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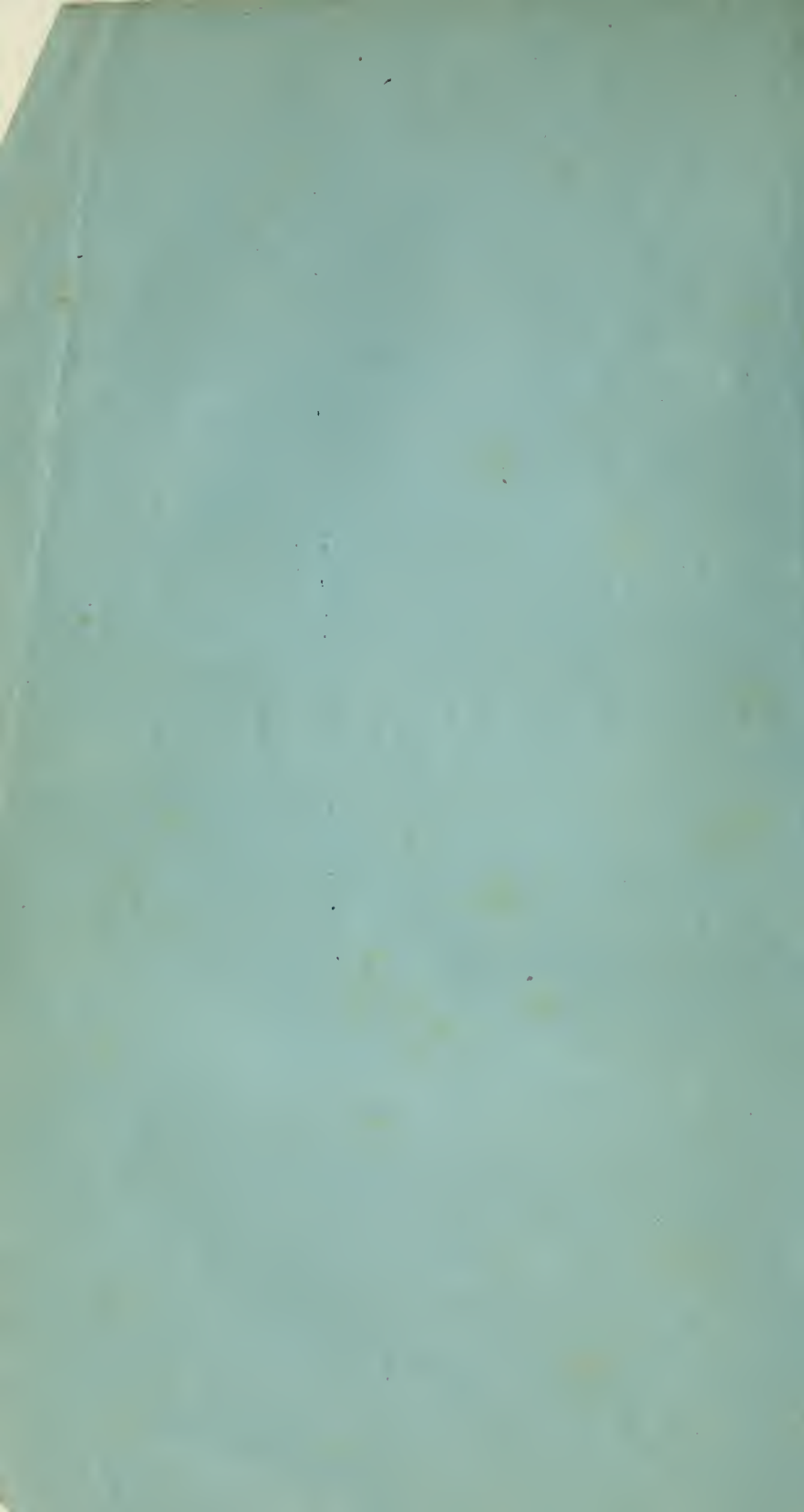
Commerce, Literature and Art.

MR. BRANTZ MAYER'S
DISCOURSE

AT THE

DEDICATION OF THE ATHENÆUM,

BALTIMORE, OCTOBER 23, 1848.



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Commerce, Literature and Art:

A DISCOURSE

BY

BRANTZ MAYER,

DELIVERED AT THE DEDICATION OF THE

BALTIMORE ATHENÆUM.

OCTOBER 23, 1848.

BALTIMORE:

PRINTED BY JOHN MURPHY

MDCCCXLVIII.

BALTIMORE, October 26th, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR :

The Joint Committee of the Maryland Historical Society, the Library Company, and the Mercantile Library Association, has requested me to ask of you for publication, a copy of the Address delivered by you before these Societies upon the evening of the 23d inst.

I have much pleasure in carrying the wish of the Committee into effect, and beg, that if not inconsistent with your own views, you will afford us an early opportunity of giving general circulation to the sentiments of your valuable and eloquent address.

Very respectfully and truly,
Your friend and servant,

J. MORRISON HARRIS.

B. C. WARD,	} Committee of the } Maryland Histo- } rical Society.
S. F. STREETER,	
J. MORRISON HARRIS,	} Committee of the } Baltimore Li- } brary Company.
J. MASON CAMPBELL,	
JOHN M. GORDON.	} Committee of the } Mercantile Li- } brary Association.
WILLIAM RODEWALD,	
HENRY MACTIER WARFIELD,	
CHARLES BRADENBAUGH,	
WILLIAM E. WOODEYAR,	

TO BRANTZ MAYER, ESQ.

BALTIMORE, 1st November, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR :

I received, to-day, your note, on behalf of the Historical Society, the Mercantile Library Association, and the Library Company of Baltimore, in which you are pleased, in very flattering terms, to request a copy of my Address for publication. I comply, at once, with your desire, and beg that you will convey to your associates, composing the Committee from the three Societies, my cordial thanks for this mark of their respect.

Very truly, your friend and servant,

BRANTZ MAYER.

TO J. MORRISON HARRIS, ESQ., &c. &c.

Chairman Joint Committee.



DISCOURSE.

THERE is nothing around which cluster so many agreeable sympathies, as the idea of HOME. It is that for which every man of true sensibility craves. We long to be at rest, in perfect security. We desire a retreat whence we are never to be driven, and wherein, our rights will always be respected. This is a natural feeling which every one experiences when he shuts the door of his dwelling and nestles in the familiar chair that stands ready, with its capacious arms, to receive him in the kindly circle gathered around his hearth stone.

NOR is this sentiment of home dearer to man, in social life, than it is to the scholar and artist who seek to shelter the houseless children of the brain. It is to them pleasant to behold these vagrants comfortably lodged and provided for the rest of their lives,—not, indeed, in mendicant asylums where genius is fed with reluctant alms,—but in a respectable home, where they may never suffer the stings of dependence, or, with wounded pride, sink into the degradation of beggary.

Such a Home, and not such an Asylum, for Literature, Art, and History, we have met, to dedicate in the City of Baltimore; and here, forever are the masters of the pen and pencil, to enjoy free quarters and hold their levees in the republic of letters. We design it to be a home in every sense of the word;—a home not only to them, but to us;—a social home, in which fashion and formality are to hold no place or to enjoy no privileges, but where all shall be cordially welcomed when they crave admission or companionship by virtue of talent or taste.

Whilst congratulating this audience that we have, at last, within the limits of our city, such an edifice, we may also indulge the remark, that this is, perhaps, the first unselfish gift that money has ever made to mind in our country. I do not allude to the foundation of professorships, or gifts to charitable institutions,—things done for the sake of Christianity, or for the advancement of education, and flowing from the generosity of wealthy individuals,—but I speak of edifices erected by spontaneous subscriptions for literary purposes, from which the donors expected no revenue in the form of money. This beautiful house has been built by FREE GIFT; so that all classes,—mercantile, professional, mechanical,—have been enabled to bestow their voluntary contributions, and to point to it as an object of personal and exalted pride.

There are, probably, many present who recollect when the first project of erecting this Athenæum was suggested, and how sneeringly the idea was discountenanced by some, that anything but the expectation of revenue could induce subscription to such an enterprize. Indeed, the first sketch comprehended the

scheme of a small income; but there were others who believed that generosity and intellectual justice were possible things, when men are properly addressed;—and, to-night, you have the material fact proved and consecrated in the dedication of this magnificent building. Let it be our boast, as Baltimoreans, when we show the shafts and columns that point heavenward from our city walls, in honor of civil and military glory, that we have now a nobler monument in our midst, to which cupidity has not paid the tribute of a cent,—in which selfishness has not set a single stone,—with which the vanity of the living or the dead has no concern, and to which time, money, intelligence, have been unstintedly devoted as a labor of love. Let it be our honest pride that herein are not to be congregated the trophies of war the spoils of victory, the emblems of mortal strife and ambition; but that the triumphs of the mind, the god-like thoughts and spiritual fancies, the sublime conceptions and achievements of genius in all countries, are to be garnered within our edifice;—that from these walls the noble images of pictured thought are to speak in beauty; that from these pedestals the eloquent marble is to breathe the passionate beauty of Venus, or the spiritual wrath of Apollo;—that from these shelves, the master minds of all ages are to speak to enquiring men, and to hold their solemn conclave of genius and wisdom!

It is a matter of no ordinary satisfaction, that the greater part of the funds with which this edifice has been erected, came from the mercantile community. In a Republic, and, indeed, in all countries, at the

present day, the majority of the people must be engaged either in commerce, agriculture, or the mechanic arts. The great bulk of national wealth, consequently, pertains to this large and influential body, and the lawful patronage of genius must spring from it wherever art and literature can constitutionally receive but little direct encouragement from the government. Science takes care of itself; because science,—the handmaid of the mechanic, the farmer, the manufacturer, and the navigator,—appeals immediately to their necessities for protection. The sailor cannot cross the sea, the merchant trade, the builder raise his dwelling, the miner dig the earth for coal or gold, nor even the distinguished cook prepare his mess of savory viands, without the aid of theoretic and practical science. Mathematics, chemistry, geology, and all that vast field which is covered by the general phrase—Natural Philosophy,—appeal personally, to the wants of every man. We feel and are forced to acknowledge our direct dependence on them, and we know that in proportion as they are developed by modern analysis, so are our means of acquiring fortune and surrounding ourselves with comforts and luxuries multiplied. This, then, is the demand that want makes on science, and the reason why science rarely asks the aid of wealth; for, without it, wealth could not transmute the dross of the desert into the coin that rules the world. But literature and art are differently situated. In such a country as America,—where the press is entirely untrammelled by a censorship or by the stringent enforcement of the law of libel,—in which the direct intercourse between men, and between the sexes, is of the

freest kind,—in which the genius of the people and the national laws have forever destroyed the possibility of perpetuating wealth in families,—the masses must, necessarily, be forced into violent action and continued effort, not only to acquire fortune, but for necessary maintainance. In this constant strife of the people against want or for accumulation, they have but little time to turn aside into the paths that are bordered by flowers, and where the muses dally and revel in perfect liberty. The habit of trade has the direct tendency to make men not only count the cost, but to look for an income from the outlay of their money. The question asked is—will it pay? The feeling that rises in the heart is the same as that with which they make a bargain:—is this a profitable investment?—and, thus, the dollar becomes the metre by which every thing is estimated when it passes under the scrutinizing eye of so prudent and parsimonious a class. The student is regarded as a dreamer. He is looked upon as a useless member of society. He does not immediately produce a profitable result, which tells upon minds that are always listening for echoes. Literature has a multiform duty assigned to it.—It is the recorder of history,—the teacher of truths, moral or scientific,—the vehicle of poetry and amusement. I speak of Literature in its higher offices, for we can scarcely dignify with so august a title that mass of verbiage which suffices for the ordinary conveyance of news, or for political discussion.—Literature, then, addresses a loftier state of the mind. It is not content with mere information, although that is one of its main reliances; but it looks to Philosophy as the analysis of human action,—to Poetry,

as the vehicle of sentiment and experience to the human heart,—to History, as the Recording Angel whose pen lingers over the great deeds and the great thoughts of a virtuous ancestry. Its business is not only with the present but the past. It is the treasurer of intellectual legacies; the diffuser of generous sympathy—the foe of selfishness, the vindicator of mind, the nurse of ideality.

It was remarked by Mr. Legaré,—one of the purest scholars given by America to the world—in advising a young friend, at the outset of his life, that, “nothing is more perilous in America than to be too long learning, or to get the name of bookish.” Great, indeed, is the experience contained in this short paragraph! It is a sentence which nearly banishes a man from the fields of wealth, for it seems to deny the possibility of the concurrent lives of thought and action. The “bookish” man cannot be the “business” man! And such, indeed, has been the prevailing tone of public sentiment for the last thirty or forty years, since it became the parental habit to cast our children into the stream of trade to buffet their way to fortune, as soon as they were able either to make their labor pay, or to relieve their parents from a part of the expense of maintenance. Early taught that the duty of life is incompatible with the pursuits of a student, the young man whose school years gave promise of renown, speedily finds himself engaged in the mechanical pursuit of a business upon which his bread depends, and either quits forever the book he loved, or steals to it in night and secrecy, as Numa did to the tangled crypt when he wooed Egeria!

In the old world there are two classes to which

Literature can always directly appeal,—government, and the aristocracy. That which is elegant, entertaining, tasteful, remotely useful, or merely designed for embellishment, may call successfully on men who enjoy money and leisure, and are ever eager in the pursuit of new pleasures. This is particularly the case with individuals whose revenues are the mere alluvium of wealth,—the deposit of the golden tide flowing in with regularity,—but not with those whose fortunes are won from the world in a struggle of enterprize. Such men do not enjoy the refreshing occupation of necessary labor, and consequently, they crave the excitement of the intellect and the senses. Out of this want, in Europe, has sprung the Opera,—that magnificent and refined luxury of extreme wealth—that sublime assemblage of all that is exquisite in dress, decoration, declamation, melody, picture, motion, art,—that marriage of music and harmonious thought, which depends, for its perfect success, on the rarest organ of the human frame. The patrons of the Opera have the time and the money to bestow as rewards for their gratification; and yet, I am still captious enough to be discontented with a patronage, springing, in a majority of cases, from a desire for sensual relaxation, and not offered as a fair recompense in the barter that continually occurs in this world between talent and money. I would level the mind of the mass *up* to such an appreciative position, that, at last, it would regard Literature and Art as wants, not as pastimes,—as the substantial food, and not the frail confectionery of life.

And what is the result, in our country, of this unprotective sentiment towards Literature? The an-

swer is found in the fact that nearly all our young men whose literary tastes and abilities force them to use the pen, are driven to the daily press, where they sell their minds, by retail, in paragraphs;—where they print their crudities without sufficient thought or correction;—where the iron tongue of the engine is forever bellowing for novelty;—where the daily morsel of opinion must be coined into phrases for daily bread,—and where the idea, which an intelligent editor should expand into a volume, must be condensed into an aphoristic sentence.

Public speaking and talk, are also the speediest mediums of plausible conveyance of opinion in a Republic. The value of talk from the pulpit, the bar, the senate, and the street corner, is inappreciable in America. There is no need of its cultivation among us, for fluency seems to be a national gift. From the slow dropping chat of the provoking button holder, to the prolonged and rotund tumidities of the stump orator—every thing can be achieved by a harangue. It is a fearful facility of speech! Men of genius talk the results of their own experience and reflection. Men of talent talk the results of other men's minds; and, thus, in a country where there are few habitual students,—where there are few professed authors,—where all are mere *writers*,—where there is, in fact, scarcely the seedling germ of a national literature, we are in danger of becoming mere telegraphs of opinion, as ignorant of the full meaning of the truths we convey as are the senseless wires of the electric words which thrill and sparkle through their iron veins!

It is not surprising, then, that the mass of American reading consists of newspapers and novels;—that

nearly all our good books are imported and re-printed;—that, with a capacity for research and composition quite equal to that of England, our men become editors instead of authors. No man but a well paid parson, or a millionaire, can indulge in the expensive delights of amateur authorship. Thus it is that Sue is more read than Scott. Thus it is that the *intense* literature of the weekly newspapers is so prosperous, and that the laborer, who longs to mingle cheaply the luxuries of wealth, health and knowledge, purchases, on his way homeward, with his pay in his pocket, on Saturday night, a lottery ticket, a Sunday newspaper, and a dose of quack physic, so that he has the chance of winning a fortune by Monday, whilst he is purifying his body and amusing his mind, without losing a day from his customary toil!

In this way we trace downward from the merchant and the literary man to the mechanic, the prevailing notion in our country of necessary devotion to labor as to a dreary task, without respite or relaxation. This is the expansive illustration of Mr. Legaré's idea, that no man must get, in America, the repute of being "bookish." And yet, what would become of the world without those derided, "bookish" men?—these recorders of history—these developers of science—these philosophers—these writers of fiction—these thousand scholars who are continually adding by almost imperceptible contributions to the knowledge and wealth of the world? Some there are, who, in their day and generation, indeed *appear* to be utterly useless;—men who *seem* to be literary idlers, and, yet, whose works tell upon the world in

the course of ages. Such was the character of the occupations of Atticus, in Rome, and of Horace Walpole, in England. Without Atticus,—the elegant scholar, who stood aloof from the noisy contests of politics, and cultivated letters,—we should never have had the delicious correspondence addressed to him by Cicero. Without the vanity, selfishness, avarice, and diletantism of Walpole, we should never have enjoyed that exquisite mosaic-work of history, wit, anecdote, character and incident, which he has left us in the letters addressed to his various friends. Too idle for a sustained work,—too gossiping for the serious strain that would have excluded the malice, scandal and small talk of his compositions,—he adopted the easy chat of familiar epistles, and converted his correspondence into an intellectual curiosity shop whose relics are now becoming of inestimable value to a posterity which is greedy for details.

No character is to be found in history that unites in itself so many various and interesting objects as that of the friend of Atticus. Cicero was a student, a scholar, a devoted friend of art, and, withal, an eminent “man of business.” He was at home in the Tusculum and the Senate. It was supposed, in his day, that a statesman should be an accomplished man. It was the prevailing sentiment, that polish did not impair strength. It was believed that the highest graces of oratory—the most effective wisdom of speech,—the conscientious advice of patriotic oratory,—could only be expected from a zealous student who had exhausted the experience of the world without the dread of being “bookish.” It was the opinion that cultivation and business moved hand in

hand,—and that Cicero could criticise the texture of a papyrus, the grain and chiselling of a statue, or the art of a picture, as well as the foreign and domestic relations of Rome. Taste, architecture, morals, poetry, oratory, gems, rare manuscripts, curious collections, government, popular favor, all, in turn, engaged his attention, and, for all, he displayed a remarkable aptitude. No man thought he was less a “business man” because he filled his dwelling with groups of eloquent marble; because he bought and read the rarest books; because he chose to mingle only with the best and most intellectual society; because he shunned the demagogue and never used his arts even to suppress crime! Cicero would have been Cicero had he never been consul. Place gave nothing to him but the chance to save his country. It can bestow no fame; for fame is won by the qualities that should win place; whilst place is too often won by the tricks that should condemn the practicer. It were well, both on the score of accomplishment and of personal biography, that our own statesmen would recollect the history of a man whose books and orations will endear him to a posterity which will scarcely know that he was a ruler in Rome!

If I thought it needful to enforce the compatibility of scholarship and “business,” I might sketch the biography of a patriot who has lately passed from amongst us. Mr. John Quincy Adams was a remarkable proof of the harmonious blending of these qualities; and moreover, he was a signal example of what an individual may acquire or achieve by the steadfast pursuit of a worthy object. He aimed to

be a Christian Gentleman, and his conduct and correspondence attest, that, at the most brilliant court of Europe, he turned joyfully from the fascinations of royal society, to kneel in unaffected humility before his God, and that whilst using his pen, in public, for the international welfare of Russia and America, he devoted it, in secret, to disclose to a beloved son, the musings of a soul penetrated with the truths of Christianity. He strove to be eminent as a rhetorician, and his verse, as well as his prose, proves the extraordinary command he obtained over his native language. Endowed with a mind that mastered every useful or interesting fact and anecdote in national story or personal biography, and remembering all its accumulations at will, he became the most delightful companion in our country. Knowing all the distinguished men of both continents, either personally or by correspondence,—having witnessed, in the old and new worlds, most of the great events of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,—and enjoying the dialectic skill of a prompt debater,—he labored to acquire the fame of an orator who could convince or crush his opponents, and delighted Senates held their breath while the “old man eloquent” poured forth his wisdom, his wit, his sarcasm and his experience. Tempted onward and upward, he became the master-spirit of the American cabinet; and, at last, crowned his eminent career of industry and public virtue, by occupying the presidential chair, from which, with true democratic simplicity, he descended to the popular arena of Congress, which witnessed the most brilliant triumphs of his political life and the still more august glories of his Christian death!

This is an example of what may be done by an encouraged and supported ordinary mind; for the intellect of Mr. Adams, when critically judged, must be regarded as rather more capacious for acquirement than creation. He was not a man of genius; yet he mingled the useful and the agreeable with more skill, perhaps, than any of the distinguished statesmen of America during the last two decades of our history.

I can readily sympathize, nevertheless, with persons who fear devoting their children to the pursuits of Literature. Scholarship is a great privilege or a great danger. It must not become an absorbing, essential, or exclusive purpose. Its relation to life must never become anything more than that of a graceful handmaid. The danger of excessive scholarship is to make a man unfit for any thing but a schoolmaster,—and, properly speaking, not even for that, because schoolmasters usually teach more of language than of idea,—more of the vehicle than the substance it bears. This is the glaring error of modern teaching, which feeds and disgust pupils with the husk of language,—tasking their memory instead of enlightening their understanding, wearying their ears instead of filling their minds with divine and eternal echoes of principle, truth, art, right, and the liberal Christianity that flows from them.

There are two kinds of great acquisition which have always appeared to me to be properly classed among the humbugs of the age, both of which, nevertheless, have their valuable uses when judiciously applied. I mean the acquisition of great wealth and of great learning,—the hoarding of dimes and dollars, and the miserly thrift of Greek roots, Hebrew ac-

cents, and Latin quantities. These deposits of mental and monetary riches may become intellectual banks which discount their treasures to the needy; but, personally considered, the great Parr and the greater Porson, are very little better than the door-keepers of such corporations. The great scholar is often an intellectual miser, who expends the spiritual energy that might make him a hero, upon the detection of a wrong dot, a false syllable, or an inaccurate word!

These are some of the real and imaginary dangers of scholarship or student life. Like all pursuits, it may run into extremes and make men solitary, moody, inactive and exclusive;—but, if we consider the other side of the picture, and study the immense benefits it is likely to bestow on those who pursue it with a judicious spirit, we shall, in time, learn to appreciate such merchants as Solon,* Roscoe, and Hope. In Europe,—especially on the Continent,—it is the pleasure of Governments to appreciate and foster men of genius whose position or means are incompatible with their tastes. They bestow pensions or personal honors which make such men conspicuous. This is especially needful for the maintenance of those who occupy themselves in entertaining or instructive literature, in works of fiction, or with the fine arts. Politics,—as the occupation of a mere literary class,—has not been hitherto permitted, except in France, and, even there, under restrictions of a formidable character.

This pension system, however, is one that is not to be approved. Men who think and write well, should

* It will be remembered that Solon began life as a supercargo.

not be supported by Government but by the PEOPLE. Pensions are apt to buy men. We do not willingly speak ill of the man who is disposed to afford us competence and leisure. We are not directly bribed,—yet, our sense of decency keeps us quiet; and, thus, there are in Continental Europe hosts of authors, painters, sculptors, poets, and statesmen, who receive the money and the decorations of princes whose thrones they surround with a brilliant cordon of genius, but who are dumb forever in the cause of the people and of progress. They think a pension and a star better than a prison and darkness, and the author, by compulsion, wanders off to the realms of fancy and art from the political realities of the dreary present.

England is free from this, because in that country talent is made available in other shapes. The press is free. There is no censorship. Men think, write and speak what they please; and, if they are personally false, the law makes them responsible. But the English author is recompensed for what he writes by his publisher,—whilst the American author is *not* recompensed by his publisher, because copy-right in this country can have no value as long as our printers may appropriate all the literature of England without a corresponding compensation to its authors. I have always regarded the appeal to our Congress for an international copy-right law as extremely just;—not, however, for the *protection* of the English author, but for the *creation* of an American copy-right. The British author writes for the British nation, not for the English tongue;—he addresses himself to his country, not to his language, for his recompense, and

the money he obtains for his book is not a dollar more nor less than he would receive if no such country as America existed. Our printers, therefore, do *him* no wrong, whilst *he*, unwillingly and indirectly, does infinite harm to American authors by employing himself in literary composition.

An international copy-right law, therefore, should be passed,—not in the spirit of an exclusive or protective tariff, but as a law under the shield of which a truly national literature might grow up; because American authors would then really possess rights they could sell, and might fairly enter into competition with the British. As the law now operates, there is neither *protection to the foreign*, or *value to American copy-right*.

A literature thus founded, and sustained by the liberal spirit of men of wealth and by proper legislation, will soon develop its peculiar national features. It will reflect the daily life and the political history of our country and its intellect. It will speak more from present influences than past records. It will disclose principles, habits and institutions, kindred with our own. It will restrain that mawkish imitation of the worst features of European fashion and civilization. It will be straightforward, manly, free, critical, pure, republican. It will extinguish the intense school of sensual literature, and raise gradually the moral and Christian tone of society. It will make us judge for ourselves, and save us from the credulous adoption of English prejudices in regard to men and nations. We shall have no second-hand opinions; but will adopt our own criticism. This may be a work of time; but its progress will be as sure as it is beneficial.

Such are some of the vast benefits to be derived from the mingling and mutual appreciation of the scholar, the student, and the merchant. Such are the results which the vast wealth deposited in the mercantile class is to produce, when liberally directed. Such is to be the effective operation of the admirable institution of noble-hearted clerks, within whose walls I address you to-night, and around which are spread the testimonials of their devotion to the intellectual progress of their class. Wiser than those who went before them, they perceive the true dignity of commerce and the advantage the merchant properly derives from enlightenment. They discern that the meanest of mankind may trade and traffic;—that the most uneducated may deal in merchandize, and by trick, contrivance, lucky speculation, the fortunate position of a store, or the alliance of an influential and wealthy family, may acquire money, or increase enormously what they already possess. They see that commerce is a nobler sphere than this. They perceive that to plan a great voyage, or to conduct it to a successful issue, requires a kind of generalship in this campaign against the seasons, elements and wants of the earth. A good merchant should be a good geographer, something of a statesman, philosopher and historian. He should know the character, habits, tastes, fancies and wants of every nation, so as to shape his ventures with wisdom. There was a time, during the last century, when wars were more common in the world, when the tonnage was less, and when colonial enterprise had not thrown the dense population of the old world on every island that studs the surface of distant seas. Then it was that

the merchant was a king, when he sent forth his gallant fleets on their long voyages to trade in the Indian oceans. The enterprises of Mr. Astor, so beautifully sketched by Washington Irving, display this feature of mercantile history and knowledge. The means of accurate information, disclosed by statistics and geographical science, have somewhat modified these risks and required less mature deliberation in modern commerce; yet the history of trade attests that the well informed merchant is always the safest and happiest, if not the richest of his class.

Of all the pursuits to which Literature invokes us, none are more attractive or useful than those of History. History is the biography of nations. It contains the germ of the future sown in the soil of the past. It is a solemn lesson of political, personal and national experience. It surveys the world from an eminence. It grasps and gathers the frail records of the past, and gleans the field of human action after the great mower—Time—has swept it with his relentless scythe. And it is a sad reflection that the gleaner has, so often, nothing for his pains but a few straws from which the grain has been trampled! History comprehends all styles of literature; and, thus, becomes the most interesting species of composition. It deals with scenery, narrative of action, dialogue, dress, decoration, geography, climate, national character, individual biography;—and, from the whole, extracts the philosophy of human action.

It is a small and selfish spirit which teaches us that we are only creatures of the present hour, and that

we perform our parts best when we attend to our personal tasks without reference either to the past or the future. There is no philosophy in such a course. It is one which would altogether shut out the lights of experience, because it would not contemplate the aspect of what had gone by,—and, would discard a wise adaptation of means to success, because it would have no hope for what was to come. “We are beings with affinities. Neither the point of time, nor the spot of earth, in which we physically live, bounds our rational and intellectual enjoyments. There may be and there often is, indeed, a regard for ancestry which nourishes a weak pride; as there is, also, a care for posterity which only disguises habitual avarice or hides the working of a low and grovelling vanity. But there is also a moral and philosophical respect for our ancestry, which elevates the character and improves the heart.”*

I would not inculcate this loyal respect for ancestry in consequence of the renown it casts upon our own persons; but a disregard of our forefathers seems to be an actual courting of oblivion for ourselves,—a clear intimation to those who come after, that they are neither to reverence our example nor to be warned by our errors. Indeed, it is astonishing, when we reflect how little we truly live for ourselves, whilst how much that we do, affects our successors. Life is too short to reach the absolute results of any man’s thoughts or deeds whose existence is not merely animal.

* Webster’s Plymouth Oration, p. 7.

The scheme of this Athenæum includes a Society devoted to History; and, in the four years of its existence, it has wrought zealously in the arduous task of gathering a valuable library of reference, in collecting the scattered fragments of our Colonial and State history, in uniting a series of publications illustrative of national history, and in corresponding with distinguished men or affiliated societies in other States, who have been engaged for longer periods in similar pursuits.

The idea of a Historical Society does not necessarily include the composition of complete works relative to individuals or epochs. Being formed by the association of numerous persons, the Society is devoted to the humbler duty of assembling facts, and preserving those minute particles of biography and story which might easily escape the notice of future authors. The history of Maryland, and, indeed, of all the States of this Union, is pregnant with such examples of loss. Time, the moth, neglect, voluntary destruction, and the fashionable rage for autograph hunting, have destroyed immense quantities of colonial and revolutionary documents, so that there are periods in our history, which are dim for the want of the materials that would have been preserved had such conservatories been instituted immediately after the independence of our Union.

“It is pleasing to perceive,”—said Mr. Adams in a letter written in 1845—“the growing interest taken by the rising generation in the collection and preservation of the historical details of the revolutionary conflict of our fathers. The institution of Historical Societies in so many States of our Union promises to

our posterity a pledge contradictory of the misanthropic declaration of Sir Robert Walpole, that all history is and must be false. It is, indeed, conformable to all experience that the history of periods, and events, pregnant with consequences affecting the condition of the human race, can be but imperfectly known to the actors and contemporaries of them. There is a French work, entitled, 'History of Great Events from Little Causes,' and there are perhaps very few of the great events in the history of mankind to which little causes have not largely contributed. I think it is a remark of Voltaire, that posterity is always eager for details; and among the incidents of that convulsion of the family of civilized man,—which began with the writs of assistants and the stamp act, and ended in the foundation of the proudest empire that the world has ever known,—the relations of the colonies of England swelling into sovereign States, with the conquered colony of France ineffectually sought to be united with them in the struggle for freedom and independence,—there are causes of detail so widely different from those which operated on the mass, that they will require the keenest perception and profoundest meditation of the future philosophical historian to assign to them their proper station and weight as elements in the composition of the complicated and wondrous tale."

It is precisely for the purpose of preserving these details of incident, character and adventure, that Historical Societies are chiefly useful. They become receptacles of fact, into which the honest and industrious student may freely come and carefully collate

the discordant materials that have been accumulated, with commendable industry, for future use.

The more we read of history, the more we must be convinced of the comparative worthlessness of what has been frequently written and regarded as authentic. Governments carefully lock up their archives and diplomatic correspondence from contemporary historians, until a century or two elapses after the events they seek to describe. Writing from a party, national, or religious view of the question or period, they disclose whatever suits their prejudices or interests. Let an Englishman take up the cause of the quarrel with Ireland, or the motives of the late war with China, and, will he be able to prepare a reliable history from the general statements that are commonly circulated? I will not dare to say that the narrator designs wilfully to falsify; but such must ever be the effect of political partialities, such the vehement animosity of bigoted sects, that even the purest citizens may be blinded to the truth. Alison's History of Europe,—the work of an English tory, upon the Napoleonic period,—became a text book as soon as it issued from the press, and yet, what American can observe the ignorance displayed in the chapter on the war between Great Britain and the United States, and not be convinced that an author who has been so false in regard to the history with which we are acquainted, must, needs, be equally faithless as to that with which we are less familiar? Read Lingard's history of the reigns of Elizabeth and Mary, and then turn to the pages of Hume wherein the same period is discussed. Both of these authors ex-

pected and courted the criticism of posterity; yet their motives and deductions are as distant as the poles,—and who shall decide between them? Read the Catholic and Protestant histories of the Inquisition, of the Knights-Templar, of the Reformation, of the Sicilian Vespers, of the massacre of St. Bartholomew,—and who shall extract a veracious story from the earnest narratives of either?

The great leading facts,—the palpable events,—those things which are known to all the world because they passed under the world's eye,—may, in most cases, be admitted;—but the secret policy of Governments or Courts,—the unseen springs of human action,—the impulses that have driven nations to grandeur or ruin,—these are but rarely disclosed with candour to the generation in which they occur, or, not until the world has, for centuries, been filled with error in regard to them. At last, time and truth, like the bones of the Prophet, revivify the dust which they touch in the grave!

There are few greater mistakes than to take for granted the great mass of documents which are the common materials for history annually published, even by free Governments. They are often designed to conceal rather than to manifest the truth. Fine phrases, patriotic speeches, mutual compliments, general principles addressed to the universal comprehension, form but a deceptive surface, beneath which rolls the dark and turbid tide of personal ambition, rank with meanness and the most absorbing selfishness.

If the history of our own times, then, is so grossly or diversely represented by party motives, how far more difficult is it for us to search the dreary vista of antiquity in order to find the details of the obscure past? Amid all the fluctuations of time, but one thing has remained steadfast. The heart of man has continued the same through all ages. The same passions, the same reasons, have governed him on the shores of the Euphrates and on the banks of the Sacramento. Contending with his fellows in the career of love, avarice or ambition,—the same partizanship has controlled his spirit and inspired him when he wrote the story of his time. He hated the successful, if his enemy;—he lauded and magnified the victor, if his friend. Who, then, shall verify the purity of that success which has made so many names immortal, or tell us whether victory, alone, was not all that sanctified a life of baseness or crime? It required two centuries to unmask the saintship of Charles the first and to destroy the bloody garments with which toryism had invested Cromwell!

Thus, there are two histories, as well as two parties, constantly running in parallel lines, in every country,—the secret and the apparent. One, evident, with all the show of honest disinterestedness and public faith; the other marked with the reverse of all these characteristics, but suppressed by those who have the skill to hide truth, or the adroitness to make victory always virtuous.

What, then, are the credible things of history? Well, perhaps, did Walpole exclaim, in the bitterness of his heart:—“as for history—I know it to be a lie!” State papers diplomatically false, memoirs notoriously

mendacious, correspondence systematically and maliciously misrepresenting,—newspapers, ignorant, deceived or the vehicles of political hatred,—reports, which are the revelations or suppressions of party,—bulletins that announce falsehoods by supreme authority,—legends that become the great traditional lies of ages,—these are some of the authorities that are condensed by the perverted talent of a partizan into history!

In contemplating such a picture of historic materials, I have been led to believe that one of the greatest benefits of our age has been conferred in the establishment of properly conducted Historical Societies. A corporation escapes the errors of an individual. It decides upon evidence, like a jury composed of men of all creeds, classes, and parties. It necessarily brings forth a vast quantity of crudities; yet it discloses, or, may disclose all the facts; and thus the individual who, hereafter, seeks to write the story of our age, will find around him, preserved with impartial care, every thing that we had the ability to rescue during the epoch in which we live.

This aggregation of the labors of many minds; this blending the views of all parties and all religions; this officious zeal in the detection of all motives; will be the means of leaving to our successors the legacy of a mass of documents and papers, for which posterity will thank us. To ourselves, perhaps, it is a thankless office; to many it seems a trifling, gossiping, or useless one;—but we enjoy the consciousness of doing a service for those who are to fill our places, because we feel the neglect of similar pursuits by those who have preceded us.

The importance then of Historical Societies, as the means of associating gentlemen in the pursuit of truth, and of inducing them to devote themselves, individually, to the composition of historical works, will be evident, I trust, to all who hear me. It should be their duty to reverse the law of nature, in relation to sound. The tones of human voices are ever loudest where they are first uttered. The echoes of true fame should be most distinct as they recede from their object in the vast vista of time.

A mere student ought never write the biography of a man of action,—for they lack sympathy. Sympathy, regulated by a just mind, is the soul of true appreciation, and, without it, a writer is naturally led to condemn motives and conduct which he cannot comprehend or approve. Thus it is by no means singular to discover in modern literature such variant criticism of the most distinguished personages. The critical sketch of Napoleon, by Dr. Channing, in American literature, is an excellent illustration of this subject. A meek Christian minister should not have undertaken to review the life of such a man as the Emperor. Jove might as well have made a dove the bearer of his thunderbolts.

High and holy are the lessons of true and philosophic history. Profound and solemn is its wisdom. It immortalizes the good—it gibbets the bad. It records the progress of worth—it denounces the wretchedness of wrong. It holds up to scorn the mean motive, the bloody crime, the desolating example of ambition. Teaching truth,—it teaches, also, the wisest

economy of individuals, who, banded in legislative bodies,—create the glory or shame of their epoch. It shows that every age is but a step in the vast scheme of eternity, and that new empires are built out of the ruins of those that are lost. But its lessons do not stop with the material decay or amalgamation of races. It has a current of philosophy winding, like a thread, through its mazes of fact; and this philosophy leads the wise and patriotic political student to direct his country into the path that conducts her to industrial prosperity, moral grandeur, and national dignity. The great and true historian deserves to rank by the side of the great prophet, for his lessons direct the destinies of humanity.

It is a matter of just pride, that the uses of this edifice do not stop even here. The subjects we have already treated embrace what are perhaps usually regarded as the most prominent interests of mankind; but there is another branch of human pursuits which I crave permission to consider of equal importance. We have devoted a portion of this building to ART;—we design to familiarize the public mind with beauty and grandeur, and, by the influence of pictures and statues, to create new standards of tasteful and enlightened opinion.

The mere ability to delineate known forms; to exhibit them with anatomical accuracy; to clothe them in graceful costume; to perpetuate the memory of men by copying their faces; to spread color on canvass with method, skill, and just relation; to talk of chiaro-oscuro with learned emphasis; to condemn painters and sculptors because their works do not

correspond with the rules that are laid down by academies and professors,—these do not constitute ART in that exalted sense which true analysis has found it to possess. They are, indeed, some of the means of artistic success, but they no more form the essential element of delineative science than does language suffice to convince unless it is impregnated with meaning. Language is the plumage of thought. Music is the interpretation of sentiment by melody. Art is the vehicle of idea by form and color. The mere servile limner of features has a talent which is not superior to the monkey, the looking glass, or the mechanical daguerreotype. It is that of imitation or reflection, alone. But the Artist forgets, for a while, that his subject possesses a body, and looking through the fleshy exterior, into the mind of his subject, he penetrates individual character, and thus, by a spiritual process, transfers to canvass the very soul of man. His pictures become biographies. We do not gaze on them to assist memory; but every look puts us in direct intellectual communication with the man or the scene, and even the dead come from their graves to *speak* to us again from the senseless wood!

Art, then, does not deal with what is immediately obvious, but catches and discloses the hidden sentiment. The Egyptians turned this principle to account when they made pictures language. It was this that made painting and sculpture such valuable adjuncts of religion. The art which springs from Idolatry creates the statue, and makes divinity palpable. The art which springs from Christianity makes the picture. The one demands embodiment; the other is content with idea. The one exacts con-

centration,—the other expansion. The one freezes into stone,—the other expands in oil.

The effect which the Roman Catholic religion has had upon the arts is notorious. The church sought to appeal to man by his senses as well as by his intellect, and thus the really great masters of the brush, the chisel, and the lyre, were induced to devote their lives to the adornment of the sanctuary and the celebration of its august services. Priest, Prelate and Pope were the great patrons of art; and thus the minds of sensitive people were constantly furnished with eloquent symbols of love, hope, fear and immortality. In Italy, Art is therefore dignified as one of the powerful coadjutors of Religion, and painters are a hieroglyphic priesthood, inspired by Heaven and divine by that inspiration. The monk preaches from the pulpit with temporary unction, but the painter preaches, forever, from the walls of church or chapel. The one is a temporal teacher, whose ministry ceases with his life; the other is an orator, eloquent through all time. The one is a minister, with all the frailties of humanity; the other a spiritual voice, reaching the soul, and embodied in the instructive forms and colors which genius has conceived in its wrapt meditations upon the spirit and story of Christianity. The priest and the painter are thus indissolubly united in Italy, and art exalts the character of the man who practices it.

Yet, it will be granted, in order to attain so distinguished a position, something more is required than the mere pictorial image of that which occurs to an ordinary imagination when it endeavors to realize an event by grouping the figures of its actors.

The great Artist must be the great inventor,—the great POET! Beauty of form and idea must keep beauty of color and effect in due subordination. But these, combined in harmonious union, produce the great poetic, religious, or historic picture. And yet, the majority of thriving painters or sculptors, subsist on but one, alone, of these elements of artistic power! None can be truly great without the great *idea*;—all others paint mere lay figures, or copy the ordinary features of landscapes.

Exclusive devotion to portrait painting, in this country, (where the fortunes of individuals are not sufficiently large to justify the encouragement of the very highest school of art,) has been one of the causes why the artist has not ranked higher in the intellectual scale and attained loftier objects in his pursuit. Affection or vanity prompts the brush. The multiplication of loved or pretty faces satisfies the mind and fills the walls, and when the tact of copying faithfully, combined with a good style of pictorial treatment, has been attained, the painter becomes “the fashion” for a season, and his fortune is secured.

There is an exceedingly vicious school of modern art, which, starting from art and not from the soul or nature, makes its disciples mannerists and the merest imitators. There is another fashionable class, which is corrupted into the vilest and most transparent mediocrity by the French lithographs that adorn the shop windows and typify the theatrical exaggeration of the country that produces them. It is a school which represents the violent passions in dramatic shapes;—which exhibits sentimental rob-

bers peering over picturesque rocks, while the bandit bride, clad in fantastic costume, crouches behind the concealing precipice and presses convulsively to her bosom the infant scoundrel in her arms. This is the demoniac school of Painters,—delighting in cut-throats, herdsmen of the Campagna, castles on crags, and all the Radcliffe clap trap of exaggerated fantasy which frightened our grandmothers out of a sound night's rest in the last century. Their pictures of the crucifixion make Christ more of a felon than a God. They imitate the dying agony of a malefactor, and immortalize the quivering fear of a villainous culprit by transferring it to the lip of Jesus!

Now, much of this false taste or false principle in art, has sprung from the fact that it has not, in recent periods, enjoyed sufficient patronage and respectability to elevate the social condition of artists, who, instead of painting their own conceptions or creations, have been engaged in delineating the ideas of other persons;—*illustrating* things instead of *creating* things;—converting themselves into *copyists* instead of *poets*. In the gallery which we open to you in Baltimore, to-day, you will find at least two pictures which are magnificent poems.—I allude to a *Sunset*, by Durand, and to the *Progress of Civilization*, by Cole. The first is the embodiment of the idea of silence and solitude.—It is a picture which mellows and droops the heart of the gazer like the solemn tones of an organ, stealing, in the dim twilight, through the long and darkling aisles of a cathedral. The other is the dawn of human action,—in which heaven and earth are meeting in their first rude embrace;—in which man and nature stand face to face

with ferocious resolution, and hunger teaches the savage to barb his arrow, to bend his bow, and to drive his shaft to the heart of his victim. He who looks upon these pictures beholds at once *their* meaning and *my* illustration. He may have beheld scenes like those depicted; but he knows they had no copy, save in the teeming brain of the poetic artist.

Such were some of the high characteristics of art when art was in its palmy days, and when artists were the friends and companions of princes, statesmen, and scholars. We cannot suppose that genius is geographical, or that it can be limited by oceans. Yet I have sometimes been tempted to believe that America was not a congenial soil in which the highest Art could flourish. Life is here, perhaps, too real and too little ideal;—we are concerned, too much, with the actual and too little with the imagination in its best pursuits. Greece and Italy have always been renowned for the expression of idea by form and sound,—by painting, statuary, or music. Their synthesis of idea was æsthetically manifested by shape, color and sound. Germany, on the contrary, has been equally renowned for analysis of idea—the spiritual dissection of thought. May it not be hoped that the Anglo-Saxon race is destined to unite the two, and ultimately to produce the highest artistic results?

This, however, will require leisure, taste, high cultivation, riches, and liberality. The mere diletanti will never do any thing for art. The essence of true patronage lies in the exalted understanding of the patron, and in the criticism which starts from the true point of *idea* instead of *form*. England has

done little, with all her wealth; she wants the fervor, the enthusiasm, the imagination of the Italian and German stocks; but here, where the blood of all the world is blent and refreshed by continual immigration, I cherish the hope of ultimate progress. Do we not perceive the feeling for art growing up slowly around us? The art, or the capacity for high art, is here; all it claims is the discriminating patronage of the rich;—and, where are we to find riches but among the merchants?

In the desire of accomplished men and women to furnish their dwellings with objects of art,—especially with a few richly framed pictures,—I think I discern a willingness to expend money upon articles of household luxury. I think I perceive a growing disposition to loosen the purse strings for the gratification of a taste which is supposed to be good. And yet, the queer, the curious and the antique, seem to be more the objects of especial desire than the grand, the beautiful, the chaste and the intellectual. It is more the fashion to assemble forms than ideas,—to gratify or amuse the eye than the mind.

We have had ages of gold and ages of silver, ages of brass and ages of iron; but, in point of taste, I think we may characterize this as the age of the *odd*. The poet who said that “a thing of beauty is a joy forever” would not repeat his line in most of our parlors. A guest is sometimes bewildered in the labyrinth of things through which he is compelled to pass on his way to a seat in the house he visits, and may reasonably doubt whether he has wrongly stumbled into a museum, a curiosity shop, or a Jew’s garret!

A few years since there was a passion for autographs. There was a rage to possess the hand-writing of those who had done, said, or written great things. Every scrap, scrawled by genius, was enshrined in Russia-binding, or encased in dainty albums clasped with silver lachets. Next came the revived taste for old china. "Monsters" were at a premium! Every "ancient family" in which one could be discovered, was hunted up, whilst every cupboard was ransacked for the vases and punch bowls, the soup plates and dinner plates, the cracked saucers and porcelain prodigies, that had become too old-fashioned for use or exhibition during the last century. A fractured cup was a thing for female diplomacy. Wits were put together to discover the lucky possessor, and all the genius of wily negotiation was exercised to out-general one another in obtaining the precious porcelain! It was borne home in state, and the neglected utensil which had lain for half a century among the dust and spiders, or served as the receptacle for some favorite salve, shone, at once, in all the splendor of polish, through the plate glass and rosewood of a magnificent *étagère*.

It was rare, indeed, that any of this cracked crockery,—this fragmentary finery of the last age,—was beautiful in shape, painting or texture. But it was old;—it had the relish of antiquity;—and, what was better still, no one else possessed it, or had any thing precisely like it. If these collections contained even a series of works of various countries, or of any period, or illustrated beauty of design,—they might be valuable. But the spirit they manifest is merely that of acquiring the *odd* with the most ridiculous and even false *dilletantism*.

To the rage for ancient china succeeded the rage for old furniture. What a rummaging of garrets that passion produced! It was the doom and death of spiders. Entailed estates that had been established for generations, by the "long leg'd spinners," among the feet and arms of many a chair and table, were destroyed by this ruthless invasion of antique taste. Crooked legs, carved elbows, perpendicular backs, and quaint carving, were in extraordinary demand. A bow-leg'd table, whose claw feet made ready to roll the ball they clutched, was a rare relic that must be acquired at any price that might be demanded. A looking-glass frame, whose mysterious and inextricable labyrinth of carved lines resembled the convolutions of a thousand tendrils, was a gem! An inlaid cabinet, with huge, brazen hinges and massive handles, was invaluable! Second-hand men were converted into cabinet counsellors or spies. It was dangerous to be suspected of a pedigree. You were doomed if you had a grandfather!

Such is the spirit of collecting the odd in furniture, which is a graft of Chinese fancy on the taste of the ages of Louis the XIV and XV. It is the school of "*renaissance*." Arising, originally, from the ancestral vanity of having old things, as indicating "family antiquity" or pretensions, it has been aped by the promiscuous crowd, until our parlors are filled with the hieroglyphic relics of departed races which are quite as ugly, but not half so useful, as the hieroglyphics of Egypt.

Am I unjust in condemning the cultivation of this quaint and barbarous taste? Am I wrong in claiming a share of our love for the simple, the beautiful,

the elegant? Am I unfair in censuring the folly and vanity that would create a resurrection of birth out of the mahogany, the walnut, and the china, that we inherit or buy? Am I unwise in censuring the spirit that would make these either valuable as memorials of other men, or the credentials of personal respectability and descent. The nobleman, of many generations, in Europe, shows his ancestral star,—the aristocrat of few generations in America points to his ancestral tea-pot or his genealogical chair!

These, indeed, are as yet, few; but their imitators are many; and the false taste and vicious principle, unless abruptly checked, are in danger of becoming perpetual and characteristic. The better views of education, art, and the uses of wealth, will produce a higher standard of the uses of existence and taste in furniture!

Do I err, then, in seeking to drive these night-mare phantoms of the past, these ugly and distorted witches, from our saloons, to the congenial gloom of garrets, and to substitute in their stead the true, the beautiful, the grand, the ideal? It requires, indeed, a lofty appreciation of what art actually is, and what are its ultimate purposes;—it exacts social and intellectual refinement of high degree;—but recollect, that the accomplished man reads the character of those he visits in their surroundings. Taste is very eloquent,—it is never dumb,—it is an audible praise to the polished observer. The jumbled and gaudy brain reveals itself in conceits. The wholesome mind discloses itself in frank, beautiful, and honest simplicity.

Good taste may easily be cultivated by avoiding imitations or cultivating originality and self-reliance

in selection. As we have few or no ancestors, we have no long leniage of "family portraits," unless we go back,—which is not our wont,—to the modest artizan who gave us birth. But books, statues, and excellent pictures, are at our command, and they may be purchased cheaper than the grotesque combinations of wood and velvet, or the golden and gorgeous mirrors in which we behold nothing but perpetual repetitions of personal vanity. Let us cover our floors with those simple implements which are needful for comfort or repose, and let us hide our walls and corners with statuary and painting of the best character of modern art. It is not necessary to buy the cracked and dim Rafaels or Murillos, which are counterfeited to pamper our taste for the antique; but, by patronizing the modest genius of *our own artists*, we encourage their growing talent, we create a new race of professional men, we elevate their character, and we make them personal or pictorial friends;—for, if the painted thoughts of the artist are proper as our continual domestic companions, the artist, who conceives and delineates them, is equally fit for the enjoyment of our social intercourse. "The artist depends upon the amateur of his century,—the amateur upon his contemporary artist;"*—and, thus, a mutual reaction of taste and capacity develops the acquirements and genius of both.

And thus we will be surrounded, in our homes, by objects of a purely intellectual character which continually speak to the inner man—to the heart—to the soul. A child, brought up in the familiar contempla-

* Goethe.

tion of grand or lovely forms, good deeds, nature, and grace, has a surrounding atmosphere of the most benignant character. The possession of a beautiful object is an eternal lesson. An eye, gazing forever from a wall, is a reproof that is not mute. The magnificent head of the Saviour, by Guido, hung constantly in a room, is a spiritual presence, which only escapes idolatry because its teaching is of God; and the effect of this high appreciation of the purposes of true Art, will soon manifest itself in everything relative to the dress, demeanour, manners, and character of an individual.

In speaking of that domain of Art which comprehends Design, we should not be forgetful of Architecture. Architecture is the physiognomy of cities. It is the public exhibition of private and individual taste. But this taste is too often made palpable by proxy; for the man who constructs a dwelling and the corporation that erects a church, generally resign their privilege of selection to an Architect who is more of a Builder than an Artist. Hence the grotesque crudities which fill our capitals with such startling admixtures of style. Architects should be accomplished men. The power of construction and the genius for design are, by no means, identical. The carpenter rarely expands into the poet; for a fine edifice is, indeed, a poem in plaster. Forms, without *fitness*, easily seduce copyists, in consequence of the ease with which they are adopted from the works of other men. We do not sufficiently consider the purpose, the character, the nature, of the edifice we erect. There is too much devotion to external effect,

and, too little, to internal comfort, or general suitability; and thus we find ourselves inappropriately lodged in Greek temples, or worshipping in the cryptic gloom of Norman dens.

The facility of collecting architectural bits, and blending them in unseemly masses, corrupts the public taste, for it familiarizes the public eye with vicious principles. A French author has declared that "architecture is frozen music." If such is the case, many of our Architects petrify the slipshod strains of the banjo and the jewsharp rather than the delicious melodies of the lyre or the sublime symphonies of the organ. Ugly things in Architecture as well as furniture, are eagerly seized in consequence of their age. There is an affectation of returning to "first principles" which dwindle into rudimental simplicity. Architects fall in love with antiquity because it is ancient, not because it is beautiful, and adopt the early and imperfect periods of particular styles, rather than the consummate order which was attained either in the Greek, the Roman or the Gothic, when national taste had reached its point of culmination. Thus it is that we have in our churches more of Gothic quotations than of Gothic completeness, and that the bare and barn-like skeletons of a barbaric age are revived in the midst of the abundant civilization of our century. This should be corrected. Men should build as they dress or as they bear themselves. They should endeavor to make their towns beautiful rather than odd. Individual eccentricity should not destroy general effect. The Greek, the Egyptian, the Goth, the Moor, the Roman, and the Norman, should not go abroad masquerading in a promiscuous mob.

A man's intellect should look out from his doors, his windows and his walls. His house should have as much external expression as his face, whilst its interior should be as perfectly fitted for the dwelling of his spirit as the cells of his skull are appropriate and comfortable for the working of his brain. A great city, filled with houses and temples erected upon such principles, would, perhaps, be a miracle of modern art; yet we should, strive to approach, if we cannot reach, so desirable, so permanent, and so magnificent a manifestation of the highest national taste. Egypt, Hindustan, Greece, and Rome, have done so in the ages that are past, and why should no privilege remain to the nineteenth century save to copy, combine, distort and jumble the architectural relics left us from the wreck of these glorious empires!

I believe that the establishment of a permanent gallery in our Athenæum, will essentially contribute to produce the beneficial results I have attempted to expound, and I crave its generous patronage by the liberal persons who have erected this edifice.

I designed in these remarks to exhibit the true uses of wealth in social life. We do not live to make money. We do not live to buy food and raiment and dwellings with the money we make. We do not live for sensual enjoyments. We do not exist to perpetuate ourselves or our time. We are creatures of progress, beings of more exalted purposes than those which may be cramped in the compass of a life time. There is a higher existence of sympathy and love which should pervade society and fill it with unselfish

meaning. That kind of life produces simplicity, directness, purity. It is the essence of Christianity. It *lives* religion. This higher life finds one of its most beautiful expressions in the lofty triumphs of Literature and Art; and, for their expansive diffusion, a commercial community has built this edifice and established a perpetual emblem of its duty. Homer and Cleomenes outlast a thousand Royalties. Individual wealth melts and disappears like a drop in the ocean of general riches; labor crumbles with the muscle that is its instrument; but true Literature and Art partake the eternity of the soul that creates them. The great author, the great sculptor, the great painter, the great musician, enjoy the meed of a double immortality, for whilst their genius "rules us from their urns," their memory is as fresh on earth as their spirits are eternal in heaven.

Were I asked to design a group to be carved in marble and placed over the portal of our Athenæum, I would link, hand in hand, Commerce, Art and Literature, as the Christian Graces of the nineteenth century. Sustaining each other in mutual interdependence of love and respect, they should look aloft. Bound together, face to face and not back to back, their pedestal should be the same massive block, and, from their divine eyes, lifted forever from the toils of life, should beam the expression of spiritual blessedness and intellectual repose.



APPENDIX.

SKETCH OF THE BALTIMORE ATHENÆUM.

THE lot and edifice of the Baltimore Athenæum are held in perpetuity, by trustees, under a charter granted by the Legislature of Maryland at its December session of 1845, chapter 122.

The project of erecting such an establishment in our city had often been spoken of; but the first practical effort to realize the matter was made by the presentation of a plan to the Maryland Historical Society and to the Board of the Library Company of Baltimore, by Mr. William Rodewald, early in the month of February, 1845.

The scheme proposed by this gentleman was not entirely adopted; but, as it was the active initiatory step in the proceeding, it deserves to be recorded as part of the history of the building. The two societies deemed the project of great importance, and appointed a joint committee of five, from each institution, to consider it. The members on the part of the Library Company were, Brantz Mayer, its President at that period; Robert Leslie; William Rodewald; F. W. Brune, Jr.; and Dr. J. R. W. Dunbar;—and, on the part of the Maryland Historical Society:—John Spear Smith, President of the Society; George W. Brown; B. C. Ward; William McKim; and Robert Cary Long.

On the 15th of February, 1845, the joint committee met; and, in a few days, a plan of operations, founded on public subscription, AS A FREE GIFT, was adopted. An address, setting forth the objects of the building, signed by numbers of our leading citizens, was published in circulars as well as in the papers of the day, and the following gentlemen were requested by the joint committee to conduct the scheme to successful completion:

WILLIAM E. MAYHEW, TREASURER.

H. CARY LONG, ARCHITECT.

BUILDING COMMITTEE.

R. GILMOR,
JOHNS HOPKINS,
J. SPEAR SMITH,

B. C. WARD,
J. McHENRY BOYD,
BRANTZ MAYER,
WM. STEVENSON.

S. W. SMITH,
G. W. DOBBIN,
C. J. M. EATON,

COMMITTEE ON TITLE.

GEORGE W. BROWN,

H. DAVEY EVANS.

COMMITTEE ON COLLECTIONS.

GEORGE BROWN,
O. C. TIFFANY,
WM. McKIM,
J. MASON CAMPBELL,
F. B. GRAF,
CHARLES TIERNAN,
DR. J. J. GRAVES,

WM. P. LEMMON,
WM. FREDERICK FRICK,
EDWARD JENKINS,
C. J. M. EATON,
J. B. MORRIS,
JAMES GEORGE,

C. C. JAMESON,
W. WITHINGTON,
JNO. GLENN,
F. W. BRUNE, JR.
DR. CHEW,
WM. STEVENSON,
EDWD. HINKLEY.

On the 7th of April, 1845, Mr. George Brown, who was about to visit Europe, resigned his place as chairman of the collecting committee, and was succeeded by Mr. O. C. Tiffany, who immediately entered upon his task with the greatest zeal. Aided in his personal solicitations by several gentlemen, but especially by Mr. C. J. M. Eaton, he soon discovered that the plan would prove successful. Twenty of our liberal citizens subscribed \$500 each, and the munificent sum of \$1000 was added by another. Smaller amounts flowed in with great rapidity; and finally, near \$35,000 were contributed for the laudable enterprize of building and *furnishing* the edifice, AS A GIFT FROM WHICH NO PECUNIARY RETURN WHATSOEVER WAS TO BE DERIVED.

Meanwhile, the joint committee obtained a charter and digested the scheme. The building committee, having ascertained that it might safely commence its operations, made contracts for a lot and for the erection of the edifice, according to a plan and specifications prepared by Mr. Robert Cary Long, the Architect.

On the 12th of January, 1846, at a meeting of the original joint committee, it was suggested that there was a great desire, on the part of the commercial community to accommodate the Mercantile Library Association, if possible, in the building;—and, accordingly, (under the provisions of the charter,) a portion of the edifice was set aside for that Institution. After the completion of the house, the ground floor was leased to it, on the 12th of February, 1848, at a nominal rent, forever.

On the 31st of January, 1848, a code of laws was framed by the original joint committee: 1st, for the apportionment of the apartments among the Societies; 2d, for the establishment of rules for mutual comfort in their occupancy; and 3d, for the creation of a Council of Government, whose members are annually elected by the three institutions in order to control the general police of the edifice.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ATHENÆUM, *Prepared by the Architect.*

The building is designed in the Italian palazzo style, having a frontage on St. Paul street of 50 feet, by 112 feet on Saratoga street—the height from the front footway to the top of the cornice being 66 feet. The ground floor, which is 17 feet high in the clear, presents externally, a rusticated ashlar, covered with a marble band course extending around the fronts, and ranging with the cornice of the main entrance frontispiece. The entrance to this floor is on St. Paul's street, the frontispiece being of white marble, with arched doorway. The windows to this floor are square headed, the frame shewing a recessed architrave. The main and second floors present, externally, stories of 20 feet each, marked by band courses, the former having semi-arched window heads. The window dressings to main floor are composed of projecting pilasters, supporting pediment heads, with recessed architraves around the window openings. The dressings terminate in projecting balconies with pedestal ends and fancy scroll work between the balconies resting on consoles and projecting from the wall so as to allow standing in them. A court yard, screened from Saratoga street by an iron railing, with gates, affords an entrance to this floor, by a slight elevation of steps, owing to the rapid rise of Saratoga street, towards this end of the building. This court is 20 feet wide by 50 feet deep, a portion of it being sunk to provide concealed water closets. The windows to the second floor are square

headed, trimmed with architraves and level cornice, supported by end trusses. These windows are also provided with projecting balconies, of lighter design than those to the main floor below. The cornice surmounting the building is enriched with cantilevers and dentils, and its whole depth is over three feet, with a projection of nearly four feet to the extreme mouldings. The roof being hipped, the cornice extends around the building, and to the boldness of this feature, as shown by the dimensions just given, the building is mainly indebted for its effect. The walls are of brick, the exterior facing being of the steam prepared bricks, laid with smooth joint, and painted in oil. The cornice and window dressings are of wood, the balconies of cast iron.

The whole of the exterior is painted in a uniform color of warm drab, relieved only by the white marble band-courses, balcony consoles, and entrance frontispiece. The roof is of tin, painted; the gutters and down spouts being of copper. The interior arrangement is nearly alike in all the stories, the north-east and north-west angles being occupied by circular stairways ascending in a regular spiral line to the floors.

The **GROUND FLOOR** has an Entrance Hall, adjoining the stairway, of 14 by 16 feet; the stairway occupies a circular space of 14 feet diameter, and a small Meeting Room of 14 by 14 feet is opposite the stairway. A Reading Room of 26 by 39 feet opens upon the Entrance Hall, adjoining which is the Library Room of 47 by 53 feet, embracing the whole width of the building; and beyond this is the Director's room, of 14 by 32 feet.

This range of apartments is devoted to the Mercantile Library Association, and fitted up appropriately for that purpose, in the same style as the Rooms of the Mercantile Library Association in Philadelphia, which were taken as a model best suited for the purposes and means of the Association. The arrangement and effect are excellent and beautiful, doing credit to Mr. Johnson, of Philadelphia, by whom these and the fittings up of the Association rooms in that city were planned. The Library Room is provided with a gallery, extending entirely around the room, with cases above and below, glazed in diamond lights and grained to imitate oak. The gallery is supported on cast iron brackets, and has an iron guard railing. The reading room is fitted up with octagon tables, at the sides of the room.

The **MAIN FLOOR** is appropriated to the Baltimore Library Company, (one of the oldest and most valuable literary institutions in Maryland,) and to the Public Reading Rooms connected therewith. The Library Room has been magnificently fitted up, with a gallery extending around the room, with ornamental glazed book-cases below and above—a spiral wreathed staircase leading to the gallery at one angle of the room. This room is of the same dimensions as that of the Library of the Mercantile Association below, viz: 47 by 53 feet, with a height of 20 feet. The area of the floor is divided by four Corinthian columns, supporting cross entablatures which break the ceiling into three long panelled compartments. The fittings up of this room are all of solid oak, and the chairs, Librarians' table, reading table and other furniture are all of the same material, and in a similar style of design to the cases. The room is richly carpeted, and the *tout ensemble* of its oaken furniture, its sienna marbled pillars, its stately array of books, and its noble dimensions, is not excelled by any public Library in the country.

Adjoining the Library are the Reading Rooms—one 26 by 47, the other 14 by 32 feet, furnished with oak furniture in keeping with that in the Library. A Director's room, 14 by 16, communicates at the west end with the Library.

The SECOND FLOOR, devoted to the Maryland Historical Society, contains the meeting room of the Society, 26 by 47, with a ceiling 23 feet high, cored at the angles and panelled in large panels—the President's room communicating therewith, 14 by 23, and the GALLERY OF FINE ARTS, which joins the meeting room, and can also be reached by the stairway entrance from the court-yard end. This noble room is 47 by 53 feet, with a ceiling 23 feet high at the apex, and sloping to 20 feet at the walls. It is lighted by a skylight in the roof, affording 400 superficial feet of glazed surface. The walls are all lined with boards, so as to attach pictures at any desired point, and the boarding is canvassed and papered over to obtain a uniform surface. Beyond the Gallery is a room 14 by 23 feet for Sculpture and Casts from the Antique, with high ceiling, and boarded in a like manner with the Gallery. This Gallery is under the management of the Historical Society, and was added to the scheme of the Athenæum at an early period, chiefly by the advice of the President, Gen. J. Spear Smith. The Rooms of the Historical Society have been fitted up in a chaste and elegant manner, with solid oak glazed cases, tables and chairs, the President's room having beautiful and appropriate furniture to suit. All the fittings up and carpetings have been designed to correspond with the style of the building, and this uniformity of style throughout adds greatly to the effect of the apartments.

Each Association is provided with fire-proof closets, built in the wall. The building is warmed by hot-air furnaces in the cellar, and is lighted throughout by gas.

The contract for the building was entered into between the Building Committee and the contractors on the 8th day of August, 1846, for the sum of \$25,900. It was afterwards agreed to add other needful work to the building, such as boarding the walls of the Gallery of the Fine Arts, putting up the Gallery for the Baltimore Library Room and other items, amounting to \$2,282. The building, completed, therefore, has cost the sum of \$28,182. The furniture is valued at about \$8,000. The Athenæum was commenced on the 16th day of August, 1846, and delivered for occupation on the 1st day of May, 1848. It is entirely free of debt.

The First Annual Exhibition of the Gallery of the Fine Arts was opened, and the edifice inaugurated, by the Address of Mr. Brantz Mayer, on the 23d of October, 1848.



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