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J O H N J A C O B A S T O R .

TO WHICH IS APPENDED

A COPY OF HIS LAST WILL.

BY

JAMES PARTON. 1822-1891

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New-York :

THE AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY,  
119 and 121 Nassau Street.

1865.

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## PREFACE.



WE all feel some curiosity respecting men who have been eminent in any thing—even in crime; and as this curiosity is natural and universal, it seems proper that it should be gratified. JOHN JACOB ASTOR surpassed all the men of his generation in the accumulation of wealth. He began life a poor, hungry German boy, and died worth twenty millions of dollars. These facts are so remarkable, that there is no one who does not feel a desire to know by which means the result was produced, and whether the game was played fairly. We all wish, if not to be rich, yet to have more money than we now possess. I have known many kinds of men, but never one who felt that he had quite money enough. The three richest men now living in the United States are known to be as much interested in the increase of their possessions, and try as hard to increase them, as ever they did.

This universal desire to accumulate property is right, and necessary to the progress of the race. Like every other proper and virtuous desire, it may become excessive, and then it is a vice. So long as a man seeks property honestly, and values it as the means of independence, as the means of educating and comforting his family, as the means of securing a safe, dignified, and tranquil old age, as the means of private charity and public beneficence, let him bend himself heartily to his work, and enjoy the reward of his labors. It is a fine and pleasant thing

to prosper in business, and to have a store to fall back upon in time of trouble. Let us beware, however, of regarding property as any thing but a *means* to important ends.

A considerable part of this little book appeared originally as an article in *Harper's Magazine*. It was so frequently copied into the newspapers, as to lead to the conclusion that the public had a good deal of curiosity to know something of the famous millionaire. Hence the present publication, which was suggested by a worthy member of the American News Company, and to which I can see no reasonable objection. Some new matter has been added, and a copy of the Will of Mr. ASTOR has been appended to the work.

The reader may learn from ASTOR'S career how money is accumulated. Whether he can learn from it how money ought to be employed when it is obtained, he must judge for himself. In founding the Astor Library, JOHN JACOB ASTOR did at least one magnificent deed, for which thousands unborn will honor his memory. That single act would atone for many errors.

J. PARTON.

NEW-YORK, *May*, 1865.



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THE  
LIFE OF JOHN JACOB ASTOR.

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CHAPTER I.

HIS PERSONAL APPEARANCE.

IN the hall of the Astor Library, on the sides of two of the pillars supporting its lofty roof of glass, are two little shelves, each holding a single work, never taken down and seldom perused, but nevertheless well worthy the attention of those who are curious in the subject of which they treat, namely, the human face divine. They are two marble busts, facing each other; one of the founder of the Library, the other of its first president, Washington Irving. A finer study in physiognomy than these two busts present can nowhere be found; for never were two men more unlike than Astor and Irving, and never were character and personal history more legibly recorded than in these portraits in marble. The countenance of the author is round, full, and handsome, the hair inclining to curl, and the chin to double. It is the face of a happy and genial man, formed to shine at the fireside and to beam

from the head of a table. It is an open, candid, liberal, hospitable countenance, indicating far more power to please than to compel, but displaying in the position and carriage of the head much of that dignity which we are accustomed to call Roman. The face of the millionaire, on the contrary, is all strength; every line in it tells of concentration and power. The hair is straight and long; the forehead neither lofty nor ample, but powerfully developed in the perceptive and executive organs; the eyes deeper set in the head than those of Daniel Webster, and overhung with immense bushy eyebrows; the nose large, long, and strongly arched, the veritable nose of a man-compeller; the mouth, chin, and jaws all denoting firmness and force; the chest, that seat and throne of physical power, is broad and deep, and the back of the neck has something of the muscular fullness which we observe in the prize-fighter and the bull; the head behind the ears showing enough of propelling power, but almost totally wanting in the passional propensities which waste the force of the faculties, and divert the man from his principal object. As the spectator stands midway between the two busts, at some distance from both, Irving has the larger and the kinglier air, and the face of Astor seems small and set. It is only when you get close to the bust of Astor, observing the strength of each feature and its perfect proportion to the rest—force everywhere, superfluity nowhere—that you recognize the monarch of the counting-room; the brain which nothing could confuse or disconcert, the purpose that nothing could divert or defeat; the man who could with ease and pleasure grasp and control

the multitudinous concerns of a business that embraced the habited and the unhabited globe — that employed ships in every sea, and men in every clime, and brought in to the coffers of the merchant the revenue of a king. That speechless bust tells us how it was that this man, from suffering in his father's poverty-stricken house the habitual pang of hunger, arrived at the greatest fortune, perhaps, ever accumulated in a single lifetime; you perceive that whatever thing this strong and compact man set himself to do, he would be certain to achieve unless stopped by something as powerful as a law of nature.

The monument of these two gifted men is the airy and graceful interior of which their busts are the only ornament. Astor founded the Library, but it was probably his regard for Irving that induced him to appropriate part of his wealth for a purpose not in harmony with his own humor. Irving is known to us all, as only wits and poets are ever known. But of the singular being who possessed so remarkable a genius for accumulation, of which this Library is one of the results, little has been imparted to the public, and of that little the greater part is fabulous.

## CHAPTER II.

### HIS FATHER AND BROTHERS.

A HUNDRED years ago, in the poor little village of Waldorf, in the duchy of Baden, lived a jovial, good-for-nothing butcher, named Jacob Astor, who felt himself much more at home in the beer-house than at the fireside of his own house in the principal street of the village. At the best, the butcher of Waldorf must have been a poor man; for, at that day, the inhabitants of a German village enjoyed the luxury of fresh meat only on great days, such as those of confirmation, baptism, weddings, and Christmas. The village itself was remote and insignificant, and though situated in the valley of the Rhine, the native home of the vine, a region of proverbial fertility, the immediate vicinity of Waldorf was not a rich or very populous country. The home of Jacob Astor, therefore, seldom knew any medium between excessive abundance and extreme scarcity, and he was not the man to make the superfluity of to-day provide for the need of to-morrow; which was the more unfortunate as the periods of abundance were few and far between, and the times of scarcity extended over the greater part of the year. It was the custom then in Germany for every farmer to provide a fatted pig, calf, or bullock against the

time of harvest; and as that joyful season approached the village butcher went the round of the neighborhood, stopping a day or two at each house to kill the animals and convert their flesh into bacon, sausages, or salt beef. During this happy time Jacob Astor, a merry dog, always welcome where pleasure and hilarity were going forward, had enough to drink, and his family had enough to eat. But the merry time lasted only six weeks. Then set in the season of scarcity, which was only relieved when there was a festival of the church, a wedding, a christening, or a birthday in some family of the village rich enough to provide an animal for Jacob's knife. The wife of this idle and improvident butcher was such a wife as such men usually contrive to pick up—industrious, saving, and capable; the main-stay of his house. Often she remonstrated with her wasteful and beer-loving husband; the domestic sky was often overcast, and the children were glad to fly from the noise and dust of the tempest.

This roistering village butcher and his worthy, much-enduring wife were the parents of our millionaire. They had four sons: George Peter Astor, born in 1752; Henry Astor, born in 1754; John Melchior Astor, born in 1759; and John Jacob Astor, born July 17, 1763. Each of these sons made haste to fly from the privations and contentions of their home as soon as they were old enough; and, what is more remarkable, each of them had a cast of character precisely the opposite of their thriftless father. They were all saving, industrious, temperate, and enterprising, and all of them became prosperous men at

an early period of their career. They were all duly instructed in their father's trade; each in turn carried about the streets of Waldorf the basket of meat, and accompanied the father in his harvest slaughtering tours. Jovial Jacob, we are told, gloried in being a butcher, but three of his sons, much to his disgust, manifested a repugnance to it, which was one of the causes of their flight from the parental nest. The eldest, who was the first to go, made his way to London, where an uncle was established in business as a maker of musical instruments. Astor and Broadwood was the name of the firm, a house that still exists under the title of Broadwood and Co., one of the most noted makers of pianos in England. In his uncle's manufactory George Astor served an apprenticeship, and became at length a partner in the firm. Henry Astor went next. He alone of his father's sons took to his father's trade. It used to be thrown in his teeth, when he was a thriving butcher in the city of New-York, that he had come over to America as a private in the Hessian army. This may only have been the groundless taunt of an envious rival. It is certain, however, that he was a butcher in New-York when it was a British post during the revolutionary war, and, remaining after the evacuation, made a very large fortune in his business. The third son, John Melchior Astor, found employment in Germany, and arrived, at length, at the profitable post of steward to a nobleman's estate.



## CHAPTER III.

### HIS CHILDHOOD.

ABANDONED thus by his three brothers, John Jacob Astor had to endure for some years a most cheerless and miserable lot. He lost his mother, too, from whom he had derived all that was good in his character and most of the happiness of his childhood. A step-mother replaced her, "who loved not Jacob," nor John Jacob. The father, still devoted to pleasure, quarreled so bitterly with his new wife, that his son was often glad to escape to the house of a school-fellow, (living in 1854,) where he would pass the night in a garret or outhouse, thankfully accepting for his supper a crust of dry bread, and returning the next morning to assist in the slaughter-house or carry out the meat. It was not often that he had enough to eat; his clothes were of the poorest description; and, as to money, he absolutely had none of it. The unhappiness of his home and the misconduct of his father made him ashamed to join in the sports of the village boys; and he passed much of his leisure alone, brooding over the unhappiness of his lot. The family increased, but not its income. It is recorded of him that he tended his little sisters with care and fondness, and sought in all ways to lessen the dislike and ill-humor of his step-mother.

It is not hardship, however, that enervates a lad. It is indulgence and luxury that do that. He grew a stout, healthy, tough, and patient boy, diligent and skillful in the discharge of his duty, often supplying the place of his father absent in merry-making. If, in later life, he overvalued money, it should not be forgotten that few men have had a harder experience of the want of money at the age when character is forming.

The bitterest lot has its alleviations. Sometimes a letter would reach him from over the sea, telling of the good fortune of a brother in a distant land. In his old age he used to boast that in his boyhood he walked forty-five miles in one day for the sole purpose of getting a letter that had arrived from England or America. The Astors have always been noted for the strength of their family affection. Our millionaire forgot much that he ought to have remembered, but he was not remiss in fulfilling the obligations of kindred.

It appears, too, that he was fortunate in having a better schoolmaster than could generally be found at that day in a village school of Germany. Valentine Jeune was his name, a French Protestant, whose parents had fled from their country during the reign of Louis XIV. He was an active and sympathetic teacher, and bestowed unusual pains upon the boy, partly because he pitied his unhappy situation, and partly because of his aptitude to learn. Nevertheless the school routine of those days was extremely limited. To read and write, to cipher as far as the Rule of Three, to learn the Catechism by heart, and to sing

the Church Hymns "so that the windows should rattle"—these were the sole accomplishments of even the best pupils of Valentine Jeune. Baden was then under the rule of a Catholic family. It was a saying in Waldorf that no man could be appointed a swine-herd who was not a Catholic, and that if a mayoralty were vacant the swine-herd must have the place if there were no other Catholic in the town. Hence it was that the line which separated the Protestant minority from the Catholic majority was sharply defined, and the Protestant children were the more thoroughly indoctrinated. Rev. John Philip Steiner, the Protestant pastor of Waldorf, a learned and faithful minister, was as punctilious in requiring from the children the thorough learning of the Catechism as a German sergeant was in exacting all the niceties of the parade. Young Astor became, therefore, a very decided Protestant; he lived and died a member of the Church in which he was born.

The great day in the life of a German child is that of his confirmation, which usually occurs in his fourteenth year. The ceremony, which was performed at Waldorf every two years, was a festival at once solemn and joyous. The children, long prepared beforehand by the joint labors of minister, schoolmaster, and parents, walk in procession to the church, the girls in white, the boys in their best clothes, and there, after the requisite examinations, the rite is performed, and the Sacrament is administered. The day concludes with festivity. Confirmation also is the point of division between childhood and youth—between absolute dependence and the beginning of responsi-

bility. After confirmation, the boys of a German peasant take their place in life as apprentices or as servants; and the girls, unless their services are required at home, are placed in situations. Childhood ends, maturity begins, when the child has tasted for the first time the bread and wine of the communion. Whether a boy then becomes an apprentice or a servant depends upon whether his parents have been provident enough to save a sum of money sufficient to pay the usual premium required by a master as compensation for his trouble in teaching his trade. This premium varied at that day from fifty dollars to two hundred, according to the difficulty and respectability of the vocation. A carpenter or a blacksmith might be satisfied with a premium of sixty or seventy dollars, while a cabinet-maker would demand a hundred, and a musical-instrument maker or a clock-maker two hundred.

On Palm Sunday, 1777, when he was about fourteen years of age, John Jacob Astor was confirmed. He then consulted his father upon his future. Money to apprentice him there was none in the paternal coffers. The trade of butcher he knew and disliked. Nor was he inclined to accept as his destiny for life the condition of servant or laborer. The father, who thought the occupation of butcher one of the best in the world, and who needed the help of his son, particularly in the approaching season of harvest, paid no heed to the entreaties of the lad, who saw himself condemned without hope to a business which he loathed, and to labor at it without reward.

## CHAPTER IV.

### HE LEAVES HOME AND GOES TO LONDON.

A DEEP discontent settled upon him. The tidings of the good fortune of his brothers inflamed his desire to seek his fortune in the world. The news of the Revolutionary War, which drew all eyes upon America, and in which the people of all lands sympathized with the struggling colonies, had its effect upon him. He began to long for the "New Land," as the Germans then styled America; and it is believed in Waldorf that soon after the capture of Burgoyne had spread abroad a confidence in the final success of the colonists, the youth formed the secret determination to emigrate to America. Nevertheless, he had to wait three miserable years longer, until the surrender of Cornwallis made it certain that America was to be free, before he was able to enter upon the gratification of his desire.

In getting to America, he displayed the same sagacity in adapting means to ends that distinguished him during his business career in New-York. Money he had never had in his life, beyond a few silver coins of the smallest denomination. His father had none to give him, even if he had been inclined to do so. It was only when the lad was evidently resolved to go

that he gave a slow, reluctant consent to his departure. Waldorf is nearly three hundred miles from the seaport in Holland most convenient for his purpose. Despite the difficulties, this penniless youth formed the resolution of going down the Rhine to Holland, there taking ship for London, where he would join his brother, and, while earning money for his passage to America, learn the language of the country to which he was destined. It appears that he dreaded more the difficulties of the English tongue than he did those of the long and expensive journey; but he was resolved not to sail for America until he had acquired the language, and saved a little money beyond the expenses of the voyage. It appears, also, that there prevailed in Baden the belief that Americans were exceedingly selfish and inhospitable, and regarded the poor emigrant only in the light of prey. John Jacob was determined not to land among such a people without the means of understanding their tricks and paying his way. In all ways, too, he endeavored to get a knowledge of the country to which he was going.

With a small bundle of clothes hung over his shoulder upon a stick, with a crown or two in his pocket, he said the last farewell to his father and his friends, and set out on foot for the Rhine, a few miles distant. Valentine Jeune, his old schoolmaster, said, as the lad was lost to view: "I am not afraid of Jacob; he'll get through the world. He has a clear head and every thing right behind the ears." He was then a stout, strong lad of nearly seventeen, exceedingly well made, though slightly undersized, and he had a clear, composed, intelligent look in the eyes, which seemed to

ratify the prediction of the schoolmaster. He strode manfully out of town, with tears in his eyes and a sob in his throat—for he loved his father, his friends, and his native village, though his lot there had been forlorn enough. While still in sight of Waldorf, he sat down under a tree and thought of the future before him and the friends he had left. He there, as he used to relate in after-life, made three resolutions: to be honest, to be industrious, and not to gamble—excellent resolutions, as far as they go. Having sat awhile under the tree, he took up his bundle and resumed his journey with better heart.

It was by no means the intention of this sagacious youth to walk all the way to the sea-coast. There was a much more convenient way at that time of accomplishing the distance, even to a young man with only two dollars in his pocket. The Black Forest is partly in Astor's native Baden. The rafts of timber cut in the Black Forest, instead of floating down the Rhine in the manner practiced in America, used to be rowed by sixty or eighty men each, who were paid high wages, as the labor was severe. Large numbers of stalwart emigrants availed themselves of this mode of getting from the interior to the sea-coast, by which they earned their subsistence on the way and about ten dollars in money. The tradition in Waldorf is, that young Astor worked his passage down the Rhine, and earned his passage-money to England as an oarsman on one of these rafts. Hard as the labor was, the oarsmen had a merry time of it, cheering their toil with jest and song by night and day. On the fourteenth day after leaving home, our youth found him-

self at a Dutch seaport, with a larger sum of money than he had ever before possessed. He took passage for London, where he landed a few days after, in total ignorance of the place and the language. His brother welcomed him with German warmth, and assisted him to procure employment—probably in the flute and piano manufactory of Astor and Broadwood.

As the foregoing brief account of the early life of John Jacob Astor differs essentially from any previously published in the United States, it is proper that the reader should be informed of the sources whence we have derived information so novel and unexpected. The principal source is a small biography of Astor published in Germany about ten years ago, written by a native of Baden, a Lutheran clergyman, who gathered his material in Waldorf, where were then living a few aged persons who remembered Astor when he was a sad and solitary lad in his father's disorderly house. The statements of this little book are confirmed by what some of the surviving friends and descendants of Mr. Astor in New-York remember of his own conversation respecting his early days. He seldom spoke of his life in Germany, though he remembered his native place with fondness, revisited it in the time of his prosperity, pensioned his father, and forgot not Walford in his will; but the little that he did say of his youthful years accords with the curious narrative in the work to which we have alluded. We believe the reader may rely on our story as being essentially true.



## CHAPTER V.

### HIS RESIDENCE IN LONDON.

ASTOR brought to London, according to our quaint Lutheran, "a pious, true, and godly spirit, a clear understanding, a sound youthful elbow-grease, and the wish to put it to good use." During the two years of his residence in the British metropolis, he strove most assiduously for three objects: 1, To save money; 2, to acquire the English language; 3, to get information respecting America. Much to his relief and gratification, he found the acquisition of the language to be the least of his difficulties. Working in a shop with English mechanics, and having few German friends, he was generally dependent upon the language of the country for the communication of his desires; and he was as much surprised as delighted to find how many points of similarity there were between the two languages. In about six weeks, he used to say, he could make himself understood a little in English, and long before he left London he could speak it fluently. He never learned to write English correctly in his life, nor could he ever speak it without a decided German accent; but he could always express his meaning with simplicity and force, both orally and in writing. Trustworthy information respecting America, in the absence of

maps, gazetteers, and books of travel, was more difficult to procure. The ordinary Englishman of that day regarded America with horror or contempt as perverse and rebellious colonies, making a great to-do about a paltry tax, and giving "the best of kings" a world of trouble for nothing. He probably heard little of the thundering eloquence with which Fox, Pitt, Burke, and Sheridan were nightly defending the American cause in the House of Commons, and assailing the infatuation of the Government in prosecuting a hopeless war. As often, however, as our youth met with any one who had been in America, he plied him with questions, and occasionally he heard from his brother in New-York. Henry Astor was already established as a butcher on his own account, wheeling home in a wheel-barrow from Bull's Head his slender purchases of sheep and calves. But the great difficulty of John Jacob in London was the accumulation of money. Having no trade, his wages were necessarily small. Though he rose with the lark, and was at work as early as five in the morning—though he labored with all his might, and saved every farthing that he could spare—it was two years before he had saved enough for his purpose. In September, 1783, he possessed a good suit of Sunday clothes, in the English style, and about fifteen English guineas—the total result of two years of unremitting toil and most pinching economy; and here again charity requires the remark that if Astor the millionaire carried the virtue of economy to an extreme, it was Astor the struggling youth in a strange land who learned the value of money.

In that month of September, 1783, the news reached

London that Dr. Franklin and his associates in Paris after two years of negotiation, had signed the definitive treaty which completed the independence of the United States. Franklin had been in the habit of predicting that as soon as America had become an independent nation, the best blood in Europe, and some of the finest fortunes, would hasten to seek a career or an asylum in the New World. Perhaps he would have hardly recognized the emigration of this poor German youth as part of the fulfillment of his prophecy. Nevertheless the news of the conclusion of the treaty had no sooner reached England than young Astor, then twenty years old, began to prepare for his departure for the "New Land," and in November he embarked for Baltimore. He paid five of his guineas for a passage in the steerage, which entitled him to sailors' fare of salt beef and biscuit. He invested part of his remaining capital in seven flutes, and carried the rest, about five pounds sterling, in the form of money.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HIS ARRIVAL IN AMERICA.

AMERICA gave a cold welcome to the young emigrant. The winter of 1783-4 was one of the celebrated severe winters on both sides of the ocean. November gales and December storms wreaked all their fury upon the ship, retarding its progress so long that January arrived before she had reached Chesapeake Bay. Floating ice filled the bay as far as the eye could reach, and a January storm drove the ship among the masses with such force, that she was in danger of being broken to pieces. It was on one of those days of peril and consternation that young Astor appeared on deck in his best clothes, and on being asked the reason of this strange proceeding, said that if he escaped with life he should save his best clothes, and if he lost it his clothes would be of no further use to him. Tradition further reports that he, a steerage passenger, ventured one day to come upon the quarter-deck, when the captain roughly ordered him forward. Tradition adds that that very captain, twenty years after, commanded a ship owned by the steerage passenger. When the ship was within a day's sail of her port the wind died away, the cold increased, and the next morning beheld the vessel hard and fast in a sea of ice. For two whole

months she remained immovable. Provisions gave out. The passengers were only relieved when the ice extended to the shore, and became strong enough to afford communication with other ships and with the coasts of the bay. Some of the passengers made their way to the shore, and traveled by land to their homes, but this resource was not within the means of our young adventurer, and he was obliged to stick to the ship.

Fortune is an obsequious jade that favors the strong and turns her back upon the weak. This exasperating delay of two months was the means of putting young Astor upon the shortest and easiest road to fortune that the continent of America then afforded to a poor man. Among his fellow-passengers there was one German, with whom he made acquaintance on the voyage, and with whom he continually associated during the detention of the winter. They told each other their past history, their present plans, their future hopes. The stranger informed young Astor that he too had emigrated to America, a few years before, without friends or money; that he had soon managed to get into the business of buying furs of the Indians, and of the boatmen coming to New-York from the river settlements; that at length he had embarked all his capital in skins, and had taken them himself to England in a returning transport, where he had sold them to great advantage, and had invested the proceeds in toys and trinkets, with which to continue his trade in the wilderness. He strongly advised Astor to follow his example. He told him the prices of the various skins in America, and the prices they com-

manded in London. With German friendliness he imparted to him the secrets of the craft: told him where to buy, how to pack, transport, and preserve the skins; the names of the principal dealers in New-York, Montreal, and London; and the season of the year when the skins were most abundant. All this was interesting to the young man; but he asked his friend how it was possible to begin such a business without capital. The stranger told him that no great capital was required for a beginning. With a basket of toys, or even of cakes, he said, a man could buy valuable skins on the wharves and in the markets of New-York, which could be sold with some profit to New-York furriers. But the grand object was to establish a connection with a house in London, where furs brought four or five times their value in America. In short, John Jacob Astor determined to lose no time after reaching New-York, in trying his hand at this profitable traffic.

The ice broke up in March. The ship made its way to Baltimore, and the two friends traveled together to New-York. The detention in the ice and the journey to New-York almost exhausted Astor's purse. He arrived in this city, where now his estate is valued at forty millions, with little more than his seven German flutes, and a long German head full of available knowledge and quiet determination. He went straight to the humble abode of his brother Henry, a kindly, generous, jovial soul, who gave him a truly fraternal welcome, and received with hospitable warmth the companion of his voyage.

## CHAPTER VII.

### HIS FIRST EMPLOYMENT IN NEW-YORK.

HENRY ASTOR'S prosperity had been temporarily checked by the evacuation of New-York, which had occurred five months before, and which had deprived the tradesmen of the city of their best customers. It was not only the British army that had left the city in November, 1783, but a host of British officials and old Tory families as well; while the new-comers were Whigs, whom seven years of war had impoverished, and young adventurers who had still their career to make. During the Revolution, Henry Astor had speculated occasionally in cattle captured from the farmers of Westchester, which were sold at auction at Bull's Head, and he had advanced from a wheel-barrow to the ownership of a horse. An advertisement informs us that, about the time of his brother's arrival, this horse was stolen, with saddle and bridle, and that the owner offered three guineas reward for the recovery of the property; but that "for the thief, horse, saddle, and bridle, ten guineas would be paid." A month after, we find him becoming a citizen of the United States, and soon he began to share in the returning prosperity of the city.

In the mean time, however, he could do little for

his new-found brother. During the first evening of his brother's stay at his house the question was discussed, What should the young man do in his new country? The charms of the fur business were duly portrayed by the friend of the youth, who also expressed his preference for it. It was agreed, at length, that the best plan would be for the young man to seek employment with some one already in the business, in order to learn the modes of proceeding, as well as to acquire a knowledge of the country. The young stranger anxiously inquired how much premium would be demanded by a furrier for teaching the business to a novice, and he was at once astonished and relieved to learn that no such thing was known in America, and that he might expect his board and small wages even from the start. So, the next day, the brothers and their friend proceeded together to the store of Robert Bowne, an aged and benevolent Quaker, long established in the business of buying, curing, and exporting peltries. It chanced that he needed a hand. Pleased with the appearance and demeanor of the young man, he employed him (as tradition reports) at two dollars a week and his board. Astor took up his abode in his master's house, and was soon at work. We can tell the reader with certainty what was the nature of the youth's first day's work in his adopted country; for, in his old age, he was often heard to say that the first thing he did for Mr. Bowne was to beat furs; which, indeed, was his principal employment during the whole of the following summer—furs requiring to be frequently beaten to keep the moths from destroying them.



Perhaps among our young readers there are some who have formed the resolution to get on in the world and become rich. We advise such to observe how young Astor proceeded. We are far from desiring to hold up this able man as a model for the young; yet it must be owned that in the art of prospering in business he has had no equal in America; and in *that* his example may be useful. Now, observe the secret. It was not plodding merely, though no man ever labored more steadily than he. Mr. Bowne, discovering what a prize he had, raised his wages at the end of the first month. Nor was it *merely* his strict observance of the rules of temperance and morality, though that is essential to any worthy success. The great secret of Astor's early, rapid, and uniform success in business appears to have been, that he acted always upon the maxim that KNOWLEDGE IS POWER! He labored unceasingly at Mr. Bowne's to *learn the business*. He put all his soul into the work of getting a knowledge of furs, fur-bearing animals, fur-dealers, fur-markets, fur-gathering Indians, fur-abounding countries. In those days a considerable number of bear skins and beaver skins were brought directly to Bowne's store by the Indians and countrymen of the vicinity, who had shot or trapped the animals. These men Astor questioned; and neglected no other opportunity of procuring the information he desired. It used to be observed of Astor that he absolutely loved a fine skin. In later days he would have a superior fur hung up in his counting-room as other men hang pictures; and this, apparently, for the mere pleasure of feeling, showing, and admiring it. He would pass his hand fondly over it, extolling

its charms with an approach to enthusiasm ; not, however, forgetting to mention that in Canton it would bring him in five hundred dollars. So heartily did he throw himself into his business.

Growing rapidly in the confidence of his employer, he was soon intrusted with more important duties than the beating of furs. He was employed in buying them from the Indians and hunters who brought them to the city. Soon, too, he took the place of his employer in the annual journey to Montreal, then the chief fur mart of the country. With a pack upon his back, he struck into the wilderness above Albany, and walked to Lake George, which he ascended in a canoe, and having thus reached Champlain he embarked again, and sailed to the head of that lake. Returning with his furs, he employed the Indians in transporting them to the Hudson, and brought them to the city in a sloop. He was formed by nature for a life like this. His frame was capable of great endurance, and he had the knack of getting the best of a bargain. The Indian is a great bargainer. The time was gone by when a nail or a little red paint would induce him to part with valuable peltries. It required skill and address on the part of the trader, both in selecting the articles likely to tempt the vanity or the cupidity of the red man, and in conducting the tedious negotiation which usually preceded an exchange of commodities. It was in this kind of traffic, doubtless, that our young German acquired that unconquerable propensity for making hard bargains, which was so marked a feature in his character as a merchant. He could never rise superior to this early-acquired habit. He never knew

what it was to exchange places with the opposite party, and survey a transaction from *his* point of view. He exulted not in compensating liberal service liberally. In all transactions he kept in view the simple object of giving the least and getting the most.

Meanwhile his brother Henry was flourishing. He married the beautiful daughter of a brother butcher, and the young wife, according to the fashion of the time, disdained not to assist her husband even in the slaughter-house as well as in the market-place. Colonel Devoe, in his well-known Market Book, informs us that Henry Astor was exceedingly proud of his pretty wife, often bringing her home presents of gay dresses and ribbons, and speaking of her as "de pink of de Bowery." The butchers of that day complained bitterly of him, because he used to ride out of town fifteen or twenty miles, and buy up the droves of cattle coming to the city, which he would drive in and sell at an advanced price to the less enterprising butchers. He gained a fortune by his business, which would have been thought immense if the colossal wealth of his brother had not reduced all other estates to comparative insignificance. It was he who bought, for eight hundred dollars, the acre of ground, on part of which the old Bowery Theatre now stands.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HE SETS UP FOR HIMSELF.

JOHN JACOB ASTOR remained not long in the employment of Robert Bowne. It was a peculiarity of the business of a furrier at that day, that, while it admitted of unlimited extension, it could be begun on the smallest scale, with a very insignificant capital. Every farmer's boy in the vicinity of New-York had occasionally a skin to sell, and bears abounded in the Catskill Mountains. Indeed the time had not long gone by when beaver skins formed part of the currency of the city. All Northern and Western New-York was still a fur-yielding country. Even Long Island furnished its quota. So that, while the fur business was one that rewarded the enterprise of great and wealthy companies, employing thousands of men and fleets of ships, it afforded an opening to young Astor, who, with the assistance of his brother, could command a capital of only a very few hundred dollars. In a little shop in Water street, with a back-room, a yard, and a shed, the shop furnished with only a few toys and trinkets, Astor began business about the year 1786. He had then, as always, the most unbounded confidence in his own abilities. He used to relate that, at this time, a new row of houses in Broadway was the

talk of the city from their magnitude and beauty. Passing them one day, he said to himself: "I'll build sometime or other a greater house than any of these, and in this very street." He used also to say, in his old age, "The first hundred thousand dollars—that was hard to get; but afterward it was easy to make more."

Having set up for himself, he worked with the quiet, indomitable ardor of a German who sees clearly his way open before him. At first he did every thing for himself. He bought, cured, beat, packed, and sold his skins. From dawn till dark, he assiduously labored. At the proper seasons of the year, with his pack on his back, he made short excursions into the country, collecting skins from house to house, gradually extending the area of his travels, till he knew the State of New-York as no man of his day knew it. He used to boast, late in life, when the Erie Canal had called into being a line of thriving towns through the center of the State, that he had himself, in his numberless tramps, designated the sites of those towns, and predicted that one day they would be the centers of business and population. Particularly he noted the spots where Rochester and Buffalo now stand, one having a harbor on Lake Erie, the other upon Lake Ontario. Those places, he predicted, would one day be large and prosperous cities, and that prediction he made when there was scarcely a settlement at Buffalo and only wigwams on the site of Rochester. At this time he had a partner who usually remained in the city, while the agile and enduring Astor traversed the wilderness.

It was his first voyage to London that established

his business on a solid foundation. As soon as he had accumulated a few bales of the skins suited to the European market, he took passage in the steerage of a ship and conveyed them to London. He sold them to great advantage, and established connections with houses to which he could in future consign his furs, and from which he could procure the articles best adapted to the taste of Indians and hunters. But his most important operation in London was to make an arrangement with the firm of Astor & Broadwood, by which he became the New-York agent for the sale of their pianos, flutes, and violins. He is believed to have been the first man in New-York who kept constantly for sale a supply of musical merchandise, of which the annual sale in New-York is now reckoned at five millions of dollars. On his return to New-York, he opened a little dingy store in Gold street between Fulton and Ann, and swung out a sign to the breeze bearing the words:

#### FURS AND PIANOS.

There were until recently aged men among us who remembered seeing this sign over the store of Mr. Astor, and in some old houses are preserved ancient pianos bearing the name of J. J. Astor as the seller thereof. Violins and flutes, also, are occasionally met with that have his name upon them. In 1790, seven years after his arrival in this city, he was of sufficient importance to appear in the Directory thus:

ASTOR, J. J., Fur Trader, 40 Little Dock street (now part of Water street.)

In this time of his dawning prosperity, while still inhabiting the small house of which his store was a part, he married. Sarah Todd was the maiden name of his wife. As a connection of the family of Brevoort, she was then considered to be somewhat superior to her husband in point of social rank, and she brought him a fortune, by no means despised by him at that time, of three hundred dollars. She threw herself heartily into her husband's growing business, laboring with her own hands, buying, sorting, and beating the furs. He used to say that she was as good a judge of the value of peltries as himself, and that her opinion in a matter of business was better than that of most merchants.

Of a man like Astor, all kinds of stories will be told, some true, some false, some founded upon fact, but exaggerated or distorted. It is said, for example, that when he went into business for himself, he used to go around among the shops and markets with a basket of toys and cakes upon his arm, exchanging those articles for furs. There are, certainly, old people among us who remember hearing their parents say that they saw him doing this. The story is not improbable, for he had no false pride, and was ready to turn his hand to any thing that was honest.

Among other anecdotes which we find related of this part of his life, are the following:

“Astor loved to tell anecdotes connected with his early difficulties. One was about a bargain he made with his brother Henry, when the latter was much better off than his brother John; for Henry was owner of butcher stall No. 57 in the Fly Market—valuable

property in the commencement of this century. Henry lived at 37 Bowery Lane.

“John, in his financial difficulties, frequently went to Henry for a loan, or for an indorsement. This was a source of annoyance to Henry, who did not like to borrow or lend to any body. On one occasion, John wanted to borrow \$200 very badly. He went to Henry, and asked him to lend him that sum.

“‘John, I will give you \$100, if you will agree never to ask me to loan you any money, indorse a note, or sign a bond for you, or be obligated for you in any manner whatever.’

“John says he hesitated for a moment, rapidly passed the proposition through his mind, saw its advantages, for \$100 was \$100 in those days. He accepted the proposition, and he never did ask a favor of that character of his brother in after years.

“A business acquaintance of Mr. Astor one day asked him what particular transaction or peculiar kind of business first gave him his great start. Mr. Astor never claimed any great sagacity or intelligence over his fellows.

“He said, in reply, that at one period of his life, he had accumulated quite a quantity of unsalable furs in this market, such as beavers. The common furs that he or his agents picked up, namely, musk-rat, mink, rabbit, squirrel, etc., he could sell in this city and at good prices. The other and costly he had to buy, but could not sell here, and they were packed away in whisky casks down in the cellar. He had no correspondent in London to send them to, and no disposition to send them if he had had. After talking over



the matter with his wife, they concluded it would be best for himself to go out to London with the choicest kind of furs. He did so. The prospect of the trip was uncertain, and to economize as much as possible, he went out as a steerage passenger.

“When he reached London, he found a ready market for his choice furs, and sold them at a very high rate. He made a list out of such goods as he thought would make money by being taken to the New-York market, purchased and shipped them by a vessel bound hither. After he was all through with his business, he was detained a couple of weeks by the ship not being ready to sail. The idle time he spent in looking about London, and picking up all the information possible, especially such as was likely to advantage his business in New-York. Among other extraordinary places he visited, was the great East-India House. He visited the warehouse and offices. On one occasion he asked one of the porters what the name of the Governor was. The man replied, giving a German name very familiar to Mr. Astor. He asked his informer if the Governor was an Englishman. He replied that he had come from Germany originally when a boy. Mr. Astor determined to see him—watched an opportunity, and sent in his name. He was admitted. When he entered, he said to the Governor:

“‘Is not your name Wilhelm —— ? Did not you go to school in such a town?’

“‘I did, and now I remember you very well. Your name is Astor!’

“After this, they had a long chat, and talked over old school matters. The Governor insisted that Mr.

Astor should dine with him. He declined for that day, but the next they met again. He asked Mr. Astor several times if there was nothing he could do for him. Mr. Astor said no; he had bought all he wanted; he needed no cash, or credit. Almost every day they met. The Governor kept urging Mr. Astor to name something that he could do for him. He asked what present would be acceptable. Astor declined any. Finally, they met two days before the vessel was to sail, and again the Governor asked Astor if he would accept any present he made him. Mr. Astor, seeing the Governor so anxious, said: 'Yes.'

"When he called to bid the Governor good-by, the latter was really quite affected at parting with his old German schoolmate.

" 'Take these,' said he, 'you may find their value.' One of the documents was simply a Canton prices current.

"The other was a carefully engrossed permit on parchment, authorizing the ship that bore it to trade freely and without any molestation, at any of the ports monopolized by the East-India Company.

"Mr. Astor bade his friend good-by, and returned to this city, never giving the *present* a second thought. He had no ships, and never had any trade with the East-Indies, and never expected to have. He little dreamed that in the parchment would be the foundation of vast shipping operations, and a trade amounting to millions, and embracing the Pacific Ocean. The permit was No. 68.

"When Mr. Astor got home, he showed these docu-

ments to his wife, and advised with her, as he always did, what to do in the matter.

“‘I have no ships—it’s no use to us,’ he said. At that time, there was a very celebrated merchant named James Livermore. He was largely engaged in the West-India trade, particularly to Jamaica. He owned vessels—some of good size.

“Mrs. Astor recommended her husband to go and have a talk with the merchant. Mr. Astor went—showed the East-India Company ship-pass and the Canton prices current.

“‘Now,’ said he, ‘if you will make up a voyage for one of your largest ships, you can have the pass and have the prices current, on one condition. You are to furnish ship and cargo, but I am to have one half the profits for my pass and for suggesting the voyage.’

“‘Pah, pah!’ said the great West-India merchant. He laughed at it—would not listen to such a one-sided operation. Astor went home and reported progress.

“For a time, the matter was dropped. Not many weeks after, the great West-India merchant thought over the matter. He had made money in the West-India trade, and he saw an opening in the East-Indies.

“At that time no vessels traded to Canton. It was just after the Revolutionary war, and the East-India ports were as hermetically sealed to American commerce as if it had not existed.

“He called at Mr. Astor’s store. ‘Were you in earnest the other day, when you showed me the pass of the East-India Company?’

“‘I was. Never more so.’ Again they talked over

the matter. The merchant finally thought he saw his way clear, and an agreement was signed, agreeing to give Mr. Astor one half the result or profits; he to have no outlay.

“The ship was selected and loaded; partly with specie—Spanish milled dollars, about \$30,000, and the other half was ginseng, lead, and scrap-iron.

“She went to Canton. The pass enabled her to anchor at Whampoa, a few miles below Canton, where she loaded and unloaded her cargo the same as if she had been a vessel belonging to the East-India Company.

“Her ginseng, costing twenty cents per pound in New-York, she sold at \$3.50 per pound in Canton, lead ten cents, scrap-iron at an enormous price. Tea was purchased that sold here at one dollar per pound profit on the Canton cost.

“When the return cargo was sold, the accounts were made out, and Mr. Astor’s half share, which was \$55,000, all in silver, was packed in barrels, and sent up to his store. When Mrs. Astor saw the barrels, she asked what was in them.

“‘The fruits of our East-India pass,’ replied her husband. He went to the ship-owner, and got back his pass. He then bought a ship, and loaded her with an assorted cargo. On her way out, she touched at the Sandwich Islands to take in water and fresh provisions. They also laid in a large stock of firewood.

“When this ship reached Canton a mandarin came on board, and noticing their firewood, asked the price of it at once. The Captain laughed at such a question, but signified that he was open to an offer. The

mandarin offered \$500 a ton, and every part of it was sold at that price. That was *sandal* wood.

“For seventeen years Mr. Astor enjoyed that lucrative sandal-wood trade without a rival. No other concern in the United States or England knew the secret. Nor was it discovered until a shrewd Boston ship-owner detailed a ship to follow one of Mr. Astor’s, and observe the events of the voyage. Then, for some time, that house was a participant in this valuable trade.

“It was a curious fact that Mrs. Astor knew more of the value of furs than he did. She would select a cargo for the Canton market, and make no mistake.”\*

We give these curious stories as we find them, without vouching for their truth. We resume our own plain narrative of known facts.

\* Old Merchants of New-York. First series.

## CHAPTER IX.

### HIS RAPID PROGRESS TO WEALTH.

MR. ASTOR still traversed the wilderness. The father of the late lamented General Wadsworth used to relate that he met him once in the woods of Western New-York in a sad plight. His wagon had broken down in the midst of a swamp. In the *mélée* all his gold had rolled away through the bottom of the vehicle, and was irrecoverably lost; and Astor was seen emerging from the swamp covered with mud and carrying on his shoulder an axe—the sole relic of his property. When at length, in 1794, Jay's treaty caused the evacuation of the western forts held by the British, his business so rapidly extended that he was enabled to devolve these laborious journeys upon others, while he remained in New-York, controlling a business that now embraced the region of the great lakes, and gave employment to a host of trappers, collectors, and agents. He was soon in a position to purchase a ship, in which his furs were carried to London, and in which he occasionally made a voyage himself. He was still observed to be most assiduous in the pursuit of commercial knowledge. He was never weary of inquiring about the markets of Europe and Asia, the ruling prices and commodities of each, the stand-

ing of commercial houses, and all other particulars that could be of use. Hence his directions to his captains and agents were always explicit and minute, and if any enterprise failed to be profitable it could generally be distinctly seen that it was because his orders had not been obeyed. In London he became most intimately conversant with the operations of the East-India Company and with the China trade. China being the best market in the world for furs, and furnishing commodities which in America had become necessities of life, he was quick to perceive what an advantage he would have over other merchants by sending his ships to Canton provided with furs as well as dollars. It was about the year 1800 that he sent his first ship to Canton, and he continued to carry on commerce with China for twenty-seven years, sometimes with loss, generally with profit, and occasionally with splendid and bewildering success.

It was not, however, until the year 1800, when he was worth a quarter of million dollars and had been in business fifteen years, that he indulged himself in the comfort of living in a house apart from his business. In 1794 he appears in the Directory as "Furrier, 149 Broadway." From 1796 to 1799 he figures as "Fur Merchant, 149 Broadway." In 1800 he had a storehouse at 141 Greenwich street, and lived at 223 Broadway, on the site of the present Astor House. In 1801, his store was at 71 Liberty street, and he had removed his residence back to 149 Broadway. The year following we find him again at 223 Broadway, where he continued to reside for a quarter of a century. His house was such as a fifth-rate merchant would now

consider much beneath his dignity. Mr. Astor, indeed, had a singular dislike to living in a large house. He had neither expensive tastes nor wasteful vices. His luxuries were a pipe, a glass of beer, a game of draughts, a ride on horseback, and the theatre. Of the theatre he was particularly fond. He seldom missed a good performance in the palmy days of the "Old Park."

It was his instinctive abhorrence of ostentation and waste that enabled him, as it were, to glide into the millionaire without being observed by his neighbors. He used to relate, with a chuckle, that he was worth a million before any one suspected it. A dandy bank clerk, one day, having expressed a doubt as to the sufficiency of his name to a piece of mercantile paper, Astor asked him how much he thought he was worth. The clerk mentioned a sum ludicrously less than the real amount. Astor then asked him how much he supposed this and that leading merchant, whom he named, was worth. The young man endowed them with generous sum-totals proportioned to their style of living. "Well," said Astor, "I am worth more than any of them. I will not say how much I am worth, but I am worth more than any sum you have mentioned." "Then," said the clerk, "you are even a greater fool than I took you for, to work as hard as you do." The old man would tell this story with great glee, for he always liked a joke.

In the course of his long life he had frequent opportunities of observing what becomes of those gay merchants who live up to the incomes of prosperous years, regardless of the inevitable time of commercial col-



lapse. It must be owned that he held in utter contempt the dashing style of living and doing business which has too often prevailed in New-York; and he was very slow to give credit to a house that carried sail out of proportion to its ballast. Nevertheless, he was himself no plodder when plodding had ceased to be necessary. At the time when his affairs were on their greatest scale, he would leave his office at two in the afternoon, go home to an early dinner, then mount his horse and ride about the island till it was time to go to the theatre. He had a strong aversion to illegitimate speculation, and particularly to gambling in stocks. The note-shaving and stock-jobbing operations of the Rothschilds he despised. It was his pride and boast that he gained his own fortune by legitimate commerce, and by the legitimate investment of his profits. Having an unbounded faith in the destiny of the United States, and in the future commercial supremacy of New-York, it was his custom, from about the year 1800, to invest his gains in the purchase of lots and lands on Manhattan Island.

## CHAPTER X.

### ANECDOTES OF HIS CLOSENESS.

WE have all heard much of the closeness, or rather the meanness, of this remarkable man. Truth compels us to admit, as we have before intimated, that he was not generous, except to his own kindred. His liberality began and ended in his own family. Very seldom during his lifetime did he willingly do a generous act outside of the little circle of his relations and descendants. To get all that he could, and to keep nearly all that he got—those were the laws of his being. He had a vast genius for making money, and that was all that he had.

It is a pleasure to know that sometimes his extreme closeness defeated its own object. He once lost seventy thousand dollars by committing a piece of petty injustice toward his best captain. This gallant sailor, being notified by an insurance office of the necessity of having a chronometer on board his ship, spoke to Mr. Astor on the subject, who advised the captain to buy one.

“But,” said the captain, “I have no five hundred dollars to spare for such a purpose; the chronometer should belong to the ship.”

“Well,” said the merchant, “you need not pay for it now; pay for it at your convenience.”

The captain still objecting, Astor, after a prolonged higgling, authorized him to buy a chronometer, and charge it to the ship's account; which was done. Sailing day was at hand. The ship was hauled into the stream. The captain, as is the custom, handed in his account. Astor, subjecting it to his usual close scrutiny, observed the novel item of five hundred dollars for the chronometer. He objected, averring that it was understood between them that the captain was to pay for the instrument. The worthy sailor recalled the conversation, and firmly held to his recollection of it. Astor insisting on his own view of the matter, the captain was so profoundly disgusted that, important as the command of the ship was to him, he resigned his post. Another captain was soon found, and the ship sailed for China. Another house, which was then engaged in the China trade, knowing the worth of this “king of captains,” as Astor himself used to style him, bought him a ship and dispatched him to Canton two months after the departure of Astor's vessel. Our captain, put upon his mettle, employed all his skill to accelerate the speed of his ship, and had such success, that he reached New-York with a full cargo of tea just seven days after the arrival of Mr. Astor's ship. Astor, not expecting another ship for months, and therefore sure of monopolizing the market, had not yet broken bulk, nor even taken off the hatchways. Our captain arrived on a Saturday. Advertisements and hand-bills were immediately issued, and on the Wednesday morning following, as the

custom then was, the auction sale of the tea began on the wharf—two barrels of punch contributing to the *éclât* and hilarity of the occasion. The cargo was sold to good advantage, and the market was glutted. Astor lost in consequence the entire profits of the voyage, not less than the sum named above. Meeting the captain some time after in Broadway, he said,

“I had better have paid for that chronometer of yours.”

Without ever acknowledging that he had been in the wrong, he was glad enough to engage the captain's future services. This anecdote we received from the worthy captain's own lips.

On one occasion the same officer had the opportunity of rendering the great merchant a most signal service. The agent of Mr. Astor in China suddenly died at a time when the property in his charge amounted to about seven hundred thousand dollars. Our captain, who was not then in Astor's employ, was perfectly aware that if this immense property fell into official hands, as the law required, not one dollar of it would ever again find its way to the coffers of its proprietor. By a series of bold, prompt, and skillful measures, he rescued it from the official maw, and made it yield a profit to the owner. Mr. Astor acknowledged the service. He acknowledged it with emphasis and a great show of gratitude. He said many times :

“If you had not done just as you did, I should never have seen one dollar of my money ; no, not one dollar of it.”

But he not only did not compensate him for his

services, but he did not even reimburse the small sum of money which the captain had expended in performing those services. Astor was then worth ten millions, and the captain had his hundred dollars a month and a family of young children.

Thus the great merchant recompensed great services. He was not more just in rewarding small ones. On one occasion a ship of his arrived from China, which he found necessary to dispatch at once to Amsterdam, the market in New-York being depressed by an oversupply of China merchandise. But on board this ship, under a mountain of tea-chests, the owner had two pipes of precious Madeira wine, which had been sent on a voyage for the improvement of its constitution.

“Can you get out that wine,” asked the owner, “without discharging the tea?”

The captain thought he could.

“Well, then,” said Mr. Astor, “you get it out, and I’ll give you a demijohn of it. You’ll say it’s the best wine you ever tasted.”

It required the labor of the whole ship’s crew for two days to get out those two pipes of wine. They were sent to the house of Mr. Astor. A year passed. The captain had been to Amsterdam and back, but he had received no tidings of his demijohn of Madeira. One day, when Mr. Astor was on board the ship, the captain ventured to remind the great man, in a jocular manner, that he had not received the wine.

“Ah!” said Astor, “don’t you know the reason? It isn’t fine yet. Wait till it is fine, and you’ll say

you never tasted such Madeira." The captain never heard of that wine again.

These traits show the moral weakness of the man. It is only when we regard his mercantile exploits that we can admire him. He was, unquestionably, one of the ablest, boldest, and most successful operators that every lived. He seldom made a mistake in the conduct of business. Having formed his plan, he carried it out with a nerve and steadiness, with such a firm and easy grasp of all the details, that he seemed rather to be playing an interesting game than transacting business. "He could command an army of five hundred thousand men!" exclaimed one of his admirers. That was an erroneous remark. He could have commanded an army of five hundred thousand tea-chests, with a heavy auxiliary force of otter skins and beaver skins. But a commander of men must be superior morally as well as intellectually. He must be able to win the love and excite the enthusiasm of his followers. Astor would have made a splendid commissary-general to the army of Xerxes, but he could no more have conquered Greece than Xerxes himself.

## CHAPTER XI.

### HOW HE BECAME SO ENORMOUSLY RICH.

THE reader may be curious to know by what means Mr. Astor became so preposterously rich. Few successful men gain a single million by legitimate commerce. A million dollars is a most enormous sum of money. It requires a considerable effort of the mind to conceive it. But this indomitable little German managed, in the course of sixty years, to accumulate twenty millions; of which, probably, not more than two millions was the fruit of his business as a fur trader and China merchant.

At that day the fur trade was exceedingly profitable, as well as of vast extent. It is estimated that about the year 1800 the number of peltries annually furnished to commerce was about six millions, varying in value from fifteen cents to five hundred dollars. When every respectable man in Europe and America wore a beaver skin upon his head, or a part of one, and when a good beaver skin could be bought in Western New-York for a dollar's worth of trash, and could be sold in London for twenty-five English shillings, and when those twenty-five English shillings could be invested in English cloth and cutlery, and sold in New York for forty shillings, it may be im-

agined that fur-trading was a very good business. Mr. Astor had his share of the cream of it, and that was the foundation of his colossal fortune. Hence, too, the tender love he felt for a fine fur.

In the next place, his ventures to China were sometimes exceedingly fortunate. A fair profit on a voyage to China at that day was thirty thousand dollars. Mr. Astor has been known to gain seventy thousand, and to have his money in his pocket within the year. He was remarkably lucky in the war of 1812. All his ships escaped capture, and arriving at a time when foreign commerce was almost annihilated and tea had doubled in price, his gains were so immense, that the million or more lost in the Astorian enterprise gave him not even a momentary inconvenience.

At that time, too, tea merchants of large capital had an advantage which they do not now enjoy. A writer explains the manner in which the business was done in those days :

“It was a great business. A house that could raise money enough thirty years ago to send \$260,000 in specie, could soon have an uncommon capital, and this was the working of the old system. The Griswolds owned the ship Panama. They started her from here in the month of May, with a cargo of perhaps \$30,000 worth of ginseng, spelter, lead, iron, etc., and \$170,000 in Spanish dollars. The ship goes on the voyage, reaches Whampoa in safety, (a few miles below Canton.) Her supercargo in two months has her loaded with tea, some china ware, a great deal of cassia or false cinnamon and a few other articles. Suppose



the cargo, mainly tea, costing about thirty-seven cents (at that time) per pound on the average.

“The duty was enormous in those days. It was twice the cost of the tea, at least: so that a tea cargo of \$200,000, when it had paid duty of seventy-five cents per pound, (which would be \$400,000,) amounted to \$600,000. The profit was at least fifty per cent on the original cost, or \$100,000, and would make the cargo worth \$700,000.

“The cargo of teas would be sold almost on arrival (say eleven or twelve months after the ship left New-York in May) to wholesale grocers, for their notes at four and six months—say for \$700,000. In those years there was *credit given by the United States* of nine, twelve, and eighteen months! So that the East-India or Canton merchant, after his ship had made one voyage, had the use of Government capital to the extent of \$400,000, on the ordinary cargo of a China ship as stated above.

“No sooner had the ship Panama arrived, (or any of the regular East-Indiamen,) than her cargo would be exchanged for grocers' notes for \$700,000. These notes could be turned into specie very easily, and the owner had only to pay his bonds for \$400,000 duty, at nine, twelve, and eighteen months, giving him time actually to send two more ships with \$200,000 each to Canton, and have them back again in New-York before the bonds on the first cargo were due.

“John Jacob Astor at one period of his life had several vessels operating in this way. They would go to the Pacific (Oregon) and carry from thence furs to Canton. These would be sold at large profits. Then the

cargoes of tea to New-York would pay enormous duties, which Astor did not have to pay to the United States for a year and a half. His tea cargoes would be sold for good four and six months paper, or perhaps cash; so that for eighteen or twenty years John Jacob Astor had what was actually a free-of-interest loan from Government of over *five millions* of dollars. Astor was prudent and lucky in his operations, and such an enormous Government loan did not ruin him as it did many others. One house was Thomas H. Smith & Sons. This firm also went enormously into the Canton trade, and although possessing originally but a few thousand dollars, Smith imported teas to such an extent, that when he failed he owed the United States three millions, and not a cent has ever been paid."\*

But it was neither his tea trade nor his fur trade that gave Astor twenty millions of dollars. It was his sagacity in investing his profits that made him the richest man in America. When he first trod the streets of New-York, in 1784, the city was a snug, leafy place of twenty-five thousand inhabitants, situated at the extremity of the island, mostly below Cortlandt street. In 1800, when he began to have money to invest, the city had more than doubled in population, and had advanced nearly a mile up the island. Now, Astor was a shrewd calculator of the future. No reason appeared why New-York should not repeat this doubling game and this mile of extension every fifteen years. He acted upon the supposition, and fell into the habit of buying lands and lots just beyond the verge

\* Old Merchants of New-York. First Series.

of the city. One little anecdote will show the wisdom of this proceeding. He sold a lot in the vicinity of Wall street, about the year 1810, for eight thousand dollars, which was supposed to be somewhat under its value. The purchaser, after the papers were signed, seemed disposed to chuckle over his bargain.

“Why, Mr. Astor,” said he, “in a few years this lot will be worth twelve thousand dollars.”

“Very true,” replied Astor; “but now you shall see what I will do with this money. With eight thousand dollars I buy eighty lots above Canal street. By the time your lot is worth twelve thousand dollars, my eighty lots will be worth eighty thousand dollars;” which proved to be the fact.

His purchase of the Richmond Hill estate of Aaron Burr was a case in point. He bought the hundred and sixty acres at a thousand dollars an acre, and in twelve years the land was worth fifteen hundred dollars a lot. In the course of time the island was dotted all over with Astor lands—to such an extent that the whole income of his estate for fifty years could be invested in new houses without buying any more land.

## CHAPTER XII.

### ONE OF HIS SPECULATIONS.

HIS land speculations, however, were by no means confined to the little island of Manhattan. Aged readers can not have forgotten the most celebrated of all his operations of this kind, by which he acquired a legal title to one third of the county of Putnam in this State. This enormous tract was part of the estate of Roger Morris and Mary his wife, who, by adhering to the King of Great Britain in the Revolutionary war, forfeited their landed property in the State of New-York. Having been duly attainted as public enemies, they fled to England at the close of the war, and the State sold their lands, in small parcels, to honest Whig farmers. The estate comprised fifty-one thousand one hundred and two acres, upon which were living, in 1809, more than seven hundred families, all relying upon the titles which the State of New-York had given. Now Mr. Astor stepped forward to disturb the security of this community of farmers. It appeared, and was proved beyond doubt, that Roger and Mary Morris had only possessed a *life-interest* in this estate, and that, therefore, it was only that life-interest which the State could legally confiscate. The moment Roger and Mary Morris ceased to live, the property would

fall to their heirs, with all the houses, barns, and other improvements thereon. After a most thorough examination of the papers by the leading counsel of that day, Mr. Astor bought the rights of the heirs, in 1809, for twenty thousand pounds sterling. At that time Roger Morris was no more; and Mary his wife was nearly eighty, and extremely infirm. She lingered, however, for some years; and it was not till after the peace of 1815 that the claims of Mr. Astor were pressed. The consternation of the farmers and the astonishment of the people generally, when at length the great millionaire stretched out his hand to pluck this large ripe pear, may be imagined. A great clamor arose against him. It can not be denied, however, that he acted in this business with moderation and dignity. Upon the first rumor of his claim, in 1814, commissioners were appointed by the Legislature to inquire into it. These gentlemen, finding the claim more formidable than had been suspected, asked Mr. Astor for what sum he would compromise. The lands were valued at six hundred and sixty-seven thousand dollars, but Astor replied that he would sell his claim for three hundred thousand. The offer was not accepted, and the affair lingered. In 1818, Mary Morris being supposed to be at the point of death, and the farmers being in constant dread of the writs of ejectment which her death would bring upon them, commissioners were again appointed by Legislature to look into the matter. Again Mr. Astor was asked upon what terms he would compromise. He replied January 19, 1819:

“In 1813 or 1814 a similar proposition was made to me by the commissioners then appointed by the Hon-

orable the Legislature of this State, when I offered to compromise for the sum of three hundred thousand dollars, which, considering the value of the property in question, was thought very reasonable; and, at the present period, when the life of Mrs. Morris is, according to calculation, worth little or nothing, she being near eighty-six years of age, and the property more valuable than it was in 1813, I am still willing to receive the amount which I then stated, with interest on the same, payable in money or stock, bearing an interest of — per cent, payable quarterly. The stock may be made payable at such periods as the Honorable the Legislature may deem proper. This offer will, I trust, be considered as liberal, and as a proof of my willingness to compromise on terms which are reasonable, considering the value of the property, the price which it cost me, and the inconvenience of having so long laid out of my money, which, if employed in commercial operations, would most likely have produced better profits.”

The Legislature were not yet prepared to compromise. It was not till 1827 that a test case was selected and brought to trial before a jury. The most eminent counsel were employed on the part of the State—Daniel Webster and Martin Van Buren among them. Astor's cause was intrusted to Emmet, Ogden, and others. We believe that Aaron Burr was consulted on the part of Mr. Astor, though he did not appear in the trial. The efforts of the array of counsel employed by the State were exerted in vain to find a flaw in the paper upon which Astor's claim mainly rested. Mr. Webster's speech on this occasion betrays, even to the

unprofessional reader, both that he had no case and that he knew he had not, for he indulged in a strain of remark that could only have been designed to prejudice, not convince, the jury.

“It is a claim for lands,” said he, “not in their wild and forest state, but for lands the intrinsic value of which is mingled with the labor expended upon them. It is no every-day purchase, for it extends over towns and counties, and almost takes in a degree of latitude. It is a stupendous speculation. The individual who now claims it has not succeeded to it by inheritance; he has not attained it, as he did that vast wealth which no one less envies him than I do, by fair and honest exertions in commercial enterprise, but by speculation, by purchasing the forlorn hope of the heirs of a family driven from their country by a bill of attainder. By the defendants, on the contrary, the lands in question are held as a patrimony. They have labored for years to improve them. The rugged hills had grown green under their cultivation before a question was raised as to the integrity of their titles.”

A line of remark like this would appeal powerfully to a jury of farmers. Its effect, however, was destroyed by the simple observation of one of the opposing counsel:

“Mr. Astor bought this property confiding in the justice of the State of New-York, firmly believing that in the litigation of his claim his rights would be maintained.”

It is creditable to the administration of justice in New-York, and creditable to the very institution of trial by jury, that Mr. Astor's most unpopular and

even odious cause was triumphant. Warned by this verdict, the Legislature consented to compromise on Mr. Astor's own terms. The requisite amount of "Astor stock," as it was called, was created. Mr. Astor received about half a million of dollars, and the titles of the lands were secured to their rightful owners. To render this conclusion of the affair palatable to the people, the trial and the documents were published in pamphlets.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### HIS GREATEST ENTERPRISE.

THE crowning glory of Mr. Astor's mercantile career was that vast and brilliant enterprise which Washington Irving has commemorated in "Astoria." No other single individual has ever set on foot a scheme so extensive, so difficult, and so costly as this; nor has any such enterprise been carried out with such sustained energy and perseverance. To establish a line of trading-posts from St. Louis to the Pacific, a four months' journey in a land of wilderness, prairie, mountain, and desert, inhabited by treacherous or hostile savages—to found a permanent settlement on the Pacific coast as the grand *dépôt* of furs and supplies—to arrange a plan by which the furs collected should be regularly transported to China, and the ships return to New-York laden with tea and silks, and then proceed once more to the Pacific coast to repeat the circuit—to maintain all the parts of this scheme without the expectation of any but a remote profit, sending ship after ship before any certain intelligence of the first ventures had arrived—this was an enterprise which had been memorable if it had been undertaken by a wealthy corporation or a powerful government, instead of a private merchant, unaided by any re-

sources but his own. At every moment in the conduct of this magnificent attempt Mr. Astor appears the great man. His parting instructions to the captain of his first ship call to mind those of General Washington to St. Clair on a similar occasion. "All the accidents that have yet happened," said the merchant, "arose from too much confidence in the Indians." The ship was lost, a year after, by the disregard of this last warning. When the news reached New-York of the massacre of the crew and the blowing up of the ship, the man who flew into a passion at seeing a little boy drop a wine-glass, behaved with a composure that was the theme of general admiration. He attended the theater the same evening, and entered heartily into the play. Mr. Irving relates that a friend having expressed surprise at this, Mr. Astor replied:

"What would you have me do? Would you have me stay at home and weep for what I can not help?"

This was not indifference; for when, after nearly two years of weary waiting, he heard of the safety and success of the overland expedition, he was so overjoyed that he could scarcely contain himself.

"I felt ready," said he, "to fall upon my knees in a transport of gratitude."

A touch in one of his letters shows the absolute confidence he felt in his own judgment and abilities, a confidence invariably exhibited by men of the first executive talents.

"Were I on the spot," he wrote to one of his agents when the affairs of the settlement appeared desperate, "and had the management of affairs, I would defy them all; but, as it is, every thing depends upon you

and the friends about you. Our enterprise is grand and deserves success, and I hope in God it will meet it. If my object was merely gain of money I should say, think whether it is best to save what we can and abandon the place; but the thought is like a dagger to my heart."

He intimates here that his object was not merely "gain of money." What was it, then? Mr. Irving informs us that it was desire of fame. We should rather say that when nature endows a man with a remarkable gift she also implants within him the love of exercising it. Astor loved to plan a vast, far-reaching enterprise. He loved it as Morphy loves to play chess, as Napoleon loved to plan a campaign, as Raphael loved to paint, and Handel to compose.

The war of 1812 foiled the enterprise. "But for that war," Mr. Astor used to say, "I should have been the richest man that ever lived." He expected to go on expending money for several years, and then to gain a steady annual profit of millions. It was, however, that very war that enabled him to sustain the enormous losses of the enterprise without injury to his estate, or even a momentary inconvenience. During the first year of the war he had the luck to receive two or three cargoes of tea from China, despite the British cruisers. In the second year of the war, when the Government was reduced to borrow at eighty, he invested largely in the loan, which, one year after the peace, stood at one hundred and twenty.

Mr. Astor at all times was a firm believer in the destiny of the United States. In other words, he held its public stock in profound respect. He had little to

say of politics, but he was a supporter of the old Whig party for many years, and had a great regard, personal and political, for its leader and ornament, Henry Clay. He was never better pleased than when he entertained Mr. Clay at his own house. It ought to be mentioned in this connection that when, in June, 1812, the merchants of New-York memorialized the Government in favor of the embargo, which almost annihilated the commerce of the port, the name of John Jacob Astor headed the list of signatures.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### HE RETIRES FROM BUSINESS AND BUILDS THE ASTOR HOUSE.

HE was an active business man in this city for about forty-six years—from his twenty-first to his sixty-seventh year. Toward the year 1830 he began to withdraw from business, and undertook no new enterprises except such as the investment of his income involved. His three daughters were married. His son and heir was a man of thirty. Numerous grandchildren were around him, for whom he manifested a true German fondness; not, however, regarding them with equal favor. He dispensed, occasionally, a liberal hospitality at his modest house, though that hospitality was usually bestowed upon men whose presence at his table conferred distinction upon him who sat at the head of it. He was fond, strange as it may seem, of the society of literary men. For Washington Irving he always professed a warm regard, liked to have him at his house, visited him, and made much of him. Fitz-Greene Halleck, one of the best talkers of his day, a man full of fun, anecdote, and fancy, handsome, graceful, and accomplished, was a great favorite with him. He afterward invited the poet to reside with him and take charge of his affairs, which Mr. Halleck did for

many years, to the old gentleman's perfect satisfaction. Still later Dr. Cogswell won his esteem, and was named by him Librarian of the Astor Library. For his own part, though he rather liked to be read to in his latter days, he collected no library, no pictures, no objects of curiosity. As he had none of the wasteful vices, so also he had none of the costly tastes. Like all other rich men, he was beset continually by applicants for pecuniary aid, especially by his own countrymen. As a rule he refused to give: and he was right. He held beggary of all descriptions in strong contempt, and seemed to think that, in this country, want and fault are synonymous. Nevertheless, we are told that he did, now and then, bestow small sums in charity, though we have failed to get trustworthy evidence of a single instance of his doing so. It is, no doubt, absolutely necessary for a man who is notoriously rich to guard against imposture, and to hedge himself about against the swarms of solicitors who pervade a large and wealthy city. If he did not, he would be overwhelmed and devoured. His time would be all consumed and his estate squandered in satisfying the demands of importunate impudence. Still, among the crowd of applicants there is here and there one whose claim upon the aid of the rich man is just. It were much to be desired that a way should be devised by which these meritorious askers could be sifted from the mass, and the nature of their requests made known to men who have the means and the wish to aid such. Some kind of Benevolent Intelligence Office appears to be needed among us. In the absence of such an institution we must not be surprised that men renown-

ed for their wealth convert themselves into human porcupines, and erect their defensive armor at the approach of every one who carries a subscription-book. True, a generous man might establish a private bureau of investigation; but a generous man is not very likely to acquire a fortune of twenty millions. Such an accumulation of wealth is just as wise as if a man who had to walk ten miles on a hot day should, of his own choice, carry on his back a large sack of potatoes. A man of superior sense and feeling will not waste his life so unless he has in view a grand public object. On the contrary, he will rather do as Franklin did, who, having acquired at the age of forty-two a modest competence, sold out his thriving business on easy terms to a younger man, and devoted the rest of his happy life to the pursuit of knowledge and the service of his country. But we can not all be Franklins. In the affairs of the world millionaires are as indispensable as philosophers; and it is fortunate for society that some men take pleasure in heaping up enormous masses of capital.

Having retired from business, Mr. Astor determined to fulfill the vow of his youth, and build in Broadway a house larger and costlier than any it could then boast. Behold the result in the Astor House, which remains to this day one of our most solid, imposing, and respectable structures. The ground on which the hotel stands was covered with substantial three-story brick houses, one of which Astor himself occupied; and it was thought at the time a wasteful and rash proceeding to destroy them. Old Mr. Coster, a retired merchant of great wealth, who lived next door to Mr.

Astor's residence, was extremely indisposed to remove, and held out long against every offer of the millionaire. His house was worth thirty thousand dollars. Astor offered him that sum; but the offer was very positively declined, and the old gentleman declared it to be his intention to spend the remainder of his days in the house. Mr. Astor offered forty thousand without effect. At length the indomitable projector revealed his purpose to his neighbor.

"Mr. Coster," said he, "I want to build a hotel. I have got all the other lots; now name your own price."

To which Coster replied by confessing the real obstacle to the sale.

"The fact is," said he, "I can't sell unless Mrs. Coster consents. If she is willing, I'll sell for sixty thousand, and you can call to-morrow morning and ask her."

Mr. Astor presented himself at the time named.

"Well, Mr. Astor," said the lady in the tone of one who was conferring a very great favor for nothing, "we are such old friends that I am willing for your sake."

So the house was bought, and with the proceeds Mr. Coster built the spacious granite mansion a mile up Broadway, which is now known as the Chinese Building. Mr. Astor used to relate this story with great glee. He was particularly amused at the simplicity of the old lady in considering it a great favor to him to sell her house at twice its value. It was at this time that he removed to a wide, two-story brick house opposite Niblo's, the front door of which bore a large



silver plate, exhibiting to awe-struck passers-by the words: "MR. ASTOR." - Soon after the hotel was finished, he made a present of it to his eldest son, or, in legal language, he sold it to him for the sum of one dollar, "to him in hand paid."

In the decline of his life, when his vast fortune was safe from the perils of business, he was still as sparing in his personal expenditures, as close in his bargains, as watchful over his accumulations as he had been when economy was essential to his solvency and progress. He enjoyed keenly the consciousness, the feeling of being rich. The roll-book of his possessions was his Bible. He scanned it fondly, and saw with quiet but deep delight the catalogue of his property lengthening from month to month. The love of accumulation grew with his years until it ruled him like a tyrant. If at fifty he possessed his millions, at sixty-five his millions possessed him. Only to his own children and to their children was he liberal; and his liberality to them was all arranged with a view to keeping his estate in the family, and to cause it at every moment to tend toward a final consolidation in one enormous mass. He was ever considerate for the comfort of his imbecile son. One of his last enterprises was to build for him a commodious residence.

## CHAPTER XV.

### HIS VISIT TO EUROPE.

IN 1832, one of his daughters having married a European nobleman, he allowed himself the pleasure of a visit to her. He remained abroad till 1835, when he hurried home in consequence of the disturbance in financial affairs, caused by General Jackson's war upon the Bank of the United States. The captain of the ship in which he sailed from Havre to New-York has related to us some curious incidents of the voyage. Mr. Astor reached Havre when the ship, on the point of sailing, had every state-room engaged; but he was so anxious to get home, that the captain, who had commanded ships for him in former years, gave up to him his own state-room. Head winds and boisterous seas kept the vessel beating about and tossing in the channel for many days. The great man was very sick and still more alarmed. At length, being persuaded that he should not survive the voyage, he asked the captain to run in and set him ashore on the coast of England. The captain dissuaded him. The old man urged his request at every opportunity, and said at last: "I give you thousand dollars to put me aboard a pilot-boat." He was so vehement and importunate, that one day the captain, worried out of all

patience, promised that if he did not get out of the Channel before the next morning, he would run in and put him ashore. It happened that the wind changed in the afternoon and wafted the ship into the broad ocean. But the troubles of the sea-sick millionaire had only just begun. A heavy gale of some days' duration blew the vessel along the western coast of Ireland. Mr. Astor, thoroughly panic-stricken, now offered the captain ten thousand dollars if he would put him ashore anywhere on the wild and rocky coast of the Emerald Isle. In vain the captain remonstrated. In vain he reminded the old gentleman of the danger of forfeiting his insurance.

“Insurance!” exclaimed Astor, “can't I insure your ship myself?”

In vain the captain mentioned the rights of the other passengers. In vain he described the solitary and rock-bound coast, and detailed the difficulties and dangers which attended its approach. Nothing would appease him. He said he would take all the responsibility, brave all the perils, endure all the consequences; only let him once more feel the firm ground under his feet. The gale having abated, the captain yielded to his entreaties, and engaged, if the other passengers would consent to the delay, to stand in and put him ashore. Mr. Astor went into the cabin and proceeded to write what was expected to be a draft for ten thousand dollars in favor of the owners of the ship on his agent in New-York. He handed to the captain the result of his efforts. It was a piece of paper covered with writing that was totally illegible.

“What is this?” asked the captain.

“A draft upon my son for ten thousand dollars,” was the reply.

“But no one can read it.

“Oh! yes, my son will know what it is. My hand trembles so that I can not write any better.”

“But,” said the captain, “you can at least write your name. I am acting for the owners of the ship, and I can not risk their property for a piece of paper that no one can read. Let one of the gentlemen draw up a draft in proper form; you sign it; and I will put you ashore.”

The old gentleman would not consent to this mode of proceeding, and the affair was dropped.

A favorable wind blew the ship swiftly on her way, and Mr. Astor's alarm subsided. But even on the Banks of Newfoundland, two thirds of the way across, when the captain went upon the poop to speak a ship bound for Liverpool, old Astor climbed up after him, saying: “Tell them I give tousand dollars if they take a passenger.”

## CHAPTER XVI.

### HIS LAST YEARS.

ASTOR lived to the age of eighty-four. During the last few years of his life his faculties were sensibly impaired; he was a child again. It was, however, while his powers and his judgment were in full vigor that he determined to follow the example of Girard, and bequeath a portion of his estate for the purpose of "rendering a public benefit to the city of New-York." He consulted Mr. Irving, Mr. Halleck, Dr. Cogswell, and his own son with regard to the object of this bequest. All his friends concurred in recommending a public library, and, accordingly, in 1839, he added the well-known codicil to his will which consecrated four hundred thousand dollars to this purpose. To Irving's Astoria and to the Astor Library he will owe a lasting fame in the country of his adoption.

The last considerable sum he was ever known to give away was a contribution to aid the election to the Presidency of his old friend, Henry Clay. The old man was always fond of a compliment, and seldom averse to a joke. It was the timely application of a jocular compliment that won from him this last effort of generosity. When the committee were presented

to him he began to excuse himself, evidently intending to decline giving.

"I am not now interested in these things," said he. "Those gentlemen who are in business, and whose property depends upon the issue of the election, ought to give. But I am now an old man. I haven't any thing to do with commerce, and it makes no difference to me what the Government does. I don't make money any more, and haven't any concern in the matter."

One of the committee replied: "Why, Mr. Astor, you are like Alexander when he wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. You have made all the money, and now there is no more money to make." The old eye twinkled at the blended compliment and jest.

"Ha, ha, ha! very good, that's very good. Well, well, I give you something."

Whereupon he drew his check for fifteen hundred dollars.

When all else had died within him, when he was at last nourished like an infant at a woman's breast, and when being no longer able to ride in a carriage, he was daily tossed in blanket for exercise, he still retained a strong interest in the care and increase of his property. His agent called daily upon him to render a report of moneys received. One morning this gentleman chanced to enter his room while he was enjoying his blanket exercise. The old man cried out from the middle of his blanket:

"Has Mrs. —— paid that rent yet?"

"No," replied the agent.

"Well, but she must pay it," said the poor old man.

“Mr. Astor,” rejoined the agent, “she can’t pay it now; she has had misfortunes, and we must give her time.”

“No, no,” said Astor; “I tell you she can pay it, and she will pay it. You don’t go the right way to work with her.”

The agent took leave, and mentioned the anxiety of the old gentleman with regard to this unpaid rent to his son, who counted out the requisite sum, and told the agent to give it to the old man as if he had received it from the tenant.

“There!” exclaimed Mr. Astor when he received the money, “I told you she would pay it if you went the right way to work with her.”

Who would have twenty millions at such a price?

On the twenty-ninth of March, 1848, of old age merely, in the presence of his family and friends, without pain or disquiet, this remarkable man breathed his last. He was buried in a vault in the church of St. Thomas in Broadway. Though he expressly declared in his will that he was a member of the Reformed German Congregation, no clergyman of that Church took part in the services of his funeral. The unusual number of six Episcopal Doctors of Divinity assisted at the ceremony. A bishop could have scarcely expected a more distinguished funeral homage. Such a thing it is in a commercial city to die worth twenty millions! The pall-bearers were Washington Irving, Philip Hone, Sylvanus Miller, James G. King, Isaac Bell, David B. Ogden, Thomas J. Oakley, Ramsey Crooks, and Jacob B. Taylor.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### HOW HE DISPOSED OF HIS PROPERTY.

THE public curiosity with regard to the will of the deceased millionaire was fully gratified by the saucy enterprise of the *Herald*, which published it entire in five columns of its smallest type a day or two after the funeral. The ruling desires of Mr. Astor with regard to his property were evidently these two: 1. To provide amply and safely for his children, grandchildren, nephews, and nieces; 2. To keep his estate, as much as was consistent with his desire, in one mass in the hands of his eldest son. His brother Henry, the butcher, had died childless and rich, leaving his property to Mr. William B. Astor. To the descendants of the brother in Germany Mr. Astor left small but sufficient pensions. To many of his surviving children and grandchildren in America he left life-interests and stocks which seem designed to produce an average of about fifteen thousand dollars a year. Other grandsons were to have twenty-five thousand dollars on reaching the age of twenty-five, and the same sum when they were thirty. His favorite grandson, Charles Astor Bristed, since well known to the public as an author and poet, was left amply provided for. He directed his executors to "provide for my unfortunate



son, John Jacob Astor, and to procure for him all the comforts which his condition does or may require." For this purpose ten thousand dollars a year was directed to be appropriated, and the house built for him in Fourteenth street near Ninth avenue was to be his for life. If he should be restored to the use of his faculties, he was to have an income of one hundred thousand dollars. The number of persons, all relatives or connections of the deceased, who were benefited by the will, was about twenty-five. To his old friend and manager, Fitz-Greene Halleck, he left the somewhat ridiculous annuity of two hundred dollars, which Mr. William B. Astor voluntarily increased to fifteen hundred. Nor was this the only instance in which the heir rectified the errors and supplied the omissions of the will. He had the justice to send a considerable sum to the brave old captain who saved for Mr. Astor the large property in China imperiled by the sudden death of an agent. The minor bequests and legacies of Mr. Astor absorbed about two millions of his estate. The rest of his property fell to his eldest son, under whose careful management it is supposed to have increased to an amount not less than forty millions. This may, however, be an exaggeration. Mr. William B. Astor minds his own business, and does not impart to others the secrets of his rent-roll. The number of his houses in this city is said to be seven hundred and twenty.

The bequests of Mr. Astor for purposes of benevolence show good sense and good feeling. The Astor Library fund of four hundred thousand dollars was the largest item. Next in amount was fifty thousand dollars for the benefit of the poor of his native village

in Germany. "To the German Society of New-York," continued the will, "I give thirty thousand dollars on condition of their investing it in bond and mortgage, and applying it for the purpose of keeping an office and giving advice and information without charge to all emigrants arriving here, and for the purpose of protecting them against imposition." To the Home for Aged Ladies he gave thirty thousand dollars, and to the Blind Asylum and the Half-Orphan Asylum each five thousand dollars. To the German Reformed Congregation, "of which I am a member," he left the moderate sum of two thousand dollars. These objects were wisely chosen. The sums left for them, also, were in many cases of the amount most likely to be well employed. Twenty-five thousand dollars he left to Columbia College, but unfortunately repented, and annulled the bequest in a codicil.

We need not enlarge on the success which has attended the bequest for the Astor Library—a bequest to which Mr. William B. Astor has added, in land, books, and money, about two hundred thousand dollars. It is the ornament and boast of the city. Nothing is wanting to its complete utility but an extension of the time of its being accessible to the public. Such a library, in such a city as this, should be open at sunrise, and close at ten in the evening. If but *one* studious youth should desire to avail himself of the morning hours before going to his daily work, the interests of that one would justify the directors in opening the treasures of the library at the rising of the sun. In the evening, of course, the library would probably

be attended by a greater number of readers than in all the hours of the day together.

The bequest to the village of Waldorf has resulted in the founding of an institution that appears to be doing a great deal of good in a quiet German manner. The German biographer of Mr. Astor, from whom we have derived some particulars of his early life, expatiates upon the merits of this establishment, which, he informs us, is called the Astor House.

“Certain knowledge,” he says, “of Astor’s bequest reached Waldorf only in 1850, when a nephew of Mr. Astor’s and one of the executors of his will appeared from New-York in the testator’s native town with power to pay over the money to the proper persons. He kept himself mostly in Heidelberg, and organized a supervisory board to aid in the disposition of the funds in accordance with the testator’s intentions. This board was to have its headquarters in Heidelberg, and was to consist of professors in the University there, and clergymen, not less than five in all. The board of control, however, consists of the clergy of Waldorf, the burgomaster, the physician, a citizen named every three years by the Common Council, and the governor of the Institution, who must be a teacher by profession. This latter board has control of all the interior arrangements of the Institution, and the care of the children and beneficiaries. The leading objects of the Astor House are: 1. The care of the poor, who, through age, disease, or other causes, are incapable of labor; 2. The rearing and instruction of poor children, especially those who live in Waldorf. Non-residents are received if there is room, but they must make com-

pensation for their board and instruction. Children are received at the age of six, and maintained until they are fifteen or sixteen. Besides school instruction, there is ample provision for physical culture. They are trained in active and industrious habits, and each of them, according to his disposition, is to be taught a trade, or instructed in agriculture, market-gardening, the care of vineyards, or of cattle, with a view to rendering them efficient farm-servants or stewards. It is also in contemplation to assist the blind and the deaf and dumb, and, finally, to establish a nursery for very young children left destitute. Catholics and Protestants are admitted on equal terms, religious differences not being recognized in the applicants for admission. Some time having elapsed before the preliminary arrangements were completed, the accumulated interest of the fund went so far toward paying for the buildings, that of the original fifty thousand dollars not less than forty-three thousand have been permanently invested for the support of the Institution."

Thus they manage bequests in Germany! The Astor House was opened with much ceremony, January 9, 1854, the very year in which the Astor Library was opened to the public in the city of New-York. The day of the founder's death is annually celebrated in the chapel of the Institution, which is adorned by his portrait.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE ASTOR ESTATE NOW.

THESE two institutions will carry the name of John Jacob Astor to the latest generations. But they are not the only services which he rendered to the public. It would be absurd to contend that in accumulating his enormous estate, and in keeping it almost entire in the hands of his eldest son, he was actuated by a regard for the public good. He probably never thought of the public good in connection with the bulk of his property. Nevertheless, America is so constituted that every man in it of force and industry is necessitated to be a public servant. If this colossal fortune had been gained in Europe it would probably have been consumed in what is there called "founding a family." Mansions would have been built with it, parks laid out, a title of nobility purchased; and the income, wasted in barren and stupid magnificence would have maintained a host of idle, worthless, and pampered menials. Here, on the contrary, it is expended almost wholly in providing for the people of New-York the very commodity of which they stand in most pressing need; namely, *new houses*. The simple reason why the rent of a small house in New-York is a thousand dollars a year is because the supply of

houses is unequal to the demand. We need at this moment five thousand more houses in the city of New-York for the decent accommodation of its inhabitants at rents which they can afford to pay. The man who does more than any one else to supply the demand for houses is the patient, abstemious, and laborious heir of the Astor estate. He does a good day's work for us in this business every day, and all the wages he receives for so much care and toil is a moderate subsistence for himself and his family, and the very troublesome reputation of being the richest man in America. And the business is done with the minimum of waste in every department. In a quiet little office in Prince street, the manager of the estate, aided by two or three aged clerks, (one of them of fifty-five years' standing in the office,) transacts the business of a property larger than that of many sovereign princes. Every thing, also, is done promptly and in the best manner. If a tenant desires repairs or alterations, an agent calls at the house within twenty-four hours, makes the requisite inquiries, reports, and the work is forthwith begun, or the tenant is notified that it will not be done. The concurrent testimony of Mr. Astor's tenants is, that he is one of the most liberal and obliging of landlords.

So far, therefore, the Astor estate, immense as it is, appears to have been an unmixed good to the city in which it is mainly invested. There is every reason to believe that, in the hands of the next heir, it will continue to be managed with the same prudence and economy that mark the conduct of its present proprietor. We indulge the hope that either the present or some future possessor may devote a portion of his vast

revenue to the building of a new order of tenement houses, on a scale that will enable a man who earns a dollar and a half a day to occupy apartments fit for the residence of a family of human beings. The time is ripe for it. May we live to see in some densely-populated portion of the city, a new and grander ASTOR HOUSE arise, that shall demonstrate to the capitalists of every city in America that nothing will pay better as an investment than HOUSES FOR THE PEOPLE, which shall afford to an honest laborer rooms in a clean, orderly, and commodious palace at the price he now pays for a corner of a dirty fever-breeding barrack!

## THE WILL OF JOHN JACOB ASTOR.

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IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN :

I, JOHN JACOB ASTOR, of the city of New-York, desiring to dispose of all the real and personal estate to which I may be entitled, at the time of my decease, in the manner hereinafter expressed, do make this my last Will and Testament.

1st. TO MY DAUGHTER DOROTHEA, wife of Walter Langdon, Esquire, I give and bequeath all *my household furniture* ; also the use, during her life, of all *my silver plate*, my new service of plate excepted. Also, I give and bequeath to her for her life, the *income* of the following stocks, debt, and money : that is to say, *one hundred thousand dollars of the debt of the city of New-York*, bearing five per cent interest ; *five hundred shares of the capital stock of the Bank of America* ; *one thousand shares of the capital stock of the Manhattan Company* ; *twenty-five thousand dollars, deposited with the New-York Life Insurance and Trust Company*, (for which I hold certificates ; ) all which income I devote expressly to her sole and separate use—to be at her own disposal when received by her, and not otherwise, and to be free from all claim, interest, or interference of her husband. And to enable her to receive the said income, I order my executors, (in whose names the funds aforesaid are to stand during the life of my said daughter,) from time to time, as she may request, to execute such revocable letters of attorney as may be requisite to enable her to receive the said income.

Also, I devise to her the *house and lot on Lafayette Place* in the city of New-York, being twenty feet six inches wide, and



one hundred and thirty-seven feet six inches deep, now occupied by her, to have and to hold the same during her natural life, free from and exclusive of any interest or interference of her husband, and to her sole and separate use.

And on her death, I give the said plate, (except as above,) sums of debt and deposit and stocks, to her then surviving issue, and their executors and administrators.

And I devise the said house and lot to her then surviving issue, and their heirs and assigns for ever. Intending that if any of her children shall have died before her, leaving issue, such issue are together to take what their parent would have taken if surviving.

2d. To JOHN JACOB ASTOR LANGDON, [see codicil,] ELIZA ASTOR LANGDON, LOUISA LANGDON, WALTER LANGDON, Jr., WOODBURY LANGDON, CECILIA LANGDON, and EUGENE LANGDON, children of my daughter Dorothea, or to such of them as shall survive me, I devise *all my lots on the easterly side of Lafayette Place*, in the city of New-York, and fronting thereon. Also, *my lots in the rear of my lots on the said easterly side of Lafayette Place*, extending to the Bowery, and fronting thereon. Also, *my lands in the said city, between Charlton street, Morton street, Greenwich street, and Hudson River*, being one hundred lots, to have and to hold the same, them my said grand-children, in equal shares, for and during their lives respectively. And on the death of each of them, my grand-children, I give the share which he or she shall have enjoyed for life, to their surviving issue, in fee simple, to be divided according to the number of their children; and in case of death without issue then surviving, I devise the share of such deceased to my said other grand-children, above named, then surviving, in fee simple.

3d. To my said grand-children, JOHN J. A. LANGDON, WALTER LANGDON, Jr., WOODBURY LANGDON, and EUGENE LANGDON, [see codicil,] or to such of them as shall survive me, I devise the *eight lots of land belonging to me, with the improvements thereon, fronting on the easterly side of Broadway*, in the city of New-York, between *Broome street and Spring street*, to have and to hold the same in equal shares, during their lives respectively;

and on the death of each, I devise the share to which he had been entitled to his issue, him surviving, in equal shares, according to the number of his children, and to their heirs or assigns forever. And in case of death without such issue, I devise such share to his then surviving brothers, and their heirs and assigns forever.

To my said grand-children, *Sarah Astor, wife of Robert Boreel, Esq., Eliza Astor, Louisa and Cecilia*, or to such of them as may survive me, I devise the *four houses and lots* fronting on the *westerly side of Broadway*, between Prince street and Houston street, now known as *numbers 579, 581, 583, and 587*, extending in the rear to Mercer street; to have and to hold the same to them respectively, in equal shares, during their lives; and on the death of each, I devise her share to her issue then surviving, to be divided according to the number of her children, and to their heirs and assigns forever; and in case of death without issue then surviving, I devise such share to her then surviving sisters, and their heirs and assigns forever.

To each of my said grand-sons, JOHN J. A. LANGDON, WALTER LANGDON, Jr., WOODBURY LANGDON, and EUGENE LANGDON, and to each of my said grand-daughters, ELIZA, LOUISA, [codicil modifies,] and CECILIA, on their respectively attaining the age of twenty-four years, I give *twenty-five thousand dollars*; and on their respectively attaining the age of thirty years, *the further sum of twenty-five thousand dollars*.

To my grand-daughter Sarah, wife of Robert Boreel, I give the lands and building now known as the City Hotel, in the city of New-York, bounded by Broadway, Thames street, Temple street, and Cedar street, to have and to hold the same for her life. On her death, I devise the same to her then surviving issue, (according to the number of her children,) and to their heirs and assigns for ever. And in case of her death without such issue, then I devise the same to her then surviving brothers and sisters, and their heirs and assigns forever. And I authorize her, with the approbation of my executors, in case the building shall be burnt down or otherwise destroyed, to sell the said lands, in fee simple, or to mortgage the same, to raise money for

rebuilding on the said lands ; in which case the proceeds and money shall be received by my executors and invested by them, and the income shall be paid to the said Sarah Boreel for her life, provided she shall reside within the State of New-York ; but in case she shall not reside therein, then ten thousand dollars per annum of such income shall be paid to her, and the residue to her mother, or, in case of her death, to the brothers and sisters of the said Sarah. And on the death of the said Sarah, the capital shall be disposed of as is herein directed as to the land itself, of which it is the proceeds.

4th. [Revoked by codicil.] To my daughter ELIZA, WIFE OF VINCENT RUMPF, Esq., I give the income, for her life, of the following funds: *Fifty thousand dollars* of the *Public Debt of Ohio*, bearing six per cent interest; *Fifty thousand dollars* of the *debt of the city of New Haven*, bearing five and a half per cent interest; *Fifty thousand dollars deposited in the New-York Life Insurance and Trust Company*, (of which I have certifies;) *one thousand shares of the capital stock of the Merchants' Bank* in the city of New-York, and *sixteen hundred and four shares of the capital stock of the Mechanics' Bank*, in the city of New-York. Also, if she shall come to the State of New-York, and there take up her residence, then I give to her *such part of my residuary real estate* as she shall select, not exceeding in value *fifty thousand dollars*, according to a just valuation thereof by my executors—which estate so selected shall be set apart to her by deed, to be executed by her and my executors; to have and to hold the same to her during her life, if she shall not discontinue her residence in New-York. And on her death, I give the capital of the said funds, and the said real estate so selected, to her then surviving issue, their heirs, executors, and administrators, respectively, to be divided according to the number of her children; but in case of her death without such issue, I authorize her to dispose of the said funds and lands by appointments in the nature of a will, in such manner, and in such shares, and for such estates as she may think fit, to and amongst all or any of her relations by consanguinity, who might by possibility take lands from her by descent, according to the law of the State

of New-York, as it shall be at the date of such appointment ; and in case of her death without such issue, and not leaving any such valid appointment, then I give the said funds and lands, one fourth to the children of my son, William B. Astor ; one half to the children of my daughter, Dorothea ; and one fourth to my grand-son, Charles Bristed, and their heirs, executors, and administrators, respectively.

Also, I give to *my said daughter Eliza*, and to *her husband, Vincent Rumpff*, my lands and *estates in the canton of Geneva, in Switzerland*, to have and to hold the same to them during their lives and the life of the survivor of them ; and on the death of the survivor, I give the same to her issue surviving her at her death, and to the heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns forever—to be equally divided, according to the number of her children ; and I hereby give her power to appoint the said Genevese estates, in case of her death without such issue, to and amongst my grand-children, or to such one or more of them, and in such shares, for such estates, and on such conditions as she may direct by instrument, in the nature of a will ; and in case of her death without issue, as aforesaid, and without leaving any valid appointment, then I devise the said Genevese estates to my grand-children, as follows : One third to the children of William B. Astor, one third to the children of my daughter, Dorothea, and one third to my grand-son, Charles Bristed, and to their heirs, executors, and administrators, respectively, forever.

5th. To my grand-son, CHARLES BRISTED, I devise all that *lot of land* belonging to me, fronting on the *westerly side of Lafayette Place*, adjoining my house now occupied by my daughter Dorothea, and being seventy-seven feet six inches wide, by one hundred and thirty-seven feet six inches deep. Also, the *lot* and house now occupied by me, on the *westerly side of Broadway*, known as *number 585*, being about twenty-nine feet in front on Broadway, and twenty-five feet on Mercer street, to which it extends. Also, *a lot* of land belonging to me on the westerly [easterly—see codicil] side of *Broadway, between Spring street and Prince street*—also, *nine lots* of land on the *Eighth avenue and Twenty-sixth street*, seven of which lie on the westerly side

of the avenue, including the two corner lots of Twenty-sixth street, and two lie on the northerly side of Twenty-sixth street near the avenue. Also, *forty-three lots* of land fronting on *Seventh avenue, Bloomingdale Road, Thirty-seventh street, and Fortieth street.* Also, *eight lots* of land on *Avenue A, between Sixth and Seventh streets.* Also, *my country seat at Hellgate,* and my lands there, containing about thirteen acres. Also, the *twenty-two lots* owned by me in the block formed by *Hamersley street, Varick street, Bedford street, and Downing street*; to have and to hold, all and singular, the said lots of land and premises for and during his natural life. Also, I give to him, on his attaining the age of twenty-five years, the *income and interest of one hundred and fifteen thousand dollars,* to be set apart by my executors out of my good bonds and mortgages, to have and enjoy such income during his life. And as to the income of the real estate above devised to him for life, I devise the same to my executors in trust to receive the same and to apply it, or so much and part thereof as they may think fit, to the use of the said Charles Bristed, until he shall attain the age of twenty-five years. And upon the death of the said Charles Bristed, I give the said lands and capital of one hundred and fifteen thousand dollars to his then surviving issue, (to be divided according to the number of his children,) and to their heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, respectively forever. And in case of his death without such issue, then I give the said lands and money, one half to the children of my son William B. Astor, and one half to the children of my daughter Dorothea Langdon, and to their heirs, executors, and administrators, respectively, forever.

6th. To my grandsons, JOHN JACOB ASTOR, WILLIAM ASTOR, and HENRY ASTOR, sons of William B. Astor, or to such of them as may survive me, I devise all *my lands lying between Bloomingdale Road, Hudson River, Forty-second street, and Fifty-first street,* to be divided in the proportion of two shares to John, and one share each to William and Henry, to have and to hold the same to them during their lives respectively. Provided, however, that if my son William B. Astor should consider either of them to have become unworthy of this devise, he may convey

the share of such one or more of them to the others or other, by appointment under his hand and seal; and on their respective deaths, I devise the share devised to each for life, to his then surviving issue, and to their heirs and assigns forever, to be divided according to the number of his children. And in case of death without such issue, then I devise the same to his surviving brothers, and their heirs and assigns for ever; or, in case they should not survive, to William B. Astor and his heirs for ever.

7th. [Codicil modifies the whole.] I direct my executors to provide for my unfortunate son, *John Jacob Astor*, and to procure for him all the comforts which his condition doth or may admit; and to bear the expense thereof, *not exceeding five thousand dollars a year*; and in case he should be restored, then I direct them to apply to his use *ten thousand dollars a year* during his life; and if he shall leave lawful issue surviving him, then I direct my executors to pay to such issue the sum of five thousand dollars per annum to each child for life. And my executors are directed to set apart from my estate, such funds as in their judgment shall be sufficient to defray these annuities; and also all other annuities bequeathed in my will; which annuities shall stand secured on such funds, exclusive of any of my lands.

8th. [Revoked by codicil.] To each of the *four daughters* of my deceased brother GEORGE ASTOR, I give *twenty thousand dollars*; to his son *Joseph*, I give *twenty-five thousand dollars*; to his son WILLIAM H. ASTOR, I give *ten thousand dollars*; to GEORGE ASTOR, Jr., I give *three thousand dollars*; to the widow of my *said brother George*, I give *two hundred pounds sterling* yearly, for her life, commencing, the first payment, one year after my death; the same to be estimated here at the current rate of exchange. To my niece *Sophia Astor*, of Nienwid, in Germany, I give five thousand dollars. To my SISTER CATHERINE, wife of Michael Miller, I give one thousand dollars; to the *children of her daughter*, MARIA MOORE, I give five thousand dollars, to be equally divided among them, and to be paid to their mother for their use.

9th. To the German Society of the City of New-York, [modified by codicils,] I give *thirty thousand dollars*, upon condition

that they do, as soon as conveniently may be done after payment of the money, invest and keep the same invested in security of bond and mortgage of lands, and apply the interest and income thereof to establish and maintain an office, in some suitable place in the city of New-York and proper persons attending, who shall speak the German language, and be otherwise qualified for their duty, who shall attend daily in such office during the usual hours for business in this city, for the purpose of giving advice and information, without charge, to all emigrants arriving here, touching their establishment here and their course of life; and for the purpose of protecting them against impositions, to which strangers without knowledge of the country or its language may be exposed.

To the TRUSTEES OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE, [revoked by codicil,] in the city of New-York, I give *twenty-five thousand dollars*. upon condition that they do, within a reasonable and convenient time, establish a professorship of the German language and literature, and do appoint and continue a professor therein, of competent learning, who shall give proper lectures and instruction in the said language and literature.

To THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE RELIEF OF RESPECTABLE AGED INDIGENT FEMALES in the city of New-York, I give twenty-five thousand dollars, on condition that they cause the same to be put out and kept at interest on bonds and mortgage of real estate, and apply the interest to the objects of their association.

And in case of a breach of any of the said conditions or from any legal or other impediment, any of the three last legacies shall fail to take effect, then I give the same to my executors, confiding in their honor alone to make such disposition of such sums as they shall deem most analogous to the aforesaid purposes.

To the GERMAN REFORMED CONGREGATION [revoked by codicil] in the city of New-York, of which I am a member, I give *two thousand dollars*.

10th. All the rest, residue, and remainder of my real and personal estate [changed by codicil] I give and devise to my son WILLIAM B. ASTOR, to have and to hold the said real estate to him for his life. And I authorize him to appoint the same after

his death to and amongst his children and their issue in such shares and for such estates and on such conditions as he may think fit, by deed or by will ; and in case he shall leave no such valid appointment, I devise the same to his children and their heirs and assigns forever, including as well those now born as subsequently born children.

And I hereby charge upon the residuary estate thus devised, portions of two hundred thousand dollars, [changed by codicil,] to be settled upon each of his daughters, and her issue, in such manner as he may think fit, subject to the condition of their marrying with the consent of himself or his wife, or such persons as he may nominate in his will, which portions are to be set apart out of the real estate devised to him as above, and which when set apart are not to form any incumbrance upon the residue: and in case of his leaving no appointment as aforesaid, these portions are to be considered as part of his daughters' shares on the division of the estate now devised, among his children. And as to the personal estate bequeathed to him, it is my will that he employ the same in the improvement of the real estate to him herein above devised, in such manner as he may think fit.

My *Service of Plate* above mentioned, I give to be used by my son William B. Astor for life, and after his death to such of his sons as he may appoint.

11th. And considering that the uncertainty of life estates may embarrass the advantageous enjoyment of lands thus situated, and considering, also, other matters of convenience, I do hereby AUTHORIZE *each and every person who shall take an estate under this will, which may terminate with his or her life, to make any lease* of the premises to them devised, and of any and every part thereof, for *any term of years not exceeding twenty-one years from the date thereof*, with covenants therein for allowing to the lessee or his assigns, the actual value at the termination of the lease, of the buildings then standing on the demised premises, and useful as a dwelling-house or for any mercantile or mechanical business, which covenant shall bind the remainder man, in respect to such lands, if he shall enter thereupon ; *provided*



that such leases be made with the assent of one of my executors, uniting in the same for this purpose, and that the fair yearly value of the premises be reserved as rent, payable annually without any anticipation by way of premium, and be made payable to the tenant for life, and to the persons in remainder successively, according to the nature of their several estates.

Also, I do *authorize any such tenant for life*, with the assent of one of my executors, uniting in the deed, to manifest the same, *to sell and convey in fee simple, to the extent of one half in value of the lands* devised, to such life tenant, in order to raise money for the improvement of the residue, for which application of the money so to be raised, such executor shall make provision before giving such assent; and his uniting in the deed shall make the same an effectual conveyance to the parties accepting the same, who shall thereby be freed from seeing to the application of the purchase-moneys.

*In case any of the stocks or funds herein specifically bequeathed should not be in my hands* at my decease, the several bequests shall be made up by purchases at the expense of my estate, of stocks or funds of the same, or a similar kind, and to the same amount, at their par values; *and in case any of the said stocks or funds should be paid off or become, in the judgment of my executors, insecure*, then it shall be lawful for them to sell and dispose of the same at the request, or with the assent, of the person entitled to the income thereof, and to invest the proceeds in such other safe securities as my executors shall think expedient, and so on, from time to time. But no change in the form of investment shall change the right or interest of any person in the income and proceeds of such property.

I appoint WILLIAM B. ASTOR, JAMES G. KING, WASHINGTON IRVING, JAMES GALLATIN, ——— ———, to be executors of this my will, and *give such of them as shall act* herein, and the *survivors and survivor of them*, the several powers, authority, and discretion herein granted. And whenever, *and as often as their number shall be reduced to two*, my acting executors shall appoint such proper persons as they may select, to be united with them in the execution of the objects of this will; and upon such

appointment being accepted and acknowledged, and recorded as a deed, the persons so appointed shall be invested with the same interest, right, discretion, and control, as if appointed by name in this will; and so, from time to time, until all the purposes of this will shall be accomplished or completed. And I expressly declare that those who shall act in the executorship of this will *shall not be answerable for the losses* which shall occur through the acts of others of their number, or of any agents by them employed, nor otherwise, than from their own fraudulent misconduct, and they shall be in all respects indemnified out of my estate, and *may employ such agents* and servants as they may deem necessary; and *may make any arrangement for the settlement of any difficulties* which may arise in relation to any of my estate, by composition or arbitration, as they shall think fit. *I authorize my executors*, at the request of any person or persons to whom lands are herein devised in common, *to set apart their shares in severalty*; and thenceforth the limitations of future estates applicable to the shares before separation shall apply to the separated share, and they may charge the lands with sums for equality of partition.

Lastly, I revoke all other wills by me made prior to this date, and publish and declare this to be my last will and testament.

In witness whereof, I have signed and sealed these presents, this fourth day of July, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-six.

JOHN JACOB ASTOR. [L. s.]

Published in the presence of us, before whom the testator declared these presents to be his last will and testament, and requested us to sign our names as witnesses, which we do, in his presence and in presence of each other. Dated, 1836, July 4.

HANNAH NORMAN, Hell-Gate, New-York.

DANIEL LORD, Jr., 26 Beach street, New-York.

Dated, 30th Dec. 1836.

GEO. B. SMITH, 640 Broadway, New-York.

EDWIN SMITH, 71 Bleecker street, New-York.

WM. W. BRUCE, 481 Houston street.

Declared by Mr. J. J. Astor to be his last will and testament, by him subscribed as such, before us, signing as witnesses, at his request. 1845, Jan. 11.

JAS. G. COGSWELL, 585 Broadway, New-York.

CHARLES J. McILVAINE, 44 Great Jones street.

DANIEL D. LORD, Nineteenth street.

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### A CODICIL TO THE WILL OF JOHN JACOB ASTOR.

IN order to make some provisions of my will more plain, to make some alterations therein, and to consolidate sundry codicils thereto, (which codicils I hereby revoke,) I make this codicil to my will, bearing date the fourth day of July, eighteen hundred and thirty-six. And do declare the said will and this codicil to contain my last will.

1st. I give to my daughter, DOROTHEA LANGDON, the *lot on the west side of Lafayette Place*, in the city of New-York, [revoked in codicil 3 March, 1841,] twenty-seven feet wide, and one hundred and fifty-five feet deep, on the north side of the house and lot, in my will given to her life; to have and to hold the same to her for life, free of any interference of her husband, and to her sole and separate use, being the same lot given in my will to Charles Bristed, and which I confirm to him after Mrs. Langdon's life. And *in relation to the income given to my daughter*, Mrs. Langdon, and to the house and lots devised to her for life; in order the better to secure the same to her, I devise and direct, that in case her husband, present or future, or any one claiming under his act or default, shall attempt to interfere with, dispose of, or incumber the said legacy of income or devise of land, or any part thereof, then in that case I do from that time give the said income and lots of land on Lafayette Place, to my executors during her life in trust, to receive the income and the rents and profits of the land, and to apply the same to the use of my said daughter and her children, in such manner and proportions as she may request; and should there be any surplus of such income,

beyond what may be so applied, I give the same to her children from time to time, as it shall accrue.

2d. Inasmuch as my grandson, JOHN J. A. LANGDON, has departed this life, whereby two legacies of twenty-five thousand dollars each, have become lapsed, I therefore *add to the lands* devised in the *second item* of my will to him and his brothers and sisters in that item named, or to such of them as may survive me, *three lots* of land lying *on the westerly side of Lafayette Place*, [modified in codicil March 3, 1841,] next north of a lot which in my will is given for life to Charles Bristed, and is above given for her life to my daughter; each of which three lots is twenty-seven feet in width, and one hundred and fifty-five feet in depth, subject to, and with the benefit of a gangway running from Art street, across the rear of the said lots parallel with Lafayette Place, and twenty feet wide, and lying at a distance of one hundred and ten feet therefrom; which three lots of land I give to my said grandchildren, to have and to hold in equal shares as tenants in common for their lives respectively; and on the death of each, I give his or her share to his or her surviving issue in fee simple, and in case of death without surviving issue, I give such share to his or her other brothers and sisters, in the same item named, surviving, in fee simple.

3d. In relation to the above lots on Lafayette Place, and to the house and lot given in my will to Mrs. Langdon, and to Charles Bristed for life, and in relation to my other lots on the west side of Lafayette Place, I have laid out the same so as to include a gangway [revoked March 3, 1841] twenty feet wide, as above mentioned, and a piece of land twenty-five feet deep, in the rear thereof, for a stable lot, which gangway is to be used as a carriage-way by the residents on the said lots appertaining thereto, and is to be regulated and kept in order, with a gate, by such residents; each lot bearing an equal share of the expense. And I direct and devise that the said lots so given to Mrs. Langdon and Charles Bristed shall be extended so as to include each one hundred and fifty-five feet deep from Lafayette Place, with the privilege of such gangway, and subject thereto.

4th. *If the yearly income* (of stocks and funds) *given to my*

daughters, *Mrs. Langdon and Mrs. Rumpff*, respectively, shall in any year fall short of fifteen thousand dollars, then the deficiency shall be made up from my residuary personal estate, remaining in the hands of my executors; but if such deficiency shall arise from any temporary suspension of dividends or income, not occasioned by actual losses in the stocks or funds, then such advances shall be refunded from the excess of income over fifteen thousand dollars per annum, afterward accruing on such stocks or funds. Also in relation to the real estate of *Mrs. Rumpff*, in case she should come to this State to reside, as provided in item fourth of my will, I direct that the selection be made by my executors, as soon as may be after my decease, and that upon the event contemplated in the said item of my will, she shall take the estate therein given in such selected land.

5th. I give to CHARLES BRISTED *the lot* of land belonging to me lying *on the easterly side of Broadway*, between Prince and Spring streets, which is the lot I intend in the fifth item of my said will, wherein the same is erroneously described as lying on the westerly side of Broadway, and the lot now correctly described, is hereby given as the other lands in that item mentioned.

6th. As to *all my lands at Green Bay*, and its vicinity, in the territory of Wisconsin, (in which there are others connected with me,) and also as to all my lands not within the city and county of New-York, I authorize and fully empower my executors, or any two of them, or of the survivors of them, to seal and deliver all deeds of conveyance, in fee simple, or for partition, if needed, and to execute all other instruments of every kind needful, or in their judgment proper, in relation to the lands and every part thereof; and also to appoint such agents, from time to time, subject to their control and direction, as they may think fit, with the like powers; the proceeds of all such sales to be disposed of as part of my personal estate. And for the purpose of such sales, and for the protection of the lands in the mean time, I give the same to my executors, as joint tenants, and not as tenants in common, in fee simple, in trust, for such purposes.

7th. *The service of plate* excepted from the gift to *Mrs. Lang-*

don in my will, and therein mentioned as my new service of plate, and given for the use of William B. Astor for life, I describe more particularly as my service of French plate, at this time in his possession; and in case he shall not leave any appointment of it among his children, I give the same on his death to his eldest surviving son.

8th. I revoke and annul the eighth item of my said will, and the legacies therein given; and in lieu thereof I give as follows: To Mrs. SARAH OXENHAM, [modified in codicil of March 3, 1841,] daughter of my late brother, George Astor, I give *thirty thousand dollars*; to his son, JOSEPH ASTOR, [modified Oct. 24, 1839,] I give *fifty thousand dollars*; provided, however, that my executors, if they think fit, may retain the same in whole or in part, and apply the same, and the income thereof, to his use, and the maintenance of him and his family during his life; and any balance is to be given to his children or next of kin. *To each of the other daughters* [modified as to Mrs. Reynell, March 3, 1841] *of my said brother George*, surviving me, I give *twenty thousand dollars*. To WILLIAM HENRY ASTOR, son of my said brother George, I give the *annual sum of five hundred dollars* during his life, commencing the first payment six months after my decease; but if he shall attempt to assign or incumber the same, or it shall be claimed by any of his creditors under any legal proceedings or claim in the law, then I direct my executors to cease paying it to him, and require them to apply the same in their discretion to his use, maintenance, and support. To GEORGE ASTOR, Junior, I give *three thousand dollars*. To the WIDOW of my brother George I give *two hundred pounds sterling, yearly, for her life*, to be estimated at the current rate of exchange at the time of payment; the first payment of two hundred pounds to be made six months after my decease, and then yearly afterward. To my niece, SOPHIA ASTOR, of Nienwid, in Germany, I give *five thousand dollars*. To the children of HANNAH MOORE, daughter of my sister Catharine, who may survive me, I give *five thousand dollars*, to be equally divided between them. *To each of the children of GEORGE EHNINGER*, who may survive me, I give *one thousand dollars*. These legacies, of which the time of payment is

not above declared, are to be paid one half in six months, the balance in twelve months, from my decease; and my executors are to set apart funds from my personal estate, to discharge the annuities which are to be allowed up to the death of the annuitants.

9th. I *reduce the legacy to the GERMAN SOCIETY OF NEW-YORK, from thirty thousand dollars to twenty-five thousand dollars.* I have given to the ASSOCIATION FOR THE RELIEF OF RESPECTABLE AGED INDIGENT FEMALES, in the city of New-York, *five thousand dollars*, which is to be deducted from the legacy of twenty-five thousand dollars given in my will. To the INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND, in the city of New-York, I give *five thousand dollars.* To the SOCIETY FOR THE RELIEF OF HALF-ORPHANS AND DESTITUTE CHILDREN, in the city of New-York, I give *five thousand dollars.* To the NEW-YORK LYING-IN ASYLUM I give *two thousand dollars.* And in case of any of these three legacies failing to go into effect, I give the same to my executors, confiding in their honor alone, to make such dispositions of such sums as they shall deem most analogous to the objects of the said charities.

10th. I direct that *the portions of two hundred thousand dollars*, [see codicil, Dec. 22, 1843,] for each of *the daughters* of my son, WILLIAM B. ASTOR, shall be settled on them on their respectively attaining the age of twenty-one years, or their marriage. I give *to my son, WILLIAM B. ASTOR, one half of my residuary personal estate* absolutely; and also *the income of the other half*, until he shall think fit to expend such other half in the improvement of my residuary estate; and the balance thereof unexpended at his death, I give to his children, or to such of them, and in such manner and proportions as he may appoint by will.

11th. *In case any devises, bequests or legacies, trusts, powers, conditions, limitations, or other dispositions or clauses in my said will or in this codicil, or in any subsequent codicil, should, for any reason, be deemed invalid,* (having intended, however, in all things, to make them conformable to the law,) then it is my will, that in all events the said will and codicils shall stand valid as to all other parts and provisions; and that no failure of

any clause of my will, or the codicils thereto, shall defeat or render void any other parts thereof. And in case of the invalidity of any devise or legacy or other provision, I direct that the property or subject of such invalid disposition shall be given to the persons for whose benefit the same appears by the expressions of such defeated clause; as to which property or subject, I authorize my executors to appoint the same, to said person or persons, in such estates, manner, and proportions, as they shall judge conformable to my will, and as shall be lawful. And inasmuch as I make advancements or beneficial provisions for persons or purposes provided for in my will and codicils, it is my direction that such advancements, if charged in my books of account, shall be deemed so much on account of the provision in my will or codicils in favor of such person or persons.

Lastly. I appoint DANIEL LORD, JUNR., *to be an executor* of my will with the other executors thereof, in the same manner as if he had been named therein, and I give him all such estate, interest, authority, trust, and power, as is given to my other executors.

I publish this codicil and my said will as hereafter modified, as together containing my last will and testament; and I have signed and sealed the same in the presence of the subscribing witnesses hereto, this nineteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight.

JOHN JACOB ASTOR. [L s.]

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## SECOND CODICIL.

I, JOHN JACOB ASTOR, do make this further codicil to my will, bearing date July 4th, 1836.

1st. In order more comfortably to accommodate my unfortunate son JOHN, I have provided for the erection of a *dwelling-house on Fourteenth street* in the city of New-York, upon a certain piece of land which I attach thereto, bounded as follows: beginning on the northerly side of Fourteenth street, one hundred and twenty-five feet westerly from its intersection with



the westerly side of the Ninth avenue, running thence northerly parallel with the said avenue to the south side of Fifteenth street, thence westerly along the same one hundred feet, then southerly parallel to the line of the said Ninth avenue to Fourteenth street, then along the same easterly one hundred feet, to the place of beginning, which house I intend to furnish and provide for his convenience and that of the persons who from time to time shall take charge of his personal comfort. Now, therefore, *I do hereby give to my son JOHN* the said house and land with the furniture appropriate thereto, to have and to hold as long during his life as the same shall be used and kept for his personal accommodation and convenience, *with remainder to my daughter Dorothea*, to be held by her so long during her life as she shall use the same or the income thereof for her own use, free from all control or interference of her husband, and so long as she or her husband shall not attempt to dispose of her interest therein, and shall not permit the same to be incumbered or taken under any incumbrance, but not longer; and in case, during her life, she or her husband, or any claiming under or against them, shall attempt to incumber or divert the same from her actual use, then I give the same to my executors, in trust, during her life, to receive the rents and profits thereof, and to apply the same to her use, for which her receipts shall be a full voucher to my executors. *After her death I give and devise the said lands and furniture*, one equal *half* part thereof to the then surviving *children and issue of my daughter Dorothea*, the other *half* to the then surviving *children and issue of my son William*, taking in fee simple, and the issue representing its parent deceased.

*Provided*, however, *and I hereby authorize my executors*, in case they shall think that the comfort of my son will be more promoted by a change of his residence or any other appropriation of the property for his benefit, *to lease* the said premises for any lawful term of years, *or to sell* the land and execute the proper deeds, to convey the same in fee simple, *and to invest the proceeds* from a sale in other lands, for his personal use and accommodation during his life, or in bonds secured by mortgage of real estate, or public stocks, and so on, from time to time, in which case of

investment I give the income, to be applied by my executors, to the use of my son John, for his life; after his death I give the said income to my daughter Dorothea, and my executors as above expressed in relation to the land; and the capital on her death I give to the then surviving children of my said daughter, and my son William, as above expressed.

Item. The sum which my executors are authorized under the seventh item of my will to expend *for my son John* is hereby enlarged to *ten thousand dollars* per annum.

Item. *In consequence of the lamented death of my daughter Eliza*, the provisions of the fourth item of my will are defeated, and I revoke the said item; and *I give the use of my estate near Geneva* to Mr. VINCENT RUMPF for his life; and after him I give the said estate *to my granddaughter Cecilia Langdon* and her heirs forever. *I give to my daughter DOROTHEA* the income of one hundred thousand dollars deposited in the New-York Life Insurance and Trust Company, bearing interest at five per cent per annum, to take and receive the income thereof so long during her life as she or her husband, present or future, or any one claiming under them, shall not attempt to encumber, charge, or assign the same, in whole or in part; and in case of any such attempt, then I give the said income to my executors, in trust, during her life, to apply the same to her use, for which her own receipt shall be a voucher; and *upon her death, I give the said capital sum* to her daughters [see codicil of June 3, 1841] ELIZA, LOUISA, and CECILIA, and to her sons, WALTER, WOODBURY, and EUGENE, and to such of these six children as may survive me, to be equally divided among them, and to be accumulated as to the share of each one under the age of twenty-one years, for his or her benefit; and on their attaining that age respectively, to be paid to them by my executors; and if any of them shall die before that age, without surviving issue, his or her share shall be given to the survivors.

*Also, I give to the said six children of my daughter Dorothea, or to such of them as may survive me, one hundred thousand dollars of the public debt of the city of New-York*, bearing five per cent interest, usually called the Water Loan, to be paid to each

on attaining their age of twenty-one years, and the interest of the shares of those under that age to be accumulated for their benefit until that period; and in case any of them shall die before that age without surviving issue, then his or her share shall go to the survivors.

Item. *I give to my said grandchildren, ELIZA, LOUISA, [see codicil of 3d June, 1841,] CECILIA, WALTER, WOODBURY, AND EUGENE, and to such of them as may survive me, five lots of land fronting on the south side of Grand street, between Ludlow and Orchard streets; and also four lots of land fronting the southerly side of Grand street, between Norfolk and Essex streets, in the city of New-York, with their improvements respectively; to have and to hold the same to my said grandchildren, in equal shares, for their lives respectively. And on the death of each, I give the share enjoyed by such deceased to his or her issue, then surviving, in fee simple; to be divided according to the number of his or her children, and if such deceased shall leave no surviving issue, then I give the share of such deceased to the survivors of the said six, and to their heirs or assigns forever. As to which lots, I direct and order that the eleventh article of my will shall apply in all respects in the same manner as if this devise had been contained in the body of the said will.*

Item. I give to my *niece, Sophia Astor, of Nienwid, in Germany, in addition to her legacy, an annuity of three hundred dollars per annum, to commence from my decease, and paid up to the time of her death, payable yearly.*

And this codicil, with my said will, and the other codicils thereto, I publish, and declare to contain my last will and testament. In witness whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name, and set my seal in the presence of the witnesses subscribing with me, this ninth day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-nine.

JOHN JACOB ASTOR, [L. s.]

Published and declared by Mr. John Jacob Astor to be a codicil to his will, this ninth day of January, A.D., 1839, in presence of us signing at his request, and in presence of him and of each other.

## THIRD CODICIL—AUGUST 22, 1839.

I, JOHN JACOB ASTOR, do make this additional codicil to my last will, bearing date the fourth day of July, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and thirty-six.

Desiring to render a public benefit to the city of New-York, and to contribute to the advancement of useful knowledge and the general good of society, I do by this codicil appropriate *four hundred thousand dollars*, out of my residuary estate, to the establishment of a *Public Library* in the city of New-York.

For this purpose *I give to my executors four hundred thousand dollars*, to be taken from my personal estate, or raised by a sale of parts of my real estate, to be made by my executors, with the assent of my son, William B. Astor, upon condition and to the intent that the said amount be settled, applied, and disposed of as follows, namely :

1st. In erecting of a suitable building for a Public Library.

2d. In furnishing and supplying the same from time to time with books, maps, charts, models, drawings, paintings, engravings, casts, statues, furniture, and other things, appertaining to a library, for general use, upon the most ample scale and liberal character.

3d. In maintaining and upholding the buildings and other property, and in defraying the necessary expenses of taking care of the property, and of the accommodation of persons consulting the library.

The said sum shall be payable one third in the year after my decease, one third in the year following, and the residue in equal sums in the fourth and fifth year after my decease.

The said library is to be accessible, at all reasonable hours and times, for general use, free of expense to persons resorting thereto, subject only to such control and regulations as the trustees from time to time exercise and establish for general convenience.

The affairs of the institution shall be conducted and directed by eleven, to be from time to time selected from the different liberal

professions and employments in life and the classes of educated men. The Mayor of the city of New-York during his continuance in office, and the Chancellor of the State of New-York during his continuance in office, shall always be trustees. The vacancies in the number of trustees occurring by death, resignation, incapacity, or removal from the State, shall be filled by persons appointed by the remaining trustees. The acts of a majority of the trustees at a meeting, reasonably notified, shall be valid.

All the property and effects of the institution shall be vested in the said trustees. They shall have power to direct the expenditure of the funds, the investment, safe keeping, and management thereof, and of the property and effects of the institution, and also to make such ordinances and regulations from time to time as they may think proper for the good order and convenience of those who may resort to the library, or use the same; and also to appoint, direct, control, and remove the superintendent of the library, and all librarians and others employed about the institution; and, also, they shall have and use all powers and authority for promoting the expressed objects of this institution, not contrary to what is herein expressed. They shall not receive any compensation for their services, except that if any one of their number shall at any time be appointed superintendent, he may receive compensation as such.

The trustees shall be subject to the visitation of the proper courts of justice, for the purpose of preventing and redressing all mismanagement, waste, or breach of trust.

And I direct that the said public library be established on my land, at the corner of Lafayette Place and Art street, on the westerly side of Lafayette Place, in the city of New-York: beginning on the westerly line of Lafayette Place, eighty-one feet; northerly from the corner of the house in which my daughter Dorothea Langdon now resides, and running thence perpendicular to Lafayette Place, one hundred and thirty-seven feet six inches, to the alley-way in the rear; thence along the alley-way to Art street; thence along Art street to Lafayette Place, and thence to the place of beginning, with the right and benefit of way in the alley; which land I direct my executors to convey

to the said trustees, in fee simple, by such proper assurances as shall secure the land for the purpose of the library, and on condition to be applied and used therefor. And inasmuch as one of the lots so to be conveyed is devised to the children of Mrs. Langdon, I order that twelve thousand five hundred dollars be paid to the said devisees as a compensation for the lot. And I direct that all the said land, hereby appropriated, be valued at forty thousand dollars, and form part of the said four hundred thousand dollars.

I further direct that a sum not exceeding                      thousand dollars may be expended in the erection of the building for the library. One hundred and twenty thousand dollars may be expended in the purchase of books and other objects for the establishment of the library, and the residue shall be invested as a fund for the maintaining and gradually increasing of the library.

All investments of the funds of the institution shall be made in the public debt of the United States of America, or of the States of the Union, or of the city of New-York, as long as such subjects of investment may be had, giving a preference according to the order in which they are named. And in case the income of the fund shall at any time exceed the amounts which the trustees may find useful to expend, for the purposes above named and particularized, they may expend such surplus in procuring public lectures to be delivered in connection with the library upon useful subjects of literature, philosophy, science, history, and the fine arts, or in promoting in any other mode the objects of the institution as above expressed. I direct my executors to cause and procure the necessary legal assurances to be made for establishing and securing the application of the funds and property hereby appropriated for the purposes of these presents, and in the mode herein pointed out; and it is my request that the trustees would apply to the Legislature of this State for such acts as may fully secure, establish, and perpetuate this institution, and render its management easy, convenient, and safe, both to themselves and the public. And as this property is devoted wholly to public purposes, I trust that the Legislature will so far favor the institution as to exempt its pro-

perty from taxation. And as a mark of my respect to the following gentlemen, I name them to be the first trustees, that is to say: The MAYOR OF THE CITY OF NEW-YORK and the CHANCELLOR OF THE STATE, for the time being, in respect to their offices; WASHINGTON IRVING, WILLIAM B. ASTOR, DANIEL LORD, JUNIOR, JAMES G. KING, JOSEPH G. COGSWELL, FITZ-GREENE HALLECK, HENRY BREVOORT, JUNIOR, SAMUEL B. RUGGLES, and SAMUEL WARD, JUNIOR.

In witness whereof, I have set my hand and seal to this codicil, and publish the same as a codicil to my will, this twenty-second day of August, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-nine.

JOHN JACOB ASTOR [L. s.]

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FOURTH CODICIL—OCTOBER 24, 1839.

A further codicil to the will of John Jacob Astor, bearing date the fourth day of July, A.D. 1836.

1st. I *revoke* and annul *the legacy* of fifty thousand dollars given to JOSEPH ASTOR and his children or next of kin, contained in the eighth item of the codicil to my will, which codicil bears date the nineteenth of January, A.D. 1838; and I *give to* the said JOSEPH ASTOR, for his life, an annuity of *three hundred pounds sterling* per annum, to commence from my decease, and to be paid half yearly, and up to his decease, provided that my executors, if they think fit, may retain the same or any payment thereof and apply the same to the use of him or his family, as they may judge most beneficial to him.

2d. I *revoke* and annul the legacy of *twenty-five thousand dollars* given in my will to the *Trustees of* COLUMBIA COLLEGE, in the city of New-York.

3d. I direct that the commissions chargeable by my executors be divided among such of them as shall act in the executorship exclusively of William B. Astor, who receives the benefit of the general residuary gifts of my will.

In witness whereof, I have subscribed this codicil, and do pub-

lish the same as an additional codicil to my last will and testament, this twenty-fourth day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-nine.

J. J. ASTOR.

Signed and declared by John Jacob Astor as a codicil to his will, this 24th day of October, A.D. 1839, in presence of us, signing at his request, and in his presence, as witnesses.

LUCY SEWELL, Hurlgate, New-York.

GEO. N. SEWELL.

Declared by Mr. J. J. Astor to be a codicil to his last will and testament, by him subscribed as such before us, signing as witnesses at his request, 1845, Jan. 11.

JOS. G. COGSWELL, 505 Broadway, N. Y.

CHARLES J. McILVAINE, 44 Great Jones street.

DANIEL D. LORD, Nineteenth street.

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#### A FURTHER CODICIL

*To the will of JOHN JACOB ASTOR, bearing date the fourth day of July, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and thirty-six.*

Having before me the said will, and the four several codicils thereto, bearing date January 19, 1838, January 9, August 22, and October 24, 1839, I do make this additional codicil: that is to say—

1st. I *revoke* so much of the said codicil, dated in January, eighteen hundred and thirty-eight, as gives to my daughter, Mrs. Langdon, for her life, the lot on Lafayette Place, given in my will to Charles Bristed for life; so that the estate of Charles Bristed in the said lot, shall not be subject to any estate of my daughter therein.

And in relation to the plan of the lots on the west side of Lafayette Place, by which a gangway is established, as is mention-



ed in the second item of the said codicil, I hereby *revoke* so much of the said codicil as relates to the establishment or enjoyment of the *gangway* therein mentioned, and I abolish and annul the said gangway, and impose it as a condition on my daughter and grand-children, holding lands adjacent to it, that such gangway be wholly abandoned.

2d. I *revoke* the legacy of two thousand dollars given in my will to the *German Reformed Congregation*, in the city of New-York, intending, during my life, to apply that amount to the religious and moral welfare of Germans in some other mode.

3d. In relation to the *Library* provided for in my codicil, bearing date the twenty-second day of August, 1839, I have concluded to change the site thereof, and I therefore direct that the land in that codicil, appropriated for this purpose, be discharged therefrom, and so much of the said codicil as appropriates the site of the said library, and the compensation to be paid for it, is hereby revoked. And instead thereof, I *allow* the building for the said *Library* to be erected on the southerly side of *Astor Place*, (formerly *Art street*,) between *Lafayette Place* and *Broadway*, on the land described as follows: Beginning on the southerly side of *Astor Place*, at a point distant one hundred and fifty-one feet westerly from the westerly corner of *Astor Place* and *Lafayette Place*; thence running westerly along *Astor Place*, sixty-five feet, thence in a line perpendicular to *Astor Place*, one hundred and twenty-five feet nine inches, to the northerly side of a lot given to my daughter, *Mrs. Langdon*; thence along the same northerly and easterly, in a line perpendicular to the westerly side of *Lafayette Place*, fifty-seven feet; thence along the rear of the lot given to *Charles Bristed*, and in that direction, parallel with the westerly side of *Lafayette Place*, thirty-one feet one inch; thence in a line perpendicular to the southerly side of *Astor Place*, one hundred and twenty-five feet, to the place of beginning; which site I direct my executors to convey to the trustees of the said library, instead of the site in the said codicil expressed, and I estimate the site now above described, at thirty-five thousand dollars. *But if the trustees* of the said library shall, before commencing the building, *think a site on the easterly*

*side of Lafayette Place preferable*, I authorize my executors, instead of the site aforesaid, to convey to the trustees of the library, as a site therefor, so much land on the easterly side of Lafayette Place as shall be sixty-five feet in front, and one hundred and twenty feet deep, to be located out of my lands there, by the said trustees; and direct that the site so selected be fairly and justly valued by my executors, and the amount of such valuation to be apportioned among the devises of the lands out of which the selection shall be made, and to be held and disposed of as the land was, both as to the capital and income.

I direct that *the sum* to be appropriated for erecting *the library building* shall not exceed *seventy-five thousand dollars*.

And I also allow that the funds of the said library may in the discretion of the trustees be invested in bonds secured by mortgage of improved real estate, as well as in the stocks enumerated in the codicil establishing such library.

4th. I give *unto my grand-children* herein next named, the following *lots of land on Lafayette Place*, of which I have caused a map to be made, and the lots to be numbered from one to seven, each lot being twenty-seven feet in width on Lafayette Place, and to be bounded by lines perpendicularly thereto, and extending to the above described site for the library, and if that shall be located on the easterly side of Lafayette Place, then extending to the rear of my lands there, namely: To my grandson, WILLIAM ASTOR, I give the *southernmost lot*, next to that of Charles Bristed, which lot now given is number two; to JOHN JACOB ASTOR, I give the *next lot north*, being number three; to LOUISA D. LANGDON, [see codicil, June, 1841,] the *lot next north*, being number four; to ELIZA LANGDON, the *lot next north*, being number five; and to my daughter, Mrs. LANGDON, I give the *two lots six and seven*, the latter being a corner lot forty feet front and narrowing to the rear; to have and to hold to them respectively, and to their heirs and assigns forever; *Provided*, however, and on condition that no buildings be erected on the said lots (including also the lot of Charles Bristed) but dwelling-houses at least three stories high and covering the full front of the lots, and the necessary offices on the rears of the lots. *Provided*,

also, that it shall be lawful for my executors at any time during the life of the devisee, to make and execute a settlement of the lots given to the said ladies, securing the enjoyment to them, as a separate estate of the said lots during life, and a power of giving the same as they please among their issue, brothers and sisters, and their issue, such power to be discretionary with my executors; *with a power to the said ladies respectively* of leasing for terms of years allowed by law; and I authorize my executors, at the request of any of the said grand-children, (including Charles Bristed and his lot,) to lay out any part of the personal estate given to them or to their use, respectively, in the erection of a suitable dwelling-house and its appurtenances on the lot so given fronting on Lafayette Place.

5th. I give to my friend FITZ-GREENE HALLECK, *an annuity of two hundred dollars*, commencing at my decease, and payable half-yearly for his life, to be secured by setting apart so much of my personal estate as may be necessary; which I intend as a mark of regard for Mr. Halleck.

6th. I direct my executors to apply *fifty thousand dollars* to the use of the *poor of Waldorp*, near Heidelberg, in the Grand Duchy of Baden, by the establishment of some provision for the sick or disabled, or the education and improvement of the young who may be in a condition to need the aid of such fund; requesting my executors to consult on this subject my esteemed friend, Mr. Vincent Rumpff, and to procure the appointment or establishment of such trust or legal body, from the authorities and government of the place, as may be requisite or deemed useful by my executors.

7th. I *reduce* the legacy bequeathed to the *German Society* of New-York, from *twenty-five thousand dollars* to *twenty thousand dollars*, of which I have already advanced them fifteen thousand six hundred and ninety-seven dollars fifty cents, to be deducted therefor, from the said last mentioned sum. Also, I *reduce* the legacy which my niece, Mrs. MARY REYNELL, wife of George Reynell, would have taken under the first codicil to my will, to *fifteen thousand dollars*. I *reduce* the legacy of my niece, Mrs.

SARAH OXENHAM, given in the said codicil, from thirty thousand to *twenty thousand dollars*.

8th. I appoint my grandson, JOHN JACOB ASTOR, to be an executor of my will with the other executors thereof, in the same manner as if he had been named therein; and I give him all such estate, interest, authority, trust, and power, as is given to my other executors. And I apply the provisions of the eleventh item of my will to all my codicils, so far as the same can be applied to the subjects thereof.

Last. I recognize and publish anew the said will and several codicils, as together with this codicil, forming my last will and testament.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this third day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-one, in the presence of the witnesses subscribing with me.

J. J. ASTOR. [L. s.]

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### SIXTH CODICIL.

A further codicil to the will of JOHN JACOB ASTOR, dated July 4, 1836.

1st. As to all such shares, estate, and interest in land (except the lot on the west side of Lafayette place, mentioned beneath) as are in my will or in any codicil thereto, given on my decease to Louisa, daughter of Mrs. Dorothea Langdon, or to the issue of the said Louisa, I give one half thereof to the other children of my daughter Dorothea, to be taken and held as an increase of the shares or sums given to them and their issue in the same property; the other half I give to my executors in trust, to receive the rents, issues, and profits thereof, for the life of the said Louisa, and to apply the same to her use, clear of any control, debts, or right of her husband thereto; and after her death I give the same to her surviving children; or if she leave none, to her surviving brothers and sisters or their issue.

2d. As to all estates, rights, and interests in lands, stocks, per-

sonal effects, or money, to which the said Louisa or her issue would have been entitled, under my will or any codicil thereto, after the death of her mother, brothers, or sisters, I give the same to her brothers and sisters and their issue, as an increase of their respective shares or interests, in the same property.

3d. As to the two legacies of twenty-five thousand dollars each, and the share of the Water stock, to which the said Louisa would have been entitled under my will and a codicil thereto, I revoke the two legacies entirely; I give the income of her share of stock to my daughter Dorothea for life; and on her death I give the capital to her other children and their issue in case of their decease.

4th. As to the lot on the westerly side of Lafayette place, given to the said Louisa in a codicil to my will, I give the same to Cecilia Langdon, to be had and holden as if her name had been written in the devise thereof, instead of Louisa, with every advantage, power and benefit, and subject to every condition, power, and limitation therein contained.

5th. I expressly authorize my daughter Dorothea Langdon, by deed or will, to appoint or give to the said Louisa and her issue, or to her or their use, any part, not exceeding in value one half of the real or personal estate by this codicil taken from Louisa and given to others.

6th. I direct and devise that CHARLES BRISTED be one of the trustees of the devise and legacy for a public library, provided for in former codicils to my will, and I give him the said estate, interest, and power, as if he were originally named in such devise and legacy.

7th. Considering the advantages which Mr. Vincent Rumpff has received from the marriage settlement of my daughter, I revoke the devise to him, for his life, of my estate near Geneva. But if an accounting shall take place between us touching the property in the said settlement after this date, and within two years, and the balance of that account shall be paid, then I renew such devise to him for life of the estate near Geneva.

In relation to the same estate which I give to the said Cecilia, subject to said life estate to Mr. Rumpff, I furthermore devise

that if she should depart this life before attaining the age of twenty-one years, then I give the said estate to her issue surviving her; and if she shall have none surviving, then I give the same to her surviving brothers and sisters and their heirs and assigns forever.

Last. I publish this as a codicil to my will, and as altering and revoking the same and the codicils thereto, so far as a different disposition is made by the present codicil.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this third day of June, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-one.

J. J. ASTOR. [L.S.]

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#### SEVENTH CODICIL.

I, JOHN JACOB ASTOR, of the city of New-York, do make this additional codicil to my will, bearing date July 4th, 1836.

In order to make a provision for Mr. WALTER LANGDON, after the decease of my daughter, his wife, in case he should survive her, I do hereby direct that an annual sum of *five thousand dollars* be appropriated to his use, from the rents and income of my lands in the city of New-York, bounded by Hudson River, Charlton, Morton, and Greenwich streets; such annual provision to commence from the death of my daughter, to be paid quarterly, and to continue during the life of the said Walter Langdon. And I authorize, empower, and direct my executors to select from the said lands such as will, in their judgment, suffice to secure the said annual sum, and to settle the same, by such conveyance, in trust or otherwise, as will secure the same to the use of the said Walter Langdon. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand, this fifteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-two.

J. J. ASTOR. [L.S.]

## EIGHTH CODICIL.

A further codicil to the will of JOHN JACOB ASTOR, bearing date July 4, 1836.

Whereas, in my will I charged upon the residuary estate devised to my son, William B. Astor, in the tenth item of my will, portions of two hundred thousand dollars, to be settled upon each of his daughters and her issue, in such manner as he might think fit, subject to the conditions therein expressed, which portions were to be set apart out of the real estate devised to him, and which, when set apart, were not to form any incumbrance upon the residue, and, in case of his leaving no appointment, the said portions were to be considered as part of his daughters' shares on the division of the estate thereby devised among his children; and whereas, in the tenth item of a codicil to my said will (such codicil bearing date January 19, 1838) I directed that such portions should be settled on them on their respectively attaining the age of twenty-one years, or their marriage: Now, thinking it best for my said grand-daughters, and for other reasons expedient, I do hereby declare, direct, and will, that the said will and codicil, so far as relates to the said portions of two hundred thousand dollars, be modified and so far revoked, so that it shall be wholly discretionary with my said son William B. Astor, to give or appoint such portions or not; and if he shall choose to appoint the same, it shall be discretionary with him to appoint the same in such manner and on such trusts and conditions as he may think fit; and unless he shall choose to appoint such portions to his daughters and their issue, they shall not be charges on my estate, or on the estate devised to my son, in any manner whatever. And I revoke so much of my said will, and of my codicil thereto, as is contrary or repugnant to this present codicil.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, and have published this as a codicil to my will, this twenty-second day of December, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-three, in the presence of Joseph G. Cogswell, Lucy Sewell, and William W. Bruce, witnesses subscribing with me.

J. J. ASTOR. [L.S.]









Nancy  
Hanks  
Lincoln  
Public  
Library