

events, so is it equally the duty of man faithfully to record, and leave to his successors an account of the transactions and occurrences of his own generation.

The historian is often misled by misstatements or prejudices, and oftentimes finds himself at a loss for reliable materials from which to prepare a correct history. The formation of *Historical Societies* is comparatively of but recent origin. Such institutions may have existed for a long period, but to a very limited extent, in some of the older countries in Europe. Still their usefulness and value are, as yet, scarcely appreciated as they deserve. Their object is not only to collect information as to existing institutions, and the present state of social and political society, but to rescue from oblivion the events of past ages; to delineate the character and habits of the people of past generations; to record whatever was peculiar in their forms of government, their social and national habits, their virtues or their vices, and transmit the whole to those who may succeed them.

The State Historical Society of Wisconsin is yet in its infancy. It has been in existence but seven years. For the first four or five years after its formation, but little more was accomplished than to organize it, and hold an annual meeting for the election of officers. A degree of apathy seemed to exist, which greatly retarded its prosperity, and limited its usefulness. But it is highly gratifying to know, that such is no longer the case. Your Society is constantly receiving valuable contributions, the number of its members steadily increasing, and its early establishment will doubtless secure and perpetuate many interesting memorials of the "olden time," which otherwise would be lost or forgotten. Let us hope that its usefulness will be duly appreciated; that the best men of our country will not only give it their countenance, but contribute freely their aid and exertions to render it worthy of the noble objects it has in view; and may its annual gatherings, in all time to come, be attended, as on the present occasion, by the intelligent citizens, and high functionaries of the State.