

Report of the Council

THE most important undertaking in the Society's affairs during the year was the beginning of the addition to the book stack. This long awaited improvement was made possible by the release to us of the Homer Gage, 1938, bequest of \$100,000. Amply sufficient ten years ago to construct a stack matching the addition of 1924, it was soon revealed that the sum bequeathed was about half of what would be needed to finish the building and its steel shelving. Therefore the Council decided to erect the building itself, the shell of the structure, and to leave the erection of the book stack to the time when we have the funds.

Bids were sought from seven firms and the contract was awarded to the lowest bidder, the Fiske-Carter Construction Company whose bid was \$61,800, with an additional \$1700 for the two marble panels matching those on the Park Avenue side. Ground was broken on July 22, 1949, and the building is already about half finished. Although there have been delays due to non-delivery of brick, the expectation is that the structure will be completed by the first of January.

The stack when finished will hold about two hundred thousand volumes and will contain about five miles of shelves. The architect for the Society is Mr. Adolph Johnson and the committee acting for the Council consists of Messrs. George S. Barton, Chandler Bullock, Albert W. Rice, Richard A. Heald, and Clarence S. Brigham. The bid for the heating has recently been awarded to the M. D. Holmes Company. The lighting will have to await the construction of the steel book stack which carries the lighting fixtures and is in itself independent of the walls of the building.

The above Building Committee also has had in charge the decision as to the use and design of tapestries for the four

large panel walls in the central rotunda room. At first there was some idea that we might use a painted tapestry in colors showing four historic scenes, and we even engaged a capable artist to draw a color sketch of such a design. But the Committee unanimously decided that such a color scheme would alter the general appearance of the room and destroy its quiet dignity. Accordingly they have acquired a soft gray velvet of neutral tone, blending with the general color scheme of the room. These hangings, which were installed only yesterday, are backed with a heavy flannel lining, thus accomplishing our chief purpose in having such curtains, that of improving the acoustics of the room.

The acquisition of books needed to fill in the Society's various collections has held up to the standard of previous years, both in quantity and in the number of rare and unique titles. Some notable files of newspapers have been obtained and in such fields as early printing, children's books, and American engraving, many outstanding rarities have come our way. The standard collections of genealogy, local history, travel, and literature have received constant additions. The detail of such acquisitions is reserved for the Librarian's report.

The most notable single gift of the year is the collection of Louisiana literature and history given to the Society by our member, Edward Larocque Tinker. This collection is now being arranged and listed. It will be well into the winter before this is accomplished. Therefore the detailed account of the gift will be reserved for a subsequent meeting. A casual examination of the collection, which contains nearly two thousand titles, shows that it is one of the outstanding libraries of Louisiana books and is especially strong in history, literature, and periodical publications. Mr. Tinker's notable monographs on Louisiana, some of which this Society has published, would indicate the quality of his library.

There have been three deaths in the Society's membership during the past six months. James Truslow Adams, of Southport, Connecticut, historian, elected in 1922, died May 18. Lucius Wilmerding, of New York, book collector, elected in 1938, died July 15. Wallace W. Atwood, of Worcester, formerly President of Clark University, elected in 1924, died July 24. Obituary notices of these members will appear in the printed *Proceedings* of this meeting. Also in this report should be recorded the death of a foreign member, Mariano Cuevas, of Mexico City, who died on March 31, 1949, at the age of seventy. He was elected in 1925 and is the author of several historical studies on the Church in Mexico.

The finances of the Society are in good shape. It is true that all costs have increased, notably in printing, that we don't pay adequate salaries and wages, and that we have to be very careful and selective in our book purchases. The fortunate sale of duplicates, chiefly the Western material duplicated through the gift of the Donald Frost collection, brought in sufficient income to cover the major cost of the purchase of rare books. As in recent years, however, it is the support which we receive from members and friends that enables us to show a satisfactory statement annually. This year has been no exception. Fifty-eight members and friends have contributed a total of \$16,765, which is highly encouraging to those who administer the Library, and for which we are very grateful. Yet there has been no concentrated appeal to members and no campaign for funds. Only a few letters were written and these were largely personal. We realize that in these days of constant appeals and low professional incomes, a scholarly membership such as ours cannot give to a cause no matter how much they believe in it. Therefore all gifts to the Society are entirely on a voluntary basis. One of the most pleasant donations of the year

was the gift of \$1000 from The Davis Press of Worcester. This firm has taken care of the printing of this Society for forty-two years, producing excellent typography and always showing a constant spirit of cooperation. Their gift was a welcome, although unexpected, further evidence of their friendship. The continued support of this Society's activities by the Lilly Endowment has been a cause of much gratification to us. When Mr. Josiah K. Lilly, Jr., was elected a member several years ago, because of his constant interest in bibliographical undertakings of a national character, we did not foresee that this support would be extended to us. It speaks well for the many efforts which this Society has made, especially in recent years, to further the cause of bibliographical study in this country, and to aid the American scholar in guiding him to the source material for his studies.

In the exhibition cases in the upper gallery are shown two exhibits—one consisting of a few interesting and outstanding acquisitions of the past year, and the other a double showcase devoted to showing some of the Society's many collections of ephemeral material such as valentines, ship sailing cards, bookplates, advertising cards, watch papers, friendship cards, and rewards of merit. Although such fields of collecting may seem unimportant compared with the source material of the nation's history, yet they open up many lines of study, such as early American engraving, pictorial illustration, and the social customs of a century or more ago. In such fields the Society has outstanding collections and the fact that they have brought many visitors to the Library from afar justifies our desire to exhibit them and our pride in their ownership.

Respectfully submitted,

CLARENCE S. BRIGHAM,
For the Council

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