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A TEMPLE
OF
AMERICAN HISTORY

THE WILLIAM L. CLEMENTS LIBRARY

BY

WILLIAM WARNER BISHOP

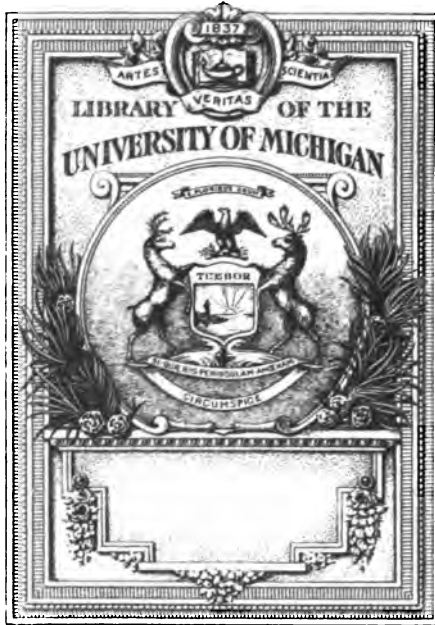
University of Michigan

WITH INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY

PRESIDENT MARION LEROY BURTON

PRIVATELY PRINTED
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

1922



THE GIFT OF
Mr. William W. Bishop.

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Mr. Wm. W. Bishop
7-7-1922

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FOREWORD

The address here printed was delivered at the laying of the corner-stone of the William L. Clements Library of American History on March 31, 1922. The donor of the building and of the Library, Regent William Lawrence Clements, personally laid the corner-stone in the presence of the Regents and a small group of faculty, students and friends of the University of Michigan. President Marion LeRoy Burton presided and the University Band furnished the music.

W. W. B.

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ORDER OF EXERCISES

THE "VICTORS".....*The University Band*

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS..*President Marion LeRoy Burton*

ADDRESS—A TEMPLE OF AMERICAN HISTORY—

William Warner Bishop

LAYING OF THE CORNER STONE BY REGENT WILLIAM
LAWRENCE CLEMENTS

THE "YELLOW AND BLUE".....*The University Band*

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

BY PRESIDENT MARION LEROY BURTON

Members of the Board of Regents and of the University:

We lay today the corner-stone of the Clements Library of American History. It represents the life-long interest and scholarly devotion of the donor. This occasion is a natural and instinctive response to a most notable event in the life of the University of Michigan.

This building will provide a home for a really great collection of Americana. It is strikingly appropriate in a University, organized and maintained by the people of this great State, that provision, in such generous and adequate fashion, should be made for the study of our own annals. Our reputation as a true University will be enhanced by this gift. In this beautiful edifice the actual sources for thorough research work in American History will be placed at the disposal of the Faculty and students.

It is unusually noteworthy that this munificent gift is made to the University by one of its own loyal sons who through the years has served faithfully and wisely as a member of its Board of Regents.

In partial recognition of these and other considerations we have planned these simple exercises. We have asked the Librarian of the University, Mr. William Warner Bishop, to deliver the address upon this occasion.

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A TEMPLE OF AMERICAN HISTORY

This ceremony marks a stage in the accomplishment of a great hope and a great purpose. Behind every building and every project there lies an idea and an inspiration. Truly Dr. Richard Storrs was right when he said that the great Brooklyn Bridge was carried across the turbulent waters of the East River on the point of John A. Roebling's pencil. And today we have placed the cornerstone of a home of learning which lay long in the mind and heart of the donor before it took outward and visible form under the skilled hands of the architect. This cornerstone typifies no passing whim or momentary fancy, but rather a settled purpose, a resolution carried to fruition through long years of patient search and sustained effort.

That purpose was first the creation of a library of the original printed sources for the history of the discovery, the exploration and settlement of North America; and later the provision of an adequate and beautiful structure to house that library in fitting fashion to reach its fruition in the work of a great university. Here was an idea and an ambition to fire the imagination of any scholar. It remained for a manufacturer and banker not only to conceive the idea but to carry it out through thirty years of devoted labor in hours snatched from the cares of a great business career.

Few folk know how slight are the foundations on which rests our knowledge of the history of this continent. Accustomed to look to manuscript sources for the history of the ancient world and the middle age, too many take comfortable refuge in the thought that as America was discovered and explored after the invention of printing, it must be easy and simple to gather the materials for the story of the discovery of the continent and the slow growth

of the knowledge of its surface. They forget that the explorers and discoverers were seldom men of letters. Their rude accounts and ruder maps got into print, it is true, with great rapidity at times, and but slowly at other times. But as a rule the reports of their findings were printed in small numbers, were read to tatters by eager men, were passed from hand to hand by the explorers, and disappeared into the limbo of worn-out pamphlets and discarded tracts. More learned tomes of geographers and historians came later, printed for the most part in small numbers, frequently only bound up as there was prospect of a sale, and also subject to that "*fata libellorum*" so familiar to the world of letters. But few libraries in the world possess even the major part of the original printed sources for American history. Many early books of prime importance exist in but few perfect copies—in numerous cases but one such is known. The task, then, of gathering a real library of Americana is (and has been for two centuries) supremely difficult and arduous.

And in these later days, particularly since the appearance of Justin Winsor's monumental history, there has arisen a collector's demand for Americana which has received the fullest commercial exploitation. Prices and costs have multiplied literally more than tenfold in my own recollection. As a consequence, mere rarity has often been exalted into value, while fundamental books have become the sport of competing collectors and the prey of the shrewd financiers among dealers the world over. None but one who joins a wise head to a generous purse may safely fish in these troubled waters of modern auctions and internationally important sales.

Fortunate indeed is Michigan that one of her own sons, who has kept before him the aim of gathering a true library of Americana, has combined the scholar's judgement as to fundamental value with the collector's watchful and keen enthusiasm. And thrice fortunate that he has had a vision of what such a library can do in promoting historical studies in his *Alma Mater*. Not for the mere joy of possession, not for the lust of ownership has he gathered

from far and near the original printed accounts of the discoverers and explorers, the tracts revealing the fates of Virginia and New England and the middle colonies in the seventeenth century, the early voyages to Canada and to our own region of the Great Lakes. Not to say that on his shelves rests the most complete collection of pamphlets relating to the American Revolution and of maps and manuscripts describing its progress and its triumphant close has he spent long hours and much labor. Rather to provide the materials for a first-hand study of the earlier history of our country and the means of utilizing them to the full for the benefit of historical scholarship has been his steadfast purpose. That purpose culminates in the gift of this building and of his collection—the William L. Clements Library of American History.

On the University rests the obligation to carry into full fruition the trust thus nobly conferred. Already the Regents have voted adequate support and aid. There is every prospect that the library will grow worthily with the years, will become a notable part of the University's equipment for research. But more is needed than secure provision for care, than increasing strength in rare books and precious manuscripts. A spirit of devotion to historical studies, a passion for the truth about America can alone justify such a gift and such a building as this. Here is an unrivalled opportunity for founding a real school of American history—nay, more—for creating anew an enthusiasm for that remoter past of our country whose study seems strangely enough to have fallen into neglect and almost into oblivion among us. Since Parkman made the nobility of the Jesuit missionaries, the care-free and adventurous spirit of the *voyageurs*, the petty strife of explorer and savage live once more in his glowing pages; since Prescott carried us breathless along the path of the *conquistadores*, since John Fiske wrote his solid and brilliant narratives, there has risen no great historian of America's earlier day to inspire alike the respect of scholars and the enthusiasm of the reading public. The school history and the historical novel appear to supply the greater part of what knowledge

is current today as to Columbus and the Cabots, the early discoverers, the hardy explorers, those Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, Swedish and English navigators who slowly revealed to Europe the position of the continent, its shore-line, its great lakes and might rivers, its mountain-chains, and its great plains. Our professed and professional—not to say professorial—historians have lost the romance of America in their multifarious monographs and theses on little themes. Here are to rest the true and vital materials out of which that romance may be re-created. And more, here are the books from which alone can be won the knowledge which must underlie all truly successful historical writing.

The opportunity, then, which lies before our historians in this temple of American history is indeed marvelous. In Boston and Cambridge one can find as much of the earlier records as will soon be housed here—in Providence even more. In New York City are fully as great collections. But nowhere else in America—so far as my knowledge goes—is there any library of Americana at the disposal of university students equal to the Clements Library. On the shores of the Pacific, indeed, the Bancroft and Huntington libraries—six hundred miles apart—each has preëminence in its own field, and the Bancroft Library is in the University of California. It is our confident hope that out of the happy conjunction of the Clements Library, the General Library, the Law Library, and the historical faculty and students will come a fresh school of American historical scholarship. Nor should we forget that but forty miles away in Detroit another alumnus of this University has gathered and given to his city a collection on the Northwest which will go far to aid and supplement these libraries here. With the Clements Library for the earliest period, for the settlement of the Atlantic Coast, and the American Revolution; with the Burton Library for Canada and the Great Lakes Region; with the Law Library for the legal side of our development; with the General Library supplementing all these and providing as well the European background of American history; with the eager spirit and generous enthusiasm which have characterized Michigan

teachers and students, why should there not grow up here a group of competent and effective students of our country's past, who shall make our earlier history live once more for coming generations?

But, says the gentle cynic, it is not in Academe that great geniuses arise and thrive. And sooth to say, it is true. The list which inscribes among English writers alone the imposing names of Gibbon and Grote, Carlyle and Macaulay, Parkman, Motley and Prescott, John Richard Green and James Bryce has but few professors even appended to its illustrious roll. But when one recalls the solid labors of the great French Benedictines of St. Maur, of the Bollandists, of such men as have carried through the great publications of *corpora* and rolls and archives, one sees the value and the service even of professional and academic historians. Not here, perhaps, shall any Macaulay or Carlyle gather the store of knowledge which directs and underlies his passionate enthusiasms. Perhaps not here shall be found the inspiration of the prophet who shall one day interpret for us the mighty panorama of the upbuilding and unfolding of democracy on this continent. But if genius rises not from study in this house to write undying verse or heroic prose, we may not, the donor may not, grieve over lost chances. Genius is of the spirit which bloweth where it listeth. Rather shall we hope here for steady labor, for careful training, for honest output of sterling work, for a tradition of high aims and vigorous performance, for a Michigan school of American history which, with the almost unrivalled means of this library, shall carry on the spirit of those pioneers who wrought well with far lesser tools.

Perhaps it is fitting to pause a moment to pay tribute to some, at least, of these men who have made this University illustrious by their work in History. Moses Coit Tyler wrote here the first portion of his great work on the history of earlier American literature. How he would have rejoiced at the privilege of using many of the books soon to stand on this spot! How painfully he gathered, by many journeys and by generous loans, the materials for his first two volumes! Burke Hinsdale taught Educa-

tion here for years with that shrewd common sense which made him a power in the land. But his real forte was the history of the old Northwest Territory and of America generally. What treasures of historical knowledge he revealed to the student whom he thought worthy of his confidence and his guidance! In earlier years Andrew D. White began and Charles Kendall Adams followed the honorable succession of historians at Michigan. I may not call the entire roll, nor name men still living, but let me at least mention the names of Angell and of Cooley—the one full of quite unusual knowledge of American affairs, revealed frequently in unexpected glimpses and vistas in conversation; the other incisive and clear, blending always the jurist and the historian in his writing and his lectures. It is a succession demanding no small attainment of us who have followed in their footsteps. May their mantles descend on the young men who shall labor here in this building and who shall carry on their work in the next quarter century!

And now it is my high privilege to express publicly the deep feeling of the University toward the man who has built up the Library to be placed here, putting himself unreservedly into its gathering, and who gives this building, whose cornerstone he has just laid with his own hands. To you, sir, we are profoundly grateful! The University thanks you. It acknowledges its debt to you and the deep obligation you have placed upon it by this gift. It will be faithful to the trust with which you have endowed it. Speaking for Regents, Faculties and officers, for alumni and students, I pledge to you, sir, not alone our thanks, but our promise to care for this gift, to add to it in worthy fashion, and to use it to the benefit of our *Alma Mater* and our country. You have spent lavishly of money, more lavishly of time and strength and thought to make possible this shrine of American history. It remains for us and for our successors to carry on your work, to fulfill your plans, to profit by your labors and your generosity. Happily, we have you with us to guide, to aid, to inspire us. With Horace, our final word, as we salute and thank you, is *Serus in caelum redeas!*

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