

THE NEW CITY HALL.

LAYING THE CORNER-STONE.

Interesting Ceremonies by the Masonic Order.

ORATION BY J. H. B. LATROBE, ESQ.

[Reported for the Baltimore Sun.]

At different periods in the past the subject of the erection of a new City Hall for the municipality of Baltimore has engaged attention, but singularly enough, it is not till in the last days of an administration of the city government which has in no wise represented the people, that the work is undertaken. It was inevitable that such a structure as would comport with the present wants and future growth and importance of the city should in time be secured; but in view of the present unsettled condition of affairs, the high prices, and other vast burdens pressing upon the people, it required such temerity as only an expiring administration could summon to initiate the work just now, especially on so stupendous a scale as has been projected—involving an outlay, it is understood, of at least a million of dollars, and some experienced persons, who have examined the plans and schedules, estimate the cost at a much larger figure. The corner-stone of the projected edifice—the new City Hall—to be located on the square bounded by Holliday, North, Fayette and Lexington streets—was laid yesterday, and, under the circumstances indicated, it is not wonderful that the people manifested no heart in the matter.—There was an extremely small attendance upon the ceremonies, and no demonstration such as would generally be expected on occasions of the sort. The Masonic Fraternity discharged the duties peculiar to their order, in the premises, but otherwise there were no popular organizations in attendance.

The members of the Order and Knights Templar, to the number of about two hundred, met at the Masonic Hall, on St. Paul street, and shortly after 11 A. M. took up the line of march, under the Grand Marshal, General James M. Anderson, and headed by a band of music, in the order published in yesterday's Sun. Previous to their arrival at the site, the seats on the platform erected for the occasion were occupied by some two hundred ladies and gentlemen, including in the number J. H. B. Latrobe, Esq., the orator of the day, Mayor Chapman, a number of the members of the late city council, the building committee, and others connected with the city government. The Blues' Band, under Professor Holland, which was engaged by the building committee, and stationed on the platform to the north of the stand intended for the orator of the day, performed a lively air as the Masonic Order passed to the place assigned it. The platform was entered through a wide arch on the Holliday street front, and was gaily decorated with flags. All things being in readiness, the Grand Master of Free and Accepted Masons, John Coates, Esq., made proclamation of the intents and purposes of the meeting, after which an original ode was sung by those present, accompanied by the Blues' Band. The Rev. John McOron, Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of Maryland, next invoked the Divine blessing on the undertaking, after which the ceremony of laying the corner-stone was proceeded with according to the regular formula of the Order, including the pouring of the corp. wine and oil on the stone, after which the Grand Master declared the corner-stone as having been properly laid, and handing over to the principal architect the various implements of architecture. The corner-stone is an immense block of Baltimore marble, some five feet square, excavated sufficiently in one corner to receive the box containing the articles to be deposited on the Holliday street front, bearing the following inscription: "Commissioners for Building City Hall—John Lee Chapman, president, Thomas B. Burch, John W. Kirkley, Thomas C. Basshor, James Smith, W. H. Taylor, secretary; George A. Frederick, architect." In the box were placed copies of the city charter, the Holy Bible, the newspapers of the day, various coins, and a number of documents pertaining to municipal legislation on the subject of the hall. After the Masonic exercises had been concluded, and music from the band, J. H. B. Latrobe, Esq., the orator of the day, delivered the following address:

ADDRESS OF J. H. B. LATROBE, ESQ.

If you please, I have a great pleasure in

ADDRESS OF J. H. B. LATROBE, ESQ.

My Fellow-citizens: I have accepted the invitation to deliver this address with more than usual pleasure. I scarcely regret that a busy period of professional life has been broken in upon by its preparation.

For years the municipality of Baltimore has been housed in a way unbecoming the character of our people. The back parlor of an old-fashioned private residence has accommodated the mayor, while the front parlor has been the secretary's office, as well as the ante-room for the crowds having business with the chief magistrate of the city. The register and the comptroller have divided between them similar parlors in an adjacent building. The appeal tax court has been packed away in a room some twelve feet by fifteen. The police commissioners were to be found in the back building of a house a century old, and left unfinished. The lower apartments of another building, eked out by shabby sheds, held the collector and his clerks. The water department had still more limited accommodations. The city commissioner was stowed away in a third story, and the park commission was indebted to the mayor's hospitality for a place in which to meet.

As for the legislative department, the first branch held its sessions in what was formerly the very modest picture gallery of Peale's Museum, and the second branch succeeded a collection of stuffed animals in an adjacent room. Neither apartment was capable of being adapted to the uses to which it was put.

So long as there was no hope of change, a decent pride kept us silent in regard to what was, in truth, humiliating; but now that a day of better things is dawning, we may, without hesitation, allude to the past, and congratulate ourselves that in the building whose corner stone we are about to lay, the municipal authorities

will have escaped from such quarters as we have described.

Why we have remained so long without a reputable city hall it is hard to say. If it has been from motives of economy, the economy has been an unwise one. In the life of an individual struggling to make his way in the world, it is doubtless proper to ask, prior to each expenditure, "Can I do without it?" and so the dinner may be deprived of its dessert, and the old garment be made to last through another season. But when the question concerns a city, and not a citizen, the application of the rule of private life may be inconsistent with the pride, patriotism and interest of the community. Neither the monument to Washington nor the Battle monument were necessities. Had neither been erected, we would still "have lived upon the fat and drunk the sweet wine upon the lees;" and yet which of us would exchange, for any other, our epithet of "the Monumental City," or, who, after the war of 1812, did not hear with pride the toast that described us as "a people who gave graves to their foes and monuments to their defenders."

For years we lived without our parks, and yet, who would now restore them to their former owners, abandoning the shades of the one, or giving up the right to enjoy, as his own, the matchless view from the high ground of the other.

If our monuments redound to our patriotism; if our railroads demonstrate our enterprise; if our parks illustrate our appreciation of the beautiful in nature, our public buildings should not disgrace us by their inconvenience, their insignificance and their inefficiency.

On an occasion like this, some reference to the early history of Baltimore naturally suggests itself as an appropriate topic, if only to perpetuate tradition in regard to old memories that are rapidly vanishing away.

The first land taken up in our vicinity was Whetstone Point, on the southside of the basin. This was in 1662, when Charles the Second was king of England, Cecilius Calvert, Lord Baltimore, was Lord Proprietary of Maryland and Philip Calvert was Governor of the Province. A piece of "glade land," so called by the old annalist, through which flowed Harford run, was taken up in 1668; the neck of land between the middle and north branches of the Patapsco was next patented, and the year after, a Mr. Thos. Cole took up four hundred and fifty acres, through which ran and debouched Jones's Falls, a name given to the stream by one David Jones, who was the first person to build a house on its banks, after purchasing the tract patented to Cole. Jones's house was on the north side of the falls near the head of tide, where what was then called "the Great Eastern Road" crossed the stream by a ford, and passed northeastwardly in the direction of French street, towards the Susquehannah.

Improvement made slow progress in those days, and it was not until 1711 that any one was found adventurous enough to build a mill. This was done by Mr. Jonathan Hanson, at the corner of Holliday and Bath streets. We see the spot from where we stand. In 1728, however, there were people enough collected to organize a town government, and the spot selected for the site was Moale's point, including the level lands around Ferry Bar, in the southwestern section of the present city. This property belonged to Mr. John Moale, "a merchant from Devonshire," and a member of the colonial Legislature. With very different ideas, apparently, of the value of ground rents from those now entertained, Mr. Moale used his influence to defeat the bill that had been introduced to incorporate the town on his land; and the most profitable employment, perhaps, that his successors have been able since then to find for the property has been to use the clay for bricks to build houses and create ground rents in other places.

Moale's point being out of the question, attention was directed to the north branch of the river, and, in 1729, an act was passed by the Legislature "for erecting a town on the north side of the Patapsco, in Baltimore county, and for laying out into lots sixty acres of land, in and about the place where one John Flemming now lives." Flemming was a tenant of Mr. Charles Carroll, and agent of the Proprietary, and resided in a house on the north side of Uhler's alley, near the corner of Charles street, according to our present nomenclature.

The first commissioners of Baltimore town were seven in number, who held their offices for life, with power to fill their own vacancies.— They might either purchase or condemn the "sixty acres," which they were to divide into lots, giving to the owner of the land, Mr. Carroll, the first choice of a single lot. No one was authorized to take more than one lot during the first four months, and none but inhabitants of the county during the first six months; after which the property was thrown open to purchasers generally. All purchasers, however, were obliged to erect a house, covering not less than 400 square feet, in eighteen months, to procure a title. The survey was made on the 12th January, 1730, with the assistance of one Philip Jones and began at the northwest corner of Pratt and Light streets, then ran along Uhler's alley towards "a great gulley" at Sharp street, then up Sharp street and across Baltimore street to McCiellan's alley, which it pursued to the precipice which overhung the falls at the corner of Saratoga and St. Paul streets, thence southwardly and eastwardly to the low grounds west of Gay street, including the Fish-street meeting house, then along these low grounds southwardly to the river, and then, following the meanderings of the river, along Water street, to the beginning. This description is not in the technical language of the survey, but is adapted to the present land marks, and is accurate enough for our purpose.

Time does not suffice to follow Baltimore in

Time does not suffice to follow Baltimore in its growth from year to year, or to describe how, as one enlarges the garments of a child in his advance to manhood, addition after addition was made to the city. At first it had but two streets, Baltimore, then called Long street, and Charles street, then called Forrest street, and nine or ten perch lanes." The names of three of these have been preserved in Lovely, St. Paul's and German—though the last two have been raised to the dignity of streets. The others appear, at present, in Lexington, South, Second, Light, Hanover and North streets. As late as 1750 the town was surrounded by a board fence. In this there were two openings for carriages, one at the north end of Baltimore street, and the other at the north end of Gay street. There was also a small opening for foot passengers on the hill near about where St. Paul's Church now stands. The fence was intended as a protection against a sudden surprise from Indian marauders, and was kept up for some three years by general subscription. A hard winter proved, however, too much for this very original fortification. It was pillered for fire-wood; and Lloyd Buchanan, Esq., is recorded as having been employed to prosecute the thieves. The town commissioners were then found to have no authority in the premises, and when this got to be understood the town fence soon disappeared in smoke.

About this time the bricks used in Baltimore were imported from England, and the Mount Clare mansion, the stately edifice still remaining to the southwest of the railroad station of the same name, was built with them, a fact worthy of mention, inasmuch as the fields on which the old house looks down, and which still belong to the descendants of the first owner, have since furnished the bricks of which a large part of our city has been built, of a quality unrivalled either in England or America.

In selecting the sites for cities, their founders generally have had regard to their economical extension. Penn selected the flat between the Delaware and Schuylkill; New Amsterdam, now New York, was planted on a comparatively level surface; Washington chose a vast plain as the site of the capital of the Union; St. Louis had a plateau of the Mississippi on which to expand, and an almost boundless prairie of unbroken ground afforded space for the indefinite extension of Chicago. But it was far different with Baltimore. After Moale's point was *tabooed*, nothing was left for those determined to have a town in the neighborhood but the marshes and sand hills around the homestead of John Fleming; and could I now present a model of the surface of the original "sixty acres," it would do more justice to those who made our city what it is than can be done by mere verbal description of the topography of the year 1729. Still, let me attempt something in this direction.

Stand with me, in imagination, at the corner of Calvert and Water streets, not long before the war of the revolution. The basin, as we now call it, is rippling at our feet, and across it rises Federal Hill, rugged and precipitous, as it has remained—all clay and sand, and colored with streaks of brown and red and yellow in fantastic mixture. At its base, a scant footway leads to Locust Point. To the left, the river seems shut in by ground on which the Lazaretto stands—the sharp turn southward, around Fort McHenry, being hidden in the distance. To the right, the water's edge is flat, and marshy. The somewhat sluggish rivulet, *debouches* near what is now the head of Light street wharf; and further southward, at the foot of a sand bank seamed with ravines, there is a spot of verdure, where the spring lately conveyed underground to the basin, gushes forth, and sparkles as it threads its way through the low grounds to the Patapasco.—Houses are scattered sparsely here and there, and boats are moving to and fro upon the water. Along the shore are ranges of tobacco hogsheads and, on the roads leading to the landing, other hogsheads are in motion, like garden rollers, with a pin in the centre of each end, to which rude shafts are attached, for the horses that have dragged them in this manner for many a weary mile. The scene, on the whole, is not unpleasing, but it owes its interest to its business life rather than to its landscape beauties.

Turning from this, let us ascend Calvert street, still unpaved, and far steeper than at present—the Baltimore street crossing being on a level with the platform of the present portico of Barnum's Hotel. There are many still living who remember the dilapidated frame buildings at the northwest corner of Baltimore and Calvert streets, whose underpinning, when the street was graded, made them look not unlike a gang of ragged cripples mounted upon stilts. Leaving them behind we find ourselves in front of the courthouse, occupying the site of the Battle Monument, and overlooking a steep sandy precipice, at the foot of which flows Jones's falls. The house now standing at the northeast corner of Lexington and Calvert streets is about in its bed. When the street was graded in 1784, it became necessary to underpin the courthouse, and Mr. Leonard Harbaugh acquired much renown by forming an archway underneath, through whose sides stairways led to the rooms above. When Mr. Harbaugh's work was done, the edifice was probably not unlike a Captain Bobadil or a "modern rough," standing astride the street with a hat too small for himself on his head, and represented by a little bell, in which was the bell that rang the people into the courts of justice. Under the Harbaugh archway was the whipping post, on whose platform were the stocks, and on an upper platform was the pillory.

lory. The last use made of this mediæval contrivance was in 1808. Able and learned men were those who sat on the bench of this courthouse of the olden time—men who owed their elevation to the knowledge of the law, and who gave dignity to the seats they occupied. Among them none was greater than Samuel Chase, who had signed the Declaration of Independence, and was elevated afterwards to the Supreme Court of the United States. He was one of the last who preserved the costume of the revolutionary day; and, dressed in small clothes, with his scarlet cloak and three-cornered chapeaux, was the type of a period then rapidly fading away, and now vanished forever. Whether we have gained anything by the change, not in costume but in legal lore, judicial integrity or public morals, is a question which need not now be discussed.

Looking northward from the courthouse, the meadow lies before us, a pleasant, smooth, green flat, around which Jones's falls issued from the rocky-mouthed ravine now spanned by the Eager-street bridge, and hugging the steep hill-sides to the west, winds its wyy, receiving in its course the city spring, bubbling from a high sand-bank. The depth of the subsequent filling at this point is shown by the depth of the sunken area around the spring at the present time.—Some idea of the great change that has been wrought in this part of the city may be inferred from the fact that a bay schooner was once built and launched hard-by the spring. From the foot of the courthouse hill the falls take a northeasterly course, passing by the "town powder house," along the present Fish street, towards the site of Gay-street bridge, and thence, turning southerly, flows through marshes along Harrison street and through Marsh market space to the Patapsco. At this time there was no bridge at Gay street, but a ferry, or a ford, according to the stage of the water, served the wants of the "great eastern road," and connected Baltimore town with old town. The latter was then a separate municipality, afterwards united to Baltimore, but whose "boys" retain, it is believed, to this day, their ancient cognomen. It was not until 1789 that the meadow was thrown upon the west side of the falls by Mr. Engelhard Yeiser and others, who cut a straight channel from Eager street to Gay-street bridge.

Above the meadow, to the north, Colonel Howard's mansion of Belvidere was built in 1783, directly opposite to the court-house, on the line of Calvert street. The Colonel was one of those men in this world who could look justice fearlessly in the face, and his dwelling was no inappropriate *vis-a-vis* to the Halls of Themis. He was one of those, too, whose example at Eutaw and Cowpens was not lost upon the brave men who fell at North Point, and whose monument the Colonel lived to see rise in sight of his parlor window, block by block, until the admirable sculpture that crowns it was lifted up to hold forever its marble wreath above this record of the honored dead.

To the northwest of the court-house we see the town jail, and beyond that (the jail intercepting the view) is Saint Paul's church, a sort of hint (this interception) that the way from this world to a better may, for evil-doers, be "a hard road to travel." The St. Paul's we speak of was not the building afterwards destroyed by fire, but a barn-like edifice on the edge of a sand-hill, with the graves of departed congregations clustered around, their coffins at times being exposed by the violence of northeast storms.—Close to St. Paul's was a bell-tower standing apart, like a sentinel on duty—a sentinel of the shabbiest shape and uniform, and now long since relieved.

The curious may readily trace the topography here described by the steep streets of the present city, and if they have accompanied us in our imaginary walk, can now look with us from the court-house hill eastward to the forest-covered heights of the Maryland Hospital, and southeastward over the marshes of market space, across part of Old Town, and beyond "Mr. Fell's store and the houses around it," on Fell's Point, to the Patapsco proper, and thence along the river until its waters mingle with those of the distant bay, whose blue line against the sky forms the horizon in that direction.

In a rare old volume, compiled with unexampled diligence by Thomas W. Griffith, Esq., and to which I am indebted for many of my facts, will be found a singularly detailed account of the growth of Baltimore up to 1830; the names of the merchants who came here, the dates of their arrival, their business, its influence upon the town, hints sometimes of their families; all this is recorded; and it is interesting to observe how many nationalities were represented in our early history. As was natural enough, we had Englishmen, Scotchmen and Irishmen, for Great Britain was the mother country. But France constituted largely, so largely indeed as to appropriate a part of the town, the district on Charles street, north of Pratt, long known as Frenchtown. Germany was largely represented, and Holland contributed numbers of her careful, accurate and intelligent merchants to swell the tide of prosperity. In later days New England found out what was good, and brought its thrift into our midst. But in the early days it was upon the Maryland stock, of earlier antecedents, with grafts from beyond the seas, that our well-doing and increase hung.

We are a mixed race, we Baltimoreans of to-day, and if, as some pretend, it is with men as it is with animals, and crossing produces improvement, the beauty of our women, which has become proverbial, is accounted for, as well as the enterprise which has ever been our distinguishing characteristic.

Nature favored Baltimore from the beginning

... favored Baltimore from the beginning
ation of the town. Indeed, was situated
country round about was fertile. A
catches, unrivalled elsewhere. In such
educts of the rich lands bordering the
bank to Baltimore as their appropriate
The streams emptying into the Patapsco
and the Patapsco itself, came rushing to the
not furnished materials for every species
manufacture. The hills to the west and
west were filled with iron ore, and the an-
ore banks and the ruins of old furnaces
how well they were worked long years ago.
iron was sent to England to be refined in
large quantities. Copper existed in the hills
to the north and west, and chrome iron in them
in the intervening valleys. Tobacco and
it were the great staples of the State, and
improvement soon became their place of export.
wonder, then, that the city attracted the na-
tionalities referred to.

But there was yet another reason. Beyond the
mountains lay the Mississippi and its tributa-
ries, and, to the navigable waters of these, Bal-
timore was nearer, geographically, by many
miles, than any other city north of her, on the
Atlantic seaboard. At first, by the packhorse,
then by common roads, then by turnpikes, she
had availed herself of this advantage. But when
the canals of New York and Pennsylvania, by
opening transportation, more than equalized
the distance, practically, another stride forward
became necessary in order to hold the trade of
the West, and here Baltimore again illustrated
her spirit of enterprise by being the first to
adopt, for general purposes, that system of rail-
roads which, ultimately, restored to her the ad-
vantages of her geographical position.

Her first great road to the West was the pio-
neer of all others in the land. The "Great East-
ern road" of 1729 came down a gulley in Sharp
street, found McClellan's alley wide enough for
its accommodation, crossed the Falls at a ford
near Fish street, and wound its devious way
through the forests that separated Baltimore
from Joppa, then the seat of justice of the coun-
try between the Patapsco and the Susquehanna.
Now, there radiate from the city railroads in all
directions, and the system of which they form a
part refers for its origin, as regards all America,
to the 28th day of February, 1827, when the
State of Maryland, with no other guide than its
turnpike charters, created the Baltimore and
Ohio Railroad Company to do that with a capi-
tal of three millions which it has cost more than
thirty millions to accomplish.

While this great work was struggling against
obstacles of all sorts, absolutely forcing its way
to the West by dint of an almost exhausting
spirit of perseverance, driven by the hostile legis-
lation of adjacent States to adopt routes at one
time looked upon as impracticable, while the
other roads to the north, east and south from
the city were being completed, Baltimore made
no advance in any of those respects which stamp
the rank of cities as the die stamps the value of
coin. The old octagonal watch boxes of the
last century still sheltered the antiquated gen-
tlemen who fancied they were protecting the
city when they warned thieves of their approach
by crying the hours during the watches of the
night. The jail, erected at the beginning of the
century, had become an over-crowded den. The
"b'boys" still "run with the machine," and the
volunteer fire department, with all its courage,
devotion and energy, still had its rows, fought
its battles in the streets, and injured its own
reputation, while it interrupted the peace of the
city. With streams of water all around of suffi-
cient elevation within reasonable distances to
supply the city by natural flow, we were still
indebted to the pumps of a private corporation
to fill costly reservoirs, which a single great
conflagration might exhaust.

We still relied, for all purposes of police, upon
the tolling of bells, or the speed of messenger
on foot, to give notice of a fire, or to inform the
authorities of a riot requiring force for its su-
pression. While New York, with nothing but
wilderness of rock and marsh to work upon,
was rapidly making it "blossom as the rose"
a vast pleasure ground, in which architect-
illustrated its faculty to adorn, we were sat-
iated with scraps of woods, here and there, in
vicinity, for shade, and dusty turnpikes for ex-
ercise and recreation; although around the
were tracts of virgin forest, with hill and
and running brooks that seemed to have been
preserved, by some special providence, for glen
our parks. Truly might it have been said,
our railroads had exhausted our energies,
left us satisfied with mediocrity, or even less
all besides. But it was not so. The French
have a saying: "On recule pour mieux sauter."
"One steps backwards that he may spring
ther forwards"—which describes, in some
the condition of our city at this time.

The pause in general improvements that fo-
wed the completion of the railroads was the
backwards, for a city, that stands still in the
ward retrogrades, in fact, by comparison.
Spring forward was due to a chief magistrate
Baltimore, the present Governor of the
who demolished the old watch boxes, who
steam and a paid fire department, take the
of the old volunteer force, who remove
golden upon the falls, and gave us an im-
structure adequate to the wants of the city
nity; who discarded the ancient pump-house
reservoirs, and brought the water, by its
flow, into the city; who gave us the telegraph
all purposes of police; who made the street
ways—in other places selfish monopolies
tribute to the public treasury, and who
but not least, devoted the revenue so soon
the purchase and adornment of public

whose peculiar beauties are unequalled, and which are not only the pride of Baltimore, but the admiration of all strangers, from all lands, who visit them.

Nor in the enumeration of what has been done under the auspices of one of our chief magistrates, must we forget what has been accomplished in the same direction under the auspices of the present incumbent. The lake which bears his name, and now rapidly approaching completion, will make the city independent alike of the droughts which curtail the supply of water, and the freshets which deteriorate it. Unique in its character, and beautiful in its surroundings, it is being constructed to last for ages.— And, still further, to supply Baltimore with water, as amply almost as was ancient Rome supplied. The wise forecast of the same administration has secured a river for the city's use, when need shall be, in the purchase of the Gunpowder; and again, last, but not least, the building whose corner-stone we this day consign to its place in the foundation, will relieve us from the humiliation of having the authorities of a city competent to the works we have described occupy offices in all respects inferior to those of a private corporation of the commonest pretensions. The municipality of Baltimore should be lodged as respectably at least as a bank or insurance office; and the City Hall should not be inferior, as it so long has been, to the most modest of the railroad stations in our midst.

This sketch of the past and present of our city has necessarily been rapid and imperfect. In 1820 the annals of Baltimore already filled a volume; and what, since then, has not been accomplished? Our pride in the emporium of Maryland will not be lessened by the edifice now to be erected. A desideratum will have been supplied when its spacious halls and commodious apartments shall be occupied for the purposes of the city government; and, second to none in extent of accommodation and architectural taste, it will place Baltimore among the foremost of cities, renowned not only for commercial thrift, but for the refinement which should always be the accompaniment of freedom, and whose noblest illustrations have always been in their works of art.

The band again performed a choice piece of music, when the Gloria in Excelsis, commencing with "Glory be to God on High," was sung; and the ceremonies being declared concluded, the Masonic Order reformed and marched to their hall, and those who had witnessed the ceremonies quietly dispersed. At no time was there over one thousand persons present. The entire ceremonies, including Mr. Latrobe's admirable address, occupied but few minutes over an hour. The old buildings on the lot have all been removed except the one used as the engine-house of No. 4, which will be vacated in a few days, when it will also be torn down. In the meantime the work of excavation and laying the foundation is being pushed forward rapidly.