

ADDRESS.

NORTHBOROUGH, MASS.

GALE MEMORIAL LIBRARY

DEDICATION.

By Rev. Benj. H. Bailey, of Malden, Mass.

DEDICATORY ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE DEDICATION OF THE

Gale * Memorial * Library,

NORTHBOROUGH, MASS.,

Wednesday, June 12, 1895.

By Rev. Benj. H. Bailey, of Malden.

It is with unaffected delight that the sons and daughters of Northboro enter into the services of this day of promise. The skies are fair; the earth a theatre of living beauty, where all things glow in the radiance of the time, and through these vestibules of verdure, redolent with the fragrance of the opulent season, we come from near and far to join in this glad celebration that has such auguries of good.

Yet the charm of this scene, the happy spell of this hour, is more and better than all which delights the sense, deeper and more substantial than that which gladdens the eye, and a hope and a glory befit the time, ampler, farther-reaching than earth, or air, or sky can compass or contain.

The annals of a community's interest in, and regard for knowledge, are pleasant to review, and the story of its progress and achievement in the might matters of the mind, agreeable to rehearse. Literature for literature's sake, is not always in the van with a people, struggling with hand to hand conflicts in the stern school of poverty, yet the records of many an ancient hamlet of New England grow luminous as we read of sacrifices on the part of its inhabitants, who gave without stint that their posterity might enjoy the advantages which they themselves never knew. So the story of the intellectual element in its formation and progressive activity in the earlier days of this town is simple, in its straight-forward and honest purpose, and I doubt not, thoroughly characteristic of the New England of its time.

I have been not a little impressed and delighted with the fact, which I glean from history, that the Northboro of that day was not very much behind time.

When Franklin went to London in 1725, he remarks that "circulating libraries were not in use;" and from another source (Ellis's Letters of Literary Men) we learn that "the only library in London which approached the nature of a public library, was that of Sion College, belonging to the London clergy." According to Southey's Doctor, "the first library set up in London was about the middle of the Eighteenth century by Samuel Fancourt." Hutton in his life of himself, says: "I was the first to open a circulating library in Birmingham in 1751.

Apart from other special methods for intellectual culture, and ominous of the noble enterprise in whose consummation we now rejoice, it is recorded that a little more than a century ago, in 1793, a number of the citizens united for the formation of a Social Library, beginning at the start with 100 volumes. Coming down to 1817, the beloved historian of the town, Rev. Dr. Allen, writes that sixty of the young ladies met stately in a room in the meeting-house and sewed straw, thus earning \$100, which sum was expended in buying books. It was Martin Luther, I think, who, thoroughly dissatisfied with the Epistle of James in the New Testament, called it an Epistle of Straw; but assuredly these strawy memories of the good girls of Northboro, nearly a

century since, have much and direct relation with the golden harvests and splendid after-glow of this happy time.

Then there was the Young Men's Library, and the Agricultural Library, and in 1843 the town received a donation of \$90 from the State, (about the sum that buys a bicycle to-day), with which libraries were purchased for all the school districts of the town. Of the sweets dispensed from these various tables of knowledge, I, even I, O fellow citizens, have feasted, and confess myself greatly nourished thereby. Shall I ever forget the transports of one boyish winter, as I seized from the somewhat neglected shelves of the ancient book-cases that once stood in the porch of yonder church, and bore away—no man saying me nay—the four bulky volumes of Goldsmith's *Animated Nature*, illustrated with cuts that would make your hair curl; or how I devoured the wonderful statements of that fascinating writer, all unconscious that he was only a compiler of other men's truths and errors, and probably knew no more about animals than I did? Grotesque were some of the solemnly expounded doctrines, as for example: that a person could *drink* a glassfull of the poison of the vengeful rattle-snake without harm, and also, that the cow sheds her horns every year, as does the deer. So are we again reminded, dear friends, that the *ministers* are not the only fabulists of the world!

Along the ever widening stream of social interest in the great enterprises for the culture of the general mind, one name appears with recurrent frequency of benefaction and a more complete and thorough organization could not be far away. In 1866, Hon. Cyrus Gale--this was Cyrus the elder—offered to give \$1,000, and he was joined in the noble benevolence by Hon. Milo Hildreth, who gave \$250 to the town on the condition that a room be furnished for books in the new town hall. The offer was accepted by the town and an annual appropriation guaranteed for the support of the library. An association was formed, which by various means raised over \$600 for the purchase of books, and in 1868 the Northboro Free Library was established and opened to the public on September 12th of that year. Its funds were soon increased by a donation of \$500 in money and \$500 in books from Hon. Isaac Davis, of Worcester, also a son of the town, and by a farther legacy of \$1,000 from Cyrus, the elder, whose continued interest and noble desire seem to us to have august and joyous fulfillment at this stately structure,--the splendid gift of Cyrus the younger, and of the gracious and true womanhood that has stood by his side through the years,--rises before us and gladdens our hearts as it will those of generations to come.

The spirits of these benefactors, the living and the dead, would justly reproach me did I fail to recall one familiar figure, the friend of this and every other good enterprise for the increase of knowledge and virtue in the social life of the town. Whoever touches the history of this community in any of the great aspects of mind or morals must reverently mention Joseph Allen, a man sympathetic by nature, with truth from whatever source, and zealous always for learning at the nutriment of a healthy mind. A friend for many years of these benefactors, helper with them in many a project for the public good, how would he have rejoiced in this day as he saw the hopes and wise purposes of the father completed by the son!

There are other members of the same good name that has for years enriched the life of this region in all best things, to whom this undertaking, now culminated, from its beginning has been dear. They are with us to-day; some in bodily form and presence, other some, I doubt not, with the larger confidence of the spirit, looking forth with assured eye upon the promise that is to come. The west held one, the trained and accomplished scholar, until earth and its duties were well rounded and complete; the east had one, the saintly spirit of the daughter beloved, whose face radiant ever with the serene beauty of a living faith, surely needed no change as she passed into the greater light.

Substantial and various, too have been the gifts from other sources, and hands of residents here and hands of the children of Northboro, reaching from afar, have helped on as they could the movement that comes to the coronation of this hour, and should I call the entire roll of benefactors the day would be far spent. As in an army, well equipped for faithful service, there are degrees in methods and results, while the spirit is one, so here, a harmony of purpose, an unity of sentiment, cohere interest and steady desire have been the forerunners of the day we celebrate, the worthy harbingers, let us hope, of this monumental benevolence in solid stone. So on the loom of time as sped away the years, human purposes, human hopes have been woven, until now the grand fabric is complete.

Touched by the memories that unbidden rise upon my mind, of the Elder Cyrus, my father's friends and my own, I would I had the art and skill of some that I see before me, wherewith to draw the picture and learn the ideal of true New England thrift. It should be his who in early life, had been a learner in the school of penury and sat at the table of economy. Days of labor and nights of careful and anxious planning should have been woven with the substance of his life, and as after years of patience he looked out upon some margin of competence, dimly descried afar in the shadows of his enterprise, he should behold something looming out of the future, larger than the possibilities of a merely material prosperity. There are graves, blessed graves in this town to-day, where lie the forms of those who toiled and wrought that sons and daughters might enjoy that which to them was denied by the hard conditions of their early life, other some that plan even more widely for the public of the after-time, and of such is the memorial of to-day. As I reverently raise these benignant spirits for our cordial salutations and affectionate remembrance, I am reminded how well they have illustrated the shrewd remark of Lord Bacon, that of great riches there is no real use except it be in the distribution, or the sentence pronounced by Cicero upon a wealthy Roman of his time, "who, in his zeal for enlarging his estate, sought not the booty of avarice, but the instrument of good." I saw in a recent paper, that one of the wealthy men of America, had as his ambition, to amass 500 millions of dollars! I hope he never said it, for if such desire gets abroad, it will have a tendency to abolish the general resurrection.

And oh! Ye wealthy ones who deign to listen to me, in these moments of my great privilege, indulge me yet a word. Be, I beseech you, kindly disposed to profit by this fine object lesson of our benefactors, and make disposition at least of some of the riches with which you are blessed before you die. Every man is, or ought to be, his own best executor at least for the public and I should say on general principles, could exercise and carry out his will quite as well while living as when dead and cold. A post mortem will, even of the sturdiest and strongest natures, parts with much of its earthly efficiency, and this is true even of "Imperial Caesar, dead and turned to clay."

As I recall public bequests that have been made I seem to be moved as by the spectacle of some suffering spirit that has got into its tomb and was peering out through the crannies with sad astonishment and regret, as it saw the treasure it had carefully gathered and hopefully left, fought over, juggled with, scrambled for and turned away and far aside from his fair and kind intent—why, it gives a value to mendicancy and lends a new terror to death!

I submit even in the presence of these eminent legal luminaries, that the best testamentary dispositions can be made in your lifetime, especially those of a public character, which, of course, you all intend to make. So, indeed, will you best consummate existence; further, establish and solidify your enterprises for the public good and behold them going on into fulfilling and fulfilled beneficence, before you die. Still, few of the benefactors of New England can perhaps be as fortunate as our friend this day, in this great and good gift, as he stands before

us, at once his father's executor and his own, thus obeying the behests of filial affection and anticipating the gratitude of coming generations.

Man and the book, humanity and its records, and what a combination of living power, of unending promise is here. For the book is the epitome of the world, and history, science, philosophy, art and religion, up to date, look out from its pages. Man without books is a poor creature upon his island of being, around which dash the sullen waves of doubt and superstition upon the rocks that line his shores,--

“A dark, illimitable ocean, without bound,
Without dimension, where length, breadth, and height,
And time, and place, are lost; where eldest Night
And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold eternal anarchy.”

But with the book the waves are pierced with sudden light from out the thinking mind, the rocks crumble, and a bridge is flung across the surge, by the engineerings of awakened intelligence, and a roadway is opened that connects him with his kind. Like the fisherman of the Arabian story, man casts the net of his intelligence into the sea of mystery that flows around every habitable shore; and the wondrous vase wrought with strange device and curious emblem rewards his enterprise, while genii of measureless power are at his hand, to threaten or enlarge his life.

The truth is, without the thought and sympathy of our kind, the human mind is vacancy, save of signs and wonders, the “rats and mice and such small deer” of thought, but peopled with the suggestion and purpose of others, it becomes an inspired vitality. Set apart in the seclusion of selfishness, man is simply alone; he becomes one only as related by the close fellowships of the mind. Linked in that great chain of sympathy which begins in God, the sanctities, the sympathies of the might confederation of the human intellect appear; the community of God in man rises upon the sight, the great realms of thought and purpose and faith, open heavenward, and a new meaning, a choice and sacred dignity are given to the race of which we form a part. Give me man only illiterate and unrefined, lacking the form and shape which the invisible fingers of thought, in their various touches produce, and you present indeed a fine animal, the choicest cub that the world has yet shown; but give man and the book, the reading man, the thinking man, the cultured man, and this is the being for whose development in all great lines of intelligent force the earth was made, for whose perfection the bending heavens wait.

Wherever books are in any large sense of use and interest, there are the standards of thought, purpose and experience that hold the mind up to the just conservatisms of discipline and stimulate its advance.

I can go to a town within the limits of this State where hardly the semblance of a library like this can be found. The air, the settled and dense air or a community halt and decrepid in the intellectual functions of social life is there, and both inhabitants and institution are studies of the antique. Old Mortality is visible, not only in the cemetery. There is the same post and rail fence in the centre of the town as fifty years ago; the same leaning post, the same shattered, bent and moss-grown rail. The scenery of the region is lovely. Nature has brought forth of her best, but the stand-stills of life are there, and already the signs are neither few nor feeble of air-tight and suffocating intelligence and hide-bound decay. The remark is trite, but cannot be too often repeated, that our prosperity in all prime respects depends upon the order and intelligent interest of the general mind, and as the New England character has been largely one in which conscience,

intelligence and virtue have been hereditary, so it should be the aim of every true son and lover of his kind to perpetuate this glorious line of pre-eminent power, remembering the word of one of the masters of English thought and expression that "Books are the rulers of the world."

Nor can I fail to remark the utility, the necessity of this and kindred institutions, as one of the powers for the preservation and advancement of all the best things that lie enwrapped within that measureless word—civilization. It is needed, such a centre of intellectual force; such a rallying place for all those instincts divine within man, whose power and guidance alone prove him to be human; an institution organic and in sympathy with the best moral and spiritual purpose of the community; it is needed, greatly needed as a bulwark against the disintegrating influences of our time, and as one of the consolidating powers of society. There are views that are more explosive than gun-powder; theories more shattering to society in its most real and living functions than dynamite; but the main stream and tendency of the course of the mind has thus far been in the direction of unity, not destruction, and the history of human thought breeds health in us and not panic. Every library is greater and better police than roams the streets, and God grant the time shall never come in New England when a book shall not be better than a prison cell! For when that day dawns New England shall have ended its glorious course, and the Puritan and the Pilgrim shall veil their faces as their power, their influence, sink away into night. All great spirits shall wisely instruct and confirm you in good as they comfort and cheer you here, the patriots and martyrs, the scholars and sages, and "thoughts that breathe and words that burn" shall be food and strength as well as balm and incense to thy soul! For here the heralds of the mighty past shall deliver the message of wisdom, the tonic for centuries of the world's better life; the organ of history shall send forth the harmonizing and elevating strains by which man shall march to the new society of the future; the trumpet of patriotism shall sound and as heroes are seen to fall, from their blood and dust new heroes shall arise; here shall the nurse of a true fame gather her children and incite to noble deeds; the school of virtue will henceforth hold its regular session and uninterrupted course; for here will be found the guide of conduct, chastener of manners, ministers of courage, quickener of every hope, in a word, from this place will issue a commanding influence and inspiration for life.

Well said Carlyle, "that wherever is a collection of books, there is an university," and in this noble gift, O fellow-citizens of Northboro, our university has choice place and stable foundation to-day, and here from out this city of "intelligences fair," "the immortal children of the mind" will send their benedictions into the coming years.

Whoso, then can add a stone to the foundations of living virtue or strengthen the sense of goodness in man, whoso vitalizes truth, so rendering it attractive to the heart; or deepens and clears the channels of intelligence and sympathy in the world, whoso enlarges the borders of knowledge, or lifts high the flaming banners of the spirit, or helps to light the torch of science, that shall illuminate his own and coming ages; whoso shall buttress faith and settle doubts and nourish the healthy and natural appetite of the mind, with food of substance and verity, the honest thought, the water of life, aye whoso shall build a structure like this and make it over, a free gift, a home where minds may resort to be nourished and comforted a centre of radiant, illuminating influence, assuredly he shall serve his kind, and minister to his race.

We joined then in the services of this day which inaugurates this institution of great and good omen for the town that we love. One thought, one sentiment, thrills every heart here, and every heart afar, in which pulses one drop of Northboro blood; it is the thought and sentiment of gratitude to the givers; of gladness for the town. It stands before us in noble figure and promise of its great utilities for the mind and heart, the soul and spirit of man; we behold not alone the

solid stones hewn long after, our mortality fading, we sink within the friendly shadows of the eternal. It is more and greater, a type of that ampler foundation, out of the mountains of the Lord, for the strength and nurture of his child, the building of each man, each woman, into a living temple for the worshipful service of the Most High God. The food of the mind, the nutriment of virtue the structure of the soul, man's great and proper make, these lie within this symbolic stone and give it a dignity and sacred purpose. So, and so only, do we read the lesson and discern the promise of this hour, and so give thanks, deep, reverent, sincere, as the omens of the living and loving spirit of almighty purpose impress our hearts, and bind us anew in joyous gratitude and hope.

It is my high privilege this day, as one of the children of Northboro, to offer the sincere tribute of our heart's gratitude to these generous givers, as this beautiful building, their noble gift passes into history and stands henceforth as one of the treasured institutions of this town. As we stand within the shelter of its solidity and premeditate its ennobling utilities for the sons and daughters of Northboro, I reverently hail and salute the good spirits gone before and the good spirits who yet remain, the just minds whose benignant intent illustrated the fine remarks of Mackintosh that "in all real life sympathy is followed by active benevolence." I salute the father's memory and desire; I salute the filial affection and purpose of the sons; I salute the generous spirits of husband and wife whose hearts, whose hopes are one in this great gift that is now consummate and complete, and these spirits enshrined here in the affectionate remembrance and loving gratitude of all our hearts shall be a pledge of good through all the coming time, while lordly Edmund from his watch-tower in the East, and crested Tomblin on the South, shall nod in glad approval to stately Assabet, and every brook within these beloved borders shall run laughing to the sea.