

**COMMERCE,  
LITERATURE AND  
ART: A DISCOURSE**

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Commerce, Literature and Art: A Discourse by Brantz Mayer

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Commerce, Literature and Art.

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MR. BRANTZ MAYER'S  
DISCOURSE

AT THE

DEDICATION OF THE ATHENÆUM,

BALTIMORE, OCTOBER 23, 1848.

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*Wm. M. Brown*



BALTIMORE, October 26th, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR:

The Joint Committee of the Maryland Historical Society, the Library Company, and the Mercantile Library Association, has requested me to ask of you for publication, a copy of the Address delivered by you before these Societies upon the evening of the 23d inst.

I have much pleasure in carrying the wish of the Committee into effect, and beg, that if not inconsistent with your own views, you will afford us an early opportunity of giving general circulation to the sentiments of your valuable and eloquent address.

Very respectfully and truly,

Your friend and servant,

J. MORRISON HARRIS.

E. C. WARD,	} Committee of the
S. F. STREETER,	
J. MORRISON HARRIS,	} Committee of the
J. MASON CAMPBELL,	
JOHN M. GORDON,	} Committee of the
WILLIAM RODENWALD,	
HENRY MAOTER WARFIELD,	} Committee of the
CHARLES BRADENBACH,	
WILLIAM E. WOODYEAR,	

TO BRANTZ MAYER, ESQ.

BALTIMORE, 1st November, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR:

I received, to-day, your note, on behalf of the Historical Society, the Mercantile Library Association, and the Library Company of Baltimore, in which you are pleased, in very flattering terms, to request a copy of my Address for publication. I comply, at once, with your desire, and beg that you will convey to your associates, composing the Committee from the three Societies, my cordial thanks for this mark of their respect.

Very truly, your friend and servant,

BRANTZ MAYER.

TO J. MORRISON HARRIS, ESQ., &c. &c.

Chairman Joint Committee.





## DISCOURSE.

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THERE is nothing around which cluster so many agreeable sympathies, as the idea of HOME. It is that for which every man of true sensibility craves. We long to be at rest, in perfect security. We desire a retreat whence we are never to be driven, and wherein, our rights will always be respected. This is a natural feeling which every one experiences when he shuts the door of his dwelling and nestles in the familiar chair that stands ready, with its capacious arms, to receive him in the kindly circle gathered around his hearth stone.

Nor is this sentiment of home dearer to man, in social life, than it is to the scholar and artist who seek to shelter the houseless children of the brain. It is to them pleasant to behold these vagrants comfortably lodged and provided for the rest of their lives,—not, indeed, in mendicant asylums where genius is fed with reluctant alms,—but in a respectable home, where they may never suffer the stings of dependence, or, with wounded pride, sink into the degradation of beggary.

Such a Home, and not such an Asylum, for Literature, Art, and History, we have met, to dedicate in the City of Baltimore; and here, forever are the masters of the pen and pencil, to enjoy free quarters and hold their levees in the republic of letters. We design it to be a home in every sense of the word;—a home not only to them, but to us;—a social home, in which fashion and formality are to hold no place or to enjoy no privileges, but where all shall be cordially welcomed when they crave admission or companionship by virtue of talent or taste.

Whilst congratulating this audience that we have, at last, within the limits of our city, such an edifice, we may also indulge the remark, that this is, perhaps, the first unselfish gift that money has ever made to mind in our country. I do not allude to the foundation of professorships, or gifts to charitable institutions,—things done for the sake of Christianity, or for the advancement of education, and flowing from the generosity of wealthy individuals,—but I speak of edifices erected by spontaneous subscriptions for literary purposes, from which the donors expected no revenue in the form of money. *This* beautiful house has been built by FREE GIFT; so that all classes,—mercantile, professional, mechanical,—have been enabled to bestow their voluntary contributions, and to point to it as an object of personal and exalted pride.

There are, probably, many present who recollect when the first project of erecting this Athenæum was suggested, and how sneeringly the idea was discountenanced by some, that anything but the expectation of revenue could induce subscription to such an enterprise. Indeed, the first sketch comprehended the

scheme of a small income; but there were others who believed that generosity and intellectual justice were possible things, when men are properly addressed;—and, to-night, you have the material fact proved and consecrated in the dedication of this magnificent building. Let it be our boast, as Baltimoreans, when we show the shafts and columns that point heavenward from our city walls, in honor of civil and military glory, that we have now a nobler monument in our midst, to which cupidity has not paid the tribute of a cent,—in which selfishness has not set a single stone,—with which the vanity of the living or the dead has no concern, and to which time, money, intelligence, have been unstintedly devoted as a labor of love. Let it be our honest pride that herein are not to be congregated the trophies of war the spoils of victory, the emblems of mortal strife and ambition; but that the triumphs of the mind, the god-like thoughts and spiritual fancies, the sublime conceptions and achievements of genius in all countries, are to be garnered within our edifice;—that from these walls the noble images of pictured thought are to speak in beauty; that from these pedestals the eloquent marble is to breathe the passionate beauty of Venus, or the spiritual wrath of Apollo;—that from these shelves, the master minds of all ages are to speak to enquiring men, and to hold their solemn conclave of genius and wisdom!

It is a matter of no ordinary satisfaction, that the greater part of the funds with which this edifice has been erected, came from the mercantile community. In a Republic, and, indeed, in all countries, at the