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PRACTICAL NOTES ON HISTORICAL RESEARCH

BY SIR FRANCIS PIGGOTT, M.A., LL.M., F.R.HIST.S.

Read April 11, 1922

HISTORICAL RESEARCH is very much in the air just now. Public opinion is at last awake to the fact, which is elementary to us, that only by knowledge of the way in which national problems have been solved in the past can the problems of the present and the future be successfully dealt with. Historical Research opens the gateways to the long-forgotten centuries. In regard to the more modern times embraced by the last few centuries, its special object is to ascertain with precision the details of those problems, political and international, the reasons which led to their solution, satisfactory or otherwise. I propose to glance at this aspect of it only. When one realises what those national problems are, that they have varied little since we began to understand what the sea means to us, it stands to reason that research should be treated as a national business; but, after our traditional manner, the period about which we ought to know so much, but know so little, is left to the individual. And war impressions speedily fade: witness the interest which Parliament takes in this matter, and the knowledge it displays of the work involved, as shown by the opposition to the grant of a modest salary to the Historian attached for purposes of research to the Foreign Office. The general criticism was that no such officer was required, that everybody knew where the facts of any event in history were to be found, and that when wanted any Foreign Office clerk could be turned on to the job of finding them!

It is not necessary to remind members of this Society what research work means ; but lest this paper should meet the eye of some Member of Parliament unlearned in his country's history, it may be well to note that it involves endless labour of the patient sort, poring over dusty volumes of old documents in the Archives, without guide or calendar, reading dozens of despatches to elucidate some one little fact which often at the end proves to be elusive, perhaps non-existent, or worse, to have been contained in some missing document. The tracing of clues is a weary business, but how great the joy when the clue leads home only those who have experienced it know. There is yet another point which is somewhat overlooked, the proper function of Historical Research. To the exploration of new fields of history must be added the verification of the statements of the general historian. I use this term to keep in a class of honour those writers who devote themselves to the elucidation of a period, or even of some important incident. Of the "general historian" I must speak as respectfully as I can, though his series of volumes always terrify me when I want to find out something with even a moderate degree of accuracy. His view of the great policies of history, when they are untinged with his own political prejudices, are of course valuable ; but his handling of details, alas ! too often leaves much to be desired. He has too many to grapple with : he cannot spend days, weeks perhaps, in unravelling the details of every incident he records ; he must take things on the credence of what others have written ; but it is a lamentable fact that his references sadly lack verification. I wonder how many of us have been irritated by blunders of even the greater sort, even in famous histories ! I fancy that it must have been reflections of this kind that led Lord Acton to plan the *Cambridge Modern History*, wherein each writer should have leisure to study thoroughly the period committed to his care, and to ransack the Archives before writing.

An assertion of this nature ought not to be made without

evidence ; and I therefore give one of many instances which it has been my fate to deal with. The Commercial Treaties of Utrecht are documents of sufficient importance to warrant careful and accurate study, for they hold their place in the development of maritime law, and contain the germ of some important principles. I do not know *one* history in which the effect of the articles dealing with it has been accurately stated !

With these ideas in my mind, when the Anglo-American Conference of Professors of History met in July last year at the invitation of the University of London, I put together a few notes, the result of my own experience in Historical Research, which I thought might be useful to students at the commencement of their studies. My friend, Mr. Hubert Hall, suggested that they might be developed into a paper for this Society. Hence these, what I have ventured to call " Practical Notes." I should say, however, that my experience is limited to a very few years, for I only began my work during the war, and the scope of it was limited to the problems of belligerent and neutral. I hesitate therefore to address those whose lives have been devoted to the erudition of Historical Research. At best these Notes can only be a very modest supplement to Mr. Hall's own lectures recently delivered at King's College.

The first question which naturally suggests itself is, What are the unofficial Historical Researchers driving at ? What do they want ? The work is not undertaken, as we say in the East, for the benefit of their health, for indeed the drudgery of it is interminable. I think their position may be thus briefly defined : they aim at accuracy of historical statement in their own work, and the elimination of " historological inexactitudes " in the work of others. But faith in accuracy and its benefits is not all-sustaining ; without printers' works it is nothing worth. Knowledge of facts which you know to be accurate hid under a bushel leads to vexation of spirit. What we want is publication, that others may know what we have, with such infinite

pains, discovered, and that mistakes may be avoided by the historians of the future.

The need for research work rests on a fundamental truth: that few things have happened in the world but are bound sooner or later to recur. History is a series of recurrent facts. Forgive me if I take my instances from my own limited experience; but for me the salient instance of this truth is the operations at sea during the Great War, and their effect on the neutrals. In almost every detail it was a repetition in new circumstances of the incidents of the wars of 1744 to 1815. And here I should like to pay my tribute of admiration to those who had this question in charge, for it has always seemed to me as little short of marvellous how they pulled the country through in the face not merely of the inherent difficulties of the task, but of the mass of ignorant and uninformed criticisms by our own people. For the practical purpose of ready reference there was nothing available. The documents relating to the War on Commerce which both belligerents waged during the French Wars were scattered about here and there: some of the Orders in Council in the "State Papers," but not all; some of the French Decrees in *De Martens*, but not all. They had never been collected. No careful analysis and comparative study of them has ever been published; and the few we had a little knowledge of were not very well understood. (Such a study had been made, but alas! it is still in MS.) The consequence was that, with nothing authoritative to guide them, the English critics of the Government action took a line which led them, without so much as blushing, straight to agreement with Bonaparte's condemnation of England and the cardinal principles of her sea-policy. Yet a reliable guide would have made it clear, even to him, that the real ground of his denunciation was that her policy interfered with his plans for her subjection.

Yet one more instance. It is almost inconceivable, yet it is a fact, that the most important despatch from Lord

Palmerston to Lord Clarendon, instructing him what amendments he was to insist on in the draft of the Declaration of Paris in 1856, was unknown, even officially, until Mr. G. W. T. Omond discovered it by accident among a lot of other despatches relating to the Crimea.

The case for publication then is overwhelming. But this is really a digression from the subject which I have specially in hand, which assumes that Historical Research is a necessity, and that the unofficial workers will carry on, buoyed up by the faint hope that some day the results of their labours will see the light. My Notes probably contain nothing new ; but even if only a few beginners are warned by them of the pitfalls in their path, into which I myself have fallen, they will have served some useful purpose.

The question of publication may conveniently be taken first, because it raises the important question of form : in other words, what the aim should be in the arrangement of the material collected.

I think that the first three volumes of the *American State Papers, Foreign Relations*, are a model of what a collection of historical documents ought to be, for this reason : they present the dispute of the beginning of the nineteenth century between England and the United States in its entirety. The despatches written on both sides of the Atlantic are given in their natural sequence, so that, making due allowance for transit of mails (a point which the student must never lose sight of), the complete story of the quarrel can be intelligently read. Yet, big to unwieldiness, repellent in type and appearance, always very dusty, their place in a library which possesses them is any odd shelf in any old back-room, and looked on, even then, as cumbering the book-space. But enshrined in their pages is the history of the most critical period in the relations between the two countries—the years which led up to 1812. That at least should entitle them to a better shelf. As Records they are pre-eminent, and (having first put on your strongest glasses, for the print is horribly small) you

can follow in them the different chains of thought in the crossing despatches ; the dispute, with all its ramifications, even the disputers and their varying temper, live again. Above all, the super-excellent indexes are simply a marvel of their kind : another example which the student should make it a point of honour to copy.

There are at least three well-known collections of Correspondence of this period, two of them of very great dimensions, which also possess the merits of orderly arrangement and full indexes : *The Correspondence of the American Commissioners to Europe* (12 vols.), *The Political Correspondence of Frederick the Great* (36 vols.) (for the most part written in the French of Potsdam), and *The Correspondence of Napoleon* (32 vols.). They throw floods of light on a hundred incidents which even now are imperfectly understood. But they are essentially personal to the writers, and they leave one with a craving to know more, perpetually wondering what caused some outburst of temper, or some new move in the political game.

When Bonaparte, for example, wrote to Citizen Talleyrand, in July, 1800, that flattering overtures were to be made to the Emperor Paul, and that 10,000 Russian prisoners were to be returned newly clothed and armed, we ought, before we condemn the action which so excited his indignation and prompted this generosity, to know why England and Austria refused to exchange them against French prisoners. Or, to take another example. Sir Ernest Satow, in his monograph on *Frederick the Great and the Silesian Loan*, has printed a series of English despatches unearthed in the Record Office ; but the story of the interlocked negotiations between England, Prussia and France can only be understood, and the meaning of these despatches made clear, when we interleave them, so to speak, with the despatches of Frederick himself which are published in his "Correspondence." Then alone can an accurate estimate be formed of the shifty policy of that extraordinary man, which so often baffled less astute statesmen.

But I admit that the difficulties in the way of achieving chronological sequence are enormous ; and this brings me to our own Archives, the field in which English historical researchers must labour.

In 1865 the Master of the Rolls wrote :

“ Although the Records constitute the most complete and perfect series of their kind in the civilised world, and although they are of greatest value in an historical and constitutional point of view, yet they are comparatively useless to the public from the want of Calendars and Indexes.”

The *Calendars of State Papers* were then started, which now number about 300 volumes. But though the progress made by the digesters is very sure, it is inevitably slow, and many years must elapse before they even come within sight of that great period of maritime wars, when the foundations of the England we know were laid. The Archives of this period are still open to the criticism that “ from want of Calendars and Indexes ” they are “ comparatively useless to the public.”

It was, I suppose, inevitable, in the preliminary sorting of the mass of documents taken over from the Departments, that the despatches should be divided into the three categories, Out Letters, In Letters, and “ Foreign Ministers in England,” but many of us have had experience of the labour involved in ploughing through three sets of bound despatches, several volumes to each set, trying to piece together the facts of some incident. For there are always four parties to any diplomatic conversation of any importance—the two Foreign Secretaries and the two diplomatic representatives—and essential facts are to be gleaned, sometimes from instructions given by the Secretary to the Minister as to his attitude towards the Government to which he is accredited, sometimes from reports by the Minister to the Secretary as to how he has carried out his instructions, and the effect produced on the Foreign Government. An interview between a Foreign Minister in London and the English Foreign Secretary will probably

be reported both by the Minister to his Government and by the Foreign Secretary to the English Minister abroad for his guidance ; and it sometimes happens that the two reports do not tally. Instances of this must be known to many of us, as well as the serious trouble caused by the discrepancy.

Let us however get to work. Imagine yourself in one of the Search Rooms of the Public Record Office trying to unravel some knotty problem : the slips filled up far in excess of the number which the rules allow ; the pile of State Papers already accumulating on the table, and you wonder whether the willing officials, their patience sorely tried, can be persuaded to allow you more, on the plea that you cannot get on without them. All this is bad enough when you are working on two countries ; but think what it means when a third country, or a fourth, or even a fifth, is involved in the dispute ! And if you should be meticulously inclined, determined to get to the bottom of the trouble, there are the bundles of odd scraps of paper, the half-sheets so dear to Secretaries of State, labelled " Miscellaneous," which are the despair of all who seek that elusive spirit—Fact. I must here note one great defect of our Archives : the scarcity of departmental and inter-departmental memoranda, from which alone we can be sure of the reasons which have actuated any given policy. I think I am right in saying that these were not sent to the Record Office. To give you an example. In trying to unravel the mystery of the Declaration of Paris I found, but quite accidentally, the drafts of two telegrams from the Foreign Office to Lord Clarendon in Paris. They seem to have been slipped in with other papers by oversight ; but they were of great importance, for they revealed the confusing uncertainty of the Government policy, which fluctuated, literally, hour by hour.

At a time in the remote past, when the Departments were very lax in their custody of papers, it seems to have been the recognised custom for Secretaries of State and

Ministers to keep their memoranda and take them away when they retired, as well as documents of far greater importance. Hence what are known as Private Collections of Papers. However grateful we may be for the information contained in the important documents which are included in them, it cannot be denied that it was a very reprehensible habit, and the lamentable incompleteness of our Archives is in large measure due to this cause. Many of these collections have found their way into the British Museum. But they are in themselves pitfalls ; for they are in some measure rescue work, odds and ends of the great man's papers bundled together, and only capable of being used for reference by reason of the arrangement and careful indexes that have been made of them by the Museum authorities. I ought to say that my intimate experience of them is limited to the *Carteret Papers*, and I may be wrong in my general conclusion ; but these are no more than an *omnium gatherum* of promiscuous documents. I was, perhaps, lucky to find one relating to the incident with which I was dealing.

And here is another pitfall. Many of the documents, even in the Record Office, are " drafts," though it is probably more true of those in the British Museum ; and the greatest care is necessary in dealing with them, for a " draft " means nothing : it may have gone no further. Also there are often copies of the same document in both repositories—one draft, the other original. Of course the Keepers of the Papers think that the treasures of the Museum ought to be transferred to Chancery Lane ; the Trustees probably think otherwise ; but there is great need of a gradual collation of the two sets of Archives, in the course of which these drafts would be weeded out as useless when the original exists, and duplicates noted.

We must assume that the transfer from the Museum to the Record Office is out of the question ; but the inconvenience is manifest. The Archives proper contain so many and such large gaps that the answer to a despatch in the

Record Office may conceivably be in Bloomsbury. I need not say how much all this adds to the labour of research.

Yet another pitfall in connexion with these private Collections: they lead to printed "Correspondence" of statesmen, usually published by some admiring descendant, compiled from diaries, notes, drafts, or copies. That many of them are valuable no one can deny; but there is something wrong about them which I will endeavour to explain: at first sight it looks like mischievous editing. I single out for special warning, based on a very careful study of one of the four volumes, the *Malmesbury Diaries and Correspondence*. I suppose few political books can have had such a vogue in "polite circles." Diplomacy was brought down to the level of the drawing-room table. The escapades and vivacious dialogues between the Empress Catherine and Sir James Harris were as good as any romance: cultivated men seem to have considered a knowledge of them to be part of their education; English and foreign writers on the periods in which Lord Malmesbury took a leading part treat them as authoritative. Alas! for historical purposes they are painfully untrustworthy.¹ The facts of the romance are too prominent; the facts of history take a lower place.

This work is a noteworthy illustration of the habit to which I have referred, of Ministers taking their papers away with them on retiring; and it raises a very important question for historians who may be driven to consult this or other books of a like nature. Of the extracts from the diaries little need be said; they are just what they profess to be—records of the impressions of the moment—and may or may not be of historical value. The historian probably has the means of checking them from other sources of knowledge. But the despatches! There are some hundreds

¹ My criticism is limited to the volume containing the Russian despatches. The accuracy of the other volume has probably been tested, as they are, I believe, among the books which students in diplomacy are required to "get up."

of them, and we have it from the editor that they came from his grandfather's papers. There are two conditions on which alone such a collection can be accepted as reliable : first, that the despatches printed are accurate ; secondly, that it is complete.

Now, in the first place, the original coded and decoded despatches are in the Record Office, and we know from the preface that they were not copied from them, and apparently were not even verified. This at once raises a presumption against their accuracy ; for those written by Sir James Harris may have passed through another stage before they were finally approved. On comparing those printed with the originals one notices at once signs of polishing ; corrections of words and phrases, not always important, but still enough to make one uneasy. Then there are omitted paragraphs, indicated by asterisks, which the editor did not think of sufficient interest to print ; but for the historian they may have contained important information. So much for accuracy. As to completeness, more especially in regard to Foreign Office despatches, they could only have been found among the Ambassador's papers either if he had impounded them, or if a clerk had copied them. Very long ones may have been left uncopied ; and this probably accounts for some important omissions. I should not have dwelt on this matter at length had it not been for the fact that the most important despatch of the whole of the Russian series is not included : Lord Stormont's very detailed instructions to Sir James Harris as to the line he was to take in regard to Catherine's Declaration of Armed Neutrality, and the answer he was to give her. For some reason which I cannot fathom, a formal answer was sent out at the same time as a " dummy " ; but nothing that I can find authorised the Ambassador in not giving Catherine the detailed answer, which dealt *seriatim* with the points in her Declaration, and declined to recognise her demands. Whether it ever got beyond Count Panin we have no means of judging. The fact with which I am

concerned is that the omission of this despatch has led every foreign writer to assume that the "dummy" was the real answer, and it is printed as such in the English books. The instructions, which maintained the traditional attitude of England in regard to the questions of maritime law in controversy, were unknown until I came across the despatch a short time ago.

To revert to my subject.

Having referred to the American State Papers I turn to the well-known Series published by our own Foreign Office. The Series was started in 1813; they therefore only deal systematically with the closing years of the French Wars. The light they throw on the years before 1813 is incidental only, and then only where early documents have been "enclosures" or "annexures" to later despatches, which are printed in the order in which they occur in the original. Thus the Orders in Council and the Berlin and Milan Decrees of 1806-7 appear in Volume VIII, among the documents annexed to some voluminous correspondence between the United States and France, laid before Congress in 1824, which is printed because the scheme of the collection, as indicated by its title, is "British and Foreign State Papers." There are also, here and there, some valuable footnotes inserted for purposes of elucidation of a reference in some later document. Thus the important Notice of the Blockade of the coast from the Elbe to Brest of May, 1806, is printed as a footnote to a document of 1813 in Vol. I.

How can I avoid this parenthesis? Is it not lamentable that there is no book in which a complete collection of the documents relating to the War with France is to be found? We had, during the Behring Sea Arbitration in 1892-3, to refer to the Orders in Council, and the only way of getting a copy was by tearing the pages out of an odd volume of the State Papers.

Critical comparison between the English State Papers and the American volumes that I have referred to would be out

of place, for annual collections of documents are in a different category from careful compilations made after the event. The former are works for speedy reference to current events ; the latter are deliberate contributions to history. The annual collections from their nature are limited to documents which have appeared during the year preceding publication ; the despatches, which contain the story of the events leading up to the documents, are not always available for publication, and may or may not be published as a Blue Book after the incident has closed.

Other well-known collections must be briefly noted : Rymer's *Fœdera* ; Dumont's *Corps Universel Diplomatique du Droit des Gens* ; De Martens' *Recueil des Traités*, started in Göttingen in 1790 ; Hertslet's *Commercial Treaties*, and his Maps by Treaty ; then there is Jenkinson's Collection, and Le Clercq's, and Tétot's *Reference Catalogue of Treaties* ; also a very useful Collection by Chalmers, whose name deserves to be written in our *Libro d'Oro* ; for he " enjoyed a pleasure in collecting treaties," and made it his hobby. " It is always happy," he says in his preface, " when private amusement can be made to subserve to general convenience." What an original and delightful man he must have been !

There were other collectors more or less forgotten ; but my object is not to make a catalogue, only to warn the wayfarer of pitfalls in his path.

My first caution then is to be careful when you refer to De Martens, for there were two editions of the *Recueil* proper, that is, the first seven volumes published in 1791 ; in the second edition, of eight volumes, published in 1808, many of the documents which had appeared in the four volumes of the *Supplément* were included. This makes things exceedingly complicated, as you never know to which edition an author is referring. And to make matters worse, many librarians have mixed their " sets," making them up with volumes of both editions. I have now made it a rule to give double references, which is not very difficult, as the comparative work has been done in the *Table Générale*.

In regard to Dumont, too, the references are often confusing, because the parts of which the eight volumes are composed are, in some libraries, bound as separate volumes and numbered accordingly, 1 to 15. The references should always be to the volume and part, and not, as in some books, to the bound parts.

Another collection started in the good old days when men seem to have been interested in these matters requires special notice: the *Annual Register*, commenced in 1758, and is still in vigorous and useful life. It seems to have been a curious compilation in its youth. To judge from the variety of topics with which it dealt it must have shared with the *Gentleman's Magazine* in relieving the tedium of our forefathers' existence. To the chronicles of the year, written by Burke the editor, there were added snatches of song, miscellaneous essays, reviews of books, a quaint group under the head "Characters," and, as a happy thought, there was added a collection of "State Papers," introduced by this paragraph in the preface:

"We have made an article of State Papers: they serve to illustrate and confirm the facts advanced in the historical part; and our readers will not be displeased to see so many curious and important pieces together."

The collection includes despatches, treaties and other official documents; but they are put together without much method, and the volumes are difficult to use for reference purposes. Nevertheless, history has so many dark passages from 1756 to the years of the French Revolution that we must be grateful for what the *Annual Register* gives us; and it is quite a repository of the forceful messages which our vigorous representative, Sir Joseph Yorke, had so frequently to deliver to Their High Mightinesses the States General in the years round about 1780. It must, however, be regretfully noted that the translations of documents written in a foreign language are often execrable. It is not so much that "French of Paris" was unknown to

our people; they seem to have lost all control over their mother-tongue.

Now here is a pitfall. There was another and rival collection called the *New Annual Register*, which started in 1780 and ran to 1825. The ground covered annually is the same in both, and the documents printed are practically the same, though the rival has some which the original has not, and *vice versa*. When from bitter experience you have realised that the two publications exist, and have hunted through the volumes of the one to verify a quotation in a document cited from the other, it will be a sufficient guide for the avoidance of confusion in the future—for the word “New” is quite small, and not very noticeable until you look for it—if you remember that the volumes of the rival series are thicker and on larger paper, and the type differently set.

The *Annual Register* proper was published by Dodsley from 1758 to 1790, when, on his death, the copyright was sold to Rivington and the stock to Otridge. Some of the volumes ran into as many as nine editions, and sets are invariably made up of volumes from many different editions; but this need not worry you, so long as you don't get hold of one of the rival volumes, as the different editions were no more than reprintings. Rivington and Otridge both represented large groups of booksellers, and each published “Continuations.” The *New Annual Register* was published by Robinson from 1780, and from 1804 by Stockdale; later the publisher was changed two or three times.

In 1794 another annual collection appeared, edited by Debrett, *State Papers Relative to the War against France*, which ran to 1803—in all eleven volumes. It is more voluminous than either of the *Annual Registers*, but is characterised by the same defects: lack of methodical arrangement and bad translations; and its title leads you to expect a more complete collection than it is. It was not continued after the renewal of the war. Apparently the

editor found the study of the lineage of the nobility and gentry more congenial work, and, as we may opine, more lucrative than that of State Papers.

You will thus see that our English printed collections do contribute a good deal to the common stock of knowledge, but they are sadly in need of digesting. I should add that some interesting Collections of Treaties were published during the War.

But now let me test the collective value of these compilations by putting a practical question: If you wanted to study the texts of the Treaties of Utrecht, where can you find them? So far as I know the answer is, only in the ponderous tomes of Dumont, and a very scarce *Actes et Mémoires* in four 12mo volumes. Its important predecessor, the Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye, can I think only be found in Dumont. Is it not rather dispiriting? And when you bear in mind what I have already said about the documents relating to the French Wars you will see how much work there is still to do.

Now in connexion with these old Treaties I must hoist a danger-signal. People of different nationalities in those far-off days wrote and talked to one another in dog-Latin, and treaties are supposed to have been negotiated in that expressive language. I believe that they were often signed in duplicate originals. The English official copy of the Treaty of Utrecht, for example, is written in Latin and French in double columns. On this a curious question arises with which we are familiar in the Chinese treaties of modern times: in case of variance between the two texts, which language is to prevail? This is sometimes answered by a clause in the treaty itself; I think, however, this was not usual in old times. But leaving this technical question on one side, the historian has to decide which text he will consult. Now I am going to venture on a heresy. The impression left on my mind after some study is that this treaty (and, it may be, others) was originally written in French and afterwards translated into Latin;

therefore I believe that historians may safely rely on the French text.

But what of the English translations? Be very wary of them, even if they are marked "official text," from copies of which, by the way, Chalmers printed. It is not merely that there are lapses into an almost unknown dialect, but there are occasionally grave mistranslations. I give one example of which I have written elsewhere. In the French text of Art. XVII of the Commercial Treaty of Utrecht between England and France it is written: *Et comme il a déjà été stipulé*, and this is rendered into English, "And as it is *now* stipulated"! A modern schoolboy would hardly make such a blunder. The article referred to an arrangement come to by the two countries in the Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye as to a limited mutual application of "free ships free goods." The mistake has had far-reaching consequences, for it served as the basis of many ignorant statements made, not in history books alone, but in Parliament at the time of the Declaration of Paris by Lord Clarendon, Sir William Molesworth, and others.

I have already taken up too much of your time; but there is one other important subject that I want to refer to, and as it will conclude with a motion, perhaps you will bear with me a little longer. It is the weakness of our libraries in foreign books which contain authentic records. Here again I give a fact to support my statement. Baron Charles De Martens' valuable *Causes Célèbres du Droit des Gens* in three volumes was published in 1825, and this edition is always referred to. But there was a second edition, in five volumes, containing a number of other *causes célèbres* published also in Leipsig in 1857, which seems to be unknown in this country. Until I brought one lately from Germany (where uncut copies are still to be had), I believe the only copy available was in the British Museum. This is a good example of what ought not to be. I cannot help thinking that our diplomatic representatives might be instructed to forward books published abroad on

important public questions to the Foreign Office Library as soon as they appear.

And this leads me to make another suggestion. The great impediment which the student will find in his work is that he does not know where to look, apart from the British Museum, for often-quoted but scarce books: for such a monumental work, for example, as Doniol's *History of the Assistance given by France to the Formation of the United States*, which is brimful of documentary information of the first order, derived from the French Archives. In the course of my own work I have been perpetually hampered by being unable to find some important book of reference, and a great deal of time has been wasted in the hunt. I believe it would not be impossible for a Bibliographical Directory to be compiled which should give, not merely the names of books, such as are given in historical works now published, but the libraries, in England or abroad, where they are to be found. Then the student who wants to refer to Dumont, Doniol, Schoell, the Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Commissioners, *Actes et Mémoires* of various periods, Rousset, Wenck, Léonard, Le Clercq, Jenkinson, Chalmers, Hamilton's Works, the American State Papers, and a host of other books of reference, without the aid of which no thorough work can be done, would be able to see at a glance where he could find it. If such a work were started by this Society I feel sure that librarians in all countries would willingly assist.