

other is known to be in a set yet incomplete, not counting that of Dr. Gibbes, destroyed at the burning of Columbia.

The difference in the character and attractiveness of these several collections is very striking. One of the most distinguished collectors in the country very justly remarks: "The different sets of the signers that are owned in the United States vary greatly in character, interest and value. Some of them are as much superior to others as a perfect Caxton imprint is superior to one that is largely made up of leaves in facsimile. Some are composed, to a great extent, of A. L. S. of the period, on public matters, while others are formed mainly of letters and documents of a private business character, written at a date remote from 1776."

It is not strange, that some autographs of the signers—notably that of Lynch—have been counterfeited. "A few years ago," says the *American Antiquarian* of Nov., 1870, "a well dressed man called to see one of the most eminent collectors in Philadelphia, and offered to sell him a letter of Thomas Lynch Jr., which he claimed to have discovered somewhere in the South. A single glance satisfied the collector that it was a base forgery, and tearing the document in pieces, he handed back the fragments to the stranger, who accepted them, and retired without saying another word." As the rare specimens of the signers become still more rare, and consequently of enhanced value, the temptation to counterfeit them will be greater.

One of the most discriminating autograph collectors in this country, writes: "There are many collections that would be considerably decreased in size, if an expert were to examine them, and cast out all the letters or documents that are not genuine, or not written by the persons whose handwriting they are intended to represent."

The danger of taking the son for the father, or *vice versa*, or the wrong man of the same name, has been very properly suggested by Mr. Burns, as well as by the autograph collector just quoted. There were two Lynches, father and son, so of Hart, Carroll, and Heyward. There were two Richard Stocktons, father and son, both eminent lawyers and statesmen of New Jersey—the signer dying in 1781,