

of our country and the growth of the representation, this room has become too contracted for the representatives of the States now existing and soon to exist; and accordingly you are about to exchange it for a Hall affording accommodations adequate to the present and the future. The occasion suggests many interesting reminiscences; and it may be agreeable, in the first place, to occupy a few minutes with a short account of the various places at which Congress has assembled, of the struggles which preceded the permanent location of the seat of Government, and of the circumstances under which it was finally established on the banks of the Potomac.

"The Congress of the Revolution was sometimes a fugitive, holding its sessions, as the chances of war required, at Philadelphia, Baltimore, Lancaster, Annapolis and Yorktown. During the period between the conclusion of peace and the commencement of the present Government, it met at Princeton, Annapolis, Trenton, and New York.

"After the idea of a permanent Union had been executed in part by the adoption of the Articles of Confederation, the question presented itself of fixing a seat of Government, and this immediately called forth intense interest and rivalry.

"That the place should be central, having regard to the population and territory of the confederacy, was the only point common to the contending parties. Propositions of all kinds were offered, debated, and rejected, sometimes with intemperate warmth. At length, on the 7th of October, 1783, the Congress being at Princeton, whither they had been driven from Philadelphia, by the insults of a body of armed men, it was resolved that a building for the use of Congress be erected near the falls of the Delaware. This was soon after modified by requiring suitable buildings to be also erected near the falls of the Potomac, that the residence of Congress might alternate between those places. But the question was not allowed to rest, and at length, after frequent and warm debates, it was resolved that the residence of Congress should continue at one place; and commissioners were appointed with full power to lay out a district for a Federal town near the falls of the Delaware; and in the mean time Congress assembled alternately at Trenton and Annapolis; but the representatives of other states were unremitting in exertions for their respective localities.

"On the 23rd of December, 1784, it was resolved to move to the City of New York, and to remain there until the building on the Delaware should be completed; and accordingly on the 11th of January, 1785, the Congress met at New York, where they continued to hold their sessions until the Confederation gave place to the Constitution.

"The Commissioners to lay out a town on the Delaware reported their proceedings to Congress; but no further steps were taken to carry the resolution into effect.

"When the bonds of union were drawn closer by the organization of new government under the constitution, on the 3rd of March, 1789, the subject was revived and discussed with greater warmth than before. It was concluded on all sides that the residence of Congress should continue at one place, and the prospect of stability in the government invested the question with a deeper interest. Some members proposed New York as being 'superior to any place they knew for the orderly and decent behaviour of its inhabitants.' To this it was answered that it was not desirable that the political capital should be in a commercial metropolis. Others ridiculed the idea of building palaces in the woods. Mr. Gerry, of Massachusetts, thought it highly unreasonable to fix the seat of Government in such position as to have nine states of the thirteen to the Northward of the place; while the South Carolinians objected to Philadelphia on account of the number of Quakers, who, they said, continually annoyed the Southern members with schemes of emancipation.

"In the midst of these disputes, the House of Representatives resolved, 'that the permanent seat of Government ought to be at some convenient place on the banks of the Susquehanna.' On the introduction of a bill to give effect to this resolution, much feeling was exhibited, especially by the Southern members. Mr. Madison thought if the proceedings of that day had been foreseen by Virginia, that state might not have become a party to the Constitution. The question was allowed by every member to be a matter of great importance. Mr. Scott said the future tranquility and well being of the United States depended as much on this as on any question that ever had, or could, come before Congress; and Mr. Fisher Ames remarked that every principle of pride and honor and even of patriotism were engaged. For a time, any agreement appeared to be impossible; but the good genius of our system finally prevailed, and on the 28th of June, 1790, an act was passed containing the following clause:—

"That a district of territory on the river Potomac, at some place between the mouths of the eastern branch and the Connogocheague, be, and the same is hereby accepted, for the permanent seat of the Government of the United States."

"The same act provided that the Congress should hold its sessions

at Philadelphia until the first Monday in November, 1800, when the Government should remove to the district selected on the Potomac. Thus was settled a question which had produced much sectional feeling between the States. But all difficulties were not yet surmounted; for Congress, either from indifference, or the want of money, failed to make adequate appropriations for the erection of public buildings, and the commissioners were often reduced to great straits to maintain the progress of the work. Finding it impossible to borrow money in Europe, or to obtain it from Congress, Washington, in December, 1796, made a personal appeal to the Legislature of Maryland, which was responded to by an advance of \$100,000; but in so deplorable a condition was the credit of the Federal Government that the state required, as a guarantee of payment, the pledge of the private credit of the commissioners.

"From the beginning Washington had advocated the present seat of Government. Its establishment here was due, in a large measure, to his influence; it was his wisdom and prudence that quieted disputes and settled conflicting titles, and it was chiefly through his personal influence that the funds were provided to prepare the buildings for the reception of the President and Congress.

"The wings of the Capitol having been sufficiently prepared, the Government removed to this District on the 17th November, 1800; or as Mr. Wolcott expressed it, left the comforts of Philadelphia 'to go to the Indian place with the long name, in the woods of the Potomac.' I will not pause to describe the appearance, at that day, of the place where the city was to be. Contemporary accounts represent it as desolate in the extreme, with its long unopened avenues and streets, its deep morasses, and its vast area covered with trees instead of houses. It is enough to say that Washington projected the whole plan upon a scale of centuries, and that time enough remains to fill the measure of his great conception.

"The Senate continued to occupy the North wing, and the House of Representatives the South wing of the Capitol, until the 24th of August, 1814, when the British army entered the City and burned the public buildings. This occurred during the recess, and the President immediately convened the Congress. Both Houses met in a brick building known as Blodgett's Hotel, which occupied part of the square now covered by the General Post Office. But the accommodations in that house being quite insufficient, a number of public spirited citizens erected a more commodious building on Capitol hill, and tendered it to Congress; the offer was accepted, and both Houses continued to occupy it until the wings of the new Capitol were completed. This building yet stands on the street opposite to the North-eastern corner of the Capitol Square, and has since been occasionally occupied by persons employed in different branches of the public service.

"On the 6th of December, 1819, the Senate assembled for the first time in this Chamber, which has been the theatre of their deliberations for more than thirty-nine years, and now the strifes and uncertainties of the past are finished, we see around us on every side the proofs of stability and improvement; this Capitol is worthy of the republic; noble public buildings meet the view on every hand; treasures of science and the arts begin to accumulate. As this flourishing city enlarges, it testifies to the wisdom and forecast that dictated the plan of it. Future generations will not be disturbed with questions concerning the centre of population, or of territory, since the steamboat, the railroad, and the telegraph have made communication almost instantaneous. The spot is sacred by a thousand memories, which are so many pledges that the City of Washington, founded by him and bearing his revered name, with its beautiful site, bounded by picturesque eminences, and the broad Potomac, and lying within view of his home and tomb, shall remain forever the political capital of the United States.\*

#### 4. LEGAL EFFECT OF REPEATING GOSSIP.

"THEY SAY."—There is a decision in the last volume of Gray's American Law Reports, which is at once sound morals and good law. A woman, sued for slander, defended on the ground that she only repeated, and without malice, what was currently reported. The Court held that to repeat a story, which is false and slanderous, no matter how widely it may have been circulated, is at the peril of the tale bearer. Slander can not always be traced to its origin. Its power of mischief is derived from repetition, even if a disbelief of the story accompanies its relation. Indeed this half doubtful way of imparting slander, is often the surest method resorted to by the slandered to give currency to his tale.

#### 5. BE SPARING OF DRUGS.

Dr. Holmes, whose reputation as a physician is equal to his literary popularity, in a valedictory address to the medical students of Harvard University, delivered recently, gives the following, we

\* The little State of Rhode Island and the State of Connecticut still continue the alternate or perambulating system with their Seat of Government. There are two Capitals in each of these States.—[Ed. J. of Ed.]