

**FITZ-GREENE
HALLECK:
A MEMORIAL**

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Fitz-Greene Halleck: A Memorial by Frederick S. Cozzens

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FREDERICK S. COZZENS

**FITZ-GREENE
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John Francis Holbeck



Yours very truly
Fitz-Greene Halleck

FITZ-GREENE HALLECK.

A MEMORIAL.

BY

FREDERIC S. COZZENS.

READ BEFORE THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, JANUARY 6, 1865.

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A MEMORIAL.

MR. PRESIDENT :

MR. DICKINSON, the Chairman of the Committee to which I have the honor to belong, has prepared some resolutions, expressive of the sincere grief which this Society feels at the recent decease of FITZ-GREENE HALLECK. It devolves upon me, in accordance with a time-honored custom, to introduce them with a brief review of the career of our late illustrious associate. I am aware, however, of an increasing hoarseness, which will prevent me addressing you in person; and as our excellent librarian, Mr. MOORE, has, at my solicitation, promised to take the load off my shoulders, I am only too happy to hand these papers to him.

THIS IS A NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY. It is a living register of deeds and men. From its accumulations of the records of the past—of the records of our common Country in general—we turn with more affectionate interest to those themes which are peculiarly *local*, to those acts which have added a lustre to this city, to those actors who have lived, and breathed, and moved among us; who have formed a part of our crowded streets, and our busy thoroughfares.

If Longfellow should die, the streets of Boston would be draped in mourning! But although we display no outward signs of grief, we feel not less keenly, that there is a vacant space among us; that a statue has fallen from its familiar pedestal; that a spark of immortal fire has been quenched forever; and that he who used to be, peculiarly, the intellectual soul and centre of this vast metropolis, now lies silent, in a narrow grave, at Guilford!

A brief biographical sketch, collected from various sources, may be not uninteresting.

Fitz-Greene Halleck was born in Guilford, Connecticut, July 8th, 1790. On his mother's side, he was descended from the famous John Eliot, "the Apostle to the Indians," and his father filled an inconsiderable position, during the Revolutionary war, under Sir Henry Clinton. "My father," said Halleck to me, "was a British Commissary. But I am inclined to believe that this high-sounding title was a fiction. British and other commissaries, in the army, usually accumulate fortunes; but as my father made nothing out of the war, I think he must have been a *sutler*. And my opinion is," continued he, "that as a *sutler* transacts his business upon his own capital, and a commissary draws his funds from the military chest, that the chances of being an honest man *are in favor of the sutler!*"

In 1814 we find Mr. Halleck a clerk of Jacob Barker. The late Daniel Embury, formerly President of the Atlantic Bank of Brooklyn, at that time was Mr. Barker's cashier. He always spoke of Halleck with almost boyish affection. "When I found,"

said he, "that Jacob Barker's affairs were in such a state that an honest cashier could not remain with him, I spoke to Halleck about them, for I had determined to leave his office, and urged him to do so likewise. But Halleck replied, 'No! I will not desert the *sinking ship*; I will remain at my post. When misfortune comes, that is the very time to stand by one's friends.' And so," said Mr. Embury, "I left the office of Mr. Barker, and entered into the employ of John Jacob Astor. Some years after, Halleck followed me. By-and-by he rose to be Astor's chief book-keeper and confidential clerk."

It is very well known that Mr. Astor left Mr. Halleck in his will, when the latter was in the height of his fame, and pretty well advanced in years, an annuity of two hundred dollars. It is very well known, also, that Mr. Wm. B. Astor added to this a gift of ten thousand dollars. It was the first gift ever given by a wealthy man to a poet, in this country. It was certainly noble and generous. Opulence often pays thousands of dollars for a picture, to secrete in a private gallery; but the greater artist, the Poet, whose works ennoble mankind, is too often forgotten.

I asked Mr. Embury, one day, why it was that John Jacob Astor had left Halleck, his faithful clerk, only this trifling sum. "I think I can explain that," he said. "Halleck often used to joke Mr. Astor about his accumulating income, and perhaps rather rashly said, 'Mr. Astor, of what use is all this money to you? I would be content to live upon a couple of hundreds a-year, for the rest of my life, if I was only sure of it.' The old man remembered that," said Mr. Embury,