

relaxed enough in recent years to exchange duplicate books or maps, but manuscripts, never! Nor is this intended as an indictment of the acquisition policies of the Library of Congress or of the Maryland Historical Society where the largest collections of Maryland public records outside the State's custody are now located. These records came through gift, bequest and purchase, all in good faith.

But how did these records get into the hands of dealers, testators and donors? In various ways—sometimes they were stolen or, perhaps better, carried away from unguarded depositories and often under the eyes of indifferent custodians. Sometimes, as in the case of Maryland, it is fair to suppose that some of the thefts or carryings-away were actually the work of custodians themselves. An example, there is in the Maryland Historical Society a letter addressed to a former Maryland State official refusing to purchase an archival item at the asking price but making a counter offer which was probably accepted, for this item is nowhere to be found today. It is also fair to suppose that many Maryland items came to the Library of Congress in the collection of Peter Force, a great scholar and borrower who sometimes forgot to return his borrowings. Many items now scattered, definitely came from the old State Library at Annapolis, torn down to make way for the new legislative chambers of the State House in 1905-1906. Some court records were carried off by members of the bar preparing cases—judges, too—to be given then to historical societies by their widows, and so forth and so on with infinite variety.

Insofar as these practices served to preserve records which might otherwise have been lost, they were beneficial. But this method of preservation has long since outlived its usefulness. All of the older states have now, and have had for some time, adequate archival institutions for this purpose. Moreover, these institutions are able to reassemble fugitive records into usable series. How uneconomical and what an anachronism to have one volume of a series at the Library of Congress and eighteen at the Hall of Records!

Within the last thirty years some of these records have been coming home. A few years ago a Charles County court record came from Minnesota. Yesterday a criminal judgment record of Cecil County for the year 1733 and a land record of the same county carried off by Tarleton and Howe were sent us by a man in Florida. A benefactor last year purchased a group of Executive Papers at public auction in New