

many institutions complete in all their parts, shall be erected to the advancement of our country, its science and its literature.

The largest public library in the United States is that at Philadelphia, containing 44,000 volumes, the next most voluminous is the one attached to the Cambridge University, numbering about 42,000 volumes.

Our National Library in 1836 contained 24,500 volumes.

At a very early period of the history of Maryland, the attention of the Legislature was directed to the propriety of forming a Public Library. The Librarian of our present State Library, whose unwearied research and diligence has enabled him to collect many highly important facts in his researches, among the old records and papers of the State, has obligingly furnished the following account of the first effort of this kind. "The first proposition for a Public Library in this Province was made by Francis Nicholson, Governor of Maryland, under King William III. to the House of Delegates, on the 31st May, 1697, (O. S.) requesting that His Majesty be addressed, that some part of the revenue given towards furnishing arms, &c., may (now the country is provided of such things) be laid out for small books, &c., according to a former proposal, and towards buying a Library.

In 1697-8 His Majesty, William III. did present a number of volumes to a former Library, in the Port of Annapolis, and also parochial libraries for each parish in the province, and a portion of the public revenue was applied to the enlargement of them, the Library at Annapolis, was by a resolution of the House of Delegates placed in the office, and under the care of the Commissary of the province.

Had the effort, thus early made, (probably the first in America) been persevered in, thus carrying out the evident designs of Governor Nicholson, the State of Maryland would now have been in possession of the most voluminous, valuable and interesting Library on this Continent—the seed thus early sown appears to have fallen on a sterile soil; it threw up some few shoots, languished and died.

The records of the State are silent upon this interesting subject up to the time of 1803. We then find an effort made by the Legislature, giving authority to the Governor and Council to apply such sums as might remain out of the annual appropriation of £500 for the contingent expenses of the government, to the purchase of books for the use of the Legislature and the officers of the State. Unfortunately, the resolutions submitted on this occasion were never acted on, and the whole subject appeared to sleep deeply and quietly, until the December session of 1826, when Robert Banning, Esquire, of Talbot county, a member of the House of Delegates, with untiring zeal and industry, pressed upon the Legislature the propriety and importance of forming a Public Library; nor did he falter or waver in his efforts until his great design was accomplished.

A bill, establishing a State Library, passed the House of Dele-