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of the New England States and New York Virginia is producing more distinguished men per thousand of her population than any other State in the Union. The majority of these, it is true, are living outside the State, and it is merely the nation at large that gains from their labors and distinctions.

In the light of other days Virginia has much to be proud of, and we optimists are hoping as much from our future as we have in the past. Let us but have educational system of New England, and let us find room for our geniuses at home by furnishing them here with every means and instrument of success, and Virginia will be again at the head of the procession.

Lynchburg News

15 Apr 1906

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## THE STATE LIBRARY

VIRGINIA HAS ONE OF THE BEST  
IN THE COUNTRY.

Was Not, However, the Pioneer in the  
Field—Splendid Work Done by Li-  
brarian John P. Kennedy and Assis-  
tant Librarian Edward S. Evans.

BY MRS. W. M. STROTHER.

Whatever may be said of Virginia's undeveloped library interests, she possesses one of the best and most splendidly administered State libraries in the United States. In this field Virginia was not the pioneer, however. New Hampshire established its State library in 1770. Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York followed in rather slow fashion. In 1823, both Massachusetts and Virginia were aroused to the necessity of establishing State libraries. Thus the two great Commonwealths started together, and in all matters purely historical, they have kept nearly side by side. Massachusetts today is the only State whose manuscript collections rival those of Virginia. It will always be a matter for regret that our State library was not in a position to buy that precious remnant of Washington's letters and books which his collateral descendants sold to the Boston Atheneum.

The several legislative acts leading to the establishing of the State library, between the years of 1823 and 1828, are unique in library history. The evolution of an idea is always interesting, and from careful reading of the current thought of that day and time, we find several strong stimulants to the library idea.

Library societies were being chartered in several towns of the State, Winchester and Front Royal and Alexandria notably. Mr. Jefferson, at Monticello, was ordering books for the University library.

An act authorizing the sale of extra copies of "Hening's Statutes" and the appropriation of all funds from this sale to the purchasing of books for the State library, was the first constructive step. The first step was taken and the act passed January 23rd, 1823. Governor Pleasants in some way, failed to follow the advice of the Assembly, which authorized him to conduct the matter toward a successful movement, and several years later Governor Tyler's administration, gave to the idea more hospitable soil and climate, and we read, under date of February 11th, 1828, that "a room in the Capitol has been selected, and a book committee appointed." The librarian, whose guardian hand shall preserve the books, was the clerk of the Council, and his salary as watch-dog

was to be not more than one hundred dollars per year. In this comfortable location, and in March, 1828, the library began its career of service to the State. It has passed through its seventy-eight years with increasing usefulness, and as stated above now stands in the front rank of libraries.

The administration of Mr. John Pendleton Kennedy has been distinguished by the most remarkable evolution of library ideas in the history of the State. He has long been possessed of noble library ideals, and in his present position he has been rapidly and surely actualizing those lofty ideals. He and his able coadjutor, Assistant Librarian Edward Steptoe Evans (we are proud to add, he is a Lynchburg boy), were trained for their present work in that best of all history training schools, the National Library in Washington. Here they both imbibed freely the spirit of nationalism and broad patriotism, which affords the only true basis for a constructive State pride. Mr. Kennedy was born in West Virginia, but he can't help that. Had he been born a few years earlier than he was, he could not possibly be any

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