In Search of
Peter Stephen Du Ponceau

It is one of the ironies of history that a man's achievements can bulk so large that they obscure the man himself. Peter Stephen Du Ponceau is a case in point. Of few residents of the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth does Philadelphia have more right to be proud, few citizens does it have better reason to remember. He became one of the nation's leading international lawyers in its formative decades, rose to eminence in the famed Philadelphia bar, and was chancellor of the city's Law Association, forerunner of the present Bar Association. Throughout a long life he maintained a profound avocational interest in the arts and sciences and especially in philology, his contributions to such fields as the languages of the North American Indian and the writing system of the Chinese bringing him international recognition. At about seventy, he undertook a determined campaign to establish an American silk industry. He followed in the succession which included Franklin and Jefferson as president of the American Philosophical Society, was second president of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and held membership in some forty-two learned bodies at

1 For a modern appraisal of his stature as a jurist, see Kurt H. Nadelmann, “Peter Stephen Du Ponceau,” Pennsylvania Bar Association Quarterly, XXIV (1953), 248-256.
2 At the time of his death Du Ponceau held both offices and was serving as second president of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia as well. He delivered his inaugural address as president of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania on his 77th birthday, June 3, 1837.

The American Philosophical Society set up a “Committee of History, Moral Science, and General Literature” in 1815, and as corresponding secretary Du Ponceau was its moving spirit. “From that Committee originated the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.” J. G. Rosenberg, “The American Philosophical Society,” The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography (PMHB), XXVII (1903), 330. Speaking of the Philosophical Society in a letter of Mar. 22, 1826, to Albert Gallatin, Du Ponceau says: “... there is also an Historical Society, lately established here by Mr Wm. Rawle, a kind of opposition line, which, I hope, will do good, if its plan is pursued with Zeal & in a proper Spirit.” The Historical Society, he adds, “began in a pretty high spirit of opposition to our [American Philosophical] Society, which I have
home and abroad. Not only were his contributions to the learned and literary life of the new republic outstanding, but his influence in the exchange of culture between the New World and the Old was considerable. With his abilities and renown as a savant he combined the highest standards of rectitude and honor. Here indeed was "an eminent and excellent man."

But he was interesting as well, and that is what makes the scant knowledge of the man himself, the sparse attention to his personal qualities, so regrettable. True, his autobiographical memoirs provide a wealth of insight into the first twenty-three years of his life. But he lived to be nearly eighty-four. And while various eulogies were pronounced or written at the time of his death in 1844, they were mainly given over to his legal and scholarly attainments. Du Ponceau the distinguished jurist, the brilliant man of letters, we know to a degree. What about Du Ponceau the human being? For example, his second marriage has all but totally escaped notice. This is instanced by the full-page article in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, one of the few bits of attention accorded him since his death; the only purely personal reference to his adulthood is the bald sentence with which the article ends: "On May 21, 1788, he was married to Anne Perry." It is unfortunate that his married life and its issue thus have to be relegated to the place of an afterthought surrounded by silence.

At the time of his marriage Du Ponceau was a rising young lawyer of almost twenty-eight. Born Pierre-Étienne du Ponceau de Fontenoy on the Isle of Ré near La Rochelle, France, on June 3, 1760, he early exhibited a prodigious talent for languages. His father,
who held an army command, intended him to become a military engineer, a vocation which the son’s nearsightedness made impossible. At fifteen, he was constrained by his recently widowed mother to prepare for the priesthood, but found the experience so stultifying that he soon fled the episcopal college “at Bressuire in Poitou” to which he had been assigned as a tutor and from which he is credited with having received his bachelor’s degree. A year or more later he made the acquaintance of Baron von Steuben, with whom he came to America late in 1777 and served as secretary-interpreter and aide-de-camp until an onslaught of consumption forced him to take sick leave in April, 1780. A period of uncertainty in health and fortunes followed, some of it spent in the South with von Steuben, some of it in or near Philadelphia.

Meanwhile, he became a citizen of Pennsylvania in July, 1781. The Congress of the Confederation elected Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York Secretary for Foreign Affairs in August, and upon Livingston’s arrival in the capital two months later Du Ponceau was recommended to him in such glowing terms that he had the young man sworn in as his secretary almost at once. In this capacity, and as a member of Livingston’s aristocratic personal household at Sixth and Chestnut streets, Du Ponceau spent what he himself de-

5 Speaking of an outmoded use of the phrase “children in arms” (one that is also a perfect play on words), Townsend Ward cites “the fact that the second President of our Historical Society [of Pennsylvania], Major Duponceau, was once a ‘child in arms;’ for while yet an infant, he held a commission as lieutenant. He has told me that when arrayed in his uniform, and carried about the Isle of Rhé, in his nurse’s arms, the respectful soldiers of the old French Monarchy would soberly yield to him the accustomed military salute.” *PMHB*, VI (1882), 13 (note).

6 Minutes of the Trustees of the University of the State of Pennsylvania, III (1779–1788), 112, Office of the Secretary of the University of Pennsylvania.

7 Not long after Baron von Steuben’s arrival at Valley Forge in February, 1778, General Washington assigned him to prepare a system of discipline and military exercises for the armies of the United States. Major L’Enfant, who subsequently laid out the city of Washington, had charge of the drawings, while Du Ponceau, “who had no experience in the military art, . . . could do little more than translate and copy.” *Whitehead*, LXIII, 216. Of this, however, he did a great deal, as is indicated by a manuscript draft in French in the New-York Historical Society entitled “L’Excercise des Troupes.” It runs to about eighty-four pages (though usually with only one half-page column to a page), and the bulk of it is in the handwriting of Du Ponceau. It was also Du Ponceau’s responsibility to see the treatise through the press and to distribute it. This, the first manual of discipline for the army of the United States, was issued under the title *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States* (Philadelphia: Styner and Cist, 1779).
scribes as "the most brilliant period of my life." Despite the dislocations of war—indeed, largely on account of them—Philadelphia was enjoying a period of unsurpassed social splendor, and he participated in it liberally, the more so since the prevailing tone of things was French. When Livingston left the Department of Foreign Affairs in June, 1783, Du Ponceau took up the study of law with the celebrated William Lewis and was admitted to practice June 24, 1785. And "on May 21, 1788," as we have seen, "he was married to Anne Perry."

Anne (or "Nancy") was a New England girl. Du Ponceau had early developed a deep regard for the region and its people. After lingering eleven days in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he landed December 1, 1777, he had spent a good month in Boston. The experience engendered in him an affection that he never lost: in his old age he declared that he loved New England next to Pennsylvania, Boston next to Philadelphia. To the New England locale, he says in the memoirs dictated to his granddaughter, "I am indebted for the amiable partner with whom I first experienced the happiness of conjugal life, I mean your sainted grand-mother." Intrigued and at home from the moment he set foot in the New World, he saw everything—its women included—couleur de rose. True to his French inheritance, he possessed a deeply romantic temperament. "I was always fond of female society," he tells us, and though he had never paid much attention to the opposite sex before, he got...

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8 Whitehead, LXIII, 341.
9 Peter Stephen Du Ponceau, Diary and Notebook (1777-1778), 5th leaf (reverse), Historical Society of Delaware. This little journal and jot-book contains a variety of material, such as algebraic and philological scribbling (including a paradoxical "Problème," a "Système des Sons" in pencil and one in ink, and an "Alphabet universel" of thirty-four characters), a few facial pen sketches, some poetry (including the Lord's Prayer in German and an expanded equivalent of "Now I Lay Me down to Sleep"), maps of the Isle de Ré locale and Valley Forge, and a "Plan des Environs du Quartier General." In the main, however, the booklet is given over to the author's journey from Portsmouth to Boston, "Voyage de Boston A York-Town," "Séjour A York-Town," "Voyage de York-Town Au Camp de S.E. le Gen. Washington Situé près de Valley-Forge," and "Séjour Au Camp." Though the accounts are in French, Du Ponceau often resorts to Russian.
10 Whitehead, LXIV, 268.
11 Cf. ibid., LXIII, 333, and LXIV, 264.
12 Ibid., LXIII, 456. In discussing the likelihood that he would have become involved in the tragic excesses of the revolution had he remained in France, he admits to having "a hot head, and a warm heart." Ibid., 443.
off to a good start in this country. When his ship landed he made a wager with a fellow passenger that he would kiss the first “female” he met. He did (she turned out to be a comely maiden), though this pleasurable and profitable conquest was made easier, he later learned, by the then declining American custom of “saluting” in just such fashion.\textsuperscript{13}

Born, it would appear, on September 18, 1768, the first Mrs. Du Ponceau was the “eldest” of the two known daughters among the eleven children of the Reverend and Mrs. Joseph Perry of Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{14} In June, 1755, the Reverend Mr. Perry became “colleague pastor” of the Second Congregational Church of Windsor, Connecticut, in association with the aged Timothy Edwards, father of the illustrious Jonathan Edwards. Later the same year, he married Sarah Lawrence of Groton, Massachusetts. A family tradition has it that after the death of Anne’s parents—her mother died in 1778 and her father in 1783—she went to live with relatives in Philadelphia, and thus her romance with Du Ponceau undoubtedly came about. Our interest in Anne is enhanced by a portrait by John Wollaston in the Philadelphia Museum of Art depicting “Mrs. Perry and her Daughter Ann.” The daughter is a pudgy, mature-looking little girl of perhaps two with a lace-trimmed dress and bonnet, and she holds a coral-and-bells, one that is a perfect example of the “triple threat eighteenth-century teething sticks, rattles, and whistles.”

Miss Perry must have been a young lady of exceptional qualities. Certainly, Du Ponceau had opportunities to marry among the belles of Philadelphia. His own memoirs tell how he devoted himself to the womankind of the city with an attention which was as unfailing as it was circumspect. Nonetheless, as he laconically puts it, “my time was not yet come.”\textsuperscript{15} His marriage was performed by the Reverend James Sproat of the Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia,\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 199–200; cf. ibid., 444.
\textsuperscript{15} Whitehead, LXIII, 46c.
\textsuperscript{16} Register of Second Presbyterian Church, 136.
with which Du Ponceau identified himself. In the course of the next four or so years he was blessed with three children: Edward, born June 17, 1789; Louisa Frances, born July 25, 1790, and named after his mother; and Peter Stephen, born June 14, 1792.\footnote{Ibid., 50, 52, and 55.} The two sons were snatched from him in infancy,\footnote{Peter, Jr., was only a week old when he died. Ibid., 183. There is no burial mention of Edward in the Register.} and on August 1, 1792, his beloved Anne was taken,\footnote{Dunlap’s \textit{American Daily Advertiser} (Phila.), Aug. 3, 1792.} a mere seven weeks after giving birth to his namesake and probably as a consequence of it.

Du Ponceau’s second wife was another Anne—Anne Latouche. She had been born of Huguenot parentage in 1759,\footnote{\textit{L’Abeille américaine} (Phila.), V (Oct. 9, 1817), 210.} which made her about nine years older than the first Mrs. Du Ponceau and a year older than her husband. An orphan, she was left without protection when the British occupied New York. Upon learning of this, Chancellor Livingston’s mother, who knew the family, at once brought her to Clermont, the palatial Hudson River estate of the “lower manor” Livingstons about thirty miles above Poughkeepsie.\footnote{Julia Delafield, \textit{Biographies of Francis Lewis and Morgan Lewis} (New York, 1877), I, 174.} It was apparently in this setting that Du Ponceau came to know Miss Latouche. Early in 1783, on one of his leaves of absence from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Chancellor Livingston took Du Ponceau with him on a visit to New York, and the young secretary “staid some time” at Clermont.\footnote{Whitehead, LXIII, 224.} A romantic involvement with Miss Latouche may well have developed on this occasion. Be that as it may, she became Du Ponceau’s second wife on September 12, 1794, in a ceremony performed by Bishop Samuel Provoost of Trinity Church, New York.\footnote{Register of Marriages in the Parish of Trinity Church, New York, I, 153, Office of the Clerk of the Vestry.}

The second Mrs. Du Ponceau was “a very lovely girl” of delicate constitution. A long period of failing health preceded her demise on October 3, 1817. She evidently possessed a frail emotional as well as physical make-up. About the end of 1801, a fire which ignited the Du Ponceau residence while destroying an adjacent frame structure on Chestnut Street brought on “a serious illness of the nervous kind”; the death of an only sister in 1803 left her “much afflicted,” and her
husband speaks of her “almost invincible horrors of locomotion [travel].”

What little more we can glean about her is found in a contemporary notice of her passing. Here she is held up as a model of patience and mildness under tribulation, fervent but unaffected in her religion. “The ministrations which she obtained from her intimates during the bitterness of her long sufferings and the regrets which she left in their spirits testify how much friendship meant to her, since she inspired so much in others.” Her heart and her hands were filled with charity. Indications are that during the twenty-three years of her married life, the second Anne was a dutiful wife to Du Ponceau and a devoted stepmother to Louisa, as witness the fact that Louisa bestowed upon her only daughter the name “Anne Latouche.”

Louisa had married Gabriel Gareshé, “a Merchant by profession, & by faith a Hug[uenot],” on October 12, 1809. Born François Gabriel in La Rochelle on June 27, 1778, the groom was a cousin of the brothers Jean-Pierre and Vital Marie Gareshé who married daughters of Peter Bauduy, one of the first American shareholders in E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., the powder manufactory on the Brandywine. Thus Gabriel must have met Louisa. Not only had Du Ponceau and Bauduy become acquainted, but the brothers Gareshé lived in Philadelphia from about 1805 to 1818, during which time Du Ponceau came to regard Vital as “a particular friend.” One reason was that when Vital and Mimika Bauduy married twelve days after Gabriel and Louisa, they set up housekeeping close to where Du Ponceau lived. Again, Du Ponceau had occasional professional connections with Du Pont during the first three decades of the cen-

24 Du Ponceau to Robert R. Livingston, Apr. 2, 1802, Oct. 24, 1803, and Aug. 21, 1810, respectively, Robert R. Livingston Papers, NYHS.


26 It might appear that the child was christened after Du Ponceau’s second wife instead of his first, the child’s own grandmother; but, since both wives had the same first name, the girl was undoubtedly given the name “Anne” after her grandmother, Du Ponceau’s first wife, and the middle name “Latouche” after his second.

27 Du Ponceau to George W. Featherstonhaugh, Oct. 19, 1809, photocopy in the American Philosophical Society Library (APS) from the original in the possession of Mrs. Duane W. Featherstonhaugh, Duanesburgh, N. Y.

28 Dorothy Gareshé Holland, The Gareshé, de Bauduy, and des Chapelles Families: History and Genealogy (St. Louis: privately printed, 1963), 93 and 91. The unpublished thesis by Helen Hamilton, “Peter S. duPonceau,” listed in Mrs. Holland’s bibliography (p. 205) is unobtainable, both the college’s copy and the author’s having been destroyed.
tury, and in its early years this association no doubt tended to reinforce the friendship of Gabriel and Louisa.

The Garesché-Du Ponceau nuptials were solemnized by the Reverend Dr. Ashbel Green, minister of the Second Presbyterian Church, and were performed in the stately and fashionable residence at the northeast corner of Sixth and Chestnut streets which Du Ponceau had acquired and occupied in 1801, the same house in which he had lived so exuberantly as a member of the family of Chancellor Livingston. Fronting on Chestnut Street, the place was diagonally opposite the State House. Du Ponceau had bought the mansion at a sheriff’s sale, at the same time acquiring the adjoining property to the rear along Sixth Street, on which stood a “small and mean” three-story brick tenement where Livingston had housed the foreign affairs office. Between the mansion and the tenement was a little, low cottage which Du Ponceau used as his law office. For the onetime undersecretary, the acquisition of the Chestnut Street property was like returning to the old homestead. On the eve of Livingston’s departure for Paris as minister to France, Du Ponceau wrote him that “we have lately purchased the house that you last lived in when you resided in Philadelphia; the recollection of the agreeable moments I then enjoyed in it, was not one of the least inducements that led me to make the choice. I feel as much at home in it, as if I never had had any other dwelling.” Some friends, however, demurred that if any of his family were taken sick in the night, it would

29 About a month before his death, George Washington wrote Du Ponceau to announce the impending arrival of Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours, the physiocrat and father of Eleuthère Irénée. Washington to Du Ponceau, Nov. 9, 1799, transcript in Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Collection of Manuscripts, Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, Greenville, Del. The most significant action taken by Du Ponceau for E. I. du Pont was on May 4, 1808, when he made a certified copy of the original articles of agreement establishing the company; the document is now on display in the Hagley Museum, Greenville, Del. Peter Bauduy withdrew from the firm in 1815, and during the suit he brought against it the following year for unpaid claims, Du Ponceau acted as a supporting witness for the plaintiff and translated the original articles for his records.

30 Register of Second Presbyterian Church, 152.

31 An original water color of the brick tenement and frame cottage as they appeared when Livingston used the former as his “public office” is owned by Mrs. John Potter Archer. An unimpeachable family tradition says that the view was drawn and colored by Du Ponceau himself while he was serving under Livingston. It is no doubt this drawing which others—such as Breton in Watson’s *Annals*—have copied.

32 Du Ponceau to Robert R. Livingston, Sept. 24, 1801, Robert R. Livingston Papers; cf. Whitehead, LXIII, 341. A side profile of the front half of the house is included in “A N.W.
be difficult to obtain the attendance of a physician so far out of town.  

And so, twenty-eight years after Du Ponceau entered the mansion as secretary, his daughter and her husband set out from it, we may presume, on their honeymoon, with plans for a trip to La Rochelle the following spring. Two sons and a daughter were born of the union. With his second wife's death in 1817, Du Ponceau was henceforth wrapped up in his daughter and grandchildren, and the Garesches moved in with him (if they did not already share the roomy residence at Sixth and Chestnut). Du Ponceau thus described the household on his sixty-second birthday in 1822:

My [grand]children are gathering roses to adorn the house on the occasion. The cook is preparing my favorite dishes, the fruits of the season are in requisition for a little family feast in honor of the day. My daughter has learned all these things in France, & the pious creature finds pleasure in this little pageant, by which she gives vent to the feelings of her heart. I am become so much of an American that I cannot help finding something strange in these domestic ceremonies, yet as the turn of my mind is somewhat romantic, and as I am well convinced of the genuine affection of my children, je me laisse faire.  

On November 30, 1825, Louisa died at the age of thirty-five after a protracted illness. The fact that it was "a Chronic Catarrh"
points to the influence of heredity. So greatly was Du Ponceau oppressed by her suffering that "sometimes," he wrote his bosom friend, John Pickering of Boston, "I sink flat for a while & then exert myself by starts," while a month after her death he exclaimed in a letter to Pickering, "Had you Known what a child, what a Support I have lost!" The aging Du Ponceau now became less preoccupied with his profession, more absorbed in his studies and his grandchildren. Anne was the apple of his eye, if for no other reason than the names she bore. She in turn loved and cared for him faithfully (Du Ponceau called her "the greatest flatterer I have known"), and it was to her, during the years 1836–1844, that he addressed and to a large extent dictated almost all the forty-four letters which make up his priceless autobiographical memoirs. Late in 1828, the "most promising" of his two grandsons, Joseph Gabriel Du Ponceau Garesché, died at Mount St. Mary's Seminary near Emmitsburg, Maryland, at the age of nine, a blow which "bowed [him] down to the ground" once more. His will reveals that his older grandson and namesake, Du Ponceau Francis Garesché, was a wastrel and caused him much anguish. On these and other scores the elderly Du Ponceau found each year an increasing burden, and none more so than the winter of 1843–1844. Nevertheless, he was looking forward to seeing the roses he so loved bloom in his little garden when bronchitis overtook him

37 Du Ponceau to John Pickering, Sept. 27 and Dec. 29, 1825, transcripts in Du Ponceau Papers, HSP.

38 Apparently, the only extant likeness of Anne Latouche Garesché is a miniature of her painted on ivory when she was a child of perhaps eight, owned by Mrs. John Potter Archer. It portrays her as a sweet-looking, wide-eyed girl, but as having a certain heaviness of face in which there is a trace of the homeliness of her father. She has wavy, shoulder-length hair with bangs, and wears a high-waisted dress of the style worn by her mother in the St. Memin medallion portrait (see pp. 65–66 and 67). Anne never married, and after her grandfather's death she went to live with her aunt, Mme. Paul Jacques Garesché (nee Louise ["Lise"] Marguerite Garesché), in Paris. She died there on Nov. 3, 1897, and is buried in the new St. Eloï Cemetery in La Rochelle (lot No. 3, grave No. 1), along with her Aunt Louise (1789–Feb. 19, 1885) and three of the latter's four children, Edward Daniel (1825–Oct. [Nov.?] 1, 1871), Aline (Feb. 5, 1829–March 16, 1925), and Lise (1830–June 3 [13?], 1891). Mrs. John Potter Archer and private correspondence.


40 Will of Peter S. DuPonceau, City Hall (Room 180), Philadelphia. "It is impossible to handle the original manuscript of this will, penned by a hand trembling with age and emotion, without responsive sympathy." Hampton L. Carson, A History of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1940), I, 185.
in mid-March. He died on April 1, 1844,\footnote{United States Gazette (Phila.), Apr. 2, 1844.} in the same house where he had lived for close to half a century.

Full of years, honors, and infirmities, Peter Stephen Du Ponceau joined his five loved ones in the family grave which presumably had been ready ever since his first child died in 1789. It was located in a cemetery which vanished nearly a century ago—the ancient Arch Street burying ground of the Second Presbyterian Church on the north side of Arch above Fifth.\footnote{On this graveyard, see Charles R. Barker's manuscript "A Register of the Burying-Grounds of Philadelphia," II (1944), 127-128, HSP.} His funeral, held from his home, was one of the largest ever witnessed in the city and was attended by a host of notables. He was borne to his resting place by eight highly distinguished pallbearers, among them the mayor of the city and the chief justice of the state.\footnote{United States Gazette, Apr. 2, 3, 4, and 5, 1844; cf. the North American And Daily Advertiser (Phila.) for the same dates.}

Du Ponceau's writings may live on in libraries, but today his grave fares as indifferently as the man himself. It has taken something akin to an act of discovery to find his present-day burial place, which turns out to be an underground vault in Mount Vernon Cemetery, Philadelphia. The vault also contains his two infant sons, his two wives, and his daughter. The lettering on the marble tablet which covers the vault is beginning to yield to erosion. The ornamental urn and wreath which embellished a once bricked-up portion of the vault lie askew on the ground. Time and neglect have taken their toll.\footnote{Du Ponceau's crypt is located along the cemetery's Main Avenue in Section F at the southwest corner of the Second Presbyterian Church's reinterment plot, whence nearly all the burials in the Arch Street burying ground were removed in 1867. Almost all the upright grave markers and horizontal vault covers in the Presbyterian plot are marble. Though only a few have survived erosion and are legible, no record of their inscriptions has been kept. Any arrangement for gardening care of the plot has long since lapsed.}

What sort of person was Du Ponceau in appearance? A moving description of him in old age is given by his friend, Job R. Tyson.

Sometimes he would decline any assistance in taking his walk to the Philosophical Hall, 5th below Chestnut. This for many years before his death, was his widest circuit. Within that building the three institutions convened that shared most in his regard, The American Philosophical Soc'y, The Historical Soc'y of Penna. & the Athenaeum. On the arrival of European news . . . he was a frequent visiter. Almost double
from the two effects of devotion to books & want of exercise, so nearly blind that no one, not even his nearest friend, expected to be recognised, so obtuse in his hearing th[at] considerable elevation of voice was necessary to make him hear, with his hands behind him except when engaged with [his] snuff-box, his hat awry on his head, his face, shirt & waistcoat probably smeared with snuff, his knee buck[les] perhaps untied, & one side perhaps shaved while the other had been untouched by a razor or perhaps shaved in spots [he was too nearsighted to use a mirror] while in other places his [ ] of untrimmed length, withal his tarnishd & unbrushed black suit presenting in the outer man any thing but the distingúe or the gentleman: thus did many an eye catch his venerable image & watch its zigzag & stumbling course along Chest[nut] St. 45

Tyson further characterizes Du Ponceau’s later maturity:

Hard of hearing, short-sighted, his form almost double by incessant sitting, absent[-minded], he was sometimes a droll companion in society. He knew no companion in the streets & sometimes poured forth his sentiments by mistake to a stranger or to a different one from the person his addresses were intended for. His image in the act of reading or writing will be remembered by all who ever saw it. His nose rested upon the paper . . . to enable him to see, while his quick eye glanced down the page in reading or his flowing pen rapidly filled the sheet. The quick appeal to Mr. Malenfant [his “faithful clerk”] for the name of each visitor upon entrance & the cordial reception, are remembered as part of the man. . . . A man whom he disliked or disapproved would soon know his sentiments.46

Du Ponceau’s appearance when he was in his prime left an equally marked impression upon his contemporaries. According to one of them, “he was of rather heavy physiognomy, but vivid in effect, dark complexion, very evidently thinking brow, and a full head of hair. . . .

45 Job R. Tyson, “Memoranda for Memoir of Du Ponceau,” end pocket of E. T. Stuart, “Peter S. Du Ponceau, Letters to, 1777 to 1839,” Du Ponceau Papers, HSP. Tyson gave a memorial address on Du Ponceau before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in April, 1855, the loss of which is irreparable. The only record of it we have is in the form of the few sheets of rough notes from which quotation is made here. Despite their limitations, these notes are the best source of personal information about Du Ponceau in his maturity.

Warped and looking much the worse for wear, the Malacca bamboo cane by the aid of which Du Ponceau tottered about is in the Historical Society of Delaware. So also are two letter seals of his, one with his coat of arms, the other, which he used after he became an American citizen, with cursive initials.

His sortie was deliberate, and marked by the folding of his wrists behind him and the bend of his shoulders, as if borne over by the weight of his mental meanderings."47 A silhouette done in later life makes him appear somewhat hunchbacked, almost dwarfish, a feature that is accentuated by a head set deep into a squat torso.48 Another contemporary, the great jurist Joseph Story, put the same impression in the statement that Du Ponceau's figure was rather awkward, his countenance striking, with "a small, sparkling, black eye, and a thin face."49 Gazing at his portrait today, one is inclined to agree in principle if not in detail that "the heavy masses of tangled hair, the silver rimmed spectacles of huge size, the contemplative eyes and large mouth might have belonged either to a professor, a musician, an artist, or to a poet, but the stooping shoulders and careless dress could only have belonged to a somewhat absent-minded bibliophile."50

There are several half-length paintings, a bust, and a medallion portrait of Du Ponceau. An oil portrait painted by Thomas Sully in 1830 hangs in the Lecture Room of Philosophical Hall of the American Philosophical Society; in the Reception Room of the Hall is a marble bust which was executed in the mid-1830's and which reveals a failing, somewhat cadaverous Du Ponceau. A copy of the Sully portrait by W. Sanford Mason hangs in Stille Hall of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, though it suffers somewhat by comparison with its exemplar. In 1845, Sully painted a copy of his portrait of Du Ponceau for the Law Academy of Philadelphia,51 and this now hangs among dozens of other portraits in the Law Library of the Philadelphia Bar Association in City Hall.

48 Portrait Collection, HSP.
49 Joseph Story to P. P. Fay, Feb. 16, 1808, in Wm. W. Story, Life and Letters of Joseph Story (Boston, 1851), I, 162-163.
50 Carson, I, 155. Engravings made from the Sully portraits give a slightly different impression, but in the paintings themselves Du Ponceau's spectacles are not "huge" any more than his mouth is "large"; his shoulders are hardly "stooping," and his dress is not "careless," though it is true that in advanced age he did develop an extreme stoop and a very slovenly appearance. See above, pp. 62-63.
51 Fathered by Du Ponceau early in 1821, the Academy had about sixty students five years later. Its official archives, heretofore practically unknown and inaccessible, have just been deposited with the Charles Klein Law Library of Temple University School of Law.
Besides the Sully portrait of Du Ponceau, the Law Library includes what its "Portrait Book" describes as a "beautiful copy" of Sully's work, in oil, by the pioneer American lithographer, Bass Otis. The original letter by which the Law Academy proffered the Otis painting to the Law Association more than a century ago also refers to it as a "copy" of Sully. But instead of the seventy-year-old Du Ponceau depicted by Sully, the Otis canvas portrays a youngish man with no spectacles and with seemingly straight, close-cropped hair. Although both paintings are fullface and half-length, the dissimilarity is so great that one might well question whether the Otis portrait is actually of Du Ponceau, especially since it is one of the two canvases in the Law Library that are untitled. There is, however, a small, tinted photograph of the Otis painting in the Rare Book Collection of the University of Pennsylvania library which has an accompanying note made in 1866 stating that it is a portrayal of Du Ponceau "at 40."

Working about the year 1845, as presumably Otis did, how could he manage to copy a painting of Du Ponceau at seventy and come up with a radically different figure hardly more than half that age? The mystery is undoubtedly solved by a medallion portrait of a handsome Du Ponceau in left profile by Fevret de St. Memin, a copper engraving of which, by the artist himself, is in the Simon Gratz Collection at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The conclusion appears inescapable that Otis worked from this profile to create his younger Du Ponceau in fullface. He was aided, of course, by Sully's work and by his own recollection of Du Ponceau in his fifties, Otis having come to Philadelphia about 1812.

It is not surprising that St. Memin should have drawn Du Ponceau. The families were friends, and about 1800 the French artist was at the peak of his popularity in Philadelphia. Young Louisa Du Ponceau also sat for St. Memin at his studio on South Third Street and had him do her portrait with the aid of his ingenious "physionotrace." The rendering of Louisa is a right profile,

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53 Simon Gratz Collection, American Prose. The portrait is a virtual unknown; at least no mention of it appears in The St.-Memin Collection of Portraits; . . . Photographed by J. Gurney and Son (New York, 1862).
and is charming. Pert, petite, and caught at the threshold of maturity, Mlle. Du Ponceau is so typically French that she almost comes to life speaking the language. Her features are delicate and beautifully formed, all of them reflecting intelligence, sensitivity, and a proud inheritance.

So much for Du Ponceau’s life in the large. A number of marked traits set it apart.

From the way Du Ponceau has fared biographically, one would hardly know that he had a family of his own; much less would anyone surmise that he was a man of deep familial affection. We have noted that he was bereft of two infant sons and a cherished wife while yet a comparatively young man. The wound left by these losses was such that he could not easily bear to touch upon the subject. Throughout his memoirs, he refers to his married life but twice, and then only in the most sentimental and moving terms. Similarly, the loss of “two fine Sons” was more than he could stand, for “tho’ I married a Second time,” he wrote to a friend, “I was determined to have no more [children], & I have kept my word.” Instead, his affection for his daughter was infused with added strength. Writing to her from Trenton as she was approaching her seventeenth birthday, he mentioned an invitation to tea and promised, “I shall try to bring you some of the Cake.” “Adieu, my dear girl,” he concluded, “I remain with love & tenderness, Your affectionate father. . . .”

The same warmheartedness manifested itself even in the area of reproof, as in the following excerpt from a letter written to Louisa when she was not quite twelve: “Your two last letters were not by far so well written as the one before them. This is the reason I have

54 Gurney, No. 25.
55 Whitehead, LXIII, 341; LXIV, 268.
56 Du Ponceau to G. W. Featherstonhaugh, Oct. 19, 1809, APS. In the Featherstonhaugh correspondence Du Ponceau refers to an uncle of Louisa’s as though he were a member or guest of the Sixth and Chestnut household. The relative could have been a Garesché, or he could have been Du Ponceau’s brother, the J. M. Du Ponceau, “Sw[orn] In[terpreter],” who, on July 2, 1812, translated from the Portuguese a verification of the signatures on a bill of health dated July 8, 1809, for a vessel about to clear the port of New York. Item 5562, Manuscripts and History Section, New York State Library, Albany. Early in his career, Peter Stephen Du Ponceau himself had been made a notary public and sworn interpreter.
57 Du Ponceau to Miss Louisa Du Ponceau, June 12, 1807, Library Company of Philadelphia (LCP).
Peter Stephen Du Ponceau

Mlle. Louisa Du Ponceau

Medallion Portraits by Fevret de St. Memin
Philadelphia, c. 1800

Collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania
not sent you the pocket Book I had promised. I wait untill you do better.”

One of the less enviable aspects of Du Ponceau's make-up was his tendency to parsimony, which had an unfortunate effect upon his relationship with his surviving grandson, Du Ponceau Francis Garesché. Du Ponceau's feelings about his own finances are glimpsed in a letter of November 14, 1821, to the writer Louis Hue Girardin, in which he averred that he was not “a monied man” and pleaded inability to grant his correspondent's request for help.

I find that impelled by my Zeal I have volunteered more labors in various ways than I should have done, by which I find my professional income greatly diminished, tho' my expenses remain the same. Fortunately my wants are few, & my way of living has always been so moderate, that I may live without the additional profit. But according to the general opinion, I am not pursuing the plan of worldly wisdom. Now & then occasions occur which give me proof of it; and this is one of them.

A nice enough declaration, to be sure, but Du Ponceau downgraded himself overmuch. After all, he numbered among his legal clients such entrepreneurs as Andrew Rodrigue, Stephen Girard, E. I. du Pont, and the latter's onetime associate Peter Bauduy. It is said that on one occasion he received a fee of $10,000 (and very solid dollars they were in those days).

According to his friend Tyson, Du Ponceau was “close in his affairs.” Independent but gave little to benevolent objects. [A]ccepted a pension which was originally $480 was increased in 1841 or 2 to $600 pr. an. Held to it with great [anxiety?] & few visited without hearing of complaints of the Sec'y of War to deprive him of it. The [west?] side of his mansion on 6th St. was let for a book-stand, & as the first occupant didn’t pay him I was frequently consulted as the means of compulsion.

Tyson went on to deplore the manner in which Du Ponceau's grandson was “stigmatised in his Will, [and] condemned to the Almshouse for his want of thrift & kept there for years.” Tyson himself was pressed to intercede, but the old man turned a deaf ear to entreaty. In fact,

58 Du Ponceau to Louisa Du Ponceau, Apr. 1, 1802, LCP.
60 Ritter, 169.
61 The little cottage Du Ponceau had used as his law office.
62 Tyson, “Memoranda for Memoir of Du Ponceau.”
when the matter was first broached, Du Ponceau was offended—the only time the friendly feelings between the two were interrupted. "To the instability which is natural to an ardent temperament," Tyson explained, "he added that which arises from a keen sense of wounded affection, of ingratitude, wrong & the infirmities of age." Evidently, the effect upon the grandson was disastrous and confirmed Tyson's fears that the references in the will would constitute "a brand which would not only have the effect of lacerating the feelings but lessen . . . the chances of amendment." Du Ponceau Garesché died about May 21, 1851, at the age of thirty-nine, apparently unregenerate and cut off by his grandfather.

Another avenue along which a better understanding of the man Du Ponceau may be found has to do with his self-effacing nature. With his marriage in 1788, he tells us, "I began to lead a very retired life, attending only to the duties of my profession." A deep strain of modesty, so marked that it could be mistaken for shyness, was one of his characteristics. This is reflected in the sequestered life he lived, and as much as anything else accounts for it. Even after his law practice endowed him with considerable means and a rather ostentatious home, he preferred to spend his days quietly and unobtrusively, toiling over some aspect of the law or linguistics, corresponding with friends, and enjoying his family. Not that he was a recluse: we have seen that during his association with Livingston he was quite a party-goer, and in later life "he had wide repute as a diner-out and wit." He undoubtedly got this reputation in connection with the distinguished gatherings which took place at the historic home of Dr. Caspar Wistar at Fourth and Locust every Saturday evening, and which continued as the "Wistar Parties" after the doctor's death in 1818.

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63 Ibid.
64 He is buried in an unmarked plot in Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn (sections 52-53, lot 4905), along with his father, who outlived him by eight years. Jacques Paul Garesché (or Paul Jacques, as he was baptized), who died about four months before Du Ponceau Garesché and is his uncle, has been reinterred there.
65 Du Ponceau to Thomas I. Wharton, June 3, 1837, on the life and character of William Rawle, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Memoirs, IV, Part I (1840), 84.
67 Around the turn of the century, Du Ponceau's ventures into the realm of the convivial may have taken another direction. In 1805, along with the brothers John P. and Vital M.
Yet Du Ponceau was almost apologetic in his attitude toward the honors he received, while the urgings of those who insisted that his life merited autobiographical attention left him incredulous, even amused. Offhand, it might seem that he was modest to a fault. He could have held high office had he wanted to: for instance, the post of chief justice of the Territory of Orleans (practically the entire state of Louisiana) was tendered him by President Jefferson. But Du Ponceau would have none of it. He was an erudit, a man of philosophic bent; the domain of practical politics and public office was not his element. In a letter to President Monroe under date of June 5, 1822, he speaks of “the quiet & retired life which choice & inclination have long made me prefer to the bustle of this intriguing world.” He sums up his feelings in referring to a long letter which Monroe wrote him on the basis of their youthful friendship as comrades in arms: “Had I been ambitious of places here was a fine opportunity afforded me to obtain that end, but I preferred my Independence. . . .”

In his writing style as in his person always modest, Du Ponceau would submit his manuscripts to a young friend for criticism as to idioms, turns of phrase, and use of words, and would guilelessly adopt his suggestions. But notwithstanding his modesty, Du Ponceau was a man of innate pride, a pride born of a modest self-estimate, a well-deserved confidence in his own abilities. Its nature was manifested early in his life in America. As we have noted, when Livingston chose him as the first member of his office staff in the new Department of Foreign Affairs, Du Ponceau was sworn in as his “secretary.” The title, though not out of place, was nonetheless a concession to Du Ponceau inasmuch as Congress had merely provided that Livingston might have one or more “clerks.” The brilliant young Frenchman felt the term to be degrading; he politely but promptly raised the issue with Livingston and won his point. He probably won in-

(not Wm.) Garesché, he was among the signers of the charter obtained by La Société Française de Bienfesse de Philadelphie. Constitution et Règlements ou By-Laws de La Société . . ., prédéts d’une Esquisse Historique (Philadelphia, 1862), 7–8. Presumably he had been a member of the earlier society of the same name, since we are told that it included most of the Frenchmen in the then national capital. When in 1798 the first Société ceased to exist, its place was taken by a “Society of Merry Fellows” (Société des Grivois).

68 Monroe Papers, Manuscript Division, NYPL.
69 Whitehead, LXIII, 207–208.
70 Ibid., 338.
creased respect, too, for to talk with the Chancellor about a matter of pride or status was to talk his own language.

A more serious threat to Du Ponceau's pride was created shortly thereafter with the swearing in of Lewis R. Morris, also twenty-one, as another secretary. In his memoirs Du Ponceau described his one-time colleague as "a young man of very moderate talents, but of very high family connexions and adequate pretensions." No matter if Du Ponceau had seniority in appointment and was the peer in ability: Morris was the nephew of Gouverneur Morris, who was quite a personage in his own right and who was, moreover, assistant to the Superintendent of Finance, Robert Morris (no relation). When Congress reorganized the Department of Foreign Affairs around the end of February, 1782, Du Ponceau came off second best to young Morris and a crisis was precipitated which shook the foreign affairs office.\(^71\) Even in so short a time Livingston had come to recognize Du Ponceau's exceptional worth, and the latter capitalized upon every advantage he possessed in urging his claim. Livingston responded by hurrying a letter to the president of Congress in which he proposed, pursuant to a clue provided by Du Ponceau, that there be two under-secretaries of equal status instead of a secretary and "a common clerk."\(^72\) He even wrote Governor Clinton of New York that he might resign the next week for the immediate reason that (so he says) Congress had deprived him of the power of appointing his own secretary.\(^73\)

In the end, realizing that Livingston had done everything he could, Du Ponceau accepted the title of "second under secretary" with good grace. Like the able Philadelphia lawyer he was to become, he had pressed his case up to, but not beyond, the point where he could obtain the best settlement: he had saved face, and the situation as well. Indirect testimony to his wisdom is borne by a bronze marker on the east side of Sixth Street just north of Chestnut commemorating the services of Livingston and Du Ponceau and marking the site of their office. Hardly had the crisis within the foreign affairs office subsided when Du Ponceau received signal recognition from without. Though he was not yet twenty-two and had been a citizen of the state for less than a year, the honorary degree of master of arts was conferred upon

\(^{71}\) *Ibid.*, 339-341.

\(^{72}\) Robert R. Livingston to John Hanson, Feb. 23, 1782, Robert R. Livingston Papers.

\(^{73}\) Robert R. Livingston to George Clinton, Feb. 23, 1782, *ibid*.
him by the University of Pennsylvania on March 21, 1782.\textsuperscript{74} Among the high functionaries who attended the commencement were General Washington and his military family, Baron von Steuben, the members of Congress, and, we must believe, Chancellor Livingston.

Du Ponceau's pride may be said to have had a romantic aspect also. Though hopelessly nearsighted, he was "too much of a beau to wear spectacles" during his early years in America. Certainly, this was true of the almost twenty months he spent in the Livingston household, when he cut somewhat of a dash as a social figure. Even so, his feelings fell short of outright vanity, though in later life he sometimes struck a pose of mild eccentricity in order to attract attention. That he did not take himself too seriously as a young blood is shown by the fact that once he entered the official and personal family of the Chancellor, he laid aside his resplendent uniform and his claim to the address of major, while Morris, doubting not that fine feathers make fine birds, continued to parade about in full regalia. As for Du Ponceau's myopia, it was so extreme that it is a marvel he did not suffer serious accident or injury; actually, the worst he experienced was embarrassment. This he took with good humor, and even enjoyed recounting his \textit{faux pas}. "I remember," he relates, "that one day on entering a room in which there was nobody, I saw my figure in a looking glass, and taking it for that of a stranger, I made a low bow to the reflection of my own person."\textsuperscript{75} While as a "beau" he managed to shun any spectacles at all, he required two pairs later in life; he was often seen putting on the second pair to be satisfied of his opposite party.

Referring to his two pairs of eyeglasses, Du Ponceau used to say that they were important to him "to look before you leap."\textsuperscript{76} He once had to apply this observation literally in circumstances which demonstrate his piquant sense of humor, and his mettle as well. He

\textsuperscript{74} Minutes of the Trustees of the University of the State of Pennsylvania, III, 112. Many years later, Du Ponceau became a trustee of the university, serving from 1818 to 1836. In 1829, he compiled the first catalogue of books in the university's library. The only entry under his own name in the compilation is John Eliot's \textit{A Grammar of the Massachusetts Indian Language}, which he and his closest friend, John Pickering of Boston, edited, publishing it early in 1822.

\textsuperscript{75} Whitehead, LXIII, 459.

\textsuperscript{76} Ritter, 168.
and five other eminent Philadelphia colleagues used to argue each February before the Supreme Court in Washington, chartering a stage for the arduous journey. As soon as the group departed the capital on the return trip, merriment reigned supreme. Returning home in the year 1808, everyone was in especially high spirits and the court jesters outdid themselves.

To such a degree was our mirth carried, that our Irish driver, listening to us, did not perceive a stump that was before him: the carriage made a terrible jolt, our Phaeton was thrown from his seat, the horses took fright, and ran away with us at a dreadful rate. A river or creek was before us, and the bridge was not very safe. It was determined to jump out of the carriage. I was pressed to show the example, but I did not choose to do it, intending to take my own course. I have heard it related, that at that moment, I took a pinch of snuff very leisurely; but that I do not remember, and I very much doubt the truth of the fact. Be that as it may, all except myself, jumped out of the carriage. Being then left alone, I collected all my presence of mind, looked about me, chose my position, and jumped out so fortunately, that I fell upon my feet without the least injury.

Suffice it to add that Du Ponceau’s companions were likewise uninjured, though more or less bruised, and “an honest countryman” soon returned with the horses and vehicle. “I am now left alone on the stage of life, which they were doomed also to leave before me,” Du Ponceau concludes. “I hope I shall meet them safe again in a better place.”

Speaking of snuff, Du Ponceau’s snuffbox, like his tome, was a boon companion. From all indications, so confirmed was he in the habit that especially under strain he indulged it with mechanical regularity and characteristic abstraction. And “in conversation a hearty pinch of snuff seemed to elasticize his memory and quicken its issues.”

“I had two great defects,” Du Ponceau points out in his memoirs. One was his nearsightedness. The other he describes by the French adjective distrait. It was a habitual attitude of preoccupation which amounted to complete absent-mindedness. “He seemed to forget every thing, even his own name escaped his recollection,” writes a contemporary. “He walked always in deep thought, and must needs

77 Du Ponceau to T. I. Wharton, June 3, 1837, on William Rawle, 87-88.
78 Ritter, 168.
79 Whitehead, LXIII, 456-457.
be addressed or arrested to recognize a passing acquaintance.”80 He read and studied with the same profound absorption, “his legs like a screw round each other & his nose touching the paper.”81 He could be an island in a sea of people. On one occasion late in life he occupied the head place at a dinner given by the Philosophical Society, and in offering a toast to some departed worthy he got so enraptured with the ministrations of a celebrated Negro waiter that he invoked the latter’s name as he intoned, “To the memory of Bogle!”82 As an example of his absence of mind and the “ludicrous effects it produced when joined to my nearness of sight,” Du Ponceau recounts a classic anecdote.

In the spring of 1778 while our army was encamped at Valley Forge the commander-in-chief ordered a sham fight to be executed by two divisions of our troops, one of which was under the command of Baron Steuben. In the capacity of his aid-de-camp I was sent to reconnoitre with orders to return immediately at full gallop, as soon as the enemy should be in sight. I rode on to the distance of about a quarter of a mile when I was struck with the sight of what I was since informed to be some red petticoats hanging on a fence to dry which I took for a body of British soldiers. I had forgotten it seems the contending parties were all Americans, and none of them clothed in scarlet regimentals. Full of my hallucination, I returned in haste to the camp, with the news that the enemy were marching upon us. Our division took the road I had indicated, and, behold! the sight of the red petticoats was all the result of their movement.83

It is easy to see why Du Ponceau’s nearsightedness and his absent-mindedness were such prominent traits: they reinforced each other. But apart from this, his abstraction had its own raison d’etre. He is a prime example of a brilliant mind so absorbed with the recondite that everyday trivia are crowded out. He was wrapped up in the arts and sciences, especially in linguistics and the law. Harvard University acted with ample justification when it bestowed upon him the honorary degree of doctor of laws in 1820.84

80 Ritter, 168 and 169.
81 Tyson, “Memoranda for Memoir of Du Ponceau.”
82 Souder, 220.
83 Whitehead, LXIII, 457.
84 After recognizing him as “a most erudite lawyer,” the Latin citation on Du Ponceau’s diploma states that he “has also investigated, with singular application, the languages of the savage natives of America, who are called Indians.” This points to the immediate occasion for
Another notable characteristic of Du Ponceau was his intense Americanism. This term, rather than “patriotism,” is alone adequate to describe the depth of his feeling for, his commitment to, the land of his adoption. France was the land of his origin, true, and he “preserved for that country a tender attachment,” he said, “but it is that of the young bride for her aged parents and the companions of her youth, which is very different from what she feels for the husband of her choice. . . .” His attachment to America was one of linguistics as well as of loyalty. He had been attracted by the English language as a child, and had mastered it effortlessly. In fact, as he says, “I had come to this country [the United States] an Anglomane. . . .” He took the next step with equal enthusiasm and proceeded to become the most zealous of Americans, so much so that he ended up an Anglophobe. His hostility to the English was such that he attributed to them almost every untoward event in politics, and as for English literature, his attitude is indicated by his assertion that the novels of Sir Walter Scott would be forgotten in fifty years. Nothing displeased him so much as to be called a Frenchman or to be reminded of his foreign birth. Conversely, he was never happier than in the act of rendering some service which evidenced his sterling regard for his country. “My American Character,” he declared, “I prize above all things,” and in relation to America and her interests, he was a dedicated man.

His greatest single ambition seemed to be to force Europe to recognize the worth of American literature, science, and scholarship. He grasped every opportunity to call attention to such matters in letters to his European correspondents.
correspondents and did what he could to have American books reviewed in foreign publications. His anger at English condescension towards American literature was especially great. He accused England of desiring to hold America in a state of mental dependence and scoffed at the contention that America had no literature. In a letter to John Pickering, May 27, 1834, he wrote, "Let the Walloon provinces of the Netherlands and the Roman Cantons of Switzerland be contented with being Satellites to French literature, and follow servilely that overwhelming planet; it is well for them and they cannot help it; but a Country like this, without which... the English language would hardly be known in Europe! It is our ascendency that has made it and English literature spread as it has done. I can assure you that in 1776 I was considered in Paris as a prodigy; & why, you will ask? Why; why for no other reason, I tell you for no other reason than because I knew the English language—"Il sait l'Anglais; il sait l'Anglais," flew from mouth to mouth, and on that account, and that alone, I was thought to be a promising lad... The American Revolution alone brought the English language into vogue, not the merit of the English writers..."\(^90\)

In a letter to Chancellor Livingston written two years before the War of 1812, Du Ponceau waxed so enthusiastic in behalf of America that his remarks take on the nature of a polemic.

To draw forth & apply with judgement the immense resources of our Country is the noblest & most solid source of praise at the present & indeed at any time. But now it is a noble revenge against the puny efforts of the Sovereigns of Europe, who are endeavouring to break our Spirits with the arts of a Cartouche & a Blackbeard. We shall convince the world, I hope, that our fate does not depend on a few robberies committed upon us in a neighbouring highway, or by violaters of hospitality abroad. Those who say that we are a mere mercantile people, guided by no other views than those of interest, ought to remember the lightning rod, the the [sic] Quadrant & the steam boat. I am informed that Mr [Rembrandt] Peale at Paris has recovered the ancient mode of painting in encaustic, & that David is sitting to him for his picture. With such resources as we possess within ourselves, it is impossible to check our growth. America shall rise & flourish in spite of Europe, Respublica perpetua—Civitas aeterna.\(^91\)

\(^90\) Whitehead, LXIII, 192–193; a transcript of Pickering's letter is among the Du Ponceau Papers, HSP. A four-page letter to Henry Wheaton written by Du Ponceau on June 3, 1828, his 68th birthday, is another good example of his "Zeal & attachment to the Cause of American Literature." Wheaton Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library.

\(^91\) Du Ponceau to Robert R. Livingston, Sept. 12, 1810, Robert R. Livingston Papers. "I have never [attended?] what foreign travellers said about our manners or about our form of Government compared with their own," wrote Du Ponceau to Samuel Breck in 1834. "But when their pen appears to be guided by hatred or malice, when they attempt to degrade, the american character as Hamilton has done, then I cheerfully raise the whip & lay on as hard as I can." Du Ponceau to Samuel Breck, June 4, 1834, LCP. Tyson, in "Memoir of Du
Du Ponceau was, as he says in his memoirs, "born a republican"—
and, he could have added, a Protestant. "The love of freedom and
equal laws was a part of my nature. I never could bear the despotism
and the superstitions of the old world. Hence my early attachment
to the principles of the Reformation, which I have preserved to this
day." He came into his religious inheritance not only by nature, but
because of the proximity of his birthplace to La Rochelle, that cele-
brated stronghold of French Protestantism. Yet, in young life, his
experience with Roman Catholicism was extensive; to please his
mother he even "took the tonsure and became Monsieur L'Abbé,
but this went very much against the grain and only confirmed his
antipathy to the Church of Rome. While as a youth he could be
openly disputatious about religion, in later life his feelings toward
Catholicism were anything but narrow or bitter. In Philadelphia, his
ties and apparently those of his family were with the old Second
Presbyterian Church on the northwest corner of Third and Arch
streets. With this congregation he worshiped for more than half a
century. Though he does not appear to have been an active church-
man, he was a man of deep natural piety to whom Divine Providence
was a firm reality. He also had a strong, if somewhat wistful, hope in
the future life, which he expressed to his granddaughter in his
memoirs with characteristic frankness and feeling: "It may be an
illusion, but it is one which I have always cherished, that the souls
of the departed watch over us from the high regions which they in-
habit. I love to indulge in those illusions. I fancy that I see your
sainted mother and others whom I need not name, and that I hear
them say to me, like the Laura of your favourite Petrarch,
'T'aspetto.'""