

ANNALS OF IOWA.

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

WANTED—AN IOWA HALL OF ARCHIVES.

It is a most regrettable fact that so little care has been taken of the original copies of Iowa official papers after their use for the immediate purposes which called them into existence. This is an evil which seems to appertain to every administration since the old romantic days of Gen. Robert Lucas, our first Territorial Governor. The habit started in his time and has continued until now. In fact, these documents have been considered "dead papers" and almost worthless. In the majority of cases they have been doomed to immediate destruction. It is difficult for the public official, in the haste with which his duties are performed, to imagine for a moment that the paper which originates in his office can have any real permanent value. They are, therefore, quickly put out of sight, and after that time are generally out of mind. It is true that very limited receptacles exist in connection with our present State offices for the preservation of important papers, but these are wholly inadequate to any general and systematic care of these documents. A document may have become a "dead paper" for any present official use or value and still for historical purposes may possess the highest value. Not long ago some copies of official papers from the British Museum came into our possession, which illustrate the point we are seeking to set forth. They were simply household expenses of one of the Henrys; mere lists of articles with their prices; not much different from a bill of goods from an old-fashioned general variety store. There were several points, however, upon which they threw considerable light. They showed to some extent the habits

of their purchasers in the matters of food and clothing, the prices of many articles at that time, and the value of the money of that period as compared with our own. These papers had been used by one of the great English historians, and came into the possession of the writer for whatever value they might possess as out-of-the-way autographs.

Some months ago Prof. Shambaugh of the Iowa State University called at the Historical Rooms after he had been making researches in our Capitol building for original documents running back to Territorial times. His "finds" were quite interesting and valuable, though his opportunities for search had been quite limited. He said—"The time has come when we must have an 'Iowa Hall of Archives.' Is there room for it in this building?" He was informed that the space in the present Historical Building was wholly preempted, and that there could be no accommodations for a Hall of Archives until the building was completed in accordance with the original plans. He then went on to mention briefly some of his important "finds" in the document room adjoining the Governor's office. There are letters by Governor Lucas, with the original copies of a few of the Governors' messages from early times until now. But these papers are packed in such close quarters that they can only be found after a great deal of patient labor. The Professor was emphatic in his declaration that a "Hall of Archives" had become a public necessity, and that as a matter of course, it should be located at the capital. Since that date this project has been discussed by many leading men throughout the State and has everywhere met with great favor. In fact, we have not heard a single word of opposition. The realization of this idea can hardly come except through the completion of the Historical Building in which the requisite space can be provided. That department should be presided over by an expert, and as public State documents are brought into existence the original copies should be carefully preserved, filed and catalogued, so as to be available at a moment's no-

tice. It is a fact which will create surprise when we state it, that not one of the Iowa executive departments has a complete file of its own reports, nor do they possess the original copies. These reports are made to the Governor and, in accordance with the statute, are sent to the State printer. When the document is put into type and the proofs read and compared, the original copy goes into the waste basket and that is the end of it. In a few years the last printed copy is distributed, or borrowed and never returned, and so the continuity of the history of a department is interrupted and lost, often beyond recovery. When the old Capitol was burned a few years ago hundreds if not thousands of precious historical papers went up in the flames. We cannot recover what has been lost, but we may gather up what remains, make adequate provision for accruing archives, and preserve them with jealous care. To effect these high purposes an "Iowa Hall of Archives" is an absolute necessity.

REPRINTING THE OLD ANNALS OF IOWA.

On the 31st of March, 1900, Senator Penrose of Tama county introduced the following preamble and resolution looking to reprinting the First and Second Series of THE ANNALS OF IOWA, which were originally published at Iowa City. The purpose in view is to print a sufficient number of this periodical to supply the libraries of our State each with a copy, as well as for exchanges with other states. The resolution passed both branches of the General Assembly without a dissenting vote:

WHEREAS, The historical magazine known as "THE ANNALS OF IOWA," was commenced by the State Historical Society, at Iowa City, in January, 1863, and continued until October, 1874; and,

WHEREAS, Said publication has long been out of print and impossible to be obtained; and,

WHEREAS, It is deemed most desirable that the public libraries, schools and colleges of this State shall each possess a copy of said work, as em-

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa 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.