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OF  
GEORGE BANCROFT**

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# THE LIFE AND LETTERS

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OF

# GEORGE BANCROFT

BY

M. A. DEWOLFE HOWE

*ILLUSTRATED*

VOLUME I

NEW YORK  
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1908

GEORGE BANCROFT

MADE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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**GEORGE BANCROFT**

*From the portrait by Gustav Richter at Harvard University*

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**Published April, 1908**



PREFACE

ABOUT five years ago the late Mrs. John C. Bancroft entrusted to me the private papers of her father-in-law that I might prepare the biography now presented. They were so numerous that the task of drawing forth from the mass of written words some semblance of the man whom they concerned seemed at first to offer nothing but difficulties. Yet it soon appeared that Mr. Bancroft himself had done much to simplify his biographer's work. The correspondence was, for the most part, well arranged; and, best of all, I found that Mr. Bancroft had secured many of his own early letters from their recipients, and had followed the practice of preserving copies of most of the letters written during his active life. When the source of manuscript material in the following pages is not specifically noted, it may therefore be understood to lie in the papers placed at my disposal.

In one of the multitude of letters not used, I find Mr. Bancroft exclaiming, "Oh! these children and biographers who cannot leave in the dark what belongs there." What does belong there, and what does not?

These are questions which the biographer must take the responsibility of answering with that uncompromising finality which an architect uses in building a house. No two architects, or biographers, confronted with the same problem, can rear precisely the same structure. Here the problem has been one of selection and elimination rather than search. If I have not always eliminated enough, it has been through a desire to shed authentic light upon a character not without its contradictions. Where interpretation and comment have been called for, I can only hope they have been given with the sympathetic candour which should exist between a biographer and his subject.

For counsel and other assistance of great variety and value I am indebted to many friends and kinsmen of Mr. Bancroft, and to certain friends of my own. Special acknowledgments must be made to Professor Wilder D. Bancroft and Mr. Charles Bruen Perkins; to the Hon. John Bigelow, Mr. Charles K. Bolton of the Boston Athenæum, Mr. Andrew McFarland Davis, Mrs. J. C. Bancroft Davis, Mr. Wilberforce Eames of the New York Public Library (Lenox Branch), Mr. Worthington C. Ford of the Library of Congress, the Rev. Dr. Edward Everett Hale, Professor Albert Bushnell Hart, Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Dr. James K. Hosmer, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, Mr. William C. Lane of the Harvard College Library, the Hon. Henry Cabot Lodge, Mrs. Thornton K. Lothrop, Mr. Leonard L. Mackall, Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, Pro-

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fessor Charles Eliot Norton, Professor and Mrs. Henry G. Pearson, the late Mr. Linzee Prescott, Mr. Josiah P. Quincy, Dr. Austin Scott, Professor W. M. Sloane, Mr. Ainsworth R. Spofford of the Library of Congress, and Mr. George G. Wolkins. That Mrs. John C. Bancroft, under whose friendly guidance the work was begun, has not lived to see its completion, is a source of the deepest regret.

Boston, *February*, 1908.



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I

INHERITANCE AND BOYHOOD

1800—1813

“You have both written the History of your Country, and made yourself a part of it.” These words from a letter of Robert C. Winthrop to George Bancroft on his ninetieth birthday could not have been addressed so truthfully to any other American. They summarise a unique career. The work and the life of George Bancroft taken together cover virtually the entire range of American history. His books are the record, from the very beginnings, of all the events which culminated in the inauguration of the first President, only eleven years before the birth of the nineteenth century. With that century the life of George Bancroft began, and continued through all but nine of its years. His life was one of many contacts with the most important persons and events of his time, both in America and in Europe. It was a life which rendered him peculiarly a national figure. The writer and the statesman, however, were not all of the man. In the full consideration of his career must be included his social relations, coloured by his strongly marked personal characteristics, and finally helping to determine the view in which

the succeeding generations have held him. It is not difficult to find in his inheritance and early influences the seeds of his development in various directions.

George Bancroft was born at Worcester, Massachusetts, October 3, 1800. Instead of tracing all the degrees by which his substantial New England ancestry transmitted to him its characteristics, it will suffice to look with some care at his father and mother and the special inheritances with which they could provide their children.

His father was the Rev. Aaron Bancroft, who was born at Reading, Massachusetts, November 10, 1755, and died at Worcester, August 19, 1839. The stock from which he sprang was of that New England strain which has so often been called "sturdy" and "pious," that one forgets how much the words may mean. Aaron Bancroft's father, Deacon Samuel Bancroft, a farmer of Reading, was a member of the ecclesiastical council which in 1750 decreed the dismissal of Jonathan Edwards from Northampton, but—be it added—was one of the minority which formally protested against the decree. A correspondent of George Bancroft in 1845 drew his attention to the fact that Samuel Bancroft, in virtue of his title of Deacon "and of his civil rank and standing, wore the large white wig of that day." Samuel Bancroft's grandfather, Thomas Bancroft of Reading, also a Deacon, left a will, from one clause of which it may be inferred that both George Bancroft and his father came by a clear inheritance into the interests to which their lives were devoted: "My history books to be divided among my three sons equally, my divinity

books among all my children, not including my bible, Clark's annotations, which I give to my son Thomas." The father of this testator was a still earlier Thomas Bancroft, born in England in 1622, and first placed with definiteness in New England through his two marriages in Dedham in 1647 and 1648. Soon after the second marriage he moved to Reading, where, as we have seen, his descendants long remained.

The agricultural life at Reading, in which Aaron Bancroft would naturally have succeeded his father, did not satisfy the boy. He was permitted to enter Harvard College in 1774. The entire college generation to which he belonged suffered serious interruptions of study through the War of the Revolution. Yet in 1778 Bancroft graduated with honor. In 1810 his college made him a Doctor of Divinity. To this distinction he had risen by steady degrees. Unsuccessful as a teacher immediately upon leaving college, he went, after a brief study of theology, to Nova Scotia where for three years he preached in various places. In the "Memoranda designed for the Inspection of my Wife and my Children," which Aaron Bancroft wrote in 1826, he said of this missionary experience: "I am fully persuaded that this peregrination was of solid benefit to me. It put me on my own resources, and obliged me to call into exercise the powers of my own mind in a greater degree than I probably should in a state where libraries and learned clergymen would have presented extraneous assistance." All this must have contributed to the independence of judgment which characterised him through life. As a mere boy he had rebelled against



the Calvinism which enveloped his father's house. "I am not sure," he wrote in the "Memoranda," "that the surfeit I then had did not give me a distaste to Calvinism which has continued to this day." On his return from Nova Scotia his theology was such that the town of Worcester refused to establish him as the successor of the congregational minister whose death had left a place to be filled. But the welcome which Aaron Bancroft's frankly Arminian preaching received gave evidence that there was room in Worcester for a second religious society. Accordingly in 1785 a new parish was established, and in 1786 Bancroft was formally ordained its minister. Though the definite rupture between the Orthodox and Unitarian ministers did not come till the nineteenth century was well begun, the young Arminian found himself held at arm's length by the surrounding clergy. How he bore himself may be inferred from a postscript to the "Memoranda": "An honest, but not very intelligent farmer of my Parish, some ten years since, accosted me in this manner, 'Well, Mr. Bancroft, what do you think the people of the old Parish say of you now?' I answered, 'I hope something very good.' 'They say, if we find fault with him, he does not mind it at all; and if we praise him, he does not mind it; but keeps steadily on his own way; we therefore have concluded that it is best to let him alone.' The farmer mentioned the fact as a subject of laughter, but I thought and still think that taking the declaration in its bearings, it was the prettiest compliment I have received through my whole life."

Another passage from the "Memoranda" illustrates a

quality of reserve characteristic of the race to which the Bancrofts belonged: "In the above sketch nothing is said of experimental religion or of offices of secret devotion. At this my children perhaps will be surprised. Possibly in these things I have been through life too reserved; but my heart always revolted from communications of this nature. Religion, as a concern between God and the soul of man, is in its essence a secret transaction, and not to be spoken of to the world. Be my views on this subject right or wrong, the fact is, I never furnished either my wife or my children with means by which they could determine what was my private communion with Heaven. Whether my general life and conversation have supported my Christian profession and my ministerial character, my family, as well as those around me, will judge."

Outside his own community he was well known as an early leader in the anti-Calvinistic branch of New England Congregationalism. From the founding of the American Unitarian Association in 1825 until 1836 he was its president. More than thirty of his separate discourses may be found in pamphlet form. A published volume of his "Sermons on those Questions of the Gospel, and on those Constituent Principles of the Church, which Christian Professors have made the Subject of Controversy" (1822), had the power to call forth from the elder President Adams, naturally sympathising with the new Unitarian movement, a letter in which two sentences read: "It is a chain of diamonds set in links of gold. I have never read, nor heard read, a volume of sermons better calculated and adapted

to the age and country in which it was written." Of all his writings, however, his *Life of Washington* (1807) carried his good name farthest. The preface declares it to be a book not written "for men of erudition, but for the unlettered portion of the community." The author "entertains no expectation of acquiring literary fame by this publication; but he hopes to escape the disgrace of having written an useless book." The effective simplicity of its style clearly saved the author from this disgrace, and carried the book into several editions, in both England and America.

A son's estimate of a father may not be taken as the most impartial testimony; but since the father is here regarded chiefly in the light of what his son derived from him, it is well to reproduce a letter written by George Bancroft to the compiler of the *Annals of the American Pulpit*, who included a sketch of Aaron Bancroft in his eighth volume (1865):

To WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D.D.

"NEW YORK, *January 28, 1862.*

"You ask of me some personal account of my father. My earliest recollections of him are of a bright and cheerful man; fulfilling the duties of life with courage and hearty goodwill; naturally given to hospitality, and delighting in the society of intelligent friends, who were attracted by the ready sympathy of his nature, his lively and varied conversation, and the quickness and clearness of his perceptions. His mind was calm and logical, discriminating and accurate, possessing the

reflective powers in an eminent degree. He loved literature and its pursuits; and though, in his youth, the opportunities of becoming learned were interrupted by the War, his natural inclinations and activity made amends for the deficiency; so that in general culture he stood among the foremost of his day, and, far more than any man in his neighbourhood, preserved through life the tastes of a scholar. Of a bilious temperament and a delicate physical organization, he used to speak of himself as having been irascible in his boyhood; but this tendency he brought under subjection, without impairing his vivacity, and he obtained and preserved to the last a complete mastery over himself.

“It never was his way to make a show of his virtues or his emotions. With him private devotion was strictly private. His affections were strong, but not demonstrative. One of his sons was lost at sea; though suffering most keenly from sorrow, he maintained his fortitude as an example to his family; but long after every one else had given up hope, he was always seen, with the arrival of the mail, walking in front of the post-office until the letters were distributed; and when day after day brought none to him, he would return to his study with undisturbed serenity, unquestioning and unquestioned. In all this prolonged period of sorrow and hope, he was never found in tears but once, when his door was suddenly and unexpectedly opened. His love for his wife, or rather their mutual affection, was singularly great. She was remarkable for benevolence, very uncommon gifts of mind, and playful cheerfulness. In April, 1839, when they had

been married more than fifty-two years, she died after a very short illness. My father, then past eighty-three years of age, attended her to the grave with no unusual display of grief; but, after returning from the funeral, he never left his homestead again, and died in less than four months.

“Throughout all his life, my father’s means were limited, and during a large part of it, were very scanty; but he was never embarrassed, for he had made it a fixed rule not to incur debt. Small as was his income, he took it upon himself to support his widowed mother in comfort; and under his care she lived to be ninety-eight.<sup>1</sup>

“His knowledge of human nature and the springs of human action made him sought for by those who needed consolation and advice; and he was frequently appealed to as an arbiter. His exactness and method made him a good man of business, and once, when circumstances compelled him to act as the administrator of a very complicated estate, he did it so well that he won the gratitude of all persons concerned. In politics he was a Federalist of the old school, from which he never deviated a hand’s breadth; and had he lived a hundred years he would have been a Federalist to the last. But what he was most remarkable for was, that, while his own opinions were held with tenacity, and while he was often unavoidably engaged in theological

<sup>1</sup> “It was in the simplicity and economy of a minister’s family, in what you see was a Dissenting Church in an Established community, that our George Bancroft grew up. It was plain living and high thinking with a vengeance.” From letter of Rev. Dr. Edward Everett Hale to the author, Jan. 20, 1906.

polemics, he maintained a steady, consistent attachment to freedom of conscience and of thought, the right of free inquiry, the right of private judgment. In this I think nobody ever excelled him. It seemed to form an elemental part of him. Whenever members of his family consulted him on a question of belief, he never taught them by his own authority, but would set before them arguments on each side, and recommended to them the best writers on the subject; he really wished them to arrive at their own conclusions by their own unbiased reflection. This respect for private judgment he carried into all departments; and I cannot recall a single instance in which he attempted to mould or sway my opinions on religious dogmas or politics. The candid and impartial exercise of the faculties of the mind, a teachable temper, and honest zeal for truth, formed his rule for himself and for all others.<sup>1</sup>

“His father, who was a leading man in his village, and remarkable for his gifts as a speaker, was known as a strict Calvinist, and a thorough supporter of Jonathan Edwards. So my father was trained in his boyhood in the strictest school of orthodoxy; but ‘the throes of his own youthful mind,’ as he used to say, revolted

<sup>1</sup> At the end of the sermon on Dr. Bancroft’s death, preached by the Rev. Alonzo Hill, his colleague and successor, it is told that when the contest between the “Liberal Christian” and “Orthodox” parties was at its height “one of Aaron Bancroft’s daughters asked leave to read Dr. Channing’s letters to Dr. Worcester. ‘And have you read Dr. Worcester’s Letters?’ inquired he. As she answered, “No,” with some expression of disparagement—‘What,’ said he, with considerable warmth, ‘are you a daughter of mine, and do you read only one side of the question?’”

against the dogmas of predestination and election. His position in the theological world was further affected by his encountering, early in life, in a distant region, ignorant and presumptuous religious enthusiasts. These circumstances and his characteristic antipathy to all exaggeration, and his distrust of the effects of excitements, set him against fanaticism and excess in all their forms.

“My father’s theology was of New England origin, and, like that of so many others, was a logical consequence of the reaction against the severities of our Puritan fathers. He was thoroughly a Protestant and a Congregationalist. Of English theological writers, he was fond of reading, among others, Tillotson, Samuel Clarke, Price, Bishop Butler, the liberal Bishop Law, the philosopher Locke. He had no sympathy with Belsham or his school, and read little or nothing of theirs till late in life. For several years he was a subscriber to the *Christian Observer*, while it was an English Low Church periodical. He always remembered with pleasure that, happening to sojourn for a time in a town where there was but one building for public worship, he and an Episcopal minister conducted the service alternately in perfect harmony. The division in the Congregational Church in Massachusetts he deplored and resisted. It met his cordial approval that his children should attend the services of a Calvinistic minister, where there was no other Congregationalist. Once he commended one of them by letter to a Calvinistic Church in another town, as a church-member in regular standing; and when one of

his daughters married a Calvinist, he advised her to worship at the same church with her husband. He considered reason as a primary and universal revelation of God to men of all nations and all ages; he was sure of the necessary harmony between reason and true religion, and he did not scruple to reject whatever seemed to him plainly in contradiction with it.

“Age may have impaired his vivacity; but his last years were serene; and whenever it was discussed whether a man would like to live his life over again, my father always expressed himself so well satisfied with his career that he would willingly run it once more.

“He took little heed of what men said of him, whether in blame or in praise, but steadily went on his way with undeviating constancy, firmness, and good temper. His theological opponents, as well as his nearer friends, bore testimony to his uprightness; and his character gained for him, among all classes of the community in which he lived, a solid influence and respect such as I have never known exceeded; indeed, I think I may say that it has not been equalled.”

There is in this letter a passing glimpse of George Bancroft's mother. Among the papers which he preserved are letters in her unskillful handwriting, full of strange misspellings, yet more noticeable still for warmth of feeling and a spontaneous play of humour. They help one to believe that Aaron Bancroft's wife, Lucretia Chandler, was the remarkable woman her distinguished son considered her. She was indeed of no common ancestry. Her mother, Mary Church, of



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Bristol, Rhode Island, was a grand-daughter of Captain Benjamin Church, the conqueror of King Philip and chronicler of the Indian Wars. Through her father's mother, Hannah Gardiner, she was descended from the picturesque race of Gardiners, who for generations held Gardiner's Island, opposite New London, in entail. Lucretia Chandler's father, John Chandler, was the fifth of his line in New England, the fourth to bear the name of John, the third in Worcester County to hold, besides, the title of Judge. Like his grandfather and father, he filled various offices of importance in the provincial government of Massachusetts. The family was conspicuous for wealth and social place. When the Revolution drew near, Mrs. Bancroft's father, known in Worcester as "Tory John," fled to Boston. At the evacuation he sailed with his fellow Tories for Halifax and thence to London, where he died in 1800. In England his claims for reimbursement for his property losses through the Revolution were so modest as to win him the title of "the honest refugee."

Lucretia Chandler was but eleven years old in 1776. Had her father been of the patriot party, her preparation for life would surely have taken a more prosperous course. There is fortunately preserved a letter<sup>1</sup> of her own which explains so many circumstances and reveals her nature so plainly that there can be no better way to picture the mother of George Bancroft than by reproducing a large portion of it. The letter was written to her daughter Jane, who in 1825 married

<sup>1</sup> See *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, Annual Meeting, October 24, 1900.*

Donato Gherardi, an Italian political refugee, and in 1827 sailed with him and the first two of their five children for Louisiana.

“WORCESTER, *February 28th* [1828].

“. . . Sometimes I wonder how your father ever could have thought of a young girl like me for his wife—one who was almost a child of nature—unfortunate in being bred without the least culture of the mind. My mother, a woman of a strong understanding, would often strive to turn my attention to reading and as often point out the importance of spending my time usefully; not having an early good school education, the groundwork was not laid. I cair’d not for history, nor did I read much of Travels. I could form no idea where the place was nor co’ld I imagin that such people as I read of ever existed, so what was the result, I read novels to a wonderful extent, I took pleasure in a good play, and found delight in reading blank vice. Your Uncle Sever<sup>1</sup> read beautifully, and he would often hear me read, which was of high consequence but as to my knowing anything that is now consider’d an English Education I am sure it was all as out of the question. I possessed a cheerful disposition—and my mother would sometimes tell me in a plaiful manner, I should never have more at my heart than I should throw off at my heels—I was always ready for any amusement, the War we had with England did not forbid mirth, that seem’d to be the only way to go on. I was the gayest in the

<sup>1</sup> Lucretia Chandler’s sister Mary married William Seaver, Jr. (*The Chandler Family*, by George Chandler, Boston, 1872).

ball room. I never wanted more attention than I received. Sometimes my pride wd have a good lesson for I could not dress like many of my young acquaintances. Altho born in the lap of plenty, and constantly more carest than fathers generally do their children, when so numerous a family as he had would not expect it, but the truth was I was my mother's eleventh child, and nearly three years elapsed before the twelfth came. I was as my mother had said, a pretty little black eyed Indian, as they called me, remarked for my upright form, which gave me the name, and till the war broke out which was when I was in my ninth year, I was even then the plaything of the family, indulged by my father. He never sit in his chair without calling for 'pug' to come to him. I sat while he smoak'd his pipe. I can even now see him go and take his glass of wine, and away to his office, happy indeed were those days, the poor and the afflicted always found a reffuge in my parents, if I possess one attum of benivolence or even feal for the sorrowful, it was from these early impressions, but allas they were too short, grievous times came, my father not willing to live in altercation with those around him, a very few indeed of the number who had not by his bounty and by his kind interfearance assisted in the daily walks of life, or aforded them such means as to enable them to get a living, it was these very men who were the most bitter, and from such men he thot it best for a while to abscond—our most confidential men laiborers was let into the seacret, and my father went to Boston, these men having all the plate, linnin and library under their care, this was indeed

afflictive, but not all—this was the work of man. My mother was to be tried more, the very next winter was the most painful, for in that winter two fine sons were drowned.<sup>1</sup> You have often heard me speak of them—they were two and four years older than myself—this loss my mother moaned the rest of her days. The next summer everything was stript and torn from us. . . . Economy was the grand order, but my mother could not willingly give up her former appearance, her society was courted, all who had ever known her was desirous of her acquaintance. While her furnature was sold in her own house, and the very chair on which she sat, bid of from her purchase. She bore it well, and never put herself down by losing her dignity. All this was hard, but the hardest was to come. We had to loose this mother. After struggling thro these times of deep distress, the war closed, a fair prospect was before us that we should be happy, but a violent feaver overtook this frail body, she had not strength to overcome the diseas. . . . Your Aunt Sever and I took the family. . . . She was then [after two years] married. I could no more visit her than if I was a mother of a family. . . . Your father had become our minister. I was pleased with him and while our affairs was in this poverty struck state, I might, or I might not be your father's wife. I had been tried in so many ways. I found there was no certainty in riches, trouble would come and it might be softened by the quiet life I might

<sup>1</sup> December 16, 1775, Benjamin and Francis Chandler, fourteen and twelve years old, were drowned while skating. (*The Chandler Family.*)

leed with a clergyman—much to the disappointment of my brothers they thought I could find some one to give me a better living, and was very desirous to have me give it up. It is not easy for a young girl to give up an object where she considers her highest happiness depends, at the same moment let me be understood I had no property nor was it known that there ever would be any. Even my mother's thirds had not been given to us, so you notice, money was not the object, if it was affection I hope I have not been deficient in my best endeavors to prove my constant desire to promote his happiness, and save his interest—it has always been my first object to see him happy—none but a parent can tell the joy he expressed on the birth of Henry—nor how happy I was when I had a half dozen children standing round me for their breakfast and supper consisted of rye bread toasted, the fragments of cold coffee boyled and put on milk. I always did it with my own hands, they as cheerful and satisfied as if it was a dainty, for why? Because mother gave it them—at dinner my children always dined with us—cheap soup or pudding would be generally seen. Count Rumford's book was of much use to me. I learn'd many cheap dishes and made them satisfactory to my family—I was grateful for the bright prospect the children as they advanced for their readiness to learn and the very great love they show their mother. . . . ”

Aaron Bancroft and Lucretia Chandler were married in 1786. They both died nearly fifty-three years later, in 1839. The end came first to Mrs. Bancroft. It

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**AARON BANCROFT**

*Father of George Bancroft*

*From a miniature in the possession of Professor Wilder D. Bancroft*

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has been seen that her husband, who two months earlier had preached his last sermon, then took to his house and never left it for the four remaining months of his life. Such parents must needs produce a remarkable family. The number of their children, thirteen, was less remarkable then than it would be now. George Bancroft was the fourth son and eighth child.

Of his brothers, the eldest, Henry, died at the age of thirty, yet after having won distinction as an East Indian sea-captain and sailing-master on one of Mac-Donough's vessels in the battle of Lake Champlain. The second son, John Chandler, also followed the sea and was lost on a voyage at the age of thirty-two. Three of the other children died in infancy. The eldest daughter, Eliza, married "Honest John" Davis, who became Governor of Massachusetts and United States Senator. Three of their five sons were Judge J. C. Bancroft Davis, General Hasbrook Davis and Mr. Andrew McFarland Davis. Another daughter of Aaron and Lucretia Bancroft, Jane Putnam, the recipient of the letter just quoted, became the mother of Admiral (Aaron) Bancroft Gherardi. To Bancroft's sister Lucretia (Mrs. Welcome Farnum) he was greatly indebted, through the whole course of his work as a writer, for acute and sympathetic criticism upon manuscripts and proofs. The "rye bread toasted, the fragments of cold coffee boyled and put on milk" were dispensed by the happy mother to a rarely potential group of children.

The traditions of George Bancroft's boyhood are



scanty. There is the record<sup>1</sup> that the mother of his playmate, Stephen Salisbury, had a poor opinion of him. "I was a wild boy," Bancroft is reported to have said late in life to a cousin of this friend of his youth, "and your aunt did not like me. She was always fearful that I would get her son into bad ways, and still more alarmed lest I should some day be the cause of his being brought home dead. There was a river, or piece of water, near Worcester, where I used to beguile young Salisbury, and having constructed a rude sort of raft, he and I would pass a good deal of our playtime in aquatic amusements, not by any means unattended by danger. Madam's remonstrances were all in vain, and she was more and more confirmed in the opinion that I was a 'wild, bad boy.' However, nothing beyond an occasional wetting ever occurred, yet I never rose in her estimation, and a 'wild boy' I continued to be up to manhood."<sup>2</sup> More prophetic of the future, the article in which this opinion is recorded tells also that when Bancroft "was only six years old, his father referred to him a question in Roman history over which the great chief justice, Theophilus Parsons, and a friend were disputing." In another magazine article,<sup>3</sup> for which Bancroft himself supplied much of the material, Professor Sloane describes his meagre earliest schooling: "His school life at Worcester is scarcely worthy of

<sup>1</sup> See "Homes and Haunts of George Bancroft," by Alfred S. Roe. *New England Magazine*, October, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> See "An Hour with George Bancroft," by Charles K. Tuckerman. *Magazine of American History*, March, 1891.

<sup>3</sup> See "George Bancroft—In Society, in Politics, in Letters," by William M. Sloane. *The Century Magazine*, January, 1887.

mention, so unsatisfactory was the instruction. His father's home was on a farm a mile and a half from the town in one direction, and Nelson's school, the only one of any repute, at the extreme opposite corner, so that from eight to eleven his daily tasks were begun and ended by a walk of more than two miles. When, at eleven, he left home for Exeter, he found himself, thanks to a friend of his father's who read Cæsar with him, on a level of attainments with his fellows."

At Phillips Academy, in Exeter, New Hampshire, George Bancroft was to receive his two years of special preparation for Harvard College. The principal of the school, Dr. Benjamin Abbot, was one of the great teachers, in the days before great schools, who impressed themselves indelibly upon the lives of their young pupils. When in 1870 Bancroft, minister at Berlin, wrote to a trustee of the Phillips Exeter Academy about a scholarship he was planning to endow, he said: "A schoolboy is forgotten in the places of his haunts, but for himself he can never forget them. Exeter is dear to me for the veneration in which I hold Dr. Abbot, my incomparable preceptor, and for the helping hand extended to me by its endowments." In 1883, when he presided at the centennial dinner of the school, he said of his master: "In the time that I was under his care I cannot recall from any pupil a saying about him that was not full of respect. To-day, though it is seventy years since I passed from his care, my heart warms with affection as I recall his name." In Professor Sloane's article the subordinate teachers are touched upon: "His other master was Hildreth, father

of the historian, a notable teacher, strong and suggestive, but at times severe and harsh. With the other masters, Fuller and Ware,<sup>1</sup> he had little intercourse and no tasks, although he always found a welcome and good wholesome talk in Fuller's room when he cared to visit him in the evening."

The influence of a powerful master was the more powerful because the school itself was small and frugally equipped. When Bancroft came to Exeter all tuition was free, and certain pupils, of whom Bancroft became one, were special beneficiaries from the funds with which John Phillips had endowed the school. It was during Bancroft's first year at Exeter that a tuition fee of three dollars a quarter was first collected. So narrow were the means of the Bancroft family that the schoolboy is said to have paid no visits to Worcester through the two years of his life at Exeter. The holidays were passed at Portsmouth with his father's friend, the Rev. Nathan Parker, at whose ordination in the Portsmouth parish Aaron Bancroft had preached the sermon, September 14, 1808. To this friend we are indebted for a glimpse of George Bancroft soon after his establishment at Exeter:

*From NATHAN PARKER to AARON BANCROFT.*

*"PORTSMOUTH, Oct. 10, 1811.*

"I have this day made a visit at Exeter, and spent an hour with George. I found him in good health, and perfectly satisfied with his situation. He appears to

<sup>1</sup> Henry Horton Fuller and Henry Ware.

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**LUCRETIA BANCROFT**

*Mother of George Bancroft*

*From a miniature in the possession of Andrew McFarland Davis*

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enter into the studies which he is pursuing with ardour and laudible ambition, which gives promise of distinction, and which must be peculiarly grateful to a parent. I conversed with him on his studies, and found him very ready to make discriminating remarks; and as much as I expected from him, I was surprized at the intelligence, with which he conversed, and the maturity of mind, which he discovered. He said that he was classed with students much older than he, among whom was Holman of your neighborhood, and that when they took their rank according to merit he was placed at the head. I found that he had become acquainted with the distinctions which are conferred on those who excelled, and was desirous of obtaining them. I was much pleased with the zeal, which he discovered on this subject. He said there were prizes distributed every year, or every term, (I forget which) to those, who excelled in particular studies. He expressed a great desire to obtain one, but said he was afraid he should not succeed, for he was the youngest but three in the academy, and he did not think he should gain a prize; but he would try. These you may say are trifling things; but they discover a disposition of mind, with which I think you must be gratified.

“I made inquiries of Mr. Abbot concerning him. He observed that he was a very fine lad; that he appeared to have the stamina of a distinguished man, that he took his rank among the first scholars in the academy; and that he wished I would send him half a dozen such boys.

“I feel extremely gratified, that I am able to give you so good an account of George; and that you have so

much reason to hope, that he will be an honour and a comfort to his parents and friends. It is my most hearty prayer, that he may continue to deserve the love of all, who are interested in his improvement; and that the hopes of parental affection may be fully gratified.

“I expect him to spend a few days with me on thanksgiving week; and hope that he will gratify me by spending with me the next vacation. If there be any thing in which I can be useful to him, you will confer a favour by informing me of it. . . .”

It was in one of the vacations at Portsmouth that Bancroft heard Webster, not yet upon the national stage, deliver an Independence Day oration. This, it may be assumed, was Webster's address to the “Washington Benevolent Society” of Portsmouth on July 4, 1812, his first important political utterance, which led to his appointment as a delegate to the Rockingham convention where he was first nominated for Congress. Bancroft's remembrance, recorded in Professor Sloane's paper, that Webster made no “gesture whatever except that once he placed his right hand over his heart,” may be taken to indicate the boy's capacity to receive and retain an impression.

At school in 1812 we find Bancroft fulfilling the expectations of those who believed in him, and attaining his own desires; for he “carried off the prize of four dollars, as the scholar who most distinguished himself in constancy and parsing the Greek and Latin languages. His reward appears to have been given him in the form of a book, ‘Elements of Criticism’; and it

may be inferred from his subsequent career that he made good use of it.<sup>1</sup> That he was, moreover, a member of the "Washington Whites," a school military company formed for the local celebration of the obsequies of Washington and surviving till 1818, is another bit of school tradition worth preserving. The more important fact is that in 1813, a little before reaching the age of thirteen, he passed from Exeter into the freshman class of Harvard College.

<sup>1</sup> See *Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. A Historical Sketch*. By Charles H. Bell. Exeter, N. H., 1883.



## II

### PREPARATION AT HOME AND ABROAD

1813—1822

BANCROFT entered Harvard College three years after President Kirkland became its head. This was a fortunate time. Activity and expansion were in the air. The historian of the college has written: "The early period of the administration of President Kirkland was preëminently distinguished by bold, original, and in many respects successful endeavours to elevate the standard of education in the University, and to extend the means of instruction and multiply accommodations in every department."<sup>1</sup> The catalogue of improvement includes the building of Holworthy, University and Divinity Halls, and the Medical College in Boston; the extensive repairing of Holden Chapel, Harvard, Stoughton, Hollis and Massachusetts Halls; the enlargement of the library, the raising of salaries, the addition of fifteen professorships to the ten previously in existence. Yet in attendance the college did not rapidly outgrow the proportions of an academy. Between 1813 and 1817, when Bancroft received his

<sup>1</sup> *History of Harvard University*. By Josiah Quincy. Vol. II, p. 333.

bachelor's degree, the greatest number of undergraduates was 315, in 1814, the smallest number, 279, in 1815. Thus, as in every small college before and since, the learners and the teachers were brought into intimate relationship.

The little faculty did not abound in men whose names have endured. In the catalogue for Bancroft's freshman year, the name of Edward Everett appears; he was then tutor in Latin. Again in Bancroft's junior and senior years Everett was professor of Greek Literature. Throughout Bancroft's course the Rev. Andrews Norton was librarian, and for the last two years Dexter lecturer on Biblical Criticism. Jared Sparks and John Gorham Palfrey appear as resident graduates in Bancroft's senior year, and in his one year as resident graduate—the period in which one holding the bachelor's and studying for the master's degree was dignified by the title of Sir, as "Sir Bancroft"—Palfrey was a proctor and Sparks a tutor in Geometry, Natural Philosophy and the Elements of Astronomy. But neither with these future fellow-historians nor yet with his classmates—among whom were Samuel A. Eliot, perhaps his most intimate college friend, Stephen Salisbury, the Worcester schoolmate to whom allusion has been made, Caleb Cushing, Samuel Joseph May and Stephen Higginson Tyng—does he appear to have come in contact so much as with a few members of the teaching force. What Dr. Peabody wrote of the decade after Bancroft's undergraduate days was doubtless true in his time: "The students certainly considered the Faculty as their natural enemies. There existed be-

tween the two parties very little of kindly intercourse, and that little generally secret. If a student went unsummoned to a teacher's room it was almost always by night."<sup>1</sup> In these circumstances the genuine friendships which Bancroft formed with President Kirkland, with Everett and with Norton, are the more noteworthy. The six years between Bancroft and Everett must have seemed a wide space to the undergraduate, and the fourteen years of Norton's seniority a chasm. Yet the boy developed early a quality of maturity which empowered him to meet his accomplished elders on terms of equality. Many evidences of it will appear in the records of his student days in Europe. That his own contemporaries discovered this quality and epitomised it, with the unerring instinct of their kind, in a nickname, appears in a passage from a letter to Norton (16 September, 1821), in which Bancroft announced the winning of his doctor's degree at Göttingen. "Yes, Dear Sir, of a verity the name which my comrades at Exeter gave me in playful good nature, and which followed me to Cambridge,<sup>2</sup> has now been made over to me according to the strictest forms of the University and the statutes of the philosophical faculty, and now from one end of the town to the other the words to my ears so enchanting, Doctor, *Herr Doctor*, are cried out to me by friends and foes, men and women, tradesmen and mechanics and beggars." Bancroft's letters from

<sup>1</sup> *Harvard Reminiscences*. By Andrew Preston Peabody. p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> Letters of 1818 from S. A. Eliot in Cambridge to Bancroft in Göttingen begin, "Dear Doctor."

Europe to his three older friends, Kirkland, Norton and Everett, abound in tokens of the debt with which their affectionate interest in him enriched his undergraduate days.

For Bancroft's routine of life and work at Cambridge there is not much to show. The College catalogue records that his rooms were successively at "Captain Dana's," at Massachusetts 16, Stoughton 22, Holworthy 4, and in his resident graduate year in the house of Professor Levi Hedge, whose eminent son, Frederic Henry Hedge, was soon to receive under Bancroft's direction his German preparation for Harvard College. A faded note-book, preserving some of Bancroft's college exercises in composition, the earliest piece of his writing to fall into my hands, has for its appropriate beginning, dated 25 February, 1815, a discussion of *Dimidium facti, qui cepit, habet*. "In this sententious maxim," the theme opens, "has Horace the Prince of lyric poetry presented to our view the difficulty of beginning. But why is it as arduous to begin, as to complete an enterprise?" Thus does the boy, four months beyond fourteen, enter upon the career of writing which is to fill nearly all of his ninety-one years. Two months later he draws a discouraging comparison between the reading of fiction and of works of morality. "The wonderful exploits of a visionary hero excite a deeper interest than the brilliant actions of illustrious generals; and many are delighted with the beauties of the 'Scottish Chiefs,' while they derive no pleasure from 'Christian Morals.'" On the anniversary of Bunker Hill his exercise is in verse,

and becomingly patriotic. He would sing of his native  
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“’Tis said the Indians, tho’ a barb’rous horde,  
Will noble subjects to our bards afford.”

Then follows a catalogue of Indian names. One must be content with the conclusion of it, and the young singer’s reflection:

“Caun-bat-ant, Caw-na-come, Qua-de-qui-na,  
Squan-to, Woo-sam-e-quen, and Manida,  
O pleasing sounds! harmonious names, like these,  
Would grace Pope’s numbers and give Waller ease!”

In these crude beginnings the boy’s paternity of the man was dimly yet surely expressing itself.

In quite another field of learning, there is in the Harvard College Library a further specimen of Bancroft’s undergraduate work. This is a large sheet<sup>1</sup> on which is inscribed an astronomical thesis in Latin *Invenire Modum Verum Nodorum Lunae*. For the value of its mathematical computations, I am not qualified to speak; but its heading in decorated Gothic letters, its carefully wrought border and diagram, with four accompanying lines of appropriate Latin verse, bespeak a precisian’s pride in the work of the hand no less than the head.

In the library, too, may be found the record of the books which Bancroft borrowed during his senior and graduate years, 1816-1818. Theology, science—es-

<sup>1</sup> In “Bibliographical Collections,” number 32.

pecially astronomy at about the time of the thesis—classic and English literature, and toward the end a preponderance of works of German scholarship and letters—these are more noticeable than the historical writings which his own later development would lead one to expect.

Bancroft's membership in Phi Beta Kappa speaks for his good standing in college. At the commencement exercises of his class, 27 August, 1817, when Caleb Cushing delivered the Salutatory Oration in Latin, Bancroft's part, the "second English Oration," was "On the dignity and utility of philosophy of the human mind."<sup>1</sup> Short and slender, keen of eye and quick of movement, the orator, not quite seventeen years old, must have seemed a mere David arrayed against a theme so gigantic. The *Advertiser* for August 30th contained what the editor called some "very just remarks" upon the ceremonies contributed by "a friend." "The exercises by the candidates for the degree of Bachelor of Arts," said this writer, "were composed in a pure, correct and manly style. The besetting faults of youth were avoided, and though we must confess that amidst various degrees of merit, no part was precisely of such a transcendant description as to stamp an exclusive impression upon our minds, yet we are happy to be relieved from the necessity of individual encomiums, by the general tone of excellence which prevailed." One may safely infer that Bancroft's oratory was little better or worse than the average. The manuscript of the oration itself having been pre-

<sup>1</sup> *Boston Daily Advertiser*, August 28, 1817.

served, it is not necessary to rely entirely upon a contemporary opinion. The concluding paragraph, redolent of the commencement platform, may speak for the whole: "Those who have engaged in the study of mind, have never shrunk from their labours. On the contrary they have become more and more enamoured of the science. They have willingly immolated on its shrine all their hopes of worldly honours and emoluments. The danger is not that they will find their employment disgusting, but that it will too much engross their attention. The man who has been introduced to the wonders and glories and pleasures of intellect feels himself elevated above the common sphere of mankind. He lives in an upper world and contemplates with calm indifference the labours of ordinary men, as of inferior beings, like the majestick eagle, who, heedless of the croakings of the ravens below, rises on his ample wing,

‘Sailing with supreme dominion  
Through the azure deep of air.’”

The most important part of the preparation for Bancroft's work in life was yet to come—in his four years of foreign study. When he heard in 1828 of President Kirkland's resignation, he wrote to him a letter from which these words are taken: "And among the results of your career I hope you will not be unwilling to count the labours and efforts of those whose efforts, if they are of value, derive that value originally from yourself. To that number I belong. To you, and to you altogether, and to you alone do I hold my-

self indebted for all that renders my life useful and honourable."<sup>1</sup> That Bancroft had in mind especially the circumstances which gave him his term of foreign study may be inferred from the following letter written to Mr. Lodge nearly fifty years later, telling also of the further influences to which the young student was indebted:

To MR. LODGE.

“WASHINGTON, 12 June, 1877.

“The proposition to me to go to Europe came to me from Dr. Kirkland; Edward Everett having in general terms recommended that some one should follow him at Göttingen. My father had the most implicit confidence in the judgment of Mr. George Cabot, and being in Boston in the spring of 1818 at the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Congregational clergy, could not forbear asking his opinion of what it would be best for me to do. Mr. Cabot emphatically advised that the offer should be accepted; he had no doubt about it. His opinion was positive and clear; without reservation or qualification. So my father told me. This consultation and answer encouraged; but I, like Mr. Cabot, had never had a moment of hesitation.

“About the same time Mr. Andrews Norton, who was writing an article for the *North American Review* on Franklin and was inclined to believe certain stories about him that were circulated under the pretended authority of John Adams, resolved to go and make enquiries directly of the venerable patriot of Quincy. Mr. Norton who at that time was as much attached to

<sup>1</sup> From letter lent by the Hon. H. C. Lodge.



me as it was possible for one of his years to be to one of mine, I took me one fine morning with him on his excursion. Imagine what a boon it was for me to pass a long afternoon and part of an evening with John Adams. Mr. Norton pressed him with enquiries about Franklin; the old man put them aside; . . . Mr. Norton could not extract from him one single disparaging word about Franklin. I was introduced to Mr. Adams as one about to repair to the University of Göttingen. He did not omit expressing his opinion dogmatically that it was best for Americans to be educated in their own country.<sup>1</sup> . . .”

The fashion of foreign study for young Americans with teaching or preaching ahead of them was just beginning to prevail. Ticknor and Cogswell, besides Everett, afforded shining examples of what a young man of promise, in Bancroft's immediate academic circle, might well do with himself. With Bancroft, however, the question was rather what those who believed in him would do with him, for the family purse had grown no more adequate to the occasion than in the school days, when he shunned even the expense of coming home for his vacations. It was his good fortune to have proved his abilities to Everett, who must have taught him both Latin and Greek; to have won so much of Norton's regard that a year after he had gone to Europe, this older friend addressed him, “My dear representative of the

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller account of this meeting, see *Century Magazine*, July, 1887. “An Incident in the Life of John Adams,” by George Bancroft.

better part of human nature, as I believe I once told you that you are;" and, best of all, to have secured the confidence and support of President Kirkland himself.

There can be no doubt that Kirkland, in providing Bancroft with the means for meeting his expenses abroad, looked upon his studies as preparatory for the ministry. That the President had also in mind the possibility of utilising for purposes of instruction the learning which Bancroft should bring back with him from Germany may be inferred from the "Extract from President Kirkland's letter of introduction to Professor Eichhorn," which Bancroft copied into the note-book containing his early themes: "They [his friends] wish him to attend especially to philology, the ancient languages and Oriental literature, that he may thus be qualified to pursue theological studies to the greatest benefit, to give instruction as any opening may occur and invite, and become an accomplished philologist and biblical critic, able to expound and defend the Revelation of God." In the Records of Overseers of Harvard College<sup>1</sup> there is the entry under June 25, 1818: "Voted, that Mr. George Bancroft, about to go abroad to pursue his theological studies, be entitled to receive a moiety of the proceeds of Madam Mary Saltonstall's donation, for the year beginning, 1 July, 1818." Subsequent records of similar purport up to November of 1821, define him as a "student of (or in) divinity." The sums which the college funds provided were evidently supplemented from private sources to which President Kirkland could appeal to good purpose. From whatever

<sup>1</sup> Vol. VI, p. 282, Harvard College Library.

sources the income was derived, and to whatever ends ~~its donors expected to~~ see its fruits devoted, there is the clear entry in the note-book already drawn upon: "Left Boston, June 27th, 1818." If there is no record of the partings from his family at Worcester and from his true friends at Cambridge, the hopes and confidence which followed the young adventurer into the ancient fields of learning surely require no proofs. The mental capacity and force of character which awaited the development of opportunity and circumstance, were traveling companions to whose care he could be safely committed.

For the four years now about to ensue, Bancroft's profuse diaries and frequent letters to kinsfolk and friends preserve a minute record of his experiences, impressions and plans. Abridged as they are, the records here given may seem disproportionate to the annals of other periods of his life. But they reveal a youth so extraordinary as to justify a generous chapter. Here, as wherever else it is possible in the course of Bancroft's career, he shall tell his own story.

From Leyden he wrote on August 4, 1818, to Edward Everett, acknowledging the letters of introduction and advice which awaited him at Amsterdam, and setting forth some of his plans of study. "The kindness of friends," says this letter, "places at my disposal \$700 per ann. At Göttingen Dr. K[irkland] assured me, that \$500 or perhaps less would place me in a respectable and comfortable situation for a year." From The Hague on August 6th he wrote to Andrews Norton, telling of his safe arrival in Holland on the last day of

July, and describing a visit to Professor Bake in Leyden. "To-morrow," he writes before an affectionate conclusion, "I depart for Göttingen. Surely a residence of three years among a new people must much change my manners and habits and character. If it makes me unworthy of your extreme and kind regards, I believe there are some, who love me enough to regret it; but by none would it be so much lamented as by myself."

Through longer extracts from letters and journals we may now follow his course.

*To PRESIDENT KIRKLAND.*

"GÖTTINGEN, *August 15, 1818.*

"*Dearest Sir:* Last night after meeting with rather more than the usual vexations, to which travellers are exposed, I found myself fairly arrived at the city of the Georgia Augusta. It is said, that the virtues of life can be exercised only in society, but I think a voyage at sea affords a fine opportunity for cultivating the Christian virtues of patience and resignation, and travelling in the public coaches of Germany would learn any one to bear a lingering disease without a shrug or a sigh. . . .

"As I drew near Göttingen the rumours of blood and war in the city made me tremble not a little. A few days ago, one of the fraternity feeling himself insulted by a butcher, after an ineffectual complaint to the Prorector of the University, cried out to his fellows for revenge. Immediately they rushed forth to attack the audacious man, who had presumed to bring his hand in too close contact with the scholar's ear. The poor

creature with his family hid themselves in the cellar, while the members of the first University in Europe nobly demonstrated upon his windows that the particles which constitute glass, have less cohesive attraction than those of stone. To restore order soldiers are called in from Hanover. These the students, armed with nothing but canes, spiritedly attacked, and defeated, but gave way to a reinforcement of infantry. Several were severely wounded, but no lives were lost. For the vanquished nothing remained but to desert the city, and this they did in a body. Twelve hundred at once departed, proclaiming as they marched away, the Philistines shall mourn. And truly the Philistines (*i. e.* the inhabitants of G.) find that their loss amounts to at least \$1,500 daily. I find sorrow sitting upon every countenance. It would seem, as if they had been robbed of their possessions and children. . . .

“What my immediate occupations are to be I cannot yet decide. The first month or two must be passed . . . [letter torn] the German language for conversation, and in making myself acquainted with the place. My plans of study can then be advantageously formed, and these I hope in a few weeks to communicate to you. I need not say, how dear to me any words from you would be, nor how closely any instructions from you would be followed by

“Your very grateful and very affectionate

“GEO. BANCROFT.”

“The Göttingen tumult does not affect me in the least, except, that very many rooms will be vacated, and

access afforded me to the best instructors. Were it not for this commotion, it would have been difficult to obtain a room, and the more approved masters have had all their hours occupied. I shall not join the University till Michaelmas, the beginning of the next term. In the meantime Mr. Benecke will be my only Tutor."

Bancroft's journal describes the beginning of his daily routine:

"On the morning of the 15th I sallied forth to deliver one of my letters of introduction. I found Mr. Benecke, the Patron in chief of all students who speak English only, to be a friendly man, of about fifty, under whose auspices I found myself two days after established in my little dominions.<sup>1</sup> Under his care I study the German Language, spending an hour *privatissimé* each day with him; and it was at first quite amusing to me to see how careful he was in observing the second when the hour had elapsed, and how uneasy and even disturbed he is when I am rude enough to stay a moment beyond the time. I must rise and fly at the instant, when the hand of time is on the point of the hour, even if in the midst of a line, aye, or of a long word."

The presentation of letters to Gauss, the astronomer, and Blumenbach, the physiologist, took place within a few days. By each the new-comer was hospitably received. Meanwhile the diary records diligent reading

<sup>1</sup> A letter to one of his sisters describes his two comfortable rooms "in a fine wide street, the first in the city," his simple fare and manner of life.

of Schiller and Goethe. "I am only more and more astonished at the indecency and immorality of the latter. He appears to prefer to represent vice as lovely and exciting sympathy, than virtue, and would rather take for his heroine a prostitute or a profligate, than give birth to that purity of thought and loftiness of soul, which it is the peculiar duty of the poet to raise, by connecting his inventions with the actions of heroes, and embodying in verse the merits of the benefactors of mankind."

"*August 30.* . . . This evening again have I been with Prof. Blumenbach and family. They are kind to me indeed. The Professor spoke of Goethe. He (Goethe) is a large stout man of about seventy, fond of amusement and mirth, fonder of eating and drinking, and notwithstanding his love of good company and good living, possessed of a great deal of majesty and form. Beside his works in poetry and *belles-lettres*, he has written on mineralogy, on botany, and lately published a very voluminous work in three vols. upon optics. The object of this treatise was to annihilate Sir Isaac Newton, and his theory; but, alas! it fell stillborn from the press, excited no attention, gained not even one opposer, call[ed] forth not one refutation. The reviewers bestowed only five or six lines upon it, lamenting that men would write books on subjects about which they are profoundly ignorant. The poor man, who had hoped to crown his fame by this, was wofully disappointed and mortified.

"Madame B., in whose hands I had put Prof.

Frisbie's Inaugural Address, expressed great and real satisfaction with the work, particularly admiring and approving the remarks upon the German writers. I had, during the week, received a letter of introduction to Prof. B. from Mr. Everett, which was charmingly written. They applauded it to the skies, and Fräulein B. insisted that it was *sehr göttlich*."

"September 9. . . . This evening I for the first time visited Prof. Dissen, so celebrated for his learning and genius. He is a short man, extremely near-sighted, wonderfully learned, very kind and obliging, and has offered me his good counsels, whenever I shall need them. He spoke of my countryman Prof. Everett. He (Prof. E.), when here, set no bounds to his industry. He allowed himself no more than six hours for sleep, and devoted the whole of the day to study. At first he employed some time with the Oriental Languages, but afterwards devoted himself almost exclusively to philology, and became exceedingly learned. Besides this, he had a vast number of acquaintances in Germany, and during the vacations, he visited the principal cities, particularly Weimar, Dresden, Berlin, &c. He also used the very best instructors, sparing no labour or expense in improving his mind and acquiring good learning. . . ."

To EDWARD EVERETT.

"GÖTTINGEN, September 12, 1818.

"I have now been in Göttingen nearly a month, and have gained some insight into their systems of study.



For a knowledge of the courses, which it would be most advantageous for me to hear, I am almost exclusively indebted to your last letter from London. The friends, which I have made here through your intercessions, cannot of course accommodate their advice to my particular views and situation.

“When I left America it was not settled very definitely, what plan of study I should pursue. In general it was desired, that I should devote myself to Philology and Orientalism, and if possible, in a leisure hour, attend such other courses, as would afford an agreeable relaxation. All more particular deliberation could better be done, after arriving at the University. Now that I am here, and find the intellectual treasures of the world collected near me, and the most learned instructors around me, by whose labours I can profit, I would gladly make such a use of these advantages, as would enable me on returning home to act an useful and an honourable part in society. To effect this it is necessary to have a definite aim; and, indeed, to pursue anything to advantage, one must form an exact and comprehensive plan.

“On stating my views of study to my friends here, they told me I had better at once arrange the manner, in which I would employ myself for the whole time of residing here; that two or three years are the least number, which can be thought of by one, who wishes to make a respectable progress in Philology; and that the eastern languages would furnish one labour for life. To understand the Hebrew Bible thoroughly and critically two or three other languages must be learned;

and these would give me so much occupation that philology must become quite a secondary affair. Or, on the other hand, I may give myself up to classical literature, and at the same time resign the hope of doing much at interpreting the Scriptures. A question then arises in my mind, whether after gaining a fair degree of acquaintance with the Classics, and that chiefly in view of understanding them, I should not strike off into the wide region of Oriental literature?

“In deciding on this point, it would be proper to think of the state of learning among us at Cambridge. Criticism in every department receives little enough attention; but most especially in relation to the Eastern languages. Of the forty now studying theology there, all attend a little Hebrew, but most of them for no other purpose than to forget it again. Of the twenty or thirty chapters, which they read, nothing more is attempted than by the help of the Lexicon to make the Original and the English agree. The Oriental department, I suppose, would open a fine and inexhaustible field for labour, would be interesting for the novelties it presented, would give knowledge valuable in itself, necessary to accomplish a theologian, and much wanted in America. But it must also be remembered, that in America this branch of learning is very little esteemed, that there are few, who would care to learn anything of it, and that therefore the advantages to be derived from it, would be chiefly a sweet but secret satisfaction.

“So far as it respects my immediate occupations I can have no doubt. I shall follow the advice you have given me, and wherever you have expressed an opinion

on a doubtful point I shall govern myself accordingly. I shall hear Dissen on Demosthenes and Æschines, Köster on Hebrew Grammar, and Welcker (he is the only professor who reads on Latin) on Tacitus. Prof. Benecke takes care of my German, and I have found him after his way kindness indeed. Respecting the choice between young Planck and Eichhorn I am yet undecided. Planck is very weak I believe, and speaks exceedingly fast and low, so that even the Germans lose a great part of his lecture, and I am rather afraid I should lose the whole. I am, too, very desirous of knowing Eichhorn: He is more celebrated at Cambridge than any other of the Göttingen Professors, and it was expected he would be the master, at whose feet I should sit. Yet I should be very unwilling to give my friends any reasonable ground for fearing that I should lose my belief in, or respect for Christianity. I do not myself believe, that my reverence for a religion, which is allied with every early and pleasant association, which, as it regards its evidence, has already been the object of my study, and which is connected with all my hopes of happiness and usefulness and distinction, can be diminished by ridicule. The natural effect of observing great talents united with a disposition to mock what so many revere, is to excite indignation or pity. Were Planck well I would hear him at once, and even as it is, I am inclined to do so. I have not yet visited Prof. E. I believe the best mode will be for me to call on him tomorrow, and if he appear to expect that I should learn from him, to decide upon attending him. If you should hereafter favour me with your opinions about studying

Oriental Literature, and if 'tis advised me to do it, I suppose it ~~must be done with him.~~ . . .”

“*September* 13. . . . I have seen Eichhorn to-day, for the first time. He is old, yet stout and hearty; very strong built, of fine proportions, broad shoulders, tall enough, with a fine open countenance, good natured in his manners, and familiar. He reached me his hand very cordially, enquired particularly about my accommodations, and the manner of securing the best and bade me come and see him very often. He enquired about the system of studies I must pursue, and on my stating my wishes on this subject, he invited me at once to attend his lectures, and promised me the best place in his lecture room. He spoke of America, that she was now making gigantick strides in improvement, and added with a wink, that she was much dreaded by England. He repeated his invitation to visit him very often, saying he was well acquainted with the American gentlemen who have resided here, particularly with Mr. Everett, for whom he has the highest regard.”

“*October* 1. I have been for some days a regular matriculated student of the University of Göttingen. On the 22nd of September I obtained my *Matrikel*. The process of procuring it is very simple. The doors of the University stand ever open; and all are invited to the rich banquet of learning. Nothing is necessary toward becoming a member of the institution, except to give your name, your country, the occupation of your father, and the studies to which you will devote your-

self; on this being known, a paper is immediately handed you, by which you become entitled to all the privileges and rights of a citizen of the Georgia Augusta. At the same time you shake hands with the Prorektor, by which form you are understood to promise that you will obey the laws of the University. There is particular mention made in the *Matrikel* of duelling, of directly resenting an injury, instead of appealing to the proper authorities, of the preservation of a good character, and pure morals, of the associations called *Landsmannschaften*, and of appearing always in decent clothing. The fees amount to about one Louis d'or. The present Prorektor is Consistorial-Rath Pott. He appeared particularly pleased on my declaring myself an American, and pointing to the name last entered in his book, which happened to be the name of a Grecian, bade me notice from what distant parts of the globe there were representatives at Göttingen. He then very particularly requested me to visit him, adding that he should have then detained me to hold a conversation with me, but he was involved in business and duties of his office."

"October 2. . . . Behold, I have seen a wonder! A learned woman, modest, and who once might have been handsome; a learned woman, Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Arts, and one of the best informed *men* in the place.

"Old Slüzer,<sup>1</sup> who died some ten years ago, was a stern republican abroad and very naturally a tyrant

<sup>1</sup> Presumably August Ludwig von Schlözer, 1735-1809.

in his own house. (He wrote a very admirable book on the coins of the Russian Empire.) Well—this man married—his wife became pregnant, he was mightily rejoiced, felt sure it was a boy, boasted of the circumstance to his friends, and destined the young man in his own mind for a scholar. His wife was brought to bed, and behold, a little miss came to light. The Professor, however, nought intimidated, still clung to his resolution, and determined to show the world that a woman could master the classics as well as anyone. He accordingly educated her completely as a boy, employing her constantly with her books. As she was really possessed of a vast deal of mind, she made great proficiency, and he determined that she should join the University. This she actually did; attending lectures, going like the rest of the students with her portfolio under her arm, and differing from them only in this, that she was exceedingly handsome, and wore petticoats. Her conduct however, was so perfectly pure and modest, that she never received the least indignity, nor was her character ever impeached. After becoming in this [way] uncommonly learned her father said she must take a degree. This, too, she did, acquitting herself undoubtedly with great honour in the Latin extemporary disputation and of course received, *bona fide*, a doctor's degree.

“Shortly after this, to escape this unnatural mode of life, she married and removed to Lübeck; her husband failed to a large amount, and she removed to Göttingen. Here she lives at present, and was visited a great deal, but now she is getting on in life, and on account of frequent ill health sees not much company. In her char-

acter and conversation she is irreproachable and from a long acquaintance with her, I am told, one would never hear from her a word that would betray her learning."

*To the REV. AARON BANCROFT.*

"GÖTTINGEN, *October 3, 1818.*

". . . The University has no splendid public buildings—economy is the order of the day. Nothing is spent in vain, and since a plain building will answer as well as any other to hold their Library, they think it better to spend their gold in collecting new books than in ornament and display. Notwithstanding all this, every thing that is necessary for the purpose of instruction, or the dignity of the Institution is procured at once, without hesitation or meanness in the use of money. They have a grand botanical garden, an anatomical Hall, an admirable observatory, superintended by one of the best astronomers in the world, several hospitals for the poor and sick, by means of which excellent Physicians are educated, a museum (though not very good), and a library of more than two hundred thousand volumes. This is by no means all. They have a large body of learned and powerful men collected here, men of talents, ardour and miraculous industry, and by these is this fine instrument put in motion. There are about fifty Professors, and every one of them laborious and learned, besides a vast number of doctors who are about twenty-four or thirty years old, and who are attached to the University and take part in instruction in every department. In addition to this, there are several in-

structors in each of the modern languages, and who are not so immediately a part of the University as the former. There are then at Göttingen about eighty regularly educated men, many of them in the very first rank of men, such as do honour, not only to their country, but their species, all of them thoroughly learned in the strictest sense of the term, and superior in this respect to anything we have in America. Besides this number of eighty who are engaged in the weighty affairs of science, there are a large number (as I have just said) who teach the modern languages and accomplishments of that kind; and, yet further, regularly appointed masters of fencing, riding and dancing, &c.; of all this vast number I can take my choice, and accordingly I have selected the best in each of those departments to which I devote myself. . . .”

“*October 3.* . . . Wolf, the Greek Professor at Berlin, is perhaps the greatest scholar in Germany; and as such one hears his name incessantly repeated and with terms of the highest admiration. His character as a man is an entirely different affair, and a thing which never comes into consideration, when he is spoken of as a scholar. . . . He treated his wife in so shocking a manner, that she was obliged to obtain a separation, in which state she now lives. He has a daughter also. This poor girl he would often keep up very late at night reading Homer to him, while he lay in bed; and if the unhappy creature happened to nod a little towards twelve or one o'clock, he would give her a violent box on the ear. The consequence of this was that she took the



first opportunity to elope with a young Prussian officer. [ibtool.com.cn](http://ibtool.com.cn)

“Wolf is now quite old. Of course his days of most active exertion are past. He now does little or nothing. The salary which he receives as Professor, he procures without giving much in return. He announces that he will read lectures on this and that author, but he merely makes a beginning, reads for a week or two, and then makes a journey. A short time ago he gave out that he would read no lectures at all, and was actually determined to trouble himself no more about them. The Prussian Government, however, interfered, and told him that if he read no lectures he should receive no salary. ‘Well,’ said he, ‘if it must be done—I dine from two to three, so I will read a lecture from 3 to 4, just to assist digestion.’”

Bancroft’s journal gives evidence that the Göttingen traditions were long-lived. Michaelis, the biblical scholar and teacher, had died in 1791. On October 9, 1818, Bancroft set down the story of his forcing a poor student to give him his silver shoe-buckles in lieu of a fee. George Ticknor had written virtually the same story in his journal for 1815. Indeed, the diaries of the two young men afford many parallels of record and impression. For Bancroft’s immediate occupations and plans a portion of a letter may speak.

To ANDREWS NORTON.

“GÖTTINGEN, *October 26*, 1818.

“. . . My lectures which begin on the first of the

coming week (two are already begun) relate to the criticism of the Greek of the New Testament, (in the preparation for which I use such works as Schleusner). 2. The *grammatical* knowledge of the Hebrew, apart from exposition. 3. The critical study of Greek, in which language I shall have Theocritus and Demosthenes explained, interpreted, &c. 4. The critical study of Latin, Tacitus and Valerius Flaccus being the authors selected. Then beside this, I have four days in the week lessons in German. My leisure time I employ with Greek for the present. These lectures continue for six months; at the end of which time, I shall have gained possession of Hebrew, done something handsome in Greek and Latin, have learnt to understand half of Paul's epistles, and have gained a general view of the philological *terminology*. At the end of that time I can decide whether I am ready to make of myself a mere scholar, to drink strong coffee, live without loving or being loved, discussing with Porson whether one should read in Sophocles' Ajax, 9 line, *δὲνῆρ* or *ἄνῆρ*, and possibly if I live to be eighty being able as the crown of human felicity to write an octavo volume on the Anapæst. But there have been philologians men of fine spirits, such as the world seldom sees: How is it with them? An Englishman calls them in a body the lacquies of the ancients. This may do of most of them, but such as Heyne, Ernesti and Rhunkenius deserve a little better treatment. True they are merely the interpreters of others; but poetry and that too of a high kind often lies concealed under a criticism; Addison is even sublime in one of his notes

on Milton. We will allow then, these good men (who live so near the pole) to be the bright lights, which we admire so much in the North, and which sometimes last a whole night, while the poets, whom they expound are the eternal stars, that are fixed in their spheres for ages. . . .”

It is worth while to draw from another long letter of these early days at Göttingen an illustration of the young student's enthusiasm:

To EDWARD EVERETT.

“GÖTTINGEN, *November* 14, 1818.

“. . . Dr. K. told me just before I left America, that they intended to buy at once, before long, a fine collection of books; and would send out some one on purpose, teaching him first all that is to be known about title pages of books and editions, and their value. Now as I am not tall, of dark complexion, and withall rather lean, I do think if I should dress myself up in old grey clothes, and take a staff in my hand, I could pass through all Germany, and be taken for the agent of a bookseller or a starving antiquary; Now as one could not have a better place to learn the titles, &c., of books than this, and no better country than this to buy books, I cannot help thinking it would be quite fine to send me on a short excursion to these convents, whose libraries are just discovered, and where one can buy old books and princeps editions by the foot. . . .”

To MRS. LUCRETIA BANCROFT.

GÖTTINGEN, November 25 [1818].

"*My Dear Mother*, . . . Pray can you find me out in this dark city? My kingdom is situated in the widest street of the Town, in the largest house in that street on the third story. It is about the same size as Eliza's chamber, only a little higher, and I have with it a small bedchamber as large as the adjoining one—Mary's chamber as you call'd it in old times. I rise before five in the morning, though in this high Northern region the sun does not get [up] till very late. On rising I find my stove already warm and the room comfortable, and a pot of coffee on the table. I drink at once a cup of this, and so on at intervals of half an hour till all is gone. At seven I go to my drawer and cut me from my brown loaf a piece of bread and butter. This lasts me till dinner which, as you already know, is brought to me and is a solitary meal. After dinner the Germans drink coffee again. The evening is the time for visits, that is to say if anyone has an inclination to visit, and friends who will be glad to see him. If one will study, however, in the evening, bread and butter and a cup of tea is his repast, and he can labour very well on a light stomach. There are several places also to which the students very frequently go to eat something warm in the evening. At these places they eat as if they were eating the pass-over, 'with their hats on their heads, their staves in their hands, and they eat in haste.' If anyone takes off his hat (or rather his cap, for we wear a sort of cloth cap), or shews the least air of a gentleman, the rest of the students begin hooting at the poor criminal. At these

houses it costs very little to get a supper, and many of the scholars in consequence go there very frequently. A very agreeable way of passing an hour of the evening is to call on one of the married Professors. There, instead of sitting round the table and drinking tea like Christians, as we do in America, I have a cup of tea brought to me by the youngest daughter of the Lady whom I visit. She pours me out one cup at a time, brings me this in one hand and sugar and cream in the other. This is drank, with a little bit of bread and butter. We wait perhaps half an hour, and then obtain a second cup; and so on for an hour. In the mean time the Ladies sew or knit, even though it be Sunday night, and the young men talk to them. In a large tea party the manner is somewhat changed. A maid servant brings round tea as with us—cake also, and what will perhaps surprise you, they also put on the salver with tea a bottle of rum—yes, my dear mother, of *rum*, a substance which the old ladies find tastes very well in tea. The Balls here are always on Sunday Evening. I have been to one out of curiosity, and seen there not only dances common among us, but also waltzing—an affair carried on in great style throughout all Germany. They do not require of me to dance in consideration of my being a foreigner and a student. . . .”

There were other surprises in German customs for the young New Englander. In a letter of October 17th, to Andrews Norton, he had written: “I would give you a specimen or two of the high language of Germany, if it did not sound so flatly like blasphemy or vulgarity in English. Nay, then, I will write you some of them

in the order of rank, and in German. *Ach, Gott*,—used chiefly by very young girls, and very old women; *ach, der Herr Gott*; *ach, allmächtiger Gott*; *ach, du lieber Gott*; *Gott im Himmel*; *Jesus—ach, der Herr Jesus*, or by contraction, *ach, du Herr Je—Gott, Gott, Gott, Gott*. These are some of the expressions under which the good and pious ladies of Göttingen express their feelings. The last, however, I never heard but once, and then from a Professor; the rest are on the tongue of every maiden or wife in Göttingen.”

For Bancroft's studies during this first winter, and for the reputation of American students the two following passages from letters will speak:

*To PRESIDENT KIRKLAND.*

“GÖTTINGEN, *January 17, 1819.*

“. . . You charged me on leaving you to become a biblical critic and a philologist; but to be good in either of these branches I must devote myself particularly to one of them, and carry on the other as a mere secondary affair. Which of them shall I chose? Your wish, I believe, was, that I should study with the thought ever on my mind, that I am to be for my life a student of Theology. I have now for six months laboured chiefly at the Greek and Latin Languages, making use of course of those books, which are to be connected with those studies. I have also laid a good foundation for Hebrew; and now in a short time I shall be ready, if you hold it expedient, to go upon the wide sea of oriental Literature. If my destination is to

be that of a biblical critic rather than that of a Philologist, Syriac must give me work for a half year, and Arabic for a year and an half; and in case it were possible to fix my residence in the vicinity of a library rich in Arabic books and *Manuscripts* another half year would give a very good stock of knowledge of the language.

“I act in all things according to your advice. In the mean time it is not to be concealed that neither money, nor, in the present state of the American public, fame is to be acquired by these pursuits. Perhaps too I shall never find one individual, who will have perseverance enough to learn of me the eastern dialects. On the other hand, it will be very fine, to be able to assist in raising among us a degraded and neglected branch of study, which in itself is so noble, and to aid in establishing a thorough school of Theological Critics. This is after all the only certain and effectual way of arriving at length at the minds of the people. Mr. Everett will bring to you all that is valuable of German philology; would it not be well, if I could assist him in his labours not so much [in his] own branch as in that sister one of biblical Criticism?

“The plan of life, which I have adopted, indicates very clearly that I must become, either an instructor at the University, or a clergyman, or set up a high school. There may be no need of me at Cambridge; it may be either disagreeable or impracticable to found an honourable school; I may expect, therefore, that I am to become a preacher. Now for all these situations classical literature is good; and my attention will always be

sufficiently devoted to the learned languages to qualify me for one of the two first mentioned places, if opportunity occur. Arabic and Syriac will not enable me to write better sermons, but will teach me to understand my bible more thoroughly.

“I have said, I believe, enough to be intelligible. I will conform myself to your advice, and I pray that you will favour me with it by the first opportunity. I add one word about German Theology. I have nothing to do with it, except so far as it is merely *critical*. Of their infidel systems I hear not a word; and I trust I have been too long under your eye, and too long a member of the Theological Institution under your inspection to be in danger of being led away from the religion of my Fathers. I have too much love and esteem for my friends at home, and too little for those, who can trifle with the hopes of thousands, to suffer myself to be overpowered by a jest or a sophism. I say this explicitly, because before I left home I heard frequently expressed fears, lest I should join the German School. . . .

“With Gratitude and Love

“GEO. BANCROFT.”

To PRESIDENT KIRKLAND.

“GÖTTINGEN, *February* 22, 1819.

“With every day that I pass, I hear a thousand good things of my countrymen, who were here before me. That they were eminently diligent, and full of zeal, and respected for their genius is only what might naturally have been expected; but it has really astonished me, to



find how much they are beloved, and how well they are remembered. As the large body of instructors have passed their lives exclusively among their books, they have something exceedingly cold in their deportment, and a person must have become quite intimate with them, before he can find out, that they are capable of feeling. But the frequency of their enquiries after Messrs. Everett and Ticknor, and their manner of speaking of them, leave no doubt of their having a real affection for them. The ladies seem to like Mr. Ticknor the best, but Mr. Everett on leaving the university received the degree of doctor from the philosophical faculty in a manner particularly honourable to him. As a friend of his I am received with open arms by every body, whom I visit, and enter into a possession of all the rights, which belonged to him, when he resided here. Eichhorn looks forward with great pleasure to the time of his return to America, and prophecies with confidence, that 'the brave fellow will make a fine stir when he gets home.' For myself I have to express the greatest gratitude to Mr. Everett, for he has been unweariedly attentive to me, and assisted me, very much by his copious advice on the subject of my studies. . . ."

"*February 27, 1819.* . . . A few evenings ago I was invited to a supper by the Prorector of the University. He told me to come at 7½, and accordingly I went in due time and reached the place before 8 o'clock. The company consisted entirely of Professors, Doctors, and the College of Lawyers, all of them tolerably advanced

in age. On my entering, they were not yet fully collected, but by degrees they dropped in, and by nine the whole host was there. This first hour was most eminently tedious. The Orientalists collected in one corner, and talked of Persia; the lawyers in another, and talked of I know not what; while the Prorector stalked from one room to the other snuffing the candles. At length we were called to supper, and a well lighted table seemed to be a cheering sight after our stupidity. I was placed by the side of the Prorector, with one of the oldest and most distinguished professors on my other side, who was, however, unluckily deaf. Conversation flagged, but as the supper was good, the jaws were not idle. By and bye the wine began to operate, and the learned body began to buzz with great animation. Jests of the most noble sort were made, deep remarks and sage criticisms pronounced. The people spoke of their watches. 'My watch,' cried the Prorector, 'keeps the best time of any one in Göttingen. I set it every hour.' It was sometime before the point of this was seen, but a heavy laugh at length came, although a little later than could have been desired. Schleiermacher's name was mentioned. '*Er macht viele Sachen unter einem Schleyer,*' said the Prorector. It was asked, what is the characteristic of a good Lutheran? 'To love wine,' said the Prorector, seizing on the bottle. 'Yes,' exclaimed a venerable Professor, 'he who does not love wine, woman and song, remains a fool all the days of his life.' A little after 11 o'clock, our wine was ended, the skins of the Professors pretty full. We rose therefore from table, and each made the best of his way home."

The roster of a day's work written on the back of a map of Göttingen, which Bancroft sent to Professor Andrews Norton,<sup>1</sup> shows how little time the young student habitually left himself for social pleasures:

- 5- 7 Hebrew and Syriac
- 7- 8 Heeren in Ethnography
- 8- 9 Church history by the elder Planck
- 9-10 Exegesis of the N. T. by old Eichhorn
- 10-11 " of the O. T. "
- 11-12 Syriac by old Eichhorn
- 12- 1 Dinner and walk
- 1- 2 Library
- 2- 4 Latin or French
- 4- 5 Philological Encyclopedie by Dissen
- 5- 7 Greek
- 7- 8 Syriac
- 8- 9 Tea and walk
- 9-11 Repetition of the old lectures and preparation for the new.

From the following passage in Bancroft's diary it may be inferred that "old Eichhorn" himself set no mean example for industry:

"*April* 5. Eichhorn told me yesterday that he labours at present from 5 in the morning till 9 at night, that he has all his life gone on in much the same way; that when he was first made professor, he studied 15 hours daily, and never experienced any inconvenience in respect of his health. When he first began studying, he sate up very late at night. This he found ruinous, and soon abandoned it. But ever since he has risen

<sup>1</sup> From correspondence lent by Prof. C. E. Norton.

early, and retired early, and this he finds the only way of effecting much. He lays it down as a fixed principle that cannot be denied, that no man naturally possessed of a good constitution ever died of study. He does not deny that hard students may have died who might have lived, if they had led another course of life. But they died of anxiety, or sadness, or melancholy, of passion, or what you will, but never of hard study. He tells me that at present, at my age, when the habits of the body are not fully formed, twelve hours of diligent study will answer, and even if I do not work more than 10 hours a day, my conscience may be at ease, but at the end of two years or two and a half, it will be quite another thing."

To MISS JANE BANCROFT.

"GÖTTINGEN, *April* 14, 1819.

". . . It is a strange world we live in, and full of more things than are dreamt of in your philosophy. My life on it, you have not formed a conception of a set of beings like the German students. I remember even now the first time that I saw a party of them collected and I believed never to have seen any of my fellow beings so rough, uncivilized and without cultivation. They are young, and therefore wild and noisy—live chiefly among themselves, without mixing in society, and are therefore careless in their deportment, awkward and slovenly. Many of them wear mustachios, a thing almost unknown in America, and all of them make themselves vile by a Beard, dirty and monstrous.

Scarcely one of them uses a hat, but instead of it a cap which sometimes can scarcely be distinguished from a nightcap. This business of wearing only an apology for a hat I find so exceedingly convenient, that I have fallen into it. When the scholars are assembled for a lecture the collection of unpleasant odours is prodigious, and (until the professor enters the room there is a great noise of whistling, talking and disputing, all which however is instantly hushed on sight of the Professor though generally wound up by a short but violent hiss. This hiss is only a signal for order and tranquility. When silence is thus put in possession of the throne the professor begins. The students have in the mean time opened their Portfolios, which they always carry with them into lectures, taken out and arranged their papers, mended their quills and brought every thing to order so that they are ready to take down every word that comes from the speaker's lips. A lecture lasts always an hour; but the instant the clock strikes it must be ended; for the lectures are counted from the striking of the clock to the striking again, and the young men must hasten to another professor. Sometimes a person is thus necessitated to stop in the middle of a paragraph, and I state what is positively true when I say I have known the lecturer break off in the middle of a sentence. If a professor read a moment after the hour has struck, be he who he may, the oldest and most learned, even Eichhorn himself, a curious scene of riot ensues. First the students shut up their books; i. e. slam them together, the next step is to stop writing and put up their paper, if this do not avail, they take their inkstands

and strike the benches most vehemently, and then begin kicking the floor. All this happens in half a minute and the professor is always brought to reason before the minute is completed.) It is however very seldom the case that any one overreaches beyond his time. You will from this get an idea of the manner in which a lecture in general is heard. On great occasions something extraordinary must be done. So for instance if Eichhorn sneeze, every scholar in the room, or at least the larger number, begins drumming with the feet, or beating the floor, as if trying its strength. I asked the reason of this strange procedure, and was told it implied as much as God bless you. If a Professor speak so fast that it is difficult to follow him in writing down what he says, they begin to scrape with their feet; the floor being sandy and the feet moving with rapidity, it produces a very grating and interrupting noise—the same is done on all occasions whatsoever when the instructor displeases his audience. This language of the feet when put in words, signifies thou art an ass.

“It is the custom in Göttingen for every man who can, to make jests in his lectures, and for every man who cannot to attempt it. When a good one is made, they clatter with their feet in token of approbation. The same happens at the end of any lecture that has been particularly good; and also at the end of the term when the lectures are closed. On this occasion the students undertake to demonstrate their love for the favourite professors; and the degree of love entertained for a Professor is measured by the degree

of noise, absolute actual noise which is made and which often lasts several minutes and can be heard as you may well suppose no inconsiderable distance. Is this information enough of the blessed human beings among whom I live? . . .”

In the papers of this period which Bancroft preserved, there is the manuscript of a short sermon in German. The diary has a passage which may be taken to throw light upon it—and upon the progress of the student who had come to Göttingen only ten months before:

“*June 27, 1819.* This morning I went out to a village in the vicinity and delivered a sermon in the German language. Many were astonished at my boldness in daring to do a thing of the kind, and feared I should fail. But I met with nothing which made me repent my having attempted to hold a sermon; on the contrary the audience were uncommonly still and attentive, and on leaving the pulpit I received the congratulations of my friends, some of whom, though unknown to me, had been induced by curiosity or affection to become my hearers. . . .”

To Kirkland and to Norton he wrote soon afterward of his studies in general:

To PRESIDENT KIRKLAND.

“GÖTTINGEN, *July 6, 1819.*

“I have just had the satisfaction of receiving a letter from you, and hasten to thank you for the kindness of

your communications. I feel particularly grateful for the degree of confidence, which you seem to repose in me. In respect to my studies thus far. I have added Hebrew and Syriac to Latin and Greek; nothing remains now but Arabic, and yet I entertain doubts of the expediency of undertaking it. As a learned theologian it is undoubtedly necessary to learn it; but the time, which so difficult a language would require, would hardly leave me time for becoming so thorough as I ought in classical literature. The idea, which you suggest, of establishing a high school, appears to open a fine field for being useful. I would gladly be instrumental in the good cause of improving our institutions of education and it is our schools, which cry out most loudly for reformation. To expect to devote the *whole* of my life to the duties of a school is not a very pleasing prospect. On my return I shall, however, be still very young, and could not perhaps in any way do more good than by embracing this scheme for a few years. It is obvious, that, in case of my seriously expecting any thing of the kind, it would be not only useful but quite necessary to pass some weeks at one or two of the best schools in Germany, and I should also think at the best of England or Scotland. I will think and reflect on the several subjects of which you speak, and hope soon to write at large on them. . . .”

To ANDREWS NORTON.

“GÖTTINGEN, *July* 10, 1819.

“. . . What have I done since coming to Germany? I have learnt much, very much. Actually more than I



had dared to hope. German one of the most difficult of modern languages I have learnt; then too Latin of which I knew something, Greek of which I knew not a word on leaving America. Of Latin I have read in Germany, Tacitus, wholly, much of Livy, of Cicero, and Horace's odes, then Catullus, &c., &c. Of Greek I have finished Herodotus, Thucydides, something of Demosthenes and Æschines, the Clouds of Aristophanes, the Iliad, and more than half of Plato. I have commenced and continued the study of Hebrew, and have read Genesis, half of Exodus, the books of Samuel, and a chapter or two here and there. I have attempted Syriac, and though I have not read much, yet I am so far advanced, that I can use a Hebrew dictionary, *i. e.* know where a Hebrew word can properly be interpreted from a Syriac one. Of German theological works I have read, till I find there is in them everything which learning and acuteness can give, and that there is in them nothing, which religious feeling and reverence for Christianity give. They are far, very far before all the rest of Christendom in learning, but not in piety nor in talent. When you write, you may give me advice if you will and to any extent you please. I only send you accounts of myself, as in duty bound. . . ."

The month in which he wrote the letters from which these passages are taken was signalised for Bancroft by a meeting with one of his own flesh and blood. Late in June his brother John wrote him from Hamburg that he had arrived there in the East Indiaman *True American*. It was soon arranged that the Göttingen

student should pay the sailor a visit, which was accomplished to the great delight of both. A month later (August 25, 1819) John Bancroft wrote to George from Portsmouth, England, that he was on the point of sailing for the East Indies. On this voyage he was lost.

In the following passage from a letter to Edward Everett there is the foreshadowing of Bancroft's work both as an historian and as a teacher:

To EDWARD EVERETT.

“GÖTTINGEN, *August 1, 1819.*

“. . . 'Tis out of the question to expect, that in any American University whatsoever the station of Professor of theology would be offered me or anyone else, who had got his theology in Germany. Would it not be well, then, to add history to my studies? This has always interested me, suits well with my philology, and as the Church history must be taken, too, with my theology also, and I think I could become useful by means of it.

“Several Gentlemen in Boston are desirous, I should become acquainted with the German Schulwesen, and on coming home set up a high school, on the European plan. I hardly know what to say to this. The labour of a school is nothing alluring; but it must be confessed, this would be the way of doing most good. A school might be established, and then instructors sent for from Germany. I would not wish, however, to give many years of my own life to an immediate connection with it. I am now between eighteen and nineteen years old, and before I am two and twenty shall probably be in

America. I should be too young to begin anything, that would decide my destiny for life, and could perhaps for five years do nought better than attempt to establish a learned school. Will you say a word on this point, when *you have time?*"

On September 4th, Bancroft set off from Göttingen with three German students on a holiday walking-trip. The chief places visited at first were Halle, Leipzig and Dresden. Conversations with Gesenius, Spohn and other eminent scholars are recorded in diary and letters. "Nothing has pleased me more," the pilgrim wrote to President Kirkland, "in the places I have visited than to find how well remembered and how highly esteemed Messrs. Everett and Cogswell and Ticknor universally are. Wherever I go, the first question is always, do you know them? and whenever I meet a scholar who did not see them, while they were in Germany, he always thinks it necessary to give a reason for it, as that he was absent at the time of their calling on him, etc., etc." The diary for the days in Dresden—where he had the peculiar pleasure of seeing Cogswell<sup>1</sup>—glows with all the enthusiasm of first acquaintance with masterpieces of painting and sculpture. From Dresden Bancroft proceeded to Prague, and on the way back to Göttingen, from which he was absent six weeks in all, passed through Jena and Weimar. In the first of these places he saw Goethe; in the second Goethe's home.

<sup>1</sup> Of this future fellow-teacher he wrote to Andrews Norton, Sept. 30, 1819: "There are few men, that I have seen as yet, who please me so well as Cogswell."

“JENA, October 12, 1819.

“. . . I visited Goethe towards noon. He was talkative and affable, began at first with speaking of common affairs. Then the discourse came on German philosophy. Kant was mentioned with reverence. The state of America became then the subject of conversation. He seemed to think he was quite well acquainted with it. He spoke of several books on the country, of Warden's Statistical account of America, &c., &c. Then too, Cogswell had given him an essay on American Literature, which appeared in Edinburgh. This essay Goethe praised much for the beauty of its style and for the liveliness and fancy with which it was written, and smiled as he mentioned the freedom with which he spoke of the different professions. Then the talk was of Cogswell, a *lieber Mann*—a man of great excellence.

“He spoke with pleasure of the visits Cogswell had paid him, &c., &c. At length I, gathering courage from talking with him, took occasion to bring him upon the English poets. Byron he praised in the highest terms, declared himself one of a large party in Germany who admired him unboundedly and seized on and swallowed everything that came from him. Of Scott we had time to talk; of Wordsworth—Southey he knew nothing; of Coleridge, the name—had forgotten however his works. The author of *Bertram*<sup>1</sup> was praised. ‘The tragedy,’ said Goethe, ‘has many beautiful passages.’ Byron, however, seemed to remain the

<sup>1</sup> Rev. C. R. Maturin. The tragedy, on Byron's recommendation, was produced 1816, with Kean in the leading rôle.

most admired of all. After this, Goethe asked after my pursuits, praised me, on my mentioning them, for coming to Germany, and spoke a word or two on Oriental matters. After this he asked what way I was to take the next day, and finding I was going to Weimar, offered me at once a letter which should make me welcome to the library. After a few more remarks I departed. In speaking of matters, I came into a strait almost as bad as poor Jennie with the Queen. Of Byron I said his last poem was reported to contain the most splendid exertions of poetical power, mixed with the lowest and most disgraceful indecencies. I did not think at the moment of Goethe's *Faust*. I mentioned, too, Byron's wife, forgetting that Goethe had not been happy in the married state. . . . I spoke a word, too, of Eichhorn's writing so many books, forgetting that Goethe had found no end with writing many.

"As for his person, Goethe is somewhat large, tho' not very, with a marked countenance, a fine clear eye, large and very expressive features, well built, and giving at once a favourable impression. In his manners he is very dignified, or rather he has a sort of dignified stiffness, which he means should pass for genuine dignity. He walks amazingly upright. I found him quite in dishabille. He had on an Oberrock—*i. e.* a surtout, but no waistcoat, a ruffled shirt, not altogether clean, a cravat like the shirt, fast inclining to dark complexion. His boots were of quite an ordinary cut. No Dandi would have worn them. He received me in the garden."

“WEIMAR, *October 13, 1819.*

“I arose early in the morning, and having engaged a servant to carry my knapsack, proceeded on foot from Jena to Weimar. The distance is not far from 10 miles. On reaching Weimar, I went directly to the library to visit the gentleman to whom Goethe had commended me. It was a very common man, one Kräuter, but he was secretary at the library, and therefore best able to show me the matters which were worthy of attention. . . . After making an end at the library, I was invited by Kräuter to go to Goethe’s house, and I found (what I had not expected) that Goethe had written word for me to be presented to his son and daughter-in-law. On calling, I found only the Frau Kammerräthin von Goethe at home. She invited me to tea in the evening. Leaving her, I walked in the city. . . . In Goethe’s daughter-in-law I found a very pretty little woman, of lively sprightly manners, witty and agreeable and spirituelle, saying all things, even common ones, very prettily, never coming into embarrassment, knowing always what to say. The son seem’d rather a stupid and ignorant fellow. I was shown Goethe’s study and apartments, his library, where *nota bene* the best German translations of the classics were to be found, his garden, his collections, &c., &c. I left Goethe’s just in time for the after piece at the theater, and everybody knows that the theater at Weimar is one of the handsomest in Germany. The piece represented was a farce, and it was laughable enough.”

Through the winter of 1819-20 Bancroft did plenty

of hard work at Göttingen. The personal aspects of **a second holiday journey**, which came in the spring, and considerably extended Bancroft's knowledge of places and men, are described in a letter of which the greater portion follows:

To ANDREWS NORTON.

“GÖTTINGEN, *June 1, 1820.*

“I have just returned from an expedition into the Harz mountains, which I made during a little vacation that is allowed us at Ascension. 'Tis a fine feeling, which is gained by walking for hours together among the mountains. The pure air on the hills, the animating exercise, the perfumes arising from the wild flowers and the fir trees, and good company are enough to make a day's walk of seven or eight leagues appear as but necessary to sharpen the appetite and make the night's sleep sound. You may have heard of the Harz as famous for mines, and for picturesque scenery. I found the views often charming, very pleasant, very lovely, but I have not yet seen anything answering my notions of the sublime, nothing terribly grand or awfully bold. Still I had a pleasant tour, and the health that is collected in walking over the mountains, gives a feeling of vigour and a disposition to activity, which well repay the time and the fatigue.

“There were five of us, and shall I describe to you my companions? I have never yet sent you accounts of acquaintance made in stages or picked up at inns, but for once in the way bear with me. Our *χορηγος*

(for I choose to talk learned with learned people) was a cosmopolite—at least I cannot say to what country he belongs. He was born in Livonia, but of English parents; as a boy he was sent to England for his education, and as a soldier has since served in the German legion, and lived of course in whatever land the enemy appeared in. I do not know what his mother tongue is. English, French, German are all one to him. Russian flows from his lips like honey, but Polish gutturals stick in his throat and he hesitates. He of course knows the world well, and in England he acquired the manners of a gentleman. He is strong, but good natured, a soldier and a brave one, yet when not in his uniform, gentle and pleasant. His heart is excellent, his morals accommodated to the latitude of Europe. Now that the wars are over he has come to Göttingen to learn history and mathematics, and if the dogs of war are let loose again, you may perhaps hear more of him.

“Next comes a Polish Nobleman from the Republic of Krakau, poor image of a republic depending for its existence on the good will of the Russians. I was quite prepossessed in favour of Michaelowski, for one of the first questions he put to me was, is the memory of Count Pulaski honoured in America? the noble Pole, who fell at the siege of Charlestown, and to whose manes Congress *voted* a monument! Our companion was a Pole I repeat, and he shares the feelings of his nation. A vehement love of his country, a longing for its independence, a burning and bitter hatred of the Russians, and an attachment to Napoleon form the leading traits



in his character. He has the manners of a man, who has a soul, and who yet has seen little of the polished world. He has many a coarse habit, and much of the grossness common to them of the North East of Europe; but yet his character is so natural, so unartificial, that it would be a pity to wish him the ways of a Frenchman. His morals coincide with his manners. What nature recommends, man must follow.

“Our third man was a Dutchman, of good family, a baron Schimmelpenninck and that is not half his name. And a more good-natured, meek creature neither you nor I have ever seen. He is strong, tall, and stout, yet not overbearing with his strength. His nerves are of immovable stuff. I never saw him laugh heartily but once: and yet no one is fonder of humour than he. He is given to irony and often says a good thing, yet with such gravity, that you would think him most seriously in earnest. He dresses well, only that his common coat has a yard or two more cloth than most people make use of; and the short jacket he sometimes wears makes him look like a sailor. On the whole I like our Dutchman mightily: he is my best friend, the only student at Göttingen, whom I go to see once a month, and so I beg you to like my description of him. He is well acquainted with modern history, and in conversation with him one may learn a good deal. He will talk on whatever subject you propose, provided he is master of it; and on all subjects he talks with the utmost frankness, and gravity, and openness, never calling for a veil to conceal his blushes, and never quitting table, when unholy things are mentioned. And yet he has a great

deal of moral principle for an European. . . . Indeed I was rejoiced to find a young man of twenty, that had a glimmering perception, a twilight notion 'of the high mystery' of chastity, though your severe morals would judge without mercy his principles.

"Our fourth man was a German of high degree, his father being Baron of the German empire, of most ancient family. But this German pleased me least of all. He is of a class of men very common in the kingdom of Hanover, and very seldom seen in other parts of Germany, a fop after the English manner. His cravat is always tied in '*the Gordian knot*,' his whiskers combed into a graceful curve, and his light hair arranged I cannot tell you how neatly. He is, as all young Germans, full of the glories of his country, will talk to you of the feudal times and the days of chivalry, can make you confess, if talking you dumb is making you confess, that the *Deutschen* are above all nations on the earth, that the *Deutschen* heroes, and men, and ladies, and armies are the best in the universe, and is ready to challenge any man, who denies that *Deutsche* literature excels that of all people and times. At the same time he is a worshipper of Alma Venus, knowing little and caring less for the *donum continentiae*.

"The fifth of the band the last, the youngest and the least, was one Bancroft, an American by birth, and though already nearly two years from home all too American in his ways of thinking. The poor lad knew beforehand but little of his companions, the Dutchman had invited him to join the party, and destiny had doomed, that the American should accept it. The

youth is in other respects well meaning enough. As he has a very great aversion to the grossness of the Germans, and cannot endure the coarseness of their amusements and still less of their vices, there is some hope of his getting through the land without being essentially altered in his ways of thinking. Besides he has a singularly strong attachment to Mr. Norton of Cambridge, North America, and would rather lose his eyes or his right arm, or his tongue, or any thing else, that is dear to him, than lose the esteem of his friend.

“And so the Dutchman, the Pole, the Hanoverian, the Teutonico-Anglico-Livonian, and the American set forth on their expedition. They drove as far as Herzberg, a little village at the foot of the Mountains they were to ascend. Poor Bancroft, who had believed the company he was with, to be a choice selection of the noblest and best of the students, soon found that he had fallen into worse hands than the poor Samaritan, and yet he enlarged his knowledge of men and things by being with men from so various parts of Europe. . . .”

It is much less as a walker than as a rider that the surviving generation recalls Mr. Bancroft. The beginnings of his favourite recreation seem therefore worth recording:

To ANDREWS NORTON.

“GÖTTINGEN, *July* 6, 1820.

“. . . You will see a good part of my day is taken up in hearing lectures. This mode of study certainly

is well calculated for those who wish to be always busy, for the alternation between private study and attending lectures makes both agreeable, and spares the health too. But that you may be quite sure I take good care of myself, I will tell you of another course I am attending. There is a famous riding school here, and at present I am one of the scholars of the celebrated Ayner, master of the stalls at Göttingen, and an adept in the art of *equery* and vociferation. We are obliged to ride without stirrups, which makes the exertion much greater, and the good effects of the exercise greater too. I have been at the school now about two months, and have learnt to manage a gentle horse without running the risk of getting my neck broken. In the meantime I know of nothing so effective for dispelling all collections of gloomy thoughts, and all twinges of discontent or homesickness, as an hour's ride without stirrups on a hard trotting horse. The quick succession of elevation and depression, to which a man is exposed, teaches him to choose a firm seat in the middle regions. At any rate I find the exercise most useful for me. I have been growing a little of late, and need violent motion to put my limbs in order and make them firm. . . .”

In the letter from which the preceding paragraph is taken, there is a brief, admiring description of Professor Patton from Middlebury College in Vermont, the one other American at Göttingen with Bancroft. “Well, at any rate,” he says, “there were two of us here, and we chose to keep the 4th of July, and I am sure of it, never did two Americans deliver a more patriotic oration or

more exalted poem, or think toasts more full of love of country than these two forlorn pilgrims did at Göttingen." The poem must have been Professor Patton's. Amongst Bancroft's papers I find a fervid oration of seven small manuscript pages, dated July 4, 1820, and beginning, "Countrymen, friends, sweet and elevating is the festival which we have now met to celebrate." "Come then," it ends; "let us unite in the frugal but friendly meal. We are few in numbers, but we have the hearts of freemen. The love of country shall bless our repast." Few, indeed—these two young enthusiasts! But one of them at least had the spirit to join to his oration a list of twelve "Toasts for the 4th of July, 1820, Göttingen." First came "The memory of Washington;" then "The President of the United States" [Monroe]. Four of the ten remaining "Sentiments" will sufficiently disclose the character of all:

"6. The American Eagle. A terror to the vulture, may she never wound the lamb.

"7. The speedy Abolition of Slavery. May our country learn to practice at home the sublime lesson she has taught the world.

"8. The sweet nymph Liberty. Europe gives her high mountains to dwell on. America consecrates to her her most extended plains.

"9. Our Country. The Asylum of the oppressed. May her benevolence not prove her poison."

There were intimations of the maturer Bancroft in this flowering of his youth; yet one queries how

large an allowance should be made for his apprehension of the humour in the episode.

On the 19th of August, Bancroft wrote a long letter to Mr. Norton describing the methods of teaching at Göttingen and the habits of his fellow-students, which, as we have already seen, were most offensive to him. The beards and the fashion of kissing after a separation—"twice as lustily as Romeo ever kissed Juliet"—were among his warrants for calling the students "barbarians." Mr. Norton had been questioning some of his young friend's previous superlatives, and in concluding his letter Bancroft thus defends himself:

". . . Now before closing this letter I must say a word in defence of myself against a charge, which it seems I have brought against myself. You have taken a few words I may have written too seriously. I have not been guilty of exaggeration. I do not remember to have described any man to you, otherwise than he may have appeared to me. Only I was afraid, that you had drawn too hard and unjust conclusions, from what I had said: and in that I should be to blame. I have said some things playfully, and have sometimes told a story, as it was told me, without vouching for its truth; but I have never made an assertion which I was doubtful about; and never expressed a judgment, which I did not feel was right. And from your letters all along it has appeared to me, that you have on the whole understood me, as I should wish to be understood. I may have made some false conclusions. If I heard a man cursing and swearing, I inferred he revered God

very little: perhaps an unjust conclusion. If they told me, the man never goes to church, I thought he cared little for religion; applicable in America but not in Germany. If I caught a man on a morning call in a nightgown and slippers without breeches on, I judged him a sloven; altogether falsely; for give him a clean shirt and a new suit of clothes, and he will dress very respectably for a public occasion. This is pretty much all the retraction I wished to make; I have always taken heed to my words, and that will always do

“your truth loving George.”

Within a month from the time of writing this letter Bancroft received his Doctor's degree. The final examination and the ceremony which followed it, are described in the ensuing passages:

“GÖTTINGEN, *September 2, 1820.*

“I have just returned from the faculty in Göttingen. For the first time in my life I have been decorated with small clothes and silk stockings, and for the first time too, have been talking Latin publicly. ‘Hail, native language!’ I may well say now, and be thankful that my trial is over. In a word I have been examined this afternoon by mighty men for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy, and now nothing remains for me to do but to appear in public and take the oath of allegiance to the University, in order to become as good and regular a Doctor as any that have been coined in these latter days; but I will try and relate the history of the whole matter. The candidate for a degree writes two papers

which he presents to the faculty. In the one he declares his wish to be admitted to an examination; in the other he gives a short history of his life. These being communicated to each member of the Academic Senate, a meeting is called of the faculty for the purpose of trying the powers of the candidate, and examining him in those departments of science to which he has particularly attended. To-day was appointed for me. At 4 o'clock I entered the house of the Dean of the faculty, Prof. Eichhorn, and after waiting a few minutes was ushered into the room where eight venerable men were assembled. A chair was placed for me. Mr. Eichhorn then began the ceremony by addressing to me a short speech in Latin of course, and after speaking a few words introductory to the examination, ended by saying he should examine me in ancient history, in Hebrew and Arabic, and invited his colleague, the celebrated Mitscherlich, to examine me in Greek. He then commenced the examination by questions relating to the cities of Phenicia and the fate of Tyre. He then gave me the Hebrew Bible and requested me to translate the 23rd chapter of Isaiah, which is a most difficult chapter. After this an Arabic poem was put into my hands, which I also translated and explained. Then one half of my examination was over. Wine and cake were presented, and these being tasted the work proceeded. Mr. Mitscherlich made me a short speech in which he announced his intention of ascertaining how much Greek I knew, and in order to effect that, he gave me an ode of Pindar to translate. Now Pindar, you [know] is of all authors the most difficult. But as I had studied him



a good deal of late, I succeeded in satisfying the good professor in my answers. The ode which he selected was the fourth Nemean ode, which commenced with, 'The best Physician for labours that are ended is hilarity.' The manner of interpreting was as follows: First the sentence was read, then each individual word which had any difficulty was explained, reduced to its primitive root, and its several meanings mentioned. This done, the construction of the words was told, and then the passage was translated into Latin. All this is done in Latin, which is the only language allowed at an examination, or at any public solemnities of the University. After the passage is thus translated, if it contain any allusions to mythology, these are enquired after, if any grammatical difficulties, they must be cleared up, if any uncorrected readings, they must be corrected. Of the ode of Pindar, about thirty lines were interpreted in this way. By this time it was past six, so I was desired to withdraw for a few moments. The deliberation was held as to the event of the trial. I was soon summoned to appear, when the Dean made a short speech again, declaring the satisfaction of the faculty with the appearance I had made, setting forth his readiness to create me a Doctor as soon as I should have disputed in public, and adding his congratulations on his own part and that of the faculty, on the honour I was about to obtain, and then I was dismissed. Next week on Saturday I am to appear in public and defend against two or more opponents the theses which are to be printed in the course of the week. Then, after taking an oath to honour the University, &c., I am to receive

a diploma in due form and order, as Doctor of Philosophy. . .”

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“GÖTTINGEN, *September 16, 1820.*

“MY DEAREST UNCLE:

“Do you remember the good story you used to tell me about the honest countryman of Stow, who, after long sighing for the honour, was at length made Justice of the Peace; and then you know as a neighbour saluted him in a friendly way by the plain title of Mr., he deigned no answer, but collecting himself most proudly, exclaimed after a long pause, ‘and pray why not *“Squire!”*’ So now if Miss Murray or Miss Hall or any of the elect of Lancaster, should happen to speak of George Bancroft, or Mr. George, I pray you to rebuke them gravely and ask, ‘pray why not *Doctor!*’ Last Saturday I was made Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Arts according to the strictest forms of the law. The customs of the place and the statutes of the University render it necessary for the candidate to proceed thus: In the course of the week he prints several propositions which he declares himself ready to defend in public. These are generally of a paradoxical nature, such as few men are disposed to believe, and on new and unusual subjects. These being printed and distributed, two or more opponents are appointed to enter the lists and oppose the candidate. The day for this intellectual warfare being appointed, the candidate proceeds early in the morning, dressed fully in black, in small clothes and silk stockings, to arrange the business of the day. He drives in a carriage first to his opponents. These he

takes with him to his room where breakfast is waiting for them. The morning repast being ended, he conducts them in the carriage as before, to the hall of the University where they take the places appointed for them—opposite the desk destined for the candidate. Then he drives to the Dean of the faculty, and invites him to appear and preside at the ceremony. In the mean time theses are distributed to every one that comes to hear the dispute. The Dean and he who is to be dubbed Doctor arrive. The Dean leads him to his place where he is to stand firmly and await all attacks. First, however, he holds a speech which commonly lasts from ten to fifteen minutes. The Dean is at present the celebrated Mr. Eichhorn, one of the most learned men in the world. He led me to the Desk and from that moment no word might be uttered except in Latin. Then I delivered a speech which lasted about twelve minutes and this gave me time to collect myself. The oration pleased, though some thought I spoke too theatrically. 'Tis not the custom here to declaim, but I chose to do it as an American, and for the sake of trying something new to the good people. After the discourse was ended, I called on one of my opponents to contradict any one of the propositions I had asserted. He chose one about a line of Horace.<sup>1</sup> It may seem to you in Lancaster of very little consequence whether one word or another be used there—but here we are bound

<sup>1</sup> Of the nine theses to be defended by "Georgius Bancroft, Massachusettsensi-Vigoniensis," as he is described on the leaflet preserving them, the seventh reads: "Bentheii conjectura nummum pro nomen in Horatii Epist. ad Pis. v. 59, rejicienda, altera tamen *procedere* pro *producere* adoptanda."

to hold it a sacred duty to render every ancient author as correct as possible. The young Gentleman who opposed me is son of the King's preacher at Dresden, a very well educated man. We talked a full half hour about the true reading with liveliness—I might almost say acrimony. The Professor of eloquence, Mitscherlich, who has published an edition of Horace, was all along on my side. We could hear him exclaiming against the arguments of my adversary as of no moment, and encouraging me by approving mine. The dispute with Ammon being at an end, I invited Dr. Hoch to oppose me upon another of my theses. He is an excellent man, already well known for his learning. The question related to the language of the earliest inhabitants of Greece, and was treated with proper coolness and deliberation. It is a difficult subject, as the testimony of early writers is so contradictory upon it. This question was discussed for about twenty minutes, and then the battle was ended and the field remained to me without any one to dispute my right to it. My peroration followed, and in this I was first obliged, according to the customs of ceremony, to say a word for the King, for the Duke of Cambridge and for the University. Then, turning to the Professors, I thanked them for their kindness to me during my stay at Göttingen, said farewell to my friends and fellow students, and then begged the Dean to confer on me the honour I had sought for. Mr. Eichhorn mounted the desk, held a speech to the audience, said some civil things to me, added his hopes and wishes for my welfare in life, and then called on the Beadle of the University to read me

the Doctor's oath. This being administered, I was called on to ascend two steps higher, and my diploma was presented me. The audience dispersed, each professor came up and congratulated me on the successful event of my trial, then turned away and departed. The Dean I conducted home in my carriage, and I remained a Doctor in Philosophy, and was then, am now, and ever shall be your loving nephew."

The Göttingen degree secured, Bancroft looks to the future, and writes thus of his plans:

To PRESIDENT KIRKLAND.

"GÖTTINGEN, *September 17, 1820.*

"Another semester has just been closed, and now my course at Göttingen is finished. I had hoped to have received a few lines from you, encouraging me in my purpose of joining the University of Berlin for the winter. But though I have not heard from you, yet the advantages I shall enjoy there, are certainly so great, that there is little room for hesitation. For ancient literature we have at Göttingen three professors; but the eldest is lazy, and does not do his duty; the youngest is a beardless youth of fine promise; but as yet he is only *growing learned*; while the third, the most learned of the whole, little Dissen, is so sickly and so easily disturbed and brought low, that his good will exceeds his powers of action. (He is now engaged with the new edition of Pindar, and promised me he would make a present of it to the Cambridge library, when

completed.) Now at Berlin I am sure of Boeckh, who is perhaps the best scholar in Germany; and Wolf, though eminently slothful, reads lectures in winter; and Buttmann, who is now writing a copious Greek Grammar, exercises the young philologists in interpreting the classics. Apart from all this the lectures here are so calculated as to return every two years, and having remained here two years, I hardly know what lectures to take, were I to continue my stay during the winter. I go from Göttingen without much regret. The people here are too cold and unsocial, too fond of writing books and too incapable of conversing, having more than enough of courtesy, and almost nothing of actual hospitality. I admire their industry; but they do not love labour; I consider their vast erudition with astonishment; yet it lies as a dead weight on society. The men of letters are for the most part ill bred; many of them are altogether without manners. Here is Harding, whose name is widely spread as the discoverer of a planet and a capital observer of the stars; but he has not a notion of what a gentleman ought to do on earth; the renowned Stäudlin, the cleverest of all the Göttingen theologians, talks quite as vulgarly as a common man of the 'cursed affair of the queen,' and the 'hellish bad situation of the ministers;' and our excellent Heeren, who has written the most acute book that has ever been written on the commerce of the ancients, hardly knows how to hold commerce with men of his own time. One of the most copious of the professors longs to get some petty office as clerk at Hanover, and often exclaims, 'could I once get out of this hell on earth,

I would never write a book again.' As it is he writes two octavos a year. <sup>cr</sup>And Eichhorn, than whom I have never seen a more amiable or a kinder man, speaks often of his labours, in a manner, which does not increase one's respect for him, and seems to think by devoting himself so exclusively to books he has lost the chance of enjoying life, and partaking of the pleasures of the idle. All these things seem to justify the Germans of higher rank in the little respect, with which they treat the learned; but they correspond poorly with the childish ideas I had formed in America of the superior culture and venerable character of the wise in Europe.<sup>1</sup> . . .

"And now that the harvest is gathering and the leaves of the forests falling for the third time since I left home, I am reminded that I am growing older. Pythagoras, in his division of life, lets the fair days of boyhood continue, till the twentieth year is ended. I like his division, it leaves me yet a few days for the thoughtless gayety of boyhood. And then the sun of the opening springtime of life will have gone down for me, and the hours, which are passing over me, will soon bring on the time for thinking with sobriety and acting with manliness. In the mean time I know you will excuse me if I have often written carelessly or as a boy. The day

<sup>1</sup> The Latin oration mentioned in the letter to Bancroft's uncle is before me. It begins with the salute, following no doubt a form virtually prescribed, "Prorector magnifice, Eques excellentissime, Decane summe colende, Professores amplissimi doctissimi; Commilitones carissimi, Amici suavissimi." This and Bancroft's privately expressed opinion of the Göttingen community are in interesting contrast.

of my departure from Göttingen is fixed for Tuesday. Among the letters which my acquaintance and friends here have given me, I find some to several of the most eminent literary men at Berlin. I feel confident of passing the following month pleasantly and usefully. How thankful ought I then be to you, to whose kind protection I owe all the high advantages, which I enjoy."

The journal provides a picturesque glimpse of Bancroft's departure from Göttingen:

"On Tuesday the 19th of September, I finished my residence at Göttingen. Two years have passed rapidly away in the stillness and activity of a student's life, and I think I may look back on them as on years which have been usefully employed. I had formed a plan of travelling to Berlin with two Grecians—Maurus, from Constantinople, and Polyzoides from Thessalonica. Many of their countrymen were desirous of accompanying us a few miles, that they might delay as long as possible the moment destined for a parting embrace. About 9 we left the walls and spires of Göttingen behind us; we had taken leave of all our friends, and now we bade adieu to their city, to its pleasant walks, the rich vales around it, and its magnificent scientific institutions. Farewell, oh! Georgia Augusta, and mayst thou long continue to bring forth offspring worthy of thy pleasant glory.

"At noon we reached Nordheim. Here we dined for the last time in company with our Grecian friends. The



hour at table was indeed moving. The welfare of our friends and our countries was drunk with enthusiasm. After dinner a Greek war song was sung, which animated every heart. Young Blastos from Chios, a pleasant little fellow, whom I was especially fond of, could hardly restrain his feelings. At length Psylas from Athens arose, and addressed his Grecian brethren in a short song, animating them to exertion and patriotism. Then followed the last embrace, the parting kiss of friendship, and lost in pleasant reminiscences, we continued our way towards Brunswick in silence and reflection."

Arrived at Berlin the young student presents his letters of introduction, and notes in his journal many impressions of the scholars he meets. A long letter to his father, October 20, 1820, discusses plans for the remainder of the stay in Europe, and possible methods for securing the required funds. A single brief passage, throwing light on past and future, must be quoted: "From the earliest years of childhood, from the moment of my entering with you the chaise, that was to take us to Exeter, I have met with benefactors and friends. The benevolence of an uncle, whom I delight to honour and love, assisted me in the years of college life, and as I was entering on more advanced studies under narrow and discouraging circumstances, I have been enabled to visit the best universities of Europe. This is heart-moving and exalting. Encouragement, such as I have received, must give a new impulse to exertion, and I feel as if something more than a moderate degree of

usefulness may hereafter be expected of me. When I return I shall be willing to serve in any station, which those, to whom I owe so much, may think most suitable for me."

A fortnight later he writes specifically to his chief benefactor about his studies at Berlin:

To PRESIDENT KIRKLAND.

"BERLIN, *November 5, 1820.*

". . . I have already been here about six weeks, and find abundant cause of joy for having come here. The character of the men of letters is quite the reverse of the character of the Göttingen Professors. There an abhorrence is felt for all innovations; here the new, that is good or promises to lead to good, cannot be too soon adopted. At Göttingen the whole tendency of the courses is, to make the students learned, to fill their memories with matters of fact; here the grand aim is to make them think. At Göttingen experience stands in good repute, and men are most fond of listening to her voice; but at Berlin experience is a word not to be pronounced too often; speculation is looked on as the prime source of truth. At G. the men are engaged in growing learned and writing useful books, which demonstrate their erudition; at Berlin the professors are perhaps quite as learned, but more accustomed to reflect; and you may find many of their books, to have written which a prodigious degree of erudition was required, and which yet do not contain a single citation. Certainly Gött-

ingen is the best place to gather genuine learning; but I hardly think, a man would learn there how to use it properly. . . .

“As to my studies, this winter, they will be chiefly a continuance of my former philological ones, to which I add a little philosophy and French and Italian. I need not say, how fine the schools of Prussia are; they are acknowledged to be the finest in Germany. Here in Berlin a great many new ideas are going into application; and the indistinct forebodings of Pestalozzi, and the eloquent discourses of Fichte have not been without lasting fruits. I need not assure you how happy I am in having an opportunity of studying the science of education in a city, where it has been the subject of so much discussion and where the Government have done so much, have done everything they could do, to realize the vast advantages about to result from the reform in the institutions of instruction. No Government knows so well how to create Universities and high schools as the Prussian. The new Academy at Bonn rivals already the oldest Universities. I have taken a course of lectures with Schleiermacher on the science of education; it is the most interesting which I have as yet attended. He brings to his subject a mind sharpened by philosophical meditation and enriched with the learning of all ages and countries. He applies to his subject all his vast acquaintance with the different systems of ethics, and with the human mind; his language is luminous, elegant and precise; his delivery is I think almost perfect. I honour Schleiermacher above all the German scholars, with whom it has been my lot to become ac-

quainted. He abounds in wit and is inimitable in satire: yet he has a perfectly good heart, is generous and obliging. I think him acknowledged to be the greatest pulpit orator in Germany. Ammon, who is sometimes named with him, is by no means his equal. In person S. is small, very small, mis-shaped, and in general without any claim to a good appearance except an expressive countenance and an eye that flashes fire continually. Yet he is exceedingly rapid in his motions, and walks with the agility and vivacity of a boy. A few evenings ago I was at his house: a stupid German Professor, who had been to seek his fortune at St. Petersburg was there too, a perfect boor in his manners, and talking incessantly, though he did not know how to converse properly. As he went away Schleiermacher showed him to the door; but immediately on returning from lighting him out, the whole company fell upon the Doctor, to know how he could invite such a cub to a family supper. His wife seized him with strong hands by the collar, and began shaking the little philosopher most playfully. He cried for mercy and forbearance, jumped two feet high, demanding to be heard—and was at length heard and pardoned.

“Besides the public schools there is at Berlin a private institution, which promises to become very useful. Ten young men, animated by the eloquence and patriotism of Fichte, formed a plan some years ago of establishing a school after the new principles. Each of them chose a peculiar branch, in which he was to perfect himself, and which he was afterwards to teach. Three of them went in the mean time to live with Pestalozzi and become

acquainted with his principles from the man himself. An ardour and a perseverance, such as the young men have manifested, deserve to meet with the most decided success. I find it quite instructive to observe their institution from time to time; they know how to unite gymnastic exercises, music and the sciences; and this is the mode of educating, which Plato has extolled as the perfection of the art. In this way I have excellent means of becoming acquainted with the old and the new ways of teaching in Germany; the subject deserves attention for its practical importance; and becomes highly attracting, when regarded in a philosophical point of view.

“My other courses are with Boeckh, Hegel and Wolf, all names of the first rank; though Boeckh is very far from having the genius of Wolf, or Hegel from having the clearness of either.<sup>1</sup> . . .”

The learned Wolf and his daughter thus appear in the final pages of the journal for 1820:

“*December 21.* Wolf talked to me about himself and his daughter with the greatest openness. The Queen, said he, passed thro’ Halle, and was at a large company there. She selected his daughter for a companion, saying, ‘Come, and sit by me, my child. I hear you know so vastly much English. Did not you find it

<sup>1</sup> In a letter of December 28, 1820, Bancroft wrote to Edward Everett: “I took a philosophical course with Hegel. But I thought it lost time to listen to his display of unintelligible words.”

hard?' 'Not at all, your Majesty.' 'I thought the *th* and other sounds very hard,' said the Queen. 'I made nothing of them,' said the little girl. 'Why? How did you learn English, then?' 'Papa taught it me in the water when I was five years old.' 'Taught it you in the water,' cried out the Queen in astonishment, 'What does that mean?' 'When he went to bathe,' answered the girl, etc., etc. 'In short,' said Wolf, 'when I went to bathe, I took my little daughter with me, and made her sit behind a screen, and while bathing, I used to call out an English word which she wrote down and then another and another, till I had taught her all the sounds of the English in several succeeding lessons.' I was quite taken with the good natured talkativeness of the old man, and the fondness with which he dwelt on his knowledge of English. The same daughter of Wolf made, when she was but 14, an abridgement of Walker, in order to become sure of the pronunciation of each word; a vast undertaking for a girl, and so young a girl, rivalled only by the zeal which induced Schlözer to copy a Russian dictionary of some hundred octavo pages, at a time when it was impossible to purchase one."

The beginning of 1821 is marked with the best of resolutions:

"*January* 1, 1821. A new year has again commenced. It is the third which I have kept in the land of strangers. When I think of the manner in which I spent the past year, I believe I may be contented with the progress I have made. Yet much yet remains to

be done, and the coming [year] is perhaps to have a more decided influence on my character and manners than the past. Some resolution must be made for the regulation of my time and conduct, and let me begin with resolving—1. To rise earlier than I have formerly done. Half past five or six is a proper hour for winter, except when something unusual prevents me from going to bed in good season. 2. I must exert myself to obtain a good English style, and to do that must write much and with care. Especially be the letters sent home for the future, written with attention. 3. This year, especially in the following month, I must strive to learn to use the French language with propriety and ease. 4. Italian must be learnt thoroughly. 5. I think it would be highly useful to take lessons in dancing for the sake of wearing off all awkwardness and uncouthness.”

A family letter on New Year's Eve gave a minute description of this unfamiliar object to a young New Englander of Bancroft's generation—a Christmas-tree. Duly following, there was another celebration recorded, with the talk accompanying it, in the journal:

“*January 2, 1821.* The Germans celebrate the last evening in the year. Sylvester evening the members of each family collect together, unless in large companies, and pass the time in the merriest manner possible. Mme. Schleiermacher assured me that 'tis the pleasantest and gayest night in the whole year. They always remain together till the midnight hour has struck, and the new year has fairly entered. Then they bid it welcome, and continue their mirth till nature calls for repose. . . .

"I spent the evening at the Countess America Bernstorff's,<sup>1</sup> a lady whose virtues I so much admire. On entering, I found Sir George Rose<sup>2</sup> there and family. We had a charming evening, all were so pleasant and willing to be happy. First a little discourse with the Countess, then a little dance, then a few words with the Count, whom I now for the first time saw, entertained me at first. Bye-and-bye I entered without knowing it into a most lively conversation with Sir George Rose on the state of religion and theological science in Germany. He had paid great attention to the subject. In our conclusions we united: namely, that the Germans united the most foolish credulity with the most audacious scepticism. Sir Geo. spoke to me of his own habits in his family. He assured [me] that after breakfast he assembles his household, and the Chaplain reads the short prayers. Then he himself reads to them a chapter from the Old and a chapter from the New Testament. These he explains, too; and if any points need a learned commentary, he calls on the Chaplain for his exposition. 'For,' said he, 'I think it the highest duty and it ought to be the greatest delight of parents to teach religion to their children. None but the parents should give a child its first ideas of God and of Christianity.' I was much delighted with Sir George's zeal and religious spirit, tho' grieved at his too strict attachment to the peculiar tenets of the Church of England.

<sup>1</sup> Daughter of Gen. Riedesel, commander of Brunswick troops in the American Revolution. She was born, 1780, in New York; hence the name America.

<sup>2</sup> British Minister at Berlin.



Our dialogue continued for a long time, and we seemed to forget that dancing was going on all the while in the adjoining chamber. At last we were interrupted, and I joined the younger part of the company. Presently the musicians played a waltz. I felt a desire to dance and ventured to do so. I got through the waltz for the first time in my life in a correct and easy manner. Then followed the Cotillon, which is a very long but very amusing dance. This too I ventured to dance for the first time. All things went off pleasantly, and all seemed happy. The dance ended; the doors were thrown open and behold the tables spread for supper. A frugal but excellent and even elegant repast crowned the pleasures of the evening."

A long passage in a letter to Dr. Kirkland from Berlin, February 1, 1821, is devoted to Wolf, in admiration of his mental powers and erudition, yet lamenting his lack of dignity of character and purity of morals. A fortnight later Bancroft acknowledges in a letter to Norton his own inability to see any beauty or attractiveness in the ballet, of which he had just seen a specimen performance at the end of Rossini's *Tancred*. Before the end of February, he left Berlin, and by way of Leipzig, Weimar, Frankfort, and Heidelberg proceeded toward Paris. A letter from Heidelberg to his sister Lucretia tells of his parting from friends in Berlin, "the incomparable Wolf"—to whom he gave a copy of his father's "Life of Washington"—the Baron von Savigny, and others. Returning from farewell visits, he found in his room a letter from Baron von Humboldt.

"He had sent me a very polite note enclosing a work of his as a keepsake, and an letter of introduction to his brother at Paris; who is, you know, the most distinguished of all living travellers. He desired at the same time to have my address in America, that we may hereafter carry on a correspondence. This your 'little brother' held quite an honourable distinction. Other good men and famous in their vocation I will not name to you. The last of all whose friendly hand was clasped in mine was Schleiermacher. He is the first pulpit orator in Germany, and besides that a most learned scholar and acute Philosopher. With him and his family I spent the last hours of my social life at Berlin. At his house I had frequently been during the winter, and had heard his lecture[s] and listened to his conversation always with instruction and admiration. And now, nothing remained but a few hours for unquiet sleep and then I was to turn my back on Berlin. . . ."

At Leipzig Bancroft saw Spohn again, and other scholars. From Kösen on March 6th he wrote Professor Levi Hedge an elaborate description of the Schulpforte gymnasium at which he had placed young Frederic Henry Hedge. The letter, in its relation to Bancroft's own career, is noteworthy for its evidences of a close study of German educational methods. At Weimar there was time for two visits to Goethe. One of them is thus described in the diary:

"WEIMAR. *March 7, 1821.*

"I was with Goethe for a half hour to-day. I felt the vast difference between [him] and the many scholars

whom I have lately seen. Goethe has the ease of a gentleman, speaks with liveliness and energy, but does not seem to take any longer a lively interest in the affairs of the world. I tried to bring him to talk of the German poets, and mentioned Tieck, but Goethe remained silent. I mentioned the Schlegels; he observed merely that they had written many pretty things. Byron's *Don Juan* Goethe has read and admired its humour. The humour of the rimes, said he, is capable only in your language where words differently written are often pronounced alike. This peculiarity of your language has been cultivated and exercised by a series of comic writers, Swift, etc., etc. Goethe spoke of Humboldt's *Agamemnon* with high praise. 'I still read in it and derive new instruction from it.' Goethe asked me about the new hall at Berlin, about the famous masquerade at court, spoke of Sir George Rose and his handsome daughters. I saluted him from Wolf. He added merely, that Wolf had given him the pleasure of his company for a few days the last autumn. Goethe spoke of the progress of colonisation in America and of the agreeable manner we have in America of setting before each advertisement a little cut denoting its subject, as a house, a ship, a horse. He thought it a very excellent custom. He spoke in praise of the riches of Berlin in the arts, the thriving state of sculpture, etc., etc. He spoke of Cogswell, adding that he had sent several little things to him in America by way of Perthes and Besser at Hamburg. Goethe's appearance is that of a healthy and active old man. His countenance is thin but shows no signs of decay.

"Goethe is still very industrious. He dictates often

for several hours in succession, lives very secluded, associating with none of the inhabitants of Weimar, appearing neither at Court nor in any parties. When any ideas arise in his mind he dictates them as a fragment, the end of which no one can conceive of, and throws them aside, till accident or inclination brings him again on the same subject. He has by him often works nearly finished, others in good progress and others just commenced on, so that Prof. Riemer says of him, he brings forth like the mice, who carry about in the womb young ones ready for delivery, and other just beginning to exist. At present Goethe has finished a volume of *Wilhelm Meister, Wander-Jahren*, and is also engaged with his 'morphologie.'

"I ought to mention that Goethe praised Schlegel's translation of Shakspeare and spoke of the delight he had taken in a late perusal of Julius Cesar. . . ."

On March 24th Bancroft wrote from Heidelberg to Dr. Kirkland a letter of which but a single sentence needs to be copied: "After long consideration I have determined to profit for four or six weeks by the learning and affability of the Heidelberg scholars, and then go to Paris, where I hope letters will await me, which are to decide whether I may yet remain some time in Europe, or am to return to America in the fall." The Heidelberg scholar from whom most was to be expected was the historian Schlosser, yet Professor Sloane has said that Bancroft "was scarcely conscious of his influence."<sup>1</sup> Letters written in April show him to be still in Heidel-

<sup>1</sup> See *Century Magazine*, January, 1887.

berg, and one of them, to Professor Levi Frisbie, describing the philosophers and philosophies most followed in Germany, reiterates Bancroft's own aversion from Hegel. The records of Bancroft's experiences in Paris begin May 5, 1821. It was a bitter disappointment to find awaiting him there no letters throwing light upon his immediate plans. The following portion of a letter sets forth his anxiety on this point:

To PRESIDENT KIRKLAND.

“PARIS, *May* 6, 1821.

. . . “If it be desired I am ready to return home in autumn; and there doing what I can for the furtherance of classic studies, I might still gain much time for private study, and might almost as well as in Europe build up a little on the foundations which I have laid. I believe I have knowledge enough of Latin and Greek to venture on teaching them, at least to beginners, in the scientific manner applied with such success among the Germans: I have visited, too, the chief schools in that land, and have studied carefully their internal organisation and the cyclus of their studies. Were I to return in a few months I might still be able to serve the cause of letters well though humbly; till riper years and maturer studies fit me for better.

“May I then urge you to favour me with a few lines? They would serve to govern me in making my resolutions; and would relieve me from the state of uncertainty as to your wishes, which I am now in. Indeed I believe you have long ere this time done so; and contrary winds or misfortunes of the sea may have de-

tained the vessel which was to bring me, what I am so anxious to obtain. When it arrives I shall welcome it with joy, be its contents what they may; be it that I am encouraged to continue and bring to an end the pilgrimage towards the shrines of Art and the altars, on which the fire of science is ever burning; or be it, that I am to forget the attractions of Europe in the desire of returning to my country and am soon to be in person there where my heart has ever been. . . .”

On the day this letter was written Bancroft met August Wilhelm Schlegel, about to return to Bonn with Sanskrit types and an accumulation of literary treasures, and dined with an American household, in company with Washington Irving. “He is very amiable,” says the diary, “and altogether unassuming. He is not talkative, but converses leisurely and thoughtfully; and his remarks are distinguished by their intrinsic worth and their grace.” By virtue of the excellent introductions from Wilhelm von Humboldt and others Bancroft was soon enjoying some of the most interesting experiences recorded in his journal.

“PARIS, *May 7, 1821.*

“. . . A little before three I called on Baron Humboldt, who had invited me to join him at that hour, and attend a session of the ‘Institut de France.’ We entered a large and spacious building appropriated to that purpose, and passing through the hall to the library, I was ushered into the most learned assembly of the world. The members were sitting around a table, which extended through the room in the form

of a hollow square. They were all past the years of early manhood; many of them seemed on the very threshold of the grave, alike venerable for their literary merit and their years. Mr. Cuvier was reading a communication as we entered. He is a man of still a very healthy and manly appearance, looking much younger than I could have expected from his long celebrity. He is quick in his motions, especially in those of his very fine sharp eyes. He looked like a man of the world; and wore the dress of a Gentleman, as if he were accustomed to it. Him followed Mr. D'Alembert, the astronomer, who read a long essay about the bones of Descartes. It seems, the Institute wished to honour the memory of that philosopher: and voted him a funeral, in which all the members followed his collected bones to their new grave. Now somebody has been asserting, that these were not the actual bones of Descartes; that the teeth were not the genuine teeth; and a great many other things equally important. So the Astronomer entertained the sage assembly for a considerable time to prove that these were the very bones of Descartes, which the Institute had so solemnly deposited in the new sepulchre. A very important subject for the collected wisdom and erudition of France to discuss! Some other papers were read. One member has the right to interrupt another, to correct him when in an error. This was often done, and led to very lively discussions. Cuvier was engaged in one of them and preserved his temper admirably; but the member, whom he set aright, seemed to have lost all patience."

"*May 28.* To-day I dined at Mr. Benjamin Constant's. I do not know when I have been present at an assembly of such choice spirits, of men eminent for their learning and genius and accustomed to the great world during the whole of an active life. On entering I found Mons. Benj. Constant and General la Fayette. To the latter I was immediately presented. The hero took me by the hand, which he warmly pressed, and began talking in the most friendly manner, as if to be an American were to him a sufficient recommendation. He is a tall and very stately man, with an open amiable countenance—breathing good will and philanthropy. Next entered Mr. Alex. de Humboldt, and presently two men, not particularly celebrated, from the department which Mr. Constant represents. A general conversation on political subjects ensued. The more I see of Mr. de Humboldt, the more I admire him; he does understand the art of talking to perfection. He is at home on every subject that is started; I have heard him talk on philological subjects and what to others seemed dry and uninteresting, when treated of by him became pleasant as well as instructive. In politics he is decidedly liberal, and can manage a political discussion even with the great masters of political wisdom. He talks to the ladies with as much ease as if he had passed years in frequenting saloons and drawing-rooms, instead of climbing Chimborazo and exploring Mexico; he talks with grace of the news of the day, tells a story charmingly, and relates a current tale of intrigue with unrivalled gaiety and spirit. Last of all the celebrated Dr. Gall, the Craniologist came in; and we adjourned



to the dining-room. The conversation continued to treat of politics; the general history of the changes in the chamber and the causes of the liberal party effecting so little were discussed. A good deal of warmth was used, for the sitting in the house to-day had been unusually stormy. Presently General Sebastiani entered, and the conversation became more interesting and warm. Mr. Constant explained the downfall of Decazes: after the unlucky death of the Duke of Berry, Decazes offered to throw himself into the arms of the Ultras. They however rejected him with disdain. He attempted then to win the *libéraux*, but they said, you have no principles; we'll have nothing to do with you. Three things ruin the *Coté gauche*: the metaphysical principles, the dinners in the country, and the want of union. The other day as they were about gaining a question Lefitte took twenty off with him to dinner at his country house, and so the point was lost. The greatest freedom in conversation prevails. No man feels bound either to conceal or soften his opinion. General Sebastiani combatted Mr. Constant with warmth; and each one was ready to explain and maintain his own views with warmth. Dr. Gall spoke but little, seemed to care little about politics. His physiognomy is very striking and original; it expressed great sagacity. The dinner was remarkably nice; every thing was served up genteelly but without display. We sat in a small snug room at a convenient round table; so that the whole party was brought close together. And at that little table how many men, who hold a conspicuous place in the political and literary world! Benjamin

Constant—General Sebastiani—Dr. Gall, Alexander von Humboldt! I never was at so pleasant a dinner party. And then that hero, whose fame we cherish in America so fondly, General la Fayette, the purest of politicians, for neither ambition, nor prospects of glory, nor wealth, nor rank, nor persecution has been able to make him swerve in the least from his principles. It was nearly nine before we rose from table; at that time other persons came in, to pass the evening at Mad. Constant's; this being the evening, on which company is received at her home. Mr. Constant is a tall and very stout man; with finely broad shoulders, and a manly frame. His language is excellent; he always expresses himself forcibly and elegantly. He is clear and practical in his views. Of all the members I have heard in the house, he seems to me the most eloquent, and in conversation he has a perfect command over his language, himself, and the ideas, which he is desirous of developing. May the cause of liberty prosper in his hands!"

"*May 30.* General la Fayette had encouraged me to come to see him. I went to his house today, and was shown into his parlour. Four engravings hang on its walls. The Rights of man and of the citizen, as decreed by the 'Assemblée Constituante,' and accepted by King Louis XVI, surrounded by appropriate devices are hung on one side of the door. A similar copy of the constitution of the United States is on the other side; at the top of it is the likeness of Washington. The third Engraving is that of the French frigate, which when beaten by the English chose rather to go down,

than surrender; the moment chosen is that, when the French are about to be swallowed up by the waves, and in the enthusiasm of liberty exclaim, *vive la liberté, vive la République*. The last Engraving is one taken from the statue lately made of Washington by Canova. This hangs in the most conspicuous part of the room, and attracts the eye at once on entering. These are worthy ornaments for the chamber of a distinguished partisan of liberty. It has seldom had in Europe so pure and upright a champion as General la Fayette."

"June 20. This morning at 11 o'clock Mr. Washington Irving called on me, and proposed an excursion together to Mr. Gallatin's<sup>1</sup> at Verrières. For the sake of his company I was glad to go. We walked to the barrier of the city, where there are always small carriages in waiting ready to go to any village for which they can get a freight. These vehicles are called . . . cuckoos. . . . They are convenient enough, clean and airy, calculated to carry from six to eight persons. One poor horse is doomed to draw the whole. Still that poor one must run rapidly; and as the road is good you get on very rapidly. Into one of these noble carriages we ascended, and for fifteen sous were transported in not much more than an hour about 7 miles. The highway to Orleans was the road we took as far as Bernis. Here we got out, and determined to walk the rest. Thus far the country passed through, had been richly cultivated and arrayed in the fairest robes of successful agriculture; but still it was France for all that. Here we turned

<sup>1</sup> Albert Gallatin, then United States Minister to France.

aside from the main road, and walked through more delicious scenery. Hills, woods, parks, country seats, villages, frequent spires of country churches, fields waving with the tall corn, just beginning to lose its greenness, fruit orchards, meadows where the grass had just been cut and hay was then making, all these and the beauties attendant on such scenery delighted us, as we went on. The birds were singing merrily along the road, and the peasants working cheerfully in the fields. All the while Mr. Irving delighted and instructed by his rich and varied conversation. He gave me such advice, as his own experience well enabled him to do, and never did I listen to counsels with more satisfaction. He is in every respect a most pure and amiable man.

“At my time of life he tells me, I ought to lay aside all cares, and only be bent on laying a stock of knowledge for future application. If I have not pecuniary resources enough to get at what I could wish for, as calculated to be useful to my mind, I must still not give up the pursuit. Still follow it; scramble to it; get at it as you can; but be sure to get at it. If you need books, buy them; if you are in want of instruction in any thing take it. The time will soon come, when it will be too late for all these things.

“Before entering Mr. Gallatin’s we looked out a nice grass plot; and there throwing ourselves at length along the green shade, I was reminded of all the carelessness and innocent delights of my boyhood.

“We found Mr. Gallatin at home and at leisure, glad to see us, and willing to amuse us. The ladies had gone to Paris; but were to return to dinner. Baron de

Staël, son of the Mad. de Staël, was with Mr. Gallatin as we entered. He is a plain man, but apparently a very amiable one. We were soon left by him; and then some conversation ensued. After this Mr. Gallatin took us through his garden, and up the hill, which rises behind his house, and from which we had a most delightful view of the whole adjacent country. Two rows of hills run North and South at some distance from each other. Between them flows a little brook, scarcely large enough to be found, gently winding thro' the wide valley, which it fertilizes. Mr. Gallatin was full of playfulness and gaiety. At dinner Mrs. and Miss Gallatin, young Mr. Gallatin and Mr. Sheldon the secretary of the legation were added to our number. The dinner was excellent; a family never need wish for a better. To various dishes of great delicacy the best fruits of the season from their own garden were added. Conversation too was gay and continued. The German sceptics in criticism were laughed at; those men, who deal in quotations by the hundreds and stud their pages with long lists of cited authors in the margin, were particularly the subject of a great deal of pleasantry. Père Harduin<sup>1</sup> so famous for his doubts was cited as a counterpart to those, who have of late denied the existence of Homer. And the little book, whose author is unknown, '*Compere Matthieu*' was mentioned as ridiculing such wild schemes in a masterly way. We left Mr. Gallatin's at seven in the evening. On returning we took a different way through the fields; and had a

<sup>1</sup> Probably Jean Hardouin, numismatist, classical and theological scholar, 1646-1729.

delightful walk as the sun was going down in a cloudless sky, the cool air of evening heightening the delights of exercise. Just as the shades of night were drawing near, we met with a cuckoo, and getting in were soon rolled over the paved highway to the vast metropolis of France. Passing over the beautiful Pont des Arts and crossing the court of the Louvre, I parted from Mr. Irving in the beautiful street Rivoli, and returned to my own room from one of the pleasantest excursions I have ever made."

"*July 4.* This great national festival did not pass unnoticed by the Americans, staying at Paris. It was celebrated by a dinner, at which General la Fayette was present. Toasts were drunk, and volunteers given. I gave 'The land of Minerva. The birth-place of arts, philosophy and freedom; civilising her conquerors in her decline, regenerating Europe in her fall; may her sons rebuild in her climes the home of liberty.' The contest of the Greeks at present is too interesting a subject to be talked of lightly, or to be regarded as a commonplace war of ambition or interest. It is a nation rising against tyranny and vindicating the rights of man. Since the days of the American war for independence, there has been no scene of exertion so pure and so glorious as this."

"*July 5.* Last evening I returned from the dinner at a late hour with Mr. Washington Irving. It was a fine evening; we walked a long time by the side of the Garden of Tuilleries. He was eloquent in speaking of

the advantages, prospects and duties of our Country. Mr. Irving is the most amiable and excellent man, in so far as I may judge, whom I have met with in Europe. I can almost say, that I never go away from him, without finding my better principles and feelings warmed, strengthened and purified by his eloquent conversation."

Both the diary and letters of this time betray loneliness and disappointment at receiving so few letters from America. The diary preserves even some disconsolate verses, "The Pilgrim's Complaint." One of the letters, of broader biographical interest, must be given:

To ANDREWS NORTON.

"PARIS, July 18, 1821.

"I received some days since a few lines from you. They were full of kindness, as your letters always have been. It had been so long too, that I had been left without letters from home, that my emotions on receiving them were unusually deep. Some weeks before leaving Göttingen I received a letter from you; from the date of that letter more than a year had passed; and within that time I heard from you but once. Of this time I have passed months without any information of any kind from home: there were some other circumstances which contributed to render my situation unpleasant; so that for some time I have written no letters, excepting such as duty required. 'Tis but within a few months, that I have learnt '*the necessity of self-reliance.*' Though I have been a thousand leagues from America,

I have not entirely lived in Europe. I was glad to learn, to observe, to compare; to admire, to be amused; but the better part of me was on the other side of the Atlantic. I had accustomed myself to depend on my friends there for counsel much more than you can easily believe. I used to read their letters carefully; and though alas! I have never been favoured with advice, with direct and explicit advice, I have uniformly deduced from the general tenour of their letters, what they wish me to become, and what they desire me to avoid. If the rhetorician bids you ask, how the great models of style would have expressed, what you are expressing; how much surer a guide it is in moral action, to consider which of your friends thinks most severely of virtue, and what he would judge of the course, expedient to be followed. The rule of the rhetorician may deceive, may be too difficult, impracticable; but the second never can be wrong or uncertain. . . .

“You are right to warn me against the vice of Europe. Yet as far as I have been in the world, I find one place nearly as bad as another. I mean by that; there are everywhere the means of indulgence offered to the dissolute. The number of the dissolute is of course unequal. But after all, is Amsterdam worse than Hamburg, or is Paris worse than Amsterdam? And can Naples exceed Paris? He that will be vicious can be so in any part of Europe. Weimar is the only place I know of, worthy of commemoration for its staid morality. Yet the temptations, that a young man falls in with, are not so great as supposed—unless he be destitute of feeling. Then he may find attractions in



every species of disgusting riot. But he, who has a heart and enthusiasm will, amid a general depravity of manners, seek out and admire the few grand models of uncorrupted virtue. These become the more effective in awaking honourable ambition, by the very contrast, in which they stand with the vulgarity and meanness of the common herd. Who, to excuse debauchery, ever has quoted the thousand corrupt senators of Rome? Yet the one untarnished Cato has been the bright point, to which the eyes of the young have been turned for many a century.

“Sometimes when weeks or months have passed, and no line from home has come to gladden me, I look within myself and live within myself. I would rest on the bosom of nature: I would go out among her beauties and commune with our general mother. I would give free course to imagination, create for myself a world of my own; I would strive to draw my principles and my happiness from myself, and build up my Paradise in my own soul. And so it must be. For our faith and our virtue we must not depend on any external impulse, but draw it from a source, which is always ours. Nothing must be too high or too pure for our thoughts and our wishes. We must neither care for good report nor ill report, nor for profit nor for loss, nor for *utility* nor for suffering. Strange, that a Christian moralist should in his theory of morals stand so far beneath Plato and Socrates; strange that a sound philosopher should call utility the basis of morals! Prometheus, exulting in the virtue, for which an unjust power was inflicting on him the torments of hell, might have taught the Christian

a sublime lesson. The precept, *Be perfect as God is perfect*, contains in itself the very essence of morals and religion, and are the sublimest words ever pronounced on earth. Such are the principles, to which I have been led; and now for the first time I feel myself independent. And were I again to be left as I probably shall be for months without messages from home, I could still give way with cheerfulness to

‘The wand’ring thought and high design,  
The fairy dreams, to virtue dear,’

and when I think of the many charges made me to beware of the voluptuous air of the South, I remember the fountain of Arethuse, which, though the whole sea of Sicily was bitter, passed through it all without losing its sweetness. And when I give way to fancy, and dream of futurity and form desires and wishes, I find all my hopes of enjoyment on earth are connected with the hope of literary activity and domestic quiet. There are three things I covet much; yea four that I vehemently long for. Virtue, a life of study, and cheerfulness. If to these be added the calm and pure delights of friendship, what more do I need to be perfectly happy? Now that you are married, you will say perhaps—a wife—I am too young to think about that—therefore stop at friendship. Are not my wishes moderate? Do not laugh at me for my vast views. To be virtuous, and studious, and cheerful and beloved! to what man’s lot did these four things ever fall? . . .

“I have just received from a friend a letter, an-

nouncing your marriage and the tour you have been making to the lakes. You are happy now, are you not? —perfectly happy, or who may ever hope to be? Yet do not forget me. Think sometimes kindly of me, and sometimes speak of me to Mrs. Norton. Pray tell her, there is a little fellow in Europe, whom when a boy, you thought worthy of your regard, and who, now that his boyish years are ending, is hoping as a man to become worthy of your friendship. He may return so changed by years, that he will be as it were a stranger in his own country. But then add that as Americans are famous for their hospitality, you mean to give him a warm welcome, and make him love home more than ever. Say what you will, write to me as often as you will or can; but do not forget nor cease to regard with friendly feelings your most true and affectionate friend

“GEORGE BANCROFT.”

Between August 3d and 28th Bancroft paid a visit to London to meet his friend Samuel A. Eliot, father of the present head of Harvard University. Of the steamboat crossing from Calais to Dover the diary says: “A light breeze was blowing from England, while borne on by the power of steam we kept a steady and regular course against the winds and the tides.” For seeing the best of London Bancroft evidently had no such opportunities as those which opened so many doors to him in Berlin and Paris. At Westminster Abbey workmen were “still busy in removing the stages erected for the coronation [of George IV], and all application for admission was in vain.” Westminster Hall he found

“still fitted out with all the crimson and gold of the coronation festivities.” There were fogs, and altogether one is not surprised to find either the entry (August 13th) “London is no place to live in,” or the later declaration (August 28th), “I was glad to be in France again.” Yet there are two brief entries in the diary at London, and a letter, dealing to be sure more with Paris than with the English capital, which, for their substance, claim a place here.

“LONDON, *August 8, 1821.*

“Dr. Caldwell, Professor at the University of Kentucky took me last evening to spend a few hours in the company of some young friends of his,—the daughters of Dr. Bollman. Their Father has been deservedly admired for the integrity he displayed in the attempt to rescue General la Fayette from his prison at Olmütz. An interesting volume of travels in the United States by an English lady has just been published, in which the merit of that action has been almost exclusively attributed to Col. Huger. This is unjust; it was Dr. Bollman, who plan'd the undertaking, and looking for an assistant in it, could find no one but an American worthy of implicit confidence. That this is the true account I gather from a narrative of the event by Dr. Bollman himself.

“*August 12.* At the Unitarian chapel in Essex Street I heard Mr. Belsham, the great apostle of Unitarianism in England. He is a corpulent heavy man, dull and monotonous in the delivery of his sermon. If the

good cause had not more eloquent defenders in America it would make but little progress. Mr. Belsham in his discourse entered into all the depths and obscurities of metaphysics, discussing the relation of the 'mind or percipient principle' to matter, and the possibility or probability of the soul's being material. I was disappointed in him. Good Christianity is better than bad metaphysics."

To PRESIDENT KIRKLAND.

"LONDON, *August 17, 1821.*

"I am now in England for a few days contrary to my own intentions I might almost say; and certainly to the well considered plan I had framed for passing the month of August in Switzerland. But as a three days' journey could give me the comfort of seeing a friend, a sight which I have so long been deprived of, I could not resist Eliot's request to cross the channel, seconded as it was by my own wishes. Travelling is not the pleasantest thing in the world; and it is necessary frequently to recruit strength and spirits by leaning for support on the bosom of an old acquaintance. It is now some weeks since I received the few lines, with which you favoured me last spring. Your letter was accompanied by one from my Father and another from Mr. Norton. They served to throw light on each other, and it certainly was not without high emotions, that I found your favour and that of Mr. N. hardly less expressive of kind feelings and good will than that of my own Parent. These new instances of benevolence have led me to reflect on the

singular vicissitudes of my past years, few as they have been. They have excited not merely a warm sensation of gratitude, but others of a mingled nature, some of them painful, others most encouraging. I will not attempt to describe my feelings, because I know I could not do so justly; and silence on my part will not I am sure be thought to indicate a deficiency of proper emotion.

“It was three months, that I passed in the French metropolis. This residence, though all too short, served to cure me of many ungrounded prejudices and false views of French character, which I had brought with me from America. How easy it is to call a nation fickle or corrupt: of fierce, determined vice England will show a stranger more in a night than France in a month, and as for their reputed love of change the *ultras* are as stubborn and unbending in their attachment to royal prerogatives and rights as the body of the nation is firm and constant in its love of liberty. And never do I expect to see a people so courteous and obliging as the French. Their pictures, their statues, their libraries and cabinets are open to every stranger, who presents himself for admittance. In London there is nothing of this, and except the Docks and the Exchange I know no public place that may be entered without solicitation. At Paris I had the good fortune to be particularly recommended to the illustrious Prussian traveller A. von Humboldt. He treated me with the utmost kindness and to him I am indebted for several most valuable acquaintances. Yet at present there are in France no leading minds on the stage to guide public

opinion and give a character to literary society. Among the publishers there never was a greater degree of activity than at the present moment; but they are employed rather in multiplying the editions of their departed classics than in bringing forward original works. The publishers are divided into two political parties: according as they are supported by the patronage of the liberals or the royalists. And this guides them in the choice of works to be reprinted. But the latter cannot print Bossuet as fast as the former can Rousseau; and the public seems to grow tired of learning history from Rollin and Millot. Still the royalists adhere to them and think it quite revolutionary to learn it of more recent historians.

“In polite literature nothing new of great value is produced, but the readers of poetry cannot do without their novelties, and now for them translations are making of Shakespeare, Schiller and Byron. These are the popular works of the day advertised at every corner of Paris, and found on every bookseller’s counter. They are translated not into verse: that had been too difficult or impossible, but into a sort of stilted prose, which is quite of a sounding and astonishing nature. I read a little of the French Byron, but was frightened at the first onset, and almost vow’d never to read him again but in the original. Yet he is read with great avidity throughout the gay city, and the French version of Lord Byron’s new performances are to be had almost as soon at the Palais Royal as at the original publisher’s in London. . . .

“Apart from the general affability of the Pa-

risians there was another thing, which particularly delighted me. I heard men, as distinguished for their knowledge of the world as for their genius or erudition, continually bestow the highest and most judicious praises on those of our countrymen, who during their travels in Europe have everywhere done so much to conciliate for us the favour and good wishes of Europeans. I had heard them extolled by the German scholars; but that I did not much mind, because they have seldom the faculty of discriminating character and are wholly without knowledge of man. Not so they, who live at Paris: and when I have heard Mr. de Humboldt or the Duke de Broglie speak of Mr. Everett and Mr. Ticknor, I have felt more proud than ever of my New England home. Mr. Cogswell was particularly well received by Cuvier: and (little as the character of Cuvier as a man is to be respected) where he praises, his praise may be regarded as sincere. That elegant observer of nature is haughty and disdains ordinarily to converse on subjects of science even with the learned. The sole exception, which I have heard of his making, was in favour of Mr. Cogswell. I have heard too the judgment, that Cuvier is understood to have passed on his genius and acquirements. In my youthful extravagance I should hardly have ventured to have said more of any man. If then Cogswell were to die without leaving behind him laurels of unfading greenness, what may the rest of us young men hope for?

“Cuvier, growing tired of his scientific glory, has set up for a gentleman and a statesman. He is foolish enough to pretend to disregard his labours as an ob-



server of nature, saying, they have been only his amusements. He had all along felt himself designed for a statesman. Now what can be more weak and childish than that? He has not one quality requisite in a minister excepting that of speaking gracefully and fluently. He is very insignificant as a politician; and yet for a few petty distinctions at court and in high life he is ready to disregard the glory of standing at the head of one of the noblest sciences. And after all what is even a successful statesman in Europe? A mere king-serving, time-serving courtier; a thing without enthusiasm and without philanthropy. Their glory is as fleeting and as empty as the light cloud that is driven about by the winds as they are by contending interests, and which passes, as they pass, to make way for another as light. Cuvier the anatomist is a man, before whom I could have trembled with admiration; but Cuvier the politician encourages me again. And La Place too, why I was told at Cambridge by my highly honoured instructor, that La Place was the rival of Newton. In Paris his picture is to be seen and there you see not the likeness of him whose genius grasped the fabric of the universe, but that of a French Peer. A peer of France the rival of Newton! Were he a plain private man I would look on him with the same reverence with which I look back on the memory of Archimedes; and regard him as even greater than the ancient. But now I know that the ancient had a noble and sublime soul; and I know as well that La Place has a weak one; for he prides himself on a foolish distinction, which ought never to have been his. I cease to venerate the author

of the *Mécanique Céleste*, when I see him give over his sublime wanderings through the infinity of the universe, worthy of an angel or a disembodied spirit, to play an insignificant part in the childishness of political squabbles. . . .”

The “instances of benevolence” mentioned in the letter just quoted must have had some practical bearing upon the continuance of Bancroft’s stay in Europe; for he was soon devoting a few days in Paris to preparations for a solitary walking trip through the Alps, on his way to Italy for the winter of 1821-1822. It is no wonder that he thought it worth while to copy in his journal the note from Alexander von Humboldt which he bore with him from Paris:<sup>1</sup>

“Je prends la liberté, mon respectable ami et confrère de vous recommander un jeune Américain qui a fait d’excellentes études de philologie et d’histoire philosophique en Allemagne. M. Bancroft est bien digne de vous voir de près; il est l’ami de mon frère, et il appartient à cette noble race de jeunes Américains, qui trouvent que le vrai bonheur de l’homme consiste dans la culture de l’intelligence.

“(Signed) HUMBOLDT.

“PARIS, le 7 Septre, 1821.”

For six weeks he had but slight use for letters of introduction. Most of this time was spent in solitude. The

<sup>1</sup> It appears from Prof. W. M. Sloane’s article in the *Century Magazine*, January, 1887, that this note was addressed to Pictet, of Geneva, whom Bancroft met there in October.

diary contains a full record of his walks from place to place in the Alps, of the beauties of nature which filled him with delight, of his frequent thoughts for the future, in which the prospect of entering the Christian ministry engaged his serious attention. It was a period of deeper heart-searching than Bancroft seems to have known before. When the weeks of solitude began, he had just been driven to accept as a fact the loss of his brother John at sea. The problems of his own future stared him in the face, and he showed no disposition to shirk them. A passage from the diary under the heading, "October 7, 1821. Egerkingen to Fraubrunnen, 8 leagues," is typical:

" . . . It seemed to me this morning that my disposition fits me for a clergyman; and that I never should be happy, as if God would one day teach me to pray earnestly and preach eloquently. To me it seems more important to enforce general purity of mind and high and generous feelings, than to distract attention by the eulogy of individual virtue or declamations against heinous crimes and vices of which mayhap not one of the hearers ever would be guilty. I would like to preach not to the old; they can hardly be changed; but to the young and the innocent; and how happy should I be in intimate and pure communion with unspotted minds.

"Several peasants joined me today, and a poor beggarly fellow who was wandering on foot like myself, seemed to think me a very proper companion, and after much questioning in his horrible low German dialect,

seemed to think it strange that I would not stop and drink a measure of wine with him.

“One person who went with me a few steps, wished to know if I was of the cloth, *ein geistlicher*. I must have something of the kind written in my face, since 'tis not the first time I have been reckoned a clergyman by men, who had never before set eyes on me.

“For a long time I have not looked in a mirror, and as I glanced my eye at one this morning I was frightened at my own long black beard. I wonder I have not been taken for a madman. My socks are all worn out, my trowsers are going, my shoes are good for nothing, my coat is decaying, my money is nearly spent; in truth I shall be glad when I see Geneva again. . . .”

There are other passages revealing the highest exaltation of spirits. At one point, he writes, “I was seized with delight, tho' warm with a long walk, could not but caper and sing or at least cry out a chorus of a rude song, as I passed amidst such beautiful scenes. I danced and sported and sprang about and might well have been taken for a madman.” Elsewhere he describes himself as “making verses at a great rate.” The following portion of a letter—from which an equal portion including two poetical outbursts is omitted—reflects something of the rhapsodic mood which coloured all the Swiss experiences:

To ANDREWS NORTON.

“GENEVA, *October* 13, 1821.

“My kindest and most respected friend, before crossing the Alps, which I hope to do ere the full moon

loses aught of her brightness, I wish once more to recall myself to your affection. When in Italy there will be so much for me to do, and so few opportunities of writing, that I shall hardly be able to send regular accounts of myself: which will be the less necessary, as I hope soon to be bodily among you. I reached Geneva about four weeks ago: the month of October promised to be pleasant: and I hastened to enter among those valleys, which I have so long wished to see. Leaving Geneva on the Southern side, I passed through all Savoy, the delicious valley of Chamouny, saw the Glaciers and icy oceans of Mount Blanc, ascended the Rhone, crossed the Alps to the sweet Lakes of Thun and Brientz, have been near the Jungfrau's untrodden snows, and seen the avalanche tumbling from her peaks, crossed the high Grimsel, beheld where the Rhone gushes from its glacier, and then passed through all that country, of which I had so often dreamed in childhood, where the deeds of Tell and the well fought battles of liberty have lent an omnipotent charm to every valley you gaze on. Earth has not scenes like these, where for many a league you walk through narrow valleys hardly a mile wide, and see rising on each side of you the lofty walls of the Alps with their snow tops, that the sun has no power on. When I entered Switzerland I came with a heavy and desponding heart. One event after another had happened to crush everything like cheerfulness in my bosom; and though I had not yet gained my one and twentieth year, my mind seemed to be sear, and I almost thought I had the heart of an old man. But I have reposed on the bosom of nature, and have there

grown young again: from her breasts gush the streams of life, and they who drink of them, regain cheerfulness and vigour. I travelled alone and like a pilgrim on his tour to the promised land. I was on foot. Yet I never felt fatigue, and solitude was delightful. I could sit undisturbed amid the beauties of nature, and give way to the delightful flow of feelings and reflections, which came hurrying on me, as I sat on the Alpine rocks and gazed on the Alpine solitudes. Never till now did I know how beautiful and how kind a mother Earth is. . . .

“As evening came on, I was walking along the banks of the lake of Thun. Its banks are perpendicular often, always steep excepting to the S. W. and of a tremendous height. Here I was unattended but by my thoughts, with the water on one side, and the rocks clothed in tannen on the other. A heavy rain came on: the clayish soil became muddy: and impeded me in marching; streams were pouring down the rocks: my path did as it were often lay in a torrent: and I had already walked nearly thirty miles, and had yet 6 to put behind me. Yet I walked patiently, aye calmly and cheerfully; I said to the winds, blow on, I care not for ye; to the sun, hide thy beams, I carry a sun in my bosom: to the rains, beat on; for my thoughts gush upon me faster than your drops. Night came on: I took many a precipice for the opening into a village; many a tall mass of granite for a house; and once I exclaimed there is the inn, and there its sign, as I saw a steep rock, from whose top there hung down several bushes fantastically tangled. But at last I reached

Unterseen, slept soundly and sweetly, for I composed myself to slumber in hope; and lo! in the morning the tops of the Jungfrau were glittering in the sun, and the valleys laughed in their green sunshiny loveliness. Now were you ever to feel sad; if, which God avert, if you were destined to suffer and to mourn, then look for consolation in solitude: go out into the fairest scenes of earth, pour out your sorrows upon nature's bosom: she will fold you in her arms and give you vigour and serenity again: but if any of those, who are sailing carelessly along in the gilded bark of happiness, come to you to offer consolation, do not listen to them. Tell them they are fools—tell them to go float like the butterflies in the sun and leave you to retirement: tell them the mourning heart is as one of the vast feathered train of passage, whose wing hath been broken by the arrow of the hunter; and that 'tis easy for one of his companions to stoop for a moment in passing from his proud course, and bid the poor wretch that is moaning in the bushes to have patience. . . .

“But I had better stop: my letter is already too long and I had rather you would think me happy, than tell you what cause I have to be sorrowful. I shall soon be with you: till then preserve for me your good will and kind affection: I could wish that on my return things would present themselves to my mind in as vivid colours, as they have done when in my solitary walks. I have reflected on virtue and truth and religion, and called up in my memory the bright examples of disinterested enthusiasm: I could wish that I could

one day write or speak as I have then thought; for then I should be eloquent: I could wish that the flow of reflection would always be as chaste as it then was; for I then should be virtuous: I could meet an angel and not blush; and if I could always possess the calm serenity of spirit, which I have sometimes felt, when the rain has been pelting over me and the torrents streaming round my feet, descending night break in wrath her vials of bitterness over me, the winds of destruction beat on me and the rains of misfortune gather to fall on my poor head: and I should still be calm, resigned and happy. Farewell I am neither mad, nor extravagant, nor dreaming. I am cheerful and rational and serene: now that time is precious to me, that moments are to be counted I have willingly resolved to spend two days here, to write once more to my friends before I enter Italy. In 5 or 7 days I may be at Milan. I would willingly leave my cares behind me and enter Italy with a light heart. Again I say farewell: if happiness dwells where it ought to do, is not your house the most cheerful on earth? I hope it is; and hope in the midst of your gladness some thoughts sometimes glance off towards me.

Oh think of me, when coldly blow  
The sullen breezes of November;  
For while o'er mildest climes I go  
Thy love and mildness I'll remember.

And when the glad new year is come,  
And cheerfully thy hearth is burning;  
Oh! think of him who e'en at Rome  
His thoughts, his heart towards thee is turning.



And when the April rains descend,  
 And seeds of life in earth ye bury,  
 Still bless thy fond, thy wand'ring friend,  
 Who's soon to tempt the rough sea's fury.

And when in May the budding tree  
 In every breast awakes devotion,  
 Then in thy prayers remember me,  
 For then I'll brave th' unsparing ocean.

And when the summer sun grows warm,  
 And light winds rock the rose that woos 'em  
 Then open wide thy friendly arm,  
 And clasp me kindly to thy bosom.

“Ever yours,

“GEORGE BANCROFT.”

The “five or seven days” allowed for reaching Milan were extended only to nine. On October 22d we find him there. On the 23d and again on the 28th his diary contains accounts of dining with Alexander Manzoni and his family. Down to the youngest children they received the traveller as only a most acceptable guest could be received. On the 28th he saw Leonardo da Vinci's “Last Supper,” and piously exclaimed in his diary: “The door cut thro' the legs of the Saviour cannot be viewed without horror.” There are two entries in the journal for the 27th, which in the light of Bancroft's subsequent experiment in school-teaching and of the ripe old age he attained, should be preserved.

“MILAN, *October 27, 1821.*

“OF SCHOOLS

“In reflecting on establishing a school on a large foundation, it appears to me that something new might

be undertaken with usefulness and advantage. 1. Greek should be the first language taught: it would be easy to procure or to make the necessary works for that. A translation of French's small grammar; and of Jacob's Handbook would be sufficient for a commencement. 2. Natural History should be taught: it quickens all the powers, and creates the faculty of accurate observation. Even in the town schools so much of natural history as relates to the plants of husbandry and weeds which torment the farmer, ought to be taught simply but thoroughly to every boy, and most of all to the poorest—whose lot it is to till the earth. 3. Emulation must be most carefully avoided, excepting the general and mutual desire of excelling in virtue. No one ought to be rewarded at the expense of another, and even where there is nothing but prizes, they who fail of gaining them, may have been impeded by the nature of their talents and not by their own want of exertion. 4. Corporal punishments must be abolished as degrading the individual, who receives them, and as encouraging the base passions of fear and deception. 5. Classes must be formed according to the characters and capacities of each individual boy. 6. Country schoolmasters might be formed with little expense by annexing to the school an institution for orphans, to be educated for schoolmasters. Of these the best might be chosen for a learned discipline, and be fitted for taking care of academies. 7. Eventually a vast printing establishment might be annexed to the school.

“For myself at the present moment I would pray to be preserved from an early death. I would like to

console my parents in their afflictions, to cultivate a love of virtue, and by being useful to repay the kindness, which has ever been shown me by the benevolent and high minded. Yet I would not wish to linger out to a wretched old age of body and of withered faculties: but when the days of active exertion are passed be removed to a brighter sphere, where I might serve the Omnipotent in exercising his will, or if not chosen for high employ, might stand in humility and wait."

Of the journey from Milan to Venice one episode must be given. Bancroft reached Brescia on the afternoon of the 29th, and, having seen the new cathedral, climbed a hill which overlooked the city. The view filled him with delight. "The sun was just setting: half of his red disc was already beneath the horizon, and I watched closely the moment, when all would vanish. Just as I was giving way to my feelings of rapture, two Austrian soldiers presented themselves not far from me, one armed with a gun and bayonet, and in the grossest and most absolute terms ordered me to descend, adding harshness to insolence and threats to contumely. I was exasperated at being interrupted in my calm admiration of nature, and in that moment my dislike of despotisms and military tyranny was stronger than ever. But resistance was vain and recrimination would have been dangerous. A soldier in Europe is licensed to be insolent, and a musket ball never varies from its course for an argument's sake. I hastened to touch the earth again, and the breath of evening, and the still vivid colours of departed day, and the aspect of

the new moon were hardly able to tranquilise me again. I returned to our inn and soon slept soundly undisturbed by bad dreams, and being confident in Providence I reposed fearless of 'force of rude and violent men.'"

In Venice, Florence and the smaller cities through which he passed on his way to Rome he saw many things with an enthusiasm which tinges the pages of his diary with a bright colour. On November 25th he arrived in Rome. With its churches, galleries, and manifold riches the greater part of his Italian journal is concerned. Here it must suffice to reproduce a few of the passages recounting the more distinctively personal experiences:

"ROME, *November 26, 1821.*

"I rose early, though I had been kept up to a late hour by the forms of the 'Doyana' and the police officers, and no sooner was I dressed, than I hastened over the bridge of Hadrian to the Church of St. Peter. As I came to the bridge I beheld the dome, rising in dignified solitude above every thing far and near; and then not even the tomb of Hadrian detained me a moment. I ran on, till I came to the Place of St. Peter, the sublimest and most impressive, which I have ever beheld. I was silent with admiration; my thoughts were sent back to my own bosom; and I walked by the Obelisk between the fountains and along the majestic Doric Colonnades, wrapt in those feelings which I love most of all to indulge in. I have heard of the disappointment experienced on the first sight of St. Peter's: I thank Heaven that I had no emotions but those of wonder and

delight, and when 'tis said that the front of the church does not seem vast, I think nothing is meant, but that it is not monstrously huge. I entered the noblest shrine which man has raised of the God of Christians, filled with those feelings of devotion and enlargement of soul, which such a sight of grandeur may well produce. After walking up its grand nave, and around its altars, and among its chapels and aisles, which were doubly solemn and pleasing for being almost solitary at that early hour, I threw myself on my knees before the grand altar, and returning thanks to God for guarding me amidst all the dangers of travelling, preserving me on the high seas and on shore, raising up friends and benefactors for me wherever I have been, and blessing me with health and external prosperity in an almost unexampled manner, I besought his Goodness in my humble petition to prepare blessings and happiness for those generous friends through whose kindness and munificence I have seen foreign countries and been able to prosecute my journey even to that city which I had ever most desired to see. My parents and every member of my family were remembered too in these moments of my life, which were too sweet and too solemn to be ever forgotten.

“Leaving St. Peter’s I returned to breakfast, and then hastening to my banker’s I found there two letters, one from young Hedge, another from the lady, whom I revere admire and love above all women on earth, whom I have ever seen. She is to me a bright star, guiding me on to virtue and industry: she is a ministering angel, pouring comfort into a wounded breast, lending me

encouragement and the best of patronage, kindness and affectionate advice and making me believe myself capable of virtue and honourable deeds, since she thinks me worthy of her friendship."<sup>1</sup>

"*December 17, 1821.* . . . Wrote some verses, suggested by a print I saw of Beauty driving away time. This I did only as an exercise; and mean often to make verses, though I know they will for the most part be poor ones. But I do it only as a useful task, a good method of gaining a command of language and learning to attend to the nice construction of the lines of our harmonious English poets. Perhaps I may one day be able to make tolerably good ones."

"*December 21.* This evening I was presented to the Princess Borghese, sister of Napoleon. On entering the rooms, I passed through an elegant suite of apartments to the one, in which company was assembled. Here the maid of honour to the Princess received me and conducted me into the private room of the Princess, who received me with the utmost kindness. There was a grace and an ease in her manners, which were delightful. Kind but not familiar, attentive but yet dignified, she has a more elegant suavity of manners, than I remember to have seen in any woman of rank, to whom I have been presented. She said civil things of America in general, of her prepossessions in their

<sup>1</sup> There were letters at about this time from Mrs. Storrow, at whose house in Paris Bancroft had first met Washington Irving. That the reference above is to her seems a reasonable conjecture.

favour, of her gratitude to them for their civility to her brother, and asking me how long I was to stay at Rome, expressed a wish to see me often. Then leaving me she went to the assembly, whom she received and conducted to the Music room. I was however first shown her diamonds and precious stones, a most splendid sight and then taken to the room, where the Princess was entertaining her company. I admired the amiable manner, in which she paid attention to them all: every lady, who entered was welcomed with a kind smile and a kiss. To one she gave a rose; she sat down by another; conversed with another, keeping every one amused, and putting every one at ease. The furniture of the room was splendid. The walls were adorned with portraits of the family; the tapestry was very splendid, of damask; the chairs rich and elegant; a beautiful harp ornamented one side of the room, placed near a fine piano. During the evening we had some music, one lady playing on the piano, and Mad. Dumesnil, the maid of honour or rather *Dame du Palais* accompanying her. The music was divine. Of the persons present few were English. There was one most exquisitely beautiful young Italian woman, reckoned the handsomest in Rome, a princess or two, and several others, whose names were not told me. Here too I saw Mrs. Patterson, formerly wife of Jerome Bonaparte. She is still pretty, though not astonishingly so. The evening passed very charmingly. I was highly pleased with the gracefulness of the Princess. She spoke to me several times during the evening, always very kindly, and seemed exceedingly ready to oblige those who wished

to see her villa and fine things. The entertainment consisted of ices, creams, tea and a little cake. The ladies were all neatly dressed; the gentlemen as for the soiree of any lady: not in a court dress. The Princess is a small woman, elegant, and when young may have been beautiful. She is still charming."

"December 22. . . . A proof of the ignorance of the Romans has just been given. At one of the better book-stores of Rome I was looking at various articles, when I was asked of what country I was by an Italian, who had entered. As I answered of the United States, he rejoined of Philadelphia or Boston? I answered Boston. Ah! said the bookseller, I have a large book in my shop about Boston; pray, come and look at it. I did so and found it to be a history of Hindostan. '*Missonsbagliato*,' cried he, 'a little mistake, I took Hindoston to be Boston.'"

"ROME, January 1, 1822.

"The new year has opened most beautifully. A warm sun, a cloudless sky, a mild and refreshing air filled my heart with gladness: a pleasant thing it is to the eyes to behold the sun: to me earth seems beautiful. I love life: I love the refreshing rays of the sun; I rejoice in myrtles and roses; in the fair face of nature, in health and vigorous youth.

"The first day of a year is a time for serious reflections and recollections. I have spent most of this day in thinking of my home; of my parents, and all those who are connected with me by blood; of my benefactors; of those who honour me with their esteem, and those who



make me happy with their friendship. Peace and gladness to them all; may their lives pass as free from cares and misfortunes as our Roman sky was this evening from clouds. May they preserve their affection for me against the hour of my return.

“I cannot but think seriously of the future. This year will see me returned to my country, if such be God’s will, and before its end I may be engaged in the duties, which are to last me my whole life. Who can say how great those duties will be? Who can tell, how long that life may be spared? I begin to feel a strong desire of engaging in the ministry, of serving at the altar of God: I would now willingly rest my hope of distinction on the hope of my being eloquent and useful in preaching the grand doctrines of Christianity, in speaking of God the author of the universe and the source of all science, of Christ who has made us acquainted with his nature, of the nature and possibility of virtue, of the duty of becoming like God, of life, death and immortality.

“There are many things in my character yet to be changed or improved. I long to become more deeply devout: but the full and internal devotion cannot be fully gained by a wanderer: at home in retirement there will be many an opportunity of becoming well acquainted with the work of the pious, who have written so feelingly on religion. From them I would strive to learn the true road to divine truth, and the direct way to win hearts. Bonaventura, Thomas à Kempis, St. Gregory Nazianzenus and St. Chrysostom are men, whose works I must consult. I must learn to govern

my thoughts more; to discipline my mind with severity, to restrain a giddy and fruitless enthusiasm, and put in its place a more sober and earnest spirit of resolution. Then too I must grow manly: for I have gained the age of a man, and must remember, that the time, when I could indulge without thinking of active life in a communion with great minds, who are departed, when I could draw knowledge from books without being troubled by a weight of labours, and without reflecting that the whole end of learning is not the delight it gives the mind, is now past and forever. The thought of duty, of active labour in life, is ever busy in my mind: the cry of public employment rings in my ears; there is no room for retiring. And he, who is soon to fill a public place of trust and most of all a sacred one, must be manly and ingenuous, vigilant over his thoughts and not inattentive to appearances. I am soon to go home; and may I go, serious and manly, ready for action and fit for honourable, dignified and useful exertions."

"ROME, *January 3, 1822.*

"The words of my Father in his letter of Nov. 12, 1821, I can never forget. . . . Yes, my dear Father, if God will preserve my life and lend me strength I will strive yet to be a support to your declining years and a protector to your children. Of all things that I remember with delight, I think most gladly of your love. You never chid me unjustly; you never taught me any principle of selfishness; you never bade me watch carefully the mere interests of this world. You gave me nothing but kindness, you taught me noth-

ing but virtue. Best of Fathers, may I never forget your precepts; may I never be unmindful of your lessons in religion. But most of all may I learn of you that fixed and deep faith, which can fasten its eye on immortality and clearly discern the scene of eternal blessedness. You are my dearest, my kindest, my holiest master: and if I do but heed your instructions well, it will be more important to me than all the sciences of earth, than all the arts and accomplishments of life. Oh! God; spare me till I gather strength, and go hence to be no more, spare me for the embrace of a father, the warm love of a mother; and may the hopes, which they rest on me, not be vain."

"*January 5, 1822.* A rainy day. I remained at home till dinner-time. Went then to see Mess. Coolidge and Ritchie with whom I dined. We were all to go in the evening to the Princess Pauline Borghese's where I was to introduce them. We entered the palace just before eight: and were very glad to find only the Princess' own family collected. She soon made her appearance, sweetly dressed, arrayed in Beauty and smiles and received us most graciously. We formed a little circle round her, and she guided the conversation with a most winning sweetness of manner. I had never known what she is till now; for now she spoke of herself with ease and freedom, mentioned her own misfortunes, her predilection for the United States; saying they were the only asylum for persons who had suffered as she had. She spoke of her health, which is wretched; that she has grown wan and thin; (and yet even in her ill health

she is beautiful) she can eat nothing,—so weak is her stomach; and for the whole day had taken only a little bouillion. She sees company; tho' she is fond of solitude: for her ill health inclines her to melancholy. She said all this with great suavity, made us observe how small her waist was, how thin her arms, which used to be large and round: showed us her ornaments, new articles for her toilette just received from Paris; chatting now like a moralist of her misfortunes and now like a woman of her beauty and ornaments. Fêtes she does not long for: for of fêtes she has had enough under the emperor: and even then two winters she left Paris to live at Nice. '*Malheur à ceux, qui ne trouvent de bonheur que dans les fêtes,*' said she; 'as for me I need repose; *j'ai besoin de repos, j'ai besoin d'amitiés.*' And she seemed to sum up her wishes in a fine climate, fine scenery, and the sea. And all this was said with such grace and sweetness, that we could not but feel deeply for her. Though a fallen princess she still preserves her dignity fully: she is the centre of conversation; the mistress of all present: she bids one to remove the table, another to sing, another to dance, and every one loves to be first to obey her. Without my requesting it she called for her tablets and wrote me a card of entrance to the pretty little villa, which she has been building in the environs of Rome, and which is reckoned very pretty. The Princess receives from Prince Borghese \$12,000 per year, which is I should think hardly enough to support her establishment; for her palace is vast; and she is unaccustomed to economy. Her toilette I think she said cost her \$4,000 per annum. Why, a mere gown

costs twenty dollars, observed she; as they entered a little into particulars. The Princess seemed to think it quite impossible for a lady to dress for only \$600 a year: a hundred and twenty guineas were nothing for a lady's toilette. And so tonight I believe we saw the Princess in all forms; in all too she seemed the most graceful, elegant and well bred woman that I have ever seen.

"We had some delightful music. 'Nothing but music does me good,' and the Princess seemed delighted as a most divine air was sung deliciously. We left the palace a little after ten; and were quite delighted with our evening and most particularly gratified that the Princess had received us on an evening, when there was no company with her. Her niece, a daughter of Louis, was in the room; and her eyes were of a black glossy beauty, that might produce an effect on young hearts.

"I came home and wrote as an exercise the verses,<sup>1</sup> which were hardly worth copying into my journal. Went to bed a little after 2 o'clock."

A week later the diary contains a sonnet with the following comment: "This sonnet is the first, which I ever ventured to undertake; and I write it as it were extempore merely for the sake of familiarising myself with the versification of sonnets. Of the thousands, which have been written, how few are really good for anything."

<sup>1</sup> These verses, "The Complaint of a Princess," were subsequently printed in Bancroft's small volume, *Poems* (Cambridge, 1823), to be mentioned in the next chapter.

For many Roman experiences which cannot be recounted in detail, and for their effect upon Bancroft, these portions of a letter to Dr. Kirkland must speak:

*To PRESIDENT KIRKLAND.*

*“ROME, February 10, 1822.*

“Were I to remain in Rome, till I grew tired of the place, or till I had seen all its wonders, I believe I never should move from it. But since time passes, and Rome must be left, I shall wait only a few days, and then visiting Naples, hasten to take leave of the Italian climate and the delights of the fine arts. I cannot express to you, how much happiness I have enjoyed in the last four or five months: and now that there are so many things, in which I have been particularly blessed, I regard myself as most fortunate in having seen Italy. When I began ascending the Alps, a most melancholy event<sup>1</sup> in our family had made me very unhappy; the winds of the North seemed more piercing than ever; the mountains were already covered with snow; and with mournful heart and blood thoroughly chilled I halted for a half hour on the top of the Simplon. But in the afternoon as we rolled down the south side of the mountain, I began to feel how reviving a Southern sun is; and on gaining the plain and finding the trees still verdant, the air mild as in spring, and the fields still covered with flowers, I grew glad in spite of myself: a generous warmth diffused itself through the system, and the mind grew warm too: and ever since then, from

<sup>1</sup> The death of his brother John. See pp. 65, 122.

the Borrorean isles to St. Peter's, from Venice to the hills of Tusculum and Alba, one emotion of admiration and rapture has succeeded to another, as if curiosity could never be fatigued, nor the means of gratifying it exhausted. Everything conspires to make a journey in Italy the most interesting in the world: the climate, the sky, the scenery, the cities and the country, classical recollections, the galleries gathered from the relics of antiquity, the elegant language, its enchanting literature, the productions of modern art keep the eyes and the mind constantly and deliciously employed. Were there nothing here but the fresco paintings of Raphael, I would go round the world thrice to see them. And here a short walk brings me to them; and a few minutes more to the Apollo, to Laocoon, and the whole gallery of marble divinities and heroes. . . .

“When I think of the time, when I ran about Worcester as a boy, that knew nothing of Europe but what little may be learned from books, and knew but as much Latin and Greek as a common schoolboy in America, and reflect on what I may since have enjoyed or learned, I cannot but wonder at my own happy destiny. Have I indeed learned to feel that Homer and Sophocles are divine? Has Æschylus, has Dante a voice intelligible to me? Can I love Virgil and Tasso? Can I admire Michel Angelo as I would Pindar? Raphael as I do Virgil? Can I be admitted to the school of Plato? Have I walked in the temples and halls of Agrippa and Augustus? Has life a charm for me above the enjoyments of senses? And do I live in health, and feel the influence of a delightful climate, and owe all this

to [illegible]. I remember always and well, that I do owe **all the delights of life**, which I most value, to your disinterested regard, which deemed me not unworthy of encouragement and not incapable of improvement. . . .”

On February 15th Bancroft set out for Naples. The journey thither and the sights and suggestions of Naples itself are graphically recorded in the diary. A letter of special personal interest was written at the same time:

To ANDREWS NORTON.

“NAPLES, *Tuesday, March 5, 1822.*

“*My very dear Sir.*—When a man has a longing, thought I as I left the mole this afternoon, what must he do? I remembered in answer the story of the little girl, who asked herself the same question, and replied, Do! my duty! You told me the tale as a child’s story: it would be well for many a man to think of its moral. My longing was an honest one; I desired to write to you how delighted I have been with Rome; how charmed I am with Naples. A vessel is on the point of embarking for Boston: I cannot let it depart without some testimony of my remembering you constantly. I was actually hastening home to write to you, when accident brought me your most affectionate, most welcome letter of the 29 December. The negligence of the Neapolitan Postmaster had nearly deprived me of it. Your counsels and reflections incline me rather to thought than to writing: but tomorrow I am going to



Pestum, and only tonight remains for reminding you of me.

“The poet, who has written the message sent by the soul of Cornelia to her husband Paulus (’tis Propertius in the last elegy, I believe, of his last book) makes her say, ‘I have lived without a blemish from the marriage to the funeral torches.’ It has long been my wish to be able to say, when I see the Boston lighthouse, from which I took my departure  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years ago,—*viximus insignes inter utramque facem*.

“I came abroad so young and have been abroad so long, that I return as it were a stranger to my own country. There are hardly four or five houses in which I feel sure of finding myself remembered. You will remember me, and though my face may be changed you will find my heart unaltered. If when I come peeping my head into your parlour door, you smile and look glad to see me near you again, I shall rather look at your face than at the finest picture of Raphael’s. . . .

“As for my handwriting I will try to improve. I hope this letter will look a little neater than my last, though lines [letter torn] and even letters are crooked. But you know I write in haste: my next must be done better. You speak of fame: the fame I wish for is the praise of the virtuous and intelligent. I had rather be honourable and virtuous than be esteemed so. But I remember what Glaucus’s papa told him. As to manners I may come home awkward: I may return with outlandish habits. Now you give me advice: I will make a request. I ask for your friendship, if you find me worthy of it: but you are not to decide in ten

minutes: if I have odd or improper ways tell me of them honestly and plainly. Then if I do not reform, send me to solitude and friendlessness. I hope to improve more in the first twelve months at home, than I have ever done in a year in Europe.

“Commend me to Mrs. Norton as an old friend of yours or if you will as a new one you are going to make: or as a stranger, who is coming to Cambridge and to whom you have some thoughts of being civil. Time flies. Good night, good night. The midnight stars have long since passed the zenith, and before morning breaks I must write two more letters. They will be short, I assure you. Commend me to Mr. Frisbie. I am heartily glad, that he still thinks of me, and hope soon to be inaugurated as his reader again. I have read no English books these 3½ years. Good night. Ever yours. When you pray for absent friends, I hope I am included. I shall sail in May if I can. The season and the voyage awaken in me too melancholy recollections. *Valeo. Cura ut valeas.* I am glad you begin your letter dear George, and am glad you end it so. Best of men, *Cura ut me ames.*”

The excursion to Paestum was duly made and points of architectural and archæological interest were noted with care. On March 8th, Bancroft with three companions set out in a small boat to see the coast of the gulf of Salerno. Landing at Amalfi they were asked to show their passports, which they could not do. The zealous local officials brought them before a justice, who in turn sent them on to the Governor of Salerno.

It was to him that they owed two nights in a dirty prison, "half devoured by evil insects and bugs of darkness." Such misfortunes, set down in the diary, were relieved by the liberty accorded the prisoners by day. Bancroft took advantage of this freedom to see and describe the beauties of nature about him. He also gave vent to his feelings in verses written by the seashore, and bearing the title of "The Young Prisoner's Lament." The first four of the thirty-two lines are typical of all:

How couldst thou leave thy native land,  
Where waves the flag of liberty,  
To fall within a tyrant's hand,  
And lose thy birthright—to be free?

On the third day of this annoying experience, a messenger brought an order of release from the police at Naples, whither Bancroft returned for an unexpected fortnight before returning to Rome.

From Rome Bancroft soon set out on the northward journey which turned his face definitely towards home. There are records of what he saw and did in Florence and other places. Of all these pages the most notable are those which describe a glimpse of Byron. In a letter to John Murray from Byron written May 26, 1822, from Montenero, near Leghorn, where the poet was living at the time with the Countess Guiccioli, there is a reference to Bancroft's visit, together with an allusion to the good opinion in which the visitor told him his works were held by Goethe and the Germans, and an account of a visit to the *Constitution*. The first half

of Byron's letter has to do with the sending of his daughter Allegra's body to England for burial. Bancroft himself, late in life, wrote for the *New York Ledger* an article on "A Day with Lord Byron." A tangible reminder of the visit, a copy of *Don Juan* given to the visitor with the author's autograph on its fly-leaf, was one of the treasures of Bancroft's library, and finally passed with all his books to the Lenox Library in New York. For the substance of the *Ledger* article Bancroft evidently had recourse to the following passages from his journal.

"LEGHORN, *May 21, 1822.*

"Joined Major Stith in a visit to the *Constitution*. Lord Byron came on board. We were presented to him. From the *Constitution* he went to the *Ontario*, where Capt. Chauncy received him with most distinguished civility. A salute was fired, the yards were manned: and three cheers given in most glorious and clear union."

"*May 22.* Rode to Monte Nero this morning. Wrote to Lord Byron a short note. 'Mr. Bancroft, an American citizen, ventures to request the honour of waiting on Lord Byron. Monte Nero, Wednesday Morning.' I sent this note and received immediately the following answer. 'Sir. I shall be very happy in your visit. Could you make it convenient about an *hour* hence—for I have been lazy to-day and am not yet drest—and (I am ashamed to say) hardly awake—I

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted in the *History of the Battle of Lake Erie, and Miscellaneous Papers*. By Hon. George Bancroft, New York: Robert Bonner's Sons, 1891.

have the honour to be yr obedt humble servt (Signed) Noel Byron. May 22d, 1822.' I amused myself with plucking myrtle and looking at the sea during the hour.

"When I reached Lord Byron's seat, I was at once shown into a cool room and in a moment his Lordship joined me, offering me his hand. At first he asked me many questions about the fleet, about our officers, our ships, and our battles. He seemed even informed of the duels, which had taken place among them, knowing the names of the parties and the particulars of the quarrels. We did not talk very long of these matters, but came upon literature.

"He spoke of several countrymen. Of Ticknor, of Everett, of Coolidge. He spoke particularly of W. Irving whose *Knickerbocker* he seemed very fond of. His style he called 'rather florid,' but commended highly. I expressed my delight on hearing praises of my countrymen; but Byron replied: His feelings as to Irving were common to all his countrymen.

"We spoke of Germany. He asked if I knew Goethe. I answered I did, and reported faithfully what I had heard Goethe say of him. I then told him of the translations which have so often been made of his works, and of the great admiration, which all Germans had for him. This B. said was new to him, and would serve as some solace for the abuse which he was constantly receiving from home. He then spoke of himself with the greatest frankness, of the abuse lavished upon him on all sides in England, of a new article Jeffries was preparing for him, of a letter addressed to his publisher: 'not to me'—said he—'for

me they deem incorrigible.' He spoke of the king as of one determined to persecute him. 'I never went to court,' said B., 'and one evening at a ball was presented to the king at the king's own request.' And yet the king complains of B.'s having written eight lines against him after having been treated so civilly. 'The lines,' added B., 'were written before I was presented to him.'

"I mentioned Goethe's comparison of *Faust* and *Manfred*: and Byron observed, evidently in earnest, that he deemed it honour enough to have his work mentioned with *Faust*. As to its origin, Lord B. said that some time before he had conceived the idea of his piece, Monk Lewis had translated to him some of the scenes and had given him an idea of the plan of the piece.

"Speaking of the immorality of his works, he said: Why what are Fielding and Smollett and those authors? He seemed to think there were worse things in Smollett than in anything he had ever written. What would they say, too, to the introduction to Goethe's *Faust*? Many of his friends, he said, in Italy as well as in England, had entreated him not to go on with *Don Juan*.

"He had dedicated one of his late works to Goethe; but for some reason or other his publisher had omitted to print it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> With a letter from Italy to John Murray, October 17, 1820, Byron enclosed a paper headed, "For *Marino Faliero*. Dedication to Baron Goethe, etc., etc., etc." It was a long production attacking Wordsworth, Southey and English poets in general. Murray seems to have taken it with insufficient seriousness, and Goethe never saw it till 1831, when John Murray, 3rd, handed it to him at Weimar. See *Works of Lord Byron. Poetry*, Vol. IV. Edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge. Footnote, p. 340.

"Shelley is translating *Faust*: 'Shelley of whom you may have heard many foolish stories, of his being a man of no principles, an atheist and all that: but he is not.'

"Lord Byron related to me the late scrape, into which he or his servant got at Pisa.

"He laughed at the story Goethe tells of his murdering a man at Florence—hopes Goethe may not hear of this affair of Pisa, lest he should make a famous story out of it.

"He asked me if I had come out on foot, offering me his carriage or his horse to return with.

"I was taken into another room, without knowing that I was doing anything more than going to enjoy new views from the pleasant villa where Byron resides. I was astonished to find myself in the same room with a most exquisitely beautiful lady, of apparently twenty-five. She was on the sofa. I had the seat nearest her. Conversation was now carried on in Italian, of music, of the fine piano-fortes made in Germany, of Berlin and the love of Berlin ladies for Music, of *Lalla Rookh*, of France and Italy, in short of the things which are proper to be discussed in the company of a very pretty woman. Lord Byron speaks Italian perfectly, the lady with the sweetest pronunciation in the world. She is of a delicate style of beauty: has a fine neck, a lovely complexion, on her cheeks the richest vermilion colour; a fine white forehead, a sweet little mouth, a graceful nose, good teeth; she is tall and her waist beautifully small. Innocence and repose seem the leading expression of her countenance. Her smile is

heavenly; her dark eyes have a calm and gentle expression; and though I have seen more splendid beauty, I have seldom seen any, who produced on me a pleasanter impression.

"Lord Byron says he left Ravenna because all his friends were exiled. The priests stuck up an affiche threatening him with I know not what. The young men of Italy, Lord B. thinks, are in a good way; they long for liberty. Let them get that, and then afterwards study politics and understand it.

"Lord B. wishes to go to America. He could judge it impartially: till now none had been there but spectators: he would go unprejudiced; at least with no prepossessions for his Mother country."

In a letter to Samuel A. Eliot, May 29, 1822, Bancroft gave this further account of the meeting with Byron:

"*My dearest friend*, . . . I have seen the opposite part of Tuscany too, the Val d'Arno, which is even finer than the fine descriptions of it can make you expect. Pisa round which the Appenines rise in circles of infinite grace, Leghorn while an American Squadron lay moored in the harbour. I must begin a new period to tell you what else I've seen: what do you think now: I went on board the Commodore's ship, Sir! the *Constitution* or *Old Ironsides* as she hath been rightly termed: Well! Is that all? Not quite. A short time after I had been on board a man, who wore his hair very long, with full fat cheeks, a healthy lively pair of dark eyes, a cheerful forehead, a man of gentle manners though of



a misshapen foot, a man of rank and some note in our small world, came on board. Whom do you guess it was? Prince Borghese? No, the fat old goat I do not mean. The Tuscan Duke? No, he is a good fellow to be sure, quite a radical, an honest man, who wears a blue coat and a white hat, and is drawn about by six horses. 'Tis not he I mean. Who was it then? Why nothing but a poet; yet it was a pleasure to have a poet on board an American Squadron, and to have been presented to Lord Byron anywhere else, would not have given me half so much pleasure as it did to meet him on American boards and beneath the American flag. I was out to see him afterward, and was treated by him with more civility than I have ever been by any man in Europe. I hardly know if I ever talked with a man so frankly. He is very gay and fashionable in his way of talking, will converse of duels and horses, rows and swimming and good principles of Liberty, and in short is one of the pleasantest men in the world. Of himself he spoke with the utmost openness, of his success and his enemies. I was taken into a room of his villa: as I believed to enjoy the prospect toward the West: when my eyes were suddenly dazzled by beauty almost more than human and my ears soothed by the sweetest Italian accents from sweet Italian lips. Who was the lady? I know not. It was a beautiful apparition, and why attach harsh ideas and harsher words to one who looked so innocent and conversed so purely? . . ."

On June 12th Bancroft wrote again to Eliot from Marseilles: "At last the day has arrived, and I hold

myself every moment ready to obey the summons from the ship which is to bear me home. . . . I embark on board the good ship *Belle*. We are bound for New York, a port which suits me quite as well as Boston would, since 'tis but a half day's journey more from New York than from the city of Boston to Worcester."

On August 8, 1822, Bancroft wrote from Worcester to President Kirkland: "I owe you my intellectual existence, my hopes and my happiness. If I can enter with fine prospects the paths of usefulness and honour, I am indebted for this advantage to you." With the final page of the letter, the young student may be left upon the threshold of his efficient years:

"Five days ago I reached New York, and my own home last evening. I have stolen a few minutes from my sisters to inform you of my welfare.

"As soon as the first welcoming is over, I must begin to think seriously of my future destiny. Or rather I must *decide* on it. The days of tranquil uninterrupted study are past; it would be foolish to sigh after them; yet they were pleasant once, when the progress of time was marked only by progress in letters, and the morning opened on the still and cheerful continuance of the labours of the evening. Those days are gone by; my wishes now prompt me—my situation forces me—to action. I must resolve on my future pursuits and course of life immediately: for till I have a fixed resolution I shall [word missing] and I detest and dread an undecided spirit. Yet I could wish to know your opinion or desires, if you take interest enough in me to

make me an object of desire or thought. I hope to be at Cambridge in a few days; but as I cannot tear myself at once from the embraces of my friends in Worcester, I could wish to be favoured with a few lines which might guide me in my decision. At any rate I hope soon to be near you, and to profit by your counsels.

“Most gratefully and most sincerely,

“GEORGE BANCROFT.”

### III

## THE PERIOD OF TEACHING

1822—1831

THERE were some harsh changes in store for Bancroft when his wanderings were done. Abroad he had enjoyed the distinction that belonged to a young, accomplished representative of a race then seldom represented in Europe. There was also the consciousness of the high place he had in the regard of those who had sent him away at eighteen. On his return he soon found himself under the scrutiny of a highly critical community, with standards of its own firmly fixed and little modified through contacts from without. His true friend Andrews Norton must have detected in Bancroft's correspondence symptoms of departure from the accepted modes of thought and expression. In a long letter of good advice, December 29, 1821, in answer to which Bancroft made the plea for forbearance already quoted,<sup>1</sup> Norton had said to the young traveller: "Our state of society is such as to require an extraordinary degree of attention to manners, in order that one may be respectable and useful. A man of learning and

<sup>1</sup> See p. 144.

talents will be judged of by many who cannot judge of him as a man of learning and talents; and his reputation and influence will be in no small degree affected by their feelings and impressions. . . . There is no place, I believe, where anything implying a considerable defect in character, anything like ostentation or vanity, anything *outré* or *bizarre* (if I may use two French words at once) is observed with a keener perception of ridicule, or tends more to the disadvantage of him in whom it is discovered."<sup>1</sup> It was almost inevitable that symptoms detected in letters should express themselves still more strongly in personal intercourse with the returned traveller. Such expressions took place at once—and first of all in Bancroft's relations with Andrews Norton, who is even said to have been subjected immediately to kisses on both cheeks, a form of greeting certainly both *outré* and *bizarre* in the Cambridge of 1822.

It is unnecessary to go into the details of the breach between the two scholars who, as the reader will have seen, had stood upon terms of affectionate intimacy tempered only by their disparity of years. That any estrangement should have arisen was the greater pity because it was so largely a matter of externals, which at that time Bancroft might have modified enough to win himself a surer approval in the community of which Andrews Norton was an influential member. "He had brought from Europe," writes one of his warmest admirers,<sup>2</sup> "a new manner, full

<sup>1</sup> From letter lent by Prof. C. E. Norton.

<sup>2</sup> W. M. Sloane in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. XXVI, 1902.

of the affectations of ardent youth, and this he wore without ease in a society highly satisfied with itself; the young knight-errant was therefore subjected to considerable ridicule." And in the face of ridicule the good opinion of one's neighbours is hard to hold.

Bancroft's lack of popularity with the dominant Harvard and Boston circle has commonly been ascribed to his espousing the Democratic side in local and national politics. This came later, and doubtless played its important part. But it needs no clairvoyance to see in the unpropitious beginning of Bancroft's resumed relation with the Cambridge community some explanation of a condition that was far from fortunate. The sensitive man who places himself early in a trying light is not the best person, as time goes on, to get himself out of it and to stand just where his best qualities will always be the most conspicuous. It is much easier for the spectator, removed by four score of years, to suggest what might have been brought about, than for the actor, young and with many valid grounds for self-confidence, to take the wisest step at every turn. One immediate course was comparatively clear, and at least incidentally it permitted Bancroft to make some requital to Harvard College for his immeasurable debt to her authorities. A tutorship in Greek at once presented itself, and for the college year of 1822-1823 Bancroft filled the post. A letter to his friend Eliot shows him established in his new work, yet looking forward to the ministerial labours for which also he had been fitting himself.

To S. A. ELIOT.

[www.libtool.com](http://www.libtool.com) "CAMBRIDGE, September 24, 1822.

"*My dear friend Eliot.*—That I have safely returned to my own country, that I have found all my nearer kindred in good condition, prospering and happy, and that employment has already been found for me are certainly reasons for gratitude to the very good Being, who has drawn the lines of my life so pleasantly. You will rejoice with me in the midst of these happy things; and now in writing I feel them the more deeply for the belief, which I have, that you will take an interest in them, and feel a moment's satisfaction at hearing of my welfare.

"Now that I am at home my first labour must be to make myself acquainted with the state of feeling about me. I have grown quite estranged from my own country and countrymen: it has been my lot to spend four years in the land of strangers; my ways of thinking are I firmly trust worthy of New England; but my manner of expressing them may have a foreign character; and it is an affair of no small importance to be able to speak our opinions in an impressive and acceptable manner. Having heard for so long a time the accents of foreign tongues, I forget in some measure, that Chatham's language is mine too; and many an unfortunate French or German phrase or sweet Italian is interceding for utterance, when I should in decency talk nothing but plain English. These little difficulties will pass soon, and before winter, I expect to find all the superfluous excitability, which I gathered in Southern countries, chilled to a calmness fit for our colder latitudes.

"It is now a little more than a month since I landed

at New York. The first sensations which are felt on seeing one's own country again after a long absence, are more pleasant, more exquisite and more intense, than I could have believed. In entering the bay of New York I could do nothing but admire; I thought I had never seen such deep and beautiful green as I then saw all along the Jersey shore; it seemed to me, that no country has such neat and pretty villages, such cheerful townships, such a transparent atmosphere and glowing sky as our own. I was inclined to find everything agreeable and beautiful. Yet on travelling from New York to Worcester I could not but feel that, pleasant as the general surface of our country may be, it is not formed after the higher laws of beauty. I look in vain for the land of romance, for the bold scenery or the luxuriant landscapes, which charmed me in other countries; I find it necessary to check those feelings, which find their gratification in contemplating exultingly the richness and daring contrasts of natural scenery. I remember, that our country is the land of our hearts for different and more serious reasons: I think of it as the place of refuge for pure religion, for civil liberties, for domestic happiness, and for all the kindly affections of social life; and while I am still dwelling on these reflections and the calm promise of comfort and pure enjoyment, which they inspire, I find myself at my Father's door, and the embrace of a mother and sisters tells me, that my hopes are not false ones. I love my country; I love it deeply; all my fair promise of usefulness and good name are connected with it: my chance of being remembered rests upon my attachment to it;



I would not desert it for all the high enjoyment of the fine arts, or all the luxuries of life, which are so common in Italy. I like its pure soil, and its calm, sober, manly inhabitants; I like most of all their uncorrupted hearts, the general purity of their devotions, the earnestness and sincerity of their affections.

“After spending about ten days with my friends and kin in the country, I came to Cambridge, where I was indebted to your sister for a very happy week, which I passed in her hospitable house. We cannot but be happy, when we are always in the presence of the virtuous and contented. While at Mrs. Norton’s, I felt more forcibly than ever the truth of what you loved to inculcate; that America is the country, where domestic happiness is best known and most duly prized; that *stability of character*, resulting from a proper union of mind, *good principles* and intelligence, gives the promise of respectability and happiness; and that of all blessings, which ever fall to the lot of man, a virtuous and affectionate wife is the one most highly to be valued. After spending the Commencement season very delightfully at or near Cambridge, I went with Dr. Kirkland to Providence, where we were much entertained by various amusing customs of the place, and were also amused and gratified by the civilities of the good people of Providence and the performances of the young men, who took their degrees this year. On returning from this Rhode Island Commencement I went again into the country; my first business there was, to write a couple of sermons; and ten days ago I began preaching in my Father’s pulpit. Last Sunday I was sent to Bolton to

officiate in the absence of the clergyman, who on that day preached for my Father; so I now consider myself as engaged in the good work, and mean soon to declare myself a candidate. In preaching I shall endeavour to be earnest and impressive rather than oratorical, and hope to write serious evangelical sermons, rather than fashionable ones. To speak from the pulpit is a very solemn thing; and as the sacredness of the place guarantees the speaker from interruption, it should also serve to warn him against attempts at vain display, or useless exhibition of talents or learning. . . .

“The place of younger Greek tutor became vacant at Commencement: The corporation have done me the honour to appoint me to it. I feel obliged to them for this early testimony of their confidence. I have accepted it but only for a year, and in the mean time can at my leisure consider the state of society at home, and decide on the course of life, which may seem most eligible to me. I shall probably preach in the meantime, and the result of my deliberations will very likely be that I shall be settled as a clergyman. . . .”

Within a few months he was writing to Eliot again, telling of the difficulties he had overcome in reorganising the methods of teaching Greek at Cambridge, and confiding to his friend a plan which was to have an important bearing upon his immediate future.

To S. A. ELIOT.

“CAMBRIDGE, December 3, 1822.

“ . . . Shall I tell you a plan of mine? It is still a great secret: nobody knows aught of it at home except

Mr. Everett, Mr. Ticknor, and Dr. Kirkland, who may have told it to Mr. Lowell, who may have told it to dozens. I have considered the nature of high schools, grammar-schools, Gymnasia, Classical schools and the like: I have consulted the books, which treat of education: I have reflected on the *means* and *end* of education. Now I am going to turn *schoolmaster*. I long to become an independent man, namely a man, who lives by his own labours. Mr. Cogswell has seen so much of the world, that he knows it and its folly: he will join me in my scheme: we will together establish a school, the end of which is to be the moral and intellectual maturity of the mind of each boy we take charge of; and the means are to be first and foremost *instruction in the classics*. We intend going into the country, and we shall choose a pleasant site, where nature in her loveliness may breathe calmness and inspire purity. We will live retired from the clamours of scandal and the disputes of the irresolute. We will delight ourselves with letters, and instead of warring against the corporation and contending with scandalous reports, we will train up a few minds to virtue and honour, and hope that when we die there will be some hands to throw flowers over our tombs. Our school is to be set on foot directly after the next Commencement. I am engaged for a year at Cambridge, and Mr. Cogswell must finish his library. Then we hope to enter on a pleasanter kind of duty; we will plant gardens, lay out walks, beautify nature, and propagate good knowledge. We call our establishment a school, and we mean to consider ourselves as schoolmasters. We might indeed

assume a pompous name, speak of instituting a Gymnasium: but let the name be modest. I like the sound of the word schoolmaster. A rose does indeed by any name smell as sweet; and I hope nobody will like me the less for assuming the character of a pedagogue."

As the year at Cambridge wore on, Bancroft found himself less and less satisfied with his surroundings: "For myself," he wrote to Eliot, May 10, 1823, "I have found College a sickening and wearisome place. Not one spring of comfort have I had to draw from. My state has been nothing but trouble, trouble, trouble, and I am heartily glad that the end of the year is coming so soon." In the same letter he said: "I have been preaching, might perhaps if I would, be advantageously settled. But I think it better to wage the warfare of learning than of faith, for the plain reason that I hold myself better fitted for the first, than for the last. Our country needs good instructors more than good preachers, and so I shall stick to the first business, spite of the temptation of leading the easier life of a parochial clergyman."

Among the Bancroft papers I find a package of eleven sermons in manuscript. Upon most of them the dates and places of their delivery are endorsed. The dates range from September of 1822 to July of 1823. Some of the sermons were thought worthy of repetition, one of them bearing the record of seven deliverances. During the eleven months covered by these endorsements, thirty-six preachings are recorded. With a small allowance for omissions of the record, it

appears that Bancroft preached practically four times in each month of this period. The leading clergymen of Boston and its neighbourhood gave him the freedom of their pulpits. Of the sermons themselves it must be said that they seem to need all the aid which their writer's personality could have brought to them. They are marked less by a distinctively religious sentiment—though that is by no means always lacking—than by a strong ethical and philosophical bent. The unobscure truths which the preacher set forth in somewhat laboriously rounded periods smacked rather of the academic essay than of a message burning to be delivered. It may be that other sermons of the period, by novitiates who persevered and attained distinction, would make a similar impression upon a reader to-day. Nevertheless one cannot but sympathise with Bancroft in deciding so soon that preaching was not his vocation.<sup>1</sup>

At about the same time Bancroft published his first book, and with it brought to an end his poetic, as he was already concluding his collegiate and ministerial, career. His European diaries and letters have already shown him busily engaged in metrical composition. The volume of *Poems*, a slender book of seventy-seven

<sup>1</sup> It does not appear that his hearers, at least in his father's parish, were any better satisfied. "The tradition in Worcester is that his manner was regarded as somewhat artificial and as so different from that which was usual at the time in the pulpit as to prevent religious services as conducted by him from being wholly acceptable either to his father or his father's congregation." Samuel Swett Green, in *Proceedings of American Antiquarian Society*, April, 1891.

Emerson, on the other hand, thought favourably of the young preacher. On January 3, 1823, when he was twenty years old,

pages, bears on its title-page the date of 1823, with Cambridge as the place of publication. The dedication to President Kirkland is dated Northampton, September, 1823, and its most considerable poem, "Pictures of Rome," is dated Worcester, July, 1823. All the other poems appear to have been written while he was abroad. Indeed, most of them are to be found, lacking their final polish, in his journals. The influence of Byron is so apparent in them that one can hardly help asking whether the young traveller, in his more complacent moments, may not have aspired to become an American Childe Harold. Subjective visions of nature and art are the prevailing themes. The naïveté of youth makes itself frequently felt. Of poetic spontaneity there is little, though, especially in the lament for his unreturning sailor-brother which fills a page of the "Pictures of Rome," there are genuine expressions of deep feeling. Yet the book leaves an impression kindred to that of the manuscript sermons—that poetry also was a pursuit to which Bancroft's years of devotion were wisely limited. Very soon after the publication of the book, Bancroft, in writing to President Kirkland (November 4, 1823), seems to feel that it "has not been

he wrote to a friend: "I am happy to contradict the rumors about Bancroft. I heard him preach at New South a few Sabbaths since, and was much delighted with his eloquence. So were all. He needs a great deal of cutting and pruning, but we think him an infant Hercules. All who know him agree in this, that he has improved his time thoroughly in Göttingen. He has become a perfect Greek scholar, and knows well all that he pretends to know; as to divinity, he has never studied, but was approbated abroad." See Cabot's *Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, I, pp. 93-94.

much cared for," and goes on to say, "I have rather the patience of mind, required for the pursuits of learning and efforts in prose than the bold invention, which gives life to original [word missing]. But such as our powers are, we must be content with [word missing] only endeavoring to make the most of them." It is the tradition, perhaps with fact for a basis, that in later life Bancroft took every means to collect and destroy all obtainable copies of his *Poems*, as unworthy to stand beside his "efforts in prose."

The preaching and the poetical venture both belonged to Bancroft's year at Harvard, though the *Poems* were made public after its completion. It has been seen that Bancroft's next step—the establishment of a school for boys—was definitely planned before he had spent many months in the Harvard tutorship. As early as 1819, Everett had written to Bancroft in Germany: "Could you have a liberal and proper support, I know no better place for you than a learned School, and the College would be indebted to you, for the most important aid in carrying into execution the projected reforms in education. We can do nothing at Cambridge till we contrive the means of having the boys sent to us far better fitted than they are now." Bancroft's own early interest in the project has been recorded among his European experiences.<sup>1</sup> The care of young Frederic Henry Hedge in Germany, where Bancroft placed and visited him in important schools, had thrown much light upon educational problems and methods.<sup>2</sup> in

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 54, 65, 91, 128.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 97.

Berlin, as we have seen,<sup>1</sup> he had paid special heed to Schleiermacher's lectures on education. Besides all this, his love of sound learning and his hard-earned experience of its acquisition were important qualifications for his new task in many of its aspects.

His associate in the undertaking, Joseph Green Cogswell, subsequently librarian of the Astor Library in New York, had been more closely identified with Bancroft's European experiences than it was necessary for the preceding chapter to indicate. Many letters passed between the two Americans in Europe, and in Bancroft's letters to friends at home, there were, as we have seen, frequent admiring allusions to Cogswell. When they found themselves together at Cambridge—Bancroft as tutor in Greek, Cogswell as college librarian and professor of mineralogy and geology—there were naturally many sympathies to bind them each to each. Their common dissatisfaction with their surroundings only served to make the bond more close. George Ticknor, writing to his brother-in-law Samuel A. Eliot, February 1, 1823, said of the plan which Bancroft and Cogswell had formed: "This purpose arises mainly from their discontent at their situation in Cambridge."<sup>2</sup> He lamented their leaving the college, and felt that time and patience would have removed the causes of their discontent. Col. T. W. Higginson has printed a letter which his father, treasurer of the college, wrote in 1833: "Cogswell," he said, "could not manage things under control

<sup>1</sup> See p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Joseph Green Cogswell, as Sketched in His Letters*, p. 135.



of others and so left college." The judgment of Bancroft was even more severe: "His manners, style of writing, Theology, etc., bad, and as a Tutor only the laughing butt of all the College. Such an one was easily marked as unfit for a School."<sup>1</sup> This prescience was doubtless more easy in 1833 than it would have been ten years earlier, yet it helps one to appreciate Bancroft's complaint of "trouble, trouble, trouble" as his "state" in Cambridge.

Cogswell's qualifications for the new enterprise were very like those of Bancroft. His correspondence in Europe shows him—for a single example of parallel tastes—keenly interested in the school of Fellenberg at Berne,<sup>2</sup> where agriculture was combined with book-learning. His scholarship, like Bancroft's, was considered sound and enlightened. In the point of age he had the advantage of fourteen years for learning what he wished and was best fitted to do. Indeed, it must have appeared that Bancroft at twenty-three could hardly have had a better associate than Cogswell at thirty-seven.

To all the qualifications and motives must be added their genuine impulse to advance the cause of education in their native land. This they felt they could do best by making an entirely fresh experiment—for such was the Round Hill School at Northampton, Massachusetts, which they established in the autumn of 1823. In certain of its characteristics, it was a sporadic growth, not perpetuated in type; in certain essentials—especially that of the social character of its support—it

<sup>1</sup> See *Harvard Graduates Magazine*, September, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> See *Life of Joseph Green Cogswell*, pp. 80, 87.

was the prototype of two or three of the most prosperous boys' schools of this later day. The very names of its pupils might be mistaken for those of the boys now at one of the existing schools drawing chiefly upon Boston and New York.<sup>1</sup> The aims and achievements of the enterprise are worth regarding somewhat closely, not only for their bearing upon the life of Bancroft, but also for their significance in the progress of American education.

On June 9, 1823, Cogswell wrote to his sister: "On looking around Worcester, for a place to fix our projected school, Mr. Bancroft and myself did not find one exactly to our minds, and concluded to go as far as Northampton, and examine the neighborhood there. Our views were much better answered here. About half a mile from the village of Northampton, on the brow of a beautiful hill, overlooking the Connecticut, and the rich plain through which it flows, and the picturesque hills which form its banks, we found two houses to be let for a very small rent, and as all the circumstances connected with the situation were exactly to our minds, we concluded at once to begin our experiment there. Accordingly we have engaged the houses from September, and expect to enter upon our new duties the

<sup>1</sup> In the list of Massachusetts boys, for example, appear three Amorys, two Appletons, two Blakes, besides Francis Boott, John Murray Forbes and John Lothrop Motley; in the New York list there are three Livingstons, two Brevoorts, Samuel G. Ward and Le Grand Cannon; from the South came Carters, Middletons, Habershams and many others. It is the exceptional name, from North or South, which does not call up some association with a well-known family.

first of October."<sup>1</sup> On the evening of the opening day Bancroft wrote to President Kirkland in fervid language about the beauties of nature surrounding him, and the influences he expected them to impart. "Were I always to have a meadow like this of Northampton before me, and such *peaceful* mountains," he said, "I should forget that *Ætna* has its volcanoes and Syria its sands. We have been in full employment for some days. Mr. Cogswell is in fine spirits, and matters work together prodigiously well for our good. We have passed the day in receiving our pupils and in conversing with their parents, and '*locating*' the little fellows." A month later, November 5, 1823, Bancroft wrote in a letter to Edward Everett: "We are going on very smoothly and very happily. It is enough to be free from the perpetual interference and unsolicited judgments of others. At Northampton we are left entirely to ourselves; and there is some comfort in shaping one's conduct by one's own inclinations and views, without being obliged to bend to the ignorance of others, who undertake to controul, when they do not understand. Our little family is fast forming habits of obedience and order; and as confinement and retirement are no evils to a scholar, there is nothing which is unpleasant in our situation."

What, then, were the special characteristics of this Round Hill School to which Bancroft was giving him-

<sup>1</sup> See *Life of Joseph Green Cogswell*, pp. 135-136.—The houses were first rented, then bought for \$12,000; subsequently (1829) the "Round Hill Institution" was chartered, stock was issued, and the directors rented the property from the stockholders. *Cogswell*, pp. 152, 163.

self with so much of enthusiasm? The teachers, the taught and the lookers-on have all left their definitions of its aims and achievements. From these joint sources may be drawn enough to reconstruct the enterprise even more fully than the present occasion demands.

In a Prospectus which Cogswell and Bancroft issued in 1823, and in a pamphlet, "Some Account of the School for the Liberal Education of Boys established on Round Hill, Northampton, Massachusetts, by Joseph G. Cogswell and George Bancroft," which they issued three years later, their purposes find full expression. The advantages of beautiful surroundings in nature are set forth. A boy of nine is old enough to commence his regular studies; a boy of more than twelve is too old and, except in unusual circumstances, will not be received. It is with boys rather than young men that the school proposes to deal. The discipline is to be precautionary rather than punitive. English, mathematics and the modern languages are to be taught for all their indirect no less than their direct advantages. The uses of a good library, for both pupils and instructors, are insisted upon. "Wherever good books are brought together, they will find readers." All pupils must learn Latin, as "essential to a practical education." Greek is left to the decision of the parents, though the Prospectus makes it evident that a decision in its favour is warmly desired. In "Some Account, etc.," there is a passage touching the value of the classics in general, so characteristic in substance and form as to stand as a fair specimen of the Round Hill

declarations: "Acquaintance with a particular science may prepare for a particular station; but the principles of virtue and prudence are of universal value, and, in connection with habits of intellectual action and a taste for intellectual pleasures, form the characteristics of liberal education. These principles are universally the same in whatever age they may have been uttered, in whatever language they may have been expressed. Here is the reason, why the ancient orators, poets, and philosophers are still to be read. Moral truths are eternal ones. The aspect of every science is changing as fast as new discoveries are made; and new investigations render ancient treatises obsolete. Both [But?] Homer and Herodotus cannot become antiquated, until simplicity and moral feeling change their nature, nor the works of men like Sophocles and Demosthenes lose their dignity, till the laws of finished beauty and eloquence, till reason and sentiment become differently modified. Nor will these and some few other ancient writers cease to be of practical value, till the number of powerful writers shall have grown so large as to hide them in the crowd, or the light of genius have shed abroad its bright beams so abundantly as to outshine their lustre."

The "practical value" of the classics has been a fruitful theme of discussion since the days of Round Hill. So too has the question of physical exercise in schools. The pamphlet from which a passage has just been quoted deals with this matter at length: "Games and healthful sports, promoting hilarity and securing a just degree of exercise, are to be encouraged. We are deeply

impressed with the necessity of uniting physical with moral education, and are particularly favoured in exercising our plans of connecting them by the assistance of a pupil and friend of Jahn, the greatest modern advocate of gymnastics. We have proceeded slowly in our attempts, for the undertaking was a new one; but now we see ourselves near the accomplishment of our views. The whole subject of the union of moral and physical education is a great deal simpler, than it may first appear. And here, too, we may say, that we were the first in the new continent to connect gymnastics with a purely literary establishment."

Parents are enjoined against providing their boys with pocket-money. "Religion, as a principle, must be quickened and exercised during the period of education"—but without estranging the pupil from the religious usages of his parents. "Dress is to be regulated with reference to neatness, economy, and cleanliness." Let the masters themselves describe its regulation, and incidentally help the readers to visualise the school-boy of eighty years ago: "The dress which is adopted among us is as follows: Coat or roundabout and trowsers of blue grey broadcloth with bright buttons, waistcoat of light blue kersey-mere, for winter. Blue broadcloth is allowed instead of blue grey. Blue nankin or cotton suit complete, for summer; and for holidays, blue silk or bombazine coat or roundabout, white jacket and trowsers, drill or marseilles. Our object is, to establish a general uniformity. A plain blue cloth cap in winter, or a straw hat in summer, is allowed, instead of a hat."

For a glimpse of the daily life under the conditions set forth so earnestly by the masters, we may turn to *The United States Literary Gazette* for February 15, 1825. An article on "The School at Northampton" describes in glowing terms the ideals and qualifications of Cogswell, Bancroft and their assistants. A paragraph near the end of the article runs as follows: "Our readers may wish to know, particularly, how the day is passed at this school. They rise in winter at six; and, after the devotional exercises of the morning, are busy with teaching and study till eight, at which time all breakfast. They then engage in vigorous exercise till nine, when the season for intellectual labor again commences, and continues till noon. Two hours are allowed for exercise, dining, and for rest, when, at two, studies are resumed, and continued till four. An hour and a half is then employed in the sports and exercises suited to the season. The evening meal is over by six, when some time is passed in attending to declamations, and then about an hour and a half is given to study, and the exercises of devotion. The instructors and pupils spend a few moments around the fire, and the boys are sent to bed at half past eight. In the morning and evening religious services they chiefly use the excellent prayers of the Episcopal Church. The collects and various services furnish a variety of earnest and suitable petitions. Saturday evening they meet, but not for study. At that time exhortations are made to the boys on their studies and on subjects suggested by the events of the week. The older boys read the New Testament aloud to the school. On Sunday the smaller boys read

aloud in the Bible. The older ones are engaged with works of Paley, Forteus, or Mason, books where the duties of religion are inculcated without any of the spirit of party." According to this article there were then forty boys in the school. In the first eight years of its existence there were two hundred and ninety-three.<sup>1</sup>

It is a fortunate circumstance that one of these boys, gifted in later life with no mean powers of description, wrote and published his recollections of the school. This may now be found in the volume, *A Sheaf of Papers*, by Thomas Gold Appleton. Here one learns that Bancroft himself did much of the teaching, and directed the work of the assistant instructors, American and foreign. Cogswell was rather the "father of the community" and its general manager. The teaching was by no means confined to books. There were sketching and riding classes, and in a garden near the gymnasium, equipped with German appliances, "many infant lessons in farming were learned." One of the institutions of the place—at least till a boy's flirtation with a pretty vender of doughnuts and pies brought it to a close—was "Crony Village," a little colony of the boys' own building. Supplied with bricks, mortar, beams and boards, they made small houses for themselves, and, generally in families of two, rejoiced in cooking over their own hearthstones potatoes and game, perhaps some of the wild animals they were encouraged to trap, or the birds shot with bow and arrow in the neighbouring woods. Another institution was

<sup>1</sup> See *Life of Joseph Green Cogswell*, p. 353.



the annual journey of the school. With horses and waggons enough for about half of the boys to ride they set forth. By the "ride and tie" method they proceeded, in the expedition described by Mr. Appleton, as far as Saybrook, Connecticut, where they camped and enjoyed capital fishing in the smack provided for their use. It was doubtless thought to be in pursuance of the same healthful purpose that the boys were got up at six o'clock in winter, to wash in water crusted with ice which they used to grind against their cheeks like soap, and to study, partially by candle-light, till breakfast time. The table was good; yet it may be imagined that some of the boys would have enjoyed it more if conversation in foreign languages had not sometimes been prescribed as the accompaniment to food. It is probable that cake twice a week at tea was more highly relished. A popular house-keeper and her daughter supplied a valuable feminine element in the establishment. A boys' school without pillow-fights would be an anomaly indeed. Of these there is a reminiscence which may involve Bancroft himself. "On one occasion two stories were fighting for their platforms, the lower attempting by the stairs to carry the upper by storm. In the midst of the noisiest of the contest, a head-master was discerned ascending the stairs to make an end of this warfare. Seeing him, the fury of the combatants redoubled, and it was not without a certain sinful pleasure that the boys saw him lifted from his footing to the lowest stair, by the Homeric onslaught of one of the most active youths. In a moment the pretended accident of mistaking him for a boy was qualified

by apology, and offers of the profusest sympathy. His assailant was too well hidden in the clouds of soldiers to be discovered or punished."

Even if this last scene from life at Round Hill shows a head-master at the mercy of his boys, it is evident that the school was in general a delightful place. The pupils treasured its memory as one of their best possessions. Yet before Bancroft had had four years of it there are indications that it was beginning to pall upon him, and that he felt his true vocation still undiscovered. In a letter to President Kirkland, August 6, 1827, he wrote: "Perhaps you may like to hear from me, how I am situated in mind, affections, and estate? I would not undertake to draw for you a picture of my mind, though I might have little to conceal. For what need is there of reserve in a man, whose passions cannot gain strength, because every reasonable wish is gratified, and whose thoughts are kept from wandering by occupations which crowd the hours of day with employment? Yet there may sometimes arise unchecked a wish for greater leisure, to be devoted to letters;<sup>1</sup> I sigh for the enjoyment of study and the delight and pride of new acquisitions; a spirit within me repines, that my early manhood should be employed in restraining the petulance and assisting

<sup>1</sup> In the *Educational Review* for April, 1891, the Rev. George E. Ellis, recalling his school-days at Round Hill, throws some light upon Bancroft's concern for his own studies. While supposed to be superintending the study of the boys, he was apt, says Dr. Ellis, to become so engrossed in some book of his own, that pupils would creep on all fours out of the room. "He was absent-minded, dreamy and often in abstracted moods as well as very near-sighted. I have seen him come into the recitation

the weakness of children, when I am conscious of sufficient courage to sustain collisions with men; the desires of ambition seem to have fixed themselves on no definite object; I cannot yet say, what proof that I have lived, I may most desire to leave after me; I cannot pierce the veil that hides the future, nor even say to myself what my own heart would prefer. Yet I rejoice in my dependence on a merciful Providence, I am content to apply myself to my present duties with earnestness and fidelity; I will meet the future as it approaches, and shape my course according to the stream on which I sail."

There is no lack of evidence that Bancroft did apply himself faithfully to the present duties at Round Hill. It does not appear that the pupils remembered his teaching with the pleasure that marked their recollections of Cogswell. The Rev. George E. Ellis, writing as an old "Round-Hiller," helps us to apprehend the situation: "I suppose that Mr. Bancroft, though meaning in all things to be kind and faithful, was, by temperament and lack of sympathy with the feelings and ways of young boys, disqualified from winning their regard and from being helpful and stimulating to them. He seemed to be more earnestly bent on learning for himself than on helping them to learn. His single year

room at an exercise held before breakfast, with a slipper or shoe on one foot and a boot on the other. More than once he sent me across the road to his library for his spectacles. These were generally to be found shut into a book, which he had been reading before going to bed. The boys, who called him familiarly 'the Critter,' were fond of playing tricks upon him, which they could do with impunity, owing to his shortness of vision."

as a tutor in Harvard College, before going to Round Hill, resulted in experiences wholly unsatisfactory to himself as well as to the beloved President Kirkland, his associates in the faculty, and the students. There was a continual restiveness and embroilment excited by what were viewed as his crotchets. It should be said, however, that these infelicities showed themselves only in Mr. Bancroft's relations with boyish pupils. For scholars of maturer years and high ambitions, he was a most warm-hearted, kindly, and helpful friend, doing them various and highly valued service."<sup>1</sup>

If Bancroft had been an entire success, as a teacher, at Round Hill, one might expect to find indications that he enjoyed the work, and abandoned it reluctantly. But the note of regret is lacking in the record. On August 30, 1831, he wrote to Edward Everett: "In one short month I cease to be a school-master. What is to be done? My plan is to maintain my independence if I can. Should circumstances favour, I think I shall succeed; remaining, however, a dweller on the banks of the Connecticut." More than a year before writing this letter Bancroft had sold his interest in the school to Cogswell, remaining temporarily as a salaried instructor. It was upon the financial rock that Cogswell's bark was soon to come to grief. The expense of carrying out the generous plans which gave the school so much of its distinction, together with the difficulty of collecting the bills of certain easy-going patrons in the South, made the burden too heavy for Cogswell to carry indefinitely. In January, 1834, he was advertis-

<sup>1</sup> See *Educational Review*, April, 1891.

ing Round Hill for sale, and preparing to take a teaching position in Raleigh, North Carolina.<sup>1</sup> The experiment had proved a failure, from the worst effects of which Bancroft had saved himself by an earlier retirement. Yet it was an experiment which reflected nothing but credit upon its makers. Regarded either as a foreshadowing of what a more highly developed Transcendentalism might produce in New England, or as a premature attempt to give the chosen youth of America an anointment with the oil of education a little above their fellows, it stands forth as a piece of embodied idealism which the student of our intellectual phenomena cannot afford to overlook.

Had Bancroft confined his activities through the years at Round Hill to school-teaching, the closing of the school might well have proved disastrous to him. But it was then that he was putting to the test the powers of his pen. In 1824, 1825 and 1826 respectively appeared three text-books, a Greek Grammar, a Latin Reader, and a Cornelius Nepos, adapted from German editions to meet the need soon discovered by Bancroft in the American school-room. In 1824 he published in Boston a translation of the *Reflections on the Politics of Ancient Greece* by his Göttingen master, Heeren. This was followed in 1829 by two volumes, bearing the Northampton imprint, of Heeren's *History of the Political System of Europe and its Colonies, from the Discovery of America to the Independence of the American Continent*. Of this work Bancroft translated only a part, supervising the rest. The first of

<sup>1</sup> See *Life of Joseph Green Cogswell*, p. 184.

these translations, besides attracting the attention of the *Edinburgh Review*, was immediately reprinted at Oxford without intimation that Bancroft was responsible for its English form. All these undertakings had their value in acquainting the editor and translator with such technical knowledge of book production as the author needs. In the same period Bancroft was giving himself the far more important training of the author by abundant writing—especially in articles for the *North American Review*. Between 1823 and 1834 seventeen of these articles stand to Bancroft's credit. They deal chiefly with themes of classical and European scholarship, though in January of 1831, there was a paper on "The Bank of the United States" and later in the same year an article on Harvard University, supporting the project to increase the college library. The Bank article, occupying over forty pages of the *Review*, was not so much an attack upon the institution as an argument against the support it had received in the Report written by McDuffie for the Congressional Committee of Ways and Means. Bancroft's paper was a careful, simple piece of writing showing much study and thought. The reader is surprised to-day, as Bancroft was in 1831, to find it ending with a declaration in favour of renewing the charter of the bank and the promise of a second article on this phase of the subject. Bancroft wrote a second article which A. H. Everett, the editor, was unwilling to print; and three years later Bancroft, indignant at the gratuitous conclusion of his first article, and at the refusal of the second, compelled this written acknowledgment: "The last

sentence in the article on the Bank in the January number of the *North American Review* was not written by you nor seen by you before the number was printed and published."

The sixth of the seventeen *North American* articles was a paper on "The Life and Genius of Goethe," published in the October number of 1824. A friend sent it to Goethe, whose thanks in German for it may be rendered as follows:

"Your Excellency has put me anew under obligation by the periodical sent me. It is in every case noteworthy to see how the effects of a long life work through the world, and also gain gradually here and there in influence, according to the times and circumstances. I had to smile when I was obliged to regard myself in so distant and besides so republican a mirror.

"Moreover, this essay has a good effect upon everybody: so much intellect and insight, joined with a youthfully cheerful enjoyment in writing, excites a certain sympathetic, pleasant feeling. He was able to fill out pleasingly even the gaps where particular information, failed him and in general to round out the whole with euphemy."<sup>1</sup>

The "youthfully cheerful enjoyment in writing" which Goethe detected may be noticed in the other articles Bancroft was writing at this time. The episode of the Bank article has shown a healthy independence of spirit. This was sometimes carried to a point which made him a difficult contributor. How seriously he took his work as a product upon which no irreverent

<sup>1</sup> See *Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Amerikanern*, L. L. Mackall (Goethe-Jahrbuch, 1904).

hand must be laid, several passages in Bancroft's letters to Edward Everett reveal. In these he complains violently of the liberties which Jared Sparks, as editor of the *North American*, had taken with his "copy."<sup>1</sup> The integrity of his own self-expression was as dear to him as it has been to many another beginner before and since. Yet the contributions did not cease, nor were his efforts confined to the *North American Review*. In Walsh's *American Quarterly Review*, for example, we find among other articles from Bancroft a paper on H. E. Dwight's *Travels in North Germany*. This is particularly worth noting for its evidences of Bancroft's reversion to the European diaries which have provided so many of the earlier pages of the present volume. In a word, he was putting to good use all his acquisitions.

Thus, for Bancroft, the period of teaching was also in large measure a period of learning—in the school of practical experience in writing. In this period also fell the more vital circumstance of his first marriage, to Miss Sarah H. Dwight, daughter of Jonathan Dwight of

<sup>1</sup> On January 2, 1827, Sparks wrote to Bancroft: "I regret as much as you can, that the article [on Greek Lexicography] was printed, since you have such impressions of the business, though I have no sense of 'wrong' in the case, and can only wonder again at your strange notions of an editor's task, and of these things in general. I believe there is no mortal whose views on this subject in any respect resemble yours, and if all writers were thus minded, an editor's condition would be very much like that of a toad under a harrow. No man, in fact, would stand to such a post long—but let that pass . . ."

On December 11, 1826, Sparks had already pointed out to Bancroft "two grand mistakes: first, to suffer yourself to be unduly excited about comparatively small things; and, secondly, to have little respect for the judgment of others."



Springfield. The marriage took place March 1, 1827, before Bancroft's connection with the Round Hill School was severed. Between 1831 and 1837, when Mrs. Bancroft died, four children—two daughters, of whom the elder died in infancy, and two sons—were born. The period of teaching and learning extended well into Bancroft's maturity, but its length was well proportioned to his total length of days and labour.

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## IV

### POLITICS AND HISTORY

1831—1845

THE chapters of a man's life can never begin and end so definitely as the chapters of the book describing it. Bancroft did not turn all at once from learning to teaching, from poetising to preaching, from books to affairs, from affairs to historiography. The busy early years of his life, already reviewed, had room, before the task of school-master was ended, for the beginnings of the two activities to which the remainder of his life was devoted—politics, emerging later into statesmanship, and historical study and writing, unremittingly pursued for nearly sixty years.

While he was still one of the masters of Round Hill, Bancroft delivered, in 1826, the Fourth of July oration at Northampton. This was his first public political utterance. It was not an occasion for partisan argument, and was not utilised for that purpose. Yet it is a significant fact that on this very day when Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were dying, it was the Virginia not the New England statesman whom Bancroft in his patriotic oratory described as one "whose principles are identified with the character of our

Government, and whose influence with the progress of civil liberty throughout the world." It was the Jeffersonian doctrine that he set forth when he declared, with reference to the Constitution, that "the sovereignty of the people is the basis of the system. With the people the power resides, both theoretically and practically. The government is a democracy, a determined, uncompromising democracy; administered immediately by the people, or by the people's responsible agents." And again: "The popular voice is all powerful with us; this is our oracle; this, we acknowledge, is the voice of God."

The words, uttered before any party considerations could have counted for much with Bancroft, are worth noting. There has always been speculation about the influences which made Bancroft a Democrat, and separated him, in Massachusetts, from most of his natural associates. The social and academic traditions of these associates held them safe within the Federalist-Whig succession. Those who stood outside of it, with the supporters first of Jefferson and then of Andrew Jackson, were regarded almost as the supporters of "Ben" Butler at a later day. The stronger convictions of the first half of the century expressed themselves perhaps even more definitely in lifted eyebrows and cold averted shoulders. There were indeed those who entertained the suspicion—still preserved orally—that so shrewd an observer as George Bancroft foresaw the triumphs of Democracy, and knew that the few distinguished Democrats in Massachusetts must obtain distinguished political rewards. When Harriet Marti-

neau visited America in 1834-1835, she saw something of Bancroft, and may very well have derived from him the impression preserved in these words in her *Society in America*.<sup>1</sup> "A Massachusetts man has little chance of success in public life unless he starts a Federalist: and he has no chance of rising above a certain low point, unless, when he reaches that point, he makes a transition into Democracy."

In the light of all these considerations the words of 1826, when Bancroft himself, teaching school in a New England village, was but twenty-six years old, are certainly significant; and in the absence of any evidence in the preserved correspondence that personal advantage dictated his choice of a party, it is fair to assume that the Northampton oration represented Bancroft's native political bent, nurtured by travel and study, toward a theoretic belief in democracy pure and simple. His later political utterances expressed this belief again and again. Certainly it is the belief which coloured—often with too clear a partiality—many pages of his history. Whether the history was tinged by his political convictions, or his politics were determined by his historic bent, would be a fruitless discussion. There were the two phenomena side by side; and it must be said that Bancroft the politician and Bancroft the historian, were consistent exponents of the same democratic principle.

He knew well enough that his views would be unpopular in his own circle. Three days before delivering his Northampton oration he wrote to his *fiancée*, Miss

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, p. 137.

Dwight, in Springfield: "If your father should think of coming, you must tell him what a radical, democratic, levelling, unrighteous oration I have written." In a letter of September 17, 1826, to Miss Dwight, visiting in Boston, there is another passage pointing the direction of Bancroft's early political philosophy: "The other day I was wandering among the tombs, full of political speculations, and finding the honest grave-digger's assistant, one of the sovereigns of the country, you know, I began to hold forth to him on liberty and equality. 'Ah! yes,' replied he, rolling up the eyes of a drunkard, 'I often think, as I am *turfing* graves, that all men are about equal. It does not take much more turf for one than another, and I charge ninepence a grave.' We parted, I astonished at his philosophy and right perception of things, whether he thought me a wise man or not."

But for Bancroft's marriage his outward identification with Democratic politics might have begun earlier. His wife's family, the Dwights of Springfield, were prominent Whigs; "and at her request," said Professor Sloane in an article<sup>1</sup> which spoke with direct authority, "he never accepted office, although once elected, in 1830, to a seat in the Legislature without his knowledge, and once, in 1831, requested to accept the nomination for Secretary of State."

That he did not escape the consequences of his Democratic beliefs, we may infer from letters to Mrs. Bancroft written during a trip to Boston in 1831, not long after the appearance of his article on the Bank.

<sup>1</sup> *Century Magazine*, January, 1887.

On May 5, Bancroft defends himself against calumnies which have disturbed his wife: "Indeed, my dear wife," he says, "the article on the U. S. Bank is the thing which in this quarter has brought upon me the imputation of Jacksonism, and that article has occasioned more strictures here from the friends of the bank, and the unqualified friends of a political party. . . . P. S. Your uncle Ned told at a dinner party that the article on the bank was written under your father's dictation, simply in defense of your father's interest, that he was a large stockholder in the west of New York, &c., &c. This Edmund said at his own table with Webster, Story and others at it. Judge ye."

On the journey homeward Bancroft wrote again:

To MRS. S. D. BANCROFT.

"WORCESTER, *May* 10, 1831.

". . . I found by diligent inquiry at the sources, that my course, as it respects the U. S. Bank, was well approved of. Alexander,<sup>1</sup> the diplomatist, sets forth his intention to print the continuance of it. I lectured Ned on his ignorance and folly about the matter; and gave him plainly to understand, he might read what I should write, to learn; and not undertake to criticise. He says in Boston, that he told you all at Springfield, that my views were derived from your father's personal interests. I said plainly, that he had held no such language; and if he says he did, he . . .

<sup>1</sup> Alexander H. Everett, Editor of the *North American Review*. See p. 164.

“I passed exactly a week in Boston and passed it ~~very pleasantly.~~ All my friends were as full as ever of the most cordial hospitality, and I had always more invitations that I could accept. They had heard several foolish and false stories; they esteemed them foolish and false; and neither Judge Jackson, nor Mr. Bowditch, nor any other respectable men, had conceived ‘distrust’; nor were my feelings in the whole time once ruffled by any unwelcome suggestions. The book-seller told me, they wished to print everything I would write; the corporation, at least a leading member of it, expressed a strong wish that I would accept a place at Cambridge; and, indeed, many seemed to wish that we lived nearer Boston, that so the friendly intercourse might be direct and frequent. I met nothing but kind welcomes, and frank warm-heartedness, the industrious calumnies of —’s friends to the contrary notwithstanding.

“I have made a good journey of it to Boston. I have gained self-confidence; and am determined, as the Scripture has it, to work out my own salvation. . . .”

The working out of his salvation took him in this year of 1831 far afield. In the autumn he travelled as far west as Cleveland, and thence to Washington, where he spent several weeks, on business connected with the incorporation of a Cleveland bank. In this business he was acting not only for himself, but for the Dwights, with whom, after the death of the first Mrs. Bancroft, and the failure of the bank, there were unhappy disagreements touching financial matters. During Bancroft’s absence from home in 1831 and 1832, his first

child was born and died. In the letters which passed between him and his wife at this time, there are passages of more than merely personal concern:

To MRS. S. D. BANCROFT.

“WASHINGTON CITY, *December 25, 1831.*

“What shall I write to you about? You charged me to write to you only of facts and sentiment; but this is the region of corrupting ambition and not of sentimental elegance; and as for the other branch of your topics, I can only say, the old maxim declares there is no such thing as a fact in the world; whether this is universally true or no I will not undertake to determine, but here in Washington, you may run through every street in the city and every letter in their alphabet of cross-roads, and I defy you to catch a fact in any one of them. It is a received adage, that truth lies at the bottom of a well; but I do not believe it; if she were there, we could send down a bucket and draw her out; but on my conscience I believe a bucket of lies would come up, and Truth remain as little seen as before.

“But really that youngest Miss Maxcy is a very pretty as well as a very accomplished girl, talks French as well as our little one will at sixteen, and plays on the piano delightfully. I told her honestly, before I asked the indulgence of hearing her, that I really knew nothing of music, and could not discriminate one tune from another; and then she went with great mildness and good nature and played exquisitely for a half hour, when her sister took her place and sang a French song



or two with great spirit and effect. Maxcy is himself a fine, gentlemanly fellow; his wife is not brilliant but amiable; and the aspect of the house is very genteel and domestic. But Mrs. Donaldson [*sic*] is a far prettier woman than Mrs. Maxcy: indeed I was quite charmed with Mrs. D. Being determined to have a long and regular chat with the old man,<sup>1</sup> the roaring lion I mean, I went in the evening. I assure you the old gentleman received us as civilly as any private individual could have done: he had me introduced to all the ladies of the family, and such was the perfect ease and good breeding that prevailed there, they talked with me as though I had been an acquaintance of ten years' standing. I remained there a large part of the evening, and the General was kind enough to ask his niece to play and sing. She did both very sweetly and artlessly; nor was there either in the manner of Jackson or any of the ladies the least *hauteur* or affectation. I received a very favourable impression of the President's personal character; I give him credit for great firmness in his attachments, for sincere kindness of heart, for a great deal of philanthropy and genuine good feeling; but touching his qualifications for President, avast there—Sparta hath many a wiser son than he. . . .

"My nearest neighbor is John Davis.<sup>2</sup> I occupy by night a room adjoining his; but by day we are the inseparables almost, except that he rarely goes out unless to the house. We are like Damon and Pythias, each writing his letters at opposite ends of the same table and

<sup>1</sup> President Jackson.

<sup>2</sup> The husband of Bancroft's sister Eliza.

sometimes seasoning our occupations with the salt of a little conversation; or a commentary on the past; a foreboding of the future; a cut at the judicious tariff; or a wise remark on the depravity of human nature.

"Mrs. Wayne inquires after you as usual with interest: and all my friends take an opportunity of expressing their interest in the little girl, who is, it appears, likely to vie with her mother in beauty under the mother's fostering care. If the poor thing shows already a will of her own, she at least comes honestly by it.

"By the way, I forgot to mention, that General Jackson is a great stickler for virtue and truth; he declares that our institutions are based upon the virtue of the community, and added, that the moment 'demagogues obtain influence with the people our liberties will be destroyed.' I was excessively edified by so chaste and apposite a remark. He assured me that truth would in the *eend* (pronounce the word to rhyme with fiend) be every man's best policy. He talked very learnedly upon the present state of England, the Princess of Orange's jewels, and I drew him out on the Bank of the United States.

"The Potomac still continues frozen, and poor Mrs. Johnston with her eleven trunks and eight bandboxes, has not clothes enough to go abroad. She has credit here for an unprecedented fondness for dress; her ornaments are more various and prettier and more expensive than those of any lady in the city. She never appears in company twice in the same dress, but delights in vicissitudes and changes and elaborate display. Mrs. Wayne, on the contrary, has become quite a

theologian, and argues on the fall of Adam, the serpent and the apple with all the ardour of a neophyte and all the sincerity of a devotee.

“The American people, as a whole, are a stern race. Gaiety of heart is almost unknown. Care, like the old man on Sinbad’s shoulders, jumps upon every one’s back; and I declare to you, I cannot recall the time, when I have witnessed any light-hearted, innocent drollery, or the outpourings of merry good nature. Everybody is intensely occupied in the pursuit of something; and in their progress through life these impetuous aspirants do not even seek out resting-places.

“A merry Christmas to you, one and all. I am to eat my Christmas Dinner at five o’clock with his ex-majesty King Charles the Tenth. Ah! I would rather be by your side, than listen to the experiences of abrogated royalty. I have written many letters, but receive few.

To MRS. S. D. BANCROFT.

“CITY OF WASHINGTON, *December 27, 1831.*

“. . . I wrote to you on Christmas day. At five I went to John Q. Adams’, and there we had a very agreeable entertainment. Mr. and Mrs. A. pleased me a great deal more in their present condition, than of yore in the palace. Mr. A. talked a great deal and exceedingly well; the dinner was excellent, except that the venison, a superb saddle, was not hot. I got so much engaged in conversation, that I staid till after nine. Among other curious things, Mr. A. told me, that in the year 1823 on the death of Judge Livingston, he had

named to Mr. Monroe *Van Buren* as a candidate for a place on the bench of the Supreme court. The hero of Kinderhook promised that, should he receive the appointment, he could convoke his enemies and his friends at Albany, give them an elegant dinner, treat them to an abundance of Champaign, and then, in a valedictory speech, would bid farewell forever to politics and pledge himself to know no parties upon the bench. Mr. Adams thinks, that had Van Buren at that time been appointed Judge, he would have followed in the track of Marshall, and proved himself a sound interpreter of national principles. That may have issued so; but I drew another inference. Van Buren was at that time the leader of the Crawford party in New York, and by nullifying its leader Adams hoped to have secured that state to his own support without division. During dinner the topics discussed were, the French revolution, the condition of England, the political characters of Whitbread, Pitt, Fox, Lord Grey and others, besides some topics more of learning than experience, and quite a discussion of the influence of the press. Mr. Adams compared the press to guns, armour, the implements of war; I replied, that those were essentially the means of destruction; that I would compare the press rather to the Cereal grains, which are ordinarily the nutriment of life, but which are sometimes perverted by distillation into poisonous liquors. 'I cannot admit your comparison,' cried Mr. A., and others at table joined against me; but my view is, none the less, the more humane and true.

"Yesterday the President's house was open at noon

for all true Musselmen. Davis and I went, and found the General, the East Room, Mrs. Donaldson and all that was to have been expected. The old man stood in the centre of a little circle, about large enough for a cotillion, and shook hands with anybody that offered. The number of ladies who attended was small; nor were they brilliant. But to compensate for it, there was a throng of apprentices, boys of all ages, men not civilised enough to walk about the rooms with their hats off; the vilest promiscuous medley, that ever was congregated in a decent house; many of the lowest, gathering round the doors, pouncing with avidity upon the wine and refreshments, tearing the cake with the ravenous keenness of intense hunger; starvelings, and fellows with dirty faces and dirty manners; all the refuse that Washington could turn forth from its workshops and stables. In one part of the room it became necessary to use the rattan; and a respectable woman would have far preferred to walk in the streets to the chance of being jostled in that assembly.

“I dined at Mr. Seaton’s. His wife is a lady of [word missing] understanding, and the party was just large enough to be so [word cut from letter] agreeable. Mr. S. is, as you may perhaps know, one of the Edit[ors of the?] *National Intelligencer*, largely acquainted with public men and measures, and of very respectable character and talents. I remained there till evening, when I repaired to Calhoun’s to hear a new dissertation on negative powers.

“But to-day I am quite in despair. My business is delayed by the want of a report from the Secretary of

the Treasury, and today I am informed, he is sick in bed with the influenza. I can with difficulty practice the patience that is necessary. To form any idea of the time, when I may bring my business here to an issue, is in vain. I almost abandon the pursuit; yet \$8000 are worth a little patience and a sturdy effort. Talk of reform! The departments are full of the laziest clerks, and men are paid large salaries for neglecting the public business. But as I am in their hands I am forced to be civil; otherwise I could read them a vituperative lecture."

To MRS. S. D. BANCROFT.

"WASHINGTON, *January* 11, 1832.

"The city has to-day been edified by an interesting speech from Mr. Clay in the Senate. He had on Monday introduced a resolution, which covers the whole ground of the protective system. It was understood that he would call it up for consideration to-day at one o'clock. Accordingly at twelve Mrs. Johnston took me in her carriage and I was her beau into the Senate chamber. Though we came thus early, the usual seats were all occupied by ladies. So we were compelled to go upon the floor of the Senate and occupy chairs in front of the Vice President between him and the Senators. Never did I see a greater concourse: the Galleries were full, and all the beauty and fashion of the city were present. Mr. Clay was evidently moved by the enormous concourse, which the fame of his eloquence had assembled; he began with expressions of great

modesty, and then proceeded in a speech highly argumentative and in no respect declamatory, to make an exposition of his views. His speech contained no pathetic appeals, no special graces; but was clear forcible and convincing. I cannot say that intense interest was kept up. As it is the opening of the debate, peculiar vehemence would have been in bad taste; parliamentary decorum seems to require an attack, as a preliminary to earnestness of excitement. The older members of Congress declare that Mr. Clay's speech in point of argument ranks among his best: in point of declamation it was inferior to many. If I must speak the truth I should own myself a little disappointed. His manner was not so graceful, as I had supposed; nor was his language distinguished by richness or variety. He spoke for an hour and three quarters.

"Yet Clay's superiority was eminent when Hayne rose to reply. He made a few remarks, purely declamatory, and then moved deferring the subject till Monday next. In other words, he wishes to take time to prepare a speech and invites the ladies to come and honour him with their presence the first day of next week.

"I think the Tariff policy will be sustained, while the Bank will not get its charter renewed this winter. . . ."

To MRS. S. D. BANCROFT.

"WASHINGTON, *January 17, 1832.*

". . . The Colonization Society had a famous meeting last night in the Hall of the Representatives. The appearance of that splendid room, when brilliantly

lighted up, is exceedingly fine. Resolutions were offered from various quarters, and several addresses were made. My feelings were on the whole enlisted in favour of the colony at Liberia, which is perhaps destined ultimately to carry the light and benefits of civilisation to the uttermost parts of the African continent. I heard with horror, that the slave trade is still continued under as aggravating circumstances as ever; and that the infernal cupidity of the slave dealers still carries one hundred thousand negroes annually into foreign bondage. Mr. Everett spoke with great eloquence and at considerable length. Some of his images were exceedingly beautiful; and his manner ready, dignified, and graceful. His language also was rich and glowing, and had nothing of the homely barrenness, by which most of the speakers in Congress are distinguished. Indeed I think public speaking at this place is extremely jejune and diffuse. Strong practical sense and firmness of character prevail far more than the arts of oratory, with the more honest part of the public officers; while the talent at intrigue and the art of forming combinations best serve the purposes of political aspirants.

“Mr. Archer of Virginia spoke also last evening and at considerable length. From the tenour of his remarks, it is plain, that the state which he represents, is at least deeply sensible of the evils of slavery, and fearfully looks forward to an impending crisis. He described the condition of free blacks in the slave-holding states to be wretched in the extreme; cut off from all opportunity of successful exertion, and necessarily rendered vicious,



because they are necessarily idle. But for my part, I shall not take, so far as the South is concerned, I shall not take a deep interest in their participation in forwarding colonisation in Africa, unless they also take some steps, initiatory at least, to final emancipation. And of this there exists little hope, until the evil becomes far more intense than it now is. For slavery corrupts the masters. My strongest objection to it is not derived from the degradation and injuries of the blacks: no; it further demoralises the whites, cuts the sinews of industry, dries up the sources of intelligent enterprise and inventive competition, and while it renders the slave an inefficient eye servant, it forms the master to habits of indolent apathy. The slave-owner is essentially a man of expedients; he accustoms himself to discomforts; he contents himself with miserable patch-work; he punishes himself constantly for subjecting his fellow-men to bondage by a proportionate depreciation in [na]tive skill, prompt industry, orderly neatness, and regular economy. I could not easily be tempted to live in a slave country. . . .”

To MRS. S. D. BANCROFT.

“WASHINGTON, D. C., *January* 18, 1832.

“. . . A thick, heavy book has been my table: it is the History of the American colonies by Chalmers; a work, written in a tory spirit, full of spleen against our ancestors but marked by profound investigation and great legal acuteness. The volume is in part polemic in its character; having the object to prove the right of

Great Britain to tax her colonies; today I have selected, to while away a few solitary hours, a work more varied in its character. It is the treatise of Sir Humphrey Davy on the Passions; and belongs to a class of works, which I have ever loved to read. But during my absence I have rather had occasion to study man in life and conduct; my former years were you know passed rather among books and boys than in action. It has been a benefit to me to have mingled actively among men; I understand them better than before; I have also acquired self-confidence; finding myself abundantly able to mix with the active on even terms. Or rather, I may say, that all my exertions have thus far prospered, and, so far as it is well to have laboured successfully, so far you may have satisfaction in my winter's work.

"It seems to me at times, as if the recollection of former years were returning to my mind more vividly than heretofore. The tastes, which have lain dormant, have revived; and my mind has been aroused to greater activity. It was an unwise thing in me to have made myself a school-master: that was a kind of occupation, to which I was not peculiarly adapted, and in which many of inferior abilities and attainments could have succeeded as well. I have felt rejoiced at being entirely emancipated from this condition: I am too fond of personal independence to be willing, that my time should be for each day so exactly measured out: besides it was impossible for me to journey in any direction in the pleasant season with you: but now, dearest love, I shall be able to show you the heights of the Catskill; and perhaps take you to the falls of Trenton:

at any rate, we will so combine our arrangements, that you shall have more to amuse and please you than the first four years of our marriage afforded. . . ."

To MRS. S. D. BANCROFT.

"CITY OF WASHINGTON, D. C., *January 23, 1832.*

". . . Last night I passed an hour or two in a manner as gratifying to me as any could have been among strangers. We went to call upon Judge Story, and we found there Judge Baldwin and Chief Justice Marshall. I drew my chair close up to the latter, nor can you readily conceive of the great suavity or rather calmness of manner by which he is distinguished. In conversation he makes no display nor is he remarkable except for this venerable coolness of manner. There are about him no marks of genius; but in his entire collectedness, great precision, and calm uniformity, you may discern the signs of an unerring judgment. He is by all acknowledged to stand foremost on the bench of the Supreme court, a first-rate man in the first class of greatness. He has travelled very little; has not been in New England since the war; has hardly seen New York, but has lived in the regular exercise of his judicial functions, unincumbered by other care than that of giving character and respectability to the bench over which he presides. Judge Baldwin thinks more of the Tariff, than he does of law; but he is an agreeable man, full of vivacity, and a thorough advocate of the protective system.

"We called on the Judge at [an] early hour in the

evening; but I was so taken with the respected circle, that I remained willingly within the influences of their wisdom, till after nine.

"Today the Tariff question has been tried in the house; a very strong and decided vote was given in favour of the protective policy.

"You may tell your father, the Tariff system is perfectly safe for the period of the present Congress."

The Washington letters bear all the marks of a keen interest in public affairs and men. It was to an inconspicuous routine and to a wife pitifully saddened by the loss of her first child that Bancroft returned early in 1832. They were still living in Northampton, and much of Bancroft's time was free for magazine writing and whatever else he might elect. The financial returns from the magazine work could not have been the sole provocations to his industry in this direction. In 1831, a Boston editor, Joseph T. Buckingham, planning a new periodical, wrote to Bancroft: "Several gentlemen have agreed to furnish original matter at the rate of one dollar a printed page, that being the price paid for contributions by the proprietors of the *N. A. Review*." In 1832 Bancroft received from Cincinnati the prospectus of the *Western Quarterly Review*, with this extravagant promise from the publishers: "For each accepted article they will pay **THREE DOLLARS PER PAGE**—a rate of compensation for literary labour, unusual, they believe, on this side the Atlantic." Bancroft's vision at this time, however, must have been fixed upon the future more than the present—and he was

fortunate in the independence which the circumstances of his wife and the success of Round Hill school up to the time of his leaving it had brought to him.

Unhappily the records of Bancroft's career reveal no such moment as that in which Prescott, after casting about for a great undertaking, wrote in his diary: "I subscribe to the 'History of Ferdinand and Isabella.'" Conscious as Bancroft was that "many of inferior abilities and attainments could have succeeded as well as he did" in the profession of teaching, he does not seem to have shared with others his views of what he could do. There are no direct memorials of the process of mind which brought him to beginning the work of his lifetime. That the subject of American history was engaging his interest and study, his closest friends and correspondents must have known. His letters of the early 'thirties' abound in evidences that he was seeking information in every available quarter. As President Kirkland in 1825 thought it worth while to consult Bancroft about the use of the subjunctive in bestowing an honorary degree upon President Dwight of Yale, so Bancroft turned for help to those who could render it. James Savage and others answered queries upon points within their knowledge. Judge Story, in a letter of May 15, 1834, warmly commended the portion of the book which he had read, at Bancroft's request, in proof. Wherever one may turn in the letters written and received by Bancroft at this time there are traces of industry, industry—prodigious and indefatigable. When the fruits of it all came to light in the first volume of his

*History of the United States*, in 1834, the uses to which he was putting his independence were clear to see. It was equally clear that he had undertaken no small task, for the first words of the Preface are: "I have formed the design of writing a History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent to the present." Farther on he says: "The work has already occasioned long preparation, and its completion will require further years of exertion." That these years would number nearly three score, and that the History would end where the actual life of the United States begins, neither writer nor reader could have imagined.

It is not a part of the plan of this biography to pause at the appearance of each volume of Bancroft's History for a critical consideration of its contents. The work of so voluminous an historian can be viewed perhaps more profitably at a later point and as a whole. Here it will suffice to give some impressions of the effect which Bancroft's first volume produced upon certain of his contemporaries. Nothing could have given him more pleasure than the following words from Edward Everett:

*From EDWARD EVERETT to GEORGE BANCROFT.*

"CHARLESTOWN, Massachusetts, October 5, 1834.

"I have this moment finished reading your History. I cannot say I have studied the volume, because it is just twenty-four hours since I took it up, and in this interval I have had a night's sleep and a day's

attendance at church. But I have read every word in your book, and on a few points compared such authorities, as I have on my shelves. I mention the rapidity with which I have gone through it, as the best manner of letting you know, how much it has interested me.

“I can say, with great sincerity, that I think you have done most admirably; I am afraid to tell you how much I like it; not for fear you will suspect my honesty; but for fear that, in thus writing to you, under the excitement of the recent perusal of the book, and with my mind labouring with all the noble ideas and warm feelings it has awakened, I may say more, than, at a cooler moment, I can stand to. Of that I must take my chance; and for the present, I must tell you, that I think you have written a Work which will last while the memory of America lasts; and which will instantly take its place among the classics of our language. It is full of learning, information, common sense, and philosophy; full of taste and eloquence; full of life and power. You give us not wretched pasteboard men; not a sort of chronological table, with the dates written out at length, after the manner of most historians:—but you give us real, individual, living men and women, with their passions, interests, and peculiarities. I have read too hastily to institute comparisons, but the sketch of Williams, and the topic of Puritanism seem to me most happily,—I know not whether to say,—thrown off or studied out (for like every thing super-excellent, there is in them a mixture of inspiration and thought): and Soto’s expedition, the mode of life in Virginia, King

James's character, Hooker's emigration, the origin of the Covenant in Scotland are also essays more or less detailed of exceeding beauty and strength. I do assure you, I never read a volume with greater pleasure, few with equal satisfaction; and I could not rest till I had told you so.

"I could almost envy you to have found so noble a theme, while yet so young. You can bestow on it all the time it needs. Carry it on, and complete it before you reach the meridian."

In the January, 1835, number of the *North American Review* appeared Everett's review of Bancroft's first volume. Though the file of family letters shows that it did not wholly satisfy his nearest of kin, the following letter indicates what it meant to Bancroft himself:

To EDWARD EVERETT.

"NORTHAMPTON, *January 8, 1835.*

"I have this afternoon read your notice of my History. If I had not steeled my heart against all weakness, I should have shed tears of delight as I read it; and that not from the gratification merely of my hopes as an author, but also from a sense of pride and gratitude, that such praise could be bestowed upon me by one whose candour I have ever admired and whose genius I have venerated. The article is beautifully written; it says everything and more than everything that my nearest friends could desire.

"From my earliest years, you have been a sort of



good genius to me. In boyhood my love of letters was kindled and heightened by my admiration of your example; and though the choice of the narrow path of intelligence has sometimes led me among thorns, I have never, for a moment, regretted my election. It was your advice to our excellent Kirkland, which carried me to Germany; it was your letters which made me friends there, taught me how to keep in the ruts, and how to profit by my opportunities. I saw, then, at Göttingen, the impossibility of reconciling the acquisitions of a German University with the notions of Boston; I remember well writing you so; I remember well, advising with you on devoting myself to the pursuit of history, and for sixteen years my main purpose in life has been unchanged.

“The public press seems unwilling to leave me at rest. Petty scribblers are still busy, although I have held my peace. I regard their folly with perhaps too much indifference; at any rate it cannot disturb the tranquillity with which I ever cherish for you the strong sentiments of grateful friendship; or the satisfaction I derive from your praise. . . .”

The commendation of Bancroft's Göttingen instructor, Heeren, must have been no less welcome than that of his American adviser. Heeren's letter, translated as follows, has the special interest of emphasising the German standards of thoroughness in going to original sources and letting the reader follow everywhere. It therefore suggests an important influence in Bancroft's training.

From A. H. L. HEEREN to GEORGE BANCROFT:

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GÖTTINGEN, September 1, 1835.

"*My honoured Friend.*—You have refreshed my remembrance of you in the most excellent way. First I received the letter announcing your work, and only a few days later, there came, what I dared not hope, the book itself. Never have I been so agreeably surprised. You have chosen a great subject; it is a life work, for it will occupy you a great part of it, and altogether it is the most agreeable, the most grateful, and the worthiest labour you could enter upon.

"I am still busy reading your book, and the further I read the more it rivets my attention. You have laboured with masterly care and constant effort. I am amazed at the mass of sources you have used, and I rejoice that the library in New Cambridge, being open to you, has met all your requirements. The care with which in each case you have given the authorities enables the reader throughout to investigate for himself. This exceedingly scrupulous care, which, moreover, you cannot hope for in English and French writers, is your great merit,—all the more since you, so far as possible, consulted contemporary writings. In this way, therefore, while you have performed the duties of the historian with respect to facts, you have not failed in those of the historiographer. The treatment is entirely worthy of the subject. Your work is no mere compilation; it is written with the warmth and enthusiasm the writer feels in his subject, so natural in writing the history of one's own country. This is the true inspira-

tion of the historian, so very different from that of the poet.

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"I entirely approve your having made this first part so thoroughly complete. Your theme is to show how America has become what it is; and to that end, this detailed exposition of the sources, by showing the research necessary to produce them, gives this first volume the best guarantee of your industry and exact scholarship.

"Continue, therefore, my worthy friend, on the road you have set out upon. It will lead you to an honourable goal. May Heaven only give you health and strength to reach it. That is all that you need.

"You have more than once remembered me in your foot-notes. It is one of the pleasantest thoughts for me,—and I hope no presumption,—that I have helped somewhat in the training of the historian of the United States. What higher reward could a teacher wish? . . ."

Within Bancroft's immediate circle there was one, his brother-in-law, "Honest John" Davis, Governor and Senator from Massachusetts, who did not hesitate to warn the historian of the dangers before him. The following passage from a letter sounded so true a note that it should not be lost:

*From JOHN DAVIS to GEORGE BANCROFT.*

"WORCESTER, *April 2, 1835.*

". . . I rejoice most sincerely in the reception your volume has met with. I would rather rest my reputa-

tion upon it with posterity than upon all the art of Jackson and Van together, but let me entreat you not to let the partisan creep into the work. Do not imbue it with any present feeling or sentiment of the moment which may give impulse to your mind. Remember that your favourite Roger lived to repent of his false opinions, and so do all frank sagacious minds. If you will give me leave I will say that you have put down your doctrine of suffrage as broad as it will bear. The right of suffrage and its qualifications involves considerations of a very grave character, not only grave but momentous. How would such an extended right as ours work in Ireland, England or France? In many of the states they hold to the freehold qualification and it remains to be determined who is wisest. But I do not mean to go into an examination of the question. The historian is the recorder of truth and not of his own abstract opinions. The sagacious historian sees and delineates the effects that spring from causes, and beyond this he can scarcely tread with safety, for he then becomes a mere reasoner instead of a recorder, and his opinions will stand or fall like those of other men, but his record if true will abide.

“You have great reason to be satisfied with your success, and fidelity coupled with perseverance will I trust complete a work that will maintain its place beside the best histories that stand upon our shelves. . . .”

Davis, at the time of writing this letter, was fresh in the Governorship to which the Whig triumph of the previous November had elected him. The neighbour-

ing Democratic governor, Marcy of New York, coiner of the long-current phrase uniting the victor and the spoils, naturally saw Bancroft's first volume with different eyes. On September 24, 1835, he wrote from Albany: "We all feel a deep interest in your historical labours. It is exceedingly important that the history of our country be written by a man thoroughly imbued with the democratic principles of our government, and it is not to be disguised that almost all our scholars competent to such an enterprise have a *penchant* towards the aristocracy."

The impression that Bancroft, during the lifetime of his first wife, refrained, out of deference to her feelings, from official participation in Democratic politics,<sup>1</sup> must be modified by the records of the year 1834. The Boston Semi-Weekly *Courier*, for November 17, 1834, contains the following self-explanatory paragraph:

"Mr. George Bancroft was a candidate for representative to the General Court from Northampton, and received 167 votes. The lowest number of votes given to a Whig candidate was 312. We rejoice that Mr. Bancroft was defeated, though we are sorry that he is obliged to suffer the mortification that follows it. We hope that he has learned a useful and salutary lesson; and that he will return from the wilderness of politics into which he plunged so inconsiderately, to the more attractive garden of literature—a field which he can cultivate, enrich and adorn—imparting profit and pleasure to his country, and reaping honour to himself. We advise him—no—advice he would think imperti-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 188.

ment,—we hope, and entreat, in the spirit of friendship, that he will write no more letters to the Workingmen, nor to any political cabal; at least not till he shall have completed his History of the United States. That, if finished as begun, will be a testimonial of his talent and fame, more enduring and more grateful to his descendants, than all the honours he can ever acquire as a politician.”

The animus of partisanship betrays itself here, though by no means so frankly as in the following two-sided paragraph from the *Boston Post* of November 7, 1834, three days before the election:

“*Workingmen of Boston!*—Hear what the self-styled ‘Good society’ say of you—will you sustain those who are continually libelling your character, and heaping upon you the vilest abuse?

“From the *Boston Atlas*:

“The “Workingmen,” as they style themselves, better known, however in that city, as the “idle men,” who adjourn from the halls of infidelity and atheism; from the dram shops and the dram cellars, to their various places of meeting, to devise some scheme by which they may live on the earnings of the industrious men—are loud in the praise of thir new leader and co-worker, Mr. Bancroft.”

The failure of Bancroft’s candidacy and the immediate hostilities to which it gave rise are of less consequence in a general view of his life than the statement of political beliefs which he made to an inquiring committee of Northampton citizens. Here he expressed

his opposition to the United States Bank, his sympathy with the labouring man of every variety, his wish to place the sceptre in the hands of the people, his belief in free labour and the restriction of slavery, his feeling that the cause of Democracy and of practical Christianity were identical, and many other sentiments characteristic both of his party and of himself. When the election was over he wrote to Edward Everett (November 17, 1834): "It will be some years before a popular party can become powerful in this state. But it will rise, and within six years it will culminate. Webster will run for Presidency, and will get at most 24 votes. Van Buren will come in; and Massachusetts will come over to his support." This did not happen; but within two years Van Buren was elected to the presidency, and the fourteen electoral votes of Massachusetts were the only ones cast for Webster.

Bancroft's defeat at the local polls by no means chilled his political ardour. The correspondence from this time forth reveals him as an important factor in Democratic party councils. His political views upon matters great and small were sought by such men as Marcus Morton in Massachusetts, Levi Woodbury in New Hampshire and W. L. Marcy in New York. Indeed it is easy to see how valuable Bancroft's party services must have been in formulating the party beliefs.<sup>1</sup> For public or private service his practised pen

<sup>1</sup> "This [the Democratic party of Massachusetts] was hardly more than a coterie of a few people of whom it was said truly enough that they kept the party conveniently small so that there might be enough Federal offices to go around. It was very convenient for them to have a scholar and enthusiast—a real

was always ready. He was not too busy to provide the democratic citizens of Fayetteville, Vermont, who invited him in 1835 to take part in their Independence Day celebration, with an historic justification of Democracy in New England. By way of postscript he added: "Allow me to offer you the following sentiment. 'Democracy. Its object is the happiness of the people; its strength is the intelligence of the people; may its permanent triumph aid the work of reform throughout the world.'" He produced the address to the Democratic electors before the state election of 1835. As the fame of his book increased, lyceums, institutes, colleges and organizations of many kinds appealed to him for political and literary lectures. On July 4, 1836, he delivered an oration before the Democracy of Springfield and neighbouring towns. A passage from this oration well illustrates his habit of both political thinking and writing:

" . . . To the tory, law is an expression of absolute will; to the whig, it is the protection of privilege; to democracy, it is a declaration of right. In the tory system, the executive and sovereign are one; in the whig system, the executive is the sovereign, except where expressly limited; in the system of democracy, the executive is not the sovereign, but the servant, of the Democrat who could 'say the things' for them. Of course the old Federalists were disgusted with this, and poor Bancroft had to share their disapprobations. But he made the Fourth-of-July orations cheerfully, and so in course of time was made collector of customs and . . . secretary of the navy."—From letter of Rev. Dr. Edward Everett Hale to the author, Jan. 20, 1906.



people. The tory clings to past abuses; the whig idolizes present possessions; democracy is the party of progress and reform. The tory, blaspheming God, pleads the will of heaven as a sanction for a government of force; the whig, forgetting that God is not the God of the dead, appeals to prescription; democracy lives in the consciences of the living. The tory demands an exclusive established church; the whig tolerates dissent on conditions; democracy enfranchises the human mind. The tory idolizes power; the whig worships his interests; democracy struggles for equal rights. The tory pleads for absolute monarchy; the whig for a wealthy aristocracy; democracy for the power of the people. The tory regards liberty as a boon; the whig as a fortunate privilege; democracy claims freedom as an inalienable right. The tory loves to see a slave at the plough; the whig prefers a tenant or a mortgaged farm; democracy puts the plough in the hands of the owner. The tory tolerates no elective franchise; the whig gives a vote to none but men of property; democracy respects humanity, and struggles for universal education and universal suffrage. The tory bids the suffering poor gather the crumbs that fall from his table; the whig says, 'Be ye clothed, be ye fed,' but allows no obligation; democracy holds it a duty to soothe the mourner, and to redeem the wretched. The tory looks out for himself; the whig for his clan; democracy takes thought for the many. The tory adheres to the party of Moloch; the whig still worships at the shrine of Mammon; democracy is practical Christianity."

A note at the end of the Springfield oration records a visit which Bancroft paid to Madison at Montpelier for a few days in March and April of 1836. He maintains "that Mr. Madison was in the last days of his life with the democracy of the country, as much as he was from 1795 to the close of the war. . . . Mr. Madison was alike opposed to the Whigs of the South and to the Whigs of the North; not to them personally, but to their doctrines; and his preference for Mr. Van Buren, whom he personally esteemed most highly, was the result, not of that personal esteem, but of love to the Union. The party that rallies round Mr. Van Buren was to Mr. Madison THE PARTY OF UNION." In this note also Bancroft has a word to say about his enemies, the Boston Whigs: "The attitude of the city of Boston has kept Massachusetts in an unrelenting opposition to every democratic administration of the country. It was said of the English nobility with regard to a man of genius, 'They helped to bury, whom they helped to starve.' It is a fact, which the yeomanry of Massachusetts ought duly to consider, that the whigs of that same city of Boston have been the loudest in their eulogies of the democratic presidents, after they were dead. . . . It is a miserable policy to reserve affection for the grave."

This Springfield oration attracted wide attention, and brought forth many favourable expressions from those who shared the views of Bancroft. That he had won his way to more than local consideration, the following extract from a letter from Governor Marcy, dated Albany, September 20, 1836, clearly indicates: "On

my return from the west I stayed one day at the Springs. In the evening I called on Mr. V. Buren and found him reading parts of your oration to some Southern gentlemen accompanied with such remarks as would have flattered you if you are a man capable of being flattered." One of his mother's refreshing, unstudied letters (February 12, 1836) gives another report of Van Buren's good opinion: "I am told by Mr. Randal who has recently visited W[ashington] that Van Burin pronounces you the first in Litterary improvements, and Eliza<sup>1</sup> the most intellectual Lady in Washington. I laughed to your father, and said I always thot my children were wonders. Eliza tells us Van Burin says you are the first in Mass."

A further evidence of Marcy's opinion of Bancroft's abilities, and at the same time of his willingness to employ them, crops out in a letter from Marcy (October 31, 1837), about a Thanksgiving proclamation which Bancroft wrote for him. "I did not decline to adopt yours *in toto*," said Marcy, "because I imagined for a moment that I could make a better one; but it was so unlike anything which our community have been used to that I at first hesitated and then decided against adopting it." The circumstance is mentioned here partly for its foreshowing of a similar yet more important transaction with Andrew Johnson, of which due notice will be taken.

Bancroft's sister Lucretia, a sprightly correspondent, who in 1834 reported a man's asking whether her brother was not crazy since he told the truth in history, wrote

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft's sister, Mrs. John Davis.

from the South in 1836 in a vein of "home truth" with which his divergences from the views of his kindred must have made him tolerably familiar:

*From MISS LUCRETIA BANCROFT to GEORGE BANCROFT.*

"CLINTON, La., December 21, 1836.

". . . You are now fairly plunged into the waters of political strife, for having once been rejected by the people, you will not give up till you have made them acknowledge their error. But *entre nous*, don't you wish you had stuck to your trade of making books and been content with the lasting glory thus gained? Would not your chance for immortality have been greater as the author of the History of the United States than as a speech-maker in Congress?

"I have seen some of the pretty speeches made on you in the course of the last contest and think you must be cased in armor of proof, if they have found no part thro' which to reach you. What say you to the charge of writing the Resolution wherein you are offered to the public as a fit Representative of its interests, or of addressing a letter to yourself, in the name of H——? There is but one thing which prevents me from siding with you in politics, and that is the companions you are compelled to be mixed with. Now, George, where will you find a man, more despised by the respectable part of the community than this same H——? . . ."

To offset what was disagreeable in Bancroft's public

relations at this time, there must have been much that was satisfying in his domestic life. The writing of the second volume of his history filled much of his time. To Everett, at the end of 1834, he wrote: "My employment, morning and evening, is in preparing the second volume. The topics are various, grand in their character and capable of being arranged in an interesting narrative." Early in 1835 he wrote to the same correspondent: "I jog on in my second volume, adding a little every day. The subject is immense; but if I have health I hope to compass it." A charming glimpse of his life at Northampton in this same year of 1835 is found in Harriet Martineau's *Retrospect of Western Travel*.<sup>1</sup>

"We had letters of introduction to some of the inhabitants of Northampton, and knew that our arrival was expected; but we little anticipated such eagerness of hospitality as we were met with. The stage was stopped by a gentleman who asked for me. It was Mr. Bancroft, the historian, then a resident of Northampton. He cordially welcomed us as his guests, and ordered the stage up the hill to his house; such a house! It stood on a lofty terrace, and its balcony overlooked first the garden, then the orchard stretching down the slope, then the delicious village, and the river with its meadows, while opposite rose Mount Holyoke. Far off in the valley to the left lay Hadley, half hidden among trees; and on the hills, still farther to the left, was Amherst, with its college buildings conspicuous on the height.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, p. 83.

"All was in readiness for us, the spacious rooms with their cool arrangements (it was the 7th of August), and the ladies of the family with their ready merry welcome. It was past noon when we arrived, and before the early dinner hour we were as much at home as if we had been acquainted for months. The American mirth, common everywhere, was particularly hearty in this house; and as for us, we were intoxicated with the beauty of the scene. From the balcony we gazed as if it was presently to melt before our eyes. This day, I remember, we first tasted green corn, one of the most delicious of vegetables, and by some preferred to green peas. The greatest drawback is the way in which it is necessary to eat it. The cob, eight or ten inches long, is held at both ends, and, having been previously sprinkled with salt, is nibbled and sucked from end to end till all the grains are got out. It looks awkward enough: but what is to be done? Surrendering such a vegetable from considerations of grace is not to be thought of.

"After dinner we walked in the blooming garden till summoned within doors by callers. My host had already discovered my taste for rambling, and determined to make me happy during my short visit by driving me about the country. He liked nothing better himself. His historical researches had stored his memory with all the traditions of the valley, of the state, and, I rather think, of the whole of New-England. I find the entries in my journal of this and the next two days the most copious of any during my travels.

"Mr. Bancroft drove me to Amherst this afternoon.

He explained to me the construction of the bridge we passed, which is of a remarkably cheap, simple, and safe kind for a wooden one. He pointed out to me the seats and arrangements of the villages we passed through, and amused and interested me with many a tale of the old Indian wars. He surprised me by the light he threw on the philosophy of society in the United States; a light drawn from history, and shed into all the present relations of races and parties to each other. I had before been pleased with what I knew of the spirit of Mr. Bancroft's History of the United States, which, however, had not then extended beyond the first volume. I now perceived that he was well qualified, in more ways than one, for his arduous task."

Further topics for Miss Martineau's lively pen were a drive to Mt. Holyoke and Sugar Loaf, the gay parties on the three evenings of her visit, and the relations between the Calvinists and the Unitarians of Northampton.

It was in 1835 that Bancroft moved with his family to Springfield. One letter written while he lived there should be given as an early token of a long-enduring friendship:

To R. W. EMERSON.

"SPRINGFIELD, *February 29, 1836.*

"I am very much your debtor for your kindness in sending me the quaint and original work of Mr. Carlyle. Should he visit the country, I shall desire the

opportunity of his acquaintance, and if within reach of his voice, shall gladly become one of his hearers.

"I am still more obliged to you for your most interesting and appropriate Historical Discourses. I cannot easily tell you, what pleasure I have had in its careful perusal. In writing a second edition of my first volume, I have taken care to insert a paragraph on the planting of Concord. You will see, that it is your Discourse which has suggested it.

"You do me great honour by your kind judgment of my labour. I have toiled day and night to get a second volume ready. But it is no easy matter to grasp so vast a subject firmly enough, to arrange the topics rightly. I trust the second volume will win your suffrage. In it I have gone largely into the spirit of Quakerism; and have had occasion to contrast George Fox and William Penn with John Locke. The view, I have taken, from what I know of your modes of thought, will not be new or disagreeable to you; the public at large may start at the truth. But what could I do? If Locke did actually embody his philosophy, political and moral, in our American Constitution, why not say so in all simplicity? And if the Quakers were wiser than he, why not say that too? Do you remember Locke's chapter on enthusiasm? Pennsylvania is the practical refutation of his argument."

On June 26, 1837, Mrs. Bancroft died, leaving three young children, Louisa Dwight, born 1833; John Chandler, born 1835, and George, born 1837. The Dwight family and Bancroft's own sisters stood ready



to help him in every way, and even after he became part of an ample establishment in Boston, rendered him frequent assistance in caring for his children. Bancroft's second marriage, to Mrs. Elizabeth (Davis) Bliss, widow of Alexander Bliss of Boston, once a junior partner of Daniel Webster, took place August 16, 1838. Mrs. Bliss, with her mother, her brothers, and her own two boys, had been living in a pleasant house in Winthrop Place, Boston, and in this house Bancroft lived through the seven years he was to spend in that city.

The event which brought him to Boston was his appointment as Collector of the Port. In the official letter, December 30, 1837, announcing President Van Buren's selection of Bancroft, Levi Woodbury described it as resulting "not only from a high estimation of your principles, your talents and acquirements, but from a conviction of its tendency to ensure harmony and advance the public interests within the state of Massachusetts." What it did from the party point of view was of course to place Bancroft in a position of commanding influence with his fellow Democrats, and of a prominence which rendered him more than ever assailable by the Whigs. For business matters, however, Bancroft seems always to have had a marked aptitude, and Professor Sloane has spoken as follows of his conduct of the collector's office: "When he entered upon his duties as collector, the law exacted from importers in payment of duties not cash, but bonds payable on time. A very large part of the whole revenue of the country was then levied in the port of Boston, and the amount of bonds received from the importing merchants

during Bancroft's period of office reached to very many millions. All his predecessors, without exception, had left behind them uncollected bonds representing large sums, which have not been collected to this day. Of all those taken in the period of his service, not one that became due was left unsettled, or in arrears, when he retired from the office."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps especially on sentimental grounds, it is pleasant to know also that he gave good appointments in the Custom House to Hawthorne<sup>2</sup> and Orestes Brownson.

Just before the middle of 1837 the first Mrs. Bancroft had died; just before its end came the news of the appointment to the Custom House. The third important event of the year for Bancroft was the publication of the second volume of his history. Whether the following letter refers only to the first or to both the first and the second volumes, it is applicable to much of Bancroft's earlier writing; and, in lieu of more detailed criticism at this point, it may well be cited:

*From THOMAS CARLYLE to GEORGE BANCROFT.*

"5, CHEYNE ROW, CHELSEA,

"LONDON, 13th June, 1838.

"Allow me to thank you in words, as in silence I very sincerely do, for the gift you have sent me, and the kind sentiments accompanying it. The Message, in all its

<sup>1</sup> *Century Magazine*, January, 1887.

<sup>2</sup> For a report of Bancroft's own account of this appointment, see *Fifty Years among Authors, Books and Publishers*. By J. C. Derby. pp. 326-327.

items, Emerson's and yours, arrived safely here some three weeks ago. I have read your Book with attention, I may say, with interest and profit, as an earnest faithful Book on a subject about which I had much curiosity and but little knowledge. You are bound to persist; and bring the business down, to the exit of Washington, at any rate.

"My praises of your Book might honestly be manifold. I do find several *things* delineated and visibly set before me in form and colour: glimpses of the old primeval Forest, in its hot dark strength and tangled savagery and putrescence; Virginia Planters with their tobacco-pouches, galloping amid the 'buckskin kye' (as our Burns has it) in the glades of the wild wood; Puritans, stern of visage, warm and sound of heart, —all this and much of the like is ocularly there. I reckon it a high praise to say that you have more than once, in such passages, reminded me of Müller's *Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft*, one of our bravest Books, which at the same time you probably never read.

"And then as to my censures, for there are censures everywhere, and all things have light *and* shadow,—I should say that your didactic theoretic matter gratified me generally much less; that, in a word, you were too didactic, went too much into the origins of things generally known, into the praise of things only partially praisable, only slightly important: on the whole, that here is a man who *has an eye*, and that he ought to fling down his *spectacles* and look with that!—Forgive my plainness of speech; did I think less of you than I

do, I had omitted this *shady* side of the business, and left only the light.

“But in any case, many thanks, my dear Sir; and right good speed in your work, and in all works you so faithfully lay your strength to. I beg a continuance of your good-will; and am always

“Very sincerely yours

“T. Carlyle.”

During the first year of Bancroft's residence in Boston occurred an episode of which the newspapers made much at the time. It would not be worth recalling now, but for its indication that Bancroft had not yet outgrown the “two grand mistakes” which Sparks twelve years before had frankly pointed out to him.<sup>1</sup> Again the trouble was with an editor of the *North American Review*.<sup>2</sup> To the April number of the *Review* Bancroft contributed an article on American historians. His first grievance with the editor, Dr. Palfrey, was that, when he came to read the proofs, he found a flattering and, as Dr. Palfrey had thought, a superfluous, allusion to Andrew Jackson removed. He immediately demanded its restoration—or the withdrawal of the entire article. Dr. Palfrey ordered the eleven fateful words restored, “if it were not too late. It proved on enquiry, that the edition was already about half printed, without the clause. It was of course restored in the residue, and the curious collectors of erudite trifles at a future

<sup>1</sup> See p. 181, footnote.

<sup>2</sup> It is here summarised from published and unpublished letters and from Boston newspapers of April, 1838.

day may be at a loss to account for the discrepancy between different copies of the same article."<sup>1</sup> But this was by no means the worst. When the article appeared Bancroft was outraged at finding interpolated, without his knowledge, a brief commendation of his own history. As the authorship of the articles in the *Review*, though unsigned, was an open secret, he felt that he would be universally charged with praising his own work, and deeply resented Dr. Palfrey's course. His friends, especially Prescott and Sparks, tried to make him see that the matter should not be taken too seriously. Pleading, with natural fellow-feeling, for the editor, Sparks wrote (April 1, 1838): "As his only motive was that of kindness to you, I think you should not view it with displeasure, but only with regret; more worthy of *complaint* than *censure*. . . . Spare the editor as much as you can, because his intentions were good, as all the world will see, even while they marvel at his manner of testifying them." But Bancroft was not to be mollified. There ensued a brief, acrimonious correspondence with Palfrey, who brought it to an end by returning one of the Bancroft letters unopened. Whereupon Bancroft, in an address "To the Literary Public," stated his case and printed the correspondence in the *Boston Post* of April 16, 1838. He certainly achieved his purpose of letting the public know that he had not been guilty of self-praise, but with much more ado than the necessities of the case could really have demanded, and with consequences of ill-feeling quite out of proportion with Dr. Palfrey's offence. In the July number of the *Review*

*Boston Daily Advertiser*, April 27, 1838.

appeared the following Note: "A passage occurring in the review of *American Histories*, in our last Number, bestows commendation on a work by the author of this article. He wishes to have it stated that he had no agency in the insertion of that passage." There is every reason to suppose that Dr. Palfrey would have printed such a note as this under far less vigorous compulsion.

The quality of Bancroft's political ardour at this time is illustrated in a letter to John Quincy Adams (March 26, 1838), urging his consideration of "supporting the separation of the Government from banks":

"I think consistency requires it of you. You have, it is true, always supported a National Bank; but never an alliance with State Banks. Like Chateaubriand and Louis Philippe, you have ever exposed the dangers and resisted the establishment of the pet bank system.

"Respect for the memory of your father points in the same direction. It was Hamilton, it was the financial aristocracy of that day, which bore down your father. That aristocracy is essentially unprincipled. It has no fixed opinions of a moral nature; it is only blindly adhesive to its material interests. Respect for your own fame points in the same direction. To whom will you bequeath the care of your memory? To the old Federalists? Their hatred is irreconcilable. To the Whigs? Their deep hostility is scarcely disguised by a faint hypocrisy. Meantime there is fast rising in New England, a moral Democracy, in harmony with Christianity, in harmony with sound philosophy, in

harmony with the progress of civilisation. Your own noble opinions, expressed to me frequently, to the public so admirably and powerfully in your letters to the people of Massachusetts after your defeat by the Whigs in the canvass for Governor, are in harmony with this Democracy; with these young men who are capable of admiring genius and doing homage to uprightness.

“The Whigs have ever been the obstacle in your path. By calling up the great principles of moral honesty, and applying these to the present struggle of avarice to gain dominion in the country, you will as I believe, produce an impression, that never will be forgotten, and endear yourself to the hearts of many young men, who will never shrink from your defence.

“As the battle of New Orleans was the consummation of the battle of Bunker Hill, so your defence of the separation of Bank and State would be the crowning glory to the opposition, which your family has manifested to the exclusive dominion of wealth. I wish to say more: I almost fear I have said too much. But as I have on all occasions defended your integrity and have avowed myself as one of your supporters for the Presidency, I believe you will forgive me. . . .”

As a federal office-holder Bancroft, of course, had many opportunities to express his partisan zeal. In February of 1840, for example, we find him in Hartford, addressing the Democratic Convention of Young Men of Connecticut. From this speech one sentence, embodying a characteristic thought of Bancroft's, must

be quoted: "A hearty sympathy with popular liberty is the sole condition on which an American scholar can hope for enduring fame." The seats of learning, he was fond of suggesting, are by no means the only repositories of wisdom. The Democratic orators, however, must have found some of their favourite weapons dulled in the very process of attack upon so popular a figure as General Harrison. For this was the year of the Log Cabin and Hard Cider campaign, and Bancroft, besides preparing the official address to the Massachusetts Democracy, had to do his part as an active campaigner, against Harrison, for Van Buren. A Fourth-of-July celebration in 1840 will serve as a type of the political spectacle at which the historian in office was expected to display himself.

The little Worcester County town of Barre was the scene of this particular spectacle. The precise truth about the day's performances probably lies midway between the narratives in the Whig and the Democratic papers of Boston. Correspondents both of the *Post* (Democratic) and of the *Atlas* (Whig) wrote full accounts of the celebration. By combining these and duly discounting one by means of the other, certain facts become prominent. There is no doubt that Bancroft found as his rival orator of the day Daniel Webster. The Whig reporter says that each party claimed the honour of having asked its orator first. "Real Facts," writing for the *Post*, declares that Bancroft was first invited, and that when the Whigs heard of it, they secured the "godlike Webster"—"to extinguish, overshadow, overwhelm, annihilate the mortal



George Bancroft—a mere man of letters—a close theorist, at the best, as some of his most forbearing political opponents, in excess of candour, affect to speak of him.” Certain it is that the Whigs brought together by far the larger assemblage. Their procession, headed by the Fitzwilliam Artillery of New Hampshire, included, by friendly count, some four thousand persons, representing upward of thirty towns. “The poor terror-stricken Locos” were described by the *Atlas* correspondent as “a huddled file of trembling partizans,” precisely six hundred in number—“for I counted every one, boys and all, twice over.” The Whigs were gorgeous with Harrison emblems and banners; the Democrats prided themselves on a simplicity above such trifles. The Whig procession started first and went farthest. While it was marching the Democrats began their exercises in the village church. Bancroft had not been speaking five minutes, according to the *Post* reporter, when the entire Whig procession marched by the meeting-house, with such a din and a thrusting of banners into the door that he was obliged to interrupt his written discourse, and take to extempore remarks about his opponents. The Whig version of the disturbance of the Democratic exercises is as follows: “But the Whigs were certainly not to blame for this. They did not know where the Loco Focos were—or what they were about. They had not seen them at all; and it is possible that there was not an individual in that immense body, who was aware that they had paraded on the Green. . . . If the shouts and music disturbed Mr. Bancroft, it was his own fault; he ought

to have had more sense than to attempt to brave the current of public opinion as he did."

For the conduct of the rival feasts, at which the Whigs are said to have seated about three thousand persons, the Democrats only six or seven hundred, and for the effect of the rival speeches, the following portion of a letter from a member of the Democratic committee will sufficiently speak:

*From A. ALDEN to GEORGE BANCROFT.*

"BARRE, *July 6, 1840.*

". . . From all I can hear we had the best—much the best celebration. Mr. Webster did not meet the expectations of his friends, hundreds of whom went away saying, 'We have heard all he said before. We wanted to have something new.' This, added to the fact that they did not have half enough food on the tables, has made many long faces. On the other hand there is not one of our men who is not in perfect extacy at what they heard from your lips. Meeting one of our farmers on the evening of the 4th, he said to me, 'I have not shed tears before to-day for many years, but I could not help crying, I felt so happy when Mr. Bancroft was speaking.' From this you may judge something of the feeling created in the minds of your auditors.

"A. ALDEN."

Declining the request of the Barre committee for a copy of his address for publication, and rejoicing in the

newly adopted Independent Treasury law as a victory for the producing classes, Bancroft wrote, July 10, 1840:

“. . . Here lies the reason of the great importance of our present political contests. The right to engage in them I derive from the Providence of God, who gave me birth in this land of freedom; and whose mercy spares to me life and the exercise of its powers. The accident of being employed in the public service can neither increase nor impair the rights and obligations of a citizen of Massachusetts. The convictions from which I act seem to me so in harmony with the whole tendency of the civilised world, that they may be defended without passion and without anxiety.

“For the cordial welcome which I received at your hands I acknowledge my indebtedness. In the contest for freedom, there may be momentary reverses; but the issue is always safe. The concourse of the Democratic yeomanry of Barre and its adjoining towns on the 4th may justly diminish anxiety as to the result of the coming elections in our own commonwealth. That the policy which we defined, will obtain the suffrage of the nation is as certain as that the moral world is subject to the government of general laws. The progress of Democracy is like the irresistible movement of the Mississippi towards the sea; there are little eddies and side currents which seem to run up hill; but the onward course of the mighty mass of waters is as certain as the law of gravitation. The Democratic principle is the true American principle; it is as safe as our independence.”

When the 1840 elections, state and national, went against Bancroft's party, his friends among the Boston Whigs were few. Of all the inner circle of scholars and writers which gave Boston its glory at this time, and to which Bancroft by a natural right of association seemed to belong, the generous, gentle Prescott was almost alone in maintaining a friendship that was steadfast and intimate. How much of the difficulty lay in the mere fact of Bancroft's Democratic sympathies, and how much in his methods of manifesting them, it is hard to say. To one of his Whig opponents, the editor of the *Courier*, he wrote this letter, now reminding us that politics were not his only concern:

To JOSEPH T. BUCKINGHAM.

"BOSTON, *November 20th*, 1840.

"I send you to-day the volume I promised you. If you examine the number and variety of topics discussed, I am sure you will see, how much labor the book has cost me.

"I will tell you my motto, which I hope you, who, for a whig, are a pretty tolerably fair judge, will think I have lived up to.

Virtue may chuse the high or low degree,  
 'Tis just alike to Virtue, and to me;  
 Dwell in a monk, or light upon a king,  
 She's still the same beloved, contented thing.  
 And think not party spirit rules my days;  
 I follow Virtue; where she shines I praise:  
 Point she to Priest or Elder, Whig or Tory,  
 Or round a quaker's beaver cast a glory.

So wishing you a mind at ease, good digestion, and a comfortable fat office under the triumphs of Harrisonism, and the resurrection of that Phenix, the United States Bank, I remain

“best of Whig editors

“Yours truly

“G. B.”

A year later, November, 1841, Bancroft was removed from his post of Collector of the Port of Boston. His wife did not have to say to him, as Mrs. Hawthorne said eight years later when her husband lost his Surveyorship at Salem, “Oh, then, you can write your book.” Bancroft was always writing his book. Far and near he was seeking for fresh material. Agents in London and Paris were copying passages from the government archives. A curious trace of Bancroft's attention to details is found in a letter to his London correspondent, sending an engraving of Franklin, from which he wanted a frontispiece for his third volume produced. “The warts on Franklin's face,” he wrote, “I wish omitted.” The engraver, however, must have had in him something which would have responded to Cromwell, for in the Bancroft frontispiece the warts are still to be seen. Nearer home Bancroft was in correspondence with such native scholars as Schoolcraft, without whose aid such a chapter as the twenty-second in volume III, fully describing the North American Indians, could hardly have been written. Again we find him receiving, at his own request, voluminous information from the State Lunatic Hospital at Worces-

ter upon the nature and causes of the insanity of George III. More effective than the help of any paid representative abroad was the assistance which Edward Everett as minister to England from 1841 to 1845 could and did render him. This coöperation in the cause of scholarship is the more creditable to the two friends because their diverging political views had brought them not long before, when Everett was Governor of Massachusetts, even to the point of returning each other's personal letters. But the difference came to be entirely a thing of the past, and it was through Everett's influence that the first steps were taken toward Bancroft's extensive and long-continued use of private collections of letters and documents in England.

The third volume of Bancroft's history, completing his account of the Period of Colonization, appeared in 1840. Thus, when he found himself a man of leisure in 1841, he found himself also an historian of established reputation. The inherent merits and faults of his writing—both to be considered later—had by this time clearly disclosed themselves. From the introduction of the first volume to the conclusion of his work, says Dr. J. Franklin Jameson, "it still continued, as our phrase is, to vote for Jackson."<sup>1</sup> But the dominant note of Democracy, and the very qualities of the writing which seem to-day the least acceptable, went far to recommend the work to a large portion of the public in the thirties and forties. Spirit and manner

<sup>1</sup> See *History of Historical Writing in America*. By J. Franklin Jameson. p. 107.

alike were well adapted to the buoyant age of Jackson. In following the course of Bancroft's life, as at present, it is needed only to look upon his books with the eyes of the decades in which they appeared. By so doing we can appreciate how much he must have meant to democrats, whether written with the small "d" of the spirit or with the large "D" of party affiliation. We can appreciate also the feelings of those to whom Jackson and all his works were anathema.

It was no easy matter for Harvard to give its LL.D. to Andrew Jackson in 1833. Ten years later it paid the same honour to his New England supporter, George Bancroft. As president of the college, Josiah Quincy expressed his concurrence in "the respect entertained by the Corporation and Overseers of Harvard University" for Bancroft's "talents and literary attainments." As the American editor of James Grahame's *History of the United States*, it soon became President Quincy's task to express himself publicly about Bancroft in terms more specific and less flattering. Bancroft retaliated in print with spirit; indeed, nearly twenty years later, and again after President Quincy's death, he was ready to return to the charge with all the resentment of a man who felt himself unjustly treated; and he would have done so but for the dissuading voice of Robert C. Winthrop.<sup>1</sup> A complete account of the controversy would fill many pages. In brief, it was this: Bancroft, in a footnote in

<sup>1</sup>This statement is made after finding the proof of an unpublished pamphlet, *John Clarke of Rhode Island and His Accusers*. New York, 1863, and reading letters from Mr. Winthrop to Mr. Bancroft written in 1862 and 1876.

his second volume, described a statement of Graname's about Clarke, an agent of Rhode Island at the Court of Charles II, as an "invention." The harshness of the term was pointed out to him, and in later editions he substituted for "invention," "unwarranted misapprehension." Here, one would suppose, was hardly matter for elaborate controversy. If the two historians had dealt directly with each other, Grahame would presumably have accepted Bancroft's acknowledgment of his mistaken use of language, and that would have been the end of it. But Bancroft was slow to act; friends intervened with conversation, letters, and newspaper correspondence; the part which the Rev. George E. Ellis played in the matter gave special offense to Bancroft. Naturally Grahame was hurt; naturally his American friends who happened to be politically antagonistic to Bancroft, felt that Grahame should be set right, and Bancroft wrong, in the eyes of the public. To recite the charges and counter-charges at this late day would be quite superfluous. All the right does not seem to have been on either side. Yet when one has reviewed the entire controversy, President Quincy's pamphlet,<sup>1</sup> following his Memoir of Grahame in the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Vol. XXIX), leaves two rather definite impressions on the mind: (1) that the Clarke point did not in itself supply a sufficient cause of so great a disturbance; and (2)

<sup>1</sup>The Memory of the Late James Grahame, the Historian of the United States, Vindicated from the Charges of "Detraction" and "Calumny" preferred against him by Mr. George Bancroft, and the Conduct of Mr. Bancroft towards that Historian Stated and Exposed. By Josiah Quincy. Boston, 1846.



that in the general conditions to which it gave rise Bancroft fell short of the generosity and candour which have so often distinguished fellow-workers, and even rivals, in important fields of labour.

The few years of Bancroft's private citizenship after he ceased to be Collector of the Port of Boston were far from idle years. The following passages from letters to Mrs. Bancroft during one of his expeditions for lecturing and the gathering of historical material give some idea of his mental and social activities:

*To MRS. E. D. BANCROFT.*

*"PHILADELPHIA, December 25, 1842.*

" . . . I busy myself in running to and fro; but whether knowledge is increased thereby, is not so certain. Here I have received extraordinary kindnesses: almost every one seemed eager to further my views, and there were men who in this cold winter weather would have gone out with me to the battle grounds. I have made some collections of considerable value, but have gained more by striking the veins of tradition, and hearing anecdotes revived, that let me get glimpses into the parties and malignant spirit of old times. Do you want a chronicle of events? I can hardly give one. I reached this place on Friday; hurried to Gilpin's where I had the most cordial welcome; dined; went below to his library; got myself quiet after the jolt in the cars, and was in good condition of body and mind before I went to speak. I omitted all that related to Dr. Johnson, and the passage about Washington: I put in a

few things extempore: and held the audience attentive and satisfied. Indeed the welcome was great and cordial. . . .

“Sunday. At church heard Dr. Bethune in the morning: called at Lucretia Mott’s. Saw the Dal-lases, who asked much for you, and invited me to a Christmas party this evening, which I declined. I dined at Kane’s. . . . By and bye Dr. Dunglison came in, and Mr. Bache, both very profound and scientific. I staid till nearly seven. Then an hour in friendly argument with Dr. Rush to get at the old papers. Farewell, Dr. Rush; I shall tease you no longer! After this I was at Thomas Earle’s, the anti-masonic Vice President: and here I found congregated Lucretia Mott, whom I had long been curious to see, and who is rather a different person from any I saw before: womanly and yet full of zeal: a complete abolitionist: and a thorough woman’s rights advocate. I staid an hour; and went to see Tyson, where a few were congregated. It was almost twelve before I got home. To-day Monday: I am resolved not to get weary. I will see such of our friends as I can; and tomorrow go to Baltimore where I must enlighten the people. Confusion be to reporters: they spirit a man’s manuscripts. If you were with me, I might stay from home a little longer; but now I remain fixed in being with you January 7th. Tell William and Alexander<sup>1</sup> to take nice care of you. Give love to John and George,<sup>2</sup> whom William must discipline if they err. Question John about his school.

<sup>1</sup> William and Alexander Bliss, Mrs. Bancroft’s sons.

<sup>2</sup> The sons of Bancroft’s first marriage.

Give love to Louisa,<sup>1</sup> who is I hope, growing methodical: and tell Susy,<sup>2</sup> I have not forgotten her commission.”

To MRS. E. D. BANCROFT.

“ELLICOTT'S MILLS, *December 31, 1842.*

“. . . At Annapolis I found some things, that were curious, and was well repaid for my visit. It is a strange old place, decayed, but hospitable. I believe I told you of my evening at Col. Nicholson's, where I met Mrs. Randall, the daughter of William Wirt. But that day from early morning till late into the evening I was among my papers. The next day at nine found me at the same place: and I toiled indefatigably till  $\frac{1}{2}$  past seven. Then I went to see the good Chancellor Bland, and his most motherly hospitable wife. Bland is a thorough Democrat of the most decided character; and he poured out the political axioms of democracy with a fervor unsurpassed. I never heard such doctrines from the Bench before. As I rose to go away, good Mrs. Bland said, 'Stay and eat an oyster.' Presently we went out into an adjoining room to a table laden with magnificent roasted oysters; large and right excellent. At each plate were placed a napkin and an oyster knife, and each person was to open his own. Then too the table groaned with other delicacies—a hospitality equal to anything you can imagine. The Chancellor liked to talk with me. Nothing would do but I must return to dine the next day. Friday was

<sup>1</sup> The daughter of Bancroft's first marriage.

<sup>2</sup> The daughter of the second marriage, then in her fourth year.

my last day in Annapolis. The night before, after my visit to the Chancellor, I toiled at my documents till midnight. In the morning I engaged at my desk again. Presently a joint committee of the two houses waited on me, with a request to address them in the evening. Well: I went to my work reading and copying till after two: a long morning's work; dined with the Chancellor on ever so many good things, wild ducks and terrapins: and democracy and law. The Chancellor is learned and communicative. 'If thou wert by my side' I should have remained a week. I liked Annapolis. It is so decidedly unlike anything else. I worked till twenty minutes or so, before my lecture; then hurried on my coat and waistcoat, and went to the Senate chamber. The President of the Senate escorted me to the chair, and I stood just where Hancock and Washington shook hands, when Washington resigned his commission. The room was crowded to suffocation. So I made my thanks to the Legislature for their distinguished kindness: to the people of Annapolis for their hospitality. I told them I was no stranger, but assured 'the beauty and intelligence of Annapolis,' that I felt as if I had lived on the spot for a hundred years, and then mixing extempore with reading, and detaining the audience only about an hour, I poured out upon the Spirit of the Age, with sundry digressions upon Washington, and the beautiful evergreen Hollies; and the American Press. After I had finished, several came to me, and I believe the impression was a kind one. They say here, I write well, but have no enthusiasm, no life. I think next Monday

night at Baltimore I will startle them, and show them, ~~that at least I have~~ a voice. I adopted last week a clear, but tranquil manner; the newspaper praised; but I saw a lady's letter in which she complained that I did not give more power to language, etc., etc. After lecture, I paid my respects to the Governor. He is famous, as the best orator in Maryland. He conversed very sensibly on slavery, on Van Buren, and on politics generally.

"Returning to my lodgings, I went immediately to work, and continued my toil till one in the morning. Then I retired to be roused at four the next morning. Less than three hours brought me to this place and a breakfast with good Mr. Campbell."

To MRS. E. D. BANCROFT.

"BALTIMORE, *January 2, 1843.*

". . . Charles Carroll of Carrollton came from the Manor to me on Saturday: staid at the Mills over night, and made me his guest for yesterday and as much longer as I would have remained, urging another visit, with you for my companion. Catholics they are: their slaves almost two hundred in number; their estate a tract of eight miles by six or seven; beautiful land in the heart of Maryland, within fifteen miles of Baltimore. Some fine Mayday, I will take you there. This morning he sent me in his carriage to Ellicott's Mills, and Mr. Campbell brought me up to Baltimore. Here I remain till Wednesday morning: having seen various things enough to make fund for chat for some of these

evenings when your Bear draws up his arm-chair, and without any trade at all, seeks to win his wife for his audience. Already, after being here but a few minutes, I find on my table muster books and Council of Safety's papers; and I must spend an hour or two or more in poring over them. Tomorrow I hope Peter Force will come up to see me. Mrs. Carroll asked very much after the children: she is also very much cultivated: I am told, is a good classical scholar; reads French with all ease: but never displays. The housekeeping was excellent; and bread and butter, and jellies, everything made on the plantation. I shall tomorrow discourse upon the Spirit of the Age: the same old sixpence which was so well reported in New York: only with a few changes and variations. I gave the same at Philadelphia and with good acceptance. And now my long continued absence draws near its end. No: it is a long, long time yet, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday; and then the glad Saturday. The net return for the four weeks, after defraying all expenses will be not far from \$400. I do not think I would do just the same thing again. . . .

"[P. S.]

"Mrs. Carroll is to put up prayers for my conversion. Her daughter is at a famous Catholic Boarding School in N. Y."

Later in this year (1843) came the great ceremony of dedicating the Bunker Hill Monument. With Webster for orator, with President Tyler and members of his cabinet for spectators, the occasion was of great importance

in Boston; and Bancroft's description of it has more than a local interest.

To MARTIN VAN BUREN.

"BOSTON, *June 22*, 1843.

". . . Our celebration on the 17th was very grand; the immense concourse of people, the beauty of the day, and the universal joyousness formed one of the most sublime and most agreeable spectacles I have ever witnessed. From the Boston State House to Bunker Hill, the streets were thronged: pretty, smiling faces beamed from every balcony, clustered at the windows; ventured out upon the roofs; and some daring ones, sat proudly elevated on the chimney tops. Webster in his speech was heavy: but the audience befriended him. I rode to the Hill in the carriage next the President with Spencer<sup>1</sup> and Porter.<sup>2</sup> The latter is a noisy, coarse, shallow politician; lean in ideas, though large enough in person. Spencer and he were full of foolish jest, but he, most so. Returning, Webster also occupied the carriage; and it amused me to see how the others were overawed by Webster's presence. I saw at once, why Webster was driven from the Cabinet.

"The dinner was a cold water one,—teetotal—but Tyler must have his brandy and water, and it was amusing to see him hold his tumbler below the table, to get a stiff glass of it, and then duck himself down to swallow it unseen. Quite a jest for the Washingtonians.

"The whigs paid little court to the Cabinet. I

<sup>1</sup> John C. Spencer, Secretary of the Treasury.

<sup>2</sup> James M. Porter, Secretary of War.

called on them on Sunday, once and once only and found only officials, and office heelers. There was quite a party of the faithless, who haunted them constantly. Robert Tyler made a regular onset upon Gov. Morton's son; telling him that the next Presidential question lay between Tyler and Cass, and that Gov. Morton ought to run as Vice President on the ticket with him. Such fools exist! Of Tyler I think better and worse: that is, I had no conception that he is so weak a man, as he showed himself here; and I think better of his integrity by perceiving how incapable he is of a steady judgment. His cabinet dupe him. Spencer sees clearly his febleness, and takes the most advantage of it. Tyler thinks his cabinet are planning his re-election, and they are really busy for some one else; Spencer who rules all, being for Calhoun.

"The same sort of correspondence which took place between Spencer and the Connecticut politicians, was entered into with some in Maine.

"But I shall weary you with details. The country is not long doomed to remain in the hands of a set of men, who have not one distinguishing quality but corruption. "Faithfully and with highest respect

"GEORGE BANCROFT."

"Poor Legaré<sup>1</sup> came to his end by a chronic disease, which now came suddenly to a crisis. Art could not save him."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hugh S. Legaré, Secretary of State, *ad interim*, who died in Boston, June 20, 1843.

<sup>2</sup> From the Van Buren Mss., Library of Congress.



In May of the next year, 1844, the letters to Mrs. Bancroft record another journey to the southward. The first of them is from Lindenwald, Van Buren's place at Kinderhook, New York. The Baltimore Convention to nominate a candidate for the presidency was on the point of meeting. Bancroft was a Massachusetts delegate, and, with the insufficient majority, his first choice was Van Buren. The three following letters, to Mrs. Bancroft, to Van Buren, and to Polk, give a full account of Bancroft's opinions and course in the matter. The point of greatest significance in it all is the assertion of Bancroft's claim to virtual responsibility for the nomination of Polk, the first "Dark Horse" presidential candidate chosen by a national convention. The claim has appeared before in print, in a letter written in Bancroft's old age;<sup>1</sup> but the letter to Polk, which shall be given here, has the advantage of a contemporary document.

To MRS. E. D. BANCROFT.

"May, 1844.

"Bound for Washington, dearest wife, I am yet so lazy as to take the journey by instalments, and give half a day or rather less, to Philadelphia. I found if I continue I should not reach Baltimore till midnight: and I resolved rather to make my entry there in open day. So I pause to take my rest at the inn; for I am resolved not to lose the benefit of the journey by making immoderate haste. Since I left Van Buren's I have

<sup>1</sup> See *American Historical Review*, July, 1906. See also Schouler's *History of the United States*, vol. IV, p. 468. Foot-note.

had none of the delights of rural scenery which I prize so much: but instead of them, the jar of steamboats and bad railroads; and swarms of politicians. Appearances are now a good deal better for Van Buren; though I find but very few, who like the Texas letter much better than I do. A little difference of tone on that subject, would have effected great unanimity in our Baltimore Convention, and I think the issue of the contest would have been certain victory. We had on the boat from N. Y. the same Col. Beirne whom I saw at Lindenwald. He is confident the vote of Virginia in the convention will be given unanimously for Van Buren; and equally confident that Clay will lose the state by a majority of five thousand. I found in our company also the delegates from Maine and New Hampshire and Connecticut. They would not leave V. B. for light grounds: they go there with a preference for him; and will not abandon that preference except for strong reasons. On the whole: I think Van Buren will receive the nomination without much doubt. If then a spirit of enthusiasm is awakened for him, he may yet succeed. As it regards our strength, the tone of feeling is improving everywhere; and the sentiment of vehement opposition to Henry Clay is avowed with a resolution that promises vigorous efforts, . . .”

To MARTIN VAN BUREN.

“WASHINGTON, *May 23, Thursday.* [1844.]

“The fever here is very high. I had hardly touched the pavement when I found Rantoul at my side. He

was full of the Southern feeling: he was sure they would not go for V.B.—but they were very reasonable men, and the North might select: they would adopt any Northern man that was a Texan, be it Cass! or Stewart!! or Heaven save the mark, Levi Woodbury!!! Buchanan expresses himself firmly and decidedly for you. This is the account of his friends; and this is the statement of the Tylerites. Connecticut is still uncertain; of Virginia I know not what opinion to form: Beirne says certainly its whole vote will be V. B.; and Dromgoole thinks others. The city is full of disorganisers; and their first, second, and third words are, look at Virginia; where Ritchie, and Roane and Stevenson are opposed to him. One Louisiana delegate is in the house with me: he is very furious in the Texas matter: it is his first word and his last; I walked with him for half an hour to mollify him: but he would not be soothed. Texas must immediately become American or will soon be British.

“From old Hickory you will see a fresh letter in the *Globe* of tonight. He writes it in favour of V. B. and Polk: with Polk, Tennessee is safe; without Polk it is gone. And to this the old Hero has set his hand. The letter is not his autograph.

“Great pains were taken last night to make up a list of certain and *reliable* delegates. It was agreed to turn out all doubtful ones and take the safe. The result as voting by states or by votes per capita was as follows:

[The conjectural list of votes by states is here omitted.]

“Thus eleven states are counted upon for you on the first but ~~not with certainty~~, giving 154 votes, 138 being a majority; and if they vote per Capita the number of votes is at least 148. This number may be increased. To meet this state of the case, the disorganisers demand, that a nomination shall be made only by a two-thirds vote. For this they can unfortunately plead precedents of some weight, in former national conventions and in this congress in the caucus for nominating Speaker and Printer. On this the battle will turn; and the point may be severely contested. But I think we shall put a face on things before Monday, that will make secession an unpopular affair altogether; and I think the apprehension of division will favour union. Peterkin of Pa. writes letters full of zeal.

“Never let any body say Mr. V. B. has no friends. There are some here to refute that. A great movement is apparent. Medary is confident of Ohio.

“In Haste

“Yours most truly

“GEORGE BANCROFT.”<sup>1</sup>

To JAMES KNOX POLK.

“BOSTON, *July* 6, 1844.

“The last time I had the pleasure of conversing with you was the fine frosty morning, when, after our long interview, we took a quiet walk just before you were leaving the scene of your fourteen years’ service for the arduous and to you most glorious campaign of 1839. I watched your progress with intensest interest,

<sup>1</sup> From the Van Buren Mss., Library of Congress.

made the more near and personal by the zeal of our friend Harris, and I shared in the exultation that followed your unexampled success.

“My eye was immediately turned towards you for the service of the nation, and our Massachusetts Democracy which at any rate has to rely on firm opinions and men to meet the immense opposition of the proudest and wealthiest aristocracy in our country, and which at all times has the hearty sympathy of its friends in New England, very readily received and acted upon the suggestion of rallying around you on the ticket with Van Buren. The convention of 1840 most unwisely did not make the nomination and by that neglect greatly weakened the ticket.

“This year before the assembling of the national convention of which body I was delegate for the state, I did not fail to put myself in correspondence with my friends of New Hampshire and New York and in other states; and while some friends of Mr. V. B. seemed to think that R. M. Johnson should be nominated V. P., I took every occasion to express the opinion, in which I found afterwards, that Gen. Jackson coincided, that the choice should fall on none other than yourself. Mr. Wright of New York encouraged me in concentrating opinion on you.

“At the convention I immediately exchanged a few words with our friend Gen. Pillow, of your neighbourhood, who conducted himself throughout with the modesty and firmness, which deserved highest commendation; and I renewed my old acquaintance with Gen. Donelson. I was able to assure them that

on the first ballot for V. P. Massachusetts would certainly throw ten, probably twelve votes for Yourself.

“You know the events of Monday and Tuesday. On Tuesday many of my friends gave way to despair. Cass was gaining. The R. M. Johnson and all doubtful ones, were ready to join him; this would have swelled his vote to 157, and then it would have seemed fractious to have held out. It flashed on my mind, — that it would be alone safe to rally on you. This I mentioned to my friend Mr. Carrol of Concord, New Hampshire, who fell into it heartily. We spoke with Gov. Hubbard; he agreed; and the N. H. delegation were fixed. I then opened the matter to our excellent friend Gov. Morton of our delegation and he coincided and his coinciding was very important. I then went to your faithful friends Gen. Pillow and Donelson. They informed me that if we of N. E. would lead off, they would follow with Mississippi and Alabama and some others. Mississippi hesitated.

“Certain of this, I repaired with Gen. Donelson and Pillow to the house where were the delegations of Ohio and New York, and I spent the time till midnight in arguing with them. Mr. Medary saw the bearings of the matter and before I left the hotel assured me his delegation would go for Polk rather than for Cass. With many of the New York delegation I spoke, but opened the matter most fully to our friend Gouverneur Kemble, who I think was in congress with you. You may suppose that the N. Y. delegation was in a great state of agitation. Kemble was calm and decided.

After hearing me at length, he gave in his adhesion decidedly to my view of the Duty of V. B.'s supporters: and such were his statements, that I returned to my lodgings.

"I returned to my lodgings before midnight tranquil and happy. I enjoyed as quiet sleep as you did on the night before your journey to Warrensburg. In the morning I saw my friend Fink, state delegate of Maryland, who heartily came into the scheme, and Pillow I believe and I certainly spoke with the principal delegate from Louisiana, who was at once hearty for the course.

"It came to voting. You should have heard the cheers as Hubbard for N. H. and I for Massachusetts announced the whole vote of N. H., I the majority of Mass. But the thing that pleased me most was, to see the Virginia delegation, all vehement for Cass, taken aback, and I had a feeling of triumph as I saw Roane lead out his Virginia train to consult, and return to announce a change of vote from Cass to yourself.

"On reaching home, I met my constituents in Faneuil Hall, the largest Democratic meeting I ever saw there; they listened to my tale for an hour and a half, and broke the silence only by bursts of delight at the nominations.

"By the special invitation of our N. H. friends I went to their great ratification meeting, where I found your hearty and ardent friend Franklin Pierce, a man of true metal, a fine fellow, when in Congress with you: but improved in talent and power by assiduous culture. Here was the same enthusiasm.

"Day before yesterday I was at Worcester: a great gathering: and but one heart.

"You will be pleased I am sure to know that Mr. Van Buren most heartily in conversation and with his pen zealously advocates your election. Yesterday I received from him a long letter, from which I quote confidentially the following words:

"The success of the nominees is of vital importance to the country. That they will succeed I have not the slightest doubt. In this state, unless we get into a distracted snarl about our Governor, (which I do not anticipate) our success will be very great. It is not possible that our friends could be more zealous. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

"You can have little leisure to write; were you to find a moment's time, I should be charmed to receive a letter from you. But at any rate, you may rely on the enthusiastic and determined support of the Democracy of New England."

Bancroft was soon involved in an important campaign of his own—as the Democratic candidate for Governor of Massachusetts. His Whig opponent was George N. Briggs, who received nearly fifteen thousand more votes. In the year of a presidential election, in a State sure to be found in the Clay column, Bancroft could hardly have hoped for other results. The fact that he identified himself at this time with Governor Dorr of Rhode Island in his fight for a more liberal

<sup>1</sup> The omitted portion explains why Bancroft, busy with his *History*, could not at the moment bring out a campaign life of Polk, which he had been asked to revise, enlarge and sign.



State constitution was particularly obnoxious to the conservative element in Massachusetts, which regarded the Dorr Rebellion as a reckless assault upon law and order. It was in June of 1844 that the trial of Dorr for high treason ended in his sentence, afterward remitted, of imprisonment for life. The existing order triumphed; but if Bancroft had not brought his allegiance to the principles for which the rebellion contended, especially the extension of the suffrage, his politics and his historical writing would have been much farther apart than usual.

Through the autumn his campaigning carried him even beyond the Massachusetts borders.

To MRS. E. D. BANCROFT.

“PO’KEEPSIE, *September 20, 1844.*

“Today, dearest Love, I have a moment’s time to tell you why I have not written fully. On arriving here on Tuesday, I found myself very weary, not getting here till near midnight. I got not a wink of sleep that night, such was the hubbub. On Wednesday, I found the town full of Reporters; and to prevent monstrous nonsense being put off as mine, I undertook to write my speech. Receiving visits all the morning, and going to the fair, and taking a drive round the environs, and dining out and going to a Soiree in the evening, you may suppose it was not easy. But I kept my mind quiet, and my attention fixed; and finished seasonably stuff enough for a speech of three quarters of an hour or more. The audience was immense, but

I think I was heard by all. The dread was that the Loco Foco would talk politics. I got their attention, more perfectly than I ever did; and it was odd to see, how every time they were pleased, they would look and consider whether there was not some horrid Loco Foco doctrine wrapped up in the sugar. Van Buren came in while I was speaking; coming directly on the platform, where I stood. He came directly upon me; but instead of being disconcerted, I turned round and shook hands with him, at which there was the most uproarious applause. If that was concerted, said two, it could not have been better. But all this I dare say you will see reverently or burlesquely told in the papers.

"Speaking of shaking hands, I was introduced to a gentleman; the deed was done. Some one whispered to him: 'What, the Orator of tomorrow?'— Coming up to me, 'Sir, if I had known who it was, I should have given a more respectful shake.' . . ."

To MRS. E. D. BANCROFT.

"September, 1844.

". . . I suppose you do not write me, because you did not like my Poughkeepsie speech. It was merely an ornamental extempore; but it satisfied the occasion, and I carried my audience with me. Still I give you leave to dislike it, since you applaud my Tammany speech, and admire my Dorr letter. All agree that the Dorr letter is as you said. Van Buren liked my view better than his own; and many people have spoken to me about it. It is but a very few people in Boston, that have savage natures enough to wish to persecute him."

To MRS. E. D. BANCROFT.

[www.libtoopl.com.cn](http://www.libtoopl.com.cn) "Tuesday night, Oct., 1844.

“. . . Do not imagine that it requires courage at this time to be a democrat! What is more ridiculous than Clay's position? What is more ridiculous than Webster's relations to Clay? What is more absurd than their two-sided policy about Texas? What is more monstrous than their proposition to protect labour by taxing labourers out of all proportion? Were I one of them, my heart would sink within me, many fathoms deep. I should feel guilty and oppressed. But to support democracy may give a quiet heart and tranquil sleep, and a good wife and loving children.”<sup>1</sup>

When Polk and Dallas were elected, it soon became evident that Bancroft's political labours were not to go unrequited. A correspondent in Mobile wrote him, December 6, 1844, of his desire to see Bancroft in the Cabinet, and his intention to express this feeling in a Mobile newspaper. In replying to him Bancroft said: "I received your very friendly notice in the *Mobile Register*, and I shall show to you, how deeply I recognise the sincerity of your regard, by using with you the

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. J. W. Chadwick, in his *William Ellery Channing* (p. 277, foot-note) has told the following story, for which he was indebted to Senator Hoar: "A democrat was a social pariah. George Bancroft, gentleman and scholar, after a brilliant candidacy for the governorship of Massachusetts, met a lady of the Whig aristocracy on the street, and said to her, 'I did not find you at home when I called.' 'No,' she answered, 'and you never will.'" The manners of the "lady of the Whig aristocracy" are not commented upon.

utmost frankness. There are many reasons why I do not desire a post in the cabinet, among others, it would interfere too much with my literary pursuits. A foreign mission would better chime with my inclinations."

As the time for Polk to announce his appointments drew near, Bancroft himself was not far from the political centre. The following passages from letters to his wife sufficiently tell the story of what he saw and heard:

To MRS. E. D. BANCROFT.

“WASHINGTON, D. C. *February 15, 1845.*

“. . . The President elect keeps his own counsels most closely; but some of those in the street seem to think, that the husband of a woman like yourself, should assuredly be one of the Clerks of the President; and as people do not know the cause of my coming here, they draw queer inferences. Time will unfold all things, among the rest whether you are to mope in Winthrop-place; or reign in Washington; or freeze your nose in some German Lapland; but of one thing I am resolved, which is one day or other to show you more of the world, than you have seen in the last five years. . . .

“After dinner I left a card on J. C. Calhoun; and with Gilpin spent an hour with Benton and his most interesting son-in-law Lieutenant Frémont. To hear him talk of the Oregon country seemed like being carried among snowcapped mountains of Switzerland;

and his account of the valleys and beautiful runs of water were enough almost to make you think that the Garden of Eden was the other side of the mountains. I had no idea, that there were so many ranges of mountains, or so beautifully picturesque and inviting a region; destined you may be sure to be filled by Yankees, and whether under our government or not to be peopled by men who have no notion of owing allegiance to any power but of their own selection. . . .”

On February 20th he wrote: “Mr. Polk keeps the secret of his cabinet appointments; nor will they probably be known before the fifth of March. If anybody asks about me, say I shall probably go envoy to Japan.” In a letter of March 2d he said: “I write tonight to enjoin on you secrecy; to be *surprised* at nothing; to be displeased at nothing. Things here are *arranged* in a manner you know nothing [about]; and entirely to my personal satisfaction. You too will be satisfied, when you come to know.”

The great secret was Bancroft’s appointment as Secretary of the Navy in Polk’s Cabinet. Political opponents in Massachusetts attempted to block his confirmation by calling the attention of a Virginia Senator to Bancroft’s utterances against slavery. But another Senator secured from Bancroft a list of all his writings on the subject, and stated his case before the Senate, which confirmed him without a dissenting vote.<sup>1</sup> Bancroft’s note on the subject to his wife was as follows:

<sup>1</sup> See *Century Magazine*, January, 1887.

To MRS. E. D. BANCROFT.

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"CITY OF WASHINGTON, *March 6, 1845.*

"Having dined yesterday at Blair's and seen a wedding at Col. Benton's, and watched a fire as it burned down a theatre and a row of houses, I might have much to say. But the time is short; and I write merely to explain to you the cause of the Senate's not acting today upon my affair. It springs from no hostility, but a rule of the Senate made a delay till Monday proper. So you will have to address me as a private citizen till Monday next: after which the Secretary of the Navy will lay his laurels, no not that, his trident at your feet. I write lest some mischievous letter-writers might pervert the matter. There is no opposition to my confirmation; but a Senator insisted on following the strict letter and routine. Love to all."

It has sometimes been said that Bancroft's lack of popularity in Massachusetts was due in part to his early recognition of the fact that New England was not the whole country. To be called from Massachusetts to a post so conspicuously national as that of Secretary of the Navy must certainly have compensated him for many things.

V

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

1845—1846

ON the first of January, 1845, Bancroft wrote to James K. Polk, President-elect: "A post in the Cabinet has not seemed to me at this time the position most favourable to my efficiency. Many years' close attention and continual investigation on my part have made the public wish somewhat general that I should as speedily as possible conclude the History which I have undertaken of the United States; and the foreign service of the country in England, in France or in Germany is the only position which would favour that end. When I was a very young man I passed three years or more in France and Germany, and during that period a winter in Berlin. The German language, as well as the French, is almost as familiar to me as the English. In making up your arrangement for the foreign corps, if the mission to Prussia were offered me, I should certainly accept it."

It is hardly to be supposed that Bancroft, having stated his wishes with such frankness, could have looked upon the navy portfolio as their complete fulfilment. If there is nothing to indicate specifically that

it was regarded as a stepping-stone to his true desire, the event shows that it took this place. Yet in the year and a half through which he administered the Navy Department, he displayed all the zeal and efficiency of one whose whole heart was in the present task.

"Without my being a candidate for a post in the cabinet," Bancroft wrote to Marcus Morton, March 10, 1845, "and against my avowed predilections, I have been called to that station, and if the Senate consent, shall enter upon it in a few days. It is my fixed purpose to govern myself there by two maxims: First, regard to the public service; and next to act as if the eye of the whole democracy watched every motion and its ear heard every word I shall utter. Duty and publicity will be my watchwords; and in great matters or small, I will do nothing in secret. If asked about appointments, I shall give such answers, as I shall be willing to have read to the world, that is to all the little world that takes an interest in such things."

On the very threshold of his official career, Van Buren had given him (March 7, 1845) the following excellent counsel: "Suppress the ardour of your temperament. Keep cool. Stand aloof from all schemes and intrigues of which you will soon see abundance. Let your course be distinguished by a singleness of devotion to the duties of your Department, and the time will come when you will find an advantage from this course beyond what is the ordinary reward of virtuous actions."

In a letter of April 14, Bancroft made reply: "Following your advice, I have quietly devoted myself to my



duty, which is arduous enough, and take as little share in the distribution of office as is consistent with fidelity to my tried friends." The files of Bancroft's correspondence at this time reveal "tried friends" in such multitudes that the answering of their importunities on behalf of other friends and of themselves must have occupied a very considerable portion of the Secretary's time. From all these letters one must be chosen, less for its value as a type than because of its intrinsic interest. It is indeed exceptional, in that it is not addressed to Bancroft himself.

*From CHARLES SUMNER to MRS. BANCROFT.*

"BOSTON, *January 9th*, 1846.

"You will think that I never appear, except as a *beggar*. Very well. I never beg for myself. But I do beg now most earnestly for another; for a friend of mine, and of your husband's; for a man of letters, of gentleness.

"I have heard to-day of the poverty of Hawthorne. He is very poor indeed. He has already broken up the humble and inexpensive house which he had established in Concord, because it was too expensive. You know how simply he lived. He lived almost on nothing; but even that nothing has gone. Let me say to your husband, not to you (for I would not quote Latin to a lady)

"*Nil habuit Codrus. Quis enim negat? et tamen illud*

*Perdidit infelix totum nihil.'*

Some of his savings were lent to Mr. Ripley at Brook Farm; but he is not able to repay them, and poor Hawthorne (that sweet, gentle, true nature) has not wherewithal to live. I need not speak of his genius to you. He is an ornament of the country; nor is there a person of any party who would not hear with delight that the author of such Goldsmithian prose, as he writes, had received honour and office from his country. I plead for him earnestly, and count upon your friendly interference to keep his name present to the mind of your husband, so that it may not be pushed out of sight by the intrusive legion of clamorous office-seekers, or by other public cares.

“Some post-office, some custom house, something, that will yield daily bread,—anything in the gift of your husband—or that his potent influence might command—will confer great happiness upon Hawthorne; and, I believe, dear Mrs. Bancroft, it will confer greater upon you; feeling, as I do, that all true kindness blesses him that bestows it more even than it blesses the receiver.

“I wish I could have some assurance from your husband that Hawthorne shall be cared for. . . .

“I wrote your husband lately on peace; but he will not heed my words.

“Believe me, dear Mrs. Bancroft,

“Yours sincerely { provided you do not }  
 { forget Hawthorne }

“CHARLES SUMNER.”

Bancroft's reply <sup>1</sup> to Sumner's letter on peace, and

<sup>1</sup> Original in Sumner Collection, Harvard College Library.

incidentally to the Hawthorne question, may best be given here, though its allusions to the Oregon boundary are at this point somewhat premature.

To CHARLES SUMNER.

“WASHINGTON, *January 13, 1846.*

“I am more of a peace man than you; as you will find in the end. For that object I would not for a moment listen to a scheme for mixing up the Oregon question with schemes of literary ambition. I know no better referees than the plenipotentiaries of two such enlightened states as Great Britain and the United States; and if our rights are asserted with *unanimity* and dignity, I have no doubt England will do us justice, which is all we want. I fear nothing but divisions at home, which may impel England to unreasonable and impossible demands.

“I was amused at your suggestion of referees. Did not Sparks discover and father upon Franklin a Red Line, that had nothing to do with the subject; but to be used as a terror to the legislature of Maine? Has not Prescott denounced us all as violators of international law and breakers of the Constitution, against the opinion of Congress and his country, and against the action of the Supreme Court? And if Congress, and the Executive and the Judiciary all acting in harmony, cannot settle a constitutional question to his satisfaction, how do we know what would happen about Oregon? And has not Guizot committed himself as minister under whose auspices a declaration has been

made, that *cette fois les Anglois ont raison?* And has he not exerted himself to narrow the boundaries of our union, and to create antagonistic powers? Oh Mr. Sumner; Mr. Sumner! You must not only cry peace, but you must seek peace, and you will find it in the paths of patriotism and justice.

“As to Hawthorne, I have been most perseveringly his friend. I am glad you go for the good rule of dismissing wicked Whigs and putting in Democrats. Set me down as without influence, if so soon as the course of business will properly permit, you do not find Hawthorne an office holder.”

On the fifth of March, 1846, Bancroft wrote to President Polk, endorsing the appointment of Hawthorne as Surveyor at the Salem Custom House, the post which he received.

An important letter to one who was not seeking office, but whom it sought, was written in the early days of the Polk administration, with which it reveals Bancroft's intimate connection. It also reveals the seriousness with which Polk and his advisers were considering the means of bringing to a satisfactory end the controversy between the United States and Great Britain on the Oregon boundary line. ‘Fifty-four forty or fight’ had not yet become the party cry, but the spirit from which it sprang was already at work.

To MARTIN VAN BUREN.

“WASHINGTON, May 5, 1845.

“I might feel embarrassment at writing to you to-

night, were not personal affection and the public interest so entirely united in what I am going to say.

“The critical state of the relations with England render the mission to that country, always the highest foreign station, now of peculiar and the gravest importance. The British minister at this place has, it is true, full powers to negotiate a settlement of the Oregon Question: and the affair is proceeding in a manner that will I am sure, obtain your approbation. But the excited condition of the English mind and the feeling manifested by the ministry render it essential that the envoy to the Court of St. James should be foremost among the first men of the land for experience, previous high station, acknowledged dignity and weight of character, ability and influence; and the President and the unanimous voice of the cabinet have singled you out for that station.

“The President does me the honour to make me the organ of communicating to you his earnest wish on this subject. He was preparing to write to you himself, but I begged to be permitted to make the communication to you. My affection prompted me to this; for I could mingle more of private views with all that is public in this very important proposition.

“It is true, that some weeks ago, and before the Oregon question became a grave one, Mr. Polk had tendered this mission to South Carolina.<sup>1</sup> What his motives were for this, you can surmise as well as I.

<sup>1</sup> For another allusion to this offer of the English mission to Calhoun, see Benton, *Thirty Years' View*, II, 650.

But I, who knew the relations of many of your personal friends towards ~~Mr. Calhoun~~, and had seen the President resolutely omit to place Mr. Calhoun in his cabinet, confess that I thought well of this resolution. But since the jealousy with England has occurred, I have reasoned that public considerations must outweigh all others; and have found myself in harmony with the President and others in thinking that you are the man, to bear the olive-branch across the Atlantic.

“You have been President. A greater reason for your selection. You would assuredly represent the country. In Europe the prime ministers are always selected on such occasions. Witness Metternich to Napoleon; Guizot lately to England; and Talleyrand, Marshall Sout, and others. On great occasions the highest men are to be taken; where war is to be averted, none but the highest.

“I must quote your own avowed opinion also. Mr. Butler told me, that you had expressed to him that in your view an Ex-President could be honourably employed in a foreign mission.<sup>1</sup> It was not till since the Oregon difficulty occurred, that I have repeated this remark of Mr. Butler’s; and added the belief which he will confirm to you, that he joins with me in the hope of your accepting the mission to England. We are your affectionate friends, and we entreat that you will do so. The President eagerly and earnestly proposed his wish to see you in that station the first moment, that

<sup>1</sup> B. F. Butler, of New York, Attorney-General under Jackson and Van Buren, subsequently wrote to Bancroft in effect that he (Bancroft) had made too much of Van Buren’s casual remark.

he became persuaded of your receiving the suggestion was a subject for your consideration and deliberate decision.

“The country would witness your acceptance of the post with unanimous satisfaction. It would be taken as evidence that American rights and the peace of the world are both to be maintained. The joy of the nation would be unmingled; and what right have you to withhold yourself from rendering most essential service to the continuance of peace and the happiness of mankind?

“You once were in England and were rejected by a faction. What poetical justice in returning there with the undivided acclamations of the country!

“You owe it to your country to go. Let me add, you owe it to yourself. You love society; from the stations you have filled you would appear in England as our first citizen, and would be welcomed to all that there is there of refinement and hospitality.

“The expense would be considerable; but the outfit and salary and your private income would place at your easy disposal twenty thousand a year for a couple of years. If you chose to remain a less time, the proportion would be greater. If you remained longer, the expense would somewhat diminish. Do you laugh as you read this? The lady Angelica and I have reasoned it out, that your personal happiness for life will be improved by an excursion to England, and if you doubt, ask Mr. Butler, or ask the lady herself.

“It is due to Mr. Polk to say, that if I write this letter to you instead of the President, it is at my per-

sonal solicitation. His own mind has been firm in its desire of seeing you in the post proposed, from the first moment that the state of public affairs led any of us to think that your services might properly be demanded in the name of the country. What more can I say? If anything can be added to make the suggestion agreeable to you, you may safely consider it as uttered by the President, and reiterated by every member of his cabinet.

“With most affectionate respect

“Yours ever

“GEORGE BANCROFT.”

Van Buren's answer was as follows:

*From MARTIN VAN BUREN to GEORGE BANCROFT.*

“LINDENWALD, *May 12th*, 1845.

“Your kind letter conveying to me the desire of the President that I should accept of the Mission to England was duly received, as was also, by the same mail, one from Mr. Butler enclosing a communication from the President to him of like import.

“I appreciate very highly the friendly and complimentary views, which, I am assured, have been taken of the question, in connection with myself, by the President and his Cabinet, and beg you to make to them my very respectful and sincere acknowledgments for this gratifying proof of their respect and confidence.

“It can scarcely be necessary to say that I have be-



stowed on the proposition all the consideration which is due to the gravity and importance of the subject, influenced by an unfeigned desire to promote, by all proper means, the patriotic views of the President in regard to this responsible portion of his official duties. I have no recollection of having expressed to my friend Mr. Butler the opinion to which you allude, yet, if you did not misunderstand him, I doubtless did so; and I certainly was never apprised of the remaining portion of his remarks to you until I received your letter. I have, however, no hesitation in saying that, in my opinion, there would be no incompatibility with his former position in the councils of the Nation, for an Ex-President to accept, under suitable circumstances, an important Foreign Mission; and farther, that an emergency in the affairs of the country might arise and be presented to his consideration by the Executive which would make it his imperative duty to overlook minor considerations, and devote himself to the public service in the form proposed, at almost any expense of personal feeling or preference for retirement.

“I am however obliged to inform you, that after a very deliberate consideration of the case as presented in the letters of the President and yourself, taken in connection with the avowed intentions of the Government in regard to that branch of the negotiations which constitutes at least the ostensible ground of the recent outbreak in Parliament, I have found myself unable to regard it as of a nature to make the acceptance of the proposed Mission on my part either a duty of the character I have described, or, under the circum-

stances by which its present offer is surrounded, agreeable. You may, however, inform the President, and I beg you to do so, that should a crisis in the affairs of the country like that to which I have alluded hereafter occur, or its present existence be made manifest, and in which there is reason to believe that the public service can be essentially promoted by any honourable efforts of mine, they will not, if called for, be withheld from personal considerations of any description. I would on the contrary rejoice in any fair opportunity to repay, in part at least, the large debt of gratitude which I owe to the country, in a form which shall be free from misconstruction or reasonable exceptions.

"The marked and warm interest you have manifested in this matter, not only in respect to its public, but also to its personal bearings are entitled to my very grateful acknowledgments. Believe me, my dear sir, that they are very cordially rendered, and that

"I am, as heretofore,

"Your sincere friend

"M. VAN BUREN.

"P. S.—I send this through Mr. Butler that it may perform a double office."

Having served as the mouthpiece of the Polk administration in its dealings with a living ex-President, it soon fell to Bancroft's lot to pronounce the official eulogy upon a dead leader. On June 8, 1845, Andrew Jackson died. On June 27th, there was a commemoration, in Washington, of his death, and Bancroft was the orator of the day. The capacity for formulating demo-

cratic doctrine which had made Bancroft so valuable to his party in Massachusetts now stood him in good stead. There could have been no more congenial task than to celebrate and interpret the life of the democratic chieftain. With reference to Jackson's death it has been said that "only those who had felt his favours came forward to pronounce his eulogy."<sup>1</sup> The extent of Bancroft's direct indebtedness to Jackson seems to have been that Bancroft, by Jackson's special direction, was to have access to the biographical papers committed to Amos Kendall and used by him in preparing his *Life of Jackson*.<sup>2</sup> The biography which it was hoped Bancroft would write was never written, and of course his history stopped far short of Jackson's time. To the oration alone, then, we must look for Bancroft's estimate of Jackson. Of the orator as such, an historian of the Polk administration wrote immediately upon its close: "As a speaker his manner is not prepossessing. Nature has not favoured him with a rich and melodious voice, or a dignified and attractive presence. But the gorgeous imagery and the sparkling gems which ornament his language, gild the philosophical thought and classical erudition, and display the intellectual wealth which years of research have enabled him to acquire."<sup>3</sup> The Jackson oration is, indeed, one of the most characteristic and effective specimens of Bancroft's "occasional" utterances. In a day of flrid

<sup>1</sup> See *History of the United States*, by James Schouler, Vol. IV p. 504, note.

<sup>2</sup> Van Buren Mss. (October, 1837), Library of Congress.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Polk Administration*, by Lucien B. Chase, p. 25.

oratory, it had all the floridity natural to Bancroft's style; and beneath the ornamented surface there was the substance of genuine sympathy with democratic principles and their most eminent exemplar. It is altogether a significant expression of Bancroft the man of letters in relation to his party.

The enduring monument of Bancroft's work in the Cabinet of Polk is found rather in what he did than in anything he said. The Naval Academy at Annapolis owes its inception to Bancroft's administrative ability. The need of a school for naval officers had long been recognised, but the recommendations of many secretaries had been of no avail. When Bancroft took charge of the Navy Department, the school seemed almost as far in the future as ever. On October 10, 1845, it was formally opened.

"Thus it was," says the historian of the Naval Academy, in a passage which need be neither abridged nor expanded, "that in four months after the first inception of the plan, and less than eight months after assuming the duties of his office, Secretary Bancroft was enabled to present to the country a fully-organised academy, in efficient working order, which was destined to do for the Navy what West Point had so long done for the Army. He had accomplished during a single recess of Congress what his predecessors had for thirty years in vain attempted to secure by legislation; and it had been done simply by a more judicious application of the means which Congress had already provided. In his annual report of December 1, 1845, he stated briefly the steps he had taken:

“Congress, in its great desire to improve the Navy, had permitted the Department to employ professors and instructors at an annual cost of \$28,200; and it had been used, besides the few employed at the receiving-ships and the Naval Asylum, to send professors with the midshipmen to every ocean and every clime. But the ship is not friendly to study, and the office of professor rapidly declined into a sinecure; often not so much was done as the elder officers would cheerfully do for their juniors. The teachers on board of the receiving-ships gave little instruction, or none whatever; so that the expenditure was fruitless of great results. Many of the professors were able and willing, but the system was a bad one. The idea naturally suggested itself of seizing the time when the midshipmen are on shore and appropriating it to their culture. Instead of sending migratory professors to sea with each handful of midshipmen, the midshipmen themselves, in the intervals between sea-duty, might be collected in a body and devote their time to suitable instruction. For the pay of the instructors Congress has provided. In looking out for a modest shelter for the pupils, I was encouraged to ask for Fort Severn, at Annapolis. The transfer was readily made by order of the Secretary of War, and a school was immediately organised on an unostentatious and frugal plan. This institution, by giving some preliminary instruction to the midshipmen before their first cruise; by extending an affectionate but firm supervision over them as they return from sea; by providing them suitable culture before they pass to a higher grade; by rejecting from the service all who fail

in capacity or in good disposition to use their time well, will go far to renovate and improve the American Navy.

“The plan pursued has been unpretending, but it is hoped will prove efficient. A few professors give more and better instruction than four-and-twenty at sea. No supernumerary officer has been ordered to Annapolis; no idle man is attached to the establishment. Commander Buchanan, to whom the organization of the school was intrusted, has carried his instructions into effect with precision and sound judgment, and with a wise adaptation of simple and moderate means to a great and noble end.”<sup>1</sup>

With Bancroft Hall as the central structure of the imposing buildings in which the officers of the new navy receive their first professional training, the debt of the country to the Secretary who founded the Academy will not soon be forgotten. Of another administrative matter which claimed his attention we have also his own account:

“When I became Secretary of the Navy,” he wrote to Dr. S. A. Allibone, October 11, 1856, “the Observatory was already in existence and under the superintendence of Maury. It was then known officially as the Depot for Charts, but Congress had not expressly sanctioned *the Observatory* by name. Mr. J. Q. Adams still cherished the hope of being the founder of a National Observatory. In conjunction with Lieut. Maury and taking counsel also of the best scientific

<sup>1</sup> See *Historical Sketch of the United States Naval Academy*. By James Russell Soley, pp. 74-76.

men, I got large appropriations for the Institution, introduced under Mr. Maury, scientific men, for example *Sears Walker*, and in a word did all I could to carry forward and perfect what I found begun. I have no right to be called in any sense the Originator of the Observatory. But I contributed my part while in office, to procure for it so complete instruments and observers, as superseded Mr. Adams' scheme, as he himself once said to me."

While Bancroft in his public capacity was achieving the establishment of the Naval Academy, his private life was shadowed by the illness and death of the only child of his second marriage. This daughter, Susan Jackson, was born May 30, 1839. Letters of 1845 from Bancroft in Washington to his wife in Boston betray much anxiety about the child's health. In October her mother stopped with her in Philadelphia on the way to Washington. There her illness became critical, and, despite the best of care in that city of skilful physicians, she died. The two sons of the first marriage were at school in Roxbury. Their older sister, Louisa, now a girl of twelve, had the nurture both of her mother's family in Springfield and of her father's household in Washington. The two sons of Mrs. Bancroft, William and Alexander Bliss, were members respectively of the classes of 1846 and 1847 at Harvard College. It was hardly possible, in all the circumstances, for Mrs. Bancroft to make the Washington house at this time so much a centre of social activity as the home of Bancroft generally was.

Bancroft's personal letters in this period do not throw all the light one could wish upon the great events of Polk's administration. With the Walker Tariff and the Independent Treasury, both established in 1846, he had, as head of the Navy Department, but a secondary concern. When he left the Cabinet after eighteen months of service the Mexican war was still unfinished, the Oregon boundary controversy was settled. The following letters, dealing more fully with the second of these subjects than with the first, have their historical value:

*To WILLIAM STURGIS.*

“WASHINGTON, *August 25, 1845.*

“. . . I am sorry you did not see Mr. McLane.<sup>1</sup> It would, however, have had no effect on the general subject, as I had conversed with him before he went and possessed him of your views. The difficulty lies in England's watching the progress of this country with fear, apprehension, and jealousy: and she will find herself on the Oregon question as impotent as on that of Texas. The present and all future colonists of Oregon prefer connection with a government that leaves them to govern themselves to one with a government that asserts authority. If all Oregon were ceded to England today, she could not keep it. Her interest for an arrangement is greater than ours. She deceives herself by the consciousness of her naval superiority; but her ships would be powerless. They could enter a harbour, but how could they occupy it? The solitude of Nootka

<sup>1</sup> Louis McLane, U. S. Minister to England.



Sound after a half century's pretended occupation, should teach wisdom. But wisdom is not taught in advance; England may yet be compelled to learn it by a destiny which she cannot control. Meantime you and I have done our duty faithfully, and should have written on our tombs, 'Here lie men who gave good advice affecting the peace of the world.'

To LOUIS McLANE.

“WASHINGTON, *December 12, 1845.*”

“Mr. Robert Lemon, for whom I enclose a letter, is the chief clerk in the State Paper Office, and by the permission of the British Secretary of State, makes copies for me of old documents, relating to American history. During the period of Mr. Everett's stay in England I received from him constantly parcels, which came to me in the Despatch Bag of the Department. If he sends you any for me, may I rely on you to send them to me in that way, or in any other, that may seem more appropriate?”

“We are here at the opening of a Congress, which confides in the Executive more fully, than has ever been the case within my memory. The temperate tone of Mr. Buchanan, combined with the clear enunciation of American Principles by the President, has conciliated the good sense of the country to the side of the administration, and the decisive and astonishingly successful result of the Texan Negotiation has given it the character of good fortune. Slidell, our minister in Mexico, an excellent French and Spanish scholar, may arrange all our affairs with that power, almost before

Europe is aware of the renewal of the negotiations. But this may be too much to hope.

“A few weeks ago a letter came to me from Mr. Edward Everett, desiring the President’s permission to write a letter to Lord Aberdeen on our affairs in Oregon. I simply read the letter to the President, and as from myself, without asking the President to interfere, declined presenting his request. It sometimes occurs to me, that Mr. E’s too great willingness to accommodate matters with England, may have increased the expectation of terms on our part, that this country would reject with unanimity. If anything can bring England to a modest and sensible view of the subject, I think it must be the vast superiority displayed by Buchanan in his papers with Pakenham, and the mixture of calmness and love of peace with fearlessness and decision in the President’s message. The success of that document is astonishingly great on this side the water. For one, I hope Great Britain will take such steps as may lead to a final, peaceful settlement of the whole matter on an equitable basis. Such, I think, is the desire and I may say, the hope, of a great majority: but so sure as Great Britain continues in the same tone of unreasonable demand, the country will with great unanimity, nerve itself for the crisis. One of the oddities is, that John Quincy Adams is vehement for insisting upon 54° 40’, and openly declares, he would not yield to Britain a foot of land on what he calls the South Seas.

“Meantime the Whig press, in their zeal to counteract the almost unanimous approval of the President’s course, is busy in raising apprehensions of sudden war,

as though England would strike in the moment of excitement.

To LOUIS McLANE.

“WASHINGTON, *March 29, 1846.*

“. . . Our affairs with Mexico appear to be going on very well. We have a great naval force at Mazatlan, from which our dates come down to Feb. 11. Were Mexico to venture on war, every port from San Francisco to Acapulco lies open to our ships. In the Gulf of Mexico we have a still larger force; and our little army of occupation is advancing to the Del Norte. No resistance is apprehended; and in Mexico itself a better spirit toward us is prevailing. The people may dislike the United States, but they dislike monarchy more; and the open suggestions of placing a European prince on a throne to be erected there, has created a party in favour of peace with the United States. The prospect of an adjustment is better than ever.

“In respect to Oregon, all eyes are turned across the Atlantic. The determination to give the ‘Notice’ is so strong, that Calhoun is left almost alone, and has been compelled to make personal appeals to his political friends to sustain him. The notice will pass and without a clause indicating a compromise.

“Shall I tell how the debate has been conducted? Mr. Allen began earnestly for 54-40 and no compromise. Mr. Crittenden for notice and negotiation; and in this is sustained by Clayton. Mr. Colquitt, from Calhoun’s wing, (Calhoun being by the force of public

opinion compelled to change his original ground which was opposition to the notice) proposed notice and compromise. This exasperated Benton, who has always been for 49. 'What,' said he, 'shall Calhoun have the glory of leading the Senate to a result?' and he insisted on peace between Allen and the friends of the Administration, and Crittenden, Clayton and that branch of the whigs. This movement of Benton's will, in some form, be successful, and within a fortnight either the notice, in a form satisfactory to Benton, will pass the Senate, with great unanimity by consent, or the House Notice will pass by a small majority.

"Calhoun is in great distress of mind; and feels conscious of error, with too much pride to confess it.

"You know the views I expressed to you without reserve before you left. I have not changed my view a hair's breadth during the whole negotiation. As to what would be acceptable here, as far as public opinion goes, 49 ceding Quadra and Vancouver's island, and ceding for seven or ten years the navigation of the Columbia, will be sustained. But that is the limit. On the question of permanent navigation of the Columbia, many of the Whigs would give way: but the country never. Neither can it be of weight to England. For do but look at our policy. We keep all our gates open. The importations for Montreal come through New York freely; there is no duty; transit is free: as to the Hudson and Lake Champlain and the New York canal, England enjoys the free navigation of them all, as a voluntary act of our legislation. This administration further proposes to let *Montreal* export

by way of New York. Why should England stipulate by a treaty for a free transit, which she will have from our own policy? For one, I am convinced, America should not surrender the free navigation, and that England has no motive to press a demand for it.

“Congress is beginning to wake up, on the subject of defences. But I do not believe that much will be done. The tone of the President’s last message, will, I think, strike you as very good. The effect here has been excellent. . . .

“The universal opinion here is, that our country is not to make an offer. Since the President offered 49, England has offered nothing. As far as the record appears, she plants herself in the Columbia River. Many private rumours suggest that England is willing to recede; I have had one letter that admits no other inference; but she has not said so. It seems but the dictate of common sense, that England, if she disapproves the rejection of our offer by Pakenham, should herself renew a proposition. If she doesn’t, we shall undoubtedly go forward and colonise the Pacific coast without further ado. If she makes the offer that there is some reason to anticipate, the arrangement will be confirmed by every Senator excepting twelve or *eight*. . . .

“[P. S.] That the repeal of the corn-laws is the commencement of a political reform in England, appears to me too clear to admit of a doubt. The corn-laws formed the central point of their old aristocracy.”

To LOUIS McLANE.

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“WASHINGTON, *June 23, 1846.*”

“. . . Others will write you. Gen. Armstrong will take to you the chief topics of conversation, and public interest. I beg leave to express to you the very great satisfaction felt here in all quarters, at the able, dignified and successful manner in which you have carried on your part of the late negotiations, which, in their importance, are not surpassed by any of the last thirty years of our history. Those who have read your letters are unanimous in this opinion, and those who have not, award to you applause on just grounds of faith. The conduct of the President throughout has been calm, wise, and resolute. It took three or four days to get the proposition to refer the treaty to the Senate adopted with absolute unanimity as to the measure and the form of language. But unanimity in the cabinet was obtained, and in the country the satisfaction is greater than I can easily express to you. The few who make a clamour, excite no attention, and are met by the public with rebuke or with indifference. Gen. Cass is considerably chagrined, he having met with less sympathy than was expected, and having got more intimately connected with the Fifty Four forties than he had designed. Mr. Buchanan, who was rumoured to have been opposed to his colleagues, has publicly authorised a denial of it, and his friends justly assert, that the form adopted for the President's message to the Senate, met his entire approbation. He goes upon the bench to fill the vacancy in the Pennsylvania and New Jersey

circuit.<sup>1</sup> But of this the public is as yet uninformed. The President, I think, will meet with a little difficulty in filling your place, exactly to his mind. A most respectable selection from the north can be made; but I doubt, if the person in view, who is a most worthy and honourable man, will feel at liberty to leave the country at this time. Nor will it be easy to satisfy all in the selection for France. But neither of these presses on present attention so much as the post of Premier; in the filling of which I hope you will be taken to counsel. Rumour has been sending the Secretary of the Navy to shiver in the swamps of Petersburg; but there is no truth in that. It may be that Mr. Charles J. Ingersoll has been thought of for that post; at least before his controversy about Webster, in the latter part of which he is generally thought not to have had the best of it. Yet his talents, his activity, and the friendly expression which preceded his personal quarrel, and the fidelity of the Democratic party to its friends, all may unite in designating him still for a foreign post.

“Very faithfully yours

“GEORGE BANCROFT.

[P. S.] “For your edification, I send you the first newspaper printed at Matamoras. I hope the *Levant* is now in the harbor of Monterey, and the *Warren* at San Francisco. Our people consider California and New Mexico as ours. They will not easily consent to give them up. Mexico is in a state of disintegration,

<sup>1</sup>Buchanan, on the contrary, remained Secretary of State through Polk's administration; then he retired from public life until Pierce appointed him minister to England in 1853.

which may render it necessary, in the pursuit of peace, to deal with her, province by province, state by state.”

Bancroft's personal relation to the Mexican war and its conduct is a matter both of private and of public record. On the event which led to it, the annexation of Texas, his political opinion was defined before he was called to the national councils. The *Boston Times*, of March 13, 1845, rejoicing in its editorial column at Bancroft's appointment to the Cabinet, recalled his advocacy of annexation at a time when other members of a democratic convention at Worcester thought it would be fatal to the party in Massachusetts. "We were present," said the writer, "and well recollect the occasion, and the intensesness of feeling manifested. The subject had not then recommended itself to our democracy so much as could have been desired. Mr. Bancroft took the floor, and with a depth of reasoning, power of grasp, and felicity of illustration, explained the bearings of annexation on our social, political and commercial interests. His eloquence flowed like a clear-running stream, and the cogency of his arguments carried conviction to every mind. He pleaded, to use his own beautiful figure, for the extension of the 'area of freedom,' and he was successful. Those views were subsequently incorporated in the letter which he addressed to the democracy on accepting the nomination for Governor, and its tenor is well and favourably known throughout the Union."

When he joined the Cabinet his view of the Mexican situation was summed up in a letter to a correspondent



in New York: "You are quite right in supposing the disposition of this government towards Mexico to be of the most conciliatory character. . . . I hope war is permanently out of fashion in the civilised world; but at least I hope and trust that that savage custom is not to intrude itself into the relations of American republics with each other." <sup>1</sup>

Less than a week after writing this letter Bancroft found himself, by the President's order of May 31, 1845, Acting Secretary of War during a temporary absence of Secretary Marcy. On May 28th Marcy had written to General Zachary Taylor, at Fort Jesup, Louisiana, a letter preparing him for an important communication which Bancroft was destined to write. This was no less than an order <sup>2</sup> (June 15, 1845)—anticipating the action of Texas which should make it a State of the Union—to make a forward movement to the western frontier of Texas, with a view to occupying a site "best adapted to repel invasion, and to protect what, in the event of annexation, will be our western border. You will limit yourself," the order continued, "to the defence of the territory of Texas, unless Mexico should declare war against the United States." As the Mexicans still considered the territory into which Taylor advanced a part of Mexico, it was this "forward movement," ordered by Bancroft as the temporary head of the War Department, which precipitated the Mexican war.

<sup>1</sup> To Henry Wikoff, May 12, 1845.

<sup>2</sup> See *Executive Documents*, 1st Session, 30th Congress, No. 60, p. 81.

Two passages from letters of December 10, 1845, are illuminative. To Commodore Perry Bancroft wrote: "We are jogging on quietly this winter, not anticipating war. Yet it may come when least expected. In that event, I am glad to believe our navy has officers capable of maintaining its glory as it was in its best days." On the same day he wrote to Commodore Conner at Pensacola: "We all hope Mexico will agree to a peace: and we are all well satisfied with the prudence and good judgment with which you have conducted your affairs. Pray keep the vessels so that we can constantly hear from Mr. Slidell without interruption."

When President Polk received the news of the conflict between American and Mexican arms which led him to recommend a declaration of war, Bancroft was the only member of his Cabinet who had not supported his determination upon this course. Yet the actual recommendation was made, May 11, 1846, with the concurrence of all the Cabinet.<sup>1</sup> Congress immediately recognised the existence of war with Mexico, and it fell to the Secretary of the Navy to issue the order which rendered operative one of the worst mistakes of judgment made by the Polk administration. On May 13th Bancroft wrote to Commodore Conner: "If Santa Anna endeavours to enter the Mexican ports you will allow him to pass freely."<sup>2</sup> When the

<sup>1</sup> See *The American Nation: A History*. Vol. XVII. "Westward Expansion," by George Pierce Garrison, pp. 204-205.

<sup>2</sup> *Executive Documents* 1st Session, 30th Congress, No. 60, p. 774. See also, Von Holst, III., 281.

exile did return from Havana, it was not, as the Washington administration hoped, to bring peace nearer, but to raise fresh obstacles of warfare and bloodshed.

In achieving the most important result of the Mexican war, the acquisition of California, the navy played of necessity a leading rôle. The series of orders issued by Bancroft to Commodore Sloat, commanding our ships in the Pacific, may be followed by the student of the conflict. They reveal the Secretary clearly foreseeing the possibility of war, directing the policy and actions of the commander in the event of its outbreak, and when it came, urging upon him more activity than he showed in the carrying out of his instructions. In fulfilment of these orders Monterey, San Francisco and other California towns were taken, though too slowly to satisfy the Washington authorities.<sup>1</sup>

From Bancroft's private letters during the progress of these events, three extracts may be made. On June 16, 1846, he wrote to Samuel Hooper of Boston: "From the best judgment I can form, Commodore Sloat could not have heard of hostilities before May 17, perhaps not so soon. Within three weeks after that, our flag ought to have been flying at Monterey and San Francisco. . . . I hope California is now in our possession, never to be given up. We were driven reluctantly to war; we must make a solid peace; that shall open the

<sup>1</sup>See H. H. Bancroft, *California*, Vol. V., Chaps. ix. and x.; *Westward Expansion*, Garrison, 232, 233, and *George Bancroft and his Services to California, Memorial Address, delivered May 12, 1891, before the California Historical Society, by Theodore H. Hittell.*

far west to religious freedom, political rights, schools, commerce and industry. The time will come when you may pass on railroads and steamers from Boston to San Francisco." To the same correspondent he wrote, June 22d: "If Mexico makes peace this month the Rio del Norte and the parallel of 35° may do as a boundary; after that 32° which will include San Diego."

On August 22, 1846, he wrote to Daniel Webster: "We have a great deal of news from Mexico today; Bravo is unwilling to act as President; Paredes delays going north; the army sent to reduce the insurgents in the Province of Jalisco defeated and its general slain; the province of Vera Cruz in revolt; the Federalists unwilling to receive Santa Anna; the most sensible people in Mexico desirous of peace. I hope we shall have it soon."

When this was written Bancroft's retirement from the Navy Department was near at hand, and for more than a year the war was to continue. In its conduct by Polk and his Cabinet, Bancroft's course was that of a faithful member of the official family. His part in directing a war so distasteful to his native New England added nothing to his popularity there. But his aim was to be rather a national than a New England statesman. It was his own feeling in later life that he had never received enough credit for the part he played in adding California to the Union.<sup>1</sup>

On September 9, 1846, Bancroft ceased to be Secretary of the Navy. His administration of the depart-

<sup>1</sup> Notes of conversation with Prof. W. M. Sloane, November, 1905.

ment had not been wholly popular in the service itself, and in the last month of his holding office the Senate had rebuffed him by failing to confirm some nominations of his making. The following extract from the *New York Evening Post*, immediately after his retirement, suggests at once the grounds of opposition to him and the merits of his official course:

“Mr. Bancroft has retired from the office of Secretary of the Navy to be the representative of the nation at the Court of England. While Secretary he had many opponents, and there are very many unable to appreciate what he recommended to be done for the navy. He seems to have viewed the navy as belonging to the country, and not to any one grade of officers in it; and under this view he wisely urged that promotions should not be made solely by seniority, but a careful discrimination should be had as to capability. Where within his power, his appointments to command and to subordinate places were made with reference to the fitness of the individual, with little regard to the age of his commission. The effect of such principles ~~were~~ <sup>was</sup> to stimulate all to deserve the approbation of the Secretary, and cause the work given them for execution to be better done. Let not these broad principles be too lightly laid aside. Consider the interests of the servants of the people, but do not forget those of the people themselves.”

The preference of Bancroft for a diplomatic post in which he could press forward his historical labours has been made clear at the beginning of this chapter.