

HOUSE No. 395.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,
BOSTON, June 7, 1883.

To the Honorable the House of Representatives :

I believe it my duty to make a more formal communication to your honorable body than was informally made by me to the Honorable Speaker of the House, about the loss of the bill in regard to the Plymouth County House of Correction. I find it necessary so to do, because I now find that another bill is missing from my table.

The custom was, when I came into the Executive office, to have the engrossed parchment rolls containing the bills brought and laid upon my desk, without any record of their receipt, so far as I knew. I requested that they should be laid on the desk of my private secretary, so that he might make a memorandum of their reception, and he then lays them upon my table. After examination they are returned to him to be deposited in the office of the Secretary of State if they are signed. If they are allowed to pass into laws by absence of my signature they are retained until the five days have elapsed. In case of bills to which I make objection, they are left upon my table to be returned with the message of objections to the proper house.

In the case of the Plymouth bill, it was lying on my table, and was examined by me, and the message prepared; and it was lying there while the message was being copied.

On the next day, when the message was to be sent in, it was looked for among the bills on my table, and could not be found. Every inquiry was made for it, and it could not then, and has not since been found.

When the several appropriation bills came, among them was a bill relating to the appropriation for the Tewksbury almshouse. They laid on my table together until I signed certain of them, and certain of them I gave to my private secretary, to be by him retained until the five days had expired, then to be sent to the office of the Secretary of State, as laws without my signature. I retained upon my table the bill in regard to the Tewksbury almshouse until I could prepare a message to the House, which I sent in to them, stating the fact that I had come to the conclusion to allow it to become a law. When that message was prepared and sent in, I looked for it among the bills on my table, and could not find it. I then inquired of my private secretary whether he had it, or had returned it to the Secretary of State, and was informed by him that he had not, and search was then made, and that bill could not be found.

It is difficult to see what object any one could have in taking away that bill except pure mischief.

Meanwhile I have lost some small articles from the drawers of my desk, which I either kept unlocked, or locked and the key deposited for convenience in another drawer. That has happened more than once.

I should feel myself responsible for these mischances and losses were it not that there are several duplicate keys to the Executive offices, by which they can be entered at any time by others than my secretaries and messengers, and I understand I have no control of any of the offices in the building. I suppose those keys are kept for the purposes of inspection of the Executive offices, watching against fire, and for the convenience of access of officers of the several departments when anything may be needed in the Executive Department.

I neither desire so to do, nor can I make any charges against anybody, of wrong-doing, but simply make this statement of facts for the information of the House, that they may take such action as they may be advised in regard to remedying such losses of bills.

There is no safe, or other place of deposit in the Executive offices in which these bills could have been any more protected than where they were.

BENJ. F. BUTLER.

