

## Public Policy Toward Historical Work

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stant increase. And it is very likely to be enlarged by gifts in the direction of historic art. Its commencement is a fortunate event in the history of the University.

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#### PUBLIC POLICY TOWARD HISTORICAL WORK.

Patrick Henry spoke of experience as alone illuminating his pathway; but with equal truth that may be said of states and nations. Change in the order of the lives of men and in the course of states and nations comes largely from considerations of experience. Men turn to memory for lessons of experience and to other men for counsel. States and nations consult their archives or those of other states and nations. Historical libraries and museums disclose the waste and error suffered in the past. They show the deviations in the course of a people. Such institutions inspire to better effort.

The providing of means for original research by future peoples has not long been a popular matter. When the bequest of James Smithson was available to this country Congress debated for ten years before deciding to accept the gift and lay the foundations of an institution which now illuminates our darkest places and fructifies our fields of scholarship. We observe with a sort of alarm that the chance might have fallen the other way and congratulate ourselves that the congressional delay and deliberation of 1846 is the spirit of yesterday.

To-day progressive nations and American commonwealths; many counties and municipalities, maintain or support institutions which prudently gather, preserve and make accessible original matter concerning their history and that of others. The people of these several communities carry the burden of taxation necessary to establish and maintain these institutions with a pleasure equal to that derived from the maintenance of educational systems. No more do the people demand a penurious provision for the support of these than they desire the nonsupport of their educational or judicial departments. Whatever lack has been suffered in the support and encourage-

ment of historical work has come not from the people but from their servants in official relation to the work. Success in the accumulation of valuable materials, the favor with which such enterprises are looked upon by men of local prestige as well as those of wider influence and more extended fields of endeavor, together with the remarkable popularity the institutions meet at the hands and in the attentions of the ordinary, practical, substantial tax-paying citizen, invariably removes official discouragement and entrenches the institutions and their administration in the public policy. Even the educational institutions do not enjoy more freedom from the hazards of local or temporary conditions, and are no more remote from the exigencies of politics and personal design.

The policy of the State of Iowa seems now to be firmly and happily fixed in this respect. Ample equipment is almost complete for the present advantageous handling and accessible arrangement of our priceless historical library and the collection in art portraiture and museum materials. Financial support now corresponds with the favor these meet in the esteem of scholar and lay patron. They are rapidly attaining a high value in the estimation of the public. They will prove valuable stores for future Iowa peoples. This growth, from its origin in the mind of one man who had approvingly observed the similar efforts of other states and nations a quarter of a century ago, has been little short of marvelous. With popular support grown from a few scattered but far sighted patriots in editorial and legislative places to a purpose common in all the State's positive forces where none condemn, few gainsay and a rich and generous people highly applaud, the prospect is little less than inspiring. Former meagerness of official support is now changed to positive zeal in a large number of the best and strongest men in official life to discharge a recognized obligation to the present and future Iowa public.

E. R. H.

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AN EARLY IOWA MILITARY HOSPITAL.—The following interesting item appeared in the *Iowa Religious News-Letter*, published at Dubuque, in the issue of August, 1862:

Having a leisure hour the other day, at Keokuk, we went with a friend through the different wards and apartments of the Military Hospital in

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