence begins when Appleton is still an undergraduate and consists of familiar letters of a young man about politics, religion, love and gossip. Unfortunately, we have only one side of the correspondence, the letters from Appleton to Adams. A few extracts will show the character of the correspondence.

The first letter is dated Leominster, 3rd of March 1792. Appleton was not twenty years old and had evidently gone to teach a school for the spring term preceding his graduation.

I have so much to write that I hardly know where to begin. I received your letter a week ago and thank Heaven for the beginning of a so valuable correspondence. But to answer your questions. I arrived safe on saturday thro thick and thin, thro drifts high as the Alps and had I prayed to Hercules, the god could not have twitted me of not exerting myself but "by the goodness of — etc. I am what, and where I am." Concerning your metaphysical affairs, what shall I say? Your proposition is certainly plausible and seeming rational and true; which is "If there be any truth involved in such obscurity that we cannot possibly come to a certain knowledge of it, we may hazard this conclusion, viz, that truth is not absolutely necessary to be known in order to our happiness." But is the consequence of granting this, scepticism and infidelity? Is it inconsistent with Scripture that there may be salvation to those who have no certain knowledge of the

Scripture and consequently of the Gospel method of salvation, etc.? May not a heathen by the mighty power of God be brought to a temper conformable to Christ's injunctions without knowing what they are?

He wrote from Dartmouth College July 9, 1792:

The fourth of July was celebrated with more magnificence than last year by the Apollonian infantry (and more is the pity). The number of Spectators was great. Peace has, this summer, held a long and agreeable reign, altho "some are taken and others left."

October 10, 1792 he wrote from Newipswich:

After being at my uncles, Sam Appleton's, a short, very short, time, they inquired of me concerning the principles of Preceptor Adams, having been informed by you may judge whom (Mr. Smith had been there a few days before) that they were deistical. I told them that you were by no means a deist, but that you did sometimes for arguments sake dispute on the doctrine of free agency, etc. They said that they heard it for truth and like wise that forty of your class were of the same opinion. The next day I was at the barber's. He inquired me out and observed that formerly Dartmouth College was famed for piety, but that of late he had heard that the students were all deists.

Mr. Appleton studied divinity at West Springfield with the famous Dr. Joseph Lathrop, who died in 1820, in the ninety-first year of his age after a single pastorate of sixty-five years. He wrote from West Springfield, January 14, 1795:

This is a terrible world, Friend Adams! The Doctor has today set me to write on this question. "Whether it is just in the Deity to make part of mankind miserable to produce the greatest happiness on the whole." I'll be hanged if I believe the affirmative and yet I make miserable work of proving the negative. What a pack of poor, weak, ignorant toads mankind are! At this moment I am a perfect sceptic and doubt of everything.

Notwithstanding all the perplexities that involve a student in Divinity, I am perfectly contented with my choice of a profession and heartily prefer it to all others. Revelation is not attended with more difficulties, I believe, than natural Religion; free agency or accountability is the foundation of the latter as well as the former. This doctrine of all others is the most difficult to understand; and yet without the belief of

it this world would be a H-ll, not in miniature, but to the very life. You inquire when I am going to touch fire to my magazine and thunder away? If prosperity should attend me their Reverences will take me in hand for examination in the latter part of next summer. In about a year from the time when you saw me at Leicester, probably, I shall commence preacher, and as I am poorer than self righteousness the first opportunity after that will undoubtedly be accepted.

He seemed to have taken a keen interest in the political affairs of the day, writing from "You know where" May 4, 1795, he says:

Is the present rage for liberty going to spread over the whole world? And are all nations going to imitate the ridiculous follies and the infernal deeds of the French? Is a king eternally to be "decried and curst" because he is so unfortunate as to be placed on a throne in these days of confusion and political enthusiasm? Because republicanism is the best government for us, does it follow that the inhabitants of Bengal are sufficiently enlightened to receive it? Even in this country, how much liberty do the common people enjoy? Perhaps one in seventy of the voters for federal representatives may have some knowledge of the candidate. The rest vote as they are directed.

On August 4, 1795, writing of Jay's treaty with England he asks:

Who gave the common farmers, blacksmiths and taylors sufficient knowledge to prove that two-thirds of the Senate are knaves or fools?

In 1796 the Town of Leicester, where Adams was living, seems to have hesitated between Mr. Appleton and Zephaniah Swift Moore for its minister. Of the two candidates, Appleton became President of Bowdoin College and Moore, who was actually settled in Leicester, became President first of Williams College and afterwards of Amherst College. Mr. Appleton finally was settled over the church at Hampton, N. H., but in a letter to Adams, August 16, 1796, he stated the terms upon which he would go to Leicester: "£100 stated on articles, or £130 at the nominal sum."

May 31, 1797 he wrote a long personal letter to Adams describing first his ordination, which took place at Hampton February, 22, 1797. His interesting comments on the proceedings are as follows:

Introductory prayer. Mr. Andrews, Newburyport. Good.  
Sermon. Dr. Macclintock, Greenland, Acts 22.22. Evidences of Christianity. Good.

Charge. Dr. Langdon, Hamptonfalls. Extemporary.

Concluding prayer. Mr. Thayer, Lancaster. Pretty good.

He then proceeds:

Let me know, say you, the stage of your courtship, or whether you have given that name to your what d'ye call it. I answer in the negative. I have not given that name to my what d'ye call it, tho I believe many other people have. As I said before, so say I now, "It has all gone over the dam." Matrimony appears to me like a great house seen at a distance. You give it a general glance and it appears well. You have no objection to live in such an one thro life. But if you think seriously of purchasing it, a thousand considerations will influence the bargain, which never entered your mind when you took but a general view. I begin to think that I have treated matrimony as too many people do death. They laugh at it when distant, but tremble at its approach; because they do not 'till then consider what important events are connected with it.

On September 18, 1797, he writes about the last Dartmouth Commencement:

There were thirty graduates. The class is said to have been a good one. Among the exercises there was a surprising contrast. Some were excellent; some very poor. In the forenoon, I was shamefully mortified. The salutatory being almost the only good performance. The afternoon's exercises were introduced by Joseph Lock's philosophical oration, which would have done honour to a professor, both as to style, matter and delivery. He is a good fellow! The parts that intervened between the salutatory and valedictory were handsome, ingenious compositions and generally speaking were decently delivered. The valedictory was by a son of Judge Thornton, of Merrimac, the worst unexceptionably I ever heard. \* \* \* The society evening exhibitions have ceased. There were orations as usual. Social Friends, by Locke, I never heard a better, I believe not so good on a similar occasion. Fraternity, by Carter, handsome composi-

tion badly delivered. Your humble servant's to the Phi was on the impossibility of preserving a perfect equality in civil society, in which, if I may be allowed to give my judgment, there was nothing brilliant and nothing contemptible. \* \* \* I never knew a larger number of graduates at commencement. There were much fewer people on the whole than is usual of late years, but as many as ever I saw on a similar occasion. A violent dysentery prevailed on the plain and had swept off numbers, which circumstance gave rather a gloom to commencement and prevented many from attending.

The last letter shows Dr. Appleton's interest in another field. He writes from Brunswick on Dec. 18, 1810, to Mr. Adams at Dartmouth:

In some part of last summer, a pond of water in a town in Vermont, the name of which I have forgotten, was drained off indiscreetly, to the destruction of trees, buildings, etc. I have not been acquainted with particulars. An occurrence of such a nature deserves more notice, than is given to it merely by a newspaper. Will you have the goodness to obtain an account, that may be relied on, and transmit it to me, or in any other way you please, to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences.

This letter refers to Runaway Pond, so-called, a pond in Glover, Vermont, which some people tried to divert from running south to running north. They dug a channel through what appeared to be hard pan. It turned out that this hard pan was a crust over a considerable deposit of quick sand. In a short time the water got into the quick sand, with the result that it bored a passage for itself through the quick sand and in a short time the entire contents of a pond a mile and a half long and a half a mile wide tore down through a valley, destroying everything in its path.

These letters afford a glimpse of the familiar intercourse of scholars a century and a quarter ago. There is nothing epoch making about them; but they disclose certain persistent New England traits, a zeal for religion, an ambition for education, an interest in politics and a fondness for disputation.

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*For the Council.*



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