

# Whitefriars Journal.

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No. 8.

APRIL, 1902.

PRIVATE  
CIRCULATION.

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## DEATH OF FRIAR B. F. STEVENS.

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It is with deep sorrow we record the death of Friar B. F. Stevens, which occurred at his residence, The Sheaves, Surbiton Hill, on March 5th. The funeral took place at Kensal Green Cemetery on March 10th. Amongst those present at the graveside were Friars Henry J. Brown (deceased's partner), G. H. Perkins, Arthur Warren, R. Newton Crane, R. Noyes Fairbanks, and Arthur Spurgeon. A handsome wreath, bearing the inscription "A Tribute of Affection and Esteem from the Brotherhood of White Friars" was placed on the coffin. There were also present the American Ambassador and the whole of the Embassy staff, with many representatives of the American Society in London, the British Museum, and the Public Record Office.

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### A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE.

Benjamin Franklin Stevens was born at Barnet, Vermont, on February 19th, 1833. He was educated at St. Johnsbury (Vermont) Academy, and entered the University of Vermont in 1853, but did not finish the course. After leaving the University he filled various public offices in his native State and in those early years laid the foundation of his later interest in historical studies by arranging the Vermont Historical Manuscripts prior to 1800, and other similar work.

He came to London in 1860 to join his brother Henry Stevens (the noted bibliographer who died in 1886) in the bookselling business, but soon started on his own account the American Library and Literary Agency, which he continued to the time of his death. Through this Agency many of the literary rarities and treasures of the last forty years have found their way to the other side of the Atlantic.

In 1866 he was appointed United States Government Despatch Agent and continued in that position up to his death. His work in connection with this appointment brought him into contact with most of the leading American visitors to this country and his genial manner so endeared him to his countrymen, whether visitors or residents here, that he was frequently called "the father of the American Colony in London." In 1865 he married Charlotte Whittingham, daughter of the well-known printer, Mr. Charles Whittingham, of the Chiswick Press, and many of the celebrated headpieces and ornaments used by the Press were of her design.

Mr. Stevens himself was for some years a partner in the Chiswick Press.

About 1870 he began to take up the historical work with which his name will be mostly associated in the future, for, although he never claimed to be an Historian himself, his publications and researches have laid the foundations for other students and writers and have in many cases caused certain episodes in American History to be almost re-written.

Amongst his most important publications were the "Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives relating to America, 1773-83," with description, editorial notes, transcription, etc., in 25 foolscap volumes, and a facsimile of the Paris MS. codex, "Columbus, His Own Book of Privileges, 1502," with English translation, etc., a foolscap volume of great typographical beauty.

Undoubtedly, however, his greatest contribution to historical research is his great "Manuscript Chronological and Alphabetical Catalogue Index of American papers in the Archives of England, France, Holland, and Spain from 1763 to 1784," which, when completed, will form nearly 200 foolscap folio volumes and make a splendid monument to his memory. It is pleasant to know that during the last few months of his life, while he suffered intense pain, he still was able to put the final touches necessary to complete his scheme. Indeed the last work he was able to do before his death was the revision of his "Introduction" to the volumes giving a history of their conception and growth.

He was Chairman of the American Society in London during the first year of its existence, and subsequently, until his death, its treasurer. He was also a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries (an honour seldom conferred on an American), F.R. Hist. Society, Member of the American Antiquarian Society, and a corresponding member of various American Historical Societies. The University of Vermont conferred upon him recently the degree of L.H.D., and he was also M.A. of Dartmouth College, New Hampshire.

His death is a great loss to his many friends and not least to his brethren of the Whitefriars Club, for no one ever better combined the qualities of a gentleman, a scholar, and a devoted friend.

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HENRY J. BROWN.

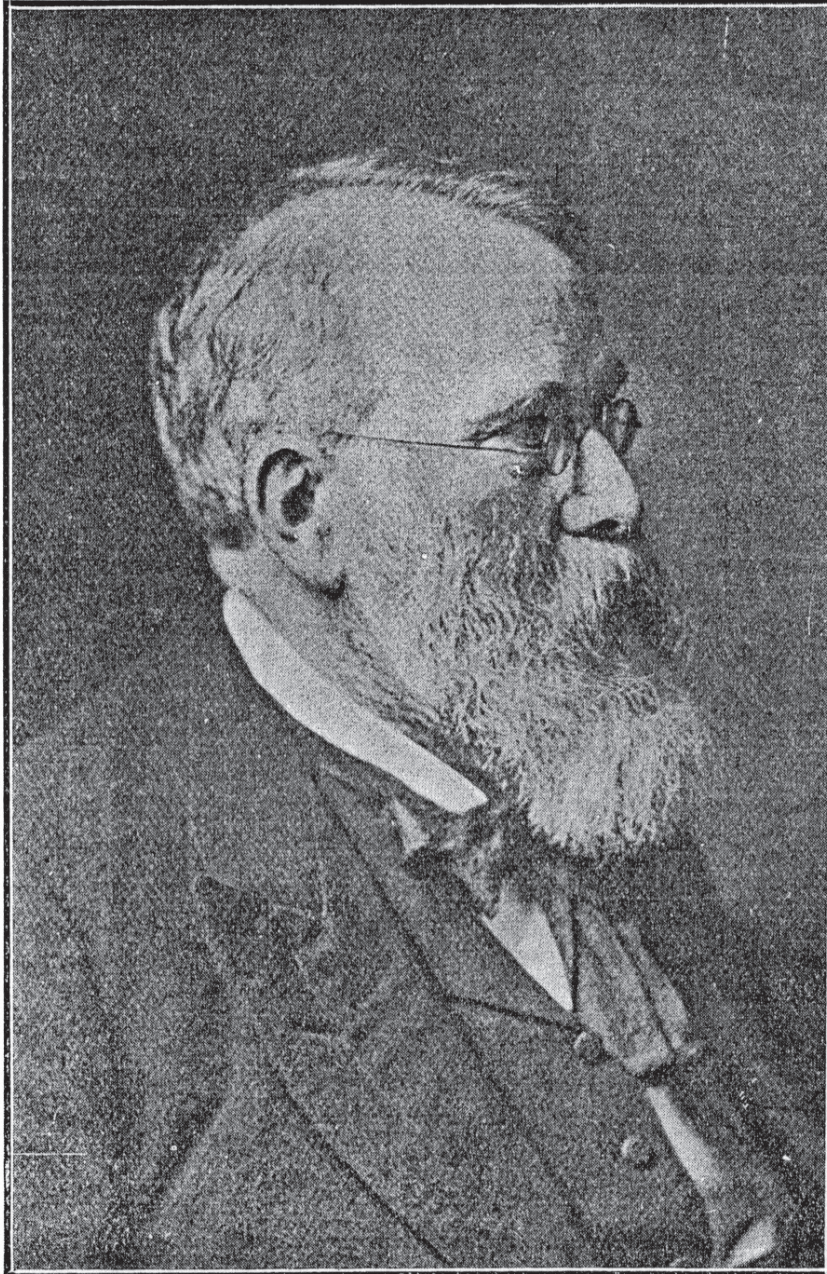
#### APPRECIATION BY FRIAR RICHARD WHITEING.

At a weekly meeting of the Brotherhood on Friday, March 7th, the Prior for the day, Friar F. J. Cross, alluded to the great loss the Club had sustained by the death of Friar B. F. Stevens, and called upon Friar Whiteing to propose a resolution of sympathy with the widow and relatives.

FRIAR WHITEING said :—Stevens was such a good friar, such a good Englishman, and, above all, such a good American.



As a friar he was always a mainstay of our meetings by his geniality and his genuine loveableness. He seemed to have in perfection an unobtrusive note that was still a positive note in itself. One felt good near him, to use the expressive



FRIAR B. F. STEVENS.

Americanism. He was so indulgent about others, so entirely free from all manner of evil speaking, that one always felt disposed to enjoyment the moment one saw him in the room. Then he had more marked qualities of friarhood at need. I shall never forget how well he carried through a little task of



brotherly helpfulness which the Club entrusted to him. One of our members had fallen on evil days, and the Club, after its custom, undertook to see what it could do for those he had left behind. They wished to live in more modest circumstances, and they were ready to part with some books and artistic objects which they would not want in their new home. It was decided that these things should be sold, and Friar Stevens undertook to sell them. So he took us all with him to the house, and there, seated quietly in a chair in the drawing-room as amateur auctioneer, he made everything fetch about three times its value, or four times where he bought it in, ostensibly for the family, but really for himself. It was a beautiful thing, beautifully done. His exaggerations in his new part were so quiet in tone, and so deliciously extravagant in substance; a perfect little bit of the fine art of doing good.

Then, in another aspect, he always seemed to me to have been, in some degree, an American by mistake, and to have been born a typical John Bull. In the first place he looked the character, and, in the next, he was the character as it exists in the ideal of our national aspirations, a man of strength and of goodness in equal proportions, the one finely tempering the other—downright, his word his bond, and withal of a genial 'live-and-let-live' that made the world seem a sweeter place for his presence. And yet this very best of John Bulls I have ever known was also the very best of Americans. He served his country faithfully in a high official capacity. He held a post of great importance as dispatch agent; and public documents of the greatest importance constantly passed through his hands. In another department his business activities brought him into close relationship with the best minds of his country. He was a sort of living guide to the great treasures of our literature. He bought whole libraries at need with knowledge and with judgment. He was a keen competitor for choice editions, and sent many a precious folio to America which England could ill spare. Above all he made a liberal use of his fortune—still for the benefit of his own people. He saw that the one thing inaccessible to him as a buyer was the treasure of documents bearing on the history of the United States, that exists in our public archives. But though he could not buy, he could copy, and he organised a system of copying in facsimile which gave American scholars at home access to some of our most precious records, in their entirety, and in their exactness of verisimilitude.

For this, and for many other reasons on which it might not become me to dwell at a moment like this, I feel that the Club has sustained a very severe loss, and in its name I beg to offer the expression of its deep and most respectful condolence to the relatives of our dead comrade.

FRIAR W. SENIOR, in a few appropriate sentences, seconded the resolution, which was carried in solemn silence.



## A TRIBUTE FROM THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR.

In the death of Benjamin Franklin Stevens, the American Colony in London has suffered a serious loss. He had held the responsible office of United States Despatch Agent for thirty-six years, and for a still longer period—from 1860, when he joined his brother Henry, a noted bibliographer, in the book selling business, till the time of his death—he was the purchasing agent of many American libraries and collectors. His knowledge of books in both countries was very extensive and valuable, and he was often consulted by experts in bibliography. But his more unique distinction was as an antiquarian and historical searcher and investigator. For a great many years he had been engaged with a large corps of assistants, searchers, and copyists in examining, in the archives of Great Britain and other countries, documents throwing light on English and American history during the critical period beginning at a date anterior to the first signs of breach between the thirteen colonies and the Mother Country, and extending till after the close of the War of Separation. He had long ago become the highest living authority on the documentary history of those times. He had made a chronological and alphabetical catalogue index of American papers deposited in the public offices of England, France, Holland and Spain from 1763 to 1784, and had extended his work of that nature into many private collections. To illustrate his reputation as to all such knowledge—on the very day of his death, in answer to an application from the New York Historical Society for record evidence as to an important event in New York City while the British troops were there in 1776, I was referred by the War Office to him as “the most likely person to assist in the question raised,” which had baffled inquiry elsewhere. He had become a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and of the Royal Historical Society, and a member of the *Société d'Histoire Diplomatique*, and of the principal Antiquarian and Historical Societies in the United States. As material for the future historian, and as a guide to all students of antiquities and genealogy, his work is of immense importance, and it is gratifying to know that its results are likely to be preserved and transmitted.

On social and personal grounds his loss is deeply lamented. He was the oldest American man of business of any prominence resident in London, and was one of the founders and first Chairman of the American Society, in whose useful work he took a



deep interest. His happy temperament and genial and sympathetic disposition made all with whom he came in contact his friends. Literary men were fond of his society, and he of theirs. Mr. Lowell in particular was much attached to him, often consulted him, and relied upon his valuable suggestions and information. He was a noble man of generous impulses, high character and pure nature, and devoted a long and busy life to useful pursuits.

I desire to place on record my high appreciation of his fine character and of the great importance of his life's work. His charming personal qualities, which made him dear to his associates, will long survive in their memory.

JOSEPH H. CHOATE.

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#### A FEW IMPRESSIONS BY FRIAR ARTHUR WARREN.

Among White Friars none has filled a larger place in the hearts of men than Benjamin Franklin Stevens. Everybody who knew this man, and he was known by many men in many countries, knew him as the embodiment of kindness. His place in life was many-sided. Some knew him as an officer of the American Government; others knew him as an historian, others as a book-seller, others as a bibliographer, or a publisher, others—years ago—as a partner in the Chiswick Press, others as an antiquary, and others as the purchasing agent in England of important American libraries, public and private, but everybody knew him as a sturdy New Englander, one of the most lovable men that ever gripped the hand and said "God speed." He was always doing something for somebody, and doing it wisely.

B. F. Stevens was one of the eight or nine American members of the Whitefriars Club, and the second of his countrymen to join our order. He became a Friar in 1890, but long before that his presence was familiar in our refectory at Anderton's. Of his sixty-nine years, forty-one were lived in England. He married an Englishwoman, Charlotte Whittingham, an artist, a daughter of the celebrated printer Charles Whittingham, whose work with the publisher William Pickering conferred a lasting honour on the making of printed books in England.

Historical research was his chief delight. But he had another delight which matched it, although it is not set down in official records, nor capable of cataloguing—the cultivation of friendly understanding between American and English folk. His energy as an historian was indefatigable. Appreciation of his work will increase with time as the results of it are utilised. For more than



thirty years he directed a staff of trained assistants in the compilation of a monumental index to Documents Relating to America in the archives of England, Holland, France and Spain. These documents, concerning the years from 1763 to 1784, are numbered by tens of thousands, and they had first to be discovered, rescued from neglect and dust. His work in this direction led him to publish facsimiles of some of the manuscripts, with editorial notes, descriptions and translations. He selected and published 2,107 of these facsimiles, in 200 sets, comprising 25 volumes. For most men this would have been the work of a lifetime. With our Friar it was an incident.

A few years ago he photographed, at the Foreign Office in Paris, the MSS. codex, "Christopher Columbus, His Own Book of Privileges," reproducing the original with transliteration, translation, and notes, in a large volume which is justly regarded as a triumph of scholarly editing, and of typography and process work. He published "The Campaign in Virginia, 1781," dealing with the Clinton Cornwallis controversy, and General Sir William Howe's Orderly Book, with precis of the correspondence between the British Government and Sir William Howe. He calendared for the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, the American portion of the Earl of Dartmouth's papers; and the Headquarters papers of the British Commanders-in-Chief in America, Generals Sir William Howe, Sir Henry Clinton, and Sir Guy Carleton. These "headquarters papers" are preserved in the Royal Institution. A year ago—January, 1901—he published a map (10 ft. by 4 ft.) of New York and Environs, A.D. 1782. The original coloured drawing of this map he discovered at the War Office in London. It was made for the British military authorities of the time, and is a very interesting and important work, the best map of the place, they say, up to that time.

Mr. Stevens was a member of a dozen societies, American, English, and French. He was the first Chairman of the American Society in London. His name and word were honoured, his knowledge and advice sought by governments, and bibliographers, and students on both sides of the Atlantic. No man of our time had more friends. The traveller who went to any capital, or any seat of learning, in the Old World or in the New, with letters from Mr. Stevens had all doors opened for him. And yet this was a man of modest nature and simple living; not a courtier, a speech-maker, or a seeker of fame. He thought straight, as Lowell said, and he thought truth and lived it.

During the past two years he suffered much. In the past year he suffered greatly; there was hardly a moment without sharp physical pain. But his mind was as clear as ever, and he worked on.

It is difficult to write about B. F. Stevens. The loss is too new and great. One hears the cheery voice, and sees the genial face, and remembers a thousand deeds of friendship. And the



pen stops. Here was a man who loved his fellow men; and they loved him.

ARTHUR WARREN.

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#### A PERSONAL NOTE BY FRIAR FAIRBANKS.

Next to his thoughtlessness of self certainly came his simplicity and straightforwardness of character. If a perplexing problem of vexed self-esteem or strained relations were brought to him to solve he simply cut the knot, or untied it so deftly that one wondered if it had ever been.

I hesitate to speak of the way he sought out occasions to lend a helping hand, or give a still more helpful word, of how he anticipated the wants of friendship and met them before they were even realised, because there are so many scores of others equally indebted to him who can phrase their gratitude much better. But his unfailing kindness, his endless resources on behalf of others, his tact and sound common sense were gifts so gracefully offered that they could not be refused, and I cannot forbear adding my own tribute.

He seemed to have the rare gift of reaching the hearts of all men equally, without distinction of country, rank, or position. Although he left his home in Vermont some forty years ago, it was most touching to me to find among the country people of his native village an affectionate remembrance which time did not erase. I doubt if any man were more successful in keeping a hold on all who had ever known him.

These Vermont people, too, were much in his thoughts in his last years. I recall, with keen pleasure, a long afternoon he spent reading to me the diary of his grandfather's experiences, as he rode on horseback into the then wilderness of Upper New England, and founded a home in the clearing he made in the forests. He often talked with me as to ways and means to supply the people of his native town with the opportunities for reading of which he had felt some lack in his boyhood, and ended by selecting and giving a large number of books to help found a library for them. In all his years of life here, he never allowed himself to lose the homely phrases of New England life, and I have before me the very cordial letter in which he said he was "real glad" to welcome a new-comer from his native State; and he never failed to ask me for news of his old home and the friends he had left.

Surely in this unassuming simplicity and loyalty lay much of the secret of his hold on the hearts of those who knew him.

ROBERT NOYES FAIRBANKS.



## CLUB NOTES.

THE Committee have devoted the greater portion of this issue of our little JOURNAL to appreciations of our dear friend Friar B. F. Stevens. He was a member of the Committee until December last, when he asked to be relieved of the position, as he was convinced, so he wrote to his colleagues, that the rest of his days would be spent in a sick chamber. He suggested that his friend and partner, Friar Henry J. Brown, should take the place of the "old invalid" as he described himself, and at the annual meeting Friar Brown was unanimously elected in his place. Friar Stevens held a very warm place in the affections of the members of the Brotherhood, and his memory will long be green in our midst.

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A LETTER has been received on behalf of Mrs. Stevens thanking the members of the Club for the resolution of sympathy passed at the weekly meeting on March 7th.

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THE portrait of our late brother is reproduced by the courtesy of Mr. Robert Marston, Editor of the "Publishers' Circular."

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OWING to illness, Mr. A. Birrell was unable to fulfil his engagement on February 7th to open a conversation on "The Commerce of Men *versus* the Commerce of Books," and his place was taken at short notice by Friar Richard Whiteing. Two guests, Mr. Maurice Hewlett and Mr. Benjamin Swift, greatly contributed to the interest of the evening. Mr. Birrell has accepted an invitation to dine with the Club on the occasion of the Shakespeare Commemoration on April 25th, when Friar Winston S. Churchill, M.P., will preside. The guests that evening will include Mr. Alfred Tennyson, grandson of the late Poet Laureate.

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WE are much indebted to the American Ambassador for so kindly acceding to our request to contribute the short article which appears elsewhere on Friar B. F. Stevens.

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Two House Dinners held on February 21st and March 21st, presided over respectively by Friar J. Bloundelle Burton and Friar Commander Robinson, were a great success. After the first dinner, members balloted for seats at the Club windows to view the Coronation Procession. It is proposed to erect a staging on Friday, June 27th, capable of accommodating thirty-seven persons, and luncheon will be provided in St. Dunstan's Room.

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FRIARS who wish to have the refusal of any tickets which may not be taken up by those who were successful at the ballot are requested to send their names at once to the Hon. Secretary.

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OF the Friars who are on the sick list, it is satisfactory to report that Friar J. Farlow Wilson is recovering from a severe



attack of bronchitis. He celebrates his semi-jubilee of membership this year. Friar A. J. Fuller, who has been at Nordrach-on-Mendip since last September, has returned to his home at East Twickenham for a little change. According to present arrangement he will go back to Nordrach after Easter. Friar Spurgeon was allowed to see him for a short time last week. He was pleased to hear all about the "dear old Club," and was much touched when he was told that constant inquiries were made about him at the meetings of the Brotherhood.

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A PROPOSAL, made at a special Club meeting, to modify the rule limiting the town membership to one hundred, was rejected by an overwhelming majority. Since this meeting three vacancies have occurred, and these have been filled by the election of Shan F. Bullock, novelist; W. H. Helm, Literary Editor of the *Morning Post*; and Benjamin Swift, novelist.

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A MOTION that guests should be invited to the House Dinners was withdrawn. An excellent suggestion was made during the discussion that the younger members of the Club should make a point of attending the House Dinners with a view to becoming better acquainted with the older Friars. The Committee hope this will be acted upon.

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As Sir William Richmond was unable to attend the meeting on February 28th through illness, Mr. Holman Hunt entertained the Club with some interesting reminiscences.

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"THE Americanisation of England" was the topic introduced by Mr. Sidney Low on February 14th, and on March 7th Mr. John Murray opened a conversation on "Author, Publisher, and Literary Agent."

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THE last "At Home" for the Session will be held on Monday, April 14th, when Mrs. Max Pemberton has kindly promised to act as hostess. An invitation will be sent to every Friar for himself and lady.

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ON April 4th Friar Charles Pearce, who has been a member of the Club for twenty-seven years, will open a "talk" on Penny Fiction—a subject on which he is an admitted authority. Health permitting the chair will be taken by his old comrade, Friar J. Farlow Wilson.

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A DOZEN members of the Richmond Club are to be entertained by the same number of Friars at the weekly dinner on April 11th, when Friar John Foster Fraser will preside, and the Club guests will be Sir Clements R. Markham, President of the Royal



Geographical Society, and Mr. F. T. Bullen. "Travellers' Tales" will be the order of the evening.

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FRIAR MAX PEMBERTON will lead off a symposium on "How I got into Print" on April 18th, and Friar L. F. Austin will take the chair.

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THE arrangements for the Annual Ladies' Banquet at the Hotel Cecil, on Friday, May 2nd, are practically complete. The Club guests will be the Countess of Warwick, John Oliver Hobbes (Mrs. Craigie), Lucas Malet (Mrs. St. Leger Harrison), Madam Sarah Grand and Mrs. Florence Annie Steel. The chair will be taken by Friar Anthony Hope. Mrs. Craigie will respond to the toast "Sovran Woman" and Lady Warwick will propose "Mere Man." The dinner will be held in the Victoria Room, to be followed at ten o'clock by a *Conversazione* in the Grand Hall. An excellent musical programme has been arranged. Further particulars will be given in a circular.

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THE Committee invited the American Ambassador and Mrs. Choate to the Annual Ladies' Banquet, but official engagements unfortunately prevent Mr. Choate's acceptance. The Hon. Secretary has received the following letter:

"1, Carlton House Terrace, S.W.,  
"20th March, 1902.

"DEAR MR. SPURGEON,

"Mrs. Choate and I had hoped to be able to accept the kind invitation of the White Friars to dine with them on the 2nd of May, and to enjoy the many good things promised for that occasion, but I regret to say that other engagements of an official character have supervened for that very evening, which will make it quite impracticable for us to accept your very cordial invitation.—Yours very truly,

"JOSEPH H. CHOATE."

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THE Committee of the Richmond Club, having arranged to give a Pastoral Play in the beautiful old riverside garden adjoining their Club House, on Saturday, June 7th, send a cordial invitation to Friars to become honorary visiting members for that day, with the privilege of introducing guests, ladies or gentlemen. Full particulars concerning this invitation, which we are sure will be greatly appreciated by the Friars, will be posted in due course.

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OUR Annual Pilgrimage this year, fixed for Saturday, June 21st, will take the form of an Excursion on the Thames, with Marlow as the centre. Saloon carriages will be attached to the ordinary train leaving Paddington for Taplow at 10.10 a.m., or will be run "special" if necessary. Two electric launches have been chartered on which the party will embark at Maidenhead Bridge. A short stay will be made at Marlow, and thence we shall proceed to Henley, Wargrave, and possibly Sonning Lock. Luncheon and afternoon tea will be served on the launches by



Messrs. Kingston and Miller, the well-known caterers of Oxford-street. Dinner will be provided at the Red Lion Hotel, Henley. A special train will leave Henley at 9.15 p.m., arriving at Paddington shortly after 10 o'clock. Friar Clement Shorter has kindly promised to contribute the letterpress for an illustrated booklet on "The Literary Associations of Marlow." Friars are requested to make a note of the date—June 21st—in their diaries. Ladies cordially invited, as in previous years.

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THOSE Friars who have joined the Club in the last year or two and who have not yet given a "sitting" to Friar Russell, of Baker-street, are requested to make an appointment as soon as possible. There is no charge for the "sitting." It will interest members to know that the portraits of some of the old Friars which show signs of fading are about to be reprinted in carbon, the negatives having been carefully preserved by the late Friar Valentine Blanchard. They are now in the possession of Friar Russell. The Whitefriars Club prides itself on the fact that it has the most complete collection of Club portraits in the country.

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MEMBERS will receive the usual dinner cards for April with this issue.

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IT is gratifying to report that every Town Member has paid his subscription for the current year. Those Country Members who have not yet remitted are reminded that the Treasurer's address is—39, Christchurch Avenue, Brondesbury, N.W.

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FRIAR CHARLES PEARCE has kindly promised to prepare a "Who's Who" for the Club Portrait Gallery, the biographical notes being confined to the Friars who have passed away. It is felt that the younger generation of Friars will like to possess some particulars of the men who did so much for the Club in its early days, and whose portraits adorn the Club-room walls. All the portraits have been identified with the exception of one. Perhaps some of the older members will be able to help Friar Charles Pearce in identifying "The Unknown."

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MEMBERS are reminded that a Bohemian luncheon is provided in the Club-room between 1 o'clock and 2.30 p.m. each day.

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AN excellent portrait of Friar Thomas Hardy will be added shortly to the Club collection through the kindness of Friar Clive Holland. We possess a splendid autograph portrait of Friar Mark Twain; but we have not one of Friar George Meredith. *Verb. sap.*

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By kind permission of Lord Salisbury, the Committee hope to arrange for a Saturday afternoon jaunt to Hatfield some time during the summer. The duties of Prior will be undertaken by Friar Gilbert Parker, M.P.

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