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OCTOBER MEETING, 1880.

The regular monthly meeting of the Society was held on Thursday, October 14, at 3 o'clock, P.M., in the Dowse Library; the Rev. Dr. GEORGE E. ELLIS, one of the Vice-Presidents, in the chair.

In the absence of the Recording Secretary, the Treasurer, Mr. CHARLES C. SMITH, was appointed Secretary *pro tem*.

The record of the last meeting was read and accepted.

The Librarian communicated a list of the accessions to the Library during the last month, calling especial attention to the work of an Associate Member, Mr. Charles Eliot Norton, on "Church Building in the Middle Ages."

A letter was read from the Hon. Zachariah Allen, of Providence, Rhode Island, accepting his election as a Corresponding Member. The Chairman then communicated a letter from Mr. Dexter, tendering his resignation of the office of Recording Secretary, as follows:—

CAMBRIDGE, 1 Oct., 1880.

The Hon. ROBERT C. WINTHROP, LL.D.,
President Mass. Historical Society.

MY DEAR SIR,—It is with great regret that I find myself obliged to ask you to communicate to the next meeting of the Council my resignation of the office of Recording Secretary. But my health has become uncertain, and my physician tells me that I cannot expect to go to Boston, or to attend to business of any kind, for some months to come.

As I cannot perform the duties of the office, I must necessarily resign it. I do so with regret, for I have appreciated the honor of the position, and enjoyed the pleasant duties of the office.

I am, with great respect, sincerely yours,

GEORGE DEXTER.

After remarks by the Hon. AMOS A. LAWRENCE, the following Resolutions presented by the Council were unanimously adopted:—

Resolved, That the members of the Massachusetts Historical Society have heard with much regret the letter of George Dexter, Esq., tendering his resignation of the office of Recording Secretary on account of ill health, and that they recall with great satisfaction the learning, fidelity, and good judgment with which he has discharged its duties.

Resolved, That Mr. Dexter's resignation be not accepted, and that the Corresponding Secretary be requested to communicate to him the best wishes of the Society for his early and entire restoration to health.

Dr. Theodor Mommsen, of Berlin, was elected an Honorary Member.

On motion of Dr. GREEN, Mr. Bradford Kingman, of Brookline, was allowed to copy, under the rules, certain memoranda of local interest in the diary of the late Rev. John Pierce, D.D., to be used by Mr. Kingman in the preparation of a History of Brookline.

An application was received from Mrs. Charles T. Jackson for permission to deposit with the Society the medals and decorations which had belonged to her husband, and which had been given to him on account of the introduction of etherization in surgery; and the application was granted on the same conditions on which the Society had accepted a similar deposit of the medals and decorations which belonged to the late Dr. W. T. G. Morton.

Dr. ELLIS then spoke as follows:—

It is but rarely that our honored President, when he has been on this side of the ocean, during the quarter of a century of his occupancy of this chair, has failed to meet us punctually here, and to open, animate, and instruct our meetings, from his own full resources of mind, of family papers, and of correspondence. Indeed, he has so seldom left the chair to his substitutes, that they have had no opportunity to practise or to familiarize themselves with its duties. In a letter which I received from him last week, he wrote that his obligations, as a delegate to the Episcopal Convention now assembled in New York, would preclude his being with us today. It is for me mainly to engage you for a few moments in following out two or three suggestions made by him in his letter.

Mr. Winthrop intimates that some allusion may properly be made on our records to the success of the recent celebration of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of our city, in which the Society was so courteously invited to take a part. It was, indeed, a most successful and delightful occasion. The propitious sky, the pleasant atmosphere, the neatness in aspect and the holiday garb of the city; the guests from over the whole country and from Canada, summoned by a generous hospitality; the admirable and vigorous address of His Honor

the Mayor, reviewing, in a masterly and attractive sketch, the planting and development of this ancient municipality; the splendid military display; the representation of large bodies of organized associations and citizens; the imposing parade of the actual handicrafts, mechanism, tools, engines, and ingenious processes, setting forth the industries, the thrift, the economies, and the amazing achievements of our time in every thing characteristic of this place and our age; and then the vast, uncounted throngs of delighted spectators, on sidewalk, platform, balcony, roof, and window-sitting,—all these elements of a civic celebration on the grandest scale, marked by the most perfect order in combination and hilarity, and happily involving no harm to life or limb in the exposure and movement of such multitudes of men, women, and children, may well be gratefully entered on all records that are to reach future times. Our Society did not avail itself of the offered privilege of appearing together in a body, but was well represented by its members, as individuals appeared in their assigned places as special guests in recognition of their other relations to the national government, the State or the city. As was most fitting, the one only quadriga which appeared in the cavalcade, after the escort, bore the chief magistrate of the city and our President, the representative in continuity of life, in flesh and blood, of the revered founder of the town and State, whose statue in bronze was unveiled on that day, a long-deferred tribute to his pre-eminent claims to our veneration and gratitude.

Happily this Society is not called upon to express, much less to put on record, any opinion or judgment as to the ideality or the execution of that work of art, the tenth of the bronze statues now standing in the city. It must bear the brunt of criticism, as its predecessors have done, without weakening at the knees or changing countenance. A ready reply offers itself to each of us as we listen to the critic. We may ask, "How ought the statue to look? What should it be?" Governor Winthrop is not a good subject for bronze or for metal of any kind. It is safe to say that the living man was better in mien and make and character than any effigies can present him. This cannot be said of all those who are commemorated on canvas, in stone or bronze. The monumental memorials, in figure and in structure, of all simple, primitive, and worthy men and times are always rude, and without the finish of ideal art, while the most beautiful statues and temples of Greece and Rome were perfected at the very time when all faith in the beings they represented had died out of living convictions.

Our President would also remind us, for recognition on our records, that the twenty-fifth day of this month will complete the centennial year of the adoption of the Constitution of Massachusetts. No further action or motion of ours in reference to that day, beyond this recognition, need be taken. As cities, towns, and various associations, scientific, literary, religious, social, charitable, and commercial, take in hand their own special anniversaries and centennials, so it is for our State authorities, according to their inclination or judgment, to note the coming of that day or the occasion which gave it its mark. Doubtless it will not have passed without at least a backward reference to it by our next Legislature. This would but renew our oft-repeated tribute to John Adams, James Bowdoin, and a few others, whose wisdom, patriotism, and love of free institutions secured by wholesome laws, are embodied in our Constitution.

It will be remembered that at our meeting last June, our attention was called to a suggestion from Canon Farrar, of St. Margaret's, Westminster, London, that our own and other of our Historical Societies might be interested in contributing towards a proposed memorial window in that venerable sanctuary to the renowned Sir Walter Raleigh, who is there buried. In a letter which I have recently received from Canon Farrar he expresses his grateful appreciation of our first response to his happy suggestion. He says that a sum between £500 and £600 will accomplish the desired result.

Subscriptions to this date from the Society, £50; at large, £190; in all from the country, £240.

A courteous invitation was sent to the officers of this Society by the Maryland Historical Society, that we might be represented with it in the part they were to take in the celebration of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the city of Baltimore. Gladly would I have availed myself of the invitation had my engagements admitted, and I could only make a grateful recognition of the courtesies. I do not know whether this Society had any representation on the occasion. But we have certainly followed with hearty interest the accounts in the journals of the exultant throngs, the demonstrative pageants, the popular enthusiasm, and the historic retrospects of the glad observance. Our kindred society must derive much inspiration and much new material from the occasion.

Dr. GREEN called attention to an advertisement and two woodcuts of Windsor chairs in the "Massachusetts Gazette"

of Sept. 7, 1787; considerable interest having been expressed, at previous meetings of the Society, in regard to the origin of the name.

The Rev. Dr. JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE then offered the following Resolution:—

Resolved, That a committee of three be appointed by the President, of which the President shall be chairman, to consider and report to this Society some plan of using the names of the streets in Boston to preserve the memory of historic characters and events.

The Resolution elicited interesting remarks by Dr. Clarke, Dr. Ellis, Mr. Sibley, Dr. Green, Mr. T. C. Amory, Mr. Everett, Dr. Paige, and Mr. G. B. Chase, and was then adopted; and the Hon. R. C. Winthrop, the Rev. Dr. Clarke, and Dr. William Everett were named as the Committee.

Mr. ELLIS AMES spoke of an unpublished autobiography of Cotton Mather, formerly in the possession of the late Rev. Dr. William Jenks, and now owned by a gentleman in New York, and stated that a descendant of Cotton Mather had intermarried with a descendant of the Rev. George Burroughs, one of the victims of the witchcraft delusion. He also referred to the well-known opinions of a former President of the Society, the late Hon. James Savage, as to the credibility of any statement which rested on the unsupported authority of Cotton Mather.