

**JAMES LORIMER
GRAHAM, JR.:
JANUARY 17TH, 1984**

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VARIOUS

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January 17th, 1894.

THE CENTURY ASSOCIATION.

1894.

JAMES LORIMER GRAHAM, JR.

On the evening of Saturday, January 17th, 1894, a meeting was held of the Century Association in memory of the late James Lorimer Graham, and in recognition of his gift of his Library.

Mr. Parke Godwin, of the Committee on Literature, presided, and introduced Mr. James M. Varnum, who read the following biographical sketch of Mr. GRAHAM:

JAMES LORIMER GRAHAM, Jr., more familiarly known to his friends, and especially to the Centurions of his time, as "Lorrie" Graham, was born in New York City in 1831.

His father, Gen. Nathan B. Graham, belonged to a prominent New York family, and his mother, Marie Antoinette McCoskry, came of good old Scotch stock. Her uncle, Robert McCoskry, was one of the founders and the first President of the Chemical Bank, and was as "canny" as the best of his race; for to his rare financial ability was associated a keen sense of humor; and he had a great fondness for singing Scotch songs, and when so engaged, his round plump figure, short curling hair, and the waving red silk handkerchief with which he accentuated every movement, made him one of the prominent and salient features of the New York of that day. His niece, Mrs. Graham, did not live long enough to see her

five children grow up into manhood and womanhood, although Lorrie, the second son, had nearly arrived at man's estate when she died.

Lorrie was educated in New York until he was about sixteen, and was then sent to Amiens, France, to complete his education. There he lived for some years with a cousin who had married a French gentleman of position and prominence, pursuing his studies; and afterwards spent some time in Paris in completing his education.

During his sojourn abroad he became a proficient French scholar, and retained all his life his fluency and perfect accent, so rare to any foreigner, and was often mistaken for a Frenchman.

His features were of the purest Latin type, the nose exquisitely modelled, and the lines of the mouth almost perfect.

He was in fact an "intellectually" handsome man, rather poetic in appearance, of good height and figure, and most charming manners. He early evinced the literary and artistic tastes which controlled and governed his whole career, loving the literature and art of France and England as well as of his own country with all the ardor of a young enthusiast — an enthusiasm very lacking in our own times.

He soon opened a correspondence with the great men of that day who had attracted him so strongly; and the kindly answers he received resulted in a large and exceptionally remarkable collection of autograph letters, which he had bound and inlaid in several large and beautiful volumes. This valuable collection was unfortunately lost on the occasion of

his shipwreck upon a voyage which he made from New York to San Francisco soon after his return to America, on the first steamship which attempted to make the trip.

The ship belonged to the old shipping house of Howland & Aspinwall, with whom Graham was then enrolled as a clerk. He and one of the younger Aspinwalls were the only passengers in the cabin; but the ship carried many emigrants; and when it was wrecked, the passengers were picked up by different sailing vessels, and carried off to various ports; so that many weeks elapsed after the loss of the ship was reported before Lorrie appeared once more at his father's home in New York, emaciated from illness, starvation and exposure, and having saved nothing but the clothes on his back, and one beautiful opal stud, which still glistened on his dilapidated shirt front.

The rest of his life was uneventful, except in those richest of all experiences, friendships with men of ability and culture; for the literary men and artists of his time, both at home and abroad, were all his warm personal friends.

He married comparatively early in life, Josephine, the daughter of Mr. Thomas Garner, a wealthy merchant of New York, a charming and attractive woman and a devoted wife, who during the many years that they were together, and until his death, was a friend and helpmate in the best sense of the term; and who made his friends hers, and caused them to feel that they were ever welcomed and honored guests in her house.

It is almost needless to say that such a man early became a member of The Century, and that during all of his life, while he was in this country, he was a constant *habitué* of the Club, the friend of all his fellow members, and ever by his kindness, his love of literature and art, and his witty and brilliant conversation, welcomed by all as a charming companion and a prince of good fellows.

When Graham died, he left the library and collections which he had gathered together with so much care and loving enthusiasm to this beloved and devoted wife, but with the intimated desire and longing, that after her death, rather than go to strangers, it should be bequeathed by her to his old love, to the home of his best friends—to that American cradle of literature and art; The Century Association of New York.

And when a little more than a year and a half ago this charming woman passed away, she provided by her will that the wish of Lorrie Graham should be carried out, and the library should find its final lodgment in the house of his friends, amongst those who knew and loved him so well.

This explanation may answer the question which has been frequently propounded: Why, when Mr. Graham died in 1876, his library should only at this late time come as a bequest to this Club.

But to return to Mr. Graham in his prime, when in the possession of full health and vigor, of boundless enthusiasm for literature and art, and with a heart full of love and affection for the worshippers at their shrines. He delighted in their presence and

society, and in the graceful hospitality of his charming wife.

This youthful Mæcenas of our times, rich in this world's goods, but regarding them as but dross compared with the richness of talent and intellect, which he worshipped above all, was indeed an exceptional character in our city and our nation.

One of the most distinguished of his literary friends, who is with us to-night, is reported, at a dinner of literary and kindred spirits not long ago, to have offered the following toast to the memory of Lorrie Graham:

“Here's to Graham! Let us keep his memory green; for when we poor fellows lived on hard tack all the week, we knew that there were always champagne and oysters for us at Graham's whenever we chose to go there.”

It was not only that his walls were covered with the pictures of the young and struggling artists which he had bought, or that he delighted in entertaining and aiding the literary or artistic men of his time; but he was a cultured, appreciative and brilliant host, not the least distinguished amongst the bright galaxy that surrounded him.

Later in life, having gone to Italy for a time, Mr. Graham was appointed the United States Consul General at Florence; and there, first at the Casa Guidi, celebrated by the Brownings, afterwards in the Palazzo Orsini, and finally in their own handsome hotel in the Via Manzoni, he and his wife dispensed their magnificent hospitality to the princes of church and of state, of literature and of art, until

his death in 1876. And of all the most welcome were their friends from their own beloved country, and especially their literary and artistic friends, as many of those present to-night will lovingly testify.

The books which have been bequeathed to this Association are the results of all those years of literary culture and companionship, gathered lovingly from his boyhood, and onward through his life; for he always delighted in the rare and the beautiful, and appreciated them with that inward sense so highly cultivated by the circumstances of his life. They tell to kindred souls the history of an artistic and loving spirit.

Amongst these books is one which will give you who knew him not a fair idea of what manner of man Lorrie Graham was, for by a man's friends you can fairly judge him.

It is an autograph book, and is entitled: "Ye Booke of ye Goode Fellowes." And the scope and purpose is attractively set forth on the first page in the following charming verses by our friend and fellow Centurion, Mr. Stoddard, as follows:

"Every book must have a name,
 Meaning much or meaning little;
 This of course must have the same:
 Let me see,—
 What shall it be?
 I have hit it, to a tittle:
 (Fellow authors be not jealous,)
 'Tis 'Ye Booke of ye Goode Fellowes.'