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AN
OPEN LETTER
TO THE
PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS
OF THE
CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

BY
JAMES TERRY.
DECEMBER, 1906.



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Arr 1913



No. 78 Wethersfield Ave.
Hartford, Conn.

Dr. Samuel Hart, President Connecticut Historical Society,

Dear Sir:—

In accordance with the promise in your letter of October 8th, I am in receipt of a "Report of the Publication Committee upon the use of Society Titles on Private Publications of Members." The reason why this letter is in printed form is that I desire to have the whole matter placed before every member of the Society, to whom a copy will be sent for their consideration. The report is an *ex-parte* one, for it does not touch upon the vital issue in question: *the unreliability of Mr. Bates's publication in connection with his official title, and use of the same for private ends.* You give no reason in the report for dismembering my query from its connecting issue, and endeavoring to obscure and side track the main question, neither do you submit any part of your letters to those individuals and societies to show whether they covered the whole ground. In your letter of October 8th, you state, "I will put the matter into the hands of the Publication Committee, or rather into the hands of the members of it, excluding Mr. Bates," and yet he contributed some of the responses given in the report of your Committee. His participation, without signing the report, shows his lack of that fine sense of honor which insures clean hands. The judges of our courts act differently.

My letter printed below shows fully my contention in this matter, of which you have taken cognizance of only a part. In the endeavor made in the report to sustain the use of official

title on private publications, all the quoted authors and their publications are placed upon the same level as the one under discussion, a great injustice to them, and another uplifting of an unworthy object.

I am willing to donate \$1000 to the publication fund of our Society, if the Committee will produce a paper issued by any society or individual quoted, which is based upon equally false assumptions and premises, and so grievous in error.

I should like to ask Dr. Hart if, in your capacity as Dean of the Berkeley Divinity School, you should publish an heretical paper with your official title, whether you would attempt in an explanation to your Bishop, or a Diocesan Court, to put yourself in a dual personality, as is attempted for the Librarian in this report. (See paragraph (d) of report.) Should you do so, he undoubtedly would say, "You cannot serve two masters."

Would you, as "Custodian of the Protestant Episcopal Prayer Book of the United States," sanction or permit the rector of an Episcopal church to make a change in this prayer book used in his church service, on the plea that it was a personal matter, and not as an official of the church? Would you be willing to receive Mr. Bates into the Berkeley Divinity School as a pupil to prepare for orders in the church, with the understanding that his "personal" opinions were a free lance as against his clerical duties? That his right hand knoweth not what his left hand doeth!

I would call your attention to one of the most noted cases of discipline in your church, the Rev. Dr. Crapsey, who published his book, "Religion and Politics," with simply his name, but who had not the weakness to attempt to hide behind a dual personality, whose conscientiousness would have scorned such contemptible evasion of his personal beliefs, to relieve himself from the censure of the Church Court of Review.

I have never known but one personality that exceeded its oneness to be a success.

This eminent thinker in this same book states that "religion and history are so closely associated that it is impossible to treat of one without reference to the other," and I have yet to learn in what manner false assumptions and doctrines against the policies of the church, are different from those against the policies of our historical society; both institutions are supposed to stand for the truth.

Before proceeding farther I will submit a copy of the essential part of my letter to you of October 5th.

78 Wethersfield Ave., Hartford, Conn.,

Oct. 5, 1906.

Dr. Samuel Hart,

Dear Sir:—

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The matter I desired to bring before the Society was the unwarranted use by Mr. Bates of his official title with the Society on a publication issued by him last July, the title of his publication and review by me you already have in hand. This use by Mr. Bates of his official position in the Society on the publication noted, gives a quasi-endorsement of the Society to the paper, which paper is founded purely on a false assumption. See page 8 of his book.

Had Mr. Bates printed his book without official title, and put in its place *A Romance*, I should have taken no notice of it, but I do not consider it the function of the Connecticut Historical Society to circulate fiction.

I shall be pleased to hear from you what action the Society takes in the matter.

Sincerely yours,

James Terry.

The report of the Publication Committee is as follows:
Report of the Publication Committee upon the Use of Society
Titles on Private Publications of Members.

- At the last previous meeting of the Society, objection was raised to the use by the Librarian of his official title on his private publications without first obtaining the formal consent of the Society, it being suggested that such use amounted to a quasi-guarantee by the Society of the contents of such publications. The Publication Committee were desired to report to the Society upon this matter; but as the Librarian is a member of this committee, its deliberations were necessarily made without
- (a) him. The duty of the remaining members is evidently comprised in three procedures: first, to ascertain the previous practice of this Society; second, to ascertain the corresponding practice of other societies of a like nature; third, to advise concerning the future practice desirable for this Society.

- Regarding the first, we find that the uniform practice of this Society has been to leave the matter to the choice and discretion of the writer, without formal permission; and that such titles have been frequently used, and never before criticised. Our two distinguished Presidents, J. Hammond Trumbull and Charles J. Hoadley, both noted for punctilious insistence upon official proprieties, so acted at will. Dr. Trumbull used the title of Corresponding Secretary upon the first two volumes of the Public Records of Connecticut, 1850-2. Dr. Hoadley used his title of President upon his pamphlet "The Hiding of the Charter," issued in 1900. Hon. Richard A. Wheeler used his
- (b) title of a Vice-president upon his history of the Town of Stonington, published in 1900. Mr. Bates has used his title of Librarian upon no less than seven books and pamphlets issued before the one to which objection is made, which have been displayed with other books in the Society's library, and placed

in the hands of officers and members, without criticism; and upon an even more widely-known article in a cyclopedia. And the member raising the objection uses his title of a member of the Society upon the titlepage of the pamphlet replying to the one to which objection is made.

Upon the second point, your committee cannot find that the question has ever been mooted, much less decided, in any other society. In a number of leading and typical ones with which we have corresponded, we are assured by their officials that such has been the case. Of the one most famous for the narrow restriction of its membership, the high position of its members, and its jealous pride of its name, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the librarian, Dr. Samuel A. Green, writes: "This Society has never taken any action on this matter. Instances are not uncommon where members have put on the titlepage of their individual issues the office which they held in the Society, or their membership therein. It has not been considered that the Society is committed to any opinion which the writer might express." Instances are Justin Winsor, who in the great "Narrative and Critical History of America" terms himself "Corresponding Secretary of the Massachusetts Historical Society"; and James Savage, its former president, (c) who uses that title in his edition of Winthrop's "History of New Engand," 1853. The librarian of the New York Historical Society replies: "This Society has not taken any action on the question. The later Dr. George H. Moore, librarian of the Society, and later superintendent of the Lenox Library, published several volumes and pamphlets with the title of his office printed on the titlepage." The librarian of the Rhode Island Historical Society replies: "The query has never, to my knowledge, been brought before our Society for action." The librarian of the New Haven Historical Society replies: "This

Society has never acted upon the matter to which you refer. I have always felt at liberty to use any title that I might have. Last spring I was elected librarian, and have always added that title to my name on any circular sent out. I think that this is customary." Reuben Gold Thwaites, the distinguished Western writer and editor, for twenty years secretary of the Wisconsin State Historical Society, writes: "It is not usual for officials to obtain formal consent for such usage of the title of office. I certainly never have done so, would not think of doing so, would not be expected to do so, and never heard of anybody else before who was expected to do so." Of eighty volumes of Mr. Thwaites's individual publications seen by the committee, in only one has his title of secretary been omitted. Another well-known historical writer, Rev. Horace Edwin Hayden, for many years corresponding secretary and librarian of the Wyoming Historical and Genealogical Society, has used the former title on publications of his own, and writes: "I did not dream of asking the privilege. The objection is hypercritical. In my forty years of experience I never heard of such a thing." Caleb B. Tillinghast, for many years librarian of the Massachusetts State Library, and now first vice-president and chairman of the Publication Committee of the New England Historical-Genealogical Society, says: "I have never before heard of any objection to the use of a title in the way you indicate. For such a purpose a person's title and honors are, I should suppose, and I think are generally considered, his property. It is practically a universal custom. It is simply a statement of facts, and the writer is entitled to such a statement."

Regarding librarians outside of societies, the facts are too familiar to need exposition. The title is regarded as even more

(d) (Underlining on this page by J. T.)

important for the information of the public than for the credit of the writer; it tells them on whose authority they receive certain facts; but that authority is personal and not official. Such men as John Fiske, William F. Poole, Justin Winsor, William I. Fletcher, Herbert Putnam, Ainsworth R. Spofford, Richard Garnett, and many other distinguished librarians, regularly use or have used their titles, without supposition that their authority was reinforced by that of the bodies they adorned.

Certain outside opinions, which carry great weight from the position and character of the writers, may be cited. Dr. Charles M. Andrews, professor of history in Johns Hopkins University and a corresponding member of this Society, writes: "The assertion that a librarian, when putting forth a printed work, may not use his official title without the consent of the corporation whose official he is, is contrary to the prevailing practices. I have never heard of an instance where a librarian either asked permission or was expected to ask permission. I know that I should not." President Hadley of Yale writes: "If a man prints his title in the exact form in which it is published in the College catalogue, there is not the least need of asking special consent." Judge Simeon E. Baldwin, acting chief justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court, and one of our vice-presidents, writes: "In my opinion, it is entirely proper (e) for one who holds an office in a literary institution to affix his title to his name, in stating the authorship of any literary work he may publish. Nor do I understand that the institution is thus, by any implication, held out as giving its authority to the work. When Renan, for instance, published his 'History of Israel,' he added to his name 'Member of the Institute'; but no one dreamt that the Institute was thus repre-

(Underlining on this page by J. T.)

sented as concurring in his conclusions. The Century Dictionary titlepage names the editor as 'William Dwight Whitney, Professor of Comparative Philology at Yale.' Was Yale thus made its sponsor? I think there is nothing in the point suggested. The practice of the world is against it."

- The judgment of your committee must coincide with this universal consensus of action and opinion. It would be perverse to advise that this Society should act alone in first making a restriction upon the liberty of its officers which has never been made or apparently thought of in any other; and it seems evident that public opinion has never identified the official or member with the society, to the extent of holding it responsible for his utterances. Not only so, but the requirement
- (f) would involve the Society in a most unpleasant and impracticable dilemma. Either it must invariably grant the permission upon asking, which would leave its responsibility greater than now, with no better guarantee for itself, since it would be held to be acting upon knowledge yet would not be acting upon knowledge; or it must appoint a committee to examine every publication, set the committee's opinion against the author's, and vote upon the question, or decide as to the permit upon a general discussion, which is of course impossible to consider; or must refuse it altogether, which would be a solitary ungraciousness without object or good result.

Leverett Belknap, }
Forrest Morgan, } Committee on
Samuel Hart, } Publications.

Upon receiving this report, I called upon Mr. Leverett Belknap, one of the committee, who informed me that the several members of the committee wrote to different societies and individuals, and upon the receipt of responses Mr. Forrest Morgan formulated and wrote the report that was signed by you all and sent to me; that there were some twenty-five of these letters of one kind and another, of which Mr. Bates furnished a part. He also stated that the committee had read my letter to you, that he had seen Mr. Bates's book but had not read it, and you also had written me that you had not seen the book. Possibly this may be the reason the committee did not act upon the full text of my letter.

Your first two references are to our two noted presidents, Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull and Dr. Charles J. Hoadley, as using official titles. I remember well when I joined the Society nearly forty years ago (I believe in membership I am next to the oldest living member) a bare half-dozen of us would gather around the old wood stove in the Society's room, and discuss historical lore, and have a social chat in the most informal manner; the business part was conducted likewise, and as your report does not show that he did not have the consent of the Society, it is fair to assume that Dr. Trumbull's "punctilious" regard for official correctness would have led him to consult with the Society, and that they acquiesced in the matter; the merit and value of his work would undoubtedly have gained their assent.

The claim in the report that Dr. Hoadley used his title of president upon the pamphlet "The Hiding of the Charter," is entirely a different matter. I am informed by the person who owned the manuscript written by Dr. Hoadley, and who presented it to the "Acorn Club," by whom it was published, that it contained no titlepage, nor signature of Dr. Hoadley

with his official title, but that the title page with his official title was placed there by Mr. Bates, who had charge of printing the pamphlet for the Acorn Club, and yet Mr. Bates was present at the reading of this report at the meeting of the Society November 13th, and made no attempt by word or deed to correct his own act which libelously impugned to my life-long friend Dr. Hoadley, such use of his title. Mr. Bates's actions are reprehensible. The plea that Mr. Bates used his official title on former publications is no palliation. They are akin to the violations of the Inter State Commerce Act, in that they are cumulative and serve to increase the penalty. It was the criticism of his article in the cyclopædia which caused the change in the Publication Committee and put Mr. Forrest Morgan there, whose servitude is apparent in this report. There is also another article in this same cyclopædia signed thus:

Forrest Morgan,
Connecticut Historical Society.

In this case he is the whole thing. He is IT. How would this look signed to a Hearst campaign document, as showing the depths to which the Society could be subjected?

The shifting in the report to the use of title of member on publications as being the same as an official title, to which I take exception, is evasive and puerile. The title of member simply implies identity with an institution; the officials carry with their titles the force and power of organization, and it is through them that all its actions, both legal and otherwise, are given corporate or organized authority. A member of the Episcopal denomination could not speak with the authority of a Bishop, and there are thousands of good men who call themselves members of the Democratic party who repudiate the acts of some officials of that organization, but for which the party

has to suffer through those officials. Would the affixing as "member" of a half-dozen widely differentiated societies by parody of reasoning make all of them responsible?

"Upon the second point your committee cannot find that the question has ever been mooted, much less decided, in any other society." This speaks volumes for the merit and character of their publications, and obviates the necessity of further comment on the quotations. It is the exception that proves the rule, accentuated by abuse.

Judge Baldwin's question, "Was Yale made the sponsor for William Dwight Whitney, Professor of Comparative Philology at Yale, as editor of the Century Dictionary, on the titlepage?" Unquestionably Yale was, to the extent of his contribution, just the same as if his work had been uttered in the classroom. Professors are employed to represent the ideals in their special lines, and receive the sanction and endorsement of a university upon those lines whether uttered in the classroom or printed issue, and when they fall from grace, the subtle change by the unwritten law of corporate procedure is affected like the drop of the snowflake. Universities are jealous and sensitive in their exercise of control over their professors, and what their institutions stand for; to forego that, would mean chaos within their organizations. It is only within a few days that Yale University made public the refusal of the use of Woolsey Hall for meetings over which it had no control, for fear that the impression might go forth that these meetings were sanctioned by Yale University.

The concluding paragraph of the report is mere twaddle; committees are appointed for the very purpose of handling the incongruous reasons stated therein, and the writer of it is acting under one of those committees.

The fallacious, impotent and contradictory reasoning presented in paragraph (d) in the report speaks for itself. "The title is regarded as even more important for the information of the public, than for the credit of the writer; it tells them on whose authority they receive certain facts, but that authority is personal and not official."

The publication committee have made their report, and it remains now with the Society to say whether they accept its conclusions and allow the use of official titles on untrustworthy publications, or whether they will exercise that corporate and institutional control which is practiced by the church, the university, scientific, and historical societies. Every corporate body is a law unto itself within its corporate provisions, and the Connecticut Historical Society is no exception.

Sincerely yours,

James Terry.

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