

I owe it to myself, gentlemen, not to conclude without assuring you that if due credit had been given to my earnest protestations of unfitness, I should not now have been found inadequately filling a place, of which the duties could be much better discharged by many whom I see about me. I beg, therefore, that you will be just enough to make this allowance for me; that I am here by no fault of mine; for I am but too conscious that I have the least possible pretensions to Science, excepting whatever knowledge I may have gathered in the course of a long application to one particular science which I apprehend may not be universally in favor. In the regulations first promulgated by the Council, I saw it stated "that there were three classes of persons who might with propriety join the Institute." In the first of these I was well aware that I could not claim a place. In the second class, which was stated to consist of "those who may reasonably expect to *derive some share of instruction* from the publication of your proceedings in the Journal," it seemed to me that I might be included;—and perhaps also in the third, which was defined as consisting of "those who, although they may neither have time nor *opportunity* for contributing much information, may yet have an ardent desire to countenance a laudable, and, to say the least, a patriotic undertaking." I confess I was amused by observing the delicate tact with which the framer of these regulations substituted in his description of the third class the word "opportunity" for "*ability*," which was plainly in his mind; but being willing to understand and accept the word in its hidden sense, I ventured to enter by a door so widely and considerately opened; but I entered it only for the purpose of receiving instruction, not with any idea of communicating it.