

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS,

WASHINGTON, Dec. 5, 1877.

DEAR SIR: You ask my opinion concerning the value of your "Dictionary of American Books." I regard it as the best, and, in fact, the only approximately complete bibliography of American books, or of works relating in any manner to this country, which exists.

Very respectfully,

A. R. SPORWOOD, *Librarian of Congress.*

MR. JOSEPH SABIN.

728 SPRUCE ST., May 13th, 1878.

DEAR MR. STONE: When I was last in New York—about the middle of February—I understood that the "Dictionary of Books on America" of Mr. Sabin, on which I have been accustomed very much to rely in matters connected with our American Historical Bibliology, had been attacked for omissions and inaccuracies. I did not hear in what Review, nor whether in a way that was in the course of fair literary judgment, or only in some way indicating an envious or interested source.

I have always looked upon Sabin's book as one of vast research; one, indeed, that is an honor to our American bibliology; and hearing lately of a copy that might be bought at a price somewhat below the subscription-price was inclined, if a person who had a previous offer of it did not take it, to buy it.

You, of course, in your official capacity and from the character of your studies, must know by experimental information as well as by the judgment of scholars, in what estimate the book deserves to be held. May I ask the favor of you to let me know whether you have ever had any reason to question the great value of the book; yourself, or have ever heard any literary judgments, which ought to lead any one to question it.

Of course, there must, in any work so immensely extensive, and dealing with books of which so many can rarely or never be seen—be many omissions and many errors of misstatement. I, myself, who have examined more fully than anybody known to me, the bibliography of the British and American Law Reports, had to observe (Pref. to 3d. ed. of the Reports, p. 38) that "any person, in characterizing one after another, a series of books so immensely numerous as the British Reports, must take much of his criticism upon trust." Yet one and all of these Reports may be seen in a few libraries; not all in one library but all in certain libraries easily to be inspected. This could not be affirmed of the books that Sabin speaks of. I presume that some do not exist, or cannot be proved to exist; at any rate are inaccessible to one and the same man. What I want to know from you is, whether from actual and experimental observation or from what you have ever heard from bibliologists of character, you have ever had any reason to doubt of the great and enduring value of Sabin's book to every scholar engaged in the study of our history. I am, dear sir,

With much respect, yours truly,

MR. FREDERICK D. STONE,

*Librarian of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.*

JOHN WM. WALLACE.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA,

PHILADELPHIA, May 15, 1878.

MY DEAR SIR: In reply to yours of the 13th ult., asking if I had ever any reason to question the value, etc., of Mr. Sabin's "Dictionary of Books relating to America," I must say, that far from doing so I have always placed the highest value on the work, and consider it wonderfully accurate and complete.

The opinion I have formed is supported by the unqualified terms of praise in which I have heard members of this Society speak of Mr. Sabin's work, after having consulted it; and I am unable to see how any one interested in American History, could allow such errors as may have crept into the Dictionary—and what work of its character is free from them—to impair in his mind the value of the whole.

I am, dear sir, very truly yours,

HON. JOHN WILLIAM WALLACE,

*President of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.*

F. D. STONE, *Librarian.*