REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

IT IS a very good sign that the presentation of the Council Report at this meeting falls to a member of the Council who is not responsible for the routine administration of the affairs of the Society. This means, I think, that while its affairs may not be going altogether as we should like to have them, they have adjusted themselves for the time being to the changing and we hope temporary, political and economic conditions which have demoralized everything for more than a decade, even the settled routine of Antiquarian Hall. There are still plenty of things to worry about, but for the most part these now concern problems which need to be considered from a long range point of view, and the satisfactory discussion of them is likely to gain by postponing the presentation of them until the annual meeting. It should be noted, however, that the generous support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York in making a grant of $4000 to the Society, has partially solved our financial problem for the current year. If it were not for such aid and for the occasional gifts from members and friends, we should have difficulty in continuing to acquire material and to make it of service to the many researchers who use this Library through visits and correspondence.

While we are waiting for the world at large to decide how it will readjust itself under the pressure of its many anxieties, this is an opportune time to revert to a former custom, when the Council Report ordinarily dealt less with the worries of administration than has been necessary of late, and more with the spiritual or intellectual concerns which provide the basic reason for the existence of this Society and for bringing together at its meetings men of scholarly tastes who

have an appreciation of the cultural ennoblement which may be derived from antiquarian pursuits. This will enable me to present two matters which have occupied the attention of the Society's officers during recent months.

This is the three hundredth year since the first printing establishment was set up in English America. The anniversary is significant for many reasons, not least because of the growth of the industry in the neighborhood where it had its humble beginnings. Realizing that there ought to be some suitable recognition of so notable an occasion, and that it should be directed by those who are best acquainted with all the circumstances connected with the introduction of printing into New England, an informal conference was held early in the year to decide what should be done. Unofficial representatives met with a number of other members of the Society who attended as representatives of the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, of Harvard and Brown Universities, the Club of Odd Volumes and the John Carter Brown Library. After canvassing various suggestions that had been proposed, it was agreed to undertake the preparation of a definitive bibliographical catalogue of the output of the Cambridge press in the seventeenth century, from 1638 to 1692—after which year there was no more printing in that town, except during the seige of Boston, until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

As an essential preliminary step, a short-title checklist and tentative census of recorded copies is in process of compilation. This has progressed far enough to supply some figures which, while they will inevitably change by the time the list is ready for printing, the additions are not likely to affect their relative significance.

The score sheet of the list[1] shows 406 titles, of which more than one-third, 139, are believed to have been

[1]The figures have been corrected to July 1, 1938.

printed, although no copy of any of these can now be found. There is encouragement for a hope that some of these may come to light at some future day, in the fact that four of them have turned up within the present century. Two of these had been sought after diligently by three generations of students who knew a great deal about their publication but could not find a copy to examine until, in 1906, the first Massachusetts Law Book came to light, to be followed in 1937 by the trial issue of a book of the Bible in John Eliot's Indian language. The other two were all but forgotten, having long been regarded as hopelessly lost, until 1917, when one of them was spotted as it went through the hands of an alert auctioneer, to be followed in 1923 by another which passed unrecognized over the desk of the world's most famous auction house into the pocket of a member of our Society.

Of the 267 titles which are now to be seen, 977 copies have been recorded, and in all probability enough more are tucked away in unsuspected depositaries to bring the number to an even thousand. More than half of the surviving titles, 138, are known from single copies. This figure raises the important question, of the number of pieces that were printed which have disappeared without leaving a trace of their former existence. If half of the surviving pieces of Cambridge printing are known from unique examples, and there are as many more whose one-time existence can be predicated with considerable confidence, what are the probabilities concerning the amount of work that has disappeared?

Figuring on the chances that a piece of early American printing has survived was taken out of the field of pure speculation by Dr. Rosenbach's discovery of the Job Book of the firm of Franklin and Hall for the years 1759 to 1765, now in the New York Public Library. In his "Colonial Printer" Mr. Wroth examined the entries for the single year 1765 and compared them with the entries of William J. Campbell's list of

Franklin imprints. He found that the number of known titles was in proportion to the pieces entered in the book, as one to 4.7. This proportion of roughly one to five is supported by a few scattered bills for official printing of a little later date found in the Connecticut and the Vermont archives. As always happens, any figures of this character need to be examined with care, and they usually call for explanations. This is particularly true of the Franklin and Hall data, partly because Franklin's eminence in other respects resulted in anything bearing his name being preserved from a very early period. Another disconcerting complication was revealed by Mr. Wroth's investigation. He found that in 1765 there were 74 jobs entered on the book, and that Campbell listed 19 titles, but that more than half of Campbell's titles could not be found in the Job Book. Moreover, he reported that there is evidence for four more pieces of printing done in that year which are not to be found in the Job Book nor in Campbell. This leaves only nine of the 74 Job Book entries, one in eight, still to be seen. For the period from 1760 to 1765, 321 Job Book entries were supplemented by 65 recorded elsewhere.

The whereabouts of copies of the early Cambridge books is another matter of importance to anyone who thinks of investigating the beginnings of New England printing. Of the 267 titles entered from existing examples, this Society has very nearly half, 124, in Antiquarian Hall at Worcester. There are, properly, more of them in or nearby Boston, but no other library can show as many under one roof. The Massachusetts Historical Society is the nearest rival, with 98; Harvard, between the College Library and the Law School, possesses 72; the Boston Public Library, 69; the Boston Athenaeum, 29; the Massachusetts State Library and Archives, 15; and the Congregational Society, 12. Rival collections further away are the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Museum in Southern California, which has 64, of which 11 are

not to be seen anywhere else; The New York Public Library has 63, 8 of which are unique. The Library of Congress has 45, with 3 of them recorded nowhere else; the John Carter Brown Library, 44, 1 unique; the Yale library 14, 3 unique; the Library Company of Philadelphia 7, with 8 more in other local libraries; and Hartford libraries 9, 2 of them nowhere else. The British Museum has 19, its 3 unique examples supplemented by 2 more elsewhere in London. The Bodleian Library at Oxford has 13, 1 of them unique; the Hunterian Museum at Glasgow, 11, 5 of these otherwise unknown; and Edinburgh 4, 2 of these nowhere else. Four private collectors in America possess respectively 27, 20, 17, and 11. Harvard outranks all the others in the possession of unique copies, with 35, this Society coming second with 24. The Massachusetts Historical Society has 18; the State Archives 7; the Athenaeum Library and the Congregational Society 3 each; and the Boston Public Library 2.

There are, omitting entries wrongly but commonly ascribed to Cambridge, nearly 400 entries for the 55 years that this press was at work. These figures give a misleading average, for the printers were handicapped during the first ten and the last fifteen years. In 1674, one of the Cambridge printers moved to Boston, where he hired a shop of his own and set up as a commercial printer with type, press and paper that belonged to himself, under normal industrial conditions, which had not existed at any time in the college town. Thereafter, the Boston establishment began to get the larger share of the ordinary printing business, and it secured more slowly a part of the official work. The Cambridge list, which shows 183 entries for the years 1661–1675, has only 83 for the last fifteen years of its existence.

An examination of these titles does not substantiate the prevailing opinion that the New Englanders of the seventeenth century concentrated their attention upon religion. Throughout the whole period of the Cam-

bridge press, the printers had two regular annual fixtures. The second book produced was an almanack, and each succeeding year as the days began to lengthen this necessity for every farmstead and waterfront counting house, the printer's surest "money-crop," was put in hand. It is unbelievable that there were not 54 printed at Cambridge, although only 37 of them can now be found, in spite of the fact that the habit of preserving this useful reminder of what happened in previous seasons, goes back to early days. For these 37 years, 43 copies are recorded.

The other annual fixture came early in July or later in August, when the college celebrated its Commencement, provided there were students to come up for the first or second degree. The regular proceedings called for a large sheet, printed on one side, giving the programme or titles of the theses which the candidates for the first or bachelor's degree were presumed to be prepared to discuss. There were 47 Commencements for which Theses were undoubtedly printed, from 1642 to 1692, and of these 10 have survived, all but two and a half of them in single copies.

The candidates for the Bachelor's degree were presented at the exercises in the forenoon, after which the assembly adjourned for luncheon and for the jollity traditionally associated with the occasion. In the afternoon, those who desired to do so, reassembled for the granting of the Master's degree to those graduates of three years before who applied for it. The programme for the afternoon session consisted of a short list of Quaestiones, printed on a quarto sheet, one-fourth the size of that required for the Theses. There were only 41 Commencements at which candidates appeared for the second degree, and by some chance 27 of these have been preserved, each one unique and all, except two at Glasgow, in Harvard's archives. The file of Quaestiones is responsible for Harvard's pre-eminence among the possessors of unique Cambridge imprints.

The college supplied the press with another group of entries in the list, which are even smaller and more uniform in appearance than the Quaestiones, but which have a puzzling interest as great as anything else that came out of that printing shop. These are the fourteen book labels that have been found, all but two of which have the name of a Harvard student and a date when he was in college. The other two are an unidentified Samuel Thompson of 1688, and Steven Day, dated 1642. There is a second copy of five of these, and three copies of one. It is unlikely that these were the only students who had labels printed, for it must have been a prevalent fashion, which lasted into the early decades of the next century.

The first thing printed at Cambridge was the Freeman's Oath, which is supposed to have been printed for use in getting the signatures of persons admitted to citizenship, to which this oath was a prerequisite. Except for a broadside giving the Capital Laws, printed in 1643, there is no evidence that anything more was done for the government until 1646, presumably because it was a period of severe financial depression. In 1644, the General Court gave the printer permission to print the Election Sermon and also the Artillery Sermon of that year, but said nothing about paying for them, so that it is quite likely that he did not take advantage of the authorization. The General Laws issued in 1648 was the first large work undertaken by the press. In 1650, the laws passed at the session of that year were ordered to be printed, and in 1654 another supplement was ordered. A new compilation of the General Laws became necessary in 1660, and after this, the printer was called upon regularly, at the close of each session of the Court, to provide promptly a supplement bringing the legislation up to date. It had also already become a regular practice to have proclamations and other official communications which were to be distributed to the several towns, put into print as broadsides. All of these ought to

have been kept with the archives, and many were, but it seems likely that there were more of them than the 24 that are listed, all but three either unique or unknown.

Closely akin to the Fast Day and Thanksgiving Proclamations, belonging in the same classification, are the sermons delivered at the invitation of the members of the General Court and of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, upon the day of their annual elections of officers. Delivered by a clergyman from a pulpit, the selection of the speaker was influenced more often than not by mundane considerations, and the listeners were men who made no attempt to turn their attention to any other world than that about them. Beginning in 1634, in an effort to influence the election of that year, the succession from 1636 was almost uninterrupted, and after 1660 most of them are known to have been printed, although only 11 of the Election sermons and 6 before the Artillery Company can be assigned to the Cambridge press. They were usually published for distribution, at the expense of a friend of the author or of the organization, with the result that they were apt to be preserved by the recipients, and are now less rare than many of the contemporary issues.

The first real book to come from the press was a versified, rather than metrical, version of the Psalms. But before placing this with works of religion, one would like to make sure that the reason for making and printing this New England translation was not a determination to wean the church-goers from anything that might remind them of the Book of Common Prayer and the liturgy with which they had been familiar.

Versifying came easily to many of the early New Englanders, and the chance that preserved a considerable portion of their efforts, illustrates the uncertainties which the student of such a subject is likely to encounter. In England, the commonest subject to arouse the muse was death, when it took away some-

one of public or private consequence. This was equally true of the Englishmen who came to America, but how true was not suspected until Worthington C. Ford recognized that the verses printed with the biographical sketches in Thomas Morton's "New Englands Memorial," were almost certainly copied from broadside elegiac tributes, such as are frequently met with in English collections. Only four of these original elegies are preserved, but the text is usually in Morton, of the 16 which appear in the list.

There is evidence for only two schoolbooks, a spelling book of about 1643 and a primer of 1668. Undoubtedly others were printed, but it is also probable that the London printers could supply the Boston market at prices with which the local printers could not compete. There are, however, six Shorter Catechisms that survive, and as this was an integral part of the familiar New England Primer, it may be that these separate catechisms were in demand as much for use in teaching to read, as religious manuals.

Leaving aside the missionary publications in what was supposed to be the language of the neighboring natives, there are listed 52 titles which are distinctly religious in their content. Of these, 24 are sermons without an obvious mundane purpose. Half as many more are longer Catechisms or works of a general religious character. The others are controversial, seven of them devoted to troubles inherited from the old world, the Quakers, Baptism, and the like, and eight were inspired by internal schismatic disputes, which it may or may not be proper to consider as religious.

The other subject which stands out prominently amid the Society's daily routine of the past six months is a bulky gift which tempts one to disregard the gift-horse adage. It is an addition to the Society's possessions which will acquire value only through the expenditure of a great deal of time-consuming energy and the application of a high degree of experience, of

expert skill, and of painfully acquired knowledge. It is a gift which arrived in eleven large packing cases containing the unsalable residuum of the accumulations of a lifetime on the shelves of an old bookseller's office. It was what was left after another bookseller and then an auctioneer had combed it through in search for anything that seemed to be worth the trouble of trying to find a purchaser.

Three comments are called for, before jumping to any conclusions from these premises. Book auctioneering has been developed of late years to a point where an item has to sell for $20 or more, before it is worth the trouble and cost of cataloguing. Furthermore, taking into consideration the contents of the Society's library, the foundation of its reputation rests largely upon the possession of stray newspapers and pamphlets from places that scarcely anyone nowadays has heard about. It is the sweepings from dusty attics which supplied many of the titles, often unrecorded elsewhere, which place this Society first in the number of its Cambridge imprints. Moreover, and chiefly, the bookseller to whom the Society thus becomes the residuary legatee was P. K. Foley.

Nobody who has sat before Mr. Foley's ancient desk, looking down into Hamilton Place, or letting eyes roam along the dusty shelves packed deep with the accumulations of a lifetime, will fail to appreciate the eagerness with which Mr. Vail delved into those packing cases, or the cautious hesitancy with which he has scanned each tattered fragment in search of the unobtrusive peculiarity which had led "P. K." to put it away on his shelves. Boston has never had a bookseller with a keener flair for the unsuspected individuality of apparently commonplace pamphlets, nor one better informed and more sympathetic to all their bibliographical idiosyncracies. He possessed the temperamental qualities which make the Irish university men the most finished scholars in the world. Had he chosen, he might have become a famous

bibliographer; he created a new field for American collectors and developed it until it was overrun by those who fattened on his leavings. He supplied his followers with a guide book which imperviously withstood the assaults of successive generations of bookish researchers. Then he let it go at that. He was happier dreaming at his desk overlooking the hurrying crowd in the street below, or now and then picking up his hat to go out for a chat with some favored customer whose friendship he valued regardless of business dealings, more often than not with something in his pocket that neither of them had expected ever to handle.

I am not venturing to forestall the satisfaction which Mr. Vail will have in telling, in the report which we look forward to reading six months hence, of what he is finding in those Foley packing cases. As a member of the Council, the count of the accessions interests me less than the evidence which is behind this gift, of the high opinion of this Society, of carefully considered approval of the way in which it has been and is being run, held by two men who have known it intimately for many years, who have had countless opportunities to watch its growth, and who would not have sent these packing cases to Worcester if they had not believed that everything, to the most pitiful-seeming cripple and invalid, would be treated sympathetically and understandingly, to be preserved conscientiously and respectfully, with the broadest outlook for possibilities of ultimate future usefulness. Arthur Swann of the auction company and Andrew McCance would have done only what they were certain would have met with Mr. Foley's approval. When they decided to send these books to the Society's library, they paid it a compliment which is to my thinking more significant than any other that it has received within my recollection.

The Council regrets to report the following deaths of members since the October meeting:

Howard E. Coffin, an engineer with a wide cultural outlook who left his impress on modern transportation,

died November 21, 1937; Wilberforce Eames, a self-taught student of books who demonstrated that books can be studied scientifically, died December 6, 1937; Francis R. Hart, a man of affairs who demonstrated that familiarity with the world of affairs is an admirable preparation for interpretative scholarship, died January 18, 1938; Chester N. Greenough, who proved that the academic life need not blunt the sympathetic understanding of the commonplaces of everyday life, died February 26, 1938. Also the deaths of William Thomas of SanFrancisco on October 18, 1936, and the deaths of three foreign members—Sir Charles Harding Firth of Oxford, England on February 19, 1936, Arthur George Doughty, Canadian archivist, of Ottawa, on December 1, 1936, and Frank Cundall, secretary of the Institute of Jamaica, on November 15, 1937—are here recorded, not having been noted in previous reports. Mr. Thomas was the great-grandson of Isaiah Thomas, founder of the Society. Extended biographical notices of these resident members will appear in the printed Proceedings of this Society.

Respectfully submitted,
George Parker Winship,
For the Council

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.