

books are concerned his report is definite enough; but the meagre description of the large accumulation of loose papers makes it almost useless as a guide to what he recovered. The books and papers gathered by Mr. Ridgely from the various rooms of the State House, from disused offices, cupboards, underneath the staircases, from the lofts, the cellars, and even the stairway leading to the dome, were not afterwards kept in one repository, but were again distributed to offices where they were supposed to belong. The State owes largely to Mr. Ridgely for his recovery of many papers which would have in a few years been irretrievably lost; not only for the recovery are we under obligation, but for the prompt copying of many that were in very bad condition, and are not now to be found.

Subsequently John Henry Alexander, LL. D., the Rev. Ethan Allen, D. D., and Colonel Brantz Mayer made reports, the two former on the Proprietary, Council and Assembly Records (of a few of which they made a very useful calendar), and the latter upon the Miscellaneous correspondence and loose papers. These reports are both useful and interesting.

The Assembly has never been unmindful of the value of the State records, but the papers were scattered through many offices and insecure places, unarranged and, apparently, without responsibility attaching to any one for their safekeeping; the loss of many valuable papers would indicate that free access could be readily obtained.

After several efforts made at various times both by the Society and by individuals to obtain from the State an appropriation for publishing the early records, your Society, through a committee, obtained from the General Assembly of 1882 the temporary custody of all the early records for the purpose of arranging, cataloguing and making them more generally accessible, under proper safeguards, to historical students and investigators. With the deposit came also an annual grant of one thousand dollars for two years to have such documents as were of historical importance copied and printed.

When the Act of 1882 was passed there was not in our building a suitable fire proof repository for the papers to be deposited with us, and the Society was compelled to ask its members and friends to raise a large sum of money to make one of the rooms on the main floor absolutely fire-proof. While this room was being prepared, several visits were made to Annapolis, and the various offices connected with the State government were examined for such papers as came within the Act of 1882. A large collection of Manuscripts, bound and unbound, was found, carefully packed, and sent to the Society's rooms, where they were immediately placed in the fire-proof.

The largest and most valuable collection was found in the Land Office, which has been for several years the official custodian of the Archives. From the State Library a few bound and unbound volumes were received, and from the office of the Clerk of the Court of Appeals four volumes of the laws. Receipts were given in the Society's name