

**CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS, 1835-  
1915: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.  
WITH A MEMORIAL ADDRESS  
DELIVERED NOVEMBER 17, 1915**

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Charles Francis Adams, 1835-1915: An Autobiography. With a Memorial Address Delivered  
November 17, 1915 by Henry Cabot Lodge

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**HENRY CABOT LODGE**

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*An Autobiography*

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## Note

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IN 1913 Mr. Adams sent to the Massachusetts Historical Society a sealed package, containing, as he expressed it, "an autobiographical sketch," to serve as material for a memoir to be prepared for publication in the *Proceedings* of the Society, when the occasion should arise. Full authority was given to the Editor of the Society to make such use of this "sketch" as seemed to him proper. Of the contemporaries of Mr. Adams no one remained qualified, by knowledge or sympathy, to prepare a memoir, and the autobiographical sketch, on examination, made a search for a biographer unnecessary. It is full and characteristic of the writer.

The Memorial Address by Mr. Lodge was delivered in the First Church in Boston, on the afternoon of Wednesday, November 17, 1915, at a public meeting of the Society in commemoration of Mr. Adams. The proceedings were marked by great simplicity and deep feeling. The invocation was made by the Rev. George Angier Gordon, and the benediction given by the Rev. Charles Edwards Park.

W. C. F.

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## Contents

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I. MEMORIAL ADDRESS. BY HENRY CABOT LODGE	ix
II. AUTOBIOGRAPHY. BY CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS	i
I. YOUTH AND EDUCATION	3
II. LAW AND POLITICS	38
III. WASHINGTON, 1861	72
IV. WAR AND ARMY LIFE	114
V. PUBLIC SERVICE AND HISTORY	168
INDEX	219





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## Memorial Address

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No man who reflects, certainly no one who gives rein to his imagination, can approach even the slightest attempt to tell the story of a man's life upon earth, whether it be his own or another's, without feeling that he is doing so in obedience to one of the overruling impulses, one of the deep-seated instincts of humanity. He cannot escape the vision of the successive generations of men as they pass by in long procession recounting, each in its turn, the lives and deeds of those who have gone before.

The form remains; the function never dies.

We fain would learn where the function and the form began and when they issued from the darkness. There comes no answer to our questioning. We cannot know, we can only guess.

In those dim, mysterious regions of the past, about which conjecture alone is possible, we may nevertheless be sure that, as soon as men secured command of language, the first use to which they put it, after passing beyond the base needs of daily communication, was to talk of themselves and of each other. When Browning's Eurydice cries to Orpheus:

No Past is mine, no Future; Look at me!

we listen to the passionate voice of an old, sophisticated and complex civilization. Primitive man was the very reverse of this. He clung to the past and grasped blindly at the future. A little speck in the vast spaces of time and eternity, his

overwhelming spiritual need, the craving hunger of his soul was to bind himself to those who had gone before and strive to clutch that which was still to come, so that he might in his ignorance rescue himself from the loneliness in which he wandered, helpless and unaided. Memory and imagination were his sole resources; so he turned to the singers, the reciters, the ballad-makers, the minstrels, and the rhapsodists to tell him of his past, of the heaven-born heroes from whom he liked to think that he was descended, of the wars, the deeds of arms, the conflict with forces of nature, of light and darkness, of the vague traditions and legends which were to him unchanging and unquestioned truths. This to him was history, and he sought the future in the prophecies and predictions of his sibyls and priests and soothsayers, in the signs of the heavens, in the flight of birds, and among the entrails of animals.

When some great genius, when more than one, perhaps, like him to whom the Greeks gave the name of Cadmus, discovered a method of expressing language by certain arbitrary signs, men began to carve those signs on stones, paint them on walls, bake them on bricks, and finally to write them on papyrus, on skins, on bark, and on parchment. Thus they recorded events which seemed to them memorable, facts began to rear their hard, unfeeling heads, and imagination slowly withdrew from a world in which it had once reigned supreme. One form of these records was the epitaph, the attempt to tell upon the tombstone something of the life of the dead who lay beneath, of the ancestor to whom primitive man had always clung in the wide wastes of the universe, which he could not understand, and to whom he had given his worship. Thus biography began, and, as Carlyle says, "History is the essence of innumerable biographies." Com-