

**AN INTRODUCTORY  
LECTURE: DELIVERED BEFORE  
THE BROOKLYN LYCEUM,  
NOVEMBER 7, 1833**

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An Introductory Lecture: Delivered Before the Brooklyn Lyceum, November 7, 1833 by  
Theodore Eames

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BY

THEODORE EAMES.

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BROOKLYN, L. I.

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At a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Brooklyn Lyceum, at the Classical Hall, Washington-street, on Thursday Evening, 7th November, 1833—after the Introductory Lecture had been delivered by THEODORE EAMES,

On motion of GOLD S. SILLIMAN, Esq.

*Resolved*, That the thanks of the Board be presented to Mr. Eames for his Introductory Address, and that a copy thereof be requested to be placed among the archives of the Lyceum.

*Resolved*, Also, That five hundred copies of the Address be printed for distribution, in pamphlet form, under the direction of the Committee on Lectures and Essays.

WEST & TROW, PRINTERS, NEW-YORK.

## ADDRESS.

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THE object and purpose of this meeting are such as must fill every virtuous and patriotic bosom with high hopes, and solid and substantial joy ; and give occasion for warm and general congratulations. We are assembled, not to discuss and settle some question of local and temporary concern ; not to mingle in the strife and virulence of party politics, nor to debate about matters of doubtful expediency or petty interest ; but to commence the operations, and give the starting impulse to an Institution, that promises, and if rightly conducted, will certainly secure a greater amount of permanent good to this village, than any other, merely secular and civil enterprise, has ever pretended to offer: an Institution calculated to move and act directly upon the mind, the noblest part of man : to search out the secret springs of moral and intellectual energy, to bring them into full and vigorous operation, and to exert an elevating and refining influence upon the whole community. And it is a soul inspiring prospect, indeed, when we see so large a portion of our population, moving as one man, and coming up to the light of learning and of science, and generously and heartily co-operating with each other, in diffusing that light, and sending its blessings and its genial warmth into every dwelling in the place.

It is one of the enlightened and liberal designs of this Institution, that a pathway shall be opened, and brought home to every door in this village, leading directly to the temple of useful knowledge : leading to a consecrated spot, where fountains of practical information, of rational, wholesome amusement, and intellectual

gratification, will always be at the service and command of all who choose to partake of them. "The streams of knowledge are thus to be poured into those little channels, that lead to every man's house and fireside, and by insinuating a taste for the most innocent of our pleasures, they are to impart a new charm, and a new attraction, to that assemblage of secure and hallowed enjoyments, which we call home."

The bearing of this enterprise upon the best interests of the community in which we live, cannot be otherwise than favorable, in the highest degree. Occupying, as we do, one of the most enchanting spots on the face of the earth; removed just far enough from the great commercial emporium of the land, to be cheered and animated by its sound, without being annoyed and thrown from our centre by its giddy whirl; surrounded by the richest and most captivating scenery, and blest with a most healthful and invigorating atmosphere, we possess all the natural advantages which could well be conferred upon us; and we have actually swelled, almost to the size of a city, unaided by any other than physical causes.

But it is time to bring moral causes into operation: it is time to attend to the intellectual culture of our population, as well as to the improvements of the localities of the village. Great as are the native attractions of the place, they were not sufficient, for many years, to secure the fixed and permanent residence of a dense and desirable population. A large portion of its inhabitants heretofore, have entered it, without any settled intention of remaining in it. They have rather regarded it as a temporary resting place, conveniently situated to enable them to reconnoitre the great city in its neighborhood, and have usually continued here no longer, than till they had ascertained whether they could, or could not obtain a foothold there, and then, like other birds of passage, have disappeared. Attached neither to the soil nor to the people by any strong bond of union, their hold on Brooklyn was extremely slight, and such as would easily yield to the smallest impulse. Their connection with the place, as it was formed without any mutual sympathy or common interest in it, so it was sundered and dissolved, without sensible pain or regret to either



party. They flowed in, and flowed out, much like the influx and efflux of the tide upon our shores, without remaining long enough either to enrich the soil or increase its verdure, and leaving no other, nor any fairer marks and traces of themselves upon its surface, than do the tide waters upon the sands, over which they flow.

One leading cause of this constant fluctuation has doubtless been, the want of permanent local institutions, of a nature and character to arrest the attention of these transient visitors, and by their intrinsic value, to secure their established and permanent abode. The village, though dressed in all the loveliness of nature, had not moral and intellectual attractions in a sufficient degree to fix the choice of that kind of population, that constitutes the true wealth and respectability of a place. There was still wanting the master work of all ; a closer social connection ; a greater community of feelings, views and interests ; a stronger bond of union, and a cement, to hold the loose and crumbling particles of society together ; in fine, the village seemed for a length of time, to fail of securing for itself, what the magic influence of poetry had long before conferred on airy nothing, "a local habitation and a name."

In this state of things, every indication that a better tone of feeling is beginning to prevail among us, is cause of heartfelt rejoicing. Every movement, that tends to bring the minds of the citizens of Brooklyn in contact with each other, and which manifests a disposition, on their part, to unite in the promotion of valuable objects, is to be hailed and welcomed, as the harbinger of brighter days. And what object can be presented, that has a stronger claim to the cordial support and co-operation of the learned, and intelligent part of our population, than that of diffusing useful information among all classes of society ? If there is any one object, within the compass of human ability, that will unite, and ought to unite, the wishes, and to enlist the feelings of all the friends of the human family, it is that of giving them the light of knowledge and instruction ; of calling into action the latent energies of their minds, of causing them to feel that they are rational beings, not only capable of, but expressly formed for social intercourse, and for high moral and intellectual attainments. That a lamentable amount of ignorance and its attendant vices exist

among the aggregate of our population, needs not, and indeed cannot be denied; but we are sure, that capacity for acquiring knowledge is not wanting among them; and it is the duty, and I will add, the privilege of the better informed, to bring those capacities into action: to give them an opportunity to develop themselves, in a right direction, and to furnish the proper materials and inducements to keep them in continued operation. Upon this truly liberal and patriotic enterprise, a highly respectable portion of the talent and influence of the village has now fairly entered, and from the interest and zeal which have been, and still continue to be manifested in the cause, the happiest results may confidently be expected.

With a view to effect a more perfect concentration of effort, in the undertaking, an Institution has been established in the village, which breathes the true spirit of melioration and improvement; whose vital principle is constant activity and persevering effort; whose watchword is "forward, and still forward," and which will therefore need the active co-operation and support of every individual who engages in it. This Institution is the Brooklyn Lyceum, whose first public meeting, since its organization, we are now holding; and which the friends of improvement generally have been invited to attend, in the hope, and with the expectation, that they will be induced to enlist in the same cause with us, and to lend their active and efficient aid, in promoting its designs. In its nature and objects, the Institution is similar to the associations which bear that name in the New-England States.

It has been thought advisable, by some of the friends of this enterprise, that a condensed general account of the origin, formation and objects of Lyceums, as they exist in our country, should be presented, on this introductory occasion, especially as they are in some degree new in this vicinity. In compliance with this suggestion, I have had recourse to such printed documents as were within my reach, and will now briefly state the result of my inquiries.

The name is of Grecian origin. It is derived from the Greek word "*λύκος*" which signifies "a wolf." This animal, among others, was offered in sacrifice to Apollo, the patron of learning,

and from this circumstance the epithet "Lycaeus" was applied to him. And it is highly probable, that in honor of Apollo, the name Lycaëum was given to a pleasant and salubrious spot at Athens, near the banks of the river Ilyssus, where Aristotle, and other philosophers after him, were accustomed to discourse with their pupils, on subjects of science and useful knowledge. Subsequent remarks will show, that the term, as thus explained, has been tastefully selected, and that it is happily adapted to indicate the general character of the associations to which it has been applied.

With respect to the introduction of Lyceums into this country, the most authentic information that I have been able to obtain, is, that in February, 1829, a public meeting was held in Boston, consisting of members of the Legislature and other gentlemen, at which a committee was appointed to collect information concerning Lyceums, in that State, and to report at a similar meeting, to be held during the ensuing session of the Legislature. At this second meeting, held February 19, 1830, his Excellency Governor Lincoln presiding, committees were appointed for the several counties, to collect and diffuse information on the subject of Lyceums, and to report at another meeting, during the next winter session of the General Court. At a general meeting of these county committees, a central committee of Massachusetts was chosen, of which the Hon. A. H. Everett was chairman, for the purpose of corresponding with the committees in the several counties. The first circular of this central committee was issued, and contained, among other things, the following authentic summary information concerning Lyceums.

"A Lyceum is a voluntary association of persons for mutual improvement. The subjects of their inquiries may be, the sciences, the useful arts, political economy, domestic economy, or such other matters as are best adapted to the wants or inclination, or employments of the members, and may vary, according to times and circumstances. The more frequent topics, thus far, have been the exact sciences, in their application to the arts and purposes of life; with others of a practical nature, and such as are profitable to persons of different classes and ages. The regulations of these associations are few and simple, and resemble those which are