

One Hundred Years Ago

(From the National Gazette of May 5, 1832)

WE regard the Philadelphia Library as an institution of great importance for the community. It is already so rich in books fitted to improve and amuse all the best descriptions of readers and inquirers that the main consideration now is not the increase of the stock, but how so extensive and available a collection may be turned to the best account. For this object the first means is evidently to render it accessible to the public during the greater part of the day. At present it is open in the afternoon only and closed at sunset, an arrangement which, in the winter, embraces but a few hours. We refer all who are concerned in the matter to an ingenious and pleasant article in Dennie's Portfolio of July 10th, 1802, thirty years ago, which concludes:

"It has been darkly hinted that pecuniary considerations affect the liberality of the establishment and that an early passage to the library is obstructed by the figures of arithmetic. But this we look on as a downright calumny. The very genius and characteristic of literature is liberality. Let not the avenue of science be blockaded by the pence table. Let not learning be locked up for lack of a golden key. But let all who have the exalted privilege of standing around the well spring of literary refreshment exclaim in a munificent spirit, generous accents and the eloquent phrase of a Jewish classic—'Ho, every one that thirstest, come ye to the waters.'"