

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

THE Council has to report the loss by death of five members since the previous meeting: Benjamin Thomas Hill of Worcester, elected in 1901, died November 9, 1927; William Pendleton Palmer of Cleveland, Ohio, elected in 1914, died December 17; Archibald Cary Coolidge of Boston, elected in 1911, died January 14, 1928; Clarence Walworth Alvord of Minneapolis, Minn., elected in 1912, died January 25; John Spencer Bassett of Northampton, elected in 1911, died January 27; also the death of Robert Hendre Kelby of New York, elected in 1918, died August 25, 1927, whose decease should have been noted at the meeting in October last.

The outstanding event of the past winter, in the life of our Society, is the gift of \$100,000 by our fellow Councillor, James Benjamin Wilbur of Manchester, Vermont. This is the largest single gift that the Society has ever received from anyone to whom it could express personally its feeling of deepest gratitude and obligation. The last Stephen Salisbury left in his will a larger amount of money; and our Founder, Isaiah Thomas, gave during his lifetime property, the first library building, and his books and newspapers, representing in equivalent values a larger amount. Mr. Wilbur's gift ranks next to these, and it comes very near to them in opportuneness and in significance. Mr. Thomas and Mr. Salisbury were closely identified with the Society during a large part of their lives, and much as the Society owes to each of them, both of them owe to their connection with this Society much of their place in the annals of American intellectual life.

Mr. Wilbur was an outsider when he was elected to the Society, and the warm friendships which have developed since played no part in his selection. His splendid gift is a most welcome addition to our resources; it is doubly valued because it comes as an expression of approval and of confidence from one upon whom the Society has no inherited or local claim and to whom it can make no adequate corresponding return. Virtue must be his own reward—the pleasant feeling that he has acquired merit in the memories of those who will through the future generations be served by this Society more adequately because of his munificence.

Coming to his first meeting as a stranger to most of us, ten years ago, Mr. Wilbur forthwith showed so lively an interest in all the activities of the Society, so keen an appreciation of what we ought to do, and so receptive a mind whenever there was opportunity to be generously helpful, that the Council took him to itself at the earliest occasion. No member of this body has been more faithful in attendance when circumstances permitted or has taken a more inspiring part in its deliberations. He had a large share in the discussions which preceded the decision to seek to increase the Society's invested funds by raising \$500,000. It was his shrewd appraisal of the situation, set forth in the opinion that this Society having its home in Worcester, could not ask for money from persons living elsewhere until citizens of Worcester had proved their belief in the importance of the Society as a local institution by contributing at least \$100,000, which turned discussion into action. He backed up this opinion by stating that when they did this, he would then give the Society an equal amount. The money from Worcester was raised in October last, and Mr. Wilbur has made his promise good. The Treasurer's report will show that the Society is now about \$230,000 better off, as a result of the projected half million endowment fund.

The library staff have as one of their perennial

occupations the task of co-operating with our fellow member, Charles Evans, in his monumental task of listing every book printed in the United States prior to 1820. This is the ideal contemplated in the scheme of his "American Bibliography." In practice certain limitations are inevitable. The nine volumes already published are of inestimable value to students of anything American prior to 1794, and each succeeding volume will add to our obligation to the patient, persistent scholar who is hewing his way through a trackless mass of steadily increasing density.

There was a time when historical and literary students carried on their investigations under the cheerful assumption that the books which they found in the libraries were all the books there ever had been. In time, the bibliographers came along, cultivating a new and hitherto untilled field of research. They made the disconcerting discovery that the existing books proved that a good many other books had once existed, of which no copies can now be located. This has proved to be a fascinating, and a perplexing, line of investigation, leading to conclusions which are of the greatest significance in regard to all literary, economic, social and historical studies. We have now reached a point where the next thing we would like to establish is some sort of basic figure which will serve as a rough norm for estimating the actual total of printed output for any firm or locality or epoch, based on the amount surviving. We used to say that, because Hain in 1825 could supply the titles of 16,000 books printed before the year 1501, the actual total might have been as much as 20,000 or rashly even 25,000. A score of years ago, the boldest of us said 30,000 and then 40,000. Now, the conservative estimate is double that, with 100,000 as the obvious round figure that is well within the limit of safety.

For American imprints, we have only one satisfactory basis for an estimate. Benjamin Franklin's Philadelphia imprints have been valued by collectors

and librarians longer and more zealously than those of any other printer whose work extended over a considerable period of time. It is reasonably certain that every Franklin imprint that reached a bookshop during the past century and a half, was not thrown away, so that we now have more nearly a complete showing of his output than for that of any other ordinary printing establishment. Moreover, Franklin was a careful person, not given to destroying his own belongings. Among other things he preserved are account books of his printing business. The American Philosophical Society possesses those covering the period of Franklin's active personal supervision of the business, and our colleague Dr. Rosenbach is the lucky owner of a volume recording the later activities of the business when the firm was Franklin and Hall. Another of our colleagues, Mr. Wroth, has studied these records, and he tells me that, for the year 1765, there exists bibliographical evidence that Franklin and Hall printed fourteen titles. His examination of the account books shows that, during that same year, the firm received payment for seventy-four separate pieces of printing. In other words, the scholar who draws his conclusions from the surviving titles, is dealing with sixteen per cent of the actual output. This would not matter seriously, if what we have left to us were a fair cross-section of the whole. Unhappily, human nature is perversely contrary when it comes to anticipating the desires or the necessities of future historians. The librarians are as bad as the rest: they buy best sellers in literature, biography and travel, instead of stocking up with the cheap ephemera which, within a score of years, will be unprocurable.

Franklin's record books are among the priceless treasures of bibliomania. There are other printers whose work was important in their time, and in whose records the students of the future are going to delve for the evidence which has final value. Our Society claims with a good deal of confidence that its library is the

best place to examine the remains of the first two centuries of American printing. It supplements the books themselves with the records and correspondence of several printing establishments, of Isaiah Thomas covering the years from 1791 to 1830; of West, Richardson and Lord from 1800 to 1840, and of Lee and Shepard from 1862 to 1888. To these has been added during the past winter the account books of Mathew Carey of Philadelphia, in thirty-three folio volumes, extending from 1785 to 1821. For a considerable portion of this period, Carey was the recognized leader among American publishers. There are over 25,000 separate accounts, and the index which is now being compiled will include some 50,000 references. This begins to look like bibliographical definitiveness. The value of such a collection of data to the student of American publishing, printing, engraving, book-binding, and typefounding is inestimable.

"A Short-Title Catalogue of Books printed in Great Britain previous to 1640" issued by the Bibliographical Society, of London, has an especial interest to Americans because, while the coincidence of dates is accidental in a way, it is also determined by historical happenings which make that latter date the precise starting point of American typographical independence. In other words, Americans have just as good a right as their British cousins to every one of the titles in this list of 26,000 entries.

Isaiah Thomas was a judicious accumulator of old books, from the mother country as well as from colonial presses, and to him the Society is indebted for a very substantial nucleus of "S T C" i.e. English imprints before 1640. What with later gifts, the librarian estimates that we have well up towards 3000 of these early English books, including a respectable number of titles that escaped the compilers of the "S T C." The difficulties in the way of satisfactorily listing these titles proved too much for our library, as of most other American collections, so that except

for the Henry E. Huntington library, to some extent the New York Public Library, and two or three private collections of which there were printed catalogues, the American representation in the "S T C" is negligible. Now that we have the printed Catalogue to work with, everything is simplified, and a start has been made toward entering in the printed volume all of our titles, preliminary to reporting them to the editors in London. The Bibliographical Society plans to supplement this alphabetical list with a chronological one, and in this our library ought to have a considerable representation. The editors cannot attempt to compile a census of all the copies of each title, but they hope to print the location of three English and three American copies, when as many as this are reported, of each title. There is bound to be a certain amount of rivalry between the principal American libraries to learn which of them ranks second to the Huntington collection, and there seems to be a reasonable probability that eastern Massachusetts, treating our resources as supplementary to those of Harvard, may make good its right to pre-eminence in the possession of the material for scholarly work.

This question of relative library resources, as between different communities, is not a matter of individual libraries but of community strength. The Massachusetts Historical Society and the Boston Public Library run in close rivalry in many respects in which neither makes a particularly impressive showing, but together and supplemented by the State Archives, Boston offers about all that any investigator of local history could ask for; while reckoning in Providence, Salem and Worcester—this region claims equality with any other section of the country. Proof of this in another field of comparison, which is of vital interest to our Society, is provided by the recently published "Union List of Serials in the Libraries of the United States and Canada." This gives, with the location of copies in the participating libraries, some

75,000 different periodicals, which is interpreted to include anything between the ordinary magazines and annual publications, except newspapers.

A careful analysis has been made of the titles entered under the letter J, some 1600 in number, and there seems no reason to doubt that this gives results which would hold true on the average for the publications of general interest throughout the alphabet. Of these 1600 titles, there are 960 which are found in one or another of the New York libraries; 950 in the District of Columbia; and 925 in the Boston district, i.e. Boston and Cambridge. With the rather special resources of our Society not much over an hour away, it seems fair to claim equality with either of the other great centers. Harvard supplies 655 of the total, which is a few more than are recorded from all the libraries in the state of Illinois—Chicago and Yale being about even with a few over 500 each. The Antiquarian Society library is particularly strong in early American periodicals, of which it has many files not recorded elsewhere.

The "Bibliography of Newspapers" brings us to the subject which renders this a memorable meeting of the Society—the completion of the preliminary survey of all the states which had newspapers before 1820. The Council congratulates the Society, and above all our Librarian, upon attaining this most important point—with a word of caution, for this is not the completion of the work, nor is it a safe stopping place. But the great bulk of the task is now behind him, and if nothing more were to be done, this would rank, as it stands, as one of the most important of the achievements of this Society. But, just as the printing of the "Short-Title Catalogue" made it possible for other libraries to find out what they had in its field, so the printing of Mr. Brigham's Newspaper bibliography, in parts, has brought to light papers that had escaped his very thorough preliminary searchings. A full share of these findings have been acquired by him and added to

the stores of the Society. It now remains to revise the entire Bibliography, put the earlier portions into the better form adopted towards the finish, and then print the whole in volume form. This will involve further expenditure of funds for printing, but the Council feels no doubt over the eventual return of the costs of this publication. The work is not likely to sell fast, but it will go surely, as libraries come to realize its fundamental importance as the key to a very large part of early American history. The costs of printing the preliminary sections have been charged off as they were met, as part of the normal cost of printing the Proceedings. The aggregate is large, but the return to the Society, partly in reputation, but chiefly through the securing of more papers, which would not have come to our notice in any other way, has been enormous.

Two years ago the Council pointed out some of the ways in which the Newspaper Bibliography seemed to it important; it reiterates all that it said then, with no qualifications. But it is now time to begin to think more seriously of future plans and prospects. No one whose memory goes back to the beginning of Mr. Brigham's administration here will regard a word of warning as out of place. The Society and its officials were very well satisfied then with the newspaper situation. That contentment was of long standing, and it was based upon a complete failure to perceive that while the Society was resting upon its assurance of newspaper superiority, other libraries were rapidly overtaking it. Mr. Brigham arrived in season, luckily, to get headway again and outdistance these rivals, and we are once more as securely established in our dominating position as we were a century ago. And we are safe now, within the limitations of our field, because we could surrender the entire floating supply of early American papers to our competitors, without serious worriment. Nobody is likely again to challenge our position as the principal reservoir of this material.

The question now is whether, having the well-filled storehouse, we are to reap the full advantage of our possessions. Scholars and investigators will come to our library, and they will continue as in the past to give this Society the amplest credit for our generous hospitality to all who can utilize our possessions. The question is, whether the special subject with which the reputation of the Society is associated, the study of American newspaper history, is to be our future province; whether we are to centralize and localize research in this field and reap the fullest advantages in reputation as well as in furtherance of knowledge; or are we to leave this to some of our academic neighbors?

A close examination of the "Union List" shows clearly that the work of a student on any aspect of the history of periodicals must be done hereabouts. We have the American field to ourselves, with useful supplementary material in the Ebeling Collection at Harvard. Harvard is striving earnestly, with the help of an enthusiastic alumnus, to accumulate seventeenth century English papers, of which she already appears to have more than any other American library. Yale has the eighteenth century periodicals securely in hand. At the end of that century, these two rivals are fighting for precedence in French Revolution papers—one of the greatest epochs in newspaper annals. The same is true of 1848, and 1870. Turning back to the beginnings, the news pamphlets which were the forerunners of regular periodic publications, Harvard appears to have the advantage, through its seventeenth century English tracts, and even more through its great Ottoman collections, which include a great many continental news pamphlets of the sixteenth as well as the seventeenth centuries.

Here is the material for endless research, for a graduate school of journalism, wherein the enthusiasms and the obsessions of contemporary practice might be tempered by the sobering discoveries that there are very few tricks of this or any other trade that

were not familiar to our long dead forebears. The Council would like to see some provision made which would assure that work of this sort should be carried on under the patronage of this Society, and that the results of such studies might most naturally be published by the Society.

The ideal provision would be a fund yielding from \$5000 to \$10,000 annually, the income to be divided, as circumstances dictate, between, first, a fellowship to secure the student, secondly, the purchase of such new material as he finds lacking here—chiefly of course photo-process facsimiles—and thirdly, the publication of definitive results of investigation.

Additional provision for the future development of the collection is, as always with a lively organization, a pressing necessity. Our increased funds and the often-tried generosity of our friends will, we trust confidently, continue to provide the money for the purchase of original papers as they turn up, the gradually increasing infrequency of opportunity being offset by the even more rapid increase in cost when they do appear on the market.

What we ought to have is money with which to begin systematically to acquire photostats of the papers we have not got. Many of these are being reproduced through local agencies, following the plan first developed at the John Carter Brown Library for the consolidation of a file of the *Newport Mercury*. Other papers that have been similarly reproduced are the *Boston News-Letter*, the *Detroit Gazette*, the *Kentucky Gazette*, the *Georgia Gazette*, the *New York Weekly Journal*, the *New York Gazette*, the *Virginia Gazette* and the eighteenth century North Carolina newspapers. Our library must secure these files as they appear, and the fostering of further work of the same sort is an obvious part of our task. What we want for ourselves, however, is first of all photostats of single copies which exist in isolated spots, out of reach of ordinary students. We ought to begin at

once systematically to accumulate these, partly to make certain that they will not disappear, and secondly as the easiest means of maintaining our prestige in this field of American history.

GEORGE PARKER WINSHIP,
For the Council

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