

## REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

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**T**HE chief purpose of the Society is to build up its Library and to make it increasingly of service to researchers. Hence the Librarian's Report, in its detailed account of acquisitions, covers the most important happenings of the year. The building has been kept in good condition, fortunately without much expense for repair. The most serious need is an addition to the book-stack. Crowded conditions are everywhere apparent, with recently bound newspapers forced to be stored in what used to be the coal-cellar, and practically all the shelves in the main library strained to the utmost. Only by the constant shifting of collections can room be found for current acquisitions.

The staff, though inadequate in number, has at least not been reduced, in spite of our curtailed income. Fortunately we have been enabled to take advantage of considerable aid from WPA workers, who have helped much in the listing, filing and arranging of material. This has been particularly noticeable in the bindery, in the cataloguing of the large collection of periodicals, and in the arranging and indexing of manuscripts. In the last named department, Mr. William S. Piper, with college training and considerable manuscript experience, has given us valued assistance, chiefly in the indexing of such manuscripts as log-books, account-books, diaries and similar material hitherto uncatalogued.

The Society has contributed illustrative material to several important exhibits in other localities—portraits to the Metropolitan Museum exhibit "Life in America for Three Hundred Years," to the Grolier Club exhibit of Frankliniana, early cookbooks to the Garden Club of America, circus posters to the Museum of the City of New York, and several engravings

to the summer show of the Fogg Museum, not to mention many American prints to the recent exhibit at our local Worcester Art Museum.

Work has continued on projects in which the Society is interested. The finished manuscript of Mr. Holmes' Bibliography of Cotton Mather has been sent to the printer for estimate and examination. The compilation of the additional volumes for the Bowen "History of Woodstock," being carried on by Mr. Donald L. Jacobus under the terms of Mr. Bowen's will, is progressing very favorably.

There have been three deaths in the membership since the last meeting. Joseph Grafton Minot, of Santa Barbara, California, elected in 1925, died June 19, 1939. Frank C. Deering, of Saco, Maine, elected in 1931, collector of Americana and especially of material relating to the American Indian, died August 12, 1939. George Watson Cole, of Pasadena, California, elected in 1918, bibliographer and librarian-emeritus of the Huntington Library, died October 10, 1939. Obituary notices of these members will appear in the printed Proceedings.

The question of income necessary to run the Society and its Library is becoming increasingly serious—a trouble probably common to most institutions. The calling of numerous bonds bearing a high interest, and the necessity of reinvesting in securities producing a much smaller income, means a loss to us of about \$3000 a year. Our only hope is for an improvement in financial conditions or a large addition to our endowment.

The year 1939 marks the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the American Book of Common Prayer, an event of especial interest to this Society, since its Library possesses one of the largest collections of the many American editions and printings of this famous volume. The Book of Common Prayer for the grace and beauty of its language is accepted as one of the great books of the world. Its origins are shrouded in antiquity. Evolved from forms of worship used centuries ago in Egypt, Greece, Rome and the Orient,

it was established as the legal form of public worship by Act of Parliament in 1549. A subject of constant debate and the kernel of a religion that persisted through successive reigns, it profoundly influenced the political, moral and intellectual life of the English world. Yet with but few unimportant alterations, it has remained unchanged for nearly four hundred years.

In the colonies those who followed the rites of the Anglican Church used the standard Book of Common Prayer ordained by the Act of Uniformity passed by Parliament in 1662. In New England the early colonists frowned upon the Anglican Church, and especially its ritual, since many of them had left England for freedom of religious worship. But in New York and the colonies to the South, episcopacy, and consequently the Book of Common Prayer, was generally accepted. In the eighteenth century, even in New England, the Anglican Church had gained a strong foothold.

At the close of the American Revolution it was found necessary to make certain alterations in the Prayer Book to adapt it to the change of rulers. In England religion was established by the State and all forms of worship were dictated by Parliament and the Crown. But in the new America where the State did not control religion, the Church itself was its own supreme government. But when it became necessary to have American bishops consecrated, in order to preserve the apostolic succession, it was found that this could not be done in England without a special Act of Parliament. The Scottish bishops, however, offered no such objection, and in 1784 Rev. Samuel Seabury of Connecticut journeyed to Aberdeen, where he was duly consecrated. Three years later, a special Act of Parliament was passed, by which Rev. William White was consecrated as Bishop of Pennsylvania and Rev. Samuel Provoost as Bishop of New York.

The chief reason for altering the Book of Common Prayer was to change the prayers for the King and the royal family. But as conventions met in the various

States in 1784 and 1785, other alterations were suggested making many changes in the liturgy. Finally a general convention met in Philadelphia in October 1785 and prepared a new Book of Common Prayer which was proposed for adoption by the Church, and in the following year Hall & Sellers of Philadelphia printed the volume which became known as the "Proposed" book. It met with immediate disfavor, however, as it contained too many radical changes, omitting both the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds, altering the Apostles' Creed and making many departures from the original text.

The Church never adopted the "Proposed" book, and late in 1789 a general convention met in Philadelphia, and a new Prayer Book which reconciled conflicting opinion was prepared. On October 16, 1789 the convention authorized the printing of the volume, and in 1790 it appeared in Philadelphia, to become the first standard Prayer Book of the Church. Always subject to revision by subsequent conventions, it has been revised eight times, although it is true that later revisions made it conform more and more to the first authorized Prayer Book of 1549. The latest revision, that of 1928, printed by the Merrymount Press, is one of the finest examples of typography and book-making ever produced in the United States.

The reason for this rather detailed account of the American Book of Common Prayer is because we have used the occasion of its 150th anniversary to place on exhibition a selection of our early Prayer Books and also of the early printed Journals of the general and State conventions relating to the subject. Also a few of the English Prayer Books, from 1587 to 1736, are shown. The exhibit is in one of the cases in the upper hall, and in the other case are displayed some of the more rare and interesting acquisitions made by the Library during the year.

Respectfully submitted,

CLARENCE S. BRIGHAM,

*For the Council*

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