

The Bodleian Library, according to the Gentleman's Magazine, for 1836, contains 420,000 volumes and 30,000 MSS. The Cottonian now kept in the British Museum contains 215,950 volumes, 21,604 MSS. and 19,093 charters.

From the best data your committee have been able to procure, the contents of the public libraries in Europe cannot be less than 20,000,000 volumes. M. Balbi estimates the contents of twenty-nine libraries in Europe at 6,406,000 volumes and 242,800 MSS.

Libraries are of slow growth, and centuries have been well spent in the accumulation of those immense and invaluable treasures, of which Europe is, and justly may be proud.

But little as yet has been done by us as a nation, great in resources and abilities toward's even the formation of one complete and perfect public library. With means so commensurate, with resources inexhaustible, we are behind all others. This is greatly to be lamented, and is a cause of unfeigned regret to the true patriot, that in a country, dependent upon the intelligence of the people, for the continuation of its free institutions, its civil and religious liberties, as ours confessedly is, that so little encouragement has been given by Congress and the separate State Legislatures to the formation of institutions so praiseworthy, so every way desirable.

Mr. Preston, of South Carolina, in a report to the Senate of the United States, made the 15th March 1836, says: "In all the public libraries of the United States, including those of schools and colleges, throughout our wide territory, and counting all the duplicates, there are not so many books as are contained in the Bibliotheque du Roi in Paris. It is a very large calculation to estimate all our libraries at 400,000 volumes, and of those there are not more than 50,000 distinct works. In Paris there are 1,200,000 books deposited in public libraries, and in all France 4,200,000. In Germany the reading public is still more liberally provided with books. The number of printed volumes of distinct works in the world may be estimated at 600,000, of these there is certainly not more than one tenth in the United States; our whole body of literature if collected in one place would not afford the means of investigating one point of science or literature, through all or a considerable portion of what has been written on it. Here where the foundations of government repose upon the aggregate intelligence of the citizens, the assistance afforded by public institutions to the exertions of intellect, is but one tenth of that which is within the reach of civilized Europe." It is more than probable that the estimate of Mr. Preston, as to the number of volumes in our public libraries is too low; but where is the man of letters and research who has not in his literary labors found himself greatly embarrassed by the paucity of our public libraries?—Yet something has been done. The foundations of many valuable libraries have been laid—the superstructure is beginning to be raised, and your committee fondly hope that the good work will progress, with accelerated diligence and activity until many, very