

**DISCOURSES AND
ADDRESSES ON SUBJECTS
OF AMERICAN HISTORY,
ARTS, AND LITERATURE**

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Discourses and addresses on subjects of American history, arts, and literature by Gulian C. Verplanck

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GULIAN C. VERPLANCK

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DISCOURSES

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ON

SUBJECTS OF AMERICAN HISTORY,
ARTS, AND LITERATURE.

BY GULIAN C. VERPLANCK.

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P R E F A C E .

The following discourses and speeches, delivered on different occasions, were printed at the time, and some of them passed through more than one edition in a pamphlet form. Though they were pronounced on various occasions and at considerable intervals of time, they have yet a general unity of purpose, being all designed to direct public attention to the history, biography, arts, and literature of our own country. It has, therefore, been thought, that they might be appropriately collected and republished together.

The rapid progress of improvement in the United States has made some of the criticisms and remarks contained in them less applicable than they were when first written. For instance, the publication of several excellent works of American Biography, within the last two or three years, has taken away much of the justice of the complaint in the Historical Discourse, of our neglect of the memory of our illustrious dead.

As, however, this and some similar remarks on other points were perfectly correct at the time, and still apply, though much less forcibly, it has not been thought proper to erase them.

New-York, May 20, 1833.

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C O N T E N T S .

- I. Anniversary Discourse before the New-York Historical Society.
- II. Eulogy upon the Founder of Maryland.
- III. Address delivered at the opening of the Tenth Exhibition of the American Academy of Fine Arts.
- IV. The Schoolmaster—Tribute to the Memory of Daniel H. Barnes.
- V. Address delivered before the Literary Societies of Columbia College, on the eve of the Annual Commencement.
- VI. Speech on the law of Literary Property.
- VII. Lecture Introductory to the several courses delivered before the Mercantile Association of New-York.

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HISTORICAL DISCOURSE.

On an occasion like this, in addressing a society formed for the purpose of exploring and preserving the history of our own country, I know of no theme that can be selected so appropriate and so copious, as the eulogy of those excellent men who have most largely contributed to raise or support our national institutions, and to form or to elevate our national character.

The wide field of research, which the history of this hemisphere opens to us, may indeed present to the philosophical, as well as to the antiquarian inquirer, many objects of more curiosity, and, perhaps, some of greater utility. The observation of the various results in legislation or jurisprudence, in public and individual character, already produced in this great school of political experiment by hitherto untried combinations of the moral elements of society—the examination and arrangement of that immense mass of useful facts exhibited in our statistics—the investigation of the character, the languages, the traditions, the manners, and the superstitions of the aboriginal inhabitants of the country—the collecting and accurately ascertaining the minor facts and minuter details of those great achievements which have rendered the history of our liberties so glorious—all have their use and value. Hence may be drawn materials

enabling the philosopher to pour new light on the moral and physical nature of man ; and it is thus that are preserved those fleeting forms of the past, which may hereafter rise and live again at the powerful bidding of the poet or the painter.

But the habit of looking to our own annals for examples of life, and of rendering due honour to those illustrious dead, the rich fruits of whose labours we are now enjoying, has a more moral, and, I think, a nobler aim. In paying the tribute of admiration to genius, and of gratitude to virtue, we ourselves become wiser and better. Instead of leaving our love of country to rest upon the cold preference of reason, that slowest and most feeble of all motives of action, we thus call up the patriotism of the heart in aid of that of the head. Our love of country is exalted and purified by being mingled with the feelings of gratitude, and reverence for virtue ; and our reverence for virtue is warmed and animated, and brought home to our hearts by its union with the pride and the love of our country.

In this respect we have not been faithful to our own honour. The short period of our existence as a people has been fruitful in models of public virtue. Other lands may boast of having given birth to men of rarer genius, and of more splendid achievement. Yet how often has that genius been the base flatterer or the willing instrument of oppression ; how often has it been low and selfish in its ambition ; how often black with crime. But the history of our illustrious men is a story of liberty, virtue, and glory. Such, however, has been our culpable negligence of their fame, that little other memorial is to be found of most of them, than what has been incorporated in the public records of their times. All that