

Portraits on in member
room
personal shield
at Bridgway

April 8. 1834

FOR POULSON'S AMERICAN DAILY ADVERTISER.

The death of JAMES COX, was announced in this paper within a few days, at the advanced age of 83. Mr. Cox was too remarkable a man to be allowed to pass away from among us without at least a slight notice. His great passion was book collecting, and during a long life, he was so thoroughly imbued with the bibliomania, that he sacrificed all his income to the attainment of his object, so long as he was able to exert himself in his profession. He came to this country from England, when a young man. Passing along Almond street, he saw a lady at her front door, whom he recognised as having emigrated from his own country, and a friendship was formed between them. Mr. Cox became her heir, and having now a comfortable house over his head, and some small income besides that derived from the exercise of his talents, he devoted himself very much to forming a library, and to literary pursuits, passing only a part of each day in teaching drawing and painting.

He was long the fashionable drawing master in the families of our wealthiest citizens, and in boarding schools, &c. Robert Morris and General Washington were among his patrons. Being almost the only professor of his art, Mr. Cox found money flow in upon him in a perennial stream, and what was so easily made was as rapidly spent. The book stores, book stalls and auctions, were daily visited in search of varieties; his bills at one book store alone, are declared to have exceeded a thousand dollars per annum, for many successive years, while his importations from Europe were also considerable. Books on the Fine Arts, when such things were unknown in our public and private Libraries, were to be seen only in his collection; hence his rooms were the resort of artists, and from this storehouse emanated patterns for various kinds of house decorations, theatrical ornaments, scenery, and so forth. Music too he cultivated successfully, and was intimate with the most prominent professors of the art. His purse was not unfrequently opened to poor actors and others.

A bachelor with these habits, and without a relative in the country, living to his great age, may be supposed to have survived most of his friends and intimates, as well as a large proportion of even his scholars; such was the case, and when the writer of this imperfect notice was first attracted to his house by the fame of his library, within about three years, he found him a solitary being of extremely eccentric habits. His companions were a dog and a maccaw; the latter, remarkable for its splendid plumage, its loquacity, and mischievous disposition.

Much persuasion was necessary, in order to obtain a view of his books, which were stored away in a second story room, in double and treble rows, and covered with cobwebs and dust, while the floor was strewn with portfolios of drawings, scraps of music, broken instruments, hour glasses, plaster casts, &c. with not a few evidences of the inroads of vermin of sundry descriptions.

43
Jas Cox No 39 Almond street
Philad^a Dec^r 12th
1818.

A few hours passed here convinced the writer that the collection possessed great value, both as a curious and useful library of reference, and his exertions, aided by others, were immediately used to induce the venerable owner so to dispose of the accumulation of his long life, as that his literary treasures might not be dispersed, but remain a monument of his industry and taste to posterity. The greatest reluctance was evinced at the very idea of parting with these old companions, who had cheered his solitude, and given him an object to live for. After frequent casual conversations, his judgment became convinced of the propriety of depositing his books in an institution where they would be kept together, and having negotiated with him for the Library Company of Philadelphia, who agreed to give him an annuity of four hundred dollars for his support in declining life, the writer had the pleasure of transporting nearly the whole of the collection to enrich the shelves of the above institution. The number of volumes exceeded five thousand.

Thus the Library Company has been benefitted, while Mr. Cox obtained the object of his wishes, that of leaving entire his literary treasures in a place where they will be appreciated, and where his name, inscribed in each, will cause him to be remembered.

The passion for collecting remained to the last. With his increased income, he has been since an occasional attender at book sales, laying the foundation of another library;—had he lived long enough, his old hive would probably have been again filled.

The Directors of the Library having granted Mr. Cox the free use of the books of the Institution, he was for some time a regular visiter, when age and increasing infirmities permitted so long a walk. He had many anecdotes to tell of his books, the difficulty he had encountered in procuring this, and the envy he had excited at having the good fortune to possess that curious specimen of typography or engraving, and his conversation generally ended, with the history of some old citizen's attempt to purchase or bribe from him one of his literary treasures.

The remains of Mr. Cox were deposited in St. Paul's Church Yard, on Sunday, the 30th of March, and though followed by no single relative, a train of respectable citizens and neighbours accompanied them to their long home. His monument is his books, and by them he will long be remembered by the citizens of Philadelphia, comparatively very few of whom could have been aware of the existence of so singularly eccentric a being as JAMES COX, the Artist and Bibliomaniac. His remaining property is understood to have passed by will to the son of one of his former friends and associates.

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