

JUVENILE ENTERTAINER.

"Torquet ab obscænis jam nunc sermonibus aurea"

No. 18.

Pictou, N. S. Wednesday Morning, November 30, 1831.

Vol. 1.

THE JUVENILE ENTERTAINER

Printed and Published every Wednesday Morning, at the Colonial Patriot Office, by W. MILNE.

CONDITIONS.

Five shillings per Annum, delivered in Town, and six shillings and three pence, when sent to the country by mail, half-yearly in advance.

When not paid half yearly in advance, seven shillings and six pence will be charged.

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BIOGRAPHY.

AMERICUS VESPUCCIUS;

Properly, Amerigo Vespucci; born March 9, 1451, at Florence, of an ancient family. He truly made great progress in natural philosophy, astronomy and geography, at that time the three principal branches of science studied at Florence, in account of their importance in relation to commerce. In 1490, he went to Spain for the purpose of trading, and was at Seville when Columbus was making preparations for his second voyage. The success of Columbus's undertaking excited Vespucci to give up trade, and explore those newly-discovered countries. According to his own account, in one of his letters, he entered on his first voyage, under the command of admiral Ojeda, May 20th, 1497, he left the harbor of Cadiz with 4 ships, and after a voyage of 37 days, reached the mainland of America, explored the bay of Paria, and sailed coast for several hundred miles, and, after several months, returned to Spain, and was received with distinction by the court at Seville. In May, 1499, he began his second voyage, the object of which was the discovery of a multitude of small islands. This is his own account. But he is fully proved, that no such voyage as the first mentioned was made, and that his first expedition to the new continent was made in 1499, under the command of Ojeda, a year after the discovery and examination of that part of the coast by Columbus. Other accounts of Vespucci are, also, inconsistent with the statement above given. After this, he entered the service of the king Emanuel of Portugal, and made 2 voyages in Portuguese ships; the first, May 10, 1501; the second, May 10, 1503. The object of this last voyage was to find a westerly passage to Malacca. Amerigo arrived at Brazil, and discovered the bay of All Saints. In 1505, he again entered the service of the king of Spain, but made no more voyages, as appears from memoranda, showing that he was at Seville till 1508, at which time he was appointed principal pilot. His duties were to prepare charts, and describe routes for vessels in their voyages to the new world, which soon received his name.

This honor certainly belonged to Columbus rather than to Amerigo, for the prior discovery of the continent by the former is not to be questioned. We have a chart of America laid down by Amerigo; a journal of 1 of his voyages, printed at Paris, 1532, in the Latin language, in 22 pages, 4to; and Amerigo's Letters, which appeared at Florence after his death, published by John Stephen di Carlo da Pavia. Vespucci died at Seville, in 1512. Emanuel, king of Portugal, caused the remains of the ship Victoria, in which he had made his last voyage to America, to be hung up in the cathedral at Lisbon, and Florence conferred marks of distinction on his family. The accounts of his life are full of contradictions and perplexities.

Encyclopædia Americana.

AMES FISHER,

One of the most eloquent of American statesmen and writers, was born at Dedham, in Massachusetts, April 9, 1753, of very respectable parents. Soon after the completion of his 12th year, he was admitted to Harvard college, with the reputation of uncommon talents and attainments. Diligence, regularity and success marked his collegiate course of four years. After receiving his degree, in 1774, the narrow circumstances of his widowed mother compelled him to postpone, for several years, the accomplishment of his original purpose of studying the law. In the interval, he acted as an assistant teacher in a public school, and continued to cultivate classical literature, to the signal improvement of his taste and fancy. At length, in 1781, he commenced the practice of the law, with the stock of knowledge which he had acquired in the office of a member of the profession, in Boston. Opportunity soon occurred for the display of his superior qualifications, both as a speaker and essay writer. The same which followed his early efforts conduces to place him in the Massachusetts convention for ratifying the constitution, in 1788. From this sphere, in which he made a deep impression by some of his speeches, particularly that on biennial elections, he passed to the house of representatives in the state legislature. Here, he soon became so eminent as an orator and man of business, that the voters of the Suffolk district elected him their first representative in the congress of the United States. He had not been long in that assembly before his friends and admirers were satisfied that they had not overrated his abilities. He won there the palm of eloquence, besides proving himself equal to the discussion of the deepest subjects of politics and finance, and the execution of the most arduous committee labors. He remained in congress during eight years, the whole of Washington's administration, which he constantly and zealously defended. "His speech on the British treaty," says his distinguished biographer, doctor Kirkland, "was the era of his political life. For many months, he had been sinking under weakness, and, though he had attended the long and interesting debate

on the question which involved the constitution and the peace of the United States, it was feared he would be unable to speak. But when the time came for taking a vote so big with consequences, his emotions would not suffer him to be silent. His appearance, his situation, the magnitude of his subject, the force and the pathos of his eloquence, gave this speech an extraordinary power over the feelings of the dignified and numerous assembly who heard it. When he had finished, a member in opposition moved to postpone the decision of the question, that they might not vote under the influence of a sensibility which their calm judgment might condemn."—On the retirement of Washington, Mr. Ames returned to his residence at Dedham, where he occupied himself with the management of his farm and the practice of the law. The latter he relinquished in a few years, owing to the decline of his health; but he felt too deep an interest in the welfare of his country to withdraw his mind and pen from politics. He published a considerable number of essays, relating chiefly to the contest between Great Britain and revolutionary France, as it might affect American liberty and prosperity. No writer evinced more ardor for the success of Britain, or more horror of the character and tendencies of the French despotism. In 1804, Mr. Ames was chosen president of Harvard college,—an honor which he declined. When Washington died Mr. Ames, then a member of the council of the commonwealth, was appointed to pronounce his funeral eulogy before the legislature of Massachusetts.—The injury which his constitution sustained in 1795 was never fully repaired. From that period his health declined, until, at length, after an extreme debility for two years, death ended his sufferings. He expired July 4, 1808; and, when the intelligence of this event was received a public meeting of citizens was held, in order to testify the general respect for his character. His remains were carried to Boston, where they were interred with honors such as had not been before paid to those of any private citizen.—In 1809, his works were issued in a large octavo volume, with prefatory notices of his life and character, from the pen of the reverend doctor Kirkland, president of Harvard college, who had enjoyed his personal friendship and intimacy. The volume is fraught with profound remarks, various historical lore, and eloquent declamation. Although the political interest of most of the topics is gone, there remains much to captivate and reward attention in the richness of fancy, warmth of feeling, beauty of language, and felicity of copious illustration, which distinguish almost every page.—Fisher Ames left seven children and a wife, to whom he was tenderly attached. In person, he exceeded a little the middle stature, was well-proportioned and perfectly erect. His features and countenance were fine, and his manners easy and affable. Of his delivery as an orator, his biographer states, that he did not systematically study the exterior graces of speaking, but his attitude was