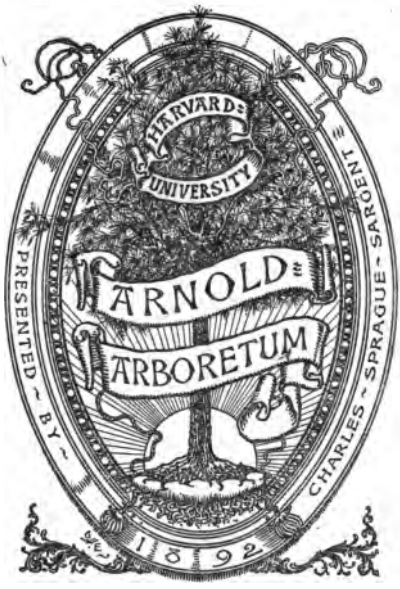

Hon J. D. Long
with the kind Regards of E. Hodgman

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY REQUEST BEFORE THE

Ornamental Tree Association,

Westford, May 13, 1876.

By EDWIN R. HODGMAN, A. M.,
Secretary of the Association.

"Tityre, tu, patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi,
Silvestrem *tenui* musam meditaris avenâ."

—*Virgil.*

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ADDRESS.

I HAVE observed that children, when a task is given them, work more earnestly if a word of encouragement is spoken to them. Kind words awaken ambition. I had a smart grandmother once who understood this matter precisely. (Mr. Mark Twain will please excuse this reference to grandmothers. I think he once showed an affectionate regard for the grandparents of our Christopher Colombo;* and we all had grandmothers once, and cannot do very well without them now.) This grandmother aforesaid used to make apple-paring "bees" for all the young folks in the neighborhood, and her way of getting a great deal of work out of every one of us showed how she understood human nature. She stirred up a lively competition between us and by encouraging looks and words tried to have us do our very best. It was *work, work*, for the first two hours, as busily as our fingers could move; and then came the pies, cakes and custards.

Now, gentlemen, our gathering to-day is a "bee" for public improvement, and this Association means to *be* for years to come. Though I am addressing men and women, I think I can safely appeal to the love of praise to spur you on in this good cause. Men are but children of a larger

*See The Innocents Abroad.

growth, and they will work all the more briskly if they are encouraged a little.

Now, I propose to speak first of a few things which *have been done* in this village to make it attractive. My knowledge of what took place many years ago must be derived from others, for I have been a resident here not quite seventeen years. Suppose we commence with the year 1840. At that time our now beautiful triangle was an unfenced common, whose geographical boundaries were not fixed. I believe our townsman, Mr. Edward Symmes, determined its latitude and longitude in the year 1855.* In the year first named (1840) the town passed the following vote: — "That John Abbot and others may build a "fence around the common, provided the town be put to no "expense on account of the same." Accordingly, in the following year, 1841, the fence was built, and the trees planted, and the expense incurred was met by voluntary subscriptions. Mr. Nathan S. Hamblin furnished the stone posts — the hammered ones near the Academy and on the side next to the Unitarian Church being his contribution to the enterprise. This seems to be the beginning of improvements, and I am sure we all rejoice in it.

I think that in this centennial year we ought to redeem that beautiful plot of ground with its fringe of trees from the disgrace and vulgarity of being called the *common*, as if it were only a place for dog fights or cat concerts. Let us call it a *park* and give it the name of some worthy and public-spirited citizen. Perhaps it does not belong to me to christen it, but I suggest the name of one who has done more than any other citizen to make it a thing of beauty in the eyes of every loyal Westford man — the late Judge John W. P. Abbot.

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* Lat. 42° 35′ 40″ N., Long. 71° 27′ 12″ W.

As a general thing all the improvements here have been brought about by individual enterprise, the town having done comparatively little for this central village except to build the town house in it. We are very grateful for this, only we wish it had changed its outward shape somewhat and given it a tower. Much has been done within a few years in the line of village improvements. Old buildings have been removed, and new ones have taken their places. Seventeen years ago an old blacksmith's shop stood between the dwellings of Greenleaf Drew and M. H. Fletcher. A similar vulcanic abode has recently been transferred from the beautiful plot in front of this hall and put to a *fowl* use elsewhere. It is now a pleasant thing to stand of a summer evening and look over the gay parterre to the distant mountains, bright with the sheen of a New England sunset. In the spring of 1860 an old barn which stood close to the large elm near the First Parish Church was torn down, and during the summer following the stable near by was erected and crowned with that mettlesome steed that has told us ever since which way the wind blows. Nearly every house has received a coat of paint within ten years, and many have been adorned with venetian blinds and bay windows. The improvements in this respect have been very marked and gratifying. The fences along the lots and in front of houses have been greatly improved in some cases, and depravity and decay have yielded to soundness and beauty. Ought *cheap* fences to be seen any more in such a pretty village as this?

The era of sidewalks dates from the origin of this Association. By the way, ought we not to change the name useful society and call it the Village Improvement Association? Almost nothing had been done before. Who does not remember what a slough of despond we all waded

through near the big elm aforesaid, in the spring of 1863, during the session of the Teachers' Institute?

This Association was formed in the autumn of 1871, Hon. J. W. P. Abbot being chosen president, and Asa Hildreth secretary. In April, 1872, the Association voted, "That the Committee on Sidewalks be instructed to build "sidewalks from the common toward the depot as far as the "funds would permit." This means, of course, the depot on Stony Brook Railroad. It seems to me there are good reasons why this instruction should be followed out in the years to come. That street is destined to be the much-travelled thoroughfare of the village, and it ought to be safe, neat and wholesome — a fitting introduction to the real beauty that nestles upon this glorious old hill. It ought to be regularly graded from top to bottom, with a hard, water-proof sidewalk for the whole distance. I call for this improvement in the name and behalf of the *ladies* who have served this generous repast to-day, and in behalf of their successors in office to the latest generation.

Do you know, ye of the masculine persuasion — have you ever estimated — the number of tons of dry goods *in manibus fœminarum et puellarum* (I call upon the preceptor, *fons linguarum*, to translate this for me) that have been laboriously tugged up that long hill during the past fifteen years, through April mud, January slosh and July heat? Is not this a burden too grievous to be borne? Obliging husbands, dear papas and timid but wishful sweethearts cannot *always* be on hand to carry the package and umbrella. Think, too, how many rubber shoes have persistently stuck in the mud opposite the home of our obliging janitor. Good-natured though he is, we cannot expect him to be always on hand to assist in such cases of feminine distress, for by-and-by he will want a bird in his own cage,

and is fairly entitled to the best one he can catch. And then, perforce, his ministrations to such wayfarers must cease.

For these and other reasons that street should receive a large share of our attention. It is the highway of our necessities and exigencies, along which our mothers and daughters must go, and probably will go, for the next century, to find out the latest fashion and to purchase the latest novelty.

Progressive as the age is, do you, venerable men, think that women will ever cease to follow the fashions? Can there be any just expectation that the road to the depot will not be the road to Hosford's and Ordway's for the ages to come? Ought we not to provide then for the *inevitable*, and tax our resources to make the oft-frequented way easy and convenient alike to spinster and matron? In so doing ye shall reap your reward in well-adjusted shirt buttons and a more relishable breakfast.

Just here a plea should be made for the widening of streets and straightening of fences in some cases. This might be done with very little trouble and expense, and it would add very much to the tidiness of our streets. In some instances loose rocks need to be piled neatly against the wall, and broken timbers and bits of wood should be carried off. Who wants to see these scattered about or likes to blunder over them in the night? A little care will do much, and the example of one person of good taste in this particular will encourage and strengthen others. Let us not always ask, Will it pay? but be willing to do some things that don't pay in cash immediately, but really do pay us indirectly and bountifully. In regard to many things ornament and utility go hand in hand. The argument for the general neatness and tidiness which we plead for lies in the direction of our health and comfort, and that is a narrow

policy which stops short with the necessary and the useful —a policy quite unworthy of a people of real intelligence and culture.

I confess I have not stood very much upon the order of my thoughts in this address, but I want to speak of trees awhile. Only a few rods from us there is a row of elms that were planted and cared for by hands that are now moldering to dust. Was it not a good deed to put them there, and in aftertimes when men ask who planted them, will it not be our pride to mention the name of Francis K. Proctor? So, too, in regard to the large elm west of the park, planted by Samuel Fletcher.

This society aims to put trees on all the streets in every place where it would be advisable to put one. It may be that no great personal advantage will come to us who set them out. But what of that? We are looking to the future and hope to add a little to the comfort and happiness of coming generations. Trees have in themselves no pledge of immortality, but some of them live long and may be memorials of us when we are dead. I quote from George B. Emerson's book on the "Trees and Shrubs of Massachusetts": —

"No element of beauty is so completely manageable as trees, and our resources in that respect are surprisingly great. Situated in the middle of the temperate zone we have, in Massachusetts, all the best of the deciduous trees, the oaks, the elms, beeches, ashes, hickories, walnuts, cherries, maples, chestnuts, lindens and buttonwoods of the temperate regions, together with the finest of the evergreens, the pines, firs, spruces, cedars, hemlocks and the delicate birches of a more northern climate. Each one of these trees has its own peculiar and distinctly marked character, recognizable at a distance and producing an effect which needs not to be mistaken for that of any other. Each has its own cycle of change, its own time of flowering and of perfecting its fruit, and of opening, maturing, changing and casting its foliage. Each has its own shape and color, distinguishing

it from every other tree, even of the species most nearly allied. Hence the endless variety of forest scenery. Here are more than fifty elements shading off and blending into each other in imperceptible gradations, according as you recede from the coast to the interior, as you go from north to south, or as you rise from the plain into the mountains. We have here representatives of the vegetations of the warmer and of the colder regions; but as you go north, first the hickory, then most of the other nut-bearing trees, then others, gradually leave you and give place to hardier foresters. As you go south the same gradual change takes place from the desertion of the pines and birches and the addition of new oaks and other trees."—pp. 7 and 8.

Having a somewhat intimate knowledge of the towns north and west of us, both in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, I have noticed the change in the kind of trees as one goes from place to place. In all the towns of northwestern Middlesex we find the chestnut and walnut in great abundance, but soon after crossing the New Hampshire line we miss them. In Mason they abound, but in New Ipswich and Temple there are none. A few are found in the valley of the Souhegan, as you go up through Merrimack and Milford as far as Wilton, where they cease. They are found in the valley of the Connecticut as far as Charlestown, I think, and perhaps beyond. In Pepperell the rock maple grows thriftily. On the road from the Centre to the old Walton tavern they line the way for nearly the whole distance. In this region there are very few beeches, but in Temple, N. H., there is a belt of land covered with them, and this extends, I am told, westward through Peterboro', Dublin, Nelson and Sullivan, to the eastern side of the Connecticut basin. In Wilton, N. H., near the centre of the town, there is, or was a few years ago, a colony of Norway pines, the only forest of the kind I have seen in this vicinity. This tree grows in the State of Maine, from which (metaphorically) a very respectable specimen has been trans-

planted to Westford. Long may it live and grow, fed by the dews and cheered by the sunshine! In this same goodly State of Maine the rock maple, the yellow birch, the white birch, and the red and white beech are seen in their perfection.

When I came to Massachusetts to reside, thirty-six years ago, being a native of Camden, Me., where the grand old forests were then standing, I sadly missed these kings among eastern trees, and although I appreciate and love everything that is beautiful and good in the dear old Bay State, I have never allowed the chestnut and the walnut to occupy the place held by the rock maple and the yellow birch in my youthful feelings. Alas! those primeval woods about my early home are gone — felled by the remorseless axe.

Seven years ago I had occasion to travel extensively in Vermont, and there I found the same variety of trees, but not of so large a growth, and I seemed to be again among my native hills. Pardon the weakness, if weakness it be, which recalls with affection a tree which stood in the door-yard of my father's house. I knew it in its youth, saw it attain a vigorous treehood, and played under it for many a happy hour. But this long since yielded to the progress of evolution and assumed new forms of molecular activity.

We are trying to do a little for the adornment of our streets, and I think we shall all agree that the planting of trees is one way to do it. A treeless thoroughfare or landscape is blank and desolate. It is well in this matter to use proper judgment. For want of this sometimes a bad arrangement is made, which mars the effect and leaves the eye discontented and the taste offended. Let a true discretion guide our enterprise, and no glaring mistakes will occur. I think it is an error to plant many trees near a dwelling.

We want the sunshine and the air. The *moisture* is an objection. Where there are many trees this dries away very slowly, and its presence is detrimental to health. I would never plant evergreens near my house, for the reason just given. Another objection is the noise they make during a high wind. To sick persons this often proves very annoying. But stately elms in the yard and the rock maple in the landscape, all aglow with brightness and beauty in its season, are to be coveted as the most desirable adornments. Let me quote again from Emerson:—

"To many persons the pleasantest season in our climate is autumn, and to a lover of nature the rich and infinitely varied gorgeousness of the autumnal woods is a most important addition to the enjoyment of that season in this country. Each tree has its own color, or rather its own class of colors, tints and shades, which belong to it and to it alone. * * * It is surprising how small is the number of trees necessary to produce a striking effect. Ten or twelve trees, fortunately or skilfully disposed on the sides or brow of a hill, are often sufficient to give an air of richness harmonizing perfectly with a highly cultivated country. * * * In a country so much exposed as ours is, in consequence of the remarkable clearness of the atmosphere, to the burning heat of the sun, the use of trees for shade is not one of the least important. At the season when men travel for pleasure, a plain, low, modest house with an open grass plot before it, shaded by an oak or an elm, speaks more to the feelings and is more beautiful than the showiest house unprotected from the sun. The traveller in a hot day welcomes every tree on the roadside. Even a thin fringe of grey birches looks pleasant; and he remembers thankfully the kindness or good taste which has spared or planted a tree with a head broad and thick enough for him to rest under and cool himself. Trees should be in every pasture and by watering places and near every barn wherever cattle, horses or sheep are to be provided for. All these animals suffer from our burning sun; and, to say nothing of their enjoyment, the cost of shade trees will be many times paid back in the saving of the milk, fat, fleece and strength which will be the consequence of their being protected from the sun."—pp. 8, 9, 10, 11.

This Association has set out a hundred, or perhaps a hundred and fifty, trees in this village, mostly of the sugar maple variety. Imagine the appearance of these in the year 1900, on some clear autumn day when they are all *glorified*. Some of you will be here to see that pageant; but to others it can only be a picture of the imagination. How vivid is that scene in the mind's eye! This street will be all *ablaze* with the rich orange and yellow of the sugar maple, with the gold and scarlet of the red flowering maple, the soft olive tints of the ash, the pale yellow of the basswood, and the scarlets and browns of the oaks and the mingling of a few other varieties, all combining to produce a halo of beauty upon the crest of this our favored arcadia. Then shall you who witness that coronation which we, gray beards, cannot expect to see, know and feel that the work of this Association has not been in vain. We share your joy by anticipation. We hope if any of our friends, like Rip Van Winkle, think of waking up about that time, they will find this vision a reality. Or, if any think of coming back from year to year in ghostly form, we trust they will witness the steady development of our (now) ideal village.

I am not a seer, unless you choose to spell it a *sere*, and I have never been to a *seance;* but now that the spirit of the occasion seems to invite our forecasting of the future, let us inquire what changes and improvements the next hundred years may bring about. Let the present telegraph to the coming years our assured belief in the real, substantial progress of this village in all matters of municipal utility and æsthetic adornment. Of course we believe in the perpetuity of this Association. We are pledged to pass it along to our children's children, not only with lustre untarnished, but with usefulness greatly augmented. The honored names now attached to our constitution will live in the annals of Westford, growing brighter as the trees grow

larger; and many a stranger from other countries, attracted hither by the reputation of the town, will ask, Whence or from whose forethought cometh this *tout ensemble* of rural loveliness, good taste and refinement? Then shall it be said, This can all be traced to the Ornamental Tree Association, which began its work long years ago. Will not this be "glory enough for one day"? Shall any of us be able to carve our names any higher on the pillar of fame? Will this ungrateful Republic keep our memories green if we do not live in a tree? And will not trees live long after we are dead? So, gentlemen, here is your chance. If you wish your name to be one of the few—the immortal names that were not born to die—be sure to enroll it among the members of this Association.

One word to those who come after us: Be sure to keep this society free from all drones and shirks. So far as the muse of history can determine, after looking at our roll, she is proud to say that perhaps one-half are good for *work*, a few are good to pay their assessments, and the rest are good for—something else. Be careful to keep up the standard of respectability and of taxation, and let no taint of degeneracy destroy an institution so beneficent and so noble.

But now as to coming events. If the President will please to call up the Spirit of 1976, I will question him a little about things in his day. He knows much more than I do, but a fool may ask questions.

Honored Sir, we wish to know if ye ancient structure, now standing near the residence of our Vice President,* at the West End, is still present to your delighted vision.—Doth it linger as a memento of the time-honored days? Do the early rays of the morning gild it, and the last beams of the setting sun linger and play on its roof?

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* Rev. L. Luce.

We presume, Sir, you can report to us the erection of one or more fine summer hotels, somewhere on the west end of Main Street, of course, to which the elite of Boston, New York and Graniteville resort to spend the warm season. O, yes; and the principal streets are all paved and lighted with gas, the real article, and none of your gasoline or paraffine. And starting from the postoffice a solid brick edifice, three stories high, standing opposite the residence of Allan Cameron, 3rd, two lines of horse-cars of the most approved pattern run every fifteen minutes to stations on the Stony Brook and on the Nashua & Acton Railroads. What was your last remark, Sir?—begging your pardon for my inattention. Do I understand that Mr. Charles Graves is still the conductor of the Stony Brook trains? Yes, you may. Good! May his shadow never grow less!

> Punch, Brother, punch with care,
> Worthy to punch forever there.

I suppose you can tell us of the monument in Abbot Park, to the memory of Lieut. Col. Robinson. Yes, it is a just and fitting tribute to a brave soldier and a true patriot. It is now moss-covered and weather-stained, but is still grand in its proportions.

You can tell us, doubtless, of new streets laid out and built upon quite extensively. Yes, the growth of your neighboring city has been so constant and rapid that many of its business men, for lack of picturesque building sites near by, have been allured to this hill, where they have built elegant mansions in great numbers. This compelled the opening of a public street along the western slope, beginning at Luke L. Fletcher's and ascending by easy grades to Heywood Street, thence across lots southward and intersecting Main Street. Very fine views of the distant

mountains on that street, Sir. Yes, and it is well dotted with houses through its whole length. And another street has been laid out on the eastern slope, commencing near the house once occupied by Mr. Dupee (yes, we knew him), and winding along past the roost of A. P. Richardson, southward across School Street to Pleasant and on to the foot of Prospect Hill. Then I am happy to inform you that a wealthy gentleman has built a splendid house on the top of that hill, and near it he has erected a fine observatory, well equipped with suitable instruments, among them a magnificent telescope, by means of which he has found that the moon is a decrepit old thing and likely to fall in pieces very soon from sheer rottenness of timbers.

Please tell us, Sir, what has been done for education during the century. With pleasure. The cause is still progressing, and we have very fine teachers. They do not have so much to say about molecules, mollusks, radiates and vertebrates, but they still teach algebra and geometry, although no one of them has yet squared the circle. One bright fellow declares he has solved the problem of perpetual motion. The people of Westford have done wonders within the century in the line of education. They have never voted less than three thousand dollars a year for schools. Every one of these has a printing press of its own, and the pupils are taught to compose types as well as essays, and a daily paper is issued, giving a synopsis of the day's work. Journalism is a distinct study, and so are drawing, painting and sculpture. A well-equipped and elegant building for the Westford Academy was erected nearly the middle of the century, on Lincoln Street, east of Abbot Park, with ample grounds and all needful appurtenances. It is truly an ornament to the town. It occupies a lot running from street to street, and the horse-cars pass it in front and rear. A grandson of the preceptor of your day has charge

of the school, and they do say that something of the fidelity, thoroughness, snap and vim of the old man crop out in the grandson.

But, Sir, do you have any recollection of him who filled the academical chair one hundred years ago? Yes, I remember him. It was about the middle of the century. He was a very venerable man then, with long, white locks and a full beard, frosted with age. Bowdoin College gave him the degree of LL.D. in 1899, and he wore his honors meekly. He held the office of preceptor until he was seventy-five years old, and even then his natural force was not abated. He could distinguish plus from minus across the school-room, and hear a whisper as readily as a woman catches gossip. But he retired from the business of teaching to prepare his two great works, which have since run through many editions. The first is an elaborate treatise on "Pumpkins, and How to Eat them," in which his ample knowledge of all cucurbitaceous plants, their habits and their uses, appears to great advantage. The second is an exhaustive essay on Hebrew Poetry, in which patient research, linguistic skill and multifarious learning have built up a noble monument —*ære perennius*—to perpetuate the name of the author. These two works were published when he was in his seventy-ninth year, and for several years after this he lived to enjoy the fruits of a ripe old age.

APOTHEOSIS.

It was indeed a tranquilizing sight to see him, on a bright summer evening, leave his residence at the west end and take his usual after-supper walk to Abbot Park. There, seating himself upon a rustic chair and raising his gold-headed cane, he would gaze upon the beautiful academy wherein his great life-work had been wrought, with a look

of quiet satisfaction. Often, at such times the Westford Cornet Band, led by a grandson of your worthy treasurer of 1876, would discourse sweet music; and then, as the rays of the declining sun would set the park and all surrounding objects aglow with a pure, white light, one was forced to recall the story of the bells of St. Mary's, Limerick, which tells of the nameless Italian who passed from earth while the very bells which he had cast and tuned with loving fondness for his art, were chiming his soul to rest. For surely as he sat there in the mellow evening of a useful life one could see "*Nunc Dimittis*" written on his brow, and feel assured that this hero of the intellectual battle-field was about to lay aside his armor in peace.

"How mildly on the wandering cloud
The sunset beam is cast!
'T is like the mem'ry left behind
When loved ones breathe their last."

At this point, gentlemen of the Association, the spirit of 1976 ceased to communicate with me, and I can only say, Let us each do our part to make this raid of the imagination *an historical reality*.

In closing I give you this sentiment:

WESTFORD — Of the hill-country of Middlesex, beautiful for situation, made beautiful more and more by the skill and taste of its people; may its glory consist in the intelligence and virtue of all who dwell here during a thousand years to come!