

Report of the Council

DURING the past winter there has been increased use of the Library, not through visits from researchers, but through correspondence. Apparently scholars and writers, realizing that travel conditions are restricted, have found that letters of inquiry can bring answers to many of their queries. I remember no time in the past when the mail has been larger, filled with appeals for aid in all kinds of historical research, and from all parts of the country. The fact that the Library has developed in recent years its collections of illustrative material, such as engravings, lithographs, caricatures, early stereoscopic views, and prints showing the American scene, is another reason why questions come to us from authors and publishers of both books and magazines. The staff of the Library cannot give undue time to such research, but generally questions can be readily answered, or at least the querists told where the information may be found.

The time of the Director has been largely taken up with reading proof of the Bibliography of Newspapers, and to conducting correspondence relating to it. There has been some delay in obtaining the proper rag paper necessary for such a reference work, but this difficulty has at length been surmounted, although it will be late in the year before the book can be issued. Conditions are such that delays, in presswork and in every feature that goes into the making of a book, conspire to prevent any settled announcement as to when this, or any other, book will be published.

There has been an unusual number of deaths of members during the past six months. Philip A. Means of Pomfret,

Connecticut, died November 24, 1944; I. N. Phelps Stokes of New York on December 18, 1944; Hunter D. Farish of Williamsburg on January 16, 1945; George Dudley Seymour of New Haven on January 21, 1945; Dixon Ryan Fox of Schenectady on January 30, 1945; Julius H. Tuttle of Dedham on February 10, 1945; Frank J. Metcalf of Washington on February 25, 1945; Carl L. Becker of Ithaca on April 10, 1945; and Franklin Delano Roosevelt of Washington on April 12, 1945. Sketches of these members will appear in the printed Proceedings of this meeting.

Ordinarily the spring report of the Council discusses various activities of the Society or some historical subject connected with its work. This year the Report will be devoted chiefly to reading portions of the reminiscences of the Library as recorded by Mary Robinson Reynolds. When Mrs. Reynolds was compelled through illness to retire from active work early in 1941, she had been in the Library for sixty years of continuous service. Although confined to the house for the past four years, she has retained her exceptional powers of observation and of memory and writes as clear a hand as ever. I asked her to write her reminiscences in the form of a narrative from 1881 until 1908 when the present administration assumed charge of the Library. She gratefully consented and began work on what she called a "chronicle" rather than a series of reminiscences, as she wished to record facts rather than personal views or memories. Now the narrative is finished and the Society owes to Mrs. Reynolds a deep debt of gratitude for preserving a mass of facts which otherwise would have been lost forever.

Mrs. Reynolds entered upon her work in September, 1881. No one is living today of all those who were members in that year; in fact the last of the members who belonged to the Society in 1881 died twenty-five years ago. I am particularly glad to read her narrative, or portions of it, at this meeting,

since our host today is Mr. John M. Merriam, our senior member, who was elected in 1888, and more than anyone living is familiar with the Society for much of the period of Mrs. Reynolds' service. The narrative will be published in full with the Council Report where it will help to familiarize all of the members with the Society in its far away days of small funds, notable scholars, and devotion on the part of its staff.

Respectfully submitted,

CLARENCE S. BRIGHAM,

For the Council

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