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Sketches of New York City.

I.

Without wearying the patience of the reader with an introduction, I will at once begin my sketch, commencing at the southern extremity of the city.

The first object to notice is the Battery—so called from having been the site of old Ft. George. It is a crescent-shaped plat of ground, of ten and a half acres, now used as a park. South of the western end of this park is Castle Garden. This building, which is nearly circular in form, was once a fort called Castle Clinton, and was entirely surrounded by water; but since then the shore has been "spliced out" to it. Here, as perhaps all know, immigrants are received and protected from the roguery which was once practiced upon foreigners.

At the foot of Broadway, and nearly adjoining the Battery, is Bowling Green, a small park upon which once stood a leaden statue of George III. In 1776, the citizens melted it into bullets with which to fight the British. Around this park still cluster some of the old buildings—formerly the homes of the aristocracy.

After leaving Bowling Green, we find nothing of special interest until we reach Trinity Church, which stands at the head of Wall Street, seemingly to guard and to watch over the busy, bustling crowd that is almost continually surging to and fro in pursuit of fortune. A merely passing notice of this church will not suffice, and though most, no doubt, have heard and read much of Trinity Church, a few facts concerning it may not be uninteresting.

An Episcopal Church was built in 1696 where Trinity now stands. This was consumed by fire in 1776, and rebuilt in 1790. In 1839 this was torn down and the present church begun. The year 1846 witnessed the completion of the renowned building. It is 192 feet in length, 80 feet in width and the walls 60 feet in height. But leaving the body of the church let us ascend into the spire, which is daily open to visitors on the payment of a small fee. We first pass up quite a distance upon a winding stairway of stone, then finish the ascent upon wooden steps. About two thirds of the way up we come to the chime-bells. There were formerly nine of these, but the number has lately been increased to ten. By this time the journey begins to be tiresome, but continuing the ascent the top of the stairs is finally reached. This is said to be 250 feet above *terra firma*. From this position, on a clear day, a fine view of the city can be obtained. South of us New York Bay is spread out, dotted here and there with ferries, or with tug-boats slowly drawing their burdens along, while occasionally a ship is seen departing for the Old World with its burden of living freight, or returning, having passed in safety through the perils of the Atlantic. As we look out upon the bay, nearly the first object that meets our eyes is Governors Island, two thirds of a mile distant. Upon this island Ft. Columbus and Castle William are situated. To the right, a mile and a half from us, are two smaller islands, Ellis and Bedlow's, and about four miles farther out

Staten Island is distinctly seen. On the west of us is Jersey City, and on the east Brooklyn the former separated by the Hudson, or North River, the latter by East River, across both of which ferries are almost constantly plying. The most noticeable objects, as we look toward Brooklyn, are the piers for the East River bridge—the Brooklyn pier almost completed, the other yet lacking several feet of the intended height.

But with this hurried glance we will descend and notice some of the old and quaint epitaphs in the churchyard below. The majority of the tombstones are sandstone and are fast crumbling away. On the north side of the church is a large one of marble, restored by the vestry with the inscription of the original still preserved. The following is a part of the inscription: "Here lies the body of Mr. WILLIAM BRADFORD, Printer, who departed this Life May 23, 1752, aged 92 Years: He was born in Leicestershire, in Old England, in 1660; and came over to America in 1682; before the City of Philadelphia was laid out: He was printer to this Government for upwards of 50 Years; and being quite worn out with Old age and labour, he left this mortal State in the lively Hopes of a blessed Immortality.

"Reader, reflect how soon you'll quit this Stage: You'll find but few again to such an Age. Life's full of Pain: Lo! here's a Place of Rest, Prepare to meet your GOD! then you are blest."

Upon a tombstone, the top of which is broken off and which bears the date 1767, appears this epitaph:

"The Boreas blasts & boisterous waves
Have tost me to and fro
In Spight of gods decree
I harbour here below
Where I do now *re anchor ride*
With many of our fleet
Yet once again I must set sail
My Admiral Christ to meet."

Here is another:

"Here Lyes ye Body of John Craig Who
Departed this Transitory Life September
ye 14th 1747 Aged 47 years."

With a notice of one more object of interest, I will close this already tedious sketch. I refer to a monument which stands in the northeast corner of the churchyard. A resolution for its erection was passed June 8, 1852. Upon one side of it is this inscription:

"SACKED TO THE MEMORY OF
those brave and good men who died whilst
imprisoned in this city, for their devotion
to the cause of AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE."
DELTA.

What is a Book; and what is it to Read?

[To have been spoken before the Philomathean Society of the State Normal School, June 19th 1874, by W. Stewart Black, who was drowned in the Missouri river, May 26' 1874.]

One of the most incomprehensible objects to the savage is a *book*. A church he can understand. A place where white people worship the Great Spirit at once suggests the holy tent in his distant camp. A festive gathering would be an intelligible affair. The more closely he observes,

the more numerous the points of resemblance he can trace between fashionable and barbaric society. A military parade he might comprehend at once. The measured tread of gathered legions would indeed differ not a little from the wild rush of his own barbaric clan; the inspiring call of trumpet and horn, of drum and fife, blending with all those numerous instruments which make the music of war so splendid and so spirit-stirring, would be unlike the horrid dissonant noises with which the savage sounds out his bloody errand. But the object and purpose of the display would be seen at a glance, and wake up all the warrior within his bosom. Show him some fine trophy of art in the form of a painting and it will suggest to him the rude sketches of horses, warriors and buffalo chases traced on his robe with charcoal and red-ochre, or the likeness of birds and beasts tattooed on his own skin. But place before him a book, or take him into a public library and he is utterly confounded. True the tiers of books, and the labyrinthian succession of apartments would evoke his admiration. The red, blue, purple and gilt, and various other colors of binding, might please him very much, but so many blocks of wood painted in different colors and arranged on the shelves would suit his fancy equally well. The mystery of the library to the savage would be the *books* in it. What are they, and for what are they made?

Let him linger now and watch the movements of the inmates and his wonder will increase. His eye will rest now on the naturalist as with anxious look and *bustling* air he reaches from shelf to shelf, takes volume after volume from its dusty retreat, looks into each as the conjuring medicine-man at home gazes into the fire to see the spirit in the coals, copies something from each book in strange characters, stuffs the manuscript in his pocket and walks proudly off.

The man of science sits for hours unconscious of the presence of the wondering savage, and seems more and more bewildered as he gazes upon a single page. The savage watches a third individual reading a favorite poet and marvels at the influence that dilates his eye, kindles his cheek, and sends madness through his frame. He is astonished at the reader of fiction, looking upon what seems to him a vacant page, and yet seeming to see spirits, living, moving, talking, loving, hating, fighting, dying. Should he seek an explanation of the enigma, it would deepen rather than solve the mystery. You tell him through an interpreter, "Here is a book by the aid of whose characters I can tell you how your people live at home." Point to the passage and read, letting the interpreter explain. You then take another volume and say here is one which, when I look at it, tells me all about the great white man who came to this country long ago, in the time of your great great grandfather, when there were no other white men here." "And here is another book," you say, "which if you could on-

ly read and understand would show you that the sun does not move as it seems to, and tell you how large those stars are and how far it is to them." And so you proceed, adding mystery to mystery, till the savages are lost in amazement.

But there are other mysteries about books which the savage would not observe—their power to determine the character and destiny of certain individuals. A few pages of a single volume falls as it were by chance under the eye of a boy in his leisure hours. They fascinate and fix his attention; they charm and hold his mind; and the result is, the boy becomes a sailor, and is wedded to the sea for life. No force can undo the work begun by those few pages; no love of father or mother, no temptation of money or honor, no fear of suffering or disgrace, is an overmatch for the enchantment conjured up and sustained by those few pages. A single book has made a boy a seaman for life—perhaps a pirate, wretched in life and death. Another book meets the eye of some youth and wakes his holy aspirations, which ever afterwards burn within his breast. Another youth in an unhappy hour meets still another volume which makes him a hater of his fellow-men and a blasphemer of God. One book makes one man a believer in goodness and love and truth; another makes another man doubt and deny the sacred verities.

A book then is indeed a wonderful thing. And it is well that we reflect occasionally upon the power which lies in the written page. What is a book? What is it to read? These may seem trifling questions. Nothing is more familiar, and nothing seems better understood. I wish, however, to define, somewhat formally, a book, and the process of reading. Children, as we know, are generally taught that whatever is printed is to be regarded with deference above what is spoken. The mother says to the little girl, "Mary, don't let baby have the newspaper, he will tear it." As a consequence of this, many children learn to esteem books as oracles of wisdom and truth. Henry Crabb Robinson tells us in his diary that when a child he was corrected for misspelling a word on the authority of his spelling-book. On being told that it was printed wrong he says, "I was quite confounded. I believed as firmly in the infallibility of print as any good Catholic in the infallibility of his church. I knew naughty boys would tell stories, but how a book could contain a falsehood was incomprehensible." Not a few men live and die with the same impression, and never cease to esteem a book as in same way endowed with a mysterious authority by the very fact of its being a *book*. There are, too, many who would never think of spending fifteen minutes in listening to stupidity or commonplace from men's lips, but who make it their duty, and imagine it is useful, solemnly to read, believe and endorse any amount of insipidity which an accredited author chooses to