

**NEW YORK DURING THE LAST HALF CENTURY:
A DISCOURSE IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
FIFTY-THIRD ANNIVERSARY
OF THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, AND
OF THE DEDICATION OF THEIR NEW EDIFICE,
(NOVEMBER 17, 1857)**

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New York During the Last Half Century: A Discourse in Commemoration of the Fifty-Third Anniversary of the New York Historical Society, and of the Dedication of Their New Edifice, (November 17, 1857) by John W. Francis

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JOHN W. FRANCIS

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Historical Discourse.

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IN COMMEMORATION

OF

The Fifty-third Anniversary

OF THE

NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

AND OF

THE DEDICATION OF THEIR NEW EDIFICE,

(November 12, 1857.)

BY

JOHN W. FRANCIS, M. D., LL. D.

Fastigia Regum.

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P R E F A C E .



It was considered desirable, on the occasion of inaugurating the new and beautiful edifice erected by the liberal contributions of the merchants and professional gentlemen of this city, for the permanent deposit of the manuscripts, books, and other property of the New York Historical Society, that the chief elements of civil and social development which have marked the annals of this metropolis, should be sketched in their origin and progress. As this could be most effectually done through personal reminiscences, the author of this brief historical record was chosen to perform the duty; partly because he is one of the few surviving early members of the Institution, and partly on account of the intimate relations he has sustained to many prominent citizens in all departments of life and vocation. Alive to the earnestly expressed wishes of his fellow-members, and cherishing a deep interest in the annals and

prosperity of his native city, while he found the task accordant with his sympathies, he yet felt that the absorbing cares of an arduous profession were essentially opposed to the research and finish appropriate to such an enterprise; and he therefore craves the indulgence of his readers, as he did that of his audience. As delivered, this survey of New York in the past, was unavoidably curtailed; it is now presented as originally written.

The author cherishes the hope that it may be in his power, at a future time, to enlarge the record of local facts and individualities associated with the unprecedented growth of New York, since and immediately preceding the formation of her Historical Society. It will be seen that his aim has been to review the condition of the site, institutions, and character of our city during the last sixty years, and, in a measure, to trace their influence on its future prospects: as the commercial emporium of the Union and the seat of its most prosperous Historical Society, we have every reason to hope that our new and extensive arrangements will secure a large accession of valuable materials. Yet those members who bear in recollection the vast changes which have occurred within the period of our existence as an association, need not be told that the original landmarks and features of the

metropolis have been either greatly modified or entirely destroyed ; while carelessness, or the neglect of family memorials, renders it extremely difficult to reproduce, with vital interest, even the illustrious persons who have contributed most effectually to our prosperity and renown.

If the author succeeds, by means of the present brief sketch or a future more elaborate memoir, in awakening attention to the men and events which have secured the rapid development of resources on this island, both economical and social, he will rejoice. Such a task, rightly performed, should kindle anew our sense of personal responsibility as citizens, of gratitude as patriots, and of wise sympathy as scholars. Even this inadequate tribute he has regarded as an historical duty, and felt it to be a labor of love.

J. W. F.

New York, *November 17, 1857.*