

THE PORT FOLIO,

THIRD SERIES,

CONDUCTED BY OLIVER OLDSCHOOL, ESQ.

Various; that the mind
Of desultory man, studious of change,
And pleased with novelty, may be indulged.

COWPER.

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AMERICAN SCENERY—FOR THE PORT FOLIO.

DESCRIPTION OF QUEBEC.

ABOVE the island of Orleans, says Gray, in his "*Letters from Canada*," published in 1809, the St. Lawrence expands, and a basin is formed by the junction of a river called the St. Charles, which takes its course through a plain separated from the great river by a ridge of high land about nine miles in length, and from one to two in breadth, extending from a place called Cape Rouge, to Cape Diamond.

Cape Diamond is a bold promontory advancing into the river St. Lawrence, of an elevation of 350 feet above the river, nearly perpendicular, and the bank the whole way to Cape Rouge is nearly of the same elevation, rising from the river almost perpendicular; the ridge slopes towards the north till it reaches the plain through which the river St. Charles runs. On the northeast or lower end of the peninsula, Quebec is situated, and the line of its fortifications runs from the river St. Charles across to the top of the bank which overlooks the St. Lawrence; the distance is about half a mile, and from the line of fortification to the point of Cape Diamond the distance is about a quarter of a mile; within this space stands the city of Quebec. It consists of an upper and lower town. The upper town may be said to be situated on Cape Diamond, at least upon the side of it which slopes towards the

NOTICE OF MR. CLYMER.—FOR THE PORT FOLIO.

At a meeting of the directors and members of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, on Monday evening, March 8th, the president, Joseph Hopkinson, Esquire, delivered the following Address, on the occasion of the death of *George Clymer, Esq.* the late president.

GENTLEMEN,

The reputation of every man must, eventually depend on the conduct of his life, and not on what friendship or envy may proclaim of him after his death. Yet, either as a decent homage to departed worth, or as an impressive lesson to those who survive, custom has established, perhaps not unwisely, a practice of making some particular notice of the life and services of distinguished men, when they have finished their earthly career, and the book of their good and evil deeds is closed. In compliance with a custom, so respectable by its antiquity, and so grateful in its observance, as well as in the indulgence of a sincere affection and respect for the late president of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the directors of that institution have desired to offer some testimonial of their sense of the worth of that excellent man, and of the loss they have sustained by his death. It is for this purpose, and in obedience to a resolution of the board of directors, I now address you.

It is neither my intention nor the wish of those whose will I execute, to pronounce a laboured or extravagant eulogium on the deceased. Such exhibitions do no honour to the sincerity of those who make them, and still less to the object of the panegyric. Honest praise best suits an honest reputation; and virtue is never commended by fulsome flattery. It is the food of vanity which the pure and upright heart disdains. It insults the understanding of the wise, and nauseates the appetite of the good. We will speak then of our departed president, with that simplicity which was a marked feature of his character, and that integrity which governed every action of his life. As this notice of him is intended only for this place, and the members of this institution, we shall contemplate the private rather than the public man, and give our attention to the qualities which displayed themselves in his intercourse with us, rather than those

which connected him with his country and the world. With this view of the subject it is obvious my duty is a circumscribed one, and the performance of it requires but a brief attention.

The establishment of an academy for the fine arts in this city was a design so entirely new, that it had never presented itself even to the imagination of our citizens; and, when first proposed, many were at a loss to conjecture its object and uses. While public improvements of various descriptions were rapidly advancing; while establishments for the promotion of the useful arts were rising daily, the erection of an institution for the cultivation of the fine arts seems to have been wholly overlooked. It is true that many years since an ill-digested attempt at something of this kind was made, but it was a mere abortion, and disappeared even before its existence was generally known. In the year 1805 the design was resuscitated on a plan more liberal and enlarged, and not exposed to the causes which produced the failure of the former effort. A number of gentlemen embarked zealously in the undertaking, which was soon supported by a liberal public patronage. Still the practicability of the scheme was denied by some, and doubted by many. In order to ensure its success it was necessary to obtain the confidence of our fellow citizens, not only in the usefulness, but in the feasibility of the project. We well know that the mass of any people, however intelligent and enlightened, have neither the time, the inclination, nor perhaps the ability, to decide for themselves upon matters not in the course of their ordinary inquiries and pursuits. If every man well understands and diligently attends to his own peculiar business it is as much as can usually be expected, or ought to be required. When, therefore, a subject is presented for their approbation and aid, which is altogether beside their customary occupations and reflections, it derogates nothing from their independence or self-respect that they should refer their opinion to others who have attended to the thing more particularly, and in whose judgment and integrity they have a just and merited confidence. It is, for this reason, of the utmost importance, that in the commencement of a novel institution, which calls upon the public for support, it should be countenanced and recommended by men on whom the

public have an entire reliance; on whose judgment they may properly hang their faith, and on whose recommendation they may prudently afford their money. With such impressions and views Mr. Clymer at once presented himself to the founders of this academy as a person eminently qualified and entitled to be placed at its head. The experiment justified the choice. He had received, and for many years enjoyed, the most important and unequivocal testimonies of confidence and respect. At different periods of our national history, from the first bold step which was taken in the march of independence, to its full and perfect consummation in the establishment of a wise and effective system of government, whenever the virtue and talents of our country were put in requition, Mr. Clymer was found with the selected few to whom our rights and destinies were committed. When posterity shall ponder on the declaration of July, 1776, and admire, with deep amazement and veneration, the courage and patriotism, the virtue and self-devotion of the deed, they will find the name of *Clymer* there. When the strength and splendour of this empire shall hereafter be displayed in the fulness of maturity (heaven grant we reach it) and the future politician shall look at that scheme of government by which the whole resources of a nation have been thus brought into action; by which power has been maintained, and liberty not overthrown; by which the people have been governed and directed, but not enslaved or oppressed, they will find that *Clymer* was one of the fathers of the country from whose wisdom and experience the system emanated. Nor was the confidence which had grown out of his political life and services, his only claim to the station which he held in this institution. Although his modest unassuming spirit never sought public displays of his merit, but rather withdrew him from the praise that was his due; yet he could not conceal from his friends nor his friends from the world the extraordinary improvement of his mind. Retired, studious, contemplative, he was ever adding something to his knowledge, and endeavouring to make that knowledge useful. His predominant passion was to promote every scheme for the improvement of his country, whether in science, agriculture, polite education, the useful or the fine arts. Accordingly we find

his name in every association for these purposes; and wherever we find him we also find his usefulness. Possessed of all that sensibility and delicacy, essential to taste, he had of course a peculiar fondness for the fine arts, elegant literature and the refined pursuits of a cultivated genius. It was in the social circle of friendship that his acquirements were displayed and appreciated, and although their action was communicated from this circle to a wider sphere, it was with an enfeebled force. His intellects were strong by nature, and made more so by culture and study; but he was diffident and retired.—Capable of teaching he seemed only anxious to learn. Firm, but not obstinate; independent, but not arrogant; communicative, but not obtrusive, he was at once the amiable and instructive companion. His researches had been various, and, if not always profound, they were competent to his purposes, and beyond his pretensions. Science, literature and the arts, had all a share of his attention, and it was only by a frequent intercourse with him, we discovered how much he knew of each. The members of this board have all witnessed the kindness and urbanity of his manners. Sufficiently fixed in his own opinions, he gave a liberal toleration to others, assuming no offensive or unreasonable control over the conduct of those with whom he was associated.

Let the philosopher inquire, and if he can, determine, why it is, that while military and political eminence impress the world with a profound respect, nay, with a sort of reverential affection, the virtues which endear a man to friendship, which are the sources of domestic happiness, which elevate, purify and adorn our nature; which flow in a constant, but tranquil, stream of general utility, obtain but a feeble applause and reluctant praise. The destroyer of the human race erects for himself a reputation extensive, lasting, splendid; and, if no sinister misfortune arrests his career; if he prosecutes his sanguinary course to the end without stumbling, he becomes a hero by universal consent, and his life is gazed at as a blaze of glory—and *this from man*; from the very beings he has tormented. If devils were the dispensers of fame, we would not wonder that murderers should stand first on the list; but that man should decree honour to the destroyer of men, is a caprice in our nature not easily explained. It is

at least peculiar to our race; and in the search that has been made for a decisive distinguishing line between the human and brute creation, it might have been resorted to, and man defined to be an animal which worships his destroyer. In the enumeration I have made of the estimable qualities of our late president, there is one omitted not less useful and even more rare than those mentioned—I mean his scrupulous and punctual attention to what may be termed the minor or secondary duties of life. I know of no error, short of absolute crimes, which is more productive of mischief in society, than an inattention to engagements which, being merely voluntary, are too often considered as of no moral or binding force. A man whose integrity would shrink from the idea of putting another to the least inconvenience in a matter of business; who will perform contracts of that sort to the letter and minute, even when no injurious consequences would follow a less strict observance, will, without the least remorse or uneasiness, or consciousness of wrong, disregard or neglect engagements, deliberately made, on which the comfort of individuals, as well as the usefulness of public institutions essentially depend. If such a one makes an office or coffee-house engagement, of little or more importance, or perhaps of no importance at all, he holds it in careful recollection, and performs it with scrupulous certainty. Yet this same man will accept the compliment of a station in some public body; he will know that his presence and services are relied on for all its operations and usefulness; that it cannot proceed one step, or adopt a measure, but by the instrumentality of those who have assumed its superintendance; and this duty, so important, for great public benefits depend on it; so exclusive, for it cannot be performed by another, will be attended or not, as humour, caprice, or pleasure may dictate, for something or nothing; the merest call of idle amusement is preferred to it, and it is only when such a man does not know what else to do, that he gives himself to obligations of this description. He is, however, in the breach of a social, if not a moral obligation, from which very injurious consequences may ensue. That his pride may have no gratification in the indulgence of this vicious habit, he should remember that the greatest men have been most

free from it. The engagement, it is true, is voluntary, but, being made, the performance of it is no longer so. He should further consider the injustice he does to those who are associated with him in the trust, and attend to discharge their duty. The absence of one may frustrate the attention of several, and thus is their time sacrificed, as well as the interests of the institution they are bound to preserve and promote. When we reflect that great affairs are of rare occurrence and take care of themselves or compel an attention to them; that generally the business of life is made up of small things, we shall conclude that an habitual inattention to them will make, in a few years, a deplorable mass of deficiency. We attend to large concerns for our own sakes; we should attend to lesser ones for others. He who justly estimates the value of the punctual performance of a promise, will not without very good reason, disregard it, whether it be to sign a contract or walk with a friend; to pay a debt, or present a toy to a child. In this most useful virtue, Mr. Clymer was preeminent. During the seven years he held the presidency of this academy, his attention to the duties of the station were without remission. He excused himself from nothing that belonged to his office; he neglected nothing. He never once omitted to attend a meeting of the directors, unless prevented by sickness or absence from the city; and these exceptions were of very rare occurrence. He was indeed the first to come; so that the board never waited a moment for their president. With other public bodies to which he was attached, I understand, he observed the same punctual and conscientious discharge of his duty. It is thus that men make themselves useful, and evince that they do not occupy places of this kind merely as empty and undeserved compliments, but for the purpose of rendering all the services which the place requires of them.

Gentlemen—In concluding this unfinished sketch of the character of our late president, I must apologise for having so imperfectly expressed your sentiments and executed your wishes. Suffer me also to use this occasion to thank you for the honour conferred on me by placing me in the chair so lately filled by a gentleman much more worthy of it.