



Always Sincerely Yours

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REMINISCENCES OF CHARLES MASON.

BY GEORGE H. YEWELL, N. A.

PART I.

My acquaintance with Charles Mason began at Iowa City, my boyhood home, in December, 1848. Born October 24, 1804, he had recently passed his forty-fourth year, and I was just nearing my eighteenth birthday. In the previous month of January, Judge Mason, together with William G. Woodward and Stephen Whicher, had been appointed by the legislature, commissioners to prepare a code of laws for the State of Iowa, and were then holding a session at the old Capitol building in Iowa City. Judge Mason's attention had been directed to me through certain rude political and local caricatures, the work of my youthful pencil, in which some strong exaggerations of character, and ridiculous situations appealed to a native sense of humor that he always manifested in a quiet way. He came one day to our house and left word for me to call upon him at his hotel, and bring with me some of my drawings for him to look over. His colleague, Mr. Woodward, whom I had known from early boyhood, was in the room when I presented myself, and introduced me to Judge Mason, whose dignity of bearing impressed me strongly, while, at the same time, I was drawn to him by a kindliness of manner and an evident desire to befriend and help me. He examined my boyish efforts in pencil and water-color, and told me, finally, if I would like to become a painter, and would let him have some of my drawings, he would show them to some artists in Washington, where he was going in

the following spring, and whose opinions he would get as to my apparent fitness for the study of art. I selected some of those I considered best for the purpose and gave him, and he told me at parting that when he returned to Iowa City he would let me know the result of his inquiries.

More than two years went by before I saw Judge Mason again. My leisure time, as before, was given to drawing and painting in my erratic and unskilled way. An incident occurred in the meantime, that had an influence in setting the current of my life strongly toward the pursuit of painting as a profession. In the summer of 1850 the American Art Union of New York appointed Mr. Joseph T. Fales one of their honorary secretaries, and sent him copies of all the engravings they had issued up to that time. These he placed upon the walls of his office in the Capitol building, he being, at the time, State Auditor. I spent many a summer afternoon dreaming over those engravings. The large one, from Cole's "Voyage of Life," where the aspiring youth in the boat grasps the rudder in one hand and stretches the other forth eagerly toward the bright cloud-temple in the sky, awoke all the latent love for art in me, and made me resolve to become a painter.

In February, 1851, Judge Mason called upon me again and told me that my sketches shown to several Washington painters had seemed to them to indicate enough talent to warrant my taking up painting as a serious study. He told me he was going to New York in May and, if I wished, he would make inquiries with reference to my establishment there as a student of art. He was on the point of leaving Iowa City, and I could write to him at his home in Burlington, Iowa, when my decision was made. This I did, later, and received in answer to that, and other letters, the following replies:

BURLINGTON, May 6, 1851.

Dear Sir: Yours of April 27th was received a few days since but my business engagements have prevented me from answering it sooner. I am expecting to go east some time in June, but may possibly not go at all. If

I go I shall not neglect your business, and if I do not go, I will write to a friend in New York in relation to the matters on which you wish enquiries made.

I fully appreciate the difficulties in your way, having had to contend against them once myself. But they are not insuperable as the history of so many men in our country clearly proves. A resolute determination can overcome all the obstacles which are so thickly strewed in the pathway of genius. In fact, I am sometimes inclined to think that these very obstacles are a final advantage. Else why do we find so few instances of persons born to every advantage who finally attain eminence in any attainment? Effort, labor, the exertion of our energies are as necessary to give strength and full development to our moral and intellectual as to our physical persons. Nothing but necessity will in any case fully call forth those energies and efforts.

I am by no means sorry to learn of your attachment to the West, and to the manners and habits of its people. Ambition is despicable where it can only be indulged in at the expense of the affections. But a residence of a few years in the east are, I think, necessary to enable you to develop capabilities which I think you possess. It will give new relish to your taste for western life, and will enable you the more fully to appreciate our advantages—our freedom from the restraints of fashion and custom, and the superiority of rural pleasures to those within the reach of the denizens of the metropolis.

I hope to be able to ascertain something of interest and advantage to you during my absence. Write me further when anything suggests itself that may be serviceable to you. I think I shall start about the middle of June.

Yours truly,

CHARLES MASON.

MR. GEO. H. YEWELL, Iowa City, Iowa.

BURLINGTON, July 4, 1851.

My Dear Sir: I have delayed to answer your last letter for the reason that I was not altogether certain whether I should be able to go to New York or not. I have now so arranged my business that, unless something unexpected shall prevent, I shall start on Thursday of next week. I shall make a short stop at Pompey, Onondaga county, New York, and then proceed to the city, where I shall not forget to make enquiries for you. If you have anything further to suggest you can write to me either here or at Pompey, if done soon.

Yours truly,

CHARLES MASON.

MR. GEO. H. YEWELL, Iowa City, Iowa.

NEW YORK, August 7, 1851.

My Dear Sir: I arrived here this morning and have been to see several persons in your behalf. I called on Mr. Durand, but he was in the country and would not return for several days. I shall stay but two days in all as my time is short, before I must return West.

Among others I have talked with Mr. Bryant, the poet, and with Mr. Ingham, the painter. They both assure me that there will be no difficulty in your getting admission into the Academy of Design. Mr. Ingham assured me that this was your best chance.

The session commences in November (about the first), and continues till March. You will attend only evenings, and will receive instruction gratuitously. (I understood him that you would be engaged some part of the time in making drawings from plaster casts). Your only expense will therefore be for your board, clothing, &c. Mr. Ingham was of the opinion that those students who had difficulties of a pecuniary character to encounter succeeded best,—where those difficulties were not insurmountable. He thinks you had better come down and spend one winter in this way. You can then tell whether you would wish to continue longer, and they can decide as to your capacity and talent as an artist. You would not be losing much, as a few months spent in New York would perhaps be of service to you in other respects.

I do not think you will like New York much, but you will be able to endure it for a few months. Before I close this I will endeavor to ascertain what the probable expense for board and washing will be. My impression is that you can get board for about \$3.00 per week, and washing for six cents per piece. Mr. Ingham says that after the first winter you will probably be able to pay your way by laboring at your profession as an artist. He kindly proffered his services in your behalf, and I think he meant what he said—which is not always true of such proffers.

AUGUST 10. I left New York yesterday morning, and am now in the western part of Massachusetts, from whence I shall start tomorrow for Onondaga county, and thence, after about a week or two, I shall leave for Iowa. I expect to be at home by the last of this month.

Since writing the first part of this letter I have made further enquiries for you and ascertain that the price of board will fall something short of the price mentioned above.

I have also had a conversation with a young gentleman who has been pursuing the same course as that you are contemplating. He was engaged in other pursuits till he had attained to about your age. When he commenced in New York he placed himself under the tuition of an artist to whom he had to pay fifty dollars per quarter. After the first quarter he was able to support himself by his profession. He seems a gentleman of sincerity and truth, and will give you any aid in his power.

I do not suppose I shall be in Iowa City soon, having now been absent so much that I shall be obliged to attend to my matters at home for a while after my return. Write to me at Burlington by the time I return. If you could make it convenient to come down early in October and obtain a little instruction previous to the opening of the Academy of Design it would be all the better. Let me know what you think of this matter.

Yours truly,

CHARLES MASON.

MR. GEORGE H. YEWELL, Iowa City, Iowa.

On receiving this last letter I consulted with friends in Iowa City, who had known me from childhood, regarding the advancement of sufficient money to pay my fare to New York, and get me through my first winter there. This was done cheerfully. A sum was handed me, the result of many small contributions, sufficient for present needs, with promise of more when that was gone. Some useful letters to New York people were given me, and I only awaited further instructions from Judge Mason, which came in the following letter:

BURLINGTON, August 31, 1851.

Dear Sir: I returned home yesterday and found yours of the 24th awaiting me. I am highly gratified to learn of your final determination, and particularly with the spirit with which you are about to commence your arduous undertaking. I entertain great hopes that you may attain high eminence in your profession.

I send you a letter of introduction to Mr. A. H. Dana, whom you will find at No. 27, Wall street. His office is in the third story. He will be able and willing to render you assistance in the way of information and advice.

I send you another letter to Wm. Thurston Black, the artist of whom I wrote in my last letter. He was at No. 74 Chambers street, but will be found at the Academy of Design, probably, before you reach New York. He was introduced to me by Mr. Dana, who can aid you in finding him if you have any difficulty on that subject. He seemed to me an honest, candid, right-hearted gentleman, and as he has traveled the same road you are about commencing, he will be able to give you much useful information.

Mr. Ingham resides in White street—I think at No. 76. You will meet with no difficulty in finding him. I do not remember his Christian name. I have no acquaintance with him except a self-introduction, but he kindly proffered to aid you in getting an admission into the Academy of Design. I did not learn whether they received every one who applied, but felt certain from what I learnt from him and Mr. Black, that you would meet with no difficulty in gaining admission there.

Mr. Black seemed to think that a few weeks' previous instruction would be of great service to you. He will give you that instruction himself, or recommend you to some other person who will do so. You will probably not do better than to employ his services as instructor, if you should conclude on that course. On this subject you can best determine what to do after you shall have reached New York.

I am glad you think of going soon, as I believe it will be important for you to reach there several weeks before the opening of the Academy. By placing yourself under a judicious instructor for that length of time I think you will be better prepared to derive full benefit from your opportunities at the Academy.

I know not that I have but one single piece of advice to give you, and that is to take some care as to your diet and much as to your exercise after your arrival in New York. Young men living in the country or in country towns generally take sufficient exercise for their health without being conscious of its necessity. Going into such a place as New York all ordinary opportunities for exercise will be wanting, and the loss of health may be your first admonition that you have not observed those laws which can secure its continued enjoyment. Unless you find some other kind of exercise do not fail to walk six or eight miles each day regularly.

I should be glad to hear from you when you get settled down in New York, if not before. If you ever have occasion for fifty or one hundred dollars let me know as I shall be very glad to make you some advances of that kind that I may secure some of the specimens of your skill as an artist after you have attained that excellence to which you aspire and which I believe you will attain.

I think you do right in selecting the northern route. A little more than forty-eight hours will carry you from Chicago to New York City by the way of Albany, and a less time by the Erie railroad, which will, I suppose, be your best way if opportunity favors you.

Yours truly,

CHARLES MASON.

MR. GEO. H. YEWELL, Iowa City, Iowa.

It is my purpose in giving these letters to the public to keep myself, as much as possible, in the background, that they may tell their own story. It will be necessary, however, to connect them by such personal incidents and occurrences as may be needed to explain their contents. I left Iowa City on the morning of October 4, 1851, and traveled by stage coach to within about thirty miles of Chicago, making the remainder of the journey by rail, arriving in New York on the morning of the 9th.

Through Judge Mason's letter I found an excellent and helpful friend in Mr. Wm. Thurston Black, who assisted me in many ways. The other letter to A. H. Dana, Esq., was instrumental in procuring me a note of introduction to his relative, Mr. Charles A. Dana, then assistant editor of *The New York Tribune*, who talked encouragingly to me and gave me a letter to his friend Thomas Hicks, the artist, who, a little later received me as a pupil. At the same time I entered the antique school of the National Academy of Design, and settled myself down to a winter of serious study.

The next letter was directed to No. 191 Grand street, New York, where, in an old-fashioned brick house on the corner of Mulberry street, I had found good homelike board and lodging for the modest sum of two dollars, sixty-two and one-half cents per week.

BURLINGTON, January 25, 1852.

My Dear Sir: My apology for not sooner replying to yours of November last is in part that my time has been unusually occupied, and in part that I have been somewhat expecting to visit the east this winter on business. All expectation of such a visit is now at an end for the present.

I am very much rejoiced to hear that you are so well pleased with your prospects in the city, and that you have found some good friends there. I am anxious to hear from you again since you have been for some time in attendance at the Academy of Design. I hope all your expectations will be realized. I take great interest in your success, and am expecting something extraordinary as the result of your studies and efforts. Let nothing dishearten you. The pursuit is a noble one. I trust you will strive to stand in the first rank among artists. In your profession, as in all others, there must frequently be causes and occasions of discouragement, but perseverance and determination will be sure to carry you through triumphantly, if your health does not fail you.

On this subject you must take much care. The change in your condition and habits of life are so great that there is danger of ill consequences unless great care is used. Your health will be most likely to suffer from want of exercise. You can have little of this in any other way than walking. I would recommend that you set apart a portion of every day for this purpose. The last year I spent in the city I walked eight miles regularly each day, and have no doubt I derived great benefit from it. Perhaps you would not need as much exercise, but you must not fail to take a pretty liberal amount of it.

How are your financial affairs? Let me know whether you need anything on that score. Your expenses are not great, but I hope you will not deny yourself anything necessary to your progress in your studies.

We have had rather a severe winter—the coldest January I have ever known. On the morning of Monday, the 19th instant, the thermometer stood at a little more than 26° below zero. It has stood at 20°, 19°, 16½° and 15° on four other mornings at different times, besides many other times when it was below zero. It is warm now.

Remember me to Mr. Black and Mr. Dana if you see them, and thank them for me for their kindness to you.

I hope to hear from you soon. Yours truly,

CHARLES MASON.

MR. GEO. H. YEWELL, No. 191 Grand street, New York City.

The accumulation of letters becomes so great at times

that I get a destructive fit upon me, and often carry the destruction too far. I am sorry to record the fact that every letter from Judge Mason, written during the remainder of my student days in New York, has been destroyed, leaving a period of nearly five years without anything from his hand. They were busy years for me, full of ambition and hope, with a growing desire each year to go and study in Europe. The opportunity finally came, through Judge Mason, in the summer of 1856, and it was settled that I should go abroad, in a letter I received from him May 29th of that year, in which he also invited me to spend a month with them at Washington before I sailed. He was at that time Commissioner of Patents, having been appointed to that office by President Pierce. I had a delightful visit with them extending over four weeks, and their kindness to me will never be forgotten. Their young daughter, Mollie, with her birds, her flowers, and her books, was the light of the household. I bade them good-bye July 5th and returned to New York. In company with a fellow student I sailed for Liverpool July 19th, in the packet ship James Foster, Jr., of the Black Ball Line. We spent a week in Scotland, four days in London, and then went to Paris where we entered the *atelier* of Thomas Couture, one of the most eminent painters of that day. He was working upon a large painting commissioned by the French government, and in my letters to Judge Mason I had described this important picture with more or less enthusiasm. This, no doubt, led to the well-meaning but injudicious suggestion of our mutual friend, Mr. Wood, as shown in the next letter.

WASHINGTON, December 4, 1856.

My Dear Sir: Our friend, Mr. Wood, a few days since suggested that you might probably obtain an order for a painting to place in one of the vacant panels of the capitol. I had thought that you would in a few years justly look for such an order, but I did not suppose that you would venture to make an effort of this kind now. Mr. Wood, however, thinks it not too soon for you to try your hand in that way, and desired me to consult with you on that subject. He had already spoken with Captain Meigs on the subject.

Now, if you think you have the courage to make such an attempt, I will try to obtain an order for you to that effect. Mr. Wood's opinion is of weight.

He proposes that you should select some proper subject of American history and prepare a suitable drawing. That being forwarded here could be laid before the proper committee and, if approved, would call for an order to paint the picture.

Now, if you have the courage to make such an undertaking, and will send me on the sketch of what you would propose to paint, I will take the matter in hand and obtain the order for you if I can. Having got the order you can take your time to make the painting.

Yours truly,

CHARLES MASON.

MR. GEO. H. YEWELL,

Care of Messrs. Greene & Co., Bankers, Paris, France.

Not unconscious of my inexperience, yet with my youthful ambition fired by the greatness of the occasion, I decided to make a bold attempt to secure a government commission, if possible, and then make all my studies bend in the direction of the subject I might choose, wisely deferring the painting of the large canvas to a future day. After long deliberation I chose for my subject "The First Prayer in Congress," and wrote to Judge Mason to get for me whatever description there might be of the event, and any historic data that would aid in the making up of a picture. The thoroughness with which he fulfilled my request is shown in the next letter, and is characteristic of the man:

WASHINGTON, Feb. 4, 1857.

My Dear Sir: Since the receipt of your letter I have been trying to gather up the information you requested, and shall give you the result of my inquiries. I have now in my possession the Journal of the Congress of 1774 from which I gather the following facts in the most authentic shape. Congress met on the 5th of September, and dissolved itself on the 26th of October following. The Congress of 1775, which finally declared independence, was a new body, though composed to a considerable extent of the same members.

The whole number of members present in 1774 was fifty-three, but at the time of the prayer by Mr. Duche there was only forty-six. Seven members reported themselves and were admitted afterwards.

On Tuesday, September 6th, a resolution was adopted inviting the Rev. Mr. Duche to open the session at Carpenter's Hall next morning with prayer, which was done on the 7th. Up to that time the following-named

members had reported themselves and taken their seats. They were probably all in attendance on that morning:

New Hampshire—Major John Sullivan, Col. Nathaniel Folsom.
 Massachusetts—Hon. Thomas Cushing, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Robert Treat Paine.

Rhode Island—Hon. Stephen Hopkins, Hon. Samuel Ward.
 New Jersey—James Kinney, Wm. Livingston, John Dehart, Stephen Crane, Richard Smith.

Connecticut—Hon. Eliphalet Dyer, Hon. Roger Sherman, Silas Deane.
 New York—James Duane, John Jay, Philip Livingston, Isaac Low, Col. William Floyd.

Pennsylvania—Hon. Joseph Galloway, Samuel Rhodes, Thomas Mifflin, Charles Humphreys, John Morton, Edward Biddle.

Delaware—Hon. Caesar Rodney, Thomas McKean, George Read.
 Maryland—Robert Goldsborough, William Pace, Samuel Chase, Thomas Johnson Gun.

South Carolina—Henry Middleton, John Rutledge, Christopher Gadsam, Thomas Lynch, Edward Rutledge.

Virginia—Hon. Peyton Randolph, George Washington, Patrick Henry, Richard Bland, Benjamin Harrison, Edmund Pendleton, Richard Henry Lee.

At a subsequent day the following gentlemen reported themselves and were admitted:

New York—John Alsop, Henry Wisner, Simon Boerum.

Pennsylvania—George Ross.

North Carolina—William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, R. Caswell.

You are probably aware that Peyton Randolph was the first President of Congress, having been elected on September 5th, the first day of the session.

Carpenter's Hall is so called because it was constructed as a place of meeting for the Society of House Carpenters. It is not the same place as Independence Hall where the Declaration of Independence was made. It is now used as an auction room. I shall endeavor to send you before long a photograph of it.

I have sent to Philadelphia for an engraving of Matteson's painting, and hope to get it soon, but thought I would not wait for these photographs. I am promised a photograph of the Rev. Mr. Duche which I hope to be able to send you at the same time. I will also, if I can, send you a likeness of Patrick Henry, who should receive a prominent position in your painting. He is represented on the occasion of this meeting of Congress as being clad in a plain suit of "minister's gray," with empowdered wig, and as having the appearance of a country parson.

As to the religious notions of the members of Congress I can learn little. I am told, however, by Mr. Lossing, the author of the "Field Book of the Revolution, a History of the United States," and some other works, that there were no Quakers in that body. The Quakers were opposed to the movement. I presume he is right.

It is also stated in Watson's "Annals of Philadelphia," in speaking of this first prayer in Congress that it was on this occasion that Gen. Washington was observed to be the only member who knelt, and Mr. Lossing made this objection to Matteson's picture,—that he had several members kneeling.

Lossing, in his "History of the United States," says in a note that Mr. Duche afterwards became a tory, but I know not on what authority he makes the statement. It detracts from the romance thrown around the scene as described by Irving, and I hope it is not true.

Mr. Duche was attended by his clerk when this prayer was made.

Charles Thomson, of Pennsylvania, was the secretary of Congress at that time, also.

Richard Henry Lee, Samuel Chase, and Roger Sherman should receive prominent positions, though not more so than the two Adamses.

In giving the names of the members of Congress, I have prefixed the titles given them in the Journal of Congress. All others have the appendage Esq. affixed to their names in that journal.

Mr. Wood will obtain the photograph of Trumbull's painting which I will send soon. Mr. Peale says that picture may be relied on for costume and somewhat so for portraits.

We are all well. The fourth of March is only four weeks distant when a new order of things will be introduced here. It is expected that the cabinet will be entirely changed. I shall probably not remain here many weeks after that date. I think I shall probably be allowed to remain if I choose. But I am pretty well satisfied with my residence in Washington, and think I shall prefer Iowa. This will be done at all events unless my situation is made more pleasant by some changes in the law now pending before Congress.

Yours truly,

CHARLES MASON.

G. H. YEWELL, Esq., Care of Messrs. Greene & Co., Bankers, Paris, France.

The next letter tells of the fate of the "First Prayer in Congress." Too presumptuous, I had sailed high, and the sun, for which I had aimed, had melted my waxen wings and let me down. The kind heart is shown in Judge Mason by the way he writes in explanation of my failure; and yet I think he liked me all the better for having made the attempt. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." The subject of the treaty for the Black Hawk purchase is one that ought to be painted some day, by an artist fitted for that kind of work, upon one of the prominent spaces in the capitol building at Des Moines. I remember, when visiting Judge Mason at Burlington some years later, we spent an evening with Hon.

A. C. Dodge at his home, and the subject of the Black Hawk purchase coming up in conversation, Gen. Dodge gave me a very fine description of the *mise en scene* of that remarkable event, at the moment of signing the treaty.

The pictures mentioned in the letter were principally copies I had made, as matter of study in color, from very beautiful paintings by modern French masters. The original of the "Falconer" was a gem of modern art, painted by my master, Couture, and one of his most admired productions.

BURLINGTON, May 20, 1858.

My Dear Sir: I have waited till the present before answering your last letter written near three months since, in order that I might give you some information respecting the paintings. On my return from Washington on Saturday last I found the paintings all safe. They came a few days previous. I have retained the "Falconer," "Paul and Virginia," and the "Fortune Teller." The rest I have sent to Hon. John P. Cook for him, if he chooses to retain the "Trooper" and the "Drawing Lesson," and to send the other two to Iowa City. I saw Mr. Cook some five weeks since and he requested me to send him one or two of the paintings. I wrote him at the same time that if he chose to take the "Fortune Teller" he could do so. I also made suggestions respecting the portfolio of sketches, and hope you will receive some orders from Davenport. I have been to Washington twice this winter and spring on business and may, very possibly, be obliged to go again, though I hope not. I have, of late, been more busily occupied than I was in the Patent Office. I go this evening to Keokuk. During the week thus far I have been engaged in the United States District Court at this place. Next week I must devote to preparation for the celebration of the anniversary of the first settlement of this State. The Indians gave possession June 1, 1833. We have organized an association with a view of celebrating that event annually hereafter. This is our first celebration, and I have been requested to deliver the oration on the occasion.

I brought with me your sketch from Washington regretting very much that you did not obtain an order. The sketch is very fine, but I see at once that your failure to secure the favor you sought grew out of the difficulty of the subject you had selected. You could not give Washington the reverential attitude which comports with my ideas without concealing his features. I hope you will not be disheartened but try again.

I think you would do better with some wilder, western subject. It has occurred to me that the first treaty for the Black Hawk purchase, as it is called, would furnish you with a better subject. There should be in the panels in the House of Representatives something commemorative of an event in each of the states in the Union. An Iowa subject treated by an Iowa artist would be peculiarly appropriate. The stalwart form of Gen.

Scott, and the striking, manly face of Keokuk, with other proper surroundings might, it seems to me, be wrought up into something highly interesting and proper. These are historical characters, and should live on canvas in the House of Representatives.

I am very much pleased with your paintings. They show great improvement. "Paul and Virginia" is my favorite. The "Trooper" is very good and so are the others.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours truly,

CHARLES MASON.

GEO. H. YEWELL, Care of Greene & Co., Bankers, Paris, France.

We now come to the time of the civil war. During that critical and unhappy period Judge Mason was sometimes most unjustly and cruelly accused of sympathy with the cause of rebellion. Nothing was ever farther from the truth. No more true-hearted patriot ever breathed than Judge Mason. He saw in the war the beginning of a hatred between the North and the South that would lead to the utter ruin of the republic that he loved with all the intensity of his strong, pure nature. Either that or a survival in the form of a military despotism equally to be deplored. His mental suffering was constant, and at times he was almost heartbroken. I am sorry that so many of his letters of that time are missing, for he wrote to me freely; and it has been to me a touching evidence of his friendship, more clearly discerned since his death, that he seemed always to take comfort in writing to me of that which lay near his heart. In the following letter there is, in his own words, a refutation of the charge of disloyalty, where he states that he had, long before, offered his services to the government. Such services would have been valuable from the fact that he had received a military education at West Point. Why he was overlooked or ignored when commanding officers of his capacity, integrity and high moral worth were needed by the nation, has always remained a mystery to me.

BURLINGTON, November 4, 1861.

My Dear Sir: Your last letter should have been long since answered, but circumstances which I will not take time to explain, but which you will in part understand, have prevented or caused me to procrastinate till the present.

I was in the west on business in April last when the first hostile shot was fired at Fort Sumter, leaving my wife and Mollie in Washington. Foreseeing the possibility of hostilities I had advised them to leave Washington as soon as the first gun should be fired in the south, believing as I then did that the next step would be to make a dash upon Washington. They accordingly left on the 18th of April and stayed over night in Baltimore, leaving for the north on the morning of the day of the great riot in that city and passing over the railroad bridges the very day before they were burned down. I returned from the west two days afterwards, and after much trouble and delay made my way to Washington, not knowing that they had left. After a few days I made my way north, where they remained through the summer, while I returned to Iowa. The Democratic party nominated me for Governor, but afterwards a third party, styling itself the Union party, proposed to unite with the Democrats and go for Col. Merritt, who had just returned from the war with the smell of gunpowder upon his garments, and thinking that in this manner the Republicans could more probably be beaten, I withdrew from the canvass. Many of our friends were dissatisfied with this and refused to vote for Merritt, and I am inclined to think that I should have done much better than he did, though I should doubtless have been beaten. There is probably a majority of 10,000 for the Republicans and against Merritt.

Our whole country is transformed into a military camp. Go into any of our towns and you see men in uniform moving about the streets, sometimes in companies or squads, sometimes singly or in numbers of two or more. A sort of martial law prevails all over the country. Men are arrested and thrown into prison on suspicion, and a writ of habeas corpus, which would never be disregarded in England, is laughed to scorn. Several of the states—especially Missouri, Kentucky and Virginia—are to a great extent laid waste. I know of no country on earth in a more deplorable condition than ours, and it does not seem to me to be improving. Men are flocking into the army from all quarters for the means of obtaining a livelihood. There are said to be half a million of men or more already in the service in the northern states, and nearly as many more in the south. There will be no difficulty in raising as many more if the means can only be provided to pay, feed and clothe them. I am heart-sick at the prospect before us, but hope, in some unlooked for way, we may escape from our present troubles without individual and national ruin, though the probability of such a result seems small. I have long since offered my services to the government whenever they are needed, but have not been called on and probably shall not be. I expect to spend the winter in Washington. My wife and Mollie are now here and may go with me, but that is not yet settled.

There is no sale for real estate. In fact, I have almost concluded to let some of mine be sold for taxes rather than pay them. I believe, however, I will pay a while longer if I can. I think you had better remain in Europe if you can obtain the means of making a livelihood, though I some-

what expect to see hostilities commenced between our country and France within the course of a few months.

And all this trouble which has been brought upon us is wholly needless. The abolitionists and the extreme southern men have succeeded in plunging the country into an abyss of ruin from which I fear all the conservative men of the north and the south will never rescue it.

My wife and Mollie send kind regards. We shall always be glad to hear from you.

Yours truly,

CHARLES MASON.

GEO. H. YEWELL, Esq., 15 Rue Taitbout, Paris, France.

Between this and the next letter there intervenes a period of a little more than seven years. In August, 1867, I went to live in Rome, Italy, setting up a studio and making that my home for eleven years.

BURLINGTON, November 22, 1868.

My Dear Friend: Yours of the 29th of August was duly received and found me at this place a good deal out of health. I remained so for a month or two. The doctor at first pronounced the disease an organic affection of the heart, but afterwards changed his opinion and thought it a disguised bilious remittent fever. I am now quite well again. We have been living on the farm for near three months and I sometimes work nearly all day without any great fatigue. I start east in the course of a few days and shall probably spend most of the winter there—mostly in Washington. I had thought somewhat of making a journey to Europe this winter, and may possibly do so yet, but probably shall postpone that trip for the present. I shall more probably go south during a part of the winter, though that is still uncertain.

Politically everything is very quiet here since the election. The Democrats seem quite as well satisfied with the President-elect as do the radicals. The probabilities are that we shall hereafter more zealously support him than they will do. I have, however, no very bright hopes for the future. When our people refused to settle their differences of opinion by the exercise of these moral and intellectual faculties which had created our noble system of government, and substituted the exercise of their brutal propensities therefor, I had little hope for the future except through those long and bloody struggles by which law and liberty regain the ascendancy which military violence always tramples underfoot. I scarcely expect to ever see a constitutional government restored in this country. Grant may if he will become a second Washington, but that is hardly to be hoped for, judging by the examples afforded by the world's history. The military power will hardly yield again to the civil. Theoretically it will do so, but not practically. The army will govern us for many years to come, and the maxims and principles which prevail in Europe will be substituted for those which our fathers vainly hoped had been established here for all gen-

erations. The republican day-dreams of my youth and earlier manhood are at an end. A centralized government has taken the place of that of the federal constitution, and that central government must necessarily be imperial by whatsoever forms it is controlled. I am accommodating myself to this change as best I may.

We expect to settle down on the farm in the spring. We have thus far been only boarders. Things look very pleasantly here. The change from city life is not disagreeable, though most of our friends predict that we shall not relish it long. On many accounts I would prefer a residence in Washington, and it is not impossible that our present purpose may change before many months. My wife and daughter will probably remain in Burlington through the winter, or, at least, until my return, when we may visit the south some time in January, to return the latter part of March.

If you have not sent the painting mentioned in your letter I hope you will not do so until we become settled in our house, here or elsewhere, when I will write you again. Times are rather prosperous here at present. Prices are high. The farmers have been growing rich in name, but they find it quite as difficult to make the ends of the year meet as ever they did when their wealth was nominally far less than at present. The laboring classes get higher wages but find it more difficult to support their families than formerly. And when pecuniary troubles shall come, as come they must before many years, I look for serious troubles throughout the country.

I was much interested in your description of life and manners in Italy, and hope I shall one day be an eye witness of what you have so well described. When I can forget the future that I had pictured to myself for my own country, I may perhaps be brought to appreciate the advantages enjoyed under European governments, and learn that the true happiness of life is to be sought in the cultivation of those tastes and social virtues which flourish or are, at least, tolerated under a system wherein the people passively submit to whatever the government of which they have little control sees proper to do.

My wife and daughter join in sending love to yourself and your good wife, whom we hope to see at our house at no distant day, if not, in that land "where all but the spirit of man is divine." Yours truly,

CHAS. MASON.

GEO. H. YEWELL, Esq.,

Care of Maquay, Packerham & Hooker, Rome, Italy.

Two large coils of telegraph wire were landed here this week. Certainly many more days cannot intervene before we are in communication with the cities of the Union.—*Democratic Enquirer (Bloomington, Iowa), August 19, 1848.*

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