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ADDRESS

BY THE

Hon. J. MORRISON HARRIS.

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Hon. J. MORRISON HARRIS,

UPON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION

OF THE

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE ORGANIZATION

OF THE

MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY,



DELIVERED

March 12th, 1894.

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AT the regular monthly meeting of the Maryland Historical Society, held January 8th, 1894, the Rev. John G. Morris suggested that suitable notice be taken of the approaching Fiftieth Anniversary of the organization of the Society, which was effected on January 27th, 1844, in an upper room in the old Post Office which stood on what is now part of the site of the present Baltimore City Hall; and also referred to the fact that of the twenty-three persons present at that organization, the only survivor was the Hon. J. Morrison Harris.

Judge Ritchie following the suggestion of Dr. Morris, proposed that an invitation be extended to the Hon. J. Morrison Harris to be present at a meeting of the Society to be held in commemoration of its Anniversary, and to address the Society, formally or informally as he might prefer, in reference to the early history of the Society and the incidents attending its formation. This proposition being approved of, a Committee was appointed to carry it into effect.

It was subsequently determined to adopt as the day to be commemorated, the 8th day of March, 1844, upon which date the Society was incorporated, rather than the 27th day of January, upon which the preliminary organization was effected; and at the meeting of the Society on the 12th day of February, 1894, the following resolution was adopted:

Resolved, That this Society celebrate on the evening of March 12th, 1894, the Fiftieth Anniversary of its incorporation; that the Hon. J. Morrison Harris, one of the founders of the Society, be invited by the Committee appointed at the last meeting, to make an address on the occasion, and that a Committee of five on arrangements and invitations be appointed by the Chair.

The Chair appointed as the Committee on Arrangements provided for in the foregoing resolution, Hon. Albert Ritchie, and Messrs. Edwin Warfield, Edward Graham Daves, Henry F. Thompson and Mendes Cohen.

Upon the evening of the 12th of March, 1894, conformably to the foregoing proceedings, after the regular order of business had been disposed of, the Hon. J. Morrison Harris, being introduced by the presiding officer, the Rev. John G. Morris, Vice-President of the Society, spoke as follows:

ADDRESS.

Mr. Vice-President and Gentlemen:—

I APPRECIATE very highly the honor you have done me by your invitation to address you on an occasion of so much interest, and beg you also to accept my thanks for the greatly esteemed compliment conveyed by the placing of my name on the roll of your Honorary Membership.

Gentlemen and Ladies:—

I heartily congratulate you that the lapse of years has but added to the corporate vigor and intelligent scope of the earnest and substantial labors by which our Maryland Society has won its recognised position in the front ranks of the kindred associations of the country. And it is indeed gratifying to know that your large and invaluable collections enable scholarly research to penetrate intelligently the darkness in which so

much of our past history was entombed, and have taught us how little regarded had been the Records of our past, and that it was your timely intervention which saved the Colonial records, of so great value, from being utilized to light the fires in the State House in which Washington uttered the ever memorable words of his Farewell Address.

My first purpose when I was honored by the invitation of your Committee, was to present and seek to illustrate the wide scope, and appreciated value of such organized effort as yours, to rescue from unmerited oblivion all possible fragments of the earlier history of our State; to indulge in pleasant retrospect of what has been done by our own and kindred associations tending to illustrate that most interesting theme, the birth, progress, and growth of our State and Country through the incidents of Colonial story; the struggle of the Revolutionary era, and the swift progress toward magnificent fulfilment which marks the record of our own day. Careful reference, however, to the discourses heretofore delivered before your Society and in the hands of its members, soon satisfied me that such topics had been too fully and forcibly discussed to tempt further handling, and that there would be small profit, either to you or myself, in winnowing over again the well-threshed grain. It then occurred to me that though I had for

years held office in the Society, my recollection of the details of the large work it had done, was very partial and indistinct, and that as a great part of your membership, with fewer opportunities, probably knew less than I did of the details of the Society's work, it might not be either unprofitable or uninteresting rapidly to review it, which course would at least secure praise for those to whose intelligent and unceasing labors the Society owes its present high position and usefulness.

Men die, and institutions perish, and after tears shed, and regrets expressed, the crucial question too often comes up, as to what the individual, or the organization has done, to merit praise or justify regret. Fortunately for this Society, as well in the story of its distinguished dead, as in the record of its meritorious service, we find satisfactory answer to such fitting interrogation.

The suggestions preliminary to active effort, took formal shape in a meeting held in the rooms of the Maryland Colonization Society "to organize an Institution for the purpose of collecting the scattered materials of the early history of this State, and for other collateral 'objects.'" This meeting was held in what was known at that day, January 27th, 1844, as the "Post Office Building," and a formal organization was effected.

Mr. Brantz Mayer, in his inaugural address as President, delivered March 17th, 1867, names as present at the meeting of January 27th, 1844, Jno. Spear Smith, Robert Gilmor, Sr., Chas. F. Mayer, Bernard U. Campbell, Jno. L. Cary, Wm. A. Talbott, Fielding Lucas, John I. Donaldson, Robert Cary Long, and Sebastian F. Streeter; all of whom he notes were dead at the time of his address. And names as the then survivors: Jno. H. B. Latrobe, Dr. James Hall, J. Morrison Harris, Jno. P. Kennedy, George Wm. Brown, Dr. Joshua I. Cohen, Dr. Stephen Collins, Frederick Wm. Brune, Jr., Capt. Robert Leslie, and himself. He further states that February 1st, 1844, Jno. Spear Smith was elected President, Jno. VanLear McMahon, Vice-President, Brantz Mayer, Corresponding Secretary, Sebastian F. Streeter, Recording Secretary, and Stephen Collins, Librarian. In connection with this record, my attention has been called to the fact, that of the nineteen gentlemen who took part in that meeting I am the solitary survivor! The late General John Spear Smith was the first President, and to the great benefit of the organization continued to hold the office up to the time of his decease, a period of twenty-two years.

Any attempted review of the work of an active and earnest Society covering a period of fifty years, must necessarily call for much discriminating se-

lection, and my hearers, so many of whom have been specially prominent in the important work that has been done, will very probably feel that many a *casus omissus* should have received notice. I can only say in advance that I plead guilty, and throw myself on the mercy of the Court, suggesting, however, that my review has involved the careful examination of four volumes of recorded work, interesting, but—bulky.

Our highly valued President, Mr. Wallis, I find made the first contribution to the collections of the Society in the form of a Massachusetts Pine Tree Shilling, and so the Society started upon a specie basis. The earliest accessions in membership were prompt and numerous, embracing large numbers of the most influential and esteemed of our citizens.

Prominent among these was Robert Gilmor, who for many years was one of the most zealous and valued members of the Society and a liberal contributor to its collections. Special reference to the many other distinguished citizens of that day who signalized their interest in the infant society, would, because of their number and individual importance, take over-much space, but the records show that an earnest zeal animated all, and the Society advanced rapidly in significance, value, and public esteem.

We now touch a most important and interesting matter which as it dragged its slow length along,

in its progress towards final settlement, gave rise to much trouble, and protracted and acrimonious discussion. To enter into the voluminous phases of the interchange of views in the matter of the George Peabody Fund would fill many pages, and perhaps enliven very needlessly the ashes of old fires, for it ultimately resulted in large advantage to each of the parties to the controversy; by securing to our own Society a most desirable and essential autonomy, with later on a most liberal endowment, and to The Peabody Institute an independent and generous provision; while from beginning to end of the heated controversy, the fair views—the honorable solicitude—and the signal liberality of George Peabody, emphasised the largeness of his nature, and won for him the enduring gratitude and praise of all the parties involved in the controversy. I do not propose to go into the details of this embroglio, and am content for the moment, with this reference, to pass from the subject; noting, however, that in the long continued and able discussions to which it gave rise, Judges Wm. Fell Giles and George William Brown, Messrs. Brantz and Charles Mayer, General Johnson, and others of our membership, ably vindicated the position of the Society and very fully maintained its claims.

In 1844 the Lecture feature of the Society was inaugurated by Mr. Charles F. Mayer, who in

subsequent years was followed by Jno. P. Kennedy, J. Morrison Harris, Thomas Donaldson, Geo. Wm. Brown, Brantz Mayer, Sebastian F. Streeter, Geo. W. Burnap, Jno. G. Morris, and Wm. Fell Giles.

These successive lectures attracted large audiences and were so well received, that a revival of the system might be thought desirable, but that in later years the demand has been so fully supplied from other sources.

During the same year, 1844, among other important accessions, the Society acquired the very valuable Journal of Charles Carroll of Carrollton,—kept during his mission to Canada in 1776, in company with Benjamin Franklin and Chief Justice Chase,—one of the most interesting papers in its possession; together with a medal presented on the 50th anniversary of the Independence of the United States, upon his attaining his 90th year; which was accompanied by a letter from John Quincy Adams, then Secretary of State, transmitting a copy of the Declaration of Independence. In the same year the Society became possessed of another of its most interesting papers, in the manuscript of Father White, for the great interest and value of which, reference must be had to the Fund Publications of the Society among which this appeared as Fund Publication, No. 7.

About this time also a new feature in its operations was introduced, and its first collation was "laid upon the table," and the members were invited to take such action in the premises as might be deemed appropriate. This supper feature held its own for a long time, and as it was very popular and tended to good fellowship, I have wondered for what reason it was dropped. Perhaps the rapidly increasing membership threatened to make it an interference with judicious economy; but it was a pleasant and valuable feature, and brought our members into better knowledge of each other, and its renewal might repay all it would cost. It is worth a good deal to knit closer the bonds of fellowship in such an association, and the organ that takes charge of a pleasant supper, often reacts in well directed liberality on higher lines.

This reference leads me to recall another feature, since abandoned, of which I have to say, *Ichabod!*—for its glory too, has departed,—the Society's Annual Dinners. For sufficient reasons, I suppose the last of these has been eaten; but they were of value far beyond their cost, and the guests who were gathered at those hospitable boards were among the most distinguished men of their time. The first banquet was very brilliant. It was given at the old Exchange Hotel, now in the occupancy of the Customs and other officials of the Govern-

ment, and was held in commemoration of the organization of the Society and the landing of the Pilgrims of Maryland. Among other distinguished guests, were Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer, and Daniel Webster. It was a brilliant and thoroughly successful affair, and from certain of its incidents it made a vivid impression on my memory. I remember that Sir Henry's speech was well conceived and eloquent. From Webster, however, great things were very naturally expected, and the interest of the occasion centered on him. The popular expectation however, as I happened to realize, seemed dangerously near disappointment. As an officer of the Society I was placed on one side of the intellectual giant, and for awhile I heartily wished that I had been anywhere else. It was for a season a frigid neighborhood, and I recall very distinctly what happened. The great man was emphatically, "grand, gloomy and peculiar," and an Arctic iceberg would have been as comfortable a neighbor at a social dinner. While Sir Henry was speaking, I ventured very modestly to suggest to Mr. Webster that his name was the next on our list of speakers. He looked at me, and his aspect was lowering and ominous, and I would have been more comfortable had he looked anywhere else. After sitting silent for some time, he suddenly said, "give me some brandy." I promptly pro-

cured a small decanter of the best. He then turned suddenly and said in his deep, thunderous tones, "You people in Maryland call me 'Black Dan;' you do not like me." This being in the nature of a thunderbolt, upset me; in point of fact, it embodied more truth than poetry, for high as was the popular estimate of his mental power, the personal appreciation was, well, a little mixed. I was emboldened, however, to say that nowhere was his intellectual greatness more highly appreciated than in Maryland, and that I thought he did our people injustice. He turned away and ruminated, and I feared our program was in some peril of collapse. Just then Sir Henry closed amidst great applause, and our unconscious toastmaster at the other end of the table announced the next toast, to which he added, Mr. Webster would do the Society the honor to respond. The applause that greeted the mention of his name was tremendous, and evidently as sincere as hearty. To my relief the great man rose, not merely to his feet, but to the height of a magnificent speech, which was applauded to the echo, and to which no auditor gave more thankful and attentive hearing than myself. I was the first to express the admiration and thanks of his audience; in fact, nothing could have been more heartfelt than my thanks, for it had looked to me like a dark piece of woods and we were brilliantly out of it.

The succeeding banquets of the Society were very successful and gave great pleasure to all concerned, but I may not specially describe them.

In 1858 my engagements in Congress required me to resign the office of Corresponding Secretary which I had held for ten consecutive years, and the Rev. Dr. Dalrymple succeeded to the position and held it up to the time of his death, being succeeded by the gentleman who to the great benefit of the Society fills it at this time.

In May, 1866, the Society decided to tender a reception to Mr. Peabody, the great importance of whose service to it justifies this further reference, and he was addressed by a committee in reference to the subject. Pending action on the matter a communication was received from him referring to the issue that had arisen with the Peabody Institute, stating his conclusions that unsurmountable obstacles existed in the way of the union of the two societies, acknowledging the rights of this Society in the question at issue, and expressing his conviction that the differing views seemed to forbid the hope of harmonious interaction, and as a personal favor asking that this Society should decline the acceptance of the part assigned to it by his letter of February, 1857. This correspondence exhibits this distinguished philanthropist in the high lights of full, frank and manly action, while there runs through it an

undercurrent of pained feeling quite touching in its character. These details seem specially appropriate in connection with his letter to the Society of November 5th, 1866, in which he renews the expression of his satisfaction at its action in acceding to his wishes; and as an expression of his high appreciation of the promptness and courtesy with which that action was taken, he presented to it an order on New York for twenty thousand dollars, to be permanently invested and the income to be applied to the uses and objects of the Society.

Somewhat later, the Society was called upon to give expression to the sincere regret of its members upon the decease of General John Spear Smith, who for twenty-two years had filled the office of President. His heart had been fully in his duties and he was exemplary and untiring in their discharge. Liberal in the donation of very valuable contributions, courtly in his demeanor, and unwearied in his zeal to promote its welfare, his devotion to the interests of the Society contributed in a great measure to its success, and won the cordial esteem of its membership. Succeeding him in 1867, Mr. Brantz Mayer became President, a compliment well bestowed in view of his long continued, intelligent and earnest interest in the affairs of the Society from the initial point of its organization, which tended largely to its

progress, usefulness and reputation. In 1871, however, his duties as an officer of the army required his residence in California, and upon his resignation he was succeeded in the Presidency by the late John H. B. Latrobe.

From 1860 to 1865, the war period, the membership largely fell off, and the monthly attendance was generally limited to eight or ten members. This was a natural outcome of absorbing national events and divided opinions, and it was left to the mailed hand of war to write out the undying record of those momentous years.

Subsequently the Society was called upon to take fitting notice of the death of three of its most prominent and esteemed members, Brantz Mayer and Judges Giles and Brown. Reference has already been made to the marked and valued services of the first of these gentlemen, and all realized that the deaths of Judges Giles and Brown, had deprived the Society of two of its most earnest and valued members, while the community at large suffered in the taking away of able and thoroughly conscientious Judges who laboring always to be just, and shrinking from no required labor, ever faithfully performed all the duties of their high offices.

Many matters in the record from 1879 to 1890 certainly merit particular reference, but a due respect to the lapse of time precludes my dwelling

upon more than a few. Within this period occurred a remarkable celebration. The good city had reached the 150th anniversary of its foundation, and stirred with enthusiasm the Society went into the business of commemoration with a rush. The occasion was certainly of much local interest, and created a general fervor not only among our own members, but in the Municipal Government, and among the citizens at large. The action of the Society alone spreads over so many pages as to forbid anything beyond a very succinct notice. Committees were appointed, and committees reported, and plan after plan was considered. *Inter alia*, Mr. Wallis was invited to deliver an oration but was unable from the press of other matters to accept the invitation, and Judge Phelps, always equipped, was appointed in his stead. Reports poured in. Programs were discussed and decided. A grand civic procession was arranged, and the laying of the corner stone of the New Post Office Building by the Masonic Fraternity settled upon: striking scenic arrangements were made in connection with an oration at the Academy of Music. "Baltimore (its site) in possession of the Indians," "Baltimore in 1730," "Baltimore at the period of the Celebration," and last but not least in our City of good living, a grand banquet. The zeal of the Society was fully shared by the civil authorities, and a great procession passed through the

streets illustrative of the historic growth and actual development of the manifold industries of the City, which surpassed all kindred displays in our community, and which, enriched by its multi-form scenic accompaniments, gave to citizens and strangers a most interesting and instructive lesson of development long to be remembered by the generation that witnessed it. This celebration with all its other pleasant features, resulted in large additions to the membership of this society and increased interest in its work.

Shortly after, it may be because the great celebration had shed over it an added lustre, the etymology of the City's name came to the front, and Judge Phelps read an interesting paper on that subject, in which the learned author held the name to have been derived from "Bal," a frequent prefix to Irish names, and signifying "Town or Place," and "ti," "more," signifying "the Great Being." An earnest and animated discussion ensued: one learned member insisting that the name had reference to the ancient worship of "Baal," and that the true division of the name was "Bal—teim—more," signifying "Great Fire of Baal," urging in support of his view, that one of the two towns in Ireland bearing the name, was known to be near the site of a famous altar to Baal.

The decision of this abstruse matter, however, was held to be outside the historical researches

of our Society, and it was respectfully turned over to the Royal Irish Society of Dublin, which is supposed to be still considering it.

In 1882 occurred the interesting and highly important transfer to the custody of the Society of the Archives of the State, and the Trustees of the Athenæum were instructed to have a fire-proof vault constructed for these most valuable papers. The possession of these documents and the wise and intelligent uses the Society has made of them, continue to be among the most striking illustrations of its value and work. The number, importance and fulness of their contents preclude any attempt to deal with them in such a paper as this. Fortunately for the Society their editing is in the hands and under the most intelligent supervision of one of its learned and honored members.

About this time the Society had the pleasure of hearing from the lips of one of our most distinguished Arctic explorers, Lieutenant Greely, a thrilling account of his daring adventures and sharp sufferings in Polar Seas, in search of that undiscovered Pole which no explorer has yet been so fortunate as to reach. This very interesting address made a most agreeable impression upon the large audience which the reputation of the explorer had attracted, and on the unlooked for call of the presiding officer, I had the pleasure

of expressing the thanks of all present to the distinguished speaker for his eloquent and highly valued address.

In December, 1888, Mr. Albert Ritchie, on behalf of those who had recently secured the very valuable "Calvert Papers" made formal presentation of them in a most interesting and exhaustive report showing their marked historic value. The completeness and length of this report preclude my consideration of it in detail, while it well merits a more extended notice. A paper was also read by Mr. Cohen elaborately discussing the subject and intelligently and lucidly showing the great value of the newly acquired documents. Dr. Wm. Hand Browne followed with a full and masterly paper upon the same subject, the length of which also precludes more than reference.

In connection with this acquisition it is pleasant to call attention to the statement made by one of the speakers, that this valuable collection of historic papers was the gift of a number of ladies and gentlemen whose names were not disclosed. It may be regretted that so handsome a gift was made *sub silentio*, but from the fact that there were ladies among the donors we must conclude that it was their modest wish for reticence that caused the secret to be kept.

In September, 1891, the Society was convened to take action in relation to the decease of its

esteemed presiding officer, John H. B. Latrobe, for so many years its efficient and honored head, and whose funeral it had attended in a body. At this special meeting all other business was laid aside and the session devoted to the expression of the deep appreciation of the Society's loss. Vice-President Stockbridge submitted a full and touching report, reviewing the late President's long continued services both to the Society and the community at large, the salient points of his long and honorable career, his thoroughness as a lawyer, the breadth of his views and labors as a philanthropist, his genial and kindly nature, and his unceasing and intelligent industry in the varied lines of activity to which he devoted himself, "Till like a clock worn out by eating time, the wheels of weary life at last stood still." To the resolutions submitted, Mr. Reverdy Johnson spoke in a full and interesting review of his life and work, and was followed by General Bradley T. Johnson in a feeling and comprehensive speech, covering the public career and valuable work of the deceased President; which was further emphasized and illustrated by an able and striking address from Mr. Mendes Cohen. President Gilman expressed in a letter emphatic testimony to the character and services of the deceased, and Mr. Francis P. Stevens and Colonel Craighill paid earnest and heartfelt tribute to his memory. It

is pleasant to know that just previous to his death a committee appointed for the purpose had gained his permission to have his portrait taken, which gave him unaffected pleasure, so that we have the satisfaction of feeling that in one sense we will always have him with us.

At a later meeting the Society did ^{to} itself the honor of electing to the Presidency, by its unanimous vote, Mr. Severn Teackle Wallis.

The imperfect review of the growth and work of our Society, gentlemen, which I now close, involves in its imperfection a high compliment to the intelligent zeal that has accomplished so much that even brief reference to it in fuller detail would far transcend the proper limitations of an address of this description. In tracing the records of the Society's work in the course of these fifty years, I have but briefly touched some special mile stones on its line of progress. Very significant and rapid has that progress been. In 1844 the organization of the Society was effected. Within the twenty-seven succeeding years its acquisitions had become so large and valuable as to entitle it to rank next to the Massachusetts Society, which in the succeeding years it is believed to have surpassed in the extent and importance of its collections. Up to the date I have referred to, contributions varied in character and great in value had poured in upon it, and accessions to its manuscripts and

library were made at every monthly meeting. "The Maryland Proprietary and State Papers," "The Gilmore Maryland Papers," "The Peabody Index to Maryland Documents in The State Paper Office, London, being abstracts and descriptions of over 1700 Documents," "The Gist Papers," "The Purviance Papers," "The Towson Gift," of nineteen case volumes of coins and medals, mark this rapid accretion. Mr. Mayer fittingly styled this last a metallic history of many nations and various lives, comprising as it does, Greek and Roman medals from a point 300 years before Christ to Anno Domini 685, Arabian, Caucasian, Mogul, Morocco, and Turkish coins, together with an unbroken series of French medals from the Merovingian kings to the date of the Bourbons. In addition to all this, the large and varied Library, which since the acquisition of the collection of the Baltimore Library Company, comprises some thirty thousand volumes, in all branches of literature, opens peculiar opportunities to the student; to all of which is added "the Gallery of Fine Arts," a cherished feature of the Society, presenting some of the choicest models of the painter's and sculptor's art.

I have thus grouped in very brief review something of the work and possessions of the Society,—with much of which perhaps, as with many of its later members, I have been imperfectly acquainted,

—to show its large and varied acquisitions, and as emphasising its labors, its popularity and its wealth. Like begets like, and success is a prolific mother. Fifty years is but a brief span in the calm life of an organization buttressed by assured means and animated by an earnest spirit. It has done much, but more remains to be achieved. The story even of our own State is not fully told, and further acquisitions may yet brilliantly illustrate its annals. But, while ever prompt to fulfill all duties to the State; a wide field, which its essayists have but partly entered in the past, offers ungarnered wealth to our members. The century in which we live has been crowded with great events. Development has been its characteristic. Progress has been its watchword. Science has achieved in it her brightest triumphs. The activities of nations have been multiplied, and the scope of human energy enlarged. The historic field is ever white unto the harvest, and the rewards of the reapers would be alike varied and opulent.

The survey from some elevated point of a wide expanse of natural scenery, combining the magnificence of mountain ranges, the sparkling course of noble rivers, the majestic stretch of old forests, and the quiet beauty of cultivated fields, ministers an intense gratification to him who is alive to the beauties of the material world. More nobly interesting must be the prospect that opens before

the mental vision of one who from the heights of an impartial and intelligent observation, overlooks the course of a nation, and addresses himself to the task of recording the mighty features of its progress.

Amid the thronging incidents, it may be, of centuries of national existence, the fierce antagonism of variant influences, the confused admixture of causes, the conflict of passions, and the rivalry of leaders, it is his office, with discriminating vision, to detect the points of salience, and through the mazes of incertitude steadfastly to trace out the truth.

The illustration of a special passion in the flowing verse of the poet, or the development of character in the fancied narrative of the novelist, is of comparatively easy execution; but the evisceration of truth from the mixed materials of national life, and the elucidation of a faithful history, taxes higher powers and merits greater commendation.

The century now rushing to its close, is one of magnificent development on all the lines of human progress, and the essayist may find none in the long sweep of the world's history more crowded with startling and controlling influences. He will note how in its course States have risen and States have sunk—trace the forceful influence of modern thought—the growth of nobler impulse—the ma-

jestic progress of the arts of peace—the broadened scope of learning—the loftier flight of science—the opened vistas of discovery—the proud assertion of individual rights—the new conception of free government, and multiplied appliances of art.

Within the broad field of interest thus rapidly outlined there is verge and space both for historian and essayist, and while few are competent to grapple with the continuous narrative of national events, and give us compendious and authoritative history; many may tread with interest and instruction to others, the less formal and methodical path of the successful essayist.

A MEMORIAL

OF THE

Hon. SEVERN TEACKLE WALLIS.

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In Commemoration

OF THE LATE

Hon. SEVERN TEACKLE WALLIS,

PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.



MEETINGS HELD

April 12th and May 14th, 1894.

PROCEEDINGS.

A SPECIAL Meeting of the Society, called by order of the Vice-Presidents (by notices inserted in the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Baltimore American* and the *Daily News*), was held at its Rooms, on April twelfth, 1894, at four o'clock, p. m.

Vice-President Rev. John G. Morris took the chair and stated that the purpose of the meeting was that the Society might take some preliminary action in relation to the death of the Honorable Severn Teackle Wallis, which had occurred at 12.10 o'clock, a. m., on Wednesday, the eleventh of April, instant.

There were present twenty-nine members.

Mr. Reverdy Johnson introduced the following Preamble and Resolutions, which were seconded by Mr. Goddard and unanimously adopted:—

“ *Whereas*, It is with the most profound sorrow that the Maryland Historical Society has learned of the death of Severn Teackle Wallis, its honored President;—Therefore,

“*Resolved*, First, That as a mark of respect to his memory, the officers of the Society and as many of its members as can do so, attend in a body the funeral of its late President:—

“Second, That a committee of five members of the Society be appointed by the Chair to prepare and submit, at its next regular meeting, Resolutions expressing the sentiments of this Society regarding the loss which it has sustained in the death of its President, and its high appreciation of that nobility of purpose which characterized and dignified his entire career.”

The Chair subsequently appointed as such committee the following members, who were formally notified April 16th, 1894, viz. :

Mr. Reverdy Johnson, *Chairman*.

Hon. Thomas J. Morris. Mr. Charles J. Bonaparte.
Mr. Richard D. Fisher. Mr. H. Irvine Keyser.

On motion, it was resolved that the members of the Society meet at its rooms at half-past two o'clock on the afternoon of the thirteenth instant and, headed by the senior officers then present, proceed in a body to attend the funeral services of the late President at Saint Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church, where pews would be reserved for their accommodation.

The meeting then adjourned.

AT the next ensuing Regular Meeting of the Society, held May 14th, 1894, Mr. Reverdy Johnson, Chairman of the special committee appointed to prepare Resolutions on the death of the President, introduced the following resolutions:—

Resolved. That in sympathy with the entire community of our State, the Maryland Historical Society deplores the death of Severn Teackle Wallis, so long conspicuous among the leaders of men.

The rare qualities of mind and character that marked his career have impressed themselves upon the professional and political life of the State, and they will long continue their moulding influence upon those who follow, whether old or young.

Life so enriched by nature and cultivation can never fail of the good work for which Providence designs it, and its silent influence extends far beyond all visible signs.

Resolved, That in bringing our special tribute to the memory of our late distinguished President, this Society records its deep sense of loss in the removal of one who earnestly sympathized with its work, and was always ready to counsel and sustain.

In his death has taken from us an officer, adviser and friend, and the void it leaves can be realized only by those who knew as we did the noble qualities so rarely combined.

Resolved, That these Resolutions and the proceedings to which they relate be entered upon the records of the Society and the Secretary be instructed to transmit a copy of such minutes to the family of the deceased.

Speaking to these Resolutions, Mr. JOHNSON said:—

The blow that has fallen upon our community did not come without preparation. Many months of sickness had been the forerunner, and accumulating years had heralded the end.

But when one so conspicuous, so gifted and many-sided in his influence is called away, there is a void left which only time and the active stir of modern life can fill.

What Mr. Wallis has been to his fellow-men all here know full well. The scholar, the lawyer, the active public spirit, the upright, chivalrous gentleman, the man without spot or blemish to tarnish a well-earned name, is a combination rarely met with in these stirring and testing times; and his fellow-citizens, his most immediate circle of friends, and the bar which he adorned, have cause to be proud of the legacy he bequeaths.

This Society over which he presided in thought and sympathy, though disease withheld his presence, can with heartfelt sorrow inscribe memorial

words upon his tomb, and we point our successors to this signal example of a life devoted to duty in its many forms, made brighter by the trials through which it passed.

It becomes us, Sir, as it is our earnest wish, to bear full tribute to the memory of our departed President, and to spread upon the records of the Society a lasting memorial of one, who while guiding its interests, has added honor to its name.

Seconding these Resolutions, Mr. CHARLES E. PHELPS, said:—

Mr. Vice-President,—

By a full month the world has grown older since all that was mortal of one of its noblest and best has been gathered into its bosom, amid lamentations as sincere as they are universal. Through the conventional “forms, modes, shows of grief” there was the overwhelming sense of a great public loss. In response to a spontaneous feeling of all hearts, the tokens of appreciation and mourning were unusually significant and impressive. As a marked tribute of respect to one whose position at the head of his profession was far from being his only or his greatest title to regard, the courts of justice were closed, and for one solemn day the commonplace and the sordid were, as by common consent, forgotten, in the contemplation of a lofty

ideal. In the presence of State and Federal Judges, and of the entire bar of Baltimore, the thoughts of all minds struggled for expression in an affecting memorial, in appropriate addresses and in a fitting judicial response.

There were earnest voices that spoke, and there was that in the subject and the occasion which lent to their utterances unwonted dignity and pathos. Other voices have been heard and other tributes have been gratefully rendered—from the public press—from the University of which Mr. Wallis was for many years the honored head—from the social club over which he gracefully presided—and from the various learned institutions with which he was officially connected. After all has been said that can be said, we feel the force of the Roman historian's expression, that to do justice to the life and character of Cicero would require his eloquence. "The lips are silent that alone could pay him worthy tribute."

And yet one more pious duty remains to be performed. Upon us here present the great public bereavement falls with peculiar weight. For the second time within a brief period the Maryland Historical Society has been called upon to mourn the death of its presiding officer. Both were lawyers of eminence in their several and distinct professional careers. Each had his own sphere of labor and usefulness, and each was a master within

that sphere. Both were accomplished and versatile men outside of their profession. Both lived to an advanced age, long and blameless lives without a blemish. In Mr. Latrobe we lost an active and laborious presiding officer, who had a full appreciation of the true scope and mission of this Society, was perfectly familiar with its archives and work, and was able to animate its meetings and enliven the graver duties of the chair, by a rich store of delightful anecdote and instructive reminiscence. When the chair made vacant by his death was offered to the acceptance of Mr. Wallis, it was well understood that from physical infirmity he would probably for a long time be unable to discharge, in person, its active duties. But the Society felt that in honoring him it but honored itself, and was proud to claim as its President the foremost citizen of the State. Although long past his scriptural threescore years and ten, and struggling with disease, there was a general reluctance to concede that Mr. Wallis was, in fact, an aged man. His personality was so bright and buoyant, his wit so sparkling and pungent, his judgment so ripened and well balanced, his spirit so fervid and forceful,—there was such a radiant atmosphere of intellectual vigor and aggressive honesty enveloping that feeble frame, that his friends would start to hear him spoken of as aged. We thought of him as a sick man who

would be well again; we could not believe that his record was made up, his life-work done, his useful and brilliant career closed. We even hoped that in offering him this new and congenial opportunity for public service, there might be something for him to look forward to with interest, something to make firmer his hold upon life, something that might count in the balancing of the forces of life and death, something to serve as a friendly hand, the "blessed hand," extending towards the dear brother descending into the abyss. We permitted ourselves to indulge the hope that in this tranquil haven of historical research that wearied spirit might find a dignified repose, and from it, renewed energy and vigor. We fondly anticipated the vision in our midst, of that classic presence, whose keenly chiseled features in symphony with the clear-cut tones of his sharp incisive speech, were the outward expression of the lightning-like rapidity and clearness of his intellect.

It is in the disappointment of these hopes and anticipations that the general calamity comes home to us with something of the weight of a domestic bereavement. We grieve that we are deprived of his wise council, his sound judgment, his exquisite taste, his ripe scholarship, his large experience, and we mourn the loss of one whose social accomplishments, charming courtesy and admirable tact, united with an electric quickness of apprehension

and innate passion for justice and fair dealing, would have given us the ideal of a presiding officer.

Stat nominis umbra. There is left us the possession of his great name; and through him we connect historically with all the great names that have shed lustre upon the Maryland bar, with his preceptor, the eloquent and gifted Wirt, and with Wirt's contemporaries, with Martin, Harper, Win-der, Pinkney and Taney.

Our lamented President was the last survivor of the next succeeding generation, represented by such eminent lawyers as Johnson, McMahan, Nelson, Latrobe and Steele. The death of Mr. Steele placed Mr. Wallis by universal consent at the head of the Maryland bar. With what conscientious labor, both in general and special preparation, he rose to that proud eminence—with what luminous and logical method he unfolded his stores of learning—with what consummate skill he extorted truth from the lips of an unwilling witness, or marshalled facts in the order of demonstration—with what mastery of the weapons of invective he riddled and crushed falsehood and fraud—with what graceful and commanding eloquence he captivated courts and juries; all this and much more, has been the theme of unstinted eulogy from his surviving professional brethren. But no point has been more unanimously emphasized, than his delicate sense of

personal and professional honor. So far as mortal vision may penetrate, a cleaner conscience never sought the presence of its Maker. The basis of his character was a profound and absorbing passion for truth and justice. Take this innate sense of justice, warm it up until it flames, arm it with wit, with satire, with invective, inspire it with courage, endow it with the staying qualities of a thoroughbred, give it a rapid ringing voice, often high-pitched, and sometimes in its energy of inflection, startlingly shrill, add to this the intense earnestness of an old Hebrew prophet, and the action, action, action of Demosthenes, let the framework be a carving in delicate but pronounced lines, sculptured after the antique—and we have a faint image of Teackle Wallis before the people.

True to the influence of his education and principles, he promptly identified himself with the Southern cause. Without leading battalions to the field, he braved the chances of civil war. He suffered for his cause, and like a brave man, bore with fortitude a long confinement in a distant fortress. He returned from his captivity capable of becoming a firebrand of discord or an angel of peace. With what chivalric dignity Mr. Wallis rose superior to all personal considerations, I am here for one to testify. But what testimony is needed to a great fact that is written in luminous letters upon the later history of the State? What General Lee

accomplished for Virginia and her confederated States, it was within the power of Mr. Wallis to effect with that numerous and influential element of his native State which had unlimited confidence in his leadership. Without hesitation he adopted as his line of conduct, the requirements of the altered situation, and the general welfare of his fellow-citizens. He allowed his patriotism to be circumscribed by no sectional or party lines. It was not long before he found occasion to grapple with a monstrous peril to society, and to begin that magnificent series of battles for the freedom and purity of the elective franchise, for honest and economical municipal administration, and for reform of the civil service, in which his splendid gifts appeared to their best advantage, and which, after all, constitutes his highest title to renown.

There was no service for which Mr. Wallis was more pre-eminently fitted, and with all whose exigencies he was, from personal experience, more perfectly familiar. He was but confronting an old enemy under a new form. Once before, in years preceding the Civil War, when the sceptre of the law was seized by crime, the efforts of Mr. Wallis through the public press, by public speech, and in formulating and vindicating State legislation, had powerfully contributed to a grand reform, but a reform which happened to be in the interest of his own political party. He now found himself called

upon to oppose abuses perpetrated under its name. With what devotion and intrepidity he gave this crowning proof of sincerity and patriotism, is a matter of recent memory.

When so many educated men deserted the field of politics in dismay, and so many high-toned men abandoned it in disgust, here was found one highly cultured and extremely sensitive nature, of quiet literary taste, of tender poetical vein, stripping for fight like a common gladiator, going down into the dust and sweat of the arena, not looking behind to count his followers, nor faltering for fear of foul play in front. It was not the rash courage of ignorance. No man better understood the formidable and crafty conspiracy he confronted. Conscious of the purity of his motives, and proudly defiant in his armor of integrity, scurrility itself was awed by his presence, and the most effective shaft that could be hurled against him was the sneer that he professed to be "better than his party." Behind this coarse and mocking jibe, there is the semblance of an idea. The criticism is one which applies not to Mr. Wallis alone, but to all true reformers of politics. They are called doctrinaires, theorists, visionary men, Utopians. Their standard of political ethics is complained of as practically unattainable. To this there are two answers. One is, that there is nothing visionary in laying down the law to practical politicians, as to

other people, "Thou shalt not steal." The other is, that in politics, as in everything else, it is necessary to keep in view an ideal standard, and to approximate it as far as possible under all circumstances.

The flag must be kept flying in high places. Because it is shot at and riddled, is no reason for hauling it down. Grant that the best efforts of Mr. Wallis often resulted in discouraging failure. The failures we now see to have been only incidental and temporary. Taking a broad view of all these efforts in the aggregate, there is a palpable proof of their permanent success. It is not of course to be claimed for Mr. Wallis that to him is due the exclusive credit for whatever advances have been made in the last quarter of a century in the direction of ballot reform and of reform in the civil service, and especially in that essential basis of all reform, an awakened public conscience. But without hyperbole it may be said of Mr. Wallis that his name deserves to be forever remembered with honor in connection with each of these great reforms, as one of their most intrepid, eloquent and effective champions. His example will be the inspiration of all future efforts upon the line of progress. No movement will hereafter be made for securing purer methods in the administration of public affairs, that will not refer as its basis to the principles he inculcated, and rely for its impulses upon the authority of his name.

For his inestimable services in informing and arousing the public conscience, and in moulding a sound public opinion, we owe our deepest debt of gratitude to his memory. And our grief at his loss is augmented by the still more recent death of a journalist who had the will and power to continue, although in a widely different sphere, and to advance, perhaps with even greater celerity, much of the work begun by Mr. Wallis. It is seldom that a community is afflicted by such a quick succession of kindred calamities as this community has sustained in the death of Mr. Wallis, so closely followed by that of George W. Abell.

There is one more point that ought to be made. I refer to the generous humanity, the broad liberality which especially marked the later years of Mr. Wallis' long and useful life. Abolitionism he hated and loathed with a hatred and loathing which exhausted the resources of his unmatched vocabulary of invective. And yet he was not an enemy of the negro, as anyone would have found to his cost who ventured to confront him with the charge. There are those now present who can testify that in this very room, no more fervent or persuasive words of his were ever heard than his eloquent plea for the liberal education of colored youth, and for their unrestricted admission to the highest privileges of professional instruction.

The career of Mr. Wallis was a stormy one. The more peace to his ashes! Measured by the

vulgar standard, it was not altogether a successful one. He died unmarried, untitled, unenriched. And yet, the world, which applauds success, bows before him in veneration.

To see the death of such a man so universally wept is creditable to human nature. It is more: it is a damaging blow to pessimism. Public spirit cannot be dead, conscience cannot be drugged, patriotism cannot be sapped, in a community that admires such a life, applauds such a character, and reveres such a memory, as the life, the character and the memory of SEVERN TEACKLE WALLIS.

Mr. A. C. TRIPPE, also seconding the Resolutions, said:—

Mr. Vice-President and Gentlemen,—

In this venerable hall, instituted for the perpetuation of the history of our State and the good fame of its people, it is singularly appropriate that we should meet tonight to honor the memory of one who stood so well on the bead-roll of her sons.

Born on the 8th day of September, 1816, and dying on the 11th day of April, 1894, at the age of nearly seventy-eight years, Severn Teackle Wallis, the President of this Society, in his many sided character was a typical Maryland gentleman.

He reached manhood when the old form of colonial life still dominated the social system of

our State, when the head of the family lived on his broad paternal acres, surrounded by wife, children and kinsmen, with a large retinue of happy and contented servants; and that spirit of personal independence, sense of individual honor, courage of opinion and generosity of heart which this life engendered, belonged to him in high degree.

As a lawyer he was true to the best traditions of our profession. To the largeness of technical learning he added the polish and culture of the scholar, and that learning and culture were ever ready at his hand. He was above all things an advocate. When he took a case it became his own. At the trial table there was not a weak point in his opponent's cause that he did not find, there was not one in his own that he did not skillfully protect. And woe betide the witness that trifled with the truth under his cross-examination. Before the jury his nice discrimination of facts and their bearing, his ready wit, his keen satire, and his tender pathos when the case required it, often won his client's cause, and if that cause were lost, it was through no fault of the advocate.

The resources of literature came to cheer him amid the toils of professional life like birds sporting amid the guns. It is remarkable that he who was so learned a lawyer should yet be so ripe a scholar. His table talk would make a book worthy of many editions. His reading travelled through

the highest walks of English speech, had culled flowers in France, but most of all, it rested amid the libraries of the better days of Spain.

Thus he stored his mind and developed that piquant style of expression which lit up his acute judgment of men and things in his public discourses to which we so much delighted to listen.

And whether it was an appeal for "Leisure—its Moral and Political Economy," or that discriminating masterpiece, his "Eulogy on George Peabody," or his address to the young graduates of the Law School, or in memory of him, the great Chief Justice, who had attained the highest professional honors,—whether it was a defence of the Southerner and his cause, and the young men he knew and loved who had followed its fortune, or a plea that our great University might be appreciated by our citizens, his end and aim was always to do good to some one. He tells you in the preface to his collected volume of addresses: "I have some hope, not altogether unsupported by the opinion of others, that the moral and educational truths, and the standard of personal, professional and political ethics and practice which it is my constant aim to inculcate and enforce, may have given a more permanent value to the collection than is generally attached to occasional addresses."

But if his published discourses marked the highest intellectual culture and discrimination, his "songs gushed from the heart."

What a touching elegy he uttered above the little maid whose tender frame first consecrated the slopes of Greenmount. Did ever a more impassioned appeal burst from the lips of man or poet than his prayer for peace which he wrote from the casemates of Fort McHenry. And when the cause which had his warmest sympathy went down in honor, and its ruined homes and devastated fields appealed to the charity of all, was there ever a more beautiful exemplification of the grace of giving than that which found expression in the "Blessed Hand."

When you heard Mr. Wallis at the bar you said he was a great lawyer; when you listened to his public address you recognized an accomplished scholar and thinker; when you read his verses you were touched with the genius of the poet. Either sphere fills the measure of most men, but he was excellent in all.

I have sometimes wished that he had devoted himself entirely to literature, his success in which could not have been questioned. What pleasing pictures of life would he have drawn,—like many of Dickens',—and would not his acute powers of observation and trenchant style have given us another Thackeray?

Stern duty gave him to the bar where he is most respected and lamented, but the regret will always be that he was not permitted to walk amid

classic groves and make for us a new world in the creatures of his own imagination.

Mr. Wallis as a citizen was earnest and patriotic. He loved Maryland and its people in every fibre of his soul.

His aim in life was

“Some usefu’ plan to make,
Not for his ain, but for auld Scotia’s sake.”

In the struggles for political liberty which preceded the war, he risked his life more than once and spent body and brain in the service till its accomplished deliverance. When the war came on and the hand of Federal power was wrongly put upon him, he would not bow his head to the mailed might of the nation, but like a Knight of Runnymede, demanded to know the cause of his detention and went forth from the casemates of the fortress at last—the invincible freeman!

During his later years he entered again the field of political discussion in the advocacy of the principles of “Civil Service Reform” as applicable to public employment, and for the divorcement of municipal affairs from party politics.

And, whether you accepted his views or not, you recognized the purity of his intentions and the sincerity and ability with which he maintained them.

His life was a protest against the material standard as the test of personal merit. With him

wealth was desirable as a means of usefulness, but it was not an end to be sought for itself alone. As it gave opportunity to leisure, as it was the instrument of benevolence, as generosity triumphed over avarice, it was desirable, but the shekel of gold was not the criterion of moral worth, nor should conscience, or rather the lack of it, be approved, whereby

“The jingling of the guinea
Cures the hurt that honor feels.”

If in its attainment it dwarfed the mind and paralyzed the soul, it was a thing to be shunned, and its possessor at this cost, was to be rated by his personality alone and not by his acquisitions. There was something higher than riches—it was true manhood, and yet they need not be incompatible.

Tall and with clear cut intelligent features there was a charm in his manner which all recognized at once who came into his presence. Struggling ever with a frail body, it was wonderful to see how his mind and will triumphed over its weak integument and dragged it at the car of his intellectuality.

His heart went out to kindred, friends and humanity. Where was there a kinder kinsman than he—who was truer to his friends than he,—and when traveling in the Swiss mountains he

came to an iron cross by the wayside with a legend asking the traveler who passed by to pray for the one who lay beneath, the appeal to him, a stranger from far away across the sea, stirred his inmost being, and his answer came,

“Peace to thy spirit, Brother. I had knelt
 At altars where the nations came to kneel
 But knew I never, in its depths, till when
 Thy lonely shrine besought me for my prayer
 The sense of kindred with all souls of men,
 One love, one hope, God’s pity everywhere.”

It has been proposed to perpetuate the memory of Mr. Wallis by a memorial bust to be placed in the Peabody Institute, by the issuance of a collected edition of his works, and by the creation of certain scholarships. This is well. But I wish that the inspiration of his life might go farther. Standing one day in the great London Minster an English gentleman and his son passed by me, and as they moved from one memorial tablet or sculptured effigy to another, each telling of the achievements of him whose name it bore, I could see the boy’s cheek flush and his eye kindle as enthusiasm and young ambition stirred within his soul. If, as Wellington had it, Waterloo was conquered at Eton thirty years before, is it too much to say that a greater influence for achievement has gone out from Westminster Abbey.

And an institution of import such as this I would like to see established in our midst. Let there be set apart in the Peabody Institute, or in our University, some Memorial Hall, whose walls would illustrate by the aid of the painter's art the great events in the history of our State, while the portraits of the men who wrought them are hung around. Then throw the doors wide open to the young. Is there professor's chair or library-shelf which would teach our children a lesson like this? What an incentive to them to emulate the motto of their fathers—"Manly deeds, Modest words."

I know of no greater service a citizen of means could do our community than by the endowment of such a foundation as this. It would be a fitting outcome of the life of one who was proud of his State and its story. And when this memorial hall shall be completed, we will hang upon its walls as all worthy of a place, the portrait of SEVERN TEACKLE WALLIS.

The question being put upon these Resolutions, they were adopted by a unanimous and rising vote.

I.

ADDRESS

BY THE

Hon. J. MORRISON HARRIS.



358184

II.

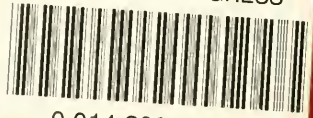
A MEMORIAL

OF THE

Hon. SEVERN TEACKLE WALLIS.

Baltimore, 1896.

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