

# NATION'S RARE DOCUMENTS UNPROTECTED AGAINST FIRE

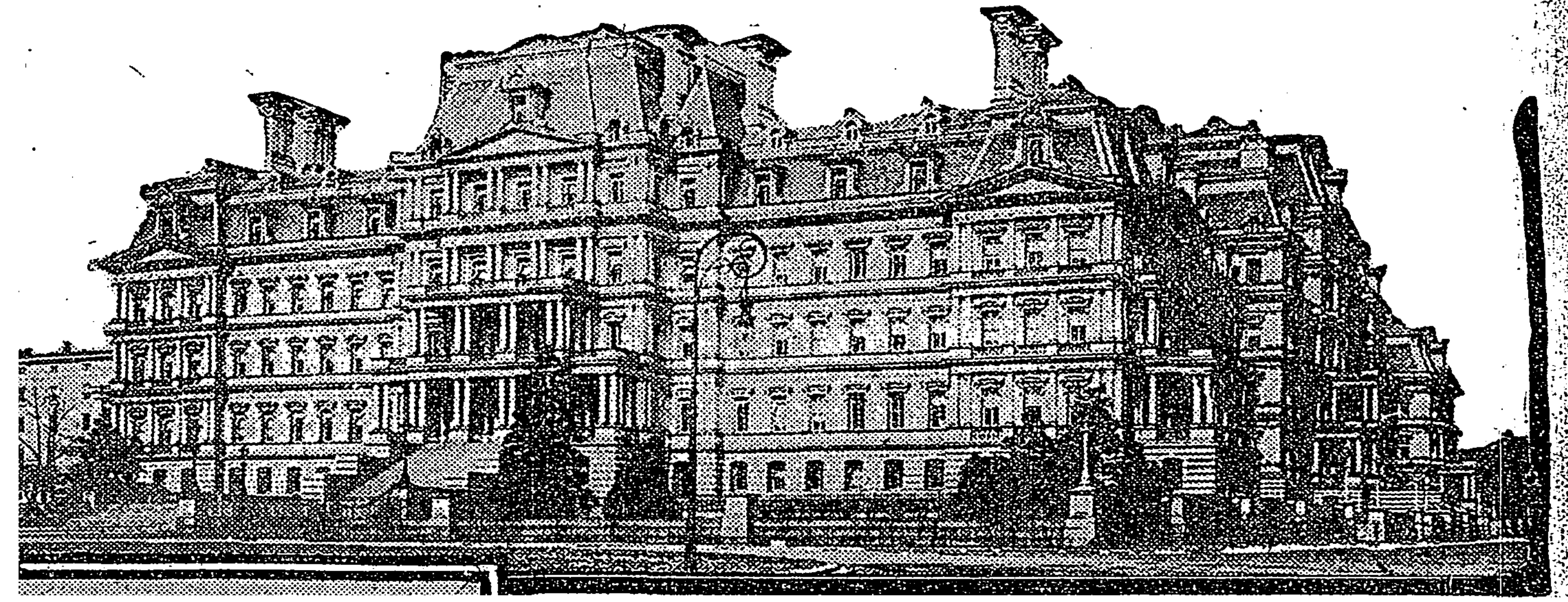
## Even the Original Declaration of Independence and Constitution Are in Peril and Thousands of Invaluable Records Are Merely Filed Away in Wooden Wall Cases.

THE National archives, comprising the historical documents of the Government, are exposed to danger of destruction by fire. Arranged as they now are, on wooden shelves in wooden wall-cases at the Department of State, they might be burned up any day—a calamity of such magnitude as to be nothing short of appalling. Hence it is that the department is about to ask Congress for a sum of money (probably about \$10,000) to take the place of built steel wall-cases with which to replace the wooden ones.

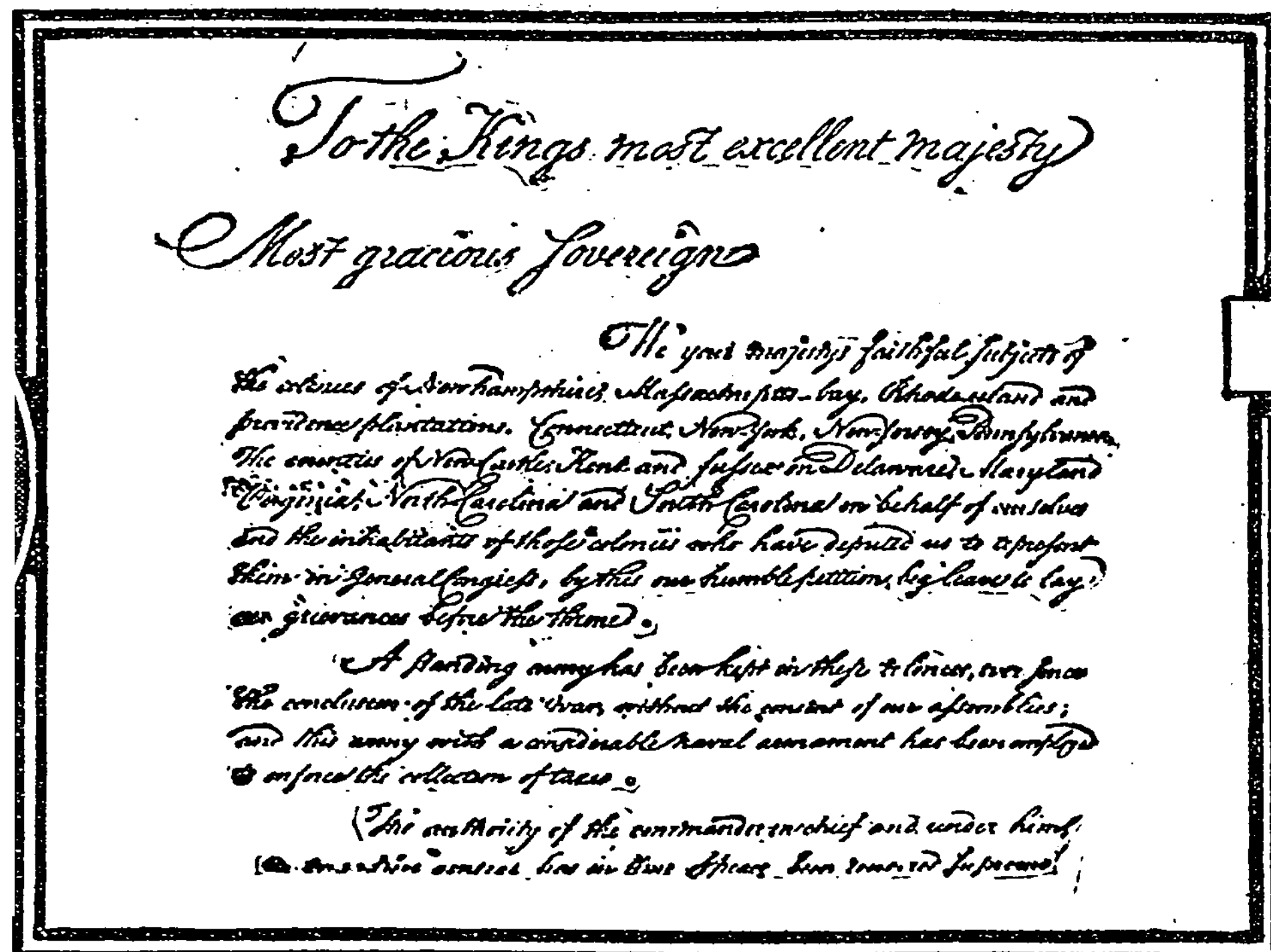
These sheets are much too large for comfortable handling, and for this and other reasons of convenience the size was again reduced in 1893 to sixteen by ten inches. Since that time also the originals have been printed on parchment paper instead of being engrossed in a formal sort of handwriting, as previously.

bearing the signatures of Hartley, Adams, Franklin, and Jay.

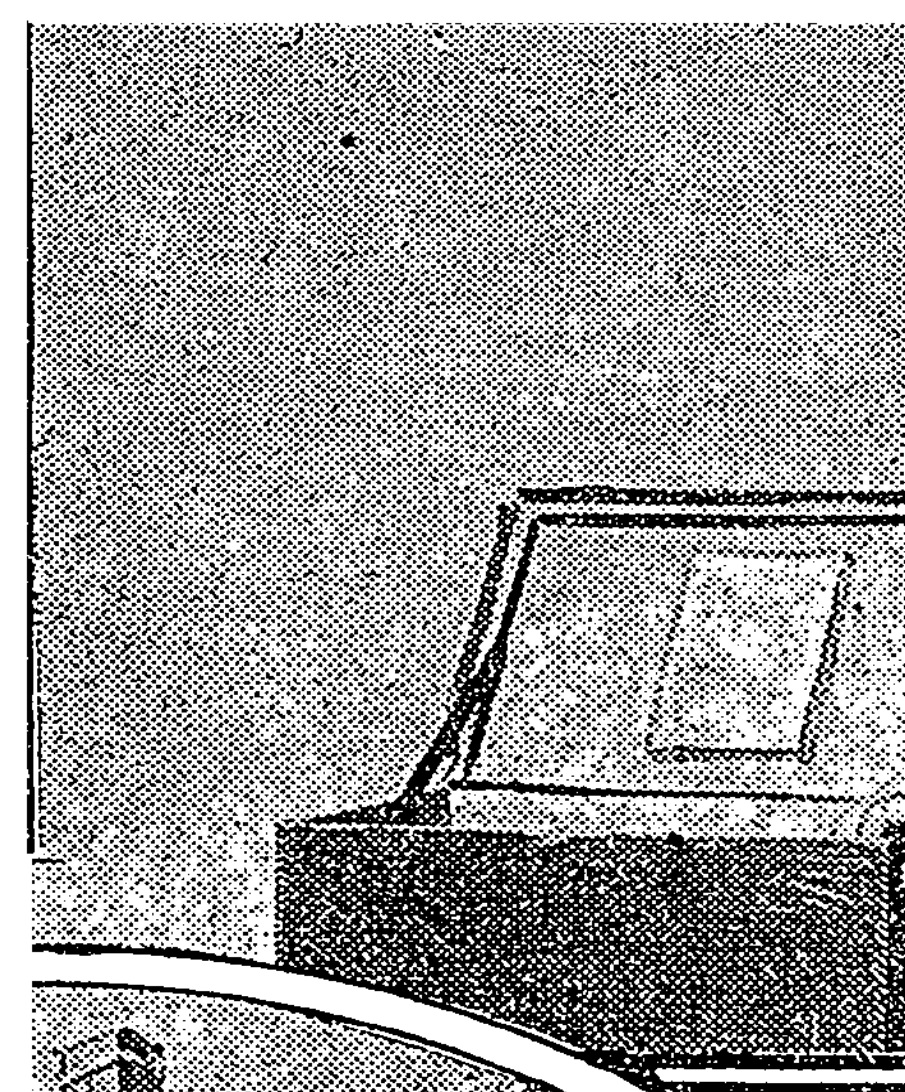
Another of the documents is the treaty with Great Britain which terminated the War of 1812. Another is the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, by which our disagreement with Mexico was brought to a close. And yet another,



THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE AT WASHINGTON



U.S. TONNER, CUSTODIAN OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS AT THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE



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ment is the petition to the King of England, George III., which Franklin himself took over and presented to that monarch in behalf of the Colonies.

As will be remembered, the object of the petition was to set forth the grievances of the Colonies, and it began:

"Most Gracious Sovereign: We, your Majesty's faithful subjects of the Colonies, Among other important documents, one finds in the handwriting of Thomas Jefferson a description of his tombstone as he desired it to be, (and as it afterward was) with a rough pen drawing of it. There is also a "ceremonial letter" bearing the signature of Napoleon. Such letters are constantly being exchanged between the various royalties and Governments, offering congratulations for a

the line of reproduction was engraving on a sheet of copper.

To perform the process it was necessary to lay a sheet of damp linen upon the face of the Declaration, and go over the letters with a stylus. As a result, the ink of the originals was to some extent dissolved, and the document was badly damaged. The copperplate copy was admirable, as anybody will testify, for this is the framed fac simile. The original plate is preserved at the Department of State, and under no circumstances would Congress allow another impression to be made from it. It is merely wanted they are struck off from an electrotype which was made from the copperplate some years ago.

The original Declaration, however, is irretrievably ruined. Eight years ago it was examined by a committee of the National Academy of Sciences, which pronounced the case hopeless, but it advised that, in order to lessen the rapidity of the inevitable fading, the poor old document should be put away in the dark and kept there. Accordingly the steel box aforementioned was made to hold it, together with the Constitution.

One might imagine that the two documents thus put away were themselves safe against fire, whatever might be the situation in regard to the rest of the National archives. But the fact seems to be that they are in greater danger than the papers contained in the wooden wallcases. The box containing them is merely of thin sheet steel, and if it were exposed to flames the mere heating of its walls to a red-hot temperature would reduce the black char. This fact was proved recently by certain experiments which a Senate committee undertook for the purpose of finding out how far the steel cases supplied for the protection of Government files were proof against fire.

In attempting even so brief a description of the archives preserved at the Department of State one should not forget to mention the original draft of the Declaration of Independence, made by Thomas Jefferson, which is exhibited on the wall of the library beneath the fac simile of the Declaration itself. Its writing (they made good ink in those days) is as clear and black as ever. Not yet should one overlook the original records of the proceedings of the convention which drew up the Constitution.

These last are packed away in a queer-looking little red trunk only about two



WILLIAM JENNERS, CHIEF CLERK OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

There is no telling whether Congress will or will not give the amount required—a special appropriation being necessary. Inasmuch as no other funds belonging to the Department of State can be diverted to such use. Time and time again the National Legislature has been besought for means wherewith to insure the safety of these precious papers, the destruction of which would be an irreparable loss to the Nation, and as often it has failed to respond. One notes with interest that less than one-twentieth of the sum annually expended for the purchase of vegetable and flower seeds, for distribution in small packets to more or less derivative constituents, would meet the entire cost of the protection demanded.

It could be realized that, from the viewpoint of Americans, this is the most wonderful and most valuable collection of documents in all the world. Included in it are the Declaration of Independence, the original Constitution of the United States, the Articles of Confederation of the Colonies, which preceded the Constitution, and all the other papers relating to the formation of the Government. As will presently be explained, the Declaration and the Constitution are not in the wooden bookcases, though until recently contained therein. They are, if anything, more perilously situated.

An important part of the National archives is an extensive series of bound volumes of the laws of the United States. These include all the bills passed by both houses of Congress and signed by the President since the beginning of the Government, each being the original copy of the law, with the autograph signatures of the Speaker of the House, the Vice President, and President attached. In themselves these volumes are a fairly comprehensive history of our country.

Merely to glance them over, without examination in detail, is extremely interesting. They begin with a few big books, containing, on sheepskin parchment, the earliest of all the laws, which, of course, have the signature of George Washington. The parchment sheets thus bound are three and a half feet long by two and a half feet wide—most uncomfortably clumsy to handle. One notes that the first of them all—the first law made by Congress and the President—regulates the forms in which oaths should be taken by persons accepting employment from the Government.

So obviously awkward was this method of recording the laws that before long the sheepskin parchment was given up and a very fine grade of parchment paper was substituted in sheets thirty by eighteen inches. The bound volumes containing

As fast as the laws are made they are bound up in volumes and placed on wooden shelves in the highly combustible wall-cases, which are arranged around the large room devoted to the housing of the National archives at the Department of State. The bindings are of rich red morocco, with gold lettering, the dates on the backs making it easy to refer at a moment's notice to any enactment of the National Legislature from the time the Government began up to the present date. As for the parchment paper used, one should mention that it is a beautiful imitation of the finest kind of real parchment—translucent like the latter, but considerably thinner.

Statements have recently gone the rounds of the press to the effect that the historical documents at the State Department were neglected, being carelessly piled in higgledy-piggledy fashion and without much regard for their preservation. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. They are filed and arranged not only with the utmost care, but in accordance with the best possible method. During every minute of the day they are under guard, and every hour during the night a watchman passes through the room, to make sure that all is safe. The only trouble—a sufficiently serious one, indeed—is that they are not properly protected against fire.

The only documents that are piled are the treaties, which, for the sake of convenience, are placed flat in a series of large envelopes, each one in a manila envelope. They could not be kept to so much advantage in any other way. On the outside of each envelope is the number of the treaty which it contains. The first treaty is No. 1, and so they run along up to No. 57, which is the last formal agreement into which we have entered with any foreign power. This (57) is what is called an "international treaty," being a general agreement among the nations of the world, and it relates to preventing the circulation of indecent publications.

Here again in this collection of treaties one finds a sort of summary of the history of the United States. Treaties tell the story of our birth and growth as a nation and of our advance to the position of a world power. One of the most interesting of them is the treaty of peace made with England at the close of the war of the Revolution. There, in its plain and somewhat frayed manila envelope, is the document itself—the veritable original—

comparatively recent, is the treaty with Spain which wound up the war of 1898. All of the treaties are the original documents, bearing the signatures and seals of the negotiators. The Department of State also keeps filed in the archives what are called "exchange copies" of large treaties—these being copies changed by the high contracting parties afterwards, with their respective ratifications attached, putting them into force. In some cases the seals attached to them are as much as six inches in diameter, and are contained in cylindrical boxes of silver or brass.

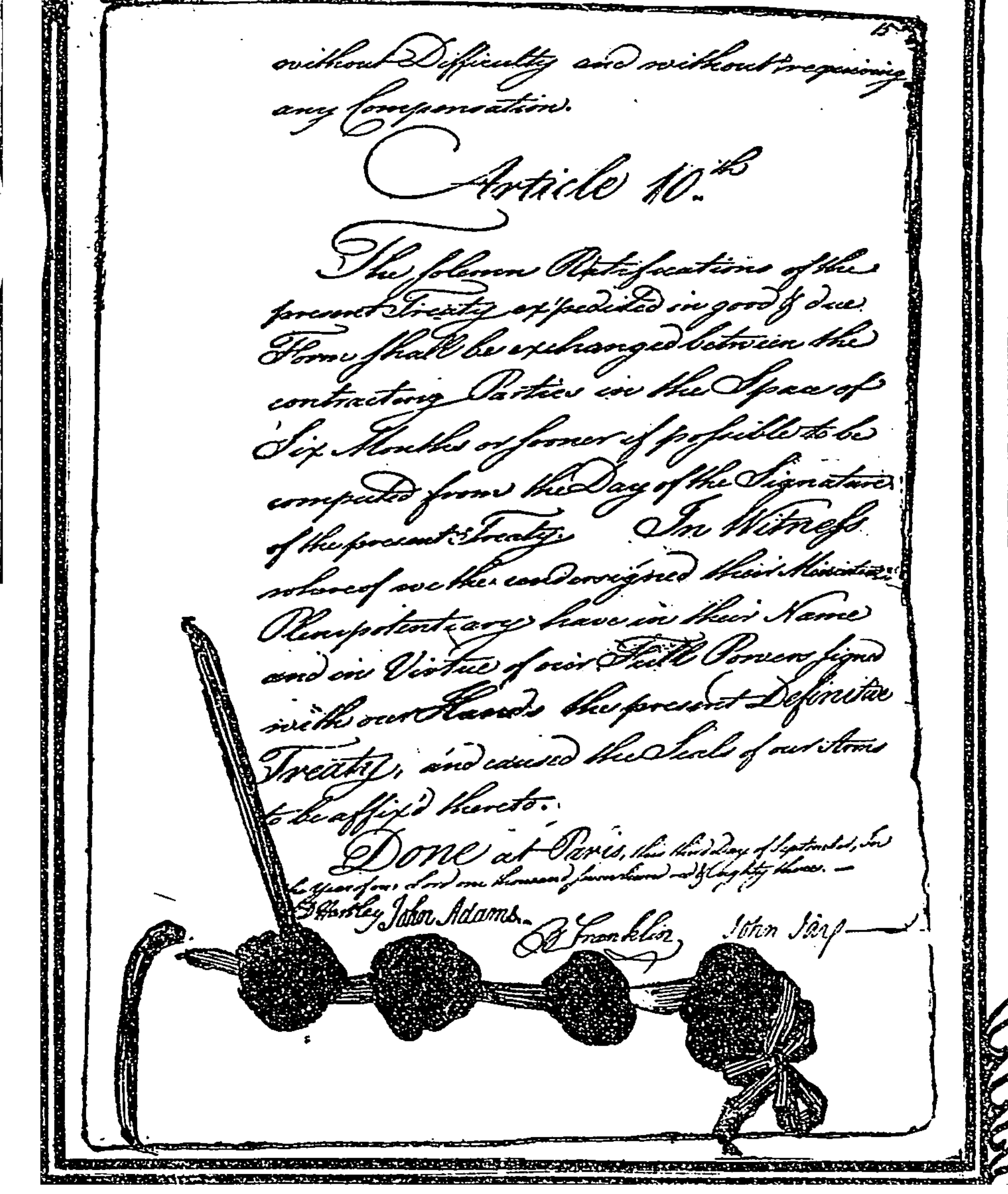
Eight years ago, in obedience to an executive order issued from the White House, a great mass of historical documents comprising what were called the Revolutionary Archives was transferred from the Department of State to the Library of Congress. Among these documents were twenty-two volumes of the Papers of James Monroe, forty-four volumes of the Papers of James Madison, about 300 volumes of the literary remains of George Washington, and the Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and Benjamin Franklin, together with the Records and Papers of the Continental Congress.

This represented a large fraction of the total archives of the Government, and one

object sought in transferring the documents in question was to make them safe against fire. The Department of State had gone to an immense deal of trouble in collecting and preserving them, the papers of Madison and Monroe, for example, being so arranged in the volumes containing them that each one occupied a sheet by itself and could be examined without handling.

In the case of the Franklin papers an expert of the British Museum in London was employed to replace certain words, which had been eaten out by mice, at the rate of a sound starting per letter. This was surely not too high a price, when it is considered that the expert was obliged to replace the paper in the gnawed holes and counterfeited the handwriting—the work being so admirably done that not the slightest perceptible trace of it remained.

In turning over all of this material to the Library of Congress, however, the Department of State retained thirty-odd volumes of the records and papers of the Continental Congress, which related to foreign affairs—these having directly to do with the special function of the department. Also, it retained a number of volumes of the papers of Franklin, likewise relating to foreign affairs—especially his correspondence while representing the



LAST PAGE OF THE TREATY WHICH BROUGHT TO A CLOSE THE WAR OF THE REVOLUTION

United States as Minister at the Court of France. One of the most interesting of the documentary treasures at the State Department.

birth, condolences for a death, or what not.

All the proclamations of the President since the beginning of George Washington's first administration are preserved in a series of bound volumes—the most interesting of them, of course, being the Emancipation Proclamation of Lincoln. There is no uniformity about these documents, some of them being written in pen ink, while others are printed, or even typed. Not yet should one overlook the original records of the proceedings of the convention which drew up the Constitution.

These last are packed away in a queer-looking little red trunk only about two feet long, which is understood to have belonged to Dolly Madison. Tradition says that when the British burned the White House in 1814 she hastily put these documents, relating so importantly to the foundation of the Government, into this very trunk, and carried them away with her, thus preserving them from destruction.

If Congress gives the money to replace the wooden wallcases with steel ones, the latter will be made as nearly fireproof as possible. They will be required, however, only for temporary purposes, inasmuch as other and more effective means have been devised for insuring the safety of the archives in the future. Plans have already been drawn for a new building which the department will occupy, four or five years from now, on Fifteenth Street, opposite the White Lot, and this structure of white marble and very beautiful to the eye will contain, either on the second or third floor, a vault for the reception of the historical documents.

The vault will have 900 feet of floor space and will be large enough to accommodate not only the present archives, but all future documentary accumulations. It will be not only fireproof, but burglar proof—built, in short, like an up-to-date bank vault, and provided with every imaginable safeguard against thieves or other depredators.

The whole interior of the vault will be occupied by shelf stacks, resembling those now in use in any great library, with narrow corridors between. Such stacks are so arranged that the removable shelves are adjustable at any height, and so can be made to fit volumes of any size. Everything inside of the electric-lighted steel room will be of metal, except the books themselves, and books will not burn. One must fear them to pieces page by page to make them burn.

Thus it is obvious that, however perilous the situation of the National archives at the present time and hitherto, they will be made entirely safe before long, and their preservation fully secured for the benefit and instruction of the generations which will people this country of ours through centuries to come.



SKELETON WHALE TOOTH SENT TO PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AS A TREATY

## "WAYWARD GIRLS COME FROM ABNORMAL HOMES"

THE Episcopal Church has just concluded a very unusual and important investigation under the Church Mission of Help so searchingly made and so frankly reported that it marks a long step forward toward the solution of some of our most vexing social problems. A committee appointed a little over a year ago has been seeking the causes that lead into an evil life girls who have once been members of the church. It has tried to find the weakest spots in the social organism and to point them wherein the church, especially, has failed.

That society in general has been inadequate to grapple with the case of the young girl who "goes wrong" is painfully evident. Most people, however, pass over the point. Nobody likes to read of vice, few have more than a word of haste and a slight shudder for a story that tells of the mud of the gutter. But the church has gone at its task unflinchingly.

"Such and such are the facts," it says in effect. "If you cannot bear to hear of them what do you think it must be to live them? Let us consider the matter as a surgeon must consider physical deformities and then do what we can to remedy the situation. Above all, do not let us shift our own responsibility or seek to clear ourselves from blame."

The investigation was made under a committee consisting of the Rev. William T. Manning, rector of Trinity Church, New York; the Rev. J. Lewis Parks, rector of Calvary Church, New York; Admiral A. T. Mahan, W. M. Parks, M. D., and Jacob Riss. The work of investigation was made by the present Secretary, Miss Emma L. Adams.

The study covers the cases of 229 girls who had been connected, some quite closely, with the church. They were inmates of the State Reformatory at Bedford, the Hudson State Training School, and Waverley House, and the four church homes. All data have been verified, and the statements of the girls have been supplemented by the records of various parishes and societies with which they had been in some way connected.

The fact that the study includes only girls who belong to the church makes a few of its conclusions less valuable to the sociologist than if its scope had been

## Interesting Results Elicited from an Important Investigation Undertaken by the Episcopal Church.

vider, but this is the case only when the report deals with nationalities and two or three other phases of its investigation. In general what is true of these 229 girls must obviously apply to the great majority of girls in similar cases. The causes underlying the trouble have been found to be poor health, defective education, unskilled and underpaid labor, and amusements surrounded by danger, but the two chief factors are feeble-mindedness and abnormal home conditions. Herein the report hangs out what many men and women have been preaching for a long time, and it is encouraging in so far as it shows that the average girl with her wits about her and half a chance for decent bringing up does not easily succumb to temptations, in spite of many handicaps.

There has been a great deal of talk lately about the disastrous results of our present fashion of treating the feeble-minded. Most of the obviously deficient are, indeed, confined in asylums of one sort or another, but for the girl or boy who is not clearly half-witted, but is still below the normal, little is done. If he or she can earn a living, nothing special is thought about it.

The investigation made by the church shows that more than half of its girls in the reformatories and homes are more or less mentally deficient. They are not idiots, of course, and many of them would pass as normal, but they are not fit to face the world as it is to-day. Some of them had no conception of the nature of evil; all of them were lacking in will power.

It is characteristic of the feeble-minded that they are affectionate and dependent. The high-grade imbecile, as well as the obviously deficient, is apt to be the easy prey of any one who is "kind." They are false; and unless the greatest care surrounds them the "high grade" are as likely to come to harm as the "low grade."

"Yet," says the report, "these defective girls are allowed to be at large because the State institutions for the feeble-minded are too crowded to admit them, though they need the protection of the institution as much as their more obviously feeble-minded sisters." In the normal family the weakest child has the tenderest care. The report would have the church seek such similar protection for its mentally defective.

The evil of the abnormal family might perhaps be traced first to a cause of waywardness. It ranks close to feeble-mindedness as a direct cause and the data is not complete. In rating this cause so high the report only bears out what probation officers have said before, that unhappy or neglected homes send out an innumerable host of girls to the courts and the reformatories.

The home is not always, perhaps not generally, bad because of drink or some such vice. Above often the trouble comes from the death of one or the other parent. The girl is left alone at home, she tries to amuse herself as best she may and that is the beginning of the end. The number of cases in which there was social wrongdoing on the part of the parents is not very large; mostly it is a question of hard luck.

On the other hand, the institution, though better than the abnormal home, is not shown to be a good place for normal children. A large number of children cannot, with the best will in the world, be studied individually as they should be, or watched as closely as could be desired when they go out to earn their living. While the institution is in some cases necessary the report suggests that every effort should be made to find among relatives a suitable and supervised refuge for a child before there is resort to an institution.

The great majority of the girls studied had earned their livings at poorly paid trades. As to this there is data for 128 girls. Of these one bookkeeper and stenographer and five chorus girls had

received a reasonably good wage. In the case of the chorus girls, however, their \$15 to \$25 a week does not mean very much. There must have been long periods when life "on the road" ate up the salary as soon as it was earned. Only the bookkeeper with \$16 to \$25 a week, really seems to have been fairly prosperous.

Of the 128, nearly half, or 55, were domestics, their monthly wage averaging from \$8 to \$12. Twenty-seven were factory girls making from \$2.33 to \$9 a week. Saleswomen, at from \$4 to \$8 a week, number ten. There are various other trades represented which paid from \$2 to \$7 a week—mostly nearer \$2 than \$7.

That there is a relationship between these low wages and the downfall of the girls cannot, says the report, be doubted. However, in most cases "low wages appear as an indirect cause; the privations they entail slowly undermine the girl's general health, and positively in an individual case how large a factor low wage has been would be possible only from one and intimate knowledge of the girl. It is obvious that, in many cases, wages were below the cost of living and the girl would have had to turn to some other means of support. It is not clear how to get it honestly. Either they could not make a living wage or they had lost their position and could not find work.

"Bad amusements are of course a factor. There has been a good deal said about the evil of the dance halls where drinks and food, and the investigation adds its testimony that the girls who come from that sort of thing. Cheap theatres and moving-picture shows played a part, too. Some 24 out of 114 cases, indeed, had drunk. Only seven were proved to have been addicted to opium, but the report says the real number is doubtless much greater than that.

"The more we know of the conditions that make up the lives of these girls," observes the report, "the less we shall be inclined to blame them for their low standard of pleasure, the more we shall realize the great need there is of wholesome executive amusement, under good conditions."

The most distressing feature of the report lies in its account of the extreme youth of the girls. So far as many of them from being "hardened" that they sit and play with dolls in the reformatory. An investigator spoke to one inmate of the Hudson Training School as