

The Diaries of Sidney George Fisher

1838-1839

EXCERPTS from another year in the life of Sidney George Fisher form this third installment of his diaries. In 1838 and 1839 Fisher continues to move in the familiar world of his Philadelphia. Life still seems promising to him, and he is still quite certain that he can make the necessary effort to establish his fortune. That effort, however, he continues to postpone.

October 2, 1838 Since closing my last volume, nothing worth noting has happened. I have been regularly in Court in the morning and have read law every day. I have four cases, which I hope will be the sources of other business. Have been received & treated courteously & kindly by some of the older members of the profession. Altho I have had no practice I am not without reputation, and am as well known as any man of my age in town. This is a great advantage, as it gives me at once a respectable position, and I do not feel much doubt about acquitting myself creditably in such practice as I may be able to get.

October 10, 1838 Yesterday was election day, and so far as I have heard every thing passed off quietly enough. Voted the Whig ticket and against the amendments to the Constitution. Ritner, however, will in all probability be defeated and the amendments carried, and with them it is to be feared many evils will be introduced into the state.¹ The independence of the judiciary will be destroyed and thus the passions of the partizan introduced into the courts. Justices of the peace, prothonotaries, registers etc., will be made elective; and thus improper persons chosen, and the fraud and excitement of elections, already extensive & dangerous, increased. The last clause of the new Constitution provides for future changes; thus all

¹ Joseph Ritner was defeated in the gubernatorial contest of 1838 by Democrat David R. Porter. The amendments to the Constitution were ratified with the backing of the Democratic Party.

character of establishment & permanence will be taken away from the government, and its principles together with the rights a Constitution is intended to protect, set afloat upon the uncertain & billowy sea of popular passion & opinion.

October 18, 1838 On Tuesday [October 16] went to a small party at Mrs. D. W. Coxe's. Joseph Bonaparte² there. Never saw him before. Looked at him with interest from the scenes thro which he has passed, & from his connection with the master-spirit of the age. Likeness to Napoleon very striking, particularly the profile. Shape of head, jaw, forehead, nose, mouth, chin and figure very like the busts & pictures. The eye & expression showed that not this, but another body now returned to dust, held the soul which governed the world. He is very simple & plain in dress & manners.

October 21, 1838 Sunday. Cloudy, damp and cool. At 10, took my favorite ride, out the old Balt: turn-pike to a lane in the woods & home by the West-Chester road. The weather was sombre & gloomy, like myself. Went at a rapid pace, almost in a run nearly all the way. The weather & the dashing speed, seemed to suit my feelings, for I had a regular black fit upon me. Stopped at the Woodlands & went in. Never was there before. It is one of the finest old places in the country. A very large & handsome house, is seated near the river, in the midst of what may well be called a park, even now. The ground is very undulating, & covered with groups of noble forest trees. The view is extensive & beautiful. Never saw finer trees, or clumps and masses more effectively arranged.³ Miss Hamilton sold it some years ago, for \$30,000. If I had such a place I would rather part with my life, an old family estate too, & she rich. She was much attached to it however & is still. I have often heard her mourn over it & lament having sold it. She did it by the advice & persuasion of Mrs. and Mr. Harrison; & perhaps it was right. It is now owned by Mitchel, the conveyancer, who bought on speculation, & it will probably before

² Joseph Bonaparte, elder brother of Napoleon, was born in Corsica in 1768 and died in Florence in 1844. He was King of Naples, 1806-1808, and King of Spain, 1808-1813. Except for the years 1832-1837, which he spent in Europe, he lived in Philadelphia and on his estate near Bordentown, N. J., from 1815 to 1841, using the name Comte de Survilliers.

³ For an article on the planting at The Woodlands, see Sarah P. Stetson, "William Hamilton and His 'Woodlands,'" *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXIII (1949), 26-33. It was one of the most beautiful countryseats in America at the time of Hamilton's death in 1813. See Sophia Cadwalader, *Recollections of Joshua Francis Fisher* (Boston, 1929), 217-222.

long be dismantled, disforested & cut up into town lots. It is rapidly going to decay now.⁴

October 22, 1838 Hen's wife expects her accouchement every hour. In a few days I shall be an *uncle*. He is too young to be a father. Altho he is fortunate in having so fine a woman, yet it is a pity he married so young. He has assumed care & responsibility too soon, and tho he has enough to live comfortably, yet he must also live plainly & economically. To be sure he has energy & talents and can no doubt exert himself with success, and his wife must eventually have something very handsome from her parents, yet still I sometimes feel very anxious about them.

October 24, 1838 Yesterday weather pleasant. Spent the morning in attending to various affairs relating to the house, sale of mill & law business. George, Sam Fisher & Henry dined with me. Gave them a good dinner, which as my faithful old Ann is an excellent cook I am able to do, & we spent the afternoon till 8 o'clk agreeably enough. What a treasure is a good, attached old family servant. Ann is of the Mt. Harmon stock, who were remarkable for their excellent qualities. She was born there & lived with my grand-father. She has been with us many years. I wish she were 20 years younger, for she is in every respect the best servant I ever knew. William, who lives with me now, is of the same breed, being a son of "Bill" my mother's coachman, who was born at Mt. Harmon, and lived with my mother from her marriage till he died in our house, in Arch St. above 10th, which event I well remember. I like to have the descendants of the old set about me, and as there are a good many of them in town & elsewhere, all excellent servants, I hope always to be able to do so.

November 5, 1838 Monday. Henry came down to see me. Seems very happy at the birth of his daughter. Mother and child both perfectly well. The little lady is said to be remarkably large & stout. Black eyes and black hair. Named Emily Atherton, after Sarah Ann's sister.

November 6, 1838 Clear, coldish weather. Occupied in settling accs: and arranging papers. Went down town to get my hair cut.

⁴ Thomas Mitchell came into possession of The Woodlands in 1831. In 1839 he suggested that the property be used for a rural cemetery, and a corporation for that purpose was formed the next year. Joseph Jackson, *Encyclopedia of Philadelphia* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1932), IV, 1217. Contrary to Fisher's prediction, the house still stands in West Philadelphia.

Found that poor Anners⁵ was dead. I could have better spared a better man. He has cut my hair ever since I was a boy, & was perhaps the best hair-dresser in the world, as travelled men say there was nothing equal to him in London or Paris. He made a handsome fortune by his art, & his fame spread all over the country. He was quite an original, a character, with many odd and amusing traits, and withall an honest, worthy man. Don't know to whom I shall go to get rid of my exuberant locks. Went to exhibition of domestic manufactures by the Franklin Institute. Very creditable. A silver ink-stand there, designed by Fisher, & presented by the Institution for the Instruction of the blind to Friedlander,⁶ the principal, which is very beautiful, displaying excellent taste, which Fisher indeed possesses in such matters.

November 8, 1838 Rain all day. Dark, warm, dismal weather. At Court in the morning. Listened with pleasure to an argument by Mr. Sergeant. He is one of the old set, a very forcible and pleasing speaker. His manner, countenance and voice are all striking, and add greatly to the power of his eloquence. He has almost retired from the bar, Binney and Chauncey⁷ quite so. These three men headed it worthily for many years, and gave it a tone & character which it is rapidly losing. There are I fear none to take their places. They were of the old school when there was learning and dignity on the bench, and courtesy & honorable feeling at the bar which was composed of men who were gentlemen by birth & education. Things have sadly changed, and are destined to grow worse, I think, instead of better. At 2 went to see Mrs. E. P. F.⁸ Fisher went to New York this morning. She gave me a long account of their plans for the future. Mr. Harrison is to give Fisher the house they now live in, when he is married, which is to be enlarged & refurnished for the reception of the bride. He is to be married in March. Her father is to give her something handsome, and I suppose they will live very well, as there

⁵ Thomas S. Anners, "perfy store 141 Chesnut." *Desilver's Philadelphia Directory and Stranger's Guide for 1837*.

⁶ Julius R. Friedlander, the first principal of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind, died on Mar. 17, 1839. *Sixth Annual Report of the Managers of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind* (Philadelphia, 1839).

⁷ Charles Chauncey (1777-1849).

⁸ The mother of Joshua Francis Fisher, the former Elizabeth Powell Francis. Frank Willing Leach, "Old Philadelphia Families," *The North American*.

is no lack of means. Read Law and settled up accs: all the evng. Shall not come out so well in money matters at the end of the year as I expected. Have lost one or two hundred dollars or rather failed to make it, by not selling grain at the proper time. Small sums amount to great ones very rapidly. My income however is increasing, and I may hope to make something at the bar. I require, to be quite easy, \$27 or 2,800, and if I can make \$2 or 300 by practice I shall have that much. In the meantime, with a little economy I can get along very comfortably on less. My habits are rather expensive, and I hate to be obliged to think about money. I should be afraid to venture on matrimony with less than \$4000 a year. In two years, I ought to be able to have that much, if I have any luck in the profession, and if other affairs turn out well.

November 9, 1838 At 4 went to Mr. Ingersoll's. The dinner was given to some foreigner, a diplomat, I forget his name. Mr. Binney & Horace⁹ there. The fine old fellow seemed in good spirits, and talked a good deal about his tour in Europe etc. It is a treat to meet Binney. He is certainly the foremost man in this city, and I have always had the greatest respect and admiration for his character and career. He has been in all things consistent, dignified, elevated and successful. Home at 9.

November 20, 1838 At 7 went to Mr. C. J. Ingersoll's lecture at the Athenian Institute. His subject was "Europe" and it was composed of rambling recollections and remarks, interspersed with many piquant personal anecdotes, drawn he said from an old port-folio of memoranda, made during his visit there 30 years ago. It was highly interesting & amusing, full of originality & humor, clothed in polished & sometimes brilliant language and delivered with all his happy ease & elegance of manner. His description of Napoleon reviewing his troops, a spectacle which he witnessed, was highly graphic & admirably executed. The "little corporal" with his cocked hat, grey frock & plain attire, mounted on a splendid steed & surrounded by a magnificent escort of officers glittering in embroidery & gold; now sitting with easy nonchalance receiving the numberless petitions of a suppliant crowd & passing them to his aids, now galloping along the ranks and now calling a private from a regiment and chatting with him before the soldiers, officers and assembled Paris; and when the

⁹ Horace Binney, Jr. (1809-1870), a Philadelphia lawyer.

ceremony was over, running up the steps of the palace like a boy and passing his hand thro his hair, as if to arrange it for the drawing-room he was to meet there.

November 22, 1838 Am told that some foolish and illiberal persons proposed to prevent Ingersoll from lecturing the other evng, in consequence of his political offences. Many would not attend from that cause. Not one of the papers have noticed the lecture. I have a great mind to write a puff myself and take it to Fry.¹⁰ I think he should not have been chosen, as his course has certainly been unprincipled & disgraceful. But the lecture was a good one, and his talents and attainments are of a distinguished order, and there is no reason why he should not be listened to, & receive just praise.

December 7, 1838 There has been a terrible commotion at Harrisburg, growing out of a contested election; two returns having been sent of the members elected in this county. The assembly separated into two parties, each elected a speaker, not without a scuffle in the house, and proceeded separately to business. A mob entered the hall of the Senate and turned them out of doors. The governor has called out the military, and a company of volunteers is to march to the scene of action tomorrow, from this city. This is the working of the democratic spirit, which seems increasing in boldness & turbulence every hour. All the violence was committed by the loco-focos, who hired a band of ruffians from this county, to over-awe the constituted authorities, and to gain success for their party by any means & at any sacrifice. A resort to brute force has now become familiar & expected. This affair will probably produce no important consequences, as it arises from circumstances of no permanent or general interest. But such an outrage, shows a dangerous state of public feeling, and the existence of hidden causes from the tendency & operation of which, much evil may result.¹¹

December 8, 1838 Snow in the morning, afterwards clear & cold. At court till 12. The affair at Harrisburgh excites general indignation, but no serious alarm. Confidence in the people is too firmly rooted to permit anyone to believe that, without cause, the government is to be subverted by a lawless mob. About 700 troops left town this morning by the rail-road for the scene of action.

¹⁰ William Fry, publisher of the *National Gazette*.

¹¹ The disturbances described by Fisher were part of the so-called Buckshot War.

This array of force will I doubt not quell the rioters and restore order.

December 12, 1838 The same kind of weather continues. Looked over accs: and at Court till 12½. Have managed my finances this year better than hitherto; there is however room for improvement, which I expect to make. I hope it will be however by adding to the amount recd rather than by diminishing expenses. Economy is a bore, yet necessary when one has a limited income. \$3000 dollars per ann: would make me very snug, as a bachelor, and a bachelor I will remain until I find a lady who can bestow something better than an *empty* hand. I am now free to choose, and shall be very cautious how I get into another scrape. After the experience which I have had, love I think, will not be able again to vanquish reason & prudence. Not that I shall ever marry for money. In my circumstances that would be ridiculous. I have had it in my power more than once, I have it in my power *now* to do so. But I will not, whilst youth and its emotions remain, resign all hopes of domestic happiness and affection. . . . At one o'clk: rode out the Schuylkill Road. Stopped to look at a country house just built near the Falls' bridge by Mr. Rockhill,¹² a rich merchant here. Fine house, large & convenient, beautifully situated, commanding a most extensive and varied prospect, of the Schuylkill, the Delaware, the city & the surrounding country. Whilst remounting the mare tried to throw me by her old trick & was very near doing so.

December 13, 1838 Somewhat colder, but delightful weather. My pretty cousin Hetty Smith was married today, and as both herself & Wistar are members of the Society, in meeting.¹³ At 9½ went with Fisher to the house, & thence to the Arch St meeting, which was crowded by a multitude to witness the ceremony. Have not been to Quaker-meeting for many years, and was interested both by the comparative novelty of the scene & by the revival of old associations. There is something impressive in these silent assemblages, and a communion more eloquent than that of words in a multitude collected for a common object, with the thoughts of all occupied upon the same solemn topic. After sitting about an hour, one of the elders rose and preached. His subject was the efficacy &

¹² Thomas Cadwalader Rockhill (1790-1855).

¹³ Esther Fisher Smith married Miffin Wistar, son of Dr. Caspar Wistar.

beauty of the silent worship of his sect. His remarks were sensible & cogent, his style not bad, but his delivery was in the monotonous sing-song twang of all Quaker preachers. When he concluded there was another long pause. Wistar & Hetty then rose, & each made the usual declaration, that they took each other for husband & wife etc. Another interval, & then the marriage contract was read & signed by the parties. The wedding party then left the meeting. The ceremony is a very trying one, but was performed by both with great composure & propriety. Hetty looked very pretty & was extremely well dressed.

December 17, 1838 After George left me, met with an annoying loss. I went into the parlor for a few minutes, & whilst there felt a stream of cold air blowing into the room. Upon looking found the front door open; went into the office and to my great vexation discovered that in the few minutes I had been out of it, some thief had entered & taken my cloak, a very handsome, full circle, black, cloth one, cost \$70 last winter, a new hat, a plated snuffer tray & snuffers, and an inkstand on which was a seal with my crest, which belonged to my grandfather. Went immediately to the police office and left a description of the articles, and offered a reward of \$20. This is the second mishap of the kind which has befallen me. Winter before last I lost a cloak and a coat in the same manner. The fellow was pretty adroit and made a good job of it, as the things are worth more than \$100. At home all the evng reading Hume & Law.

December 25, 1838 Christmas day. Bright, exhilarating, winter weather; not too cold, but bracing and clear. At 10 George Smith came in and we went to see Mr. Nathan Dunn's museum of Chinese curiosities,¹⁴ opened for the first time yesterday. It is arranged in the lower room of the fine building lately erected by the Philad: Museum, and certainly nothing could be more interesting or more splendid. Mr. Dunn is a bachelor of large fortune, which he accumulated during a long residence in China, and whilst there he amused himself by collecting this vast and magnificent assemblage, which cost \$50,000 there, and \$8000 to put it in order for exhibition. It now forms part of the Museum, and a permanent ornament & honor to our city, and is a spectacle unique in its kind and I suppose unequalled in any

¹⁴ The Philadelphia Museum building was opened July 4, 1838, and stood on the northeast corner of Ninth and Sansom streets. In later years it became known as the Chinese Museum, although that collection was removed in 1842-1843. Jackson, III, 915.

country. It exhibits a perfect picture of Chinese life. Figures of natural size, admirably executed in a species of fine clay, all of them portraits of individuals, are there to be seen, dressed in the appropriate costume, engaged in their various avocations, and surrounded by the furniture, implements and material objects of daily existence. The faces are expressive, the attitudes natural, the situations & grouping well conceived, and the aspect of the whole very striking and life-like. Mandarins, priests, soldiers, ladies of quality, gentlemen of rank, play-actors and slaves; a barber, a shoe-maker and a blacksmith employed in their trades; the shop of a merchant with purchasers buying goods, the drawing room of man of fortune, with his visitors smoking and drinking tea & servants in attendance; all sitting, standing, almost talking, with the dress, furniture and accompaniments of actual life. Some of the costumes are of the richest & most gorgeous description, and the furniture is exceedingly beautiful. I had no idea that the Chinese were so luxurious & refined. In addition to these figures there is a vast variety of articles of every description. Models of country houses and boats, weapons, lamps, pictures, vases, images of Gods, and porcelain vessels, many of them most curious and beautiful, and in number, infinite. Mr. Dunn was in the room himself and explained to us the nature and uses of many things. All the figures and pictures were done by native artists. He has not had time as yet, & will not have room even in that large hall, to arrange all his treasures. Nothing could be better conceived or executed than the whole affair, and it is highly creditable to his taste and liberality. The profits, after paying current expences, are, I understand to be given to some charitable institution. He certainly could not have spent his money in a way that would give more pleasure to others, or afford more satisfaction to himself. Staid there, highly interested and pleased, till 12. Then started to pay some of my Christmas day visits.

December 27, 1838 At 10 went to a party at Mrs. Jno Sergeant's. Miss Americus Vespucci there, an Italian lady lately arrived, said to be a descendant of Amerigo Vespucci, the soi-disant discoverer of America. In addition to this claim to distinction, she has, so the story is, written a political pamphlet, been exiled from her native country and been wounded on the field of battle. She is rather a fine looking person, but I saw nothing very remarkable in her appearance,

to justify the raving of Mrs. Read, et id genus omne, who take up every new or notorious person in the most violent manner, get into fits of absurd and affected enthusiasm, and often find at last that they have been hum-bugged.¹⁵

December 28, 1838 At 10 went to a party at Sigoigne's¹⁶ where this Vespucci, the Italian lady, is staying. Just before I went Robt: Walsh came in. He arrived from N. York today and returns tomorrow. Seems very happy, as he has cause, at his engagement. Talked over his plans. I trust nothing will happen to disappoint him. I am to be his grooms-man. Sigoigne's party large and gay. Talked nearly all the evng to Miss Coleman. The Italian donna looked very well in crimson velvet, & a very peculiar & handsome headgear. Walsh says the story in New York is that she is no better than she should be. Like enough, as she is young, good-looking, and alone. Passed a pleasant evng.

January 1, 1839 I shall make an effort to gain enough practice to prevent the mortification of having failed in an attempt, and to add to my income. But I hate it, utterly & perfectly, and a slave to it I cannot & will not be. I will believe that a different & higher destiny awaits me than that of even a successful lawyer at such a bar as this. If other schemes fail, literature, farming, and the solitary

¹⁵ The mystery and rumor which surrounded Miss Vespucci in her own time has continued to the present day, and "so the story is" characterizes the few references to her. Vincent Nolte, traveling by stagecoach from New Orleans to New York in 1839, writes that his companion "was a black-eyed, well-formed Italian lady. She was I learned, the daughter of a Florentine notary, and had been the mistress of a Polish noble, who lost his life in the revolutionary troubles in Ravenna and Bologna. . . . She fought at his side, in man's clothes, and had a sabre-scar on her forehead. She had come to the United States through Brazil, with a lineal genealogy from the discoverer Americus Vespucci. . . ." Hoping for a reception like that given Lafayette, Miss Vespucci had applied in vain both to the Federal government and to the states. "Now and then she got \$1000, but she was an ordinary adventuress, and gained but little. She is now living on a country-seat near Ogdensburg. . . ." Vincent Nolte, *Fifty Years in Both Hemispheres* . . . (New York, 1854), 434.

Miss Vespucci has received additional notoriety from the story that in Ogdensburg, N. Y., she lived with George Parish in the mansion built by his uncle, banker David Parish. George Parish "won in a poker game at Evans Mill, Maria Ameriga Vespucci, mistress of John Van Buren, son of the President. For many years Ameriga, called by the scandalized neighbors, 'Parish's fancy woman,' lived in utter loneliness amid the splendor of this mansion with its palatial outbuildings . . . all included by an eight-foot wall." *New York: A Guide to the Empire State* (New York, 1940), 534.

The editors are indebted to Thomas P. Govan for these references to Miss Vespucci.

¹⁶ Mrs. Adèle Sigoigne, 6 Washington Square.

independence of Mount Harmon would be far better & more congenial to my tastes. I feel confident that I shall yet do something not unworthy. I *know* that I have the power, & the opportunities are afforded every man.

January 8, 1839 In the morning read & went to Court. Returning, met in the street my old college friend Thos: Williams, with whom I was once extremely intimate. Saw him again with pleasure and interest. He lives in Pittsburgh, is a husband and a father, possesses considerable property, has risen to eminence in his profession and is now a member of the State Senate, and a distinguished one, having lately made a very eloquent speech on the subject of the recent outrages at Harrisburgh. He came home with me and sat for two hours. Gave me an account of the riot in the Senate, "all of which he saw, & part of which he was." The statements in the papers were not exaggerated. A band of ruffians, trained bullies, heroes of the cock-pit and the grog-shop, were *hired* by the opposite party and sent to Harrisburgh to intimidate & control the legislature. They rushed into the House with yells for blood, and dispersed both it and the Senate. The life of the speaker was threatened, and he would have been killed had he not, meanly enough, made his escape.¹⁷ They succeeded in overturning the government and producing a state of complete anarchy, and prostration of law and authority. Nothing but the arrival of the troops prevented a scene of bloodshed and violence, & restored order. Such is the natural working of democracy.

January 9, 1839 Engle came in. He is married and intends to spend the winter here. Went with him to see his bride. Very ordinary looking woman, the daughter of a lawyer in Chester. His marriage and associations, which are in the sphere entirely different from mine, will necessarily put an end to our intimacy. He is a very good fellow, but his opinions in politics, and his manners are not to my taste. Intimate companionship cannot continue, where such a dissimilarity of habits, connections, feelings and situation exists. Walked. Henry dined with me. In the afternoon read. Walked. At 7&½ went to the Museum, where three times a week Frank Johnson's band play¹⁸; it

¹⁷ Charles B. Penrose, the Speaker, accompanied by Thaddeus Stevens and others, escaped through a window amid a scene of wild disorder.

¹⁸ Francis Johnson, a Philadelphia Negro, had become highly popular for his military and dance music. His band had performed in London in 1837, giving promenade concerts in the

is intended as an imitation of Musard's rooms in Paris. This plan has been very successful, as crowds attend every night. They could not have a better room, and the thousands of objects of curiosity in the Museum give interest & employment to the intervals of the music.

January 16, 1839 Colder, but clear and brilliant weather. Thermometer 18 at 9 o'clock, at 5 P.M., it rose to 26. At Court attending to some business till 12. Went to a meeting of the Agricultural Society, where for amusement more than anything else, I made a little speechification about a contested claim for a premium for a crop of mangel-wurtzel & sugar beet. In return for my zeal they did me the high honor to elect me assistant secretary and librarian, by which I was vexed not a little. This was done after I left the room, or I should have prevented it. On reflection, will accept the secretaryship, but at the next meeting will ask to be excused as to the library.

January 24, 1839 In the evng went to a party at Mrs. Moncure Robinson's, a dance with one carpet up. Music too loud for the rooms, which were however well lighted. The party was gay and not crowded. Perdita there, looking pale and thin. Did not speak to any of the family. Danced twice with Miranda, and talked to her nearly all the time. This is foolish and imprudent. It creates a talk, when in all probability there will be no result. Have no intentions at present certainly. There is however some excitement in it, and without something of the kind, society would be a dull affair. She has a very fine face, but is too tall & has a bad manner. Home at 1 o'clock in a bad humour with myself. Am spending my time foolishly and unprofitably, when I should be doing much. Yet, except study, I have nothing to do. I have the ability to work but no work before me, and this waiting thro the best years of life is a miserable affair. Must write something, no matter what. Always feel better satisfied when thus employed. It is creating something, and there is an effect produced. Have some idea of writing some articles for the farmer's Cabinet¹⁹ on farming, country life, planting trees etc. They may do good.

style of Philippe Musard in Paris. The Philadelphia Museum engaged Johnson during Christmas week of 1838, and he played a return engagement during the week of Jan. 5, 1839. Louis C. Madeira, comp., *Annals of Music in Philadelphia* . . . (Philadelphia, 1896), 44-45; *United States Gazette*, Dec. 24, 1838, and Jan. 5, 1839.

¹⁹ *The Farmers' Cabinet and American Hand-Book* was published in Philadelphia from 1836 to 1848. Until 1840 it was titled the *Farmers' Cabinet*. Winifred Gregory, ed., *Union List of Serials* . . . (New York, 1927), 507.

January 29, 1839 Went out on some business, at 1, rode out the ridge-road, which is in admirable order, to the top of the hill behind Robeson's mill. Was much pleased with the handsome seats on the way, particularly Pepper's,²⁰ which is finely situated, has a great many large trees, pines and cedars among them, which produce an excellent effect in winter, and is kept up in beautiful style. All his gates and palings are washed with coal tar, which is a dead black and makes them look as if made of iron. It is far handsomer than white or any other color and preserves the wood. I hope in the spring to have all mine, together with the roofs of the buildings done in the same way.

January 31, 1839 Cloudy, gloomy, damp weather, and colder than yesterday, thermometer 34. Read Law till 12 and talked with Henry. At one o'clock: started to go out to Stenton, where to my great regret I have not been for many months. Not that I have wished to neglect my excellent old aunt, or that I have not often thought of her, but absence from town during the summer and autumn, and a mind engrossed by other thoughts have made me procrastinate from time to time, those attentions, which were a duty, and have ever been to me a pleasure; a duty and pleasure which alas! I shall no longer be able to perform and enjoy. Her health since Algernon's death²¹ has been gradually declining, tho during the last summer she was much better and stronger than she had been for some time. About 3 weeks ago however she took a cold, which was succeeded by fever; she has been getting weaker ever since, and yesterday I heard that it had become evident that death was rapidly approaching. Rode out at a rapid pace, the sombre sky and damp, cold wind increasing the melancholy feelings with which my mind was filled. Got to the house at 2. Found Eliz: Betton, Cousin Maria,²² & Sarah Walker in the dining room, all in great distress. Sarah Walker, a warm hearted, strong-minded, excellent person, the intimate friend and for many years almost constant companion of the old lady, struggling to conceal her emotions, Elizabeth a weak but amiable girl, voluble & crying, and Maria, as is her nature, calm. They told

²⁰ George Pepper (1779-1846) was the owner of Fairy Hill on Ridge Ave. near Laurel Hill Cemetery. Leach.

²¹ Algernon Sidney Logan died at Stenton on Dec. 19, 1835.

²² Maria Dickinson (1783-1854), daughter of John Dickinson, married Albanus Charles Logan in 1808. John W. Jordan, *Colonial Families of Philadelphia* (New York, 1911), I, 33.

me she was sinking rapidly & that there was not the slightest hope. I said little, for my heart too was full, and my thoughts were busy with the past. From my infancy I have been accustomed to be constantly at Stenton, and have been always received by its venerable and excellent mistress with particular kindness and affection. She was the intimate & honored friend of both my parents, was at the death-bed of my father, supported, comforted, cheered my mother in her widow-hood, and when we were left wholly orphans, was ever ready with sympathy and advice, and behaved to us on all occasions with the utmost kindness & affection. When I was at boarding school at Germantown, I dined every week at Stenton, and always looked forward to my visit with delight. Since leaving College, I have been in the habit of going there very often. I was much attached both to Aunt Logan & to Algernon, one of the best fellows that ever lived, honorable, high-minded, kind hearted & a true gentleman; they were always glad to see me, and the place itself has a peculiar charm, independent of its inmates. The old fashioned house built by James Logan, the gigantic forest trees grouped around it, the antique furniture, and the associations connected with the spot always affected my imagination very strongly. From these causes, Stenton and she who gave to it its principal attraction, are connected with the recollections of every part of my life, and as I sat in that familiar old room, the persons and the scenes of other days rose before me. My mother, how often when a child have I been in it with her. Alge, how often by its hospitable table has he kindly listened to and encouraged my boyish talk. My noble brother James, I thought of the day when he came here with me to bid our good aunt adieu, before he went to Europe, & she kissed him & bade God bless him. All now gone, and she, the cheerful, benignant, admirable old lady whom we all so loved and revered, was lying in the next room to me on her death-bed. I was almost overcome & could scarcely repress my tears. After sitting for half an hour wrapt in these gloomy reflections, Maria told me that Aunt Logan had been informed that I was there, and wished to see me. I went to her chamber. I had not seen her for six months and was shocked by the change. In that pallid, emaciated, contracted face and sunken eye I could scarcely recognize the fresh, healthy looking, animated countenance which I had been accustomed to greet, for tho 77 years old, she was always remarkable for the

clearness and bloom of her complexion and hale appearance. Her old age was indeed "like a lusty winter, frosty but kindly," as she herself used to say. I went to her bed-side, took her hand and kissed it. She spoke with effort, and in broken sentences. Expressed her pleasure at seeing me, said that she had always felt for me much interest & regard, that she had known my parents intimately and loved them well, that she recollected then the time when my "young & beautiful mother was left alone with her little orphans," and how devoted she was to them, that she was a "sweet & lovely creature," she said how fortunate it was that we had had in our excellent Aunt Nancy,²³ a person so devoted to us, to take care of us when our mother died, that she had often thought with pleasure of the respectable manner in which we had lived and the good prospects before us; all this & much more to similar effect was said with difficulty and at intervals. I said little. I had enough to do to control my feelings, & did not wish to excite her. I did however tell her of the true attachment & reverence I had always felt for her, and of the real satisfaction, & as I hoped, improvement I had derived from the intercourse which I had been permitted to enjoy with her & the kindness which through my whole life I had uniformly received from her. I said that her life had been a blessing to all her friends and had afforded a constant lesson and example of virtue & excellence, that the retrospect of such a career so blameless & useful, must at this moment, be a source of most pleasing reflection to her. She answered that she had always tried to live quietly, & she believed had done little harm to anyone. I sat there for half an hour much impressed & deeply grieved. When I rose to go, she begged me to come again, & said that it was "pleasant and comforting to be surrounded by kind friends when on the bed of languishing." I pressed her hand & bid her good bye, promising to come again. Her answer was "take my blessing with thee." I said, "I receive it as I would that of a parent." These are most probably the last words I shall ever hear her speak.

February 2, 1839 Left cards at Jackson's, went to Atherton's, where Henry told me that he had just heard from Thos: Fisher that Aunt Logan was no more. She died this morning at 10 o'clock. A quiet and peaceful close to a long, virtuous and useful life.

²³ Ann Worrell had come to live with the Fisher family when S. G. Fisher's mother was married in 1808. "Aunt Nancy" died on Mar. 9, 1845, at the age of 70, and was buried in the Fisher lot in Laurel Hill Cemetery. Fisher Diary (1845).

February 5, 1839 Still fine weather, but colder and windy. Thermometer in the morning 26, at noon 32, in the evng 23. At Court, at 1 took an early dinner, and at 2&½ went with Henry in his wagon, to the funeral at Stenton. A great many people there, composed of the connections and friends, and all the neighbors in humble life, tenants etc. The procession started at 4, and we walked down the fine avenue of spruce pines to the family grave yard. She was buried in a spot selected by herself, between the graves of her husband and her son Algernon. The scene was impressive, much more so than it would have been in the burial ground of a church. Everything around was associated with *her*. The contemporary trees, the grave yard adorned & planted by herself, the old mansion in which she had lived so many years, the garden & grounds where her steps so long had been familiar, the wintry aspect of the country, and the multitude of sorrowing friends, grouped in solemn silence around the tomb, all added strength to the emotions of those who appreciated and valued the virtues of the departed, and lamented her loss. This is the second time I have been at a funeral at Stenton.

Got into town at a little past 5, as Hen is a rapid driver. At 7 went to Dr. Meigg's lecture at the Athenian Institute on "The Augustan Age," and a very good one it was. The style was easy and flowing, the thought and illustration elegant and agreeable, and he displayed learning and a full acquaintance with his subject. How a man in such full practice, who is employed night & day, and delivers about a dozen women a week, for he is the first accoucheur of the city, can find time or attention to write such a piece, I cannot well imagine. Industry & method accomplish wonders however, and it is astonishing how much may be achieved by well directed effort, and time well employed.²⁴

February 12, 1839 At 7 went to the lecture, by Strickland²⁵ the architect, on buildings of Ancient & Modern Rome. It was badly expressed, badly delivered, in the worst possible taste, and his object appeared to be to sneer at & ridicule those monuments which have ever been the admiration of the world. Was glad to see that his

²⁴ Dr. Charles D. Meigs (1792-1869) was long associated with the Jefferson Medical College where he lectured on obstetrics, and was the author of numerous medical works.

²⁵ William Strickland (1787-1854), a Philadelphia architect and engineer, was an outstanding exponent of the Greek Revival in America and the designer of the Second Bank of the United States and the Merchants' Exchange. *DAB*. Unless otherwise noted, identifications are generally made from the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

coarse & vulgar jests were received as they deserved to be, by the audience. At 9&½ went to a small party at Mrs. Moncure Robinson's. Was agreeably surprised by finding Miss E. Ingersoll there. The death of her cousin who accidentally shot himself last autumn, has kept her in thro the winter. Talked to her all the evng. She is certainly the most attractive girl in town. I have always known her well, & admired her greatly. It is fortunate for me that I see her seldom, otherwise I fear prudence would prove a poor barrier to feeling.

February 14, 1839 At 10 went to a ball at Mrs. Nicholas Biddle's.²⁶ In the early part of the evng it was insufferably hot & crowded. When the supper rooms upstairs however were thrown open, it was very pleasant. The rooms were well-lighted & the music good, and everyone very gay. No-body there I cared particularly to see, so talked very miscellaneously, particularly to people heretofore somewhat neglected. The women looked very well, noticed some as remarkably handsome, Mrs. Blight, Mrs. Wm Ashurst,²⁷ Mrs. Wm Brown and Mrs. Butler, who is always superb. Alas! all our pretty women are married. A part of the splendid service of plate presented by the stockholders of the Bank was displayed on the supper tables.²⁸ In one of the rooms is an exquisite picture by Sully of Mrs. Jno: Craig,²⁹ a most lovely woman. There is also a fine hunting piece by Snyders, presented to Mr. Biddle by Jos: Bonaparte.³⁰ Got thru the evng pleasantly enough. Home at 2 o'clk. Smoked a cigar, scribbled this & will to bed.

²⁶ Nicholas Biddle's town house still stands at 715 Spruce St. and is occupied by the Catholic Historical Society.

²⁷ Mrs. William Henry Ashurst, nee Elizabeth Kent Hone.

²⁸ Philip Hone described this silver, said to have cost \$15,000, as "the most superb service of plate I ever saw . . . the inscription recites all his valuable services to the institution and to the country at large, and among other things his having 'created the best currency in the world.'" Bayard Tuckerman, ed., *The Diary of Philip Hone* (New York, 1889), I, 288. After the failure of the Bank, Biddle had the silver melted down.

²⁹ Sully's portrait of the beautiful Jane Josephine Sarmiento, who married John Craig and later Edward Biddle, was subsequently destroyed by fire at Marquard's Storage House in New York. Edward Biddle and Mantle Fielding, *The Life and Works of Thomas Sully* (Philadelphia, 1921), 129.

³⁰ This large canvas entitled the "Wolf Hunt" is by Francis Snyders (1579-1657). A translation of Bonaparte's letter to Biddle, dated at Point Breeze, July 15, 1832, reads in part: "I beg of you to accept as a remembrance from a man who has learned to appreciate you in a long series of years, a painting by Snyders, which will go well in your parlor or in your dining-room." The painting is now owned by Col. Nicholas Biddle.

February 19, 1839 At 7 went to the lecture at Athenian Institute, on "The Romance of American History" by Wm. B. Reed.³¹ It was too long, full of factitious sentiment, badly arranged, style turgid & pretending, without originality of thought, and altogether a commonplace production.

March 4, 1839 At 9 went to a small, but very beautiful *recherché* party at Mrs. Geo: Cadwalader's. It was made for Mrs. Harrison. The rooms are very rich and splendid, & also in excellent taste, tho I think too costly for our style of living and habits. Walls & ceilings painted in fresco by Monachesi,³² curtains, chairs, divan, ottomans of the richest white damask satin *embroidered*, vases, candelabra, chandeliers, enormous mirrors in great profusion, chairs white & gold, beautiful carpets, etc. etc., in two large rooms, brilliantly lighted, and filled with about 50 well-dressed and well-bred men & women, sitting in quiet talk, made a pretty scene. The supper was in the same style of sumptuous elegance, without profusion. They have been accustomed to this thing all their lives, and do it with ease, propriety & grace. Very different from the gaudy show, crowded glitter and loaded tables of certain vulgar people here, who by mere force of money have got into a Society to which they are not entitled by birth, education or manners.

March 19, 1839 Wind east and cloudy. Therm 50 to 54. Read, went to Court, walked, met Miss Coleman & joined her, went to Atheneum etc. till 6, the hour for a dinner at Head's,³³ given by the Counsellors of the Athenian Institute to the lecturers. There were about 30 present and the dinner was excellent, admirably cooked and served. Judge Hopkinson Pres: at one end, Judge Sergeant at the other. I was up near Hopkinson, between Dr. Meigs and Mutter³⁴ &

³¹ William B. Reed (1806-1876), a lawyer, diplomat, and author, was attorney general of Pennsylvania in 1838.

³² Little is known of this painter, although he was evidently highly regarded in his day. The rotunda of the Merchants' Exchange was "most beautifully ornamented by the distinguished Italian painter Monachesi." J. C. Wild and J. B. Chevalier, *Views of Philadelphia and Its Vicinity* (Philadelphia, 1838). This information was furnished the editors by Charles E. Peterson.

³³ The Mansion House, Joseph Head, proprietor, 122½ South Third St. *A. M'Etroy's Philadelphia Directory for 1839*.

³⁴ Dr. Thomas Dent Mütter (1811-1859) was professor of surgery at Jefferson Medical College, 1841-1856. In 1849 he started the Mütter Museum, a collection of pathological specimens, for the College of Physicians, adding to it his own extensive collection in 1856. *Appleton's Cyclopædia of American Biography* (New York, 1888); Jackson, III, 917.

opposite Dr. Wood & Wm. B. Read. It was gay, but nothing remarkable happened or worth remembering was said. Of course there were toasts and speeches in abundance, the best by Dr. Chapman & C. J. Ingersoll. Strickland was boisterous & vulgar, but with that exception, everyone behaved perfectly well. Jno: J. Smith,³⁵ in alluding to the Library of Philad., took occasion to speak of James Logan & his donation of the Loganian library,³⁶ and as germane to that matter, proposed my health, I being one of the descendants of that worthy. I of course returned thanks, but in as few words as possible, & after two or three prefatory remarks, proposed as a toast, "The Memory of Sir Walter Scott." Had I not been taken so completely by surprise, I would have said more, dwelt somewhat more fully on the character of Logan, risen by a more easy & gradual ascent to that of Scott, & in short made something of a speechification. My toast was well-recv'd & was drunk standing. Home at 11 o'clk, after a pleasant evng.

March 20, 1839 Rain and a raw east wind. Therm: 38 to 42. Wrote to Rickards, telling him I should be down soon, & to prepare for me. Sent him the article I wrote for the Farmer's Cabinet. Got a letter yesterday from Forman,³⁷ saying that there is a young lady from N. York, Miss Angelica Hamilton, very handsome & agreeable, staying at McLane's. He advises me to come down & try my luck. I expect to go down to plant trees etc., towards the end of the month, so that I may perhaps see her. Went to the Supreme Court, where the great Presbyterian Church case is now trying, to hear Preston.³⁸ He

³⁵ John Jay Smith (1798-1881) was librarian of The Library Company of Philadelphia for twenty-one years. *Recollections of John Jay Smith* (Philadelphia, 1892).

³⁶ The Loganian Library was founded by James Logan. In 1792 it was made a part of The Library Company of Philadelphia by act of Legislature.

³⁷ Gen. Thomas Marsh Forman (1758-1845), a nephew of Gen. David Forman, lived at Rose Hill, an estate near Mount Harmon in Cecil County, Md. He saw service in both the Revolution and the War of 1812, and represented Cecil County in the Maryland Legislature in 1790, 1792, and 1800. Anne Spottswood Dandridge, *The Forman Genealogy* (Cleveland, Ohio, 1903), 105-106.

³⁸ In March, 1799, the Legislature of Pennsylvania incorporated "The Trustees of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America." When the disagreements of the Old and New School factions of the Church led to a split in the General Assembly of 1838 and the election of two groups of trustees, legal action was brought in the name of the Commonwealth to determine which group should be recognized as the "true and only General Assembly." For a full report on this case which attracted outstanding lawyers and considerable public interest, see D. W. Lathrop, *The Case of The General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, before the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania . . .* (Philadelphia, 1839).

spoke yesterday & finished today. How much I regret that I did not go before. I heard him in the Senate 4 or 5 years ago, & knew him pretty well. Was not much struck at that time with his oratory, & regarded him in common with others as a mere declaimer, tho a very brilliant & eloquent one. Since this cause has been on, the excessive crowd & suffocating atmosphere of the room, has kept me away, particularly as I did not expect much pleasure from hearing him. This morning however McCall³⁹ gave me such a glowing account of his speech that I went, & was lucky enough to get a stand, close to him, within the bar. He had already been speaking two hours & was much exhausted, as he is ill with a cold. Was much struck by his appearance and manner. He is a man of large frame, bony & muscular, but not fat. Coarse features, florid complexion, grey eyes, and an auburn wig. His face is expressive both of intellect & feeling. His voice has great power, loud & rough, and he exerts it to the fullest extent. His action & gestures are bold, vehement, almost violent, but commanding & impressive, they o'erstep not the modesty of nature, and accord well with his massive figure, impassioned features & fiery eloquence. He takes snuff in enormous quantities, and his colleague kept a supply for him on a sheet of paper on the table, to which he constantly helped himself, daubing it in his haste all over his sweaty face. The speech itself was admirable. Broad views, close reasoning, luminous arrangement, illustrated and adorned by fine thought & poetic imagery, and clothed in language clear, chaste, appropriate, glowing & rich. Tho he spoke with the utmost vehemence & rapidity, he never hesitated for a word, never reconstructed a sentence, but rolled out his sounding & harmonious periods as complete & highly finished as tho they had been elaborated in his study. We have nothing equal to him here. Binney has perhaps more learning, a mind more severely trained, he reasons more closely, perhaps thinks more accurately, but he is cold and stern and serene tho elegant & symmetrical. His style wants the glow of feeling & the sunset radiance of imagination. The one is from the north, the other from the south. Binney is a Tuscan or Doric Temple, simple & elegant, massy & plain; Preston a Gothic cathedral, grand, strong and vast, but incrustated with rich and fanciful decorations and lighted by windows of painted glass, a

³⁹ Presumably Peter McCall (1809-1880), an active lawyer and mayor of Philadelphia in 1844-1845. *Appleton's Cyclopædia*.

structure as Willis happily expressed it, which looks as tho it were built by giants and adorned by fairies. After he finished I went up to him, & was glad to find that he recognised me. He seemed much exhausted, & said that he was completely worn out. Shall call on him tomorrow. Listening to his speech this morning, threw me into a fit of enthusiasm for my profession.

March 21, 1839 Went to George's office, and to see Mr. McIlvaine, a director of the French town & New Castle rail-road Co.; to represent to him the inconveniences to which the people of Sassafrass Neck are subjected by the change of hours they have made, and the profits which the company would derive from continuing to stop at Ford's. According to the new arrangement, they leave here at 1 o'clk, but start from Balt: at 7 P.M. and pass Ford's at 10, so that, tho I can go to Mt. Harmon very well, but cannot return by that line, a great annoyance after having been so long accustomed to get there & back so rapidly & comfortably. The Philad: Wilmington & Balt: Railroad Co: have purchased the stock of the French town & N. Castle, and the two lines being united, they have a monopoly, and do as they please. These monopolies of the means of conveyance are a serious evil, as by destroying opposition they take away the motives of improvement, and desire for excellence, and increase the expence whilst they diminish the comfort & speed of travelling. The whole route from Washington to N. York is now owned by gigantic corporations, who of course manage the lines, solely with a view to profit, without reference to the convenience or accommodation of passengers. Heretofore the line on the Chesapeake has been unrivalled for speed, cleanliness, civility of officers & servants, and admirable accommodations of every kind. Secure now from any competition, & sure that all persons must travel by their conveyance, they charge what they please, and the fare & accommodation will I doubt not be as wretched as that of the line to N. York. McIlvaine said that the Compy wished if possible to retain the profits of Ford's Landing which are rapidly increasing, and thought that a memorial addressed to them from the inhabitants of Sassafrass Neck would have some effect. He said also that if Ford would build a wharf, they could easily stop at night.

March 26, 1839 Walked with George out to Fair-mount. Have not been there for a long time, and was much surprised & pleased by

the improvements. The promenade on the top, round the basins, commands a noble prospect of the city on one side and the Schuylkill scenery on the other. The whole place is laid out & planted with great taste, when finished it will be very beautiful.

March 29, 1839 Very disagreeable weather, hot, windy and dusty. Therm: 60 to 75. Read law all the morning. Went to Athenaeum. The town is thrown into a ferment by the announcement of the abdication of the great money king, the resignation of Mr. Biddle of the Presidency of the Bank.⁴⁰ Various surmises are afloat as to his motives, some suppose he intends to enter upon a career of political ambition and aims at the Presidency, others, that tired of affairs, satisfied with success, and fond of ease, he wishes to retire to the enjoyment of domestic quiet, literary leisure, and the gratification of his elegant tastes. He has certainly led a distinguished and brilliant career, and is a person of very eminent abilities. He has managed the Bank admirably, both for the institution and the country, and throughout the bitter contests of party, has displayed great temper, dignity & moderation. His course so elevated, firm, consistent & successful, is the best refutation of the calumnies by which he has been assailed. He leaves the Bank in full career of prosperous operation, and retires from it, with an immense fortune, after having enjoyed the unwavering confidence of the stockholders and the community for 17 years, and with a reputation which extends throughout the commercial world.

April 5, 1839 A funny thing happened at Fisher's wedding. When the ladies had retired the men sat at supper talking & drinking till 1 o'clock. Fisher with them, very uneasy, not knowing whether to go to bed or stay. At last Mr. Middleton,⁴¹ in order to send him off, said before his face, "Well gentlemen, since the bride-groom has retired, let us drink his health." The groom took the hint and disappeared.

April 17, 1839 I intended to come up on Monday, and went over to Ford's for the purpose. Found there, George Cadwalader, who had just landed, & was going to his farm in Kent Co: Asked him

⁴⁰ Nicholas Biddle resigned from the Bank on Mar. 29, 1839.

⁴¹ Henry Middleton (1770-1846), of Middleton Place near Charleston, S. C., Joshua Francis Fisher's father-in-law, served as governor of South Carolina and as U. S. Minister to Russia. Leach.

to go to Mt. Harmon & sleep, which he did. We went back with Rickards & I spent the evng at Ford's waiting for the boat. By some accident, the men allowed it to pass before they saw it. Was obliged therefore to stay at Ford's all night. They gave me a comfortable bed & were very civil. Got up at sunrise the next morning & went back to Mount Harmon in the dear-born which was to take Cadwalader. When I arrived there, found that he had met with an unpleasant accident. He slept in my room, the smaller of the two chambers. On going to bed, he placed his candle on the chair which contained his clothes, intending in a few minutes to put it out. He fell asleep without doing so. Waked in the night, very faint, & found the room filled to suffocation with a dense noisome smoke. Tho convinced the house was on fire he could not move. Like one in a night-mare, his muscles refused to obey his will, & he could not raise his hand. At length by a desperate effort, he got out of bed & succeeded in opening the window. Was afraid to open the door, as he supposed the next room was in flames. The fresh air, gradually revived him, & he remembered the candle. He looked and found a glowing heap of embers on the chair. This he threw down & smothered with the carpet. His coat, waist-coat, trousers, stock, & purse which contained \$100 dollars were entirely burnt up. The smell was excessively offensive when I went in, after the door & windows had been open for some time, it must have been dreadful when he woke. The chair was close to the bed & how it happened that the bedclothes did not take fire, I cannot imagine. Had they done so, he would have been burnt to death. It was a very narrow escape. Fortunately he had other clothes with him, except a coat. I lent him an old fustian shooting coat, & he had a surtout. After breakfast we walked about the farm. Showed him the barn & clearing, and he expressed himself much pleased with the place. Liked him better than I expected. I have never had more than a slight acquaintance with him. He is a man of the world, a man of pleasure, shrewd, practical, with much business ability, no education, but a good deal of experience in life, very gentleman-like & easy in his manners, cautious & close in conversation, and either from sagacity or wonderful good luck, or both, the most successful & fortunate person I know of, in all his undertakings. By speculations in real estate he has made a large fortune in a few years, and lives with more splendor & expence than any man in town. Numerous

servants, many horses, some of which cost 4 or 5000 dolls, a large & handsome house, beautifully furnished, frequent & magnificent entertainments, show a command of means for which many persons are at a loss to account.⁴²

April 22, 1839 Am worried about my cursed expences. My income will be short this year in consequence of the drought of last summer, which almost destroyed my corn crop.

May 16, 1839 On Tuesday dined with John Cadwalader. Mr. Dunlap,⁴³ the new pres: of the Bank of U.S. there. A fat, dull man, not fit to sit in Biddle's seat.

May 23, 1839 In the evng went to Fisher's seeing company. The bride looked extremely well, and received her friends with much grace & propriety. The rooms are very handsome. Everybody there.

July 17, 1839 I fear I shall spend 700 or 800 beyond my income, unless I can make it up by economy & lending some money at high rates. Good notes are now at 2 pr ct: a month, and I have a mortgage due in October of \$5000, which if I receive, and can lend at that rate, with perhaps a little made by practice, will get me thro easily enough. Don't know what I should have done without Hen, as he has had money and lent it to me very kindly. What a cursed bore it is to be obliged to think about money.

September 11, 1839 Another day of cool, admirable weather. In the morning at Court etc. till 12. Then rode till 3. Never saw a more brilliant sky or felt a more perfect atmosphere. Had a delightful ride. When I came in found T. R. Fisher here. There has been a strike among his workmen & some of them have combined to prevent the rest from working. He wants to put them in jail. Gave him advice & he is to determine tomorrow what is to be done. It is an indictable offence, & I hope he will prosecute them. In the afternoon looked over some law on the subject.

September 12, 1839 Cool & cloudy. Therm: 68. In the morning read law & drew a case stated in Mrs. Hughes' business. Walked. Dined at Atherton's, where I spent the afternoon pleasantly. On

⁴² George Cadwalader (1804-1879), an estate lawyer, is best known for his active military career. As a brigadier general in the Pennsylvania Militia, he quelled the nativist riots in Philadelphia in 1844, and served with distinction as a general in the U. S. Army in the Mexican and Civil wars. Leach; *Appleton's Cyclopædia*.

⁴³ Thomas Dunlap. John Cadwalader, a brother of George Cadwalader, was one of the Bank's attorneys.

coming to my office found a note from Tom Fisher, desiring me to come out to advise him what to do with his men. Started at 5. Spoke to some of the men, who were willing to go to work, but were afraid of the others. They are Englishmen & seem to be miserably stupid fellows. There has however been as yet no conduct on the part of the conspirers very decisive, so I told Tom he had better wait a day or two. Rode fast & got in at 7½, the mare performing admirably. In the evng, went to the Museum to hear the Hungarian Minstrels & a celebrated ventriloquist.⁴⁴ The minstrels imitate very successfully the sounds of different instruments, flute, clarionet, bassoon etc. The music was nothing remarkable, but the various sounds they produced with the voice showed extraordinary power. The ventriloquist was admirable. He maintained a rapid conversation with 6 or 8 persons, supposed to be in different parts of the room, & made the voices, all of which were distinct & different, come from the garret, the cellar & all quarters, with surprising exactness. He imitated also the cries of various animals, dogs, poultry, hogs, with wonderful fidelity. The best was the imitation of the hum & buz of a bee, which was increased & diminished by his attempts to catch it & by distance & which he at last catches & seems to put humming into a bottle. The room was crowded.

September 20, 1839 Clear, warmish weather. At 10 rode out to Powelton⁴⁵ to see the sale of some Durham cattle sent out by Whitaker, a great English breeder. Not so good as the lot sent last year. Some beautiful cows among them, & one magnificent white bull. They did not sell very well, cows from 3 to 500 dolls.; Mr. Powell⁴⁶ bidding in a good many for Whitaker. Admired the stately woods & park-like grounds of Powelton, where Powell is now building a very large & handsome house. Two immense wings, 3 rooms deep each, are added to the old house, which was a large one, & the whole

⁴⁴ This performance at the Philadelphia Museum was conducted by four Hungarian singers and a polyphonist, Mr. Love: "On account of the enormous expense attending the two exhibitions on the same evening, the price of Admission will be Fifty Cents." *United States Gazette*, Sept. 12, 1839.

⁴⁵ Powelton was located on the west side of Thirty-second St., north of Race St., in West Philadelphia.

⁴⁶ John Hare Powel (1786-1856) was the adopted son of Mayor Samuel Powel (1739-1793). His large wealth permitted him to indulge, among other interests, the pursuit of gentleman farming. Leach.



Water color by David J. Kennedy

POWELTON

of the first floor of which is converted into a hall. When finished & handsomely furnished it will be a noble establishment. He is going to Europe in the spring & says he will live in it when he returns. It will at any rate be a fine place for Sam,⁴⁷ when he comes to his fortune, which will be immense. His position however, in relation to his brothers, will be unpleasant, as the whole property is entailed on him, which in this country is unusual, & they thus will have nothing, whilst he will be rich. After leaving the cattle, rode a few miles out the road past the new lunatic asylum.⁴⁸ Got home at 1. In the afternoon read a chapter of Russel.⁴⁹ Went to the exhibition of the Horticultural Society, in the saloon of the Museum. Display of vegetables & fruit very fine. Saw some immense mangel-wortzel, sugar beet & pumpkins, one of which weighed 196 lbs: & was 7 feet in circumference. Spent the evng pleasantly at Atherton's.

September 21, 1839 Weather unpleasantly warm. Settled some accs: & went to one or two places about town. Times are dreadfully bad. Money 3 pr ct a month, merchants failing, another suspension anticipated, everybody gloomy. Happily I am not in business and have nothing of consequence at risk, so that beyond temporary inconvenience from deficient income, as this year, I cannot be much affected. Henry however has some stock in S. Western Bks which I wish he was rid of.

October 2, 1839 Went over to see Wm Wister, after his misfortune. The calico mill which he rents from Uncle William, was burnt a few nights ago, and a large quantity of goods destroyed.⁵⁰ The mill & machinery & some of the goods are covered by the Ins: but he will be an actual loser for several thousand dollars, besides being checked in his business, which he was pursuing very successfully, having from honorable feelings, praiseworthy & rare enough in these days, undertaken to pay all his creditors in full, & having in

⁴⁷ Samuel Powel (1818-1885) removed to Newport, R. I., prior to the Civil War. *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ The Blockley Almshouse, now known as the Philadelphia General Hospital, was completed in 1834. It was designed by William Strickland and built on property purchased from the William Hamilton estate on the west bank of the Schuylkill. Jackson, I, 62.

⁴⁹ William Russell, *History of Modern Europe*, Pt. II: 1648-1763 (London, 1784). Fisher Diary (1839); Allibone's *Dictionary of English Literature*.

⁵⁰ The Bellefield Print Works, owned by William Logan Fisher (1781-1862) and operated by his son-in-law William Wister (1803-1881), burned on Monday morning, Sept. 30. Only four days before, another calico printing mill, the Mulhausen Manufacturing Co. in Southwark, had burned. *United States Gazette*, Sept. 30, 1839.

fact paid them \$21,000. I hope he will soon get started again. Asked him if he knew of a dog. He said one of his men had a setter, thorough-bred, not perfectly broke, but who would hunt & stand and a fine, active, spirited animal. Went to look at him. He is rather handsome, & white & yellow. The man asked \$20, and as it was cheap for such a dog, altho I can ill afford it, I took him. I am to take him in all this month, and he is to be kept at the man's risk until delivery. Came home by the School-House lane & Ridge road, which takes one thro the finest scenery in the neighborhood of the city. What changes time produces in *us*, & how slowly in nature & in material things does it work its transformations. As I rode along, I looked at the old school-house,⁵¹ the trees, the landscape, the houses, all familiar, and the scene of many of my boyish days, and could perceive but little alteration. But the few years that have passed over *me* since I obeyed the summons of that old bell, and wandered thro the neighboring fields & woods have made me a different creature.

October 6, 1839 Sunday. On Friday was the greatest & most destructive fire ever known in this city. It burned all night, and about 20 warehouses & stores were destroyed, between Front & Water & Chesnut & Market Streets. The loss is about \$600,000. Several lives were lost, & many persons wounded & badly burnt.⁵²

October 8, 1839 Weather still clear and warm. It is election day & the bell is tolling to call "the people" to register their sov reign pleasure. Read Russel for an hour, & then went to give my vote, tho I feel no interest whatever in the contest. I always vote *against* the popular side on principle. The evil of our government, and a great & pressing one, is the tyranny of the many, the supremacy of numbers over mind; the danger is, the excess of the democratic spirit, which threatens the destruction of all law, order and security. It is nonsense to talk of liberty in this country, where the educated classes must always be in a minority & therefore without political influence or power and subjected, without protection to the control of demagogues & mobs.

⁵¹ Germantown Academy, founded in 1760. S. G. Fisher delivered the oration at the Academy's centennial celebration on Apr. 21, 1860.

⁵² On Oct. 4 fire broke out in W. C. Stroup's provision store at No. 14 South Wharves, on Delaware Ave. north of Chestnut St. Fanned by high winds, the fire spread rapidly, destroying property to an estimated loss of \$500,000. Two members of the Good Will Fire Company lost their lives. *United States Gazette*, Oct. 7, 1839.

October 9, 1839 Warm, cloudy, sultry weather. Therm: 75. In the morning read a little of Russel. Went down town to hear the news. The Banks have again suspended specie payments and everything is confusion & distress, with little prospect of change.⁵³ The times seem out of joint. An unsound currency, depressed trade, deranged finances, corruption in government, general degradation in public opinion, an ignorant, reckless, tyrannical mob with unprincipled & selfish demagogues to guide it, for our masters, what can we expect but continued disasters.

*Knowest thou yesterday, its aim & reason;
Workest thou well today for worthy things;
Then calmly wait tomorrow's coming season,
And fear not thou what hap so'er it brings.*

⁵³ This suspension was forced on the banks of Philadelphia by the unsound condition of the Bank of the United States.

[The editors regret an error on their part. In the previous installments the diarist's name has been spelled *Sydney*, as his son's name was spelled. The father's name should properly be spelled *Sidney*.]