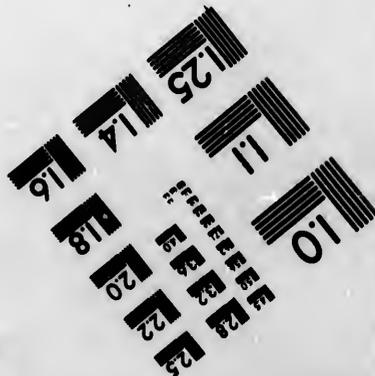
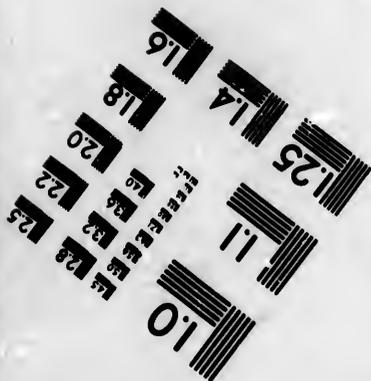
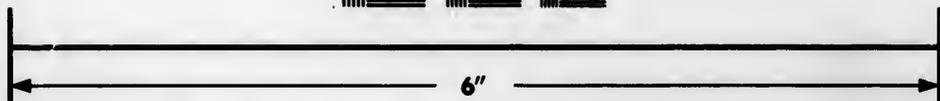
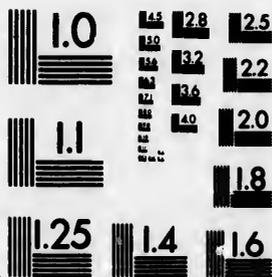


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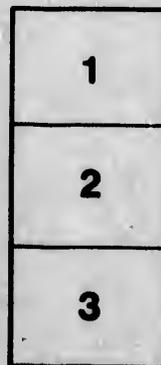
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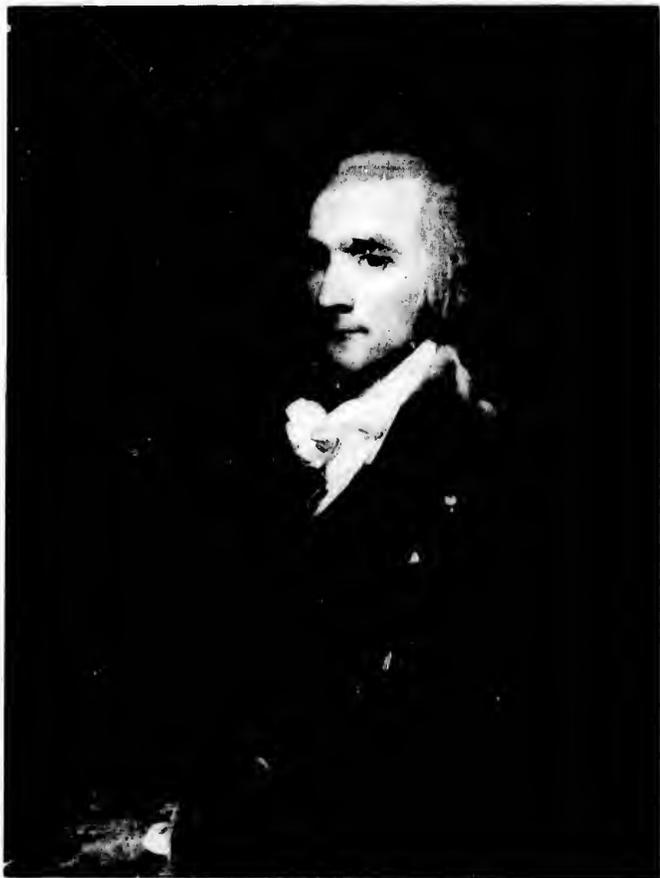
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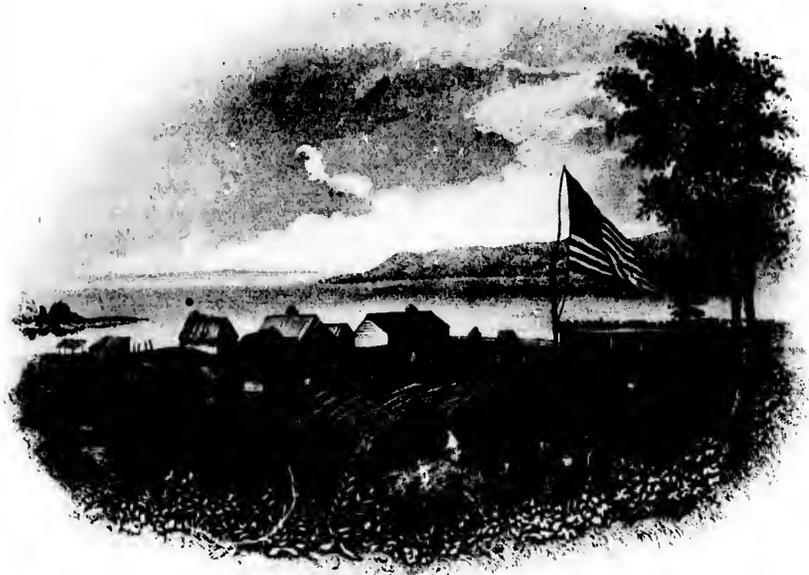
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*John Jacob Astor.
After a Portrait by Gilbert Stuart*

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Astoria in 1812.

JOHN JACOB ASTOR.

I HAVE often had occasion to remember a remark made with droll solemnity by the American sculptor, Hiram Power, at his studio in Florence thirty-four years ago, "Wealth is nothing." And I recall these words because they represent pre-eminently the characteristic and distinctive opinion of a large portion of the original American colonists and of their descendants.

I failed to become a convert to Mr. Power's New England philosophy, whereof so many like phrases and *obiter dicta* are current in familiar American parlance. I never wished to live at Brookdale, where Hawthorne went to learn that wealth is nothing, nor should I have been content at Walden with the contemplation of nature and a daily plate of Thoreau's bean soup. On the contrary, I am so little of a Diogenes, that it has always seemed to me a truism that we owe to wealth the greatest advantages and pleasures that life can offer in education, in the comforts and refinements of home, in the embellishments of art and in the delight of travel.

Throughout the United States, which is the poor man's country, my opinion would have been repudiated even so lately as fifty years ago. The founders of the Great Republic, and their immediate descendants, believed that wealth has a bad influence upon the people; that it is a menace to popular institutions; that it is democratic and virtuous to be poor, and aristocratic and un-American to be rich. These principles were the household words of the Puritan and Quaker colonists, and so strongly did they stamp these doctrines upon the standards of their time, that to this day they are echoed in a desultory and perfunctory manner

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in the school and lecture room, from the pulpit, and upon the stage, by the tendencies of legislative enactment, and in the utterance of the Press, and by the Jury which finds the poor man obviously right and the rich man necessarily wrong.

The theorists, who at the close of the American Revolution elaborated a Federal Government, very logically adopted the principle as the pivot about which much of their legislation circled, that large fortunes are contrary to the austere tenets of republican simplicity. The minds of these men, from their infancy, were under the influence of a religious aversion to the pomps and vanities of riches. The framers of the American Constitution left upon that remarkable instrument the imprint of their deliberate intention, that the heirs of the men who achieved American Independence should be nowise favoured by the entails and primogeniture and hereditary successions of Courts and Cavaliers. They aimed at the continual redistribution of accumulated property—from shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves in two generations, as it is nowadays phrased—and their purpose was

encouraged in no small degree by the preponderating religious sentiment of New England, whose favourite discourse it was that only by a miracle, equivalent to the most improbable phenomenon, could a rich man enter into Heaven.

At the close of the Revolutionary war, the new Republic comprised a



Waldorf.



(From a water-colour sketch.)

strip extending along the Atlantic seaboard from the Green Mountains to the Spanish possessions in Florida. All west of Pennsylvania, Virginia and the Carolinas was Indian territory, into which only a few adventurous pioneers had penetrated. No white man had yet crossed the continent, and but few had seen the Great Lakes or the Mississippi. The five millions of keen freemen and freewomen who inhabited the Thirteen States were unsurpassed in enterprise and endurance, and it appeared to be manifest destiny that the vast tracts stretching westward, belonging to France, to Spain, and to the aboriginal inhabitants, should become their inheritance. It was during this early period of recovery from the devastation of the revolutionary struggle, and when New York was rising from the ashes of the conflagration of 1776, that a poor German lad, whose name was destined to become famous, arrived at that city in November 1784.

My great-grandfather was born in a peasant's cottage in the village of Waldorf, or Wald-Dorf, "the village in a wood," near Heidelberg, on July 17th, 1763. He received the usual parish school education, and at the age of sixteen left

home to escape a stepmother's ill usage. He set out on foot for the Rhine, and pausing for a last look at the familiar scenes he was to behold no more for many years, made three valuable resolves to which he adhered through life—to be honest, to be industrious, and never to gamble. Arrived in London, he lodged for four years at the house of an elder brother, and having during that interval acquired the English language, embarked for the New World, towards whose broadening field of opportunity he felt himself irresistibly attracted, and where he had the premonition of great fortune.

Upon reaching New York he at once busied himself in the fur trade, to whose vast developments his thoughtful attention had been directed by a fellow-countryman, and wherein immense profits were being realised. He entered upon this occupation with unremitting vigour, and in a dozen years had diverted some of the most profitable markets from his competitors, and was at the head of a business branching to Albany, Buffalo, Plattsburg and Detroit. He established his central office at New York, where he diligently cultivated a merchant's habits in regularity and method, in the knowledge of accounts, and in the mastery of the minutest details of his affairs. He rose early, lived frugally, laboured with indefatigable activity, and soon had considerable means at command. He was a keen judge of the men employed either at his counting-room, or as traders with the Indians, and—himself the most painstaking of them all—required from each the best of which he was capable.

The furs, when delivered, were shipped to England, the vessels returning with English manufactures; and it was not long before he was able to buy a ship of his own, and in the following year a second. Before the end of the century he had, to quote his own expression, "a million dollars afloat," which represented a fleet of a dozen vessels. He was the first merchant in America to conceive the idea of habitually circumnavigating the globe, sending supercargoes with American furs to England, thence carrying British wares to China, and returning with tea. For about twenty-five years his ships sailed round the world, some going eastward and some westward, each voyage occupying two years more or less. These incessant departures were directed from the New York counting-room, which in those days of sailing packets, with commercial restrictions now unknown, with inevitable delays and accidents, without telegraphs, and with but irregular postal communication, demanded the most comprehensive foresight and sagacity in the organisation and conduct of each successive venture. Mr. Astor tells us that it was his habit to meditate at leisure upon his projects, and to elaborate their minutest details, but that once set in motion they were urged forward without fear or hesitation, *and without advice*.

During the first years of his life in America, the development of the commercial establishment Mr. Astor was building up called for his frequent presence among the Indian tribes with which the fur trade was carried on. He was obliged to be his own agent at the frontier trading stations, making agreements for the delivery of large quantities of furs; and as his dealings multiplied, it was no less necessary to regulate the affairs of his agencies. In later life he often spoke with enthusiasm of the incidents and adventures of this period of his career. It is easy to place before one's imagination the grandeur of the scenes he then beheld in their primeval beauty. Through the forests of Lower Canada, of New York and Michigan, he walked, guided by *coureurs des bois*, sometimes the first European explorer of their recesses. He traversed the Great Lakes with a band of Ontario *voyageurs*, and shot the Sault Sainte Marie in a birch canoe with a couple of Indians. He visited encampments on the

St. Lawrence and at Saginaw Bay, and beheld along the Mohawk valley the last Iroquois wigwams—those final vestiges of the intrepid Six Nations. Wherever he went he dealt with the chiefs, bargaining with them in a spirit of fairness and humanity, and forbidding his agents ever to sell liquor to the savages. These journeyings were continued through the summers of several years, and their area extended from the Hudson to the copper rocks of Lake Superior. Not many Europeans ever beheld the magnificence of American scenery thus in aboriginal wildness, and few received from it more profound and suggestive influences. How earnestly must an intelligent man have pondered the sights and sounds that were of ordinary occurrence in those remote woods and waterways: the exuberant song of brilliant-plumaged birds; the painted redskins with uncouth and fearful visage; at break of day the sun-flushed calm of the unpolluted lakeside; at evening, from afar, the mournful cry of a loon, or, at rare intervals, that strange and significant sound which pioneers describe, the downfall of a great old tree crashing through the branches of its neighbours! How suggestive to a keen and aspiring mind the common spectacle of an eagle soaring across the transparent sky and winging its graceful flight afar: and how often in after years, in the midst of ease and prosperity, must the subject of this sketch have mused upon the incidents and perils of these journeyings of his adventurous and masterful prime!

The lucrative results of the fur trade bear comparison with the later products of the Californian gold mines. Each was the El Dorado of its day, each gave employment direct or indirect to many thousands, and each was the object of intense competition. As the fur-bearing animals which formerly filled the northern forests—the beaver, racoon, mink, sable, and otter—were diminished and in places wholly exterminated, new streams and undisturbed forests, ever farther westward, were scoured in search of game, until the pursuit spread across the continent from ocean to ocean. It was this enlargement of the fur-trading area which led to the earliest establishments of commerce on the Pacific coast. Of all the schemes of aggrandisement framed by Mr. Astor's various competitors—the North-west Fur Company, the Missouri Company, the Hudson's Bay Company, the Mackinaw Company, and the Russian Fur Company, several of them being strong and opulent associations—none approached the magnitude of his project of colonisation, which the pen of Washington Irving has preserved in *ASTORIA*. This enterprise contemplated the development of the North Pacific coast by the establishment of a trading station which should ultimately grow to be a city, and which from the first should be doubly in communication with New York—by sea around Cape Horn, and also by an overland route, which Sir Archibald Mackenzie's journey across the Continent in 1793 had suggested. The feasibility of an overland route was further demonstrated in 1804 by the exploration of Lewis and Clarke, who, ascending the Missouri, were the first white men to traverse the passes of the Rocky Mountains, reaching the Pacific at the mouth of the Columbia River, whose harbour had been mentioned by early navigators. The area of operations was thus to be shifted from the exhausted forests of Michigan and Canada to the almost boundless territories now known as Oregon, Washington, Vancouver's Island and British Columbia, a new and vast market being simultaneously found in China, where a large demand for furs had arisen. Perhaps few private individuals, even in the great days of Italian merchant princes, ever more readily brought the visionary aspects of so romantic a conception within the working limits of a feasible undertaking. In Mr. Astor's mind the various ramifications of the entire scheme were elaborately developed and perfected. The central post at the mouth of the Columbia; the lines of trade branching into the interior; the ships

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arriving with wares suited to the Indian traffic; their departure for China laden with furs; their sailing thence to England freighted with tea, and their return to New York with British manufactures—all appeared coherent and practicable. In this enterprise Mr. Astor was not actuated by a mere desire of gain—for he was already rich beyond the needs of any individual—but by a delight in the exercise of those faculties whose calibre had already been so widely proved, by the creation



Mr. Lewis, Supercargo of the "Tonquin."
(From a miniature.)

of a vast emporium of commerce whose operations would explore and civilise the entire western coast of the continent, bringing its expanse within the influence and control of the American Government.

The first incidents of the settlement of Astoria, as graphically set forth day by day in the manuscript journal of its existence in my possession, were not fortunate. The ship *Tonquin* sailed from New York with an equipment of all that the infant colony could require and a company of experienced men to establish a fortified post at the mouth of the Columbia. The voyage was marked by bitter altercations upon questions of privilege, or rather personal vanity, between the captain and the agents and supercargoes. These disputes assumed proportions that made harmonious action difficult,

and impaired the discipline of the ship even before her destination was reached, in March 1811. The entrance into the Columbia River was accomplished in a heavy gale, with the sacrifice of eight men sent out with two boats to take soundings. Amid renewed altercations between Captain Thorn and the agents, whom he stigmatised as "the most worthless beings that ever broke ship-biscuit," the site of the settlement was fixed upon a tongue of land named by earlier explorers "Point George." Goods were landed, the angles of the fort traced, and acquaintance made with the Chinook Indians and their one-eyed chief, Comcomly, a shrewd and daring savage of whom mention is frequently made, and who welcomed the voyagers with barbaric hospitality. After a feast of fish and game, Comcomly's wives and daughters danced for the solace and diversion of their guests, having previously painted their swarthy bodies with gaudy stripes and anointed themselves with cod-liver oil. One infers that these nymphs, with their aboriginal charms thus heightened, must have produced a captivating impression, for we presently learn that Duncan McDougall, a canny Scot, and the chief agent of the settlement, was married soon after to one of the Schem's daughters.

Three months later, the *Tonquin* set sail with twenty-three souls on board for Vancouver's, where Captain Thorn's irascible temper was not improved by the tricky methods of the Indians, till, in a moment of spleen, he struck a chieftain in the face and kicked his peltries overboard. Such an affront was not likely to pass without bloody retaliation. The next morning the Indians approached in their canoes, offering furs, and apparently unarmed. In violation of Mr. Astor's written instruction that the savages were to be allowed on shipboard only a few at a time, they were suffered to clamber up the sides of the ship in large numbers. Mr. Lewis, the supercargo, called Captain Thorn's attention to the throngs putting off from shore, and expressed the suspicion that they carried concealed weapons beneath their tunics. The answer was a taunting sneer, and it was the last word the skipper uttered. Perceiving that their intended treachery was discovered, the

redskins fell upon the whites with tomahawk and scalping knife. The desperate struggle that ensued ended in the butchery of all the crew on deck, only four sailors, with young Lewis, who was dangerously wounded, finding a refuge in the cabin, where they barricaded themselves against their pursuers, and succeeded in clearing the ship with musketry fire. On the following morning, when day broke, the *Tonquin* was still at anchor with sails idly flapping, and no one apparently on board. The savages, at this sight, swarmed back with yells of triumph upon their prey, and the ship was soon covered with them, when suddenly the powder magazine exploded, and Lewis, by his own suicide and the destruction of the vessel, wreaked a sanguinary vengeance upon his foes.

The news of the loss of the *Tonquin* was brought months later to Astoria by that ill-fated vessel's Indian interpreter who, having been on shore at the time of the conflict, was spared by his captors. It struck consternation into the hearts of the little garrison, and while their apprehensions were soon relieved by the arrival of a second vessel, the narrative of McDougall and his men, and of those who made their way overland during the year 1812, is one of continual hardship and danger. A climax was reached in June of that year, at the outbreak of war between Great Britain and the United States. The colony was by that time fairly well established, and Mr. Astor at once applied to the Federal Government for



Comcomly.
(From a water-colour drawing.)

letters of marque to equip a vessel at his own cost for the defence of the Columbia River. He pointed out to Mr. Monroe, then Secretary of State, how much had been achieved, dwelt upon the brilliant future that awaited the settlement, and entreated that his own efforts and the endurance and sufferings of his men might not be for nothing. But he waited in vain for a reply to repeated and urgent solicitations. The Washington Government was too absorbed with its own dangers to heed the exposure of a remote station, and was, moreover, nowise displeased that so comprehensive a hold upon the illimitable resources of the Pacific coast should be stricken from the hand about to grasp them. This exercise of democratic antipathy to private fortune was perfectly consistent, for had the Astoria project been successful, it would have conferred a greater domain than any ever yet controlled by a single citizen. The end was not long in coming. On November 30th, 1812, the British sloop of war *Raccoon* appeared off Cape Disappointment, and summoned



Mr. Astor's Residence, New York.
(From a pencil drawing.)

McDougall to surrender, which he did with precipitation. The judgment of his employer, of those with him at Astoria, and of the Chinook Sachem, his one-eyed father-in-law, was that he betrayed his trust. For once Mr. Astor's knowledge of human nature was disastrously at fault. The fort was defensible, the river channel was difficult of navigation, and Comecomly declared his redoubtable braves, who numbered some hundreds, to be equal to the repulse of any landing force which might penetrate into the woods, which, as the *Raccoon's* company numbered but one hundred and twenty, was not impossible. But incentives and encouragements were wasted upon McDougall, and it is slender consolation to know that the fighting Sachem applied to his renegade son-in-law all the disparaging epithets known to the Chinook vernacular, and added to them the hard words he had gathered from the white man's civilisation.

So perished one of the most remarkable ventures of that period of early exploration; and it is worthy of note, as showing the popular ignorance that prevails

concerning it in America, that its originator is commonly supposed to have derived his fortune from it, whereas the loss was £800,000, a heavy reverse in those days, and one that nearly ruined him.

With the return of peace and the withdrawal of the British blockading squadron from New York, Mr. Astor's consignments to England and China were resumed, and were continued until his retirement from commercial activity in 1827. At the beginning of this century he commenced buying plots of land on New York Island, having an early prescience of the growth of the city by which it is now almost covered. These purchases were made with such judgment in the line of approaching expansion as frequently to be sold again after a few years for double or treble what he had paid for them. With enlarged means these acquisitions of real estate assumed larger proportions, and took in whole farms, which gradually became covered with houses. To show that this species of farming as practised with discrimination was not in vain, it may be mentioned that one of these farms, purchased in 1811 for £900, is now worth, with its improvements, £1,400,000. An amusing notion prevalent in America is that by some queer rule of his descendants no purchase has ever been or ever can be parted with. As a matter of fact the Estate books record the sale of hundreds of plots of land during the entire century, and it should require no extraordinary acumen to perceive that so silly and narrow-minded a rule could only be imagined by very silly and narrow-minded people.

Mr. Astor's early domestic life was as simple as were all his surroundings during those primitive and provincial days. Two years after his arrival he married, and was soon able to live in a house of his own—the first, we are told, that he possessed. His wife, who had been brought up in New York during the revolutionary period, and who, upon the withdrawal of the British garrison, saw General Washington ride in upon his famous white charger, was a devoted and loving helpmate through storm and sunshine. Anxieties and cares were rarely wanting, and my great-grandfather's rise to fortune was due to none of the happy windfalls and favouring chances popularly associated with those early years: the first half of his life was an arduous struggle in which adversity and disappointment only stimulated to further self-improvement and to a broader and profounder study of the world. As time passed he was frequently consulted by the United States Treasury upon financial subjects, and was in correspondence upon monetary questions with Henry Clay, James Monroe, Thomas Jefferson, President Madison and Albert Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury. In 1816 he was appointed a director of the Bank of the United States. He detested the shams and insincerities and pettifoggings whereby one who is approached by many beggars and by not a few rogues is often made to see the less attractive aspect of human nature. His only extravagance was in acquisition of news and information of use in his operations over the globe, a comical instance of which was his receiving intelligence from Montreal by special relays of the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, December 24th, 1814, whereby peace was restored between Great Britain and the United States, two days before it was known to the American Government to which he had the gratification of making its announcement.

From 1820 to 1822, and from 1829 to 1834, Mr. Astor resided in Europe. Soon after arriving on the Continent he visited his native village of Waldorf, where from the first provision had been made for his surviving relatives, and which he afterwards endowed with an asylum for its infirm and destitute. How familiar and yet how different must the scenes of his forlorn boyhood have appeared, with their humble surroundings, whither his ancestor, Jean Jacques d'Astorg, a French Huguenot, had fled, upon the Revocation of the Edict of



Mrs. Astor.
(From a miniature.)

Nantes, and where he had been thankful to find a refuge! Traveling through the Black Forest and Switzerland, Mr. Astor purchased a villa named Genthod, on the Lake of Geneva, and after journeying extensively in Germany and Italy, resided for some time in Paris, where his daughter-in-law's father, General Armstrong, had been American Minister. During leisure hours in New York he had learned French from an *émigré* instructor, and now applied himself to acquiring Italian. He passed two winters at Rome and Naples, visiting the wonders of Italian art, delighted with Pompeii, rejoicing in the charm of the Southern scenery, and

finding everywhere objects for study and reflection. He was presented at the Court of Charles the Tenth; and three years later, a revolution having intervened, at that of Louis Philippe. He met Guizot in Paris and Metternich in Vienna, and at Naples witnessed the accession of young Ferdinand II., subsequently better known to fame as King Bomba. The summers were spent at Genthod with his daughter Eliza, who had married the diplomatic representative of the Hanse towns in Paris, whom I remember in my boyhood as a handsome and courtly old man.

After his final return to New York he lived much in the company of a small group of men of letters, of whom the most distinguished was Washington Irving, who spent several years as a guest in Mr. Astor's house. He appreciated fine dramatic performances, and was a regular theatre-goer in the days of Edmund Kean, Charles Mathews, Garcia and Madame Malibran, when a piece of merit was on the stage. To the end he delighted in making excursions, and found in the magnificent scenery of the Hudson, the Alleghanies and the Catskills an exhilarating and inexhaustible pleasure. During the long evenings of the American winter his recreation was in his library, and this fondness for books increased as his reading extended. He gathered about him a few thousand choice volumes, taking by preference historical and biographical subjects. With what interest must his self-taught mind have traced through those brilliant pages the vicissitudes of earthly affairs, and mused upon the subtle destiny that in all ages so often wrecks the illustrious and raises men from humble spheres to renown!

In America my great-grandfather's life and character have been distorted and

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- PEDRO D'ASTORCA** followed Raymond, Count of Toulouse, to FRANCE, after the war in SPAIN, 1085, against the MOORS, who were commanded by Yusuf Tashafin, Moslem King of the ALMORAVIDS of Morocco. Received a grant of lands in LANGUEDOC from Count Raymond, whom he followed as a Crusader to the Holy Land, where he was killed at the taking of JERUSALEM, 1100. A SPANISH Queen granted to one of his ancestors the arms of a Falcon, Argent, on a gloved hand, Or, in acknowledgment of the recapture of her favourite Falcon. The recipient adopted as his name the SPANISH word AZOR (The Goshawk)
- PIERRE D'ASTORC** Served under SIMON de MONTFORT, Comte de Toulouse, at the battle of MARET, 1213, in which the KING of ARAGON was killed.
- BERNARD D'ASTORC** A Crusader serving under Alphonse, Comte de Toulouse
- GUILLAUME D'ASTORC** Present at the Foi et Hommage rendered, May 1221, by Mainfroid de Chateaufort
- PIERRE D'ASTORC** Seigneur de Noailiac, LIMOUSIN, in 1268.
- ADHEMAR D'ASTORC** Served in 1298 in GASCONY and FLANDERS.
- BERNARD D'ASTORC** Served against the ENGLISH in 1339 and 1356
- PIERRE D'ASTORC** Seigneur de Montbartier, GUIENNE, 1390, 1435
- JEAN JACQUES D'ASTORC** Married Anne de Montclair served against the ENGLISH in 1440, 42, 50.
- JACQUES D'ASTORC** Seigneur de SEGREVILLE Married Jeanne de Beaufort.
- JEAN JACQUES D'ASTORC** Married Jeanne de VERDALE
- JACQUES D'ASTORC** Knight of the Order of St John of JERUSALEM.
- ANTOINE D'ASTORC** Baron de Montbartier (Haute GARONNE) Served in ITALY under FRANÇOIS Ist Married Marguerite, daughter of Roger Baron of MONTESPAN December 10th 1505.
- ANTOINE D'ASTORC** Seigneur de Montbartier, and Governor in the Diocese of TOULOUSE. Married Gabrielle de GOIREN de LUX in 1553. His Will is dated February 27th 1587. The Chateau de Montbartier, GUIENNE, was destroyed by the LIGUE in 1571.
- JOSEPH D'ASTORC** Marquis de Roquepine. Married Miremonde de MUN, November 10th 1592. Comte d'Aubarede, BIGORRE, by gift of Raymond de GOIRANS, his aunt, Dame d'Aubarede.
- PAUL D'ASTORC** Seigneur d'Aubarede, Governor of SEDAN, Marechal des Camps Married Gabrielle de Mauléon, daughter of Giraud de Mauléons Baron de BARBAZON, July 31st, 1629
- JACQUES D'ASTORC** Comte d'Aubarede, Baron de BARBAZON, Seigneur de THUY, MORY GINDON and BELMONT. Married Hilaire de BUSCA, daughter of Baron de Peyrusse, February 2nd 1652
- JEAN JACQUES D'ASTORC** Born in FRANCE, January 28th 1664 Fled to GERMANY upon the Revocation of the Edict of NANTES in 1685. Married Anne Margaretha Eberhard in 1692. Died at NUSSLOCH near HEIDELBERG, BADEN, April 2nd 1711.
- FELIX ASTOR** Son of the foregoing. Born at NUSSLOCH, 1693. Married Eva Dorothea Freund in 1739. Died at WALDORF, near HEIDELBERG, BADEN, August 10th 1765.
- JOHANN JACOB ASTOR** Born July 7th 1724. Married Maria Magdalena Vorfelder, July 8th, 1766 Died at WALDORF, April 18th 1816.
- JOHN JACOB ASTOR** Born at WALDORF, July 17th 1763, Remained in AMERICA in 1784. Married Sara Todd September 19th 1785 Died in NEW YORK, March 29th 1848.

distorted and

caricatured until only an odd travesty survives. By the press, in particular, with the exception of a few serious journals, he has been continually derided and reviled with that spirit of pure malignity which pursues the successful man. It is not democratic to climb so high. The value of such criticism may be estimated by what trans-Atlantic newspapers say of one another in the heat of their occasional rivalries; at such times each can be trusted to tell the unvarnished truth about the other, and it is not infrequently made to appear that there exists no ampler copiousness of meanness and vulgarity, no grosser exhibition of ignorance, no coarser profanation of private life, of modesty, of the defenceless, or of domestic sorrow, than fills the columns of these lepers white as snow. And yet, such is the infirmity of our nature, that it is difficult for an individual to disregard the depressing influence of an habitual atmosphere of personal abuse. I remember when a lad hearing my father say of some of the most virulent of these attacks—*"It is enough to make one wish to abandon such a country."*—an opinion I subsequently learned to share.

Throughout the United States the old-time Quaker and Puritan faith in simplicity of life and small fortunes has latterly been rudely shaken. The gradual and universal transition to standards of opulence furnishes an instructive study. The development of "plutocrats" can hardly be within the intention of the founders of the Republic: neither are the tramps, who number close upon two hundred thousand, and who have their annual "Congress," at which the moral and physical filth of the land assembles to discuss its campaign for the ensuing year. And yet the organic and economic system, which the men of 1789 devised and set in operation, has not only failed to prevent the gathering together of great fortunes, but by an extraordinary sarcasm it has half ruined and largely exterminated the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the people for whom they legislated. Where to-day are the direct descendants of those colonists who filled the ranks of the Continental army and made America? What has become of the Revolutionary families? Who now owns the land those colonists possessed and for which many of them gave their lives? Half those families have become wholly extinct. In some the surviving members have sunk to the level of mere tillers of the soil. Many live in respectable destitution. In six of the original Thirteen States—namely, Georgia, Virginia, Connecticut, Delaware, Vermont, and North Carolina—the Society of the Cincinnati, founded by Washington and Lafayette, has perished for want of any one to perpetuate it. Of their possessions at the end of the Revolutionary war not one ten-thousandth part is now in the ownership of their lineal successors. Only in rare instances do they retain the land upon which the homesteads of their ancestors were raised. How pungent must seem the moral: "Wealth is nothing" to those of them who have inherited the names and heirlooms of their Revolutionary sires and nothing more! Even before the end of the first half-century of Independence it began to be asked how far the equality of man with man could be depended on to elevate the level of desire and accomplishment; and as early as the days of Benjamin Franklin there were not wanting thinkers who questioned the wisdom of submitting complex and delicate problems of society and statecraft to the decision of the multitude. But in Mr. Astor's tranquil old age such problems were only at a rudimentary stage, and it may be that they have not advanced beyond that limit at the present day. He himself expressed unbounded faith in the future of the American Continent, and in the ultimate development of the country to a vast range of wealth and power, irrespective of, or even in despite of political creeds.

At seventy-five his vigour began to fail, and he was obliged to discontinue his

favourite horseback exercise. Thenceforward he resided chiefly at a country seat on the East River, just beyond what were then the City limits. Here Washington Irving composed the history of Astoria; here the project for the gift to the City of an "Astor Library," to be permanently open to the public, was conceived; and here, looking out upon the movement of the ships that passed by Long Island Sound, whose suggestions and associations must have been a perpetual interest and inspiration, his life faded peacefully away.

Mr. Astor's portrait expresses his character with unmistakable distinctness. It is a face that speaks of method and penetration and lucidity; of a reserved and meditative habit; of patient courage and masterful resolve; of forethought and suggestiveness and common sense—precisely the qualities expressed throughout his despatches to his agents. He was a man intense in action, who early divined the astute philosophy that the secret of success is concentration; that ingenuity often brings the improbable to pass; that amid the emergencies of this haphazard world, the ultimate reliance, under Providence, is oneself; that whoever attempts great things without believing in his own power to achieve, is certain to fail. He



was blessed with the excellent nervous system of one who has sprung fresh from the people, and abstemiousness and sobriety preserved to him a reserve of staying power that sustained him through many troubles and sorrows. He was wont to say jestingly that an ounce of practice is better than an ocean of theory, and professed the practical man's scorn of visionary experiments. None knew better how to make the utmost of opportunity, or to adapt the means to the end. In a period of extraordinary financial expansion and development, and the floating of promiscuous securities and the promoting of many doubtful ventures, he was a man of inflexible truth and probity. He never asked advice, believing his own judgment to be as reliable as his neighbours', and content to make his own mistakes rather than theirs. In the midst of indefatigable industry, a vein of sentimental sadness, of which his private papers give repeated indication, tinged his thoughts with a strange and retrospective pathos. Perhaps this was but a trace of the reverie of one who, grown meditative as the shadows lengthen, and passing the joys and loves and triumphs of a lifetime in review, catches beneath a thousand memories their inevitable undertone of tears.

Among the souvenirs I possess of my great-grandfather are two medals—one

silver, the other bronze—that were originally conferred as rewards upon Indian chiefs. The appearance of the portrait puts their probable date at about 1818. Mr. Astor was "The American Fur Company," that corporate body being a fiction intended to broaden and facilitate his operations. The letters U.M.O. stand for "Upper Missouri Outfit," originally the name of a trading stockade on the Yellowstone, and now a Government post. One of these medals, which are apparently the only ones remaining in existence, has been bored, to permit its being worn at the neck by the Sachem upon whom it was bestowed. Through how many swarthy hands must both have passed! at how many pow-wows and savage dances must they have figured! how significantly they speak of the vanished Sagamores and Wiskinskies with whose fate they were identified, and no less of him whose effigy they carried to the primeval wilderness, and to whose potent and far-reaching influence they bear such eloquent testimony!

WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR.

Respectfully yours
John Jacob Astor

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