

# **John Lothrop Motley. a memoir — Volume 3 eBook**

## **John Lothrop Motley. a memoir — Volume 3 by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.**

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# Page 1

## Title: Memoir of John Lothrop Motley, v3

Author: Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

Release Date: December, 2003 [Etext #4727] [Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule] [This file was first posted on March 7, 2002]

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## JOHN LOTHROP MOTLEY.

### A MEMOIR

By Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

Volume III.

## XXII.

1874. AEt. 60.



*“Life of John of Barneveld.”—Criticisms.—Groen van Prinsterer.*

The full title of Mr. Motley’s next and last work is “The Life and Death of John of Barneveld, Advocate of Holland; with a View of the Primary Causes and Movements of the Thirty Years’ War.”

In point of fact this work is a history rather than a biography. It is an interlude, a pause between the acts which were to fill out the complete plan of the “Eighty Years’ Tragedy,” and of which the last act, the Thirty Years’ War, remains unwritten. The “Life of Barneveld” was received as a fitting and worthy continuation of the series of intellectual labor in which he was engaged. I will quote but two general expressions of approval from the two best known British critical reviews. In connection with his previous works, it forms, says “The London Quarterly,” “a fine and continuous story, of which the writer and the nation celebrated by him have equal reason to be proud; a narrative which will remain a prominent ornament of American genius, while it has permanently enriched English literature on this as well as on the other side of the Atlantic.”

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“The Edinburgh Review” speaks no less warmly: “We can hardly give too much appreciation to that subtle alchemy of the brain which has enabled him to produce out of dull, crabbed, and often illegible state papers, the vivid, graphic, and sparkling narrative which he has given to the world.”

In a literary point of view, M. Groen van Prinsterer, whose elaborate work has been already referred to, speaks of it as perhaps the most classical of Motley’s productions, but it is upon this work that the force of his own and other Dutch criticisms has been chiefly expended.

The key to this biographical history or historical biography may be found in a few sentences from its opening chapter.

“There have been few men at any period whose lives have been more closely identical than his [Barneveld’s] with a national history. There have been few great men in any history whose names have become less familiar to the world, and lived less in the mouths of posterity. Yet there can be no doubt that if William the Silent was the founder of the independence of the United Provinces, Barneveld was the founder of the Commonwealth itself. . . .“Had that country of which he was so long the first citizen maintained until our own day the same proportional position among the empires of Christendom as it held in the seventeenth century, the name of John of Barneveld would have perhaps been as familiar to all men as it is at this moment to nearly every inhabitant of the Netherlands. Even now political passion is almost as ready to flame forth, either in ardent affection or enthusiastic hatred, as if two centuries and a half had not elapsed since his death. His name is so typical of a party, a polity, and a faith, so indelibly associated with a great historical cataclysm, as to render it difficult even for the grave, the conscientious, the learned, the patriotic, of his own compatriots to speak of him with absolute impartiality.“A foreigner who loves and admires all that is great and noble in the history of that famous republic, and can have no hereditary bias as to its ecclesiastical or political theories, may at least attempt the task with comparative coldness, although conscious of inability to do thorough justice to a most complex subject.”

With all Mr. Motley’s efforts to be impartial, to which even his sternest critics bear witness, he could not help becoming a partisan of the cause which for him was that of religious liberty and progress, as against the accepted formula of an old ecclesiastical organization. For the quarrel which came near being a civil war, which convulsed the state, and cost Barneveld his head, had its origin in a difference on certain points, and more especially on a single point, of religious doctrine.

As a great river may be traced back until its fountainhead is found in a thread of water streaming from a cleft in the rocks, so a great national movement may sometimes be followed until its starting-point is found in the cell of a monk or the studies of a pair of wrangling professors.



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The religious quarrel of the Dutchmen in the seventeenth century reminds us in some points of the strife between two parties in our own New England, sometimes arraying the “church” on one side against the “parish,” or the general body of worshippers, on the other. The portraits of Gomarus, the great orthodox champion, and Arminius, the head and front of the “liberal theology” of his day, as given in the little old quarto of Meursius, recall two ministerial types of countenance familiar to those who remember the earlier years of our century.

Under the name of “Remonstrants” and “Contra-Remonstrants,”—Arminians and old-fashioned Calvinists, as we should say,—the adherents of the two Leyden professors disputed the right to the possession of the churches, and the claim to be considered as representing the national religion. Of the seven United Provinces, two, Holland and Utrecht, were prevailingly Arminian, and the other five Calvinistic. Barneveld, who, under the title of Advocate, represented the province of Holland, the most important of them all, claimed for each province a right to determine its own state religion. Maurice the Stadholder, son of William the Silent, the military chief of the republic, claimed the right for the States-General. ‘Cujus regio ejus religio’ was then the accepted public doctrine of Protestant nations. Thus the provincial and the general governments were brought into conflict by their creeds, and the question whether the republic was a confederation or a nation, the same question which has been practically raised, and for the time at least settled, in our own republic, was in some way to be decided. After various disturbances and acts of violence by both parties, Maurice, representing the States-General, pronounced for the Calvinists or Contra-Remonstrants, and took possession of one of the great churches, as an assertion of his authority. Barneveld, representing the Arminian or Remonstrant provinces, levied a body of mercenary soldiers in several of the cities. These were disbanded by Maurice, and afterwards by an act of the States-General. Barneveld was apprehended, imprisoned, and executed, after an examination which was in no proper sense a trial. Grotius, who was on the Arminian side and involved in the inculpated proceedings, was also arrested and imprisoned. His escape, by a stratagem successfully repeated by a slave in our own times, may challenge comparison for its romantic interest with any chapter of fiction. How his wife packed him into the chest supposed to contain the folios of the great oriental scholar Erpenius, how the soldiers wondered at its weight and questioned whether it did not hold an Arminian, how the servant-maid, Elsje van Houwening, quick-witted as Morgiana of the “Forty Thieves,” parried their questions and convoyed her master safely to the friendly place of refuge,—all this must be read in the vivid narrative of the author.

The questions involved were political, local, personal, and above all religious. Here is the picture which Motley draws of the religious quarrel as it divided the people:—



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“In burghers’ mansions, peasants’ cottages, mechanics’ back-parlors; on board herring-smacks, canal-boats, and East Indiamen; in shops, counting-rooms, farm-yards, guard-rooms, alehouses; on the exchange, in the tennis court, on the mall; at banquets, at burials, christenings, or bridals; wherever and whenever human creatures met each other, there was ever to be found the fierce wrangle of Remonstrant and Contra-Remonstrant, the hissing of red-hot theological rhetoric, the pelting of hostile texts. The blacksmith’s iron cooled on the anvil, the tinker dropped a kettle half mended, the broker left a bargain unclined, the Scheveningen fisherman in his wooden shoes forgot the cracks in his pinkie, while each paused to hold high converse with friend or foe on fate, free-will, or absolute foreknowledge; losing himself in wandering mazes whence there was no issue. Province against province, city against city, family against family; it was one vast scene of bickering, denunciation, heart-burnings, mutual excommunication and hatred.”

The religious grounds of the quarrel which set these seventeenth-century Dutchmen to cutting each other’s throats were to be looked for in the “Five Points” of the Arminians as arrayed against the “Seven Points” of the Gomarites, or Contra-Remonstrants. The most important of the differences which were to be settled by fratricide seem to have been these:—

According to the Five Points, “God has from eternity resolved to choose to eternal life those who through his grace believe in Jesus Christ,” *etc.* According to the Seven Points, “God in his election has not looked at the belief and the repentance of the elect,” *etc.* According to the Five Points, all good deeds must be ascribed to God’s grace in Christ, but it does not work irresistibly. The language of the Seven Points implies that the elect cannot resist God’s eternal and unchangeable design to give them faith and steadfastness, and that they can never wholly and for always lose the true faith. The language of the Five Points is unsettled as to the last proposition, but it was afterwards maintained by the Remonstrant party that a true believer could, through his own fault, fall away from God and lose faith.

It must be remembered that these religious questions had an immediate connection with politics. Independently of the conflict of jurisdiction, in which they involved the parties to the two different creeds, it was believed or pretended that the new doctrines of the Remonstrants led towards Romanism, and were allied with designs which threatened the independence of the country. “There are two factions in the land,” said Maurice, “that of Orange and that of Spain, and the two chiefs of the Spanish faction are those political and priestly Arminians, Uytenbogaert and Oldenbarneveld.”

The heads of the two religious and political parties were in such hereditary, long-continued, and intimate relations up to the time when one signed the other’s death-warrant, that it was impossible to write the life of one without also writing that of the other. For his biographer John of Barneveld is the true patriot, the martyr, whose cause

was that of religious and political freedom. For him Maurice is the ambitious soldier who hated his political rival, and never rested until this rival was brought to the scaffold.

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The questions which agitated men's minds two centuries and a half ago are not dead yet in the country where they produced such estrangement, violence, and wrong. No stranger could take them up without encountering hostile criticism from one party or the other. It may be and has been conceded that Mr. Motley writes as a partisan,—a partisan of freedom in politics and religion, as he understands freedom. This secures him the antagonism of one class of critics. But these critics are themselves partisans, and themselves open to the cross-fire of their antagonists. M. Groen van Prinsterer, "the learned and distinguished" editor of the "Archives et Correspondance" of the Orange and Nassau family, published a considerable volume, before referred to, in which many of Motley's views are strongly controverted. But he himself is far from being in accord with "that eminent scholar," M. Bakhuyzen van den Brink, whose name, he says, is celebrated enough to need no comment, or with M. Fruin, of whose impartiality and erudition he himself speaks in the strongest terms. The ground upon which he is attacked is thus stated in his own words:—

"People have often pretended to find in my writings the deplorable influence of an extreme Calvinism. The Puritans of the seventeenth century are my fellow-religionists. I am a sectarian and not an historian."

It is plain enough to any impartial reader that there are at least plausible grounds for this accusation against Mr. Motley's critic. And on a careful examination of the formidable volume, it becomes obvious that Mr. Motley has presented a view of the events and the personages of the stormy epoch with which he is dealing, which leaves a battle-ground yet to be fought over by those who come after him. The dispute is not and cannot be settled.

The end of all religious discussion has come when one of the parties claims that it is thinking or acting under immediate Divine guidance. "It is God's affair, and his honor is touched," says William Lewis to Prince Maurice. Mr. Motley's critic is not less confident in claiming the Almighty as on the side of his own views. Let him state his own ground of departure:—

"To show the difference, let me rather say the contrast, between the point of view of Mr. Motley and my own, between the Unitarian and the Evangelical belief. I am issue of *Calvin*, child of the Awakening (reveil). Faithful to the device of the Reformers: Justification by faith alone, and the Word of God endures eternally. I consider history from the point of view of Merle d'Aubigne, Chalmers, Guizot. I desire to be disciple and witness of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

He is therefore of necessity antagonistic to a writer whom he describes in such words as these:—

"Mr. Motley is liberal and rationalist.

“He becomes, in attacking the principle of the Reformation, the passionate opponent of the Puritans and of Maurice, the ardent apologist of Barnevelt and the Arminians.

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“It is understood, and he makes no mystery of it, that he inclines towards the vague and undecided doctrine of the Unitarians.”

What M. Groen’s idea of Unitarians is may be gathered from the statement about them which he gets from a letter of De Tocqueville.

“They are pure deists; they talk about the Bible, because they do not wish to shock too severely public opinion, which is prevailingly Christian. They have a service on Sundays; I have been there. At it they read verses from Dryden or other English poets on the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. They deliver a discourse on some point of morality, and all is said.”

In point of fact the wave of protest which stormed the dikes of Dutch orthodoxy in the seventeenth century stole gently through the bars of New England Puritanism in the eighteenth.

“Though the large number,” says Mr. Bancroft, “still acknowledged the fixedness of the divine decrees, and the resistless certainty from all eternity of election and of reprobation, there were not wanting, even among the clergy, some who had modified the sternness of the ancient doctrine by making the self-direction of the active powers of man with freedom of inquiry and private judgment the central idea of a protest against Calvinism.”

Protestantism, cut loose from an infallible church, and drifting with currents it cannot resist, wakes up once or oftener in every century, to find itself in a new locality. Then it rubs its eyes and wonders whether it has found its harbor or only lost its anchor. There is no end to its disputes, for it has nothing but a fallible vote as authority for its oracles, and these appeal only to fallible interpreters.

It is as hard to contend in argument against “the oligarchy of heaven,” as Motley calls the Calvinistic party, as it was formerly to strive with them in arms.

To this “aristocracy of God’s elect” belonged the party which framed the declaration of the Synod of Dort; the party which under the forms of justice shed the blood of the great statesman who had served his country so long and so well. To this chosen body belonged the late venerable and truly excellent as well as learned M. Groen van Prinsterer, and he exercised the usual right of examining in the light of his privileged position the views of a “liberal” and “rationalist” writer who goes to meeting on Sunday to hear verses from Dryden. This does not diminish his claim for a fair reading of the “intimate correspondence,” which he considers Mr. Motley has not duly taken into account, and of the other letters to be found printed in his somewhat disjointed and fragmentary volume.

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This “intimate correspondence” shows Maurice the Stadholder indifferent and lax in internal administration and as being constantly advised and urged by his relative Count William of Nassau. This need of constant urging extends to religious as well as other matters, and is inconsistent with M. Groen van Prinsterer’s assertion that the question was for Maurice above all religious, and for Barneveld above all political. Whether its negative evidence can be considered as neutralizing that which is adduced by Mr. Motley to show the Stadholder’s hatred of the Advocate may be left to the reader who has just risen from the account of the mock trial and the swift execution of the great and venerable statesman. The formal entry on the record upon the day of his “judicial murder” is singularly solemn and impressive:—

“Monday, 13th May, 1619. To-day was executed with the sword here in the Hague, on a scaffold thereto erected in the Binnenhof before the steps of the great hall, Mr. John of Barneveld, in his life Knight, Lord of Berkel, Rodenrys, *etc.*, Advocate of Holland and West Friesland, for reasons expressed in the sentence and otherwise, with confiscation of his property, after he had served the state thirty- three years two months and five days, since 8th March, 1586; a man of great activity, business, memory, and wisdom,—yea, extraordinary in every respect. He that stands let him see that he does not fall.”

Maurice gave an account of the execution of Barneveld to Count William Lewis on the same day in a note “painfully brief and dry.”

Most authors write their own biography consciously or unconsciously. We have seen Mr. Motley portraying much of himself, his course of life and his future, as he would have had it, in his first story. In this, his last work, it is impossible not to read much of his own external and internal personal history told under other names and with different accessories. The parallelism often accidentally or intentionally passes into divergence. He would not have had it too close if he could, but there are various passages in which it is plain enough that he is telling his own story.

Mr. Motley was a diplomatist, and he writes of other diplomatists, and one in particular, with most significant detail. It need not be supposed that he intends the “arch intriguer” Aerssens to stand for himself, or that he would have endured being thought to identify himself with the man of whose “almost devilish acts” he speaks so freely. But the sagacious reader—and he need not be very sharp-sighted—will very certainly see something more than a mere historical significance in some of the passages which I shall cite for him to reflect upon. Mr. Motley’s standard of an ambassador’s accomplishments may be judged from the following passage:—



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“That those ministers [those of the Republic] were second to the representatives of no other European state in capacity and accomplishment was a fact well known to all who had dealings with them, for the states required in their diplomatic representatives knowledge of history and international law, modern languages, and the classics, as well as familiarity with political customs and social courtesies; the breeding of gentlemen, in short, and the accomplishments of scholars.”

The story of the troubles of Aerssens, the ambassador of the United Provinces at Paris, must be given at some length, and will repay careful reading.

“Francis Aerssens . . . continued to be the Dutch ambassador after the murder of Henry IV. . . . He was beyond doubt one of the ablest diplomatists in Europe. Versed in many languages, a classical student, familiar with history and international law, a man of the world and familiar with its usages, accustomed to associate with dignity and tact on friendliest terms with sovereigns, eminent statesmen, and men of letters; endowed with a facile tongue, a fluent pen, and an eye and ear of singular acuteness and delicacy; distinguished for unflagging industry and singular aptitude for secret and intricate affairs;—he had by the exercise of these various qualities during a period of nearly twenty years at the court of Henry the Great been able to render inestimable services to the Republic which he represented. “He had enjoyed the intimacy and even the confidence of Henry IV., so far as any man could be said to possess that monarch’s confidence, and his friendly relations and familiar access to the king gave him political advantages superior to those of any of his colleagues at the same court. “Acting entirely and faithfully according to the instructions of the Advocate of Holland, he always gratefully and copiously acknowledged the privilege of being guided and sustained in the difficult paths he had to traverse by so powerful and active an intellect. I have seldom alluded in terms to the instructions and dispatches of the chief, but every position, negotiation, and opinion of the envoy— and the reader has seen many of them is pervaded by their spirit. “It had become a question whether he was to remain at his post or return. It was doubtful whether he wished to be relieved of his embassy or not. The States of Holland voted ‘to leave it to his candid opinion if in his free conscience he thinks he can serve the public any longer. If yes, he may keep his office one year more. If no, he may take leave and come home.’ “Surely the States, under the guidance of the Advocate, had thus acted with consummate courtesy towards a diplomatist whose position, from no apparent fault of his own, but by the force of circumstances,—and rather to his credit than otherwise,— was gravely compromised.”

The Queen, Mary de’ Medici, had a talk with him, got angry, “became very red in the face,” and wanted to be rid of him.



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“Nor was the envoy at first desirous of remaining. . . . Nevertheless, he yielded reluctantly to Barneveld’s request that he should, for the time at least, remain at his post. Later on, as the intrigues against him began to unfold themselves, and his faithful services were made use of at home to blacken his character and procure his removal, he refused to resign, as to do so would be to play into the hands of his enemies, and, by inference at least, to accuse himself of infidelity to his trust. . . .“It is no wonder that the ambassador was galled to the quick by the outrage which those concerned in the government were seeking to put upon him. How could an honest man fail to be overwhelmed with rage and anguish at being dishonored before the world by his masters for scrupulously doing his duty, and for maintaining the rights and dignity of his own country? He knew that the charges were but pretexts, that the motives of his enemies were as base as the intrigues themselves, but he also knew that the world usually sides with the government against the individual, and that a man’s reputation is rarely strong enough to maintain itself unsullied in a foreign land when his own government stretches forth its hand, not to shield, but to stab him. . . .

“‘I know,’ he said, that this plot has been woven partly here in Holland and partly here by good correspondence in order to drive me from my post.

“‘But as I have discovered this accurately, I have resolved to offer to my masters the continuance of my very humble service for such time and under such conditions as they may think good to prescribe. I prefer forcing my natural and private inclinations to giving an opportunity for the ministers of this kingdom to discredit us, and to my enemies to succeed in injuring me, and by fraud and malice to force me from my post. . . . I am truly sorry, being ready to retire, wishing to have an honorable testimony in recompense of my labors, that one is in such hurry to take advantage of my fall. . . . What envoy will ever dare to speak with vigor if he is not sustained by the government at home? . . . My enemies have misrepresented my actions, and my language as passionate, exaggerated, mischievous, but I have no passion except for the service of my superiors.’“Barneveld, from well-considered motives of public policy, was favoring his honorable recall. But he allowed a decorous interval of more than three years to elapse in which to terminate his affairs, and to take a deliberate departure from that French embassy to which the Advocate had originally promoted him, and in which there had been so many years of mutual benefit and confidence between the two statesmen. He used no underhand means. He did not abuse the power of the States-General which he wielded to cast him suddenly and brutally from the distinguished post which he occupied,



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and so to attempt to dishonor him before the world. Nothing could be more respectful and conciliatory than the attitude of the government from first to last towards this distinguished functionary. The Republic respected itself too much to deal with honorable agents whose services it felt obliged to dispense with as with vulgar malefactors who had been detected in crime. . . .“This work aims at being a political study. I would attempt to exemplify the influence of individual humors and passions—some of them among the highest, and others certainly the basest that agitate humanity—upon the march of great events, upon general historical results at certain epochs, and upon the destiny of eminent personages.”

Here are two suggestive portraits:—

“The Advocate, while acting only in the name of a slender confederacy, was in truth, so long as he held his place, the prime minister of European Protestantism. There was none other to rival him, few to comprehend him, fewer still to sustain him. As Prince Maurice was at that time the great soldier of Protestantism, without clearly scanning the grandeur of the field in which he was a chief actor, or foreseeing the vastness of its future, so the Advocate was its statesman and its prophet. Could the two have worked together as harmoniously as they had done at an earlier day, it would have been a blessing for the common weal of Europe. But, alas! the evil genius of jealousy, which so often forbids cordial relations between soldier and statesman, already stood shrouded in the distance, darkly menacing the strenuous patriot, who was wearing his life out in exertions for what he deemed the true cause of progress and humanity. . . .“All history shows that the brilliant soldier of a republic is apt to have the advantage, in a struggle for popular affection and popular applause, over the statesman, however consummate. . . . The great battles and sieges of the prince had been on a world’s theatre, had enchained the attention of Christendom, and on their issue had frequently depended, or seemed to depend, the very existence of the nation. The labors of the statesman, on the contrary, had been comparatively secret. His noble orations and arguments had been spoken with closed doors to assemblies of colleagues, rather envoys than senators, . . while his vast labors in directing both the internal administration and especially the foreign affairs of the commonwealth had been by their very nature as secret as they were perpetual and enormous.”

The reader of the “Life of Barneveld” must judge for himself whether in these and similar passages the historian was thinking solely of Maurice, the great military leader, of Barneveld, the great statesman, and of Aerssens, the recalled ambassador. He will certainly find that there were “burning questions” for ministers to handle then as now, and recognize in “that visible atmosphere of power the poison of which it is so difficult to resist” a respiratory medium as well known to the nineteenth as to the seventeenth century.



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### XXIII.

1874-1877. AEt. 60-63.

*Death of Mrs. Motley.—Last visit to America.—Illness and death.—Lady HARCOURT'S communication.*

On the last day of 1874, the beloved wife, whose health had for some years been failing, was taken from him by death. She had been the pride of his happier years, the stay and solace of those which had so tried his sensitive spirit. The blow found him already weakened by mental suffering and bodily infirmity, and he never recovered from it. Mr. Motley's last visit to America was in the summer and autumn of 1875. During several weeks which he passed at Nahant, a seaside resort near Boston, I saw him almost daily. He walked feebly and with some little difficulty, and complained of a feeling of great weight in the right arm, which made writing laborious. His handwriting had not betrayed any very obvious change, so far as I had noticed in his letters. His features and speech were without any paralytic character. His mind was clear except when, as on one or two occasions, he complained of some confused feeling, and walked a few minutes in the open air to compose himself. His thoughts were always tending to revert to the almost worshipped companion from whom death had parted him a few months before. Yet he could often be led away to other topics, and in talking of them could be betrayed into momentary cheerfulness of manner. His long-enduring and all-pervading grief was not more a tribute to the virtues and graces of her whom he mourned than an evidence of the deeply affectionate nature which in other relations endeared him to so many whose friendship was a title to love and honor.

I have now the privilege of once more recurring to the narrative of Mr. Motley's daughter, Lady Harcourt.

"The harassing work and mental distress of this time [after the recall from England], acting on an acutely nervous organization, began the process of undermining his constitution, of which we were so soon to see the results. It was not the least courageous act of his life, that, smarting under a fresh wound, tired and unhappy, he set his face immediately towards the accomplishment of fresh literary labor. After my sister's marriage in January he went to the Hague to begin his researches in the archives for John of Barneveld. The Queen of the Netherlands had made ready a house for us, and personally superintended every preparation for his reception. We remained there until the spring, and then removed to a house more immediately in the town, a charming old-fashioned mansion, once lived in by John de Witt, where he had a large library and every domestic comfort during the year of his sojourn. The incessant literary labor in an enervating climate with enfeebled health may have prepared the way for the first break in his constitution, which was to show



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itself soon after. There were many compensations in the life about him. He enjoyed the privilege of constant companionship with one of the warmest hearts and finest intellects which I have ever known in a woman,—the ‘ame d’elite’ which has passed beyond this earth. The gracious sentiment with which the Queen sought to express her sense of what Holland owed him would have been deeply felt even had her personal friendship been less dear to us all. From the King, the society of the Hague, and the diplomatic circle we had many marks of kindness. Once or twice I made short journeys with him for change of air to Amsterdam, to look for the portraits of John of Barneveld and his wife; to Bohemia, where, with the lingering hope of occupying himself with the Thirty Years’ War, he looked carefully at the scene of Wallenstein’s death near Prague, and later to Varzin in Pomerania for a week with Prince Bismarck, after the great events of the Franco-German war. In the autumn of 1872 we moved to England, partly because it was evident that his health and my mother’s required a change; partly for private reasons to be near my sister and her children. The day after our arrival at Bournemouth occurred the rupture of a vessel on the lungs, without any apparently sufficient cause. He recovered enough to revise and complete his manuscript, and we thought him better, when at the end of July, in London, he was struck down by the first attack of the head, which robbed him of all after power of work, although the intellect remained untouched. Sir William Gull sent him to Cannes for the winter, where he was seized with a violent internal inflammation, in which I suppose there was again the indication of the lesion of blood-vessels. I am nearing the shadow now,—the time of which I can hardly bear to write. You know the terrible sorrow which crushed him on the last day of 1874,—the grief which broke his heart and from which he never rallied. From that day it seems to me that his life may be summed up in the two words,—patient waiting. Never for one hour did her spirit leave him, and he strove to follow its leading for the short and evil days left and the hope of the life beyond. I think I have never watched quietly and reverently the traces of one personal character remaining so strongly impressed on another nature. With herself—depreciation and unselfishness she would have been the last to believe how much of him was in her very existence; nor could we have realized it until the parting came. Henceforward, with the mind still there, but with the machinery necessary to set it in motion disturbed and shattered, he could but try to create small occupations with which to fill the hours of a life which was only valued for his children’s sake. Kind and loving friends in England and America soothed the passage, and our gratitude for so many gracious acts is deep and true. His love for children, always a strong feeling, was gratified by the constant presence of my sister’s



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babies, the eldest, a little girl who bore my mother's name, and had been her idol, being the companion of many hours and his best comforter. At the end the blow came swiftly and suddenly, as he would have wished it. It was a terrible shock to us who had vainly hoped to keep him a few years longer, but at least he was spared what he had dreaded with a great dread, a gradual failure of mental or bodily power. The mind was never clouded, the affections never weakened, and after a few hours of unconscious physical struggle he lay at rest, his face beautiful and calm, without a trace of suffering or illness. Once or twice he said, 'It has come, it has come,' and there were a few broken words before consciousness fled, but there was little time for messages or leave-taking. By a strange coincidence his life ended near the town of Dorchester, in the mother country, as if the last hour brought with it a reminiscence of his birthplace, and of his own dearly loved mother. By his own wish only the dates of his birth and death appear upon his gravestone, with the text chosen by himself, 'In God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.'"

### XXIV.

*Conclusion.—His character.—His labors.—His reward.*

In closing this restricted and imperfect record of a life which merits, and in due time will, I trust, receive an ampler tribute, I cannot refrain from adding a few thoughts which naturally suggest themselves, and some of which may seem quite unnecessary to the reader who has followed the story of the historian and diplomatist's brilliant and eventful career.

Mr. Motley came of a parentage which promised the gifts of mind and body very generally to be accounted for, in a measure at least, wherever we find them, by the blood of one or both of the parents. They gave him special attractions and laid him open to not a few temptations. Too many young men born to shine in social life, to sparkle, it may be, in conversation, perhaps in the lighter walks of literature, become agreeable idlers, self-indulgent, frivolous, incapable of large designs or sustained effort, lose every aspiration and forget every ideal. Our gilded youth want such examples as this of Motley, not a solitary, but a conspicuous one, to teach them how much better is the restlessness of a noble ambition than the narcotized stupor of club-life or the vapid amusement of a dressed-up intercourse which too often requires a questionable flavor of forbidden license to render it endurable to persons of vivacious character and temperament.



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It would seem difficult for a man so flattered from his earliest days to be modest in his self-estimate; but Motley was never satisfied with himself. He was impulsive, and was occasionally, I have heard it said, over excited, when his prejudices were roughly handled. In all that related to the questions involved in our civil war, he was, no doubt, very sensitive. He had heard so much that exasperated him in the foreign society which he had expected to be in full sympathy with the cause of liberty as against slavery, that he might be excused if he showed impatience when he met with similar sentiments among his own countrymen. He felt that he had been cruelly treated by his own government, and no one who conceives himself to have been wronged and insulted must be expected to reason in naked syllogisms on the propriety of the liberties which have been taken with his name and standing. But with all his quickness of feeling, his manners were easy and courteous, simply because his nature was warm and kindly, and with all his natural fastidiousness there was nothing of the coxcomb about him.

He must have had enemies, as all men of striking individuality are sure to have; his presence cast more uncouth patriots into the shade; his learning was a reproach to the ignorant, his fame was too bright a distinction; his high-bred air and refinement, which he could not help, would hardly commend him to the average citizen in an order of things in which mediocrity is at a premium, and the natural nobility of presence, which rarely comes without family antecedents to account for it, is not always agreeable to the many whose two ideals are the man on horseback and the man in his shirt-sleeves. It may well be questioned whether Washington, with his grand manner, would be nearly as popular with what are called "the masses" as Lincoln, with his homely ways and broad stories. The experiment of universal suffrage must render the waters of political and social life more or less turbid even if they remain innoxious. The Cloaca Maxima can hardly mingle its contents with the stream of the Aqua Claudia, without taking something from its crystal clearness. We need not go so far as one of our well-known politicians has recently gone in saying that no great man can reach the highest position in our government, but we can safely say that, apart from military fame, the loftiest and purest and finest personal qualities are not those which can be most depended upon at the ballot-box. Strange stories are told of avowed opposition to Mr. Motley on the ground of the most trivial differences in point of taste in personal matters,—so told that it is hard to disbelieve them, and they show that the caprices which we might have thought belonged exclusively to absolute rulers among their mistresses or their minions may be felt in the councils of a great people which calls itself self-governing. It is perfectly true that Mr. Motley did not illustrate the popular type of politician. He was too high-minded,



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too scholarly, too generously industrious, too polished, too much at home in the highest European circles, too much courted for his personal fascinations, too remote from the trading world of caucus managers. To degrade him, so far as official capital punishment could do it, was not merely to wrong one whom the nation should have delighted to honor as showing it to the world in the fairest flower of its young civilization, but it was an indignity to a representative of the highest scholarship of native growth, which every student in the land felt as a discouragement to all sound learning and noble ambition.

If he was disappointed in his diplomatic career, he had enough, and more than enough, to console him in his brilliant literary triumphs. He had earned them all by the most faithful and patient labor. If he had not the “frame of adamant” of the Swedish hero, he had his “soul of fire.” No labors could tire him, no difficulties affright him. What most surprised those who knew him as a young man was, not his ambition, not his brilliancy, but his dogged, continuous capacity for work. We have seen with what astonishment the old Dutch scholar, Groen van Prinsterer, looked upon a man who had wrestled with authors like Bor and Van Meteren, who had grappled with the mightiest folios and toiled undiscouraged among half-illegible manuscript records. Having spared no pains in collecting his materials, he told his story, as we all know, with flowing ease and stirring vitality. His views may have been more or less partial; Philip the Second may have deserved the pitying benevolence of poor Maximilian; Maurice may have wept as sincerely over the errors of Arminius as any one of “the crocodile crew that believe in election;” Barneveld and Grotius may have been on the road to Rome; none of these things seem probable, but if they were all proved true in opposition to his views, we should still have the long roll of glowing tapestry he has woven for us, with all its life-like portraits, its almost moving pageants, its sieges where we can see the artillery flashing, its battle-fields with their smoke and fire,—pictures which cannot fade, and which will preserve his name interwoven with their own enduring colors.

Republics are said to be ungrateful; it might be truer to say that they are forgetful. They forgive those who have wronged them as easily as they forget those who have done them good service. But History never forgets and never forgives. To her decision we may trust the question, whether the warm-hearted patriot who had stood up for his country nobly and manfully in the hour of trial, the great scholar and writer who had reflected honor upon her throughout the world of letters, the high-minded public servant, whose shortcomings it taxed the ingenuity of experts to make conspicuous enough to be presentable, was treated as such a citizen should have been dealt with. His record is safe in her hands, and his memory will be precious always in the hearts of all who enjoyed his friendship.



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### APPENDIX.

A.

*The Saturday club.*

This club, of which we were both members, and which is still flourishing, came into existence in a very quiet sort of way at about the same time as “The Atlantic Monthly,” and, although entirely unconnected with that magazine, included as members some of its chief contributors. Of those who might have been met at some of the monthly gatherings in its earlier days I may mention Emerson, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Lowell, Motley, Whipple, Whittier; Professors Agassiz and Peirce; John S. Dwight; Governor Andrew, Richard H. Dana, Junior, Charles Sumner. It offered a wide gamut of intelligences, and the meetings were noteworthy occasions. If there was not a certain amount of “mutual admiration” among some of those I have mentioned it was a great pity, and implied a defect in the nature of men who were otherwise largely endowed. The vitality of this club has depended in a great measure on its utter poverty in statutes and by-laws, its entire absence of formality, and its blessed freedom from speech-making.

That holy man, Richard Baxter, says in his Preface to Alleine’s “Alarm:”—

“I have done, when I have sought to remove a little scandal, which I foresaw, that I should myself write the Preface to his Life where himself and two of his friends make such a mention of my name, which I cannot own; which will seem a praising him for praising me. I confess it looketh ill-favoredly in me. But I had not the power of other men’s writings, and durst not forbear that which was his due.”

I do not know that I have any occasion for a similar apology in printing the following lines read at a meeting of members of the Saturday Club and other friends who came together to bid farewell to Motley before his return to Europe in 1857.

*A parting health*

Yes, we knew we must lose him,—though friendship may claim  
To blend her green leaves with the laurels of fame,  
Though fondly, at parting, we call him our own,  
'T is the whisper of love when the bugle has blown.

As the rider that rests with the spur on his heel,  
As the guardsman that sleeps in his corselet of steel,  
As the archer that stands with his shaft on the string,  
He stoops from his toil to the garland we bring.



What pictures yet slumber unborn in his loom  
Till their warriors shall breathe and their beauties shall bloom,  
While the tapestry lengthens the life-glowing dyes  
That caught from our sunsets the stain of their skies!

In the alcoves of death, in the charnels of time,  
Where flit the dark spectres of passion and crime,  
There are triumphs untold, there are martyrs unsung,  
There are heroes yet silent to speak with his tongue!



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Let us hear the proud story that time has bequeathed  
From lips that are warm with the freedom they breathed!  
Let him summon its tyrants, and tell us their doom,  
Though he sweep the black past like Van Tromp with his broom!

The dream flashes by, for the west-winds awake  
On pampas, on prairie, o'er mountain and lake,  
To bathe the swift bark, like a sea-girdled shrine  
With incense they stole from the rose and the pine.

So fill a bright cup with the sunlight that gushed  
When the dead summer's jewels were trampled and crushed;  
*the true Knight of learning*,—the world holds him dear,—

Love bless him, joy crown him, God speed his career!

### B.

#### *Habits and methods of study.*

Mr. Motley's daughter, Lady Harcourt, has favored me with many interesting particulars which I could not have learned except from a member of his own family. Her description of his way of living and of working will be best given in her own words:—

“He generally rose early, the hour varying somewhat at different parts of his life, according to his work and health. Sometimes when much absorbed by literary labor he would rise before seven, often lighting his own fire, and with a cup of tea or coffee writing until the family breakfast hour, after which his work was immediately resumed, and he usually sat over his writing-table until late in the afternoon, when he would take a short walk. His dinner hour was late, and he rarely worked at night. During the early years of his literary studies he led a life of great retirement. Later, after the publication of the ‘Dutch Republic’ and during the years of official place, he was much in society in England, Austria, and Holland. He enjoyed social life, and particularly dining out, keenly, but was very moderate and simple in all his personal habits, and for many years before his death had entirely given up smoking. His work, when not in his own library, was in the Archives of the Netherlands, Brussels, Paris, the English State Paper Office, and the British Museum, where he made his own researches, patiently and laboriously consulting original manuscripts and reading masses of correspondence, from which he afterwards sometimes caused copies to be made, and where he worked for many consecutive hours a day. After his material had been thus painfully and toilsomly amassed, the writing of his own story was always done at home, and his mind, having digested the necessary matter, always poured itself forth in writing so copiously that his revision was chiefly devoted to reducing the over-abundance. He never shrank from



any of the drudgery of preparation, but I think his own part of the work was sheer pleasure to him.”

I should have mentioned that his residence in London while minister was at the house No. 17 Arlington Street, belonging to Lord Yarborough.



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### C.

*Sir William GULL's account of his illness.*

I have availed myself of the permission implied in the subjoined letter of Sir William Gull to make large extracts from his account of Mr. Motley's condition while under his medical care. In his earlier years he had often complained to me of those "nervous feelings connected with the respiration" referred to by this very distinguished physician. I do not remember any other habitual trouble to which he was subject.

*74 Brook Street, Grosvenor Square, W.*

February 13, 1878.

*My dear sir,*—I send the notes of Mr. Motley's last illness, as I promised. They are too technical for general readers, but you will make such exception as you require. The medical details may interest your professional friends. Mr. Motley's case was a striking illustration that the renal disease of so-called Bright's disease may supervene as part and parcel of a larger and antecedent change in the blood-vessels in other parts than the kidney. . . . I am, my dear sir,

Yours very truly,  
*William W. Gull.*

*To Oliver Wendell Holmes, ESQ.*

I first saw Mr. Motley, I believe, about the year 1870, on account of some nervous feelings connected with the respiration. At that time his general health was good, and all he complained of was occasionally a feeling of oppression about the chest. There were no physical signs of anything abnormal, and the symptoms quite passed away in the course of time, and with the use of simple antispasmodic remedies, such as camphor and the like. This was my first interview with Mr. Motley, and I was naturally glad to have the opportunity of making his acquaintance. I remember that in our conversation I jokingly said that my wife could hardly forgive him for not making her hero, Henri IV., a perfect character, and the earnestness with which he replied 'au sérieux,' I assure you I have fairly recorded the facts. After this date I did not see Mr. Motley for some time. He had three slight attacks of haemoptysis in the autumn of 1872, but no physical signs of change in the lung tissue resulted. So early as this I noticed that there were signs of commencing thickening in the heart, as shown by the degree and extent of its impulse. The condition of his health, though at that time not very obviously failing, a good deal arrested my attention, as I thought I could perceive in the occurrence of the haemoptysis, and in the cardiac hypertrophy, the early beginnings of vascular degeneration. In August, 1873, occurred the remarkable seizure, from the effects of which Mr. Motley

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never recovered. I did not see him in the attack, but was informed, as far as I can remember, that he was on a casual visit at a friend's house at luncheon (or it might have been dinner), when he suddenly became strangely excited, but not quite unconscious. . . . I believed at the time, and do so still, that there was some capillary apoplexy of the convolutions. The attack was attended with some hemiplegic weakness on the right side, and altered sensation, and ever after there was a want of freedom and ease both in the gait and in the use of the arm of that side. To my inquiries from time to time how the arm was, the patient would always flex and extend it freely, but nearly always used the expression, "There is a bedevilment in it;" though the handwriting was not much, if at all, altered.

In December, 1873, Mr. Motley went by my advice to Cannes. I wrote the following letter at the time to my friend Dr. Frank, who was practising there:—

[This letter, every word of which was of value to the practitioner who was to have charge of the patient, relates many of the facts given above, and I shall therefore only give extracts from it.]

December 29, 1873.

*My dear Dr. Frank,*—My friend Mr. Motley, the historian and late American Minister, whose name and fame no doubt you know very well, has by my advice come to Cannes for the winter and spring, and I have promised him to give you some account of his case. To me it is one of special interest, and personally, as respects the subject of it, of painful interest. I have known Mr. Motley for some time, but he consulted me for the present condition about midsummer. . . . If I have formed a correct opinion of the pathology of the case, I believe the smaller vessels are degenerating in several parts of the vascular area, lung, brain, and kidneys. With this view I have suggested a change of climate, a nourishing diet, *etc.*; and it is to be hoped, and I trust expected, that by great attention to the conditions of hygiene, internal and external, the progress of degeneration may be retarded. I have no doubt you will find, as time goes on, increasing evidence of renal change, but this is rather a coincidence and consequence than a cause, though no doubt when the renal change has reached a certain point, it becomes in its own way a factor of other lesions. I have troubled you at this length because my mind is much occupied with the pathology of these cases, and because no case can, on personal grounds, more strongly challenge our attention.

Yours very truly,

*William W. Gull.*



During the spring of 1874, whilst at Cannes, Mr. Motley had a sharp attack of nephritis, attended with fever; but on returning to England in July there was no important change in the health. The weakness of the side continued, and the inability to undertake any mental work. The signs of cardiac hypertrophy were more distinct. In the beginning of the year 1875 I wrote as follows:—

February 20, 1875.



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*My dear Mr. Motley,*— . . . The examination I have just made appears to indicate that the main conditions of your health are more stable than they were some months ago, and would therefore be so far in favor of your going to America in the summer, as we talked of. The ground of my doubt has lain in the possibility of such a trip further disordering the circulation. Of this, I hope, there is now less risk.

On the 4th of June, 1875, I received the following letter:—

*CALVERLY Park hotel, Tunbridge Wells,  
June 4, 1875.*

*My dear sir William,*—I have been absent from town for a long time, but am to be there on the 9th and 10th. Could I make an appointment with you for either of those days? I am anxious to have a full consultation with you before leaving for America. Our departure is fixed for the 19th of this month. I have not been worse than usual of late. I think myself, on the contrary, rather stronger, and it is almost impossible for me not to make my visit to America this summer, unless you should absolutely prohibit it. If neither of those days should suit you, could you kindly suggest another day? I hope, however, you can spare me half an hour on one of those days, as I like to get as much of this bracing air as I can. Will you kindly name the hour when I may call on you, and address me at this hotel. Excuse this slovenly note in pencil, but it fatigues my head and arm much more to sit at a writing-table with pen and ink.

Always most sincerely yours,  
My dear Sir William,  
J. L. Motley.

On Mr. Motley's return from America I saw him, and found him, I thought, rather better in general health than when he left England.

In December, 1875, Mr. Motley consulted me for trouble of vision in reading or walking, from sensations like those produced by flakes of falling snow coming between him and the objects he was looking at. Mr. Bowman, one of our most excellent oculists, was then consulted. Mr. Bowman wrote to me as follows: "Such symptoms as exist point rather to disturbed retinal function than to any brain-mischief. It is, however, quite likely that what you fear for the brain may have had its counterpart in the nerve-structures of the eye, and as he is short-sighted, this tendency may be further intensified."

Mr. Bowman suggested no more than such an arrangement of glasses as might put the eyes, when in use, under better optic conditions.

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The year 1876 was passed over without any special change worth notice. The walking powers were much impeded by the want of control over the right leg. The mind was entirely clear, though Mr. Motley did not feel equal, and indeed had been advised not to apply himself, to any literary work. Occasional conversations, when I had interviews with him on the subject of his health, proved that the attack which had weakened the movements of the right side had not impaired the mental power. The most noticeable change which had come over Mr. Motley since I first knew him was due to the death of Mrs. Motley in December, 1874. It had in fact not only profoundly depressed him, but, if I may so express it, had removed the centre of his thought to a new world. In long conversations with me of a speculative kind, after that painful event, it was plain how much his point of view of the whole course and relation of things had changed. His mind was the last to dogmatize on any subject. There was a candid and childlike desire to know, with an equal confession of the incapacity of the human intellect. I wish I could recall the actual expressions he used, but the sense was that which has been so well stated by Hooker in concluding an exhortation against the pride of the human intellect, where he remarks:—"Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High; whom although to know be life, and joy to make mention of His Name, yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know Him, not indeed as He is, neither can know Him; and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence, when we confess without confession that His glory is inexplicable, His greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above and we upon earth; therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few."Mrs. Motley's illness was not a long one, and the nature of it was such that its course could with certainty be predicted. Mr. Motley and her children passed the remaining days of her life, extending over about a month, with her, in the mutual understanding that she was soon to part from them. The character of the illness, and the natural exhaustion of her strength by suffering, lessened the shock of her death, though not the loss, to those who survived her. The last time I saw Mr. Motley was, I believe, about two months before his death, March 28, 1877. There was no great change in his health, but he complained of indescribable sensations in his nervous system, and felt as if losing the whole power of walking, but this was not obvious in his gait, although he walked shorter distances than before. I heard no more of him until I was suddenly summoned on the 29th of May into Devonshire to see him. The telegram I received was so urgent, that I suspected some rupture of a blood-vessel in the brain, and that I should hardly reach him alive; and this was the case. About two o'clock in the

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day he complained of a feeling of faintness, said he felt ill and should not recover; and in a few minutes was insensible with symptoms of ingravescient apoplexy. There was extensive haemorrhage into the brain, as shown by post-mortem examination, the cerebral vessels being atheromatous. The fatal haemorrhage had occurred into the lateral ventricles, from rupture of one of the middle cerebral arteries.

I am, my dear Sir,  
Yours very truly,

*William W. Gull.*

### E.

*From the proceedings of the Massachusetts society.*

At a meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society, held on Thursday, the 14th of June, 1877, after the reading of the records of the preceding meeting, the president, the Hon. Robert C. Winthrop, spoke as follows:

“Our first thoughts to-day, gentlemen, are of those whom we may not again welcome to these halls. We shall be in no mood, certainly, for entering on other subjects this morning until we have given some expression to our deep sense of the loss—the double loss—which our Society has sustained since our last monthly meeting.”— [Edmund Quincy died May 17. John Lothrop Motley died May 29.]

After a most interesting and cordial tribute to his friend, Mr. Quincy, Mr. Winthrop continued:

“The death of our distinguished associate, Motley, can hardly have taken many of us by surprise. Sudden at the moment of its occurrence, we had long been more or less prepared for it by his failing health. It must, indeed, have been quite too evident to those who had seen him, during the last two or three years, that his life-work was finished. I think he so regarded it himself. “Hopes may have been occasionally revived in the hearts of his friends, and even in his own heart, that his long-cherished purpose of completing a History of the Thirty Years’ War, as the grand consummation of his historical labors,—for which all his other volumes seemed to him to have been but the preludes and overtures,— might still be accomplished. But such hopes, faint and flickering from his first attack, had well-nigh died away. They were like Prescott’s hopes of completing his ‘Philip the Second,’ or like Macaulay’s hopes of finishing his brilliant ‘History of England.’ “But great as may be the loss to literature of such a crowning work from Motley’s pen, it was by no means necessary to the completeness of his own fame. His ‘Rise of the Dutch Republic,’ his ‘History of the United Netherlands,’ and his ‘Life of

John of Barneveld,' had abundantly established his reputation, and given him a fixed place among the most eminent historians of our country and of our



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age. "No American writer, certainly, has secured a wider recognition or a higher appreciation from the scholars of the Old World. The universities of England and the learned societies of Europe have bestowed upon him their largest honors. It happened to me to be in Paris when he was first chosen a corresponding member of the Institute, and when his claims were canvassed with the freedom and earnestness which peculiarly characterize such a candidacy in France. There was no mistaking the profound impression which his first work had made on the minds of such men as Guizot and Mignet. Within a year or two past, a still higher honor has been awarded him from the same source. The journals not long ago announced his election as one of the six foreign associates of the French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences,—a distinction which Prescott would probably have attained had he lived a few years longer, until there was a vacancy, but which, as a matter of fact, I believe, Motley was the only American writer, except the late Edward Livingston, of Louisiana, who has actually enjoyed. "Residing much abroad, for the purpose of pursuing his historical researches, he had become the associate and friend of the most eminent literary men in almost all parts of the world, and the singular charms of his conversation and manners had made him a favorite guest in the most refined and exalted circles. "Of his relations to political and public life, this is hardly the occasion or the moment for speaking in detail. Misconstructions and injustices are the proverbial lot of those who occupy eminent position. It was a duke of Vienna, if I remember rightly, whom Shakespeare, in his 'Measure for Measure,' introduces as exclaiming,—

'O place and greatness, millions of false eyes  
Are stuck upon thee! Volumes of report  
Run with these false and most contrarious quests  
Upon thy doings! Thousand 'stapes of wit  
Make thee the father of their idle dream,  
And rack thee in their fancies!'

"I forbear from all application of the lines. It is enough for me, certainly, to say here, to-day, that our country was proud to be represented at the courts of Vienna and London successively by a gentleman of so much culture and accomplishment as Mr. Motley, and that the circumstances of his recall were deeply regretted by us all. "His fame, however, was quite beyond the reach of any such accidents, and could neither be enhanced nor impaired by appointments or removals. As a powerful and brilliant historian we pay him our unanimous tribute of admiration and regret, and give him a place in our memories by the side of Prescott and Irving. I do not forget how many of us lament him, also, as a cherished friend. "He died on the 29th ultimo,

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at the house of his daughter, Mrs. Sheridan, in Dorsetshire, England, and an impressive tribute to his memory was paid, in Westminster Abbey, on the following Sunday, by our Honorary Member, Dean Stanley. Such a tribute, from such lips, and with such surroundings, leaves nothing to be desired in the way of eulogy. He was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, by the side of his beloved wife. "One might well say of Motley precisely what he said of Prescott, in a letter from Rome to our associate, Mr. William Amory, immediately on hearing of Prescott's death: 'I feel inexpressibly disappointed—speaking now for an instant purely from a literary point of view—that the noble and crowning monument of his life, for which he had laid such massive foundations, and the structure of which had been carried forward in such a grand and masterly manner, must remain uncompleted, like the unfinished peristyle of some stately and beautiful temple on which the night of time has suddenly descended. But, still, the works which his great and untiring hand had already thoroughly finished will remain to attest his learning and genius,— a precious and perpetual possession for his country.'"

.....

The President now called on Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, who said:—

"The thoughts which suggest themselves upon this occasion are such as belong to the personal memories of the dear friends whom we have lost, rather than to their literary labors, the just tribute to which must wait for a calmer hour than the present, following so closely as it does on our bereavement."

.....

"His first literary venture of any note was the story called 'Morton's Hope; or, The Memoirs of a Provincial.' This first effort failed to satisfy the critics, the public, or himself. His personality pervaded the characters and times which he portrayed, so that there was a discord between the actor and his costume. Brilliant passages could not save it; and it was plain enough that he must ripen into something better before the world would give him the reception which surely awaited him if he should find his true destination. "The early failures of a great writer are like the first sketches of a great artist, and well reward patient study. More than this, the first efforts of poets and story-tellers are very commonly palimpsests: beneath the rhymes or the fiction one can almost always spell out the characters which betray the writer's self. Take these passages from the story just referred to: "Ah! flattery is a sweet and intoxicating potion, whether we drink it from an earthen ewer or a golden chalice. . . . Flattery from man to woman is expected: it is a part of the courtesy of society; but when the divinity descends from the altar to burn incense to the priest, what wonder if the idolater should feel himself transformed into a god!"

"He had run the risk of being spoiled, but he had a safeguard in his aspirations.

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“My ambitious anticipations,’ says Morton, in the story, were as boundless as they were various and conflicting. There was not a path which leads to glory in which I was not destined to gather laurels. As a warrior, I would conquer and overrun the world; as a statesman, I would reorganize and govern it; as a historian, I would consign it all to immortality; and, in my leisure moments, I would be a great poet and a man of the world.’

“Who can doubt that in this passage of his story he is picturing his own visions, one of the fairest of which was destined to become reality?

“But there was another element in his character, which those who knew him best recognized as one with which he had to struggle hard, —that is, a modesty which sometimes tended to collapse into self- distrust. This, too, betrays itself in the sentences which follow those just quoted:—“In short,’ says Morton, ‘I was already enrolled in that large category of what are called young men of genius, . . . men of whom unheard-of things are expected; till after long preparation comes a portentous failure, and then they are forgotten. . . . Alas! for the golden imaginations of our youth. . . . They are all disappointments. They are bright and beautiful, but they fade.’”

.....

The President appointed Professor Lowell to write the Memoir of Mr. Quincy, and Dr. Holmes that of Mr. Motley, for the Society’s “Proceedings.”

Professor William Everett then spoke as follows:

“There is one incident, sir, in Mr. Motley’s career that has not been mentioned to-day, which is, perhaps, most vividly remembered by those of us who were in Europe at the outbreak of our civil war in 1861. At that time, the ignorance of Englishmen, friendly or otherwise, about America, was infinite: they knew very little of us, and that little wrong. Americans were overwhelmed with questions, taunts, threats, misrepresentations, the outgrowth of ignorance, and ignoring worse than ignorance, from every class of Englishmen. Never was an authoritative exposition of our hopes and policy worse needed; and there was no one to do it. The outgoing diplomatic agents represented a bygone order of things; the representatives of Mr. Lincoln’s administration had not come. At that time of anxiety, Mr. Motley, living in England as a private person, came forward with two letters in the ‘Times,’ which set forth the cause of the United States once and for all. No unofficial, and few official, men could have spoken with such authority, and been so certain of obtaining a hearing from Englishmen. Thereafter, amid all the clouds of falsehood and ridicule which we had to encounter, there was one lighthouse fixed on a rock to which we could go for foothold, from which we could not be driven, and against which all assaults were impotent.



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“There can be no question that the effect produced by these letters helped, if help had been needed, to point out Mr. Motley as a candidate for high diplomatic place who could not be overlooked. Their value was recognized alike by his fellow-citizens in America and his admirers in England; but none valued them more than the little band of exiles, who were struggling against terrible odds, and who rejoiced with a great joy to see the stars and stripes, whose centennial anniversary those guns are now celebrating, planted by a hand so truly worthy to rally every American to its support.”

### G.

*Poem by William Cullen Bryant.*

I cannot close this Memoir more appropriately than by appending the following poetical tribute:—

*In memory of John Lothrop Motley.*

*By William Cullen Bryant.*

Sleep, Motley, with the great of ancient days,  
Who wrote for all the years that yet shall be.  
Sleep with Herodotus, whose name and praise  
Have reached the isles of earth's remotest sea.  
Sleep, while, defiant of the slow delays  
Of Time, thy glorious writings speak for thee  
And in the answering heart of millions raise  
The generous zeal for Right and Liberty.  
And should the days o'ertake us, when, at last,  
The silence that—ere yet a human pen  
Had traced the slenderest record of the past  
Hushed the primeval languages of men  
Upon our English tongue its spell shall cast,  
Thy memory shall perish only then.

### ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

An order of things in which mediocrity is at a premium  
Better is the restlessness of a noble ambition  
Blessed freedom from speech-making  
Flattery is a sweet and intoxicating potion  
Forget those who have done them good service  
His dogged, continuous capacity for work



His learning was a reproach to the ignorant  
History never forgets and never forgives  
Mediocrity is at a premium  
No great man can reach the highest position in our government  
Over excited, when his prejudices were roughly handled  
Plain enough that he is telling his own story  
Republics are said to be ungrateful  
They knew very little of us, and that little wrong  
Visible atmosphere of power the poison of which  
Wonders whether it has found its harbor or only lost its anchor

[The End]

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