

be expected to follow their pastor into halls, little chapels, and unattractive rooms, such as could be secured to meet the new emergency. With a persistency and courage that no reverses could daunt, Mr. Corey has finally secured eligible lots in the upper part of New York. Worshipping now in a small chapel, he will soon erect an edifice to crown the years of toil and struggle with triumphant success.

Dr. Corey possesses marked executive and business ability. He visited England at his own expense to induce the great preacher Mr. Spurgeon to come to America. He would have accomplished his object, but the prince of preachers could not leave his own work at that time. Blest with means, Dr. Corey is liberal in his aid of educational and philanthropic causes. Few men have a larger hold on the young business element of the city. He is a high-toned, genial and manly gentleman, better known, perhaps, among the business portion of the city than any clergyman in New York. He is one of our best read ministers, and has a private library that ranks among the first in the land. Preaching without notes, with a sonorous voice and impassioned utterance, tall and manly in form and bearing, he leaves a marked impression on his audience, and ranks among the best pulpit orators of the metropolis. The last year he received the collegiate honor of Doctor of Divinity.

## XII.

## JOHN JACOB ASTOR.

HIS EARLY LIFE. — EMBARKS FOR AMERICA. — HE BEGINS BUSINESS. — EARLY SUCCESS. — ENGAGES IN COMMERCE. — SITE OF THE ASTOR HOUSE. — HIS STYLE OF BUSINESS. — A BRIDAL GIFT. — HIS LIBERALITY. — ASTOR LIBRARY. — THE MORLEY LEASE. — HOW HIS WEALTH WAS LEFT. — MR. ASTOR AT EIGHTY-ONE. — HIS RELIGION. — HIS CLOSING HOURS.

## HIS EARLY LIFE.

WHILE New York has a name, the memory of John Jacob Astor will form an important part of our historic fame. As the tall cliff among the hillocks, or the cathedral among the lowly dwellings, so he towers among his compeers. He was born on the 17th of July, 1763, in the small village of Waldorf, near Heidelberg, in the duchy of Baden, Germany. His father was a very respectable man, and held the office of bailiff. Mr. Astor was a countryman of Martin Luther, and possessed many traits that marked the great reformer. He was educated by his mother. His school books were the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. During his long life, it was his habit, on waking in the morning, to read from those books that he used in the home of his boyhood.



## EMBARKS FOR AMERICA.

He was twenty years old at the close of the war of Independence. He resolved to seek his fortune in the New World. He was a poor, uneducated boy, and he trudged on foot from home to the seaport from which he was to sail. A small bundle held all his worldly effects. He had money enough to secure a common steerage passage. He expected to land penniless on American soil. Outside of his native village he paused, and cast towards it one last, long look. Beneath the linden tree under which he stood he formed three resolutions: "I will be honest, I will be industrious, I will never gamble." He kept these resolutions to the day of his death. He sailed from London in March, 1783. His voyage was long and very boisterous. He formed friendships on board the vessel that laid the foundation for his future wealth. The father of ex-Mayor Tiemann, and Mr. Paff, of whom Mr. Astor bought a portion of the ground on which the Astor House now stands, were passengers. As Wesley, on the Atlantic Ocean, formed the acquaintance of the Moravians, whose influence over him changed his whole life, so Mr. Astor made the acquaintance of a furrier, in the steerage of his vessel, that introduced him to that business by which he accumulated millions.

## HE BEGINS BUSINESS.

All sorts of stories are circulated about the early career of Mr. Astor. He is said to have commenced trading in apples and peanuts. Had this been so, it would have reflected no disgrace on him or his chil-

dren. He brought with him seven flutes from his brother's manufactory in London. These he sold. He invested the proceeds in furs. He went steadily to work to learn the trade for himself. He was frugal, industrious, and early exhibited great tact in trade. He was accustomed to say, later in life, that the only hard step in making his fortune was in the accumulation of the first thousand dollars. He possessed marked executive ability. He was quick in his perceptions. He came rapidly to his conclusions. He made a trade or rejected it at once. In his humblest relations to trade he exhibited all the characteristics which marked him in maturer life. He made distinct contracts. These he adhered to with inflexible purpose. He was elastic and sprightly in his disposition, cheerful, open-hearted and honorable. His broad German face glowed with intelligence and kindness. The honor of New York, his adopted city, was always dear to him.

## EARLY SUCCESS.

Mr. Astor was fortunate in obtaining a clerkship in the house of Robert Bowne, an honest, wealthy Quaker, who was ever after the fast friend of Mr. Astor. Astor's brother, Harry, was a rich Bowery butcher. He furnished funds to his brother to set up for himself in the fur trade. Mr. Astor founded the American Fur Company, and had several partners, among whom Peter Smith, the father of Gerrit Smith, was conspicuous. Mr. Smith retired from the firm with a fortune of two millions. Mr. Astor kept on his way, and rolled his fortune up to over fifty millions.



## ENGAGES IN COMMERCE.

Mr. Astor became an importer. At one time his store was in South Street, near the South Ferry. Afterwards he took one on the corner of Pine and Pearl Streets, which still stands. During the war of 1812 he was largely engaged in the tea trade. He also fitted out several blockade runners for Gibraltar. An eminent minister of this city at that time was a clerk in Mr. Astor's store. He relates the following incident. A schooner was purchased, and was to be loaded and cleared in twenty-four hours. It was a case that required despatch. The whole force of the establishment was at work, Mr. Astor among them. The loading began on Saturday morning. At ten o'clock at night Mr. Astor said to the company, "Now, boys, all knock off. Come early to-morrow morning, and we'll finish up the work." Turning to the clerk, whom he knew to be a pious young man, he said, "You need not come to-morrow. I am glad we have one Christian among us. You go to church, and pray for us poor sinners hard at work." He then had vessels ploughing every sea. His ships, freighted with furs, sailed to France, England, Germany, Russia and China. He knew intimately the various markets to which he traded. He gave directions in the smallest details about distributing his cargoes and exchanging commodities in foreign markets, and these instructions had to be minutely obeyed.

## SITE OF THE ASTOR HOUSE.

At an early day Mr. Astor began to invest in real estate. Just before he died, some one asked him if he had not too much real estate. He replied, "Could I begin life again, knowing what I now know, and had money to invest, I would buy every foot of land on the Island of Manhattan." From beating felts on Gold Street, Mr. Astor came up to Broadway, on the corner of Vesey. A small brick mansion, which he built, was filled with furs from the cellar to the attic. His office was on the Vesey Street side, where either himself or wife were always found to attend to customers. The fashionable residences of New York were below Vesey Street. His house was considered far up town. On the block above Mr. Hone built an elegant mansion, of which he was very proud. The Park, opposite, was surrounded by a mean wooden fence. Against this, in the morning, Mr. Hone would lean, toy with his watch-key, which was attached to a leather chain, and admire his house. Mr. Hone was one of the rich men of New York, and was not a little proud of his wealth. One morning Mr. Astor went over to where Mr. Hone was standing, and said to him, "Mr. Hone, you are a successful merchant and a good citizen. You have a fine wife and some nice children. You have a snug little property, and are building a comfortable house. I don't see why you are not just as well off as if you were rich." It was not an easy matter to purchase the square on which the Astor House now stands. But it was accomplished. The English style of the Astor House has always attracted attention. Mr. Astor



visited England, and obtained the plans, in person, on which that celebrated hotel was built.

#### HIS STYLE OF BUSINESS.

The day of his death he was the master of his business. He was very exact in keeping his contracts. He had a dispute one day with his wood-sawyer. He kept an open fire of hickory wood, and laid in a large supply. The wood-sawyer charged him three and sixpence a cord, while the market price was three shillings. Mr. Astor refused to pay a penny above the regular price. While he was disputing with the sawyer, some ladies came in to solicit a donation for a charitable institution. He paused in the debate, heard the plea of the ladies, ordered Bruce, his confidential clerk, to draw up a check of five hundred dollars, signed it and handed it to the ladies, bowed them out, and then renewed the dispute with the laborer, by whom he did not choose to be cheated out of a single penny.

#### MAKES FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS.

The German Benevolent Society made Mr. Astor an honorary member. They sent him regular notices of all the meetings, though he never attended any. About two years before he died he added a codicil to his will, leaving the society twenty thousand dollars. As his custom was, he notified the trustees that he had done so. All the persons who were mentioned in his will were notified of the fact as soon as the thing was done. The German Society was embarrassed. They chose a committee to wait upon Mr. Astor, to see if he would not anticipate his death by giving them the twenty

thousand dollars. Mr. Astor shook his head when the committee made the proposal, and declined to do it. "You'll get the money," the old man said. They pressed the matter, and finally Mr. Astor said, "I'll give you twenty thousand dollars in Pennsylvania five per cent. bonds." These bonds were at a discount of twenty-five per cent., which would leave the society but fifteen thousand dollars. The committee asked permission to consult with the society before they closed the contract. They were instructed to make better terms with Mr. Astor if they could. They represented to him the hardship of losing five thousand dollars, while it could make no difference to Mr. Astor. He ended the interview by quietly saying, "It is in the will, gentlemen, and I can easily strike it out." They closed with the proposal. Bruce was called for, the bonds were delivered, and with a face radiant with pleasure, leaning on his staff, he tottered into the back office, chuckling as he went, to tell William that he had "made five thousand dollars that morning."

#### A BRIDAL GIFT.

He had a favorite grand-daughter. He made her promise that she would not get married without his consent. One day the young miss called upon him, kissed him, and told him she was going to be married. "Is he likely?" said the old man. "Does he love you, and do you love him?" These questions being answered in the affirmative, he sent her away, and told her to come and see him in one week. In the mean time Mr. Astor made diligent inquiries about the young fellow. They were all satisfactory. On the