

F
302
.6

L69D42+

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF
ROBERT R. LIVINGSTON.

BY FREDERIC DE PEYSTER, LL.D.

CORNELL
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY



THIS BOOK IS ONE OF
A COLLECTION MADE BY
BENNO LOEWY
1854-1919
AND BEQUEATHED TO
CORNELL UNIVERSITY

DATE DUE

~~FEB 15 1955 H V~~

~~R R FEB 6 65~~

~~R R JAN 17 68~~

~~MAY 19 1967 H V~~

~~Library loan~~

~~1968~~

Cornell University Library

E 302.6.L69D42

A biographical sketch of Robert R. Livin



3 1924 016 845 129

016 09e1



Cornell University
Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

<http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924016845129>



Wm. R. Livingston

A
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF
ROBERT R. LIVINGSTON.

READ BEFORE THE N. Y. HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
OCTOBER 3, 1876,

BY THE PRESIDENT,

FREDERIC DE PEYSTER, LL.D.

NEW YORK:
PUBLISHED FOR THE SOCIETY.

MDCCCLXXVI.

Ps

CORNELL
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

At a stated meeting of the NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, held in its Hall, on Tuesday Evening, December 5, 1876, the following recommendation, presented by the Executive Committee, was nnanimously adopted :

The Executive Committee respectfully recommend to the Society, that the President be invited to deposit in the archives of the Society a copy of his biographical sketch, accompanying the gift of Vanderlyn's portrait of Chancellor Livingston, for publication.

Extract from the Minutes.

ANDREW WARNER,
Recording Secretary.

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY, 1876.



PRESIDENT,
FREDERIC DE PEYSTER, LL.D.

FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT,
WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT, LL.D.

SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT,
JAMES W. BEEKMAN.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDING SECRETARY,
GEORGE H. MOORE, LL.D.

DOMESTIC CORRESPONDING SECRETARY,
EVERT A. DUYCKINCK.

RECORDING SECRETARY,
ANDREW WARNER.

TREASURER,
BENJAMIN H. FIELD.

LIBRARIAN,
JOHN AUSTIN STEVENS.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

FIRST CLASS—FOR ONE YEAR, ENDING 1877.

SAMUEL OSGOOD, D.D., WILLIAM R. MARTIN,
CHARLES P. KIRKLAND, LL.D.

SECOND CLASS—FOR TWO YEARS, ENDING 1878.

EDWARD F. DE LANCEY, HENRY DRISLER, LL.D.,
JAMES H. TITUS.

THIRD CLASS—FOR THREE YEARS, ENDING 1879.

JOHN TAYLOR JOHNSTON, ERASTUS C. BENEDICT, LL.D.,
ROBERT LENOX KENNEDY.

FOURTH CLASS—FOR FOUR YEARS, ENDING 1880.

EVERT A. DUYCKINCK, JAMES WILLIAM BEEKMAN,
GEORGE H. MOORE, LL.D.

CHARLES P. KIRKLAND, LL.D., *Chairman.*
JOHN AUSTIN STEVENS, *Secretary.*

[The President, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, and Librarian are members, *ex-officio*, of the Executive Committee.]

COMMITTEE ON THE FINE ARTS.


A. B. DURAND, JOHN A. WEEKS,
ANDREW WARNER, EDWARD SATTERLEE,
WILLIAM J. HOPPIN, CEPHAS G. THOMPSON.

WILLIAM J. HOPPIN, *Chairman.*
ANDREW WARNER, *Secretary.*

[The President, Librarian, and Chairman of the Executive Committee are members, *ex-officio*, of the Committee on the Fine Arts.]



BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF
ROBERT R. LIVINGSTON.

HE Portrait of ROBERT R. LIVINGSTON, first Chancellor of the State of New York, which has this evening been presented to the New York Historical Society by Mrs. Thomson Livingstone, an American lady, now residing in Paris, represents this distinguished gentleman in the court-dress worn by him when representing the United States as their Minister Plenipotentiary at the Court of France during the consulate of the First Napoleon.

There are doubtless many persons present this evening who are unacquainted with his character and public services, to whom a brief sketch will be of interest. I propose, therefore, to present the principal facts in his public career, and shall touch,

incidentally, upon the history of the family of Livingston. Before proceeding with this biographical sketch, it may be well first to make a brief statement regarding this portrait, and the artist who painted it.

The admirable portrait now before you is the work of John Vanderlyn, the noted painter, who was born at Kingston, Ulster county, New York, in October, 1776, and who died there September 23d, 1852. His rudimentary instruction in art was received from Gilbert Stuart, in New York, when about sixteen years of age. By the aid of Aaron Burr he visited Paris in 1796, for improvement in painting. He returned five years thereafter to New York, and in 1803 revisited Europe, remaining there till 1815. It was in the interval between these last-mentioned dates that he made excellent copies of some of the paintings by the "Old Masters;" but he was more distinguished by his well-known paintings, "The Murder of Jane McCrea by the Indians," and "The Ariadne," the latter a justly celebrated work of art, and the first successful representation, by an American artist, of a mythological subject. Among his other works was the well-known picture, "Marius sitting among the Ruins of Carthage;" which received the high honor of the Gold Medal at the Paris Exhibition in 1808; and it is said, on the authority of Chancellor Livingston, that when the Emperor Napoleon first saw it in this

exhibition, he directed that medal to be given to Mr. Vanderlyn without his picture being subjected to the usual ordeal before the Art Committee.

After his return to America, he painted the portraits of several distinguished Americans ; and then, relinquishing the pursuit of his art, the source of his true fame and approved success, he turned his whole attention to the exhibition of panoramic views, in the building called the Rotunda, situated in the City Hall Park, in this city. The experiment did not remunerate him ; and with its failure ceased also the successful practice of his art, his wonted vigor having declined. The last painting by this artist was a portrait of President Taylor, which was publicly exhibited in 1851.

Having thus briefly referred to the artist, I now proceed to lay before you an outline of the life and public services of Mr. Livingston, whose likeness is so admirably preserved to us. In order to properly consider the life of this eminent citizen, it may be well to glance briefly at the history of the Livingston family, which, by its high social position, talents, and wealth, justly ranks among the first in the land.

The common ancestor of the Livingstons in this country was John Livingston, an energetic preacher of the Reformed Church in Scotland, who was banished from that country in 1663, for non-conformity with prelatical rule. He fled for refuge to Holland,

that glorious land where civil liberty and the rights of conscience are universally enjoyed, respected, and maintained, and settled in Rotterdam, in which city he died in 1672.

Of the seven children of the worthy clergyman, one, a son named Robert, who was born in Roxburghshire, in Scotland, in 1654, emigrated from Holland to New York about 1675. In 1686 he secured, by purchase from the Indians, a large tract of land for which he subsequently received a grant from Governor Dongan of the Province of New York, by which the same was made the Manor and Lordship of Livingston, with the privilege to its owner of holding a Court-leet and a Court-baron, and with the right of advowson to all the churches within its boundaries.

By a Royal Charter issued by George the First, in 1715, this grant was confirmed, and the additional privileges of selecting a representative to the General Assembly of the Colony, and two constables, were conferred upon the tenants of the Manor. The original manor covered an area computed at from 120,000 to 150,000 acres, and included very nearly the whole of the present counties of Dutchess and Columbia in this State. Of this vast estate much has passed out of the possession of the family by sale and otherwise, but a large portion still retains the name of, and is comprised in the Manor of Livingston, as originally created.

The wife of this Robert Livingston was of the Schuyler family, another prominent race in this State, many of whom have also been greatly distinguished in its history. There were three sons from this union—Philip, Gilbert, and Robert—who became the heads of different branches of this celebrated family.

The eldest of these three sons, Philip, the second proprietor of the Manor and Lordship of Livingston, had a son who bore his name, and who inherited the spirit of his great-grandfather, the reverend gentleman who fled to Holland rather than violate principle. This Philip was born in Albany in 1716, and died in York, Pennsylvania, in 1778. Although a merchant by profession, and one of the most distinguished of his time, he was a man of liberal education, having been graduated at Yale College in 1737, and held many offices of honor and trust in his native colony. He represented the city of New York in the Colonial House of Assembly in 1758, and continued a member of that body until 1769. He was the Speaker during his latter term of office; was a member of the first and second Continental Congresses, and while acting in this representative capacity, affixed his signature to the Declaration of Independence, an act which secured immortality to his name and memory.

William Livingston, brother of the Philip whose

life has just been briefly sketched, also deserves a passing notice for his great distinction at the Bar, for his services as a Representative in Congress from New Jersey, and as Governor of the State of New Jersey ; this latter position he held till the close of his active public life.

His name and fame survived in his son, Brockholst Livingston, born in the city of New York, November 25th, 1757. This gentleman took an active and important part in the War for Independence, shared in the capture of Burgoyne, and was promoted to the rank of Colonel. He held many important public positions, and in 1806 was raised to the Bench of the Supreme Court of the United States. His death took place on the 18th of March, 1823. Following this assemblage of distinguished men, many others of this celebrated family of Livingston attained distinction at the Bar and in the various walks of civil life ; but of these time will not allow even brief mention.

In this short sketch of this family, I have shown that, by their talents, their virtues, and their public zeal, they conferred honor upon as well as deserved honor from the country which proudly enrols them among its most esteemed, meritorious, and useful citizens.

I propose now to give you some brief but carefully ascertained particulars, regarding the subject of this excellent portrait, for which we are indebted to the

kind thoughtfulness of our patriotic countrywoman—herself of kin to this branch of the family.

Robert Livingston, first Lord and Patentee of the Manor of Livingston, gave to his youngest son Robert 13,000 acres of land, the same being the town of Clermont. This grant was in reward for discovering and frustrating a plot formed among the Indians to massacre the white population of the Province. His only son and child, Robert R. Livingston, became at his father's death the owner of this large estate, and a person of much distinction in the State, receiving the appointment of Judge from the English Crown. He was chosen a delegate to the Colonial Congress, which met in New York, October 7th, 1765, "to consider the means of a general and united, dutiful, loyal and humble representation of their condition to his Majesty George the Third, and the English Parliament, and to implore relief from the recent enactments of that body, levying duties and taxes on the Colonies." This body is known in history as the Stamp Act Congress. Robert R. Livingston married Miss Margaret Beekman, only daughter and child, then living, of Colonel Henry Beekman, of Rhinebeck. They had a numerous family of children, of whom the eldest was Robert R. Livingston, of Clermont, whose portrait is before you. He was born in the city of New York on the 27th of November, 1746, and at the age of eighteen

years was graduated from King's, now Columbia College, then under the presidency of Myles Cooper. He next studied law under William Smith, the historian, and later in the office of his kinsman, Governor William Livingston, of New Jersey.

In 1773 he was admitted to the bar, and for a short time was a business partner of John Jay. He met with great success in the practice of law, and was appointed Recorder of the City of New York, under the Crown, in 1773; this office he retained but two years, losing it through his attachment to liberty and his active sympathy with the revolutionary spirit of his countrymen, which took form in deeds in 1775.

He was sent a delegate from New York to the Congress of 1776, and had the honor of being chosen one of a committee of five to draft the Declaration of Independence; which, owing to absence, he was prevented from signing, being called away to New York to attend the Provincial Congress, of which he was a member.

On the 8th July, 1776, he took his seat in the Provincial Convention—which on the same day changed the title of the Province to that of the State of New York—and was appointed on the committee to draw up a State Constitution.

During the Revolution he signalized himself by his zeal and efficiency in the cause of independence,

and he ranks with the most illustrious characters of that notable period.

He was the first Chancellor of the State of New York, and held that high position from 1777 until February, 1801. In this official capacity he had the honor to administer the oath of office to Washington, on his inauguration as first President of the United States. The ceremony took place at the City Hall, then fronting on Wall street, in this city, which had been specially fitted up for the reception of Congress. On this memorable occasion, Chancellor Livingston, after having administered the oath, exclaimed in deep and impressive tones, "Long live George Washington, President of the United States."

From August, 1781, to August, 1783, he ably filled the important office of Secretary of Foreign Affairs for the United States. In 1788 he was made Chairman of the New York Convention to consider the United States Constitution, and was principally instrumental in procuring its adoption.

Chancellor Livingston was tendered the post of Minister to France by President Washington, but saw fit to decline its acceptance; at a later period, however, after refusing a position as Secretary of the Navy in the cabinet of President Jefferson, he was prevailed upon to undertake the mission to France, and was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to that government in 1801, resigning the Chancellorship

of New York to accept the post abroad. Upon his arrival in France, he was received by Napoleon Buonaparte, then First Consul, with marked respect and cordiality; and enjoyed the warm friendship of that remarkable personage during a residence of several years in the French capital, where, as is stated in an encyclopædia of the day, "he appeared to be the favorite foreign envoy." His ministry was signalized by the cession of Louisiana to the United States, which through his negotiations took place in 1803. Although Mr. Monroe was also a member of the commission appointed to arrange this matter with the French government, he did not arrive in Paris until Mr. Livingston had nearly perfected and definitely settled the terms of the cession. The share of Monroe in the transaction was principally in affixing his signature as one of the commission to the contract between the two governments. Minister Livingston was also successful in procuring a settlement for the numerous spoliations by the French on our commerce; but the Congress of the United States, to this day, has failed to distribute to its rightful owners the money received under that settlement. Having resigned his position at the French capital, he travelled extensively in Europe. After his return to Paris in 1804, on his journey homeward, he took leave of Napoleon, then Emperor, who, in token of his friendship and esteem, presented

Livingston with a splendid snuff-box, containing a miniature likeness of himself, painted by the celebrated Isabey.

While in Paris he made the acquaintance of Fulton, and a warm friendship grew up between them, and together they successfully developed a plan of steam navigation, the particulars of which invention, though generally known, I shall briefly recount. Towards the close of the last century, Mr. Livingston became deeply impressed with the great advantages which must occur to commerce from the application of steam to navigation. He obtained from the Legislature of the State of New York the exclusive right to navigate its waters by steam power for a period of twenty years, and then constructed a boat of thirty tons burden, with which he succeeded in making three miles an hour. The concession from the Legislature was made on condition of attaining a speed of four miles, and this Livingston might have accomplished had his public duties permitted him the time to devote to further experiments. When at a later day, as has been mentioned, he made the acquaintance of Fulton—who, though young, was possessed of great practical as well as theoretical ability—he acquainted him with what had been done in America, and advised him earnestly to turn his attention to the subject. Together they made numerous experiments, and finally launched a

boat on the Seine, which, however, did not fully realize their expectations.

Upon the return of Livingston and Fulton to America, their experiments were continued, and in 1807 the "Clermont" was built and launched upon the Hudson River, where it accomplished five miles an hour. This success clearly demonstrated the feasibility of the propulsion of vessels by the aid of steam, and effected a complete revolution in the art of navigation.

Mr. Livingston, it will be seen, was both an originator and inventor before his meeting with Fulton; and though Fulton is considered the actual inventor of the successful steamboat, it must be acknowledged that he was greatly indebted to Livingston, not merely for material aid and encouragement, but likewise for much practical and valuable suggestion and assistance.

I will not detain the members of the Society longer by further particulars on this interesting subject, but shall append to this sketch a copy of a communication drawn up by Mr. Livingston himself, and addressed to Doctors Hosack and Francis, which was published in the *American Medical and Philosophical Register*. This communication will enable others to judge for themselves how far Mr. Livingston was instrumental in perfecting and bringing before the world one of the greatest discoveries of the age.

An enumeration of the public services of this eminent citizen would scarcely be complete without a reference to the prominent part taken by him in establishing the great system of inland navigation by canals, which has made New York the chief commercial State of the Union.

Another important service rendered by Livingston was in determining and adjusting the eastern boundary line of New York State. In company with several other distinguished citizens, he served on the commission appointed for this purpose, which permanently settled the controversies between New York, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, and which may be said to have given the State of Vermont to the Union.

The retirement of Mr. Livingston from public service was but the beginning of a new era of usefulness in his memorable career. During the remainder of his life he devoted much time and attention to the subject of agriculture, and was actively engaged in introducing a number of valuable improvements in that art into the State of New York. Through his endeavors the use of gypsum for fertilizing purposes became quite general, and he was the first to introduce the celebrated breed of merino sheep to the farming community west of the Hudson River.

While a resident of Paris, which then, as now, was a great art centre, and the resort of the refined and

intelligent from all parts of the civilized world, Mr. Livingston found time, aside from his official duties, to cultivate those tastes which afterwards he sought to encourage among his countrymen at home.

He was the principal founder of the American Academy of Fine Arts, established in New York in 1801, and upon his return to America became its President, continued for many years its chief officer, and through life was devoted to its interests. He added a fine collection of busts and statuary to that institution, many of which now grace the National Academy of Design in this city, and are included among its most precious treasures.

Through the liberality of Napoleon, who was a warm friend and supporter of the arts and sciences, Mr. Livingston was enabled to increase the possessions of the American Academy, by the addition of many valuable paintings and rare prints. I may add here that, when the American Academy of Fine Arts was overshadowed by the Academy of Design, resulting from the misunderstanding which grew out of the attempt to remove the President of the former in order to substitute the artist who became the President of the latter, the artists generally ceased to exhibit their paintings, as theretofore had been their uniform practice, in the elder institution, and restricted their patronage to the younger ; hence, the source from which the American Academy chiefly

derived its income was no longer available, that institution fell into debt, and finally became bankrupt. Fortunately, its Book of Minutes has recently become the property of the New York Historical Society. A new value now attaches to this already interesting relic, as we have in it abundant evidence of the zeal of the principal founder and first President of the Academy, whose portrait we now also possess, and to whose munificent patronage in its early and prosperous career these Minutes conclusively attest.

Mr. Livingston did not, however, restrict his attention to the fine arts. Having truly at heart the best interests of his countrymen, he, like Washington, took a deep interest in all that pertained to their welfare, but in an especial manner in agriculture. He contributed largely to the literature of the day on this subject, and among his published works are an "Essay on Agriculture" and an "Essay on Sheep." His last work, written a few days previous to his death, was devoted to agriculture, and was published in Brewster's Encyclopædia.

Among the men of our common country, who by their deeds *and fame* have added to the national glory and to the substantial welfare of the land, a pre-eminently conspicuous place will ever be assigned to Robert R. Livingston.

Eminent in the profession of law, he occupied

several of the highest positions in the State and nation, in which positions his legal talents were of great benefit to his fellow-citizens, and met with the universal acknowledgement they so richly deserved.

As an orator he possessed a marked degree of persuasive eloquence, which was frequently successful in overcoming the most deeply rooted prejudices. His well-known patriotism and acknowledged integrity of character lent an almost irresistible force to his utterances, and enabled him to rivet the attention of his auditors. So distinguished a person as Franklin termed him the Cicero of America.

As an author his works show an intimate acquaintance with the subjects of which they treat, and give evidence of careful preparation and sound judgment.

In his career as diplomatist, he evinced a masterly ability and a keen insight of character, which rendered every negotiation upon which he entered in that capacity a brilliant as well as honest success for his country; and he not only won the appreciation of his countrymen, but also the esteem of the foreign officials with whom he was thrown in contact.

As an earnest worker in science, to whose inventive genius the world is in part indebted for the early and successful solution of the problem of steam-navigation, he takes rank among the benefactors of mankind.

A lover of the beautiful, he was among the earliest

and most liberal patrons of art in America, and by his influence, benefactions, and labors, aided greatly in the development of a pure taste among his countrymen.

His mental activity was of the most remarkable nature, leading him to find sufficient relaxation in change of employment, where others demand amusements and pleasure. He found agreeable employment in the study of science, history, and the classics, and up to the last days of his active and useful life, gave evidence of the possession of undiminished mental energy and unclouded intellect.

Possessed of a recognized integrity of character, amiable disposition, and refined tastes, coupled with a broad culture, which he was assiduous in developing, he won hosts of admirers, and in his circle of friends counted many of the most learned and distinguished men, both at home and abroad. With an unbounded love for his country, his wealth as well as his talents were ever employed in serving her best interests.

Connected with the Protestant Episcopal Church from an enlightened preference for its doctrines, he continued through life a devoted member of it. Wholly destitute of hostile feeling towards those who entertained other and opposing religious views, he furnishes a notable example of the freedom from prejudice on these subjects which

is a characteristic of the purely enlightened man.

Under the provisions of an Act of Congress, each State was entitled to place the statues of two of its most eminent citizens in the Capitol at Washington.

The State of New York having made but one selection, that of George Clinton, whose name was suggested by Governor Hoffman—at that time the incumbent of the gubernatorial office—and this nomination having received the approval of the Legislature, it devolved upon his successor in office, Governor Dix, to make the second nomination. With discriminating judgment, this cultured gentleman selected Chancellor Livingston for this high honor. The nomination receiving the approval of the legislative body, Mr. E. D. Palmer, a sculptor of note residing at Albany, was selected to execute the statue, which, upon being finished, was placed in the old Representatives' Hall in the Capitol at Washington, where it now stands in company with those of Hamilton, Clinton, Jefferson, Trumbull, and other of the most celebrated men of the nation. This statue, which has been pronounced by competent judges one of the finest in the collection, is in bronze, and of colossal size. The Chancellor is represented standing erect, his form mantled by his robe of office, which falls in graceful folds from his broad shoulders. The right hand bears a scroll inscribed "Louisiana,"

suggestive of his great diplomatic achievement, which secured for the United States the immense area of territory now comprised within the boundaries of the six States of Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, and Kansas.

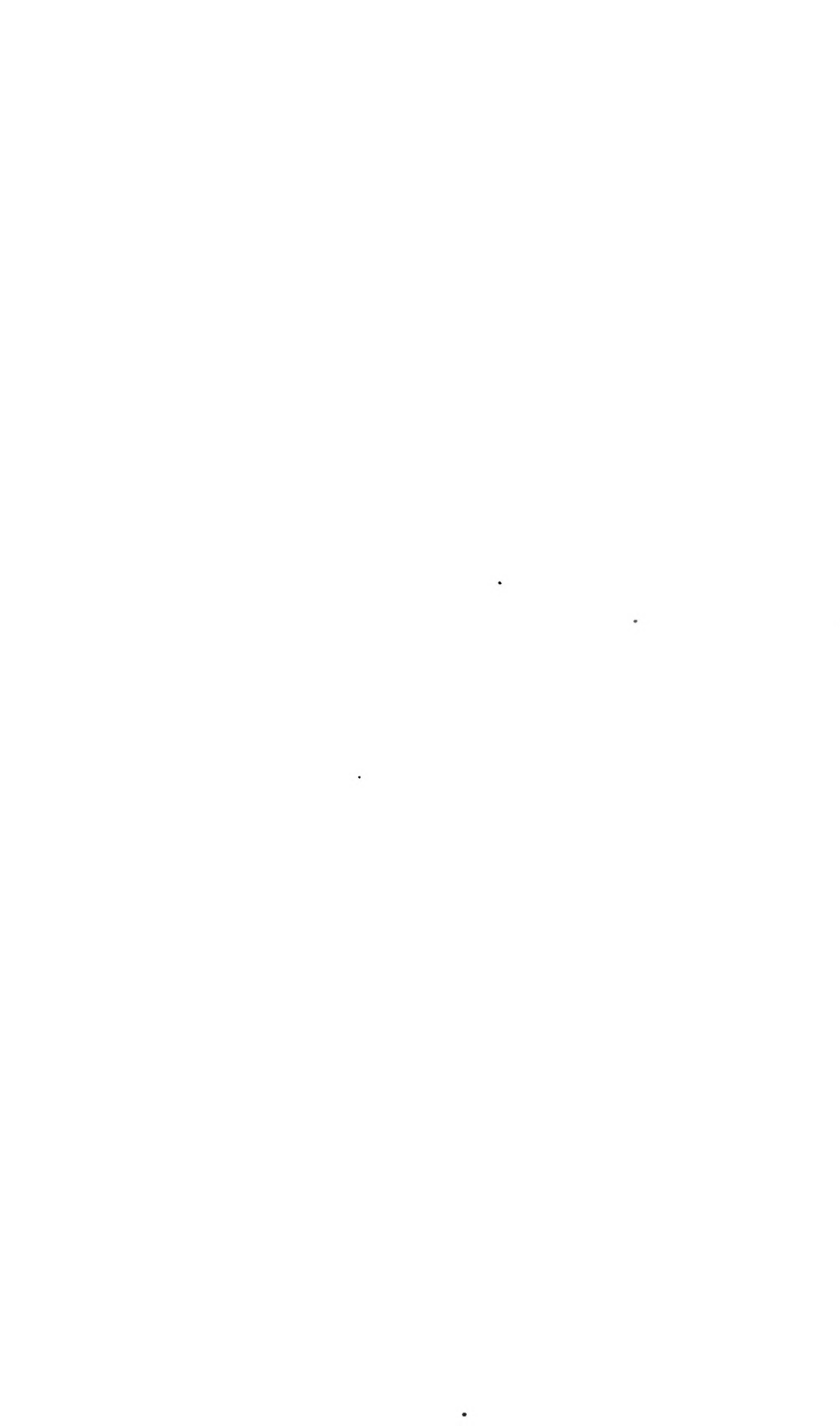
Few men have enjoyed in so large a degree the confidence of their countrymen, and fewer still have been more actively engaged in events of greater importance to the world at large.

His well-poised judgment furnished him an unerring guide in both public and private affairs, lifting him above the ordinary weaknesses of the multitude, and he was alike distinguished for his probity and his wisdom.

After a most useful, active and patriotic career, he passed from this life on the 26th of February, 1813, at his seat at Clermont, in the sixty-sixth year of his age.

The memory of such a life is in itself a priceless legacy.

" So his life has flowed
From its mysterious urn a sacred stream,
In whose calm depth the beautiful and pure
Alone are mirror'd ; which, though shapes of ill
May hover round its surface, glides in light,
And takes no shadow from them."



APPENDIX.

An Historical Account of the Application of Steam for the Propelling of Boats; prepared by Chancellor Livingston, and addressed to Drs. Hosack and Francis, editors of the *American Medical and Philosophical Register*; published in Vol. II. of that journal, pages 256 to 263.

“IT is much to be wished that a regular account of the introduction of useful arts had been transmitted by the historical writers of every age and country, not merely that justice might be done to the genius and enterprise of the inventors, and the nation by whom they were fostered, but that the statesman and philosopher might mark the influence of each upon the wealth, morals, and characters of mankind. Every one sees and acknowledges the changes that have been wrought by the improvements in agriculture and navigation, but seldom reflects on the extent to which apparently small discoveries have influenced, not only the prosperity of the nation to which the invention owes its birth, but those with which it is remotely connected. When Arkwright invented his cotton-mills, the man would have been laughed at that ventured to predict that not only Great Britain would be many millions gainer annually by it, but that in

consequence of it the waste lands of the Carolinas and Georgia would attain an incalculable value, and their planters vie in wealth with the nabobs of the East. A new art has sprung up among us, which promises to be attended with such important consequences, that I doubt not, sirs, you will with pleasure make your useful work record its introduction, that when in future years it becomes common, the names of the inventors may not be lost to posterity, and that its effects upon the wealth and manners of society may be more accurately marked. I refer (as you have doubtless conjectured) to the invention of steamboats, which owe their introduction solely to the genius and enterprise of our fellow-citizens; the utility of which is already so far acknowledged, that although only four years have elapsed since the first boat was built by Mr. Livingston and Mr. Fulton, ten vessels are now in operation on their construction, and several more contracted for.

“ When Messrs. Watt and Bolton had given a great degree of perfection to the steam-engine, it was conceived that this great and manageable power might be usefully applied to the purposes of navigation; the first attempt, however, to effect this, as far as I have yet learned, was made in America in the year 1783. Mr. John Fitch (having first obtained from most of the States in the Union a law vesting in him

for a long term the exclusive use of steamboats) built one upon the Delaware. He made use of Watt and Bolton's engine, and his propelling power was paddles. This vessel navigated the river from Philadelphia to Bordentown for a few weeks, but was found so imperfect, and liable to so many accidents, that it was laid aside, after the projector had expended a large sum of money for himself and his associates.

“ Rumsey, another American, who was deservedly ranked among our most ingenious mechanics, followed Fitch ; but, not being able to find men at home who were willing, after Fitch's failure, to embark in so hazardous an enterprise, he went to England, where, aided by the capital of Mr. Daniel Parker and other moneyed men, he built a boat upon the Thames, which, after many and very expensive trials, was found defective, and never went into operation. Rumsey's propelling power was water pumped by the engine into the vessel and expelled from the stern.

“ The next attempt was made by Chancellor Livingston, to whom, as to Fitch, the State of New York gave an exclusive right for twenty years, upon condition that he built and kept in operation a boat of twenty tons burthen, that should go at the rate of four miles an hour. He expended a considerable sum of money in the experiment, and built a boat of

about thirty tons burthen, which went three miles an hour. As this did not fulfil the conditions of his contract with the State, he relinquished the project for the moment, resolving, whenever his public avocations would give him leisure, to pursue it. His action upon the water was by a horizontal wheel placed in a well in the bottom of the boat, which communicated with the water at its centre, and when whirled rapidly round propelled the water by the centrifugal force, through an aperture in the stern. In this way he hoped to escape the encumbrance of external wheels or paddles, and the irregularities that the action of the waves might occasion. Not being able with the small engine he used, which was an eighteen-inch cylinder, with a three-foot stroke, to obtain, as I have said, a greater velocity than three miles an hour, and fearing that the loss of power in this way was greater than could be compensated by the advantage he proposed from his plan, he relinquished it; but, as I am informed, still thinks that when boats are designed for very rough water, that it may be eligible to adopt it in preference to external wheels.

“ Not long after, John Stevens, Esq., of Hoboken, engaged in the same pursuit, tried elliptical paddles, smoke-jack wheels, and a variety of other ingenious contrivances—sometimes of his own invention, and again, in conjunction with Mr. Kinsley, late one of

our most distinguished mechanics. None of these having been attended with the desired effect, Mr. Stevens has, since the introduction of Messrs. Livingston and Fulton's boat, adopted their principles, and built two boats that are propelled by wheels, to which he has added a boiler of his invention, that promises to be a useful improvement on engines designed for boats. Whilst these unsuccessful attempts were making in America, the mechanics of Europe were not wholly inattentive to the object. Lord Stanhope, who deservedly ranks very high among them, expended a considerable sum of money in building a steamboat, which, like all that preceded it, totally failed. His operating power upon the water was something in the form of a duck's foot. A gentleman in France (whose name I have forgotten), when Mr. Livingston and Mr. Fulton were building their experimental boat on the Seine, complained in the French papers that the Americans had forestalled his invention; that he had invented a boat that would go seven miles an hour, and explained his principles. Mr. Fulton replied to him, and showed him that attempts had been previously made in America, and assuring him that his plan was quite different. Mr. ——'s would not answer. He had expended a great deal of money and failed; he made use of a horizontal cylinder and chain-paddles.

“ After the experiments made by Mr. Livingston

and Mr. Fulton at Paris, a boat was built in Scotland that moved in some measure like a small boat that was exhibited for some time at New York by Mr. Fitch. The cylinder was laid horizontally, and her action upon the water was similar to his ; but as her speed upon the water was a little better than two miles an hour, I presume she has gone into disuse.

“ You will not, sir, find this record of the errors of projectors uninteresting, since they serve the double purpose of deterring others from wasting time and money upon them, and of setting in its true light the enterprise of those who, regardless of so many failures, had the boldness to undertake and the happiness to succeed in the enterprise.

“ Robert R. Livingston, Esq., when minister in France, met with Mr. Fulton, and they formed that friendship and connection with each other to which a similarity of pursuits generally gives birth. He communicated to Mr. Fulton the importance of steam-boats to their common country, informed him of what had been attempted in America and of his resolution to resume the pursuit on his return, and advised him to turn his attention to the subject. It was agreed between them to embark in the enterprise, and immediately to make such experiments as would enable them to determine how far, in spite of former failures, the object was attainable. The principal direction of these experiments was left to Mr.

Fulton, who united, in a very considerable degree, practical to a theoretical knowledge of mechanics. After trying a variety of experiments on a small scale, on models of his own invention, it was understood that he had developed the true principles upon which steamboats should be built, and for the want of knowing which, all previous experiments had failed. But, as these gentlemen both knew that many things which were apparently perfect when tried on a small scale, failed when reduced to practice upon a large one, they determined to go to the expense of building an operating boat upon the Seine. This was done in the year 1803, at their joint expense, under the direction of Mr. Fulton, and so fully evinced the justice of his principles, that it was immediately determined to enrich their country by the valuable discovery as soon as they should meet there, and in the meantime to order an engine to be made in England. On the arrival at New York of Mr. Fulton, which was not until 1806, they immediately engaged in building a boat of what was then considered very considerable dimensions. This boat began to navigate the Hudson River in September, 1807; its progress through the water was at the rate of five miles an hour. In the course of the ensuing winter it was enlarged to a boat of one hundred and forty feet keel, and sixteen and a half feet beam. The Legislature of the State were so

fully convinced of the great utility of the invention, and the interest the State had in its encouragement, that they made a new contract with Mr. Livingston and Mr. Fulton, by which they extended the term of their exclusive right five years for every additional boat they should build, provided that the whole term should not exceed thirty years; in consequence of which they have added two boats to the North River boat (besides those that have been built by others under their license), the Car of Neptune, which is a beautiful vessel of about three hundred tons burthen, and the Paragon, of three hundred and fifty tons, a drawing of which is sent you herewith, together with a description of her interior arrangements.

“ It will appear, sir, from the above history of steam-boats, that the first development of the principles and combinations upon which their success was founded was discovered by Mr. Fulton in the year 1803, and grew out of a variety of experiments made by him and Mr. Livingston for that purpose, at Paris, about that period; and that the first steamboat that was ever in this or any other country put into useful operation (if we except the imperfect trial of Fitch) was built upon those principles by Mr. Livingston and Mr. Fulton, at New York, in 1807. From these periods the invention of the art may be dated. I will not trouble you with an explanation of these

principles ; they are now so clearly developed in his patents, and rendered so obvious by being publicly reduced to practice, that any experienced mechanic may, by a recourse to them, build a steamboat. What has hitherto been a stumbling-block to the ablest mechanics of the old and new world is now become so obvious and familiar to all, that they look back with astonishment upon their own failures, and lament the time they have been deprived of this useful invention. Had it not been for a fortunate occurrence of circumstances, it is highly probable that another century would have elapsed before it had been introduced. Past failures operated as a discouragement to new trials ; the great expense that attended experiments upon the only scale on which it could succeed would have deterred any but men of property from engaging in the enterprise ; and how few of these are there in any country that choose to risk much in projects, and upon such especially as have repeatedly proved unfortunate ? Add to this, that without special encouragement from the government, and a perfect security of their rights, in case of the success of so expensive and hazardous an enterprise, it could not have been expected that any individuals would have embarked their time, their fame, and their fortunes in it. In the present instance, happily for our country, mechanical talents and property united with the enthusiasm of pro-

jectors in the enterprise, and the enlightened policy of this State afforded it a liberal patronage. Under these circumstances a new art has happily, and honorably for this country, been brought into existence ; speed, convenience, and ease have been introduced into our system of travelling, which the world has never before experienced ; and the projectors, stimulated by the public patronage and the pride of success, have spared no expense that can contribute to the ease and safety of travellers. Their boats are furnished with every accommodation that can be found in the best hotels ; every new boat is an improvement upon the one that preceded, until they have obtained a degree of perfection which leaves us nothing to wish, but that the public, duly impressed with the advantage they have received from their labors, may cheerfully bestow on them the honor and profit to which the boldness of their enterprise, and the liberal manner in which it has been executed, so justly entitle them.

A FRIEND TO SCIENCE."



