

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

AT THE

DEDICATION OF THE LIBRARY,

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1857.

NEW YORK:

PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY.

M DCCC LVII.

Officers of the Society, 1857.

PRESIDENT,
LUTHER BRADISH.

FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT,
THOMAS DE WITT, D. D.

SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT,
FREDERIC DE PEYSTER.

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BENJ. ROBERT WINTHROP.

Secretary of the Executive Committee,
GEORGE HENRY MOORE.

New York Historical Society.

DEDICATION OF THE LIBRARY,

NOVEMBER 3, 1857.

THE Society assembled in the Lecture Room, at the usual hour. As the evening was devoted to the dedication of the building, by ceremonies directed to be observed by the Committee of Arrangements appointed at a previous meeting, the ordinary business was dispensed with, except the report of the Executive Committee on nominations, and nominations of new members.

Prayer was then offered by the Rev. THOMAS DE WITT, D. D., First Vice President of the Society.

The Hon. LUTHER BRADISH, President, then addressed the Society, as follows :

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT.

We are at length assembled for the first time under our own roof. The New York Historical Society has passed its nomadic state, and has at last found a fixed and permanent home. From wandering for half a century, the tenants at will of others, we come this evening to take possession, as our own, of this beautiful temple, with all its ample accommodations, and to dedicate them to the cause of history and of art

—of history in its broadest sense, and of art in its illustrations of history.

Here, for the benefit of the present and future generations, will history garner up its treasures. Here will each succeeding age, for the instruction of those to come after it, bring its record of the current events of time. And here, too, in the future, will the Genius of History from these accumulated treasures, construct its variegated but harmonious narrative—showing the relations and dependencies of apparently isolated events, and exhibiting the great truth that the histories of seemingly detached periods, instead of forming integral subjects complete in themselves, are but parts of the universal system of that Providence which, in infinite intelligence and wisdom, governs the world.

Here, too, in this fitting temple, will art lend the light and the fascination of its illustrations to the great truths of history. The genius which inspired the imagination and guided the pencil of Raphael, of Michael Angelo, of Rubens, and of Murillo, will hereafter cover these walls with its beautiful creations, illustrative of the men, the manners, and the events of the time; and prove to mankind that in art the present is not inferior to the past, or the New World to the Old.

Sculpture, too, whose magic power can call from the inert and shapeless mass the ideal semblance of animated and intellectual life, even in its sublimest forms; which can give to marble, in the graceful lineaments of female form and loveliness its chisel traces, the combined expression of the shrinking delicacy of female modesty and the force and dignity of conscious virtue; which, in its magical transformations, can exhibit, in the quarried block, the first dawn of civilization, and the first springing of celestial hope in the bosom of a graceful daughter of the forest; or can in marble symbolize the ethereal spirit's flight from darkness into light, and from time to eternity—this noble art will hereafter adorn these galleries with the productions of its genius, and prove to the world that America, too, can furnish names worthy to be associated with those of Thorwaldsen and Canova, of Phidias and Praxiteles.

The burin of the engraver, too, will lend its aid to enrich our galleries, and in its representations of both painting and sculpture, exhibit the magic of light and shade, the grace of outline and the beauty of design. Thus will these several departments of art conspire to illustrate and give additional interest to the truths of history, and thereby advance the proper objects of this society.

Ten years have passed away since the project of this building first

received a definite form. In 1847 the New York Historical Society, then comparatively few in numbers, and feeble in pecuniary resources, but deeply impressed with the great and increasing value of its library and collections, and with the danger to which they were exposed, took the incipient steps for the erection of a new fire-proof edifice, for the reception and preservation of that library and those collections, and for the general accommodation of the Society. This enterprise, under the circumstances, might well, as it did, to the timid and even prudent, seem hardy. It was indeed bold. For the Society resolved upon an undertaking of great magnitude and importance, involving a large expenditure of money, without having in its treasury a single dollar for its achievement. But the Society relied upon the intelligence and known liberality of New York, in the confident belief that her public spirit would not permit an object of such conceded merit, and of so great public concernment, to fail for want of the necessary means for its accomplishment. It was, therefore, determined that an appeal, accompanied by a statement of facts, should be made to the public generally, and to the friends of historical literature in particular, for aid in the accomplishment of this great object of general interest. Most nobly did the public of New York respond to this appeal, and by its liberality and public spirit in promptly furnishing the requisite pecuniary means, fully justify the confidence of the Society and the wisdom of its enterprise. To collect and apply those means, however, has required a long time, great effort, and continued perseverance. But the success which has at length crowned persevering effort, should render us insensible to the exertions which have achieved that success; and, in the important good thus accomplished, we should forget the personal sacrifices it has cost and regard only the new hopes it inspires, and the increased responsibilities it involves.

On the 17th of October, 1855, this enterprise, thus commenced, had progressed with such encouraging success, that the corner stone of the present building was laid, and the work thenceforward steadily advanced. That liberality and public spirit which were so nobly manifested at the inception of this enterprise, still accompanied its continued prosecution, until, in this finished and beautiful structure, you now behold the consummation of an enterprise commenced in weakness, but in hope, perseveringly prosecuted in anxiety and with great effort, and at length crowned with ample and entire success. The two cardinal conditions, also, upon which this enterprise was undertaken, have been faithfully observed, and are this evening fulfilled. This new edifice was to be

fire-proof. It is substantially so; and, when completed, no debt was to remain upon the Society on account of it. This, also, is true. The report of the Trustees of the Building Fund, which will be presented to you in the course of the evening, will, among other interesting details, announce the gratifying fact that, after faithfully discharging every just obligation incurred in procuring the site, and in the erection of this new fire-proof edifice, there will still remain, on account of this special fund, a balance to go towards the furnishing of the building for the uses of the Society. The further sum required to complete the payments for the necessary furniture of the building, alone now remains to be provided for. A voluntary contribution of a very few dollars from each member of the Society would abundantly supply the deficiency, and fully accomplish the desired object of finally closing this great enterprise. This small sum would in each case bear but a very inconsiderable proportion to the greatly increased accommodations and advantages procured to each member of the Society by the very satisfactory completion of this enterprise. Thus the two original and important conditions of this enterprise are this evening fulfilled. Your building is essentially fire-proof, and there will remain upon the Society, on account of it and its site, no debt, except, indeed, one of deep gratitude to those munificent patrons of the enterprise who have generously furnished the means of its accomplishment. To those generous patrons we point to this new and beautiful structure as an enduring and fit monument to their own liberality and public spirit. To the Society generally who originally projected and undertook this enterprise, and has watched with the deepest interest its progress and its completion, we present this noble edifice, with all its tasteful arrangements, its ample accommodations, and its admirable adaptation to its objects, as the reward of its enterprise, its perseverance and its ultimate and complete success.

With the successful accomplishment of this enterprise, a new and brighter era in the history of this Society is inaugurated. With these enlarged accommodations, and these greatly increased facilities, for the prosecution and accomplishment of its objects, the responsibilities of the Society are correspondingly increased. In proportion, as its library and collections are rendered more safe and more available, will be the inducement and the obligations of the Society to extend the former and enlarge the latter.

That these new and increased responsibilities will, in the future, be fully and honorably met by the Society, we have an assurance in its

past history. But, for the ability to meet in a fit and becoming manner these new and increased responsibilities by increased activity, enlarged operations, and more extended usefulness, we must still look to the continued encouragement and patronage of that generous public which smiled so benignly upon the infancy of the Society; which has so generously fostered its youth, and which surely will not withhold from its ripening manhood the encouragement it may hereafter need, and shall deserve. Let it then be our object as a society fully to merit the patronage we seek. Let us, in entering upon the new and more brilliant career now opened before us, go forward with new energy and increased zeal; and, by judicious administration and greater activity in our operations, justify the appeals made to the public in our behalf, giving back to that public the cultivated fruits of its own munificence; and thus rendering this Society what, if wisely conducted, it cannot fail to be—both an ornament and a blessing to New York and our country.

FREDERIC DE PEYSTER, Esq., Chairman of the Trustees of the Building Fund, submitted and read a report from that body.

REPORT.

To the New York Historical Society:

The doubts and anxieties of the past have vanished, and the expectations of the Trustees, and, may they hope, of the Society, are realized by the accomplishment of the work committed to their charge. You have this evening met to dedicate this spacious edifice to the important and deeply interesting objects, for the promotion of which this Society was organized. Upwards of a half century has passed away since a few public-spirited individuals met together to form an association for "the purpose of discovering, procuring, and preserving whatever may relate to the natural, civil, literary, and ecclesiastical history of the United States in general, and of this State in particular."

Such was and is the design of this Institution, as expressed in the original act of its incorporation, on the 10th of February, 1809; amended and continued in force by subsequent acts, and its charter, without limitation as to time, finally confirmed on the 2d of February, 1846, subject only to the usual restriction provided in all public acts.

During this semi-centennial existence, the Society has been without a permanent abode of its own; its treasures of historical materials were subjected to the injury of frequent removals, and liable at all times, in their insecure places of deposit, to be destroyed by fire. It has been a

wanderer from place to place during these many years, but now, like the wayworn traveller, it has reached its home, and looks with pleased satisfaction on this abode for the various collections, gathered during these journeyings. Here it can display its various contributions, preserve its precious repository of the past, and make this library, with its constantly increasing additions, worthy of our city, State, and country.

The trustees, to whom the funds were confided for the construction of this fire-proof building, present themselves before you, on this interesting occasion, to report the disposition which has been made of these in the execution of their duties. From the incipient step in this enterprise, taken by the Society on the 1st of June, 1847, to its final consummation this day, a period of more than ten years has elapsed of continuous effort and varying solicitude. The Society had resolved upon a measure, for the attainment of which no means were provided, necessarily involving a large expenditure.

To collect and apply these means was an onerous undertaking, and could only be accomplished by strong, persevering, and well-directed efforts.

The trustees rejoice that it *is* accomplished, and that the hour has arrived when they can throw open the doors of this library for your reception, exhibit its collections, and tender to you their cordial congratulations on its final completion. A few small claims only remain yet to be paid, for the liquidation of which there is a sufficient fund reserved.

The five annual and the special reports, from time to time heretofore presented, exhibit the history of this enterprise and show the progress made in collecting funds; the difficulties encountered in the successive attempts, and the successful effort finally accomplished in obtaining the requisite addition, which the liberal hearts of the liberal men of this great commercial city generously contributed.

It is not for those who now address you to speak of the architectural design of the building, of its style of decoration, or of the taste displayed in its exterior and interior appearance, and of the conveniences provided for the suitable arrangement of its numerous collections. They submit to the Society and the public these results; and if they meet their approbation, it will be a sufficient compensation for personal sacrifices and an honest endeavor to discharge faithfully their trust.

In the gallery specially set apart for the reception and preservation of the books and newspapers, and for their ready and convenient examination, these various collections are systematically arranged. In the apartment separately provided for our invaluable manuscripts, these unique treas-

ures are similarly placed, where they can easily be referred to, and, to the greatest extent, secured from loss, depredation, or injury. Rising above these is the gallery devoted to the productions of art, which crowns, as it were, the whole. It contains the portraits of many men of our own land, who have made their names and their country illustrious by their talents and virtues; and evidences also of the genius of men like Cole, who have dignified the Arts of Design by the brilliant creations of their pencil.

The collections which comprise the printed and manuscript materials have been catalogued under the skilful care of our Librarian, and the Catalogue is now passing through the press.

There will also be a catalogue of the Gallery of Art; and it will furnish to the members a satisfactory estimate of the extent and richness of the entire collection.

On these extensive shelves, are placed, let us trust, in perpetual preservation, for the benefit of historical research, the proofs of those measures which led to the declaration of our country's independence; of the character of the men and their measures which achieved that independence; and of the causes and their effects, which are exhibited in the growth, power, resources, and extension of our Republic; stretching as it now does its giant limbs from ocean to ocean—from the regions of the hardy north to the genial climes of the sunny south. Its citizens have reached, in the march of empire, its western bound; and from thence look forth over the wide expanse of ocean to the opposite shores of Asia—prepared, when the hour arrives, to aid more fully in extending to that primal land of our race, the blessings and civilization of Christianity.

The earliest measure which occupied the attention of the trustees, was the appointment of its standing committees of finance, and on the building, and a treasurer of the fund. The duties which devolved upon that officer, and upon these several committees, the trustees are happy to have it in their power to say, have been most faithfully and zealously performed.

The committee to whom was committed the construction of the building, the preparation of the various contracts, the supervision of the work, and of the materials provided, and the expenditure of the fund, have with unremitting exertion, continued watchfulness, and great sacrifice of time and labor accomplished the results you this day witness.

They have made their final report to the trustees, from which it appears there have been, at various times and in different forms, ex-

pended for the site, twelve thousand and ninety-seven dollars and fifty-one cents; on the building, sixty-nine thousand four hundred and seven dollars and thirty cents, and for furnishing the same, three thousand two hundred and thirty-five dollars and three cents, making together an aggregate of eighty-four thousand seven hundred and thirty-nine dollars and eighty-four cents.

The details of these several items are set forth in the account current, annexed to and which forms part of their Report.

Thus it appears that the Building Fund has been sufficient to defray the expense of the site and of this edifice; leaving a balance to be applied to the furnishing of the building.

Persons not familiar with the difficulties of such an enterprise, executed under similar circumstances, cannot be aware of the unavoidable delays incident thereto. The procuring of a design for a fire-proof Library edifice, adapted to the uses and to meet in all respects the wishes of the Society, was a matter of great moment and careful consideration.

Then, the procuring of the contracts from responsible parties for the several departments into which the work divided itself, also occupied necessarily much care and preparation. The Committee in these matters were efficiently aided by the Architects, Messrs. Mettam and Burke, whose attention and vigilance were unremitting in guarding the interests of the Society, and advancing the work done.

The Committee state that it has been their endeavor, with the means at their disposal, to carry out the views of the trustees, and to accomplish the objects of the Society, in the highest degree practicable. Their constant aim has been to erect a building best suited to the purposes of the Society, creditable to its taste, and honorable to its patrons and the public. How far they have succeeded in this their constant and earnest endeavor, the Committee submit to the trustees, the Society, and the public.

If the committee on the building, to adopt their own language, "are so fortunate as to meet *their* approbation, they will feel amply compensated for all the effort, anxiety, and personal sacrifices, which a discharge of the duties devolved upon them has necessarily involved."

The Report of that committee is on file with the documents, to be preserved in grateful remembrance of its services, cheerfully given and faithfully executed.

It only remains, in this connection, for the trustees to add, that when the few debts yet to be paid are settled, and for the payment of which,

as before stated, there is a fund in hand reserved, they will avail themselves of the earliest opportunity to communicate this desired result; and on that occasion submit their final Report, and surrender up the building, with its appurtenances, to the Society.

Cicero aptly termed Herodotus the "Father of History"—and History itself "the light of truth." Herodotus first gave to the world a general history adorned with the graces of a pure eloquence, and with that attractive simplicity, which was the prominent characteristic of all the more prominent of the most ancient authors.

His *Bust*, therefore, is properly placed above the portico which leads to these extensive galleries, repositories of facts, principles, and discoveries. From these may some congenial mind compose an "Historical Essay," which like that shall add to his own perpetual renown, and prove by his work the value, though less ambitious design, of our own.

The direct object of his work was to recount the victorious struggles of the Greeks with the Persians. But in tracing the causes of the events related, and in describing other nations connected with these events, he was led into the interesting and valuable digressions which constitute the remarkable portions of his book. It has been illustrated by the wisdom and matured experience of later ages; is confirmed in its material details by the learning of congenial minds; and abounds in a variety of information, touching the manners, customs, and national traits of which he speaks; and to which in many instances this highly distinguished author has furnished the only key of knowledge.

Thus, as an emblem of the objects which this Society has specially in view, this *Bust* proclaims from without to the passing inquirer the design of this *Historical Library*.

By the collections we are engaged in preserving and increasing, by every practicable measure, we are enlarging the means of historical inquiry and investigation, relating to the several departments classified in our Charter. In process of time this Library cannot fail to become better known and extensively consulted; and the just expectation may be indulged, that, by its intrinsic worth and amplitude of materials, it will become the great central resort for historical investigations of every kind, and give to our city and State the enviable distinction of possessing the best and most extensive Historical Library in this portion of the globe.

When Cicero was Quæstor in Sicily, his first object, on arriving there, was to visit the tomb of Archimedes. The officials of Syracuse,

who waited upon him, being ignorant of its existence, he persevered in the search, which resulted in the discovery of the small column, hid by the surrounding undergrowth, on which, with great difficulty, was traced the almost illegible name of the great geometrician.

One hundred and thirty-six years had only elapsed since the Roman soldier slew the intellectual giant of Syracuse, whose dead body the Roman general entombed with honors becoming his genius. The simple inscription would have altogether perished, had not Cicero's admiration and perseverance made it immortal.

Little more than three quarters of a century have elapsed, and a citizen of these United States, in ardent admiration of the men who fell martyrs in the cause which made his country free and independent, might in vain seek for the places where some of these eminent patriots were interred! Already are many of these forgotten—nay, irrevocably obliterated! Over others the monumental stone has been placed, and the name of the illustrious dead inscribed on it; but, like the letters on the column of the world-renowned Syracusan—their names are almost effaced. Some patriot hand, like Old Mortality, must deepen with his chisel their almost obliterated inscriptions; some patriot pen, stirred by the incidents in the lives of these martyrs, perpetuate, by their biographies, the memory of their deeds; or, from these records around you, some gifted mind, touched with the sentiments which valor and worth never fail to create, must give to the world the knowledge and the benefit of their example.

The scholiast tells us, that when the friends of Pytheas, who had conquered in the Nemæan games, came to Pindar, with the request that he would write an ode on his victory, the poet demanded a sum which they refused to give. "We can have," say they, "a brazen statue for the money, which will be better than a poem." Changing their minds, however, they returned and offered him what he demanded. Upon this hint Pindar formed the graceful exordium, which has been thus elegantly translated:

"It is not mine, with forming hand,
To make a lifeless image stand
For ever on its base;
But fly, my verses, and proclaim
To distant lands, with deathless fame,
That Pytheas conquered in the rapid race!"

The poet's verse has proved more imperishable than a memorial of

REMARKS OF MR. BANCROFT.

The Committee of Arrangements have assigned me the pleasing duty of seconding the motion for the acceptance of the Report. This beautiful and convenient building is the endowment for history made by the citizens and especially by the merchants of New York. It is their affectionate tribute in commemoration of the honorable fame of their ancestors, the varied fortunes of this great commonwealth, and that sympathy which binds the present generation with every generation of mankind that has gone before. Assembled here, we feel that events do not occur without adequate causes; that for every thing there is a reason; and that there are no gaps in the chain that connects the past with the present; that the institutions of to-day are but the necessary development of former time; that this moment in our existence, though often imperceptibly and in minute degrees, reflects light from all preceding ages. In an especial manner our own city and our own State have the most diversified affinities with ancient forms of civilization. The son of a merchant of the Venetian republic first ran down our coast. A fellow-citizen of Dante and Michael Angelo, under the banner of France, found out the channel into our harbor. When the fulness of time came for the establishment of a colony on this shore, Holland summoned Hudson from ranging among the jagged rocks of Spitzbergen and the icy mists of the Straits of Veigatz to lead the way in ascending our noble river; just as afterwards, when the great men of the age went forth, not like Titans to destroy, but with the better energies of creative power to lay the foundations of our Union, a Hamilton, whose cradle had been rocked by the breezes of the tropics, was called from the Antilles to plead for the adoption of the federal Constitution. Here assembled the first Congress of 1765; here the New York sons of liberty sent forth the first invitation for that of 1774; on our soil was won the decisive victory of independence, and here Washington inaugurated national freedom and union. The moment of planting the institutions of cultivated man within our limits was marked by whatever is most romantic in American history. The interior of the State was occupied by that wonderful people who had advanced furthest among savages in civil polity and confederations; and while all that was most daring in adventure, all that was most self-sacrificing in religion, were entering on the one side with Champlain and the Catholic missions; on the other, the great commercial republic of Europe, the forerunner and fostering example for America, was preparing to take possession of Albany and Manhattan. In the Old World, republican

government has fallen on evil days—and a kingdom has taken the place of the glorious Dutch union of sovereign states. But if the living waters of freedom have diminished in that European land, through which they once flowed most brightly, they are but as the fountain of Arethusa, which disappears only to gush forth again in a happier clime. America claims a share of the honors due to Chaucer, and Raleigh, and Shakspeare—the English literature that preceded the first planting of Virginia. The glory of the Dutch republic is peculiarly our inheritance. The republican liberty of the Netherlands, which was vindicated by a contest longer and more trying than that of Athens with Persia, is to be found only here. It is ours, all ours. The banks of the Hudson are its asylum, where it renews its perennial youth like the eagle. The gift of this building has another significance; it is one of many proofs that the busiest city is the most genial home for literature. Where there is the most action, there there must be the most thought. The world of the scholar and the world of the man of affairs are all one. The widest connections furnish the greatest opportunity of concentrating knowledge, and the readiest means for its diffusion. In such a community there is no possibility of a dead calm, of a stagnation of mind. The ever-moving winds of controversy winnow opinions, and the fire of truth is kept alive and fed by contributions from all climes. And what city is bound by more associations and ties to all parts of the world than our New York? At one moment one of its sons discovers the Antarctic continent; at another, a ship from our wharves is planted by a man of heroic mould, illustrious in his youth,—the immortal Kane,—among the icebergs of Greenland, as the imperishable monument that of all the flags in the world the stars and stripes have approached nearest to the pole. But if we would see the intimate connection of our city with every part of the globe and the many nations of the earth, we have only to look about us, not at the magazines of our merchants, where, indeed, every thing is gathered together from ocean and from land for the support, the comfort, and the grace of life, but at the men moving in our streets, representing as they do not our own country only, not England and Holland only, but every nation of Europe from Cadiz to Warsaw, from Ireland to the Isles of Greece; so that by necessity the civilization of all those lands is intertwined with ours. The seers who look into futurity abound in their eulogies of the coming commercial greatness of New York, when its proportion of the mercantile marine shall be still greater than it is now, and it shall be the centre of the exchanges of the world; when its population shall fill

this island, and, like a branching vine, cover all the lands around. But this superiority in material resources is not enough; the crowning glory of New York must be its advancement in intelligence. Here must flourish unsurpassed colleges of that science of which the blessed skill removes disease, or charms away its pains. Here we must have schools of jurisprudence to teach it as a science, resting on immutable principles of justice, to interpret international and constitutional law on a system that shall be at once cosmopolitan and national, breathing union among ourselves and good will to all the peoples of the earth. Here where the crowded streets show the most of that favored being who alone was created in the image of his Maker, the truths that lift man above the vicissitudes of time, and connect him with things that are eternal, must shine out in their purest lustre. Here divine art must make visible to the senses the forms of beauty that repose in the capacious recesses of creative genius. Here universities must gather together all the fountains of truth and send the living waters through the land. Let the comprehensive and liberal spirit of our merchants and the vivifying intelligence of scholars join together to promote the fullest development of every capacity for good. This edifice is an earnest of that co-operation.

President KING, of Columbia College, then addressed the President as follows :

REMARKS OF PRESIDENT KING.

Mr. President: The scene presented here this evening carries me back to other days—I may say to other generations; and looking round upon the few scattered ancients, my contemporaries, among the large assemblage of younger men, the active, stirring men of this active, stirring age, it may be said, almost without a figure, that posterity is here to welcome and to encourage the early friends of the Historical Society who yet survive to witness, and take part in, this joyous and most gratifying inauguration of a building not unworthy of the treasures it is to contain, and which it is to secure against the danger irreparable for such a library and collection as ours—of fire.

I thank you, Mr. President, and the gentlemen of the Committee of Invitation, for giving me this opportunity of being present at such a festival, and taking a part, however humble, in its proceedings.

Born in the city of New York, I have always felt the full force of the exalting claim of the Apostle of the Gentiles, that he was “a citizen of no mean city;” and whatever tends to promote the honor or add to

the illustrious annals of the city or State, enlists my earnest sympathy and co-operation.

And in illustrious annals there is no State in our wide Union that surpasses New York, and not one that with so much to say, has said so little in her own behalf.

But there are laid up here, sir, and will, I would fain hope, continue to be laid up, treasures of private letters, diaries, and memoirs, which together with the printed materials accessible to all, will furnish authentic matter for that history of New York which is yet to be written.

We need at this day, especially, to popularize the study of our history, and especially of our own history; for, diligently and honestly pursued, it is the *essential* study among a people where all are called to take a part in public affairs, to make either the laws or those who do make them. In this study they will perceive that however oppression and wrong may for a time prosper, the Nemesis of History follows close upon the guilty career, and brands with indelible infamy the bold, bad man, who would "owe his greatness to his country's ruin."

Men, indeed, of the school of Sir Robert Walpole, whose whole statecraft consists in the one sordid maxim—false as it is sordid—"every man has his price," may sneer at history as a tissue of lies, and seek to throw doubt upon all acts and all motives that cannot be traced to the unscrupulous theory of their statesmanship; but the memorials which such a Society as ours gathers, preserves, and finally publishes, refute this degrading hypothesis—memorials of private letters never designed for the light, and of conversations held in the intimacy and privacy of home, revealing the heart of the speaker or writer, letters and memoirs such as constitute the matchless collection which Sparks has given us of our great Washington. How few the men that ever lived who, acting on so great a theatre, could stand the ordeal of such an honest publication. Yet who that has ever read these letters but feels that, however exalted before may have been his admiration of Washington, it is enhanced by these volumes.

So, too, we have already manuscript treasures inedited, and having now a repository safe from the destroying fire, and placed beyond the possibility of what once was a scarcely less threatening danger—the sheriff's hammer—we may reasonably calculate to have many more precious family papers, records, and memorials confided to us, which though they may not illustrate such names as Washington or Jay, rarely, and only at long intervals vouchsafed to any nation, shall yet teach the coming ages that God, and therefore Truth, is in History, and Virtue and

Patriotism in public men. It is a great trust to be the depository of such materials; what we see before us is the sure warrant that the trust is well reposed, and will be faithfully fulfilled.

REV. DR. WILLIAM ADAMS, being called upon, responded as follows :

REMARKS OF REV. DOCTOR ADAMS.

I am somewhat startled, Mr. President, at the formality of your call, at this stage of the proceedings, since I had entered the hall with the expectation of being a listener, rather than a speaker. I had, indeed, passed my word that I would be present, and that if the occasion should require, I would say a word, by meeting any necessity of the case; but I must confess that the bait which lured me into this hall was the expectation of listening to the distinguished speakers of the evening, especially the promise of hearing Mr. Irving, and Mr. Verplanck, the original founders of this Society.

The researches of the antiquary and the labors of the historian have always, with minds of a certain order, been the theme of satire. Even such a man as Dr. JOHNSON confessed to no patience with history. He would not even read the elaborate works of HUME and ROBERTSON; and on one occasion he positively forbade Mr. BOSWELL ever to mention in his presence again the Punic War. He ridiculed BEAUCLERC, and other members of the Kit-Cat Club, for what they reported as having seen in foreign travel. Yet the mind of Dr. JOHNSON was precisely of that order which would have been benefited by the more copious induction of facts derived from history and travel. How different was it with Dr. PALEY, who, with his bob-wig and round hat, was the very impersonation of *bonhomme*,—who requested a friend, when going upon foreign travel, to bring back, he cared not how common a thing, “if it was nothing but an old shoe, or an old smock,” which would illustrate the manners and condition of a people.

After all that we say of the dignity of history, it is the small, the common, and the humble, which give us a correct idea of existing society. No better illustration of this can be afforded than the letters of Dr. JOHNSON to Mrs. THRALE. In his letters from the Hebrides, we have a perfect picture of the manners of that isolated people. We see the very things that they eat, their dirty habits, the comfortless apartments in which they slept; and it seems now to have gleamed upon the mind of that old man himself, that it might have been better for him if, at an earlier period of his life, he had not been so restricted

to the habits of Englishmen, and that he had himself given more attention to history and foreign travel.

A little incident like the advertisement in a paper, than which nothing can be more common or insignificant, may give to us a correct illustration of the state of society. In our own archives there is a file of the *Boston News-Letter*, the oldest newspaper published upon this continent. Cast your eye over its pages, and you will be convinced that that smutty chronicle is the index of the greatest revolutions of Providence. On the 13th of November, 1732, you find an advertisement which reads as follows :

“This day, at 4 o'clock, will be sold at public vendue, at the Sun Tavern, a parcel of red and blue muslins, perpets, and threads, for the Guinea Trade. Also, three or four very likely negroes, just arrived. All to be seen at the place of sale.”

The African slave trade in the city of Boston, a little more than one century ago! A good thing would it be for us to be more familiar with these historic facts, that we may sprinkle our fervor with a little cool patience. SHEM, HAM, and JAPHET, instead of pelting one another with mutual recriminations, would do well to consult those earlier facts of history, and, with forbearance and sympathy, cast the mantle of charity over the nakedness of our common ancestors.

Ask any intelligent traveller, returning from the Old to the New World, what are those objects which have awakened in his mind the greatest interest, and he will inform you, not always those things which are regarded great and noble in the judgment of common men, so much as those things, often simple, humble, and insignificant in themselves, which stand related to the great discoveries of science, the great achievements of liberty, and the general progress of the human race; not always those stupendous piles of architecture, whose grandeur and decorations have exhausted the wealth of centuries; not always the sceptres and crowns and regalia of kings, which have been worn often by men and women whom no gold or gems could adorn; not so much the abbeys and cathedrals, in whose long and solemn aisles repose the ashes of the mighty dead—the few good among the many bad. He will tell you of such things as the cottage near the city of Genoa, the birth-place of CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, on the front of which is inscribed these words :

“Unus erat mundus; duo sint, ait iste:—fuere.”

“There was one world—there may be two,” said he. It is the house of GALILEO, at Florence, containing his scientific implements, and

among them that little Dutch telescope, with which this great "Columbus of the Heavens," as he has been called, made his first researches in the firmament. It is the little lamp which still hangs in the Cathedral at Pisa, the oscillation of which first put in motion the mind of that great philosopher concerning the laws of the pendulum and the measurement of time. It is the pulpit of JOHN KNOX, in the Antiquary's Hall at Edinburgh,—plain, stout, and oaken,—in which that noble reformer thundered out his denunciations against religious despotism; and by the side of it, the stool which JENNIE GEDDES flung at the head of the Dean of Edinboro', when, lending himself a tool to royal oppression, he dared to curtail the liberty of worship in God's people—a singular projectile, but the signal shot of a great revolution! It is that little bit of plaster in one of the cells of the Tower of London, which you cannot read but with a suffused eye, on which are scratched, as with a nail, by some noble martyr for the truth, these verses of scripture:

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that continueth unto the end, the same shall be saved."

It is the little Latin Bible belonging to Martin Luther inscribed all over with marginal notes, in the handwriting of that great Reformer, brought by Gustavus Vasa, and now in the Royal Museum of Stockholm, the lever by which in his own lifetime that stalwart hero prised up fifty millions of people to light and liberty.

Those are the things which are truly great, though small in themselves, because they are associated in every mind with the progress of the human race in knowledge and in freedom.

If there be importance attached to such objects in foreign lands, how much more important are similar objects in our own. A collection of newspapers, of pamphlets, orations, sermons, may be regarded in themselves as entirely valueless; but they serve to preserve to us a perfect picture of times that are past, more faithful often than the largest folios.

We have all been under the impression that injustice has been done to many of the events and personages of American history, through the prejudice of foreign historians. No better illustration can we have than the different feelings which prevail in regard to two distinguished parties who figured during the American Revolution upon opposite sides of that great contest—Major André of the British army, and Captain Hale, of our own. What man, woman, or child that ever read the touching fate of André, who has not been moved to a genial sympathy? Gallant, educated, accomplished, he met the fate of a soldier, amid the tears of those who executed him. How few are acquainted with the

history and the fate of Capt. Hale! Educated at Yale College, accomplished in person and manners, high in the confidence of his military superiors, he volunteered to accomplish a nobler service than his British contemporary, and met his fate with a nobler self-possession and courage. Requesting writing materials on the morning of his execution, that he might address a farewell line to his mother and sisters, he was denied that facility by the provost of the British army, who said that he "did not intend the rebels should ever know that they had so brave a man in their body;" and when he saw the fatal gallows erected, here in Chambers-street of our own city, instead of flinching, he said his only regret was that he had not more than one life to lay down for the good of his country. Yet no Metropolitan monument is reared to his honor on the spot where he fell, though the remains of André sleep beneath sculptured marble in Westminster Abbey.

It is a pious duty devolving upon us, to render justice to the deeds of our fathers. Let us dig up their statues from the sand and rubbish where they have fallen, and place them upon their proper pedestals: Hamilton in Wall street; the incorruptible Jay in our City Hall; all the civil and military heroes of our annals: let us study their calm and serious features, and copy whatever was noble or good in their example.

However it may be with other people, we are the last who can afford to forego the advantage of antiquarian and historical research. It was a remark made by Dr. Chalmers:—"One thing I should not like in America: I should not like your *raw and recent* population. I love to feel, when I am walking here in Edinboro', that I am treading on the *same stanes* with my ancestors."

In breaking away from the old world, tearing ourselves from the old universities, from those ancient parks,

"With their sylvan honors of feudal bark,"

with all that has been consecrated by the lapse of time—we are in danger of losing our reverence for that which is old, and attaching ourselves exclusively to that which is new. Ours, indeed, is not a recent history. Most cordially do I sympathize with the remark made by the accomplished historian and orator (Mr. Bancroft), who has preceded me, that we have an indefeasible claim in all of British life and history. We have not lost our pedigree by being translated across the sea. There is no bend of illegitimacy in our national escutcheon. The fame of Milton and Spenser and Shakspeare belongs to us as much as to any

Englishman. They who still retain possession of the ancestral isle have no prescriptive claim to those crown jewels of English literature. Their blood is our own. Nevertheless, we do well to guard ourselves against those influences that might affect us, from familiarity with that which is recent and novel. Let us reverently regard whatever is old, and fixed, and stable. Let us not swing loose from the anchorage of historic association. Rather let us cultivate that wisdom which, forming an accurate judgment of the past, and a correct horoscope of the present, shall forecast those noble anticipations of the future which are nurtured alike by our history and our religious faith.

Rev. GEORGE W. BETHUNE, D. D., also addressed the Society, and the Report of the Trustees was accepted.

BENJAMIN ROBERT WINTHROP, Esq., then, at the request of the President, read the letter accompanying his donation to the Society of the "Washington Chair," which was accepted, with the thanks of the Society.

The President announced that the Fifty-Third Anniversary of the Society would be celebrated at the Library, on Tuesday evening, November 17th, when the Address would be delivered by JOHN W. FRANCIS, M. D., LL. D.

The President also announced that the Library and Galleries would be open for the reception of the families of members on the following evening, Wednesday, November 4th.

The benediction was then pronounced by Rev. PETER S. VAN PELT, D. D.

On Wednesday evening, November 4th, pursuant to the announcement of the President, there was a very large attendance of members accompanied by their families at the Library. About 9 o'clock, the company having assembled in the Lecture Room, the President took the chair, and introduced the Rev. Dr. OSGOOD, who addressed them as follows :

REMARKS OF DR. OSGOOD ON THE DOMESTIC ASPECTS OF HISTORY.

Dr. OSGOOD, on being introduced by the President, remarked, that the assembly met now to complete the last evening's dedication, and

that the Society came now with their families to say Amen to the consecrating prayer, and to take possession of this new literary home. The present occasion seemed to him to be peculiarly of a domestic character; and his words would aim to illustrate the worth of History as a record of Humanity, in its affections as well as its politics, and in its relations to woman as well as to man. He was not sorry to address an audience so richly representing the true humanity; and he did not consider an audience of men alone to be wholly human; and perhaps he might presume to say that an audience of women alone was no much nearer the complete humanity which God created in his own image, when "male and female created he them."

He then invited the ladies and gentlemen present to survey with him the various apartments of the edifice, in a passing review, and to interpret the building itself as the symbol of the historical creed of the Society.

I. Begin with the Refectory, and interpret it as a symbol of sociality in its literary relations. The table surely has an historical significance; and it needed no great antiquarian learning to prove that eating and drinking were very ancient institutions, and were likely to survive the wreck of empires, and the changes of fashions. With the progress of civilization, the table rises in dignity; and the natural appetite, to which it appeals, is refined and exalted by the intellectual and social tastes that are concentrated and nurtured by its cheerful plenty. The Refectory is in the basement of our edifice; and its position teaches the fact that agriculture, with its daily bread, is the material basis of human welfare, and that our bread is twice blessed when partaken in generous fellowship. Our bread is never truly blessed unless womanly grace smiles upon it; and here to-night, with our wives, daughters, and friends, we accept the Refectory as the symbol of our sociality.

II. Ascend a story of the edifice, and we enter this spacious and convenient Lecture Room, which marks the intention of the Society to be an instrument of popular education. Here history is to be presented, not as the interest of a few antiquarian scholars, as dry as the dust on their folios, but as the interest of our common humanity, as a study for all rational creatures, for youth and age, scholar and merchant, for woman and for man. Here our monthly meetings are to be held, and our regular historical papers are to be read. It might, perhaps, be expected that the more various, and especially the feminine elements in the audience, would act favorably upon the manner and matter of the speaking and reading; and that bright eyes, with their

quick intuition, would drive all dulness from the rostrum, as sunshine drives away the clouds. But it must be understood that order was to be preserved, without respect of persons; and that our President, who could shine in parlors as well as Senates, was quite as much master of the art of winning gentle volatility to sobriety by his bland dignity, as of subduing unruly men to order by his manly authority. In all soberness, it is to be hoped that this hall of audience will be one of the educational institutions of the city.

III. The Library is our symbol of history, as literature, and of literature, in all its compass, as the record of the affections as well as of the understanding. History has been too often poorly interpreted into a register of dates, upon a tomb of relics of the dead. It should be regarded as the record of human life in all its compass; and our new library, with its admirable arrangements, and large hospitality, fitly expresses this idea. It is well that the Library is open to woman as well as to man; and this fact will tend to give a truer expression to our historical treasures, and show, ere long, what dry antiquarians have too often forgotten, that there is a line of white ribbon as well as of red tape running through the looms of time. We have, on our front wall, the head of Herodotus, the father of history. Where is the mother of history, or is there none? Who is that fair head over our vestibule, the lovely woman with a star for her diadem? Is it a type of our America with her vesper star, or is it Memory with her twilight retrospections, or is it the ideal Mother of History, of whom every true womanly soul is the loyal daughter, even as the nine muses of old were daughters of Mnemosyne?

IV. The Picture Gallery crowns the edifice, and presents the beautiful arts as the flower of human civilization. Why wonder at the arrangement? Why speak as if the beautiful were the lying paint on the cheek of meretricious Folly, instead of the healthful bloom on the face of Truth, that fair daughter of the Eternal Mind? Art, too, like literature, is rooted in the affections, and has its domestic side and its feminine inspirations. If few women are comparatively artists, and no woman has ever given a masterpiece of the first class to sculpture or painting, or to music, or eloquence, or poetry, the balance is made up, and more too, by the fact that the masterpieces of men have, for the most part, been inspired by women, and that, as with DANTE, so with most great artists, woman is man's Beatrice, the genius of his inspirations.

Mention was here made of the worth of the beautiful arts to human welfare; and it was said that as the French naturalist, ADANSON, asked

in his will that a wreath made of the fifty-eight classes of plants which he had established by his own researches might be laid upon his coffin; so we have laid upon this, not tomb, but temple of history, a garland of flowers of art, whose enlivening and healing grace shall be the blessing of generations to come. COLE's Course of Empire was spoken of, and the artist was called the EDMUND SPENSER of American art.

The address, which was nearly an hour long, and is here presented only in outline, closed with some reference to the fitness of the season for the opening of this edifice. At this time of commercial depression, it was good for us to think of the old times of trial, and strengthen our too effeminate manners by a little of the ancient manliness under misfortune. Read the year '57 backwards, and it is '75, and speaks to us of the school of Revolutionary heroes. In this dark time, we light up this beautiful hall of history, and in the cheering ray we brighten all solemn remembrances with the radiance of cheerful and progressive hopes.

After some remarks by Gen. PROSPER M. WETMORE, the company retired.

