

John Lathrop, Jr.

The Quiet Poet of Federalist Boston

LEWIS LEARY

IN FACTION-RIDDEN Boston of the 1790s, when tempers rose as Federalism battled to gain and maintain supremacy, no one seems to have had a harsh word to say of John Lathrop, Jr., who wanted very much to be a poet. He was not as prolific, nor as repetitious, as America's Sappho, Sarah Wentworth Morton. He did not use literature as a platform for moral, social, and religious reform like Judith Sargent Murray. He was not a bohemian like James Allen, inspired by 'the West Indian muses' of rum, lemon, and sugar. Nor was he the town's 'official' poet, like diminutive Thomas Dawes, ready with a rhyme for almost every public occasion. Of the young men then graduating from Harvard, Lathrop was among the least conspicuous, though during his collegiate career he seems to have been one of the few among them to sign his name, even his initials, to occasionally published poems. He did not gain the public applause, nor the occasional rich remuneration, of Thomas Paine, who would later change that horrid name to Robert Treat Paine, Jr. He had not the broad humor of William Bigelow, who as 'Charles Chatterbox' provided occasional chuckles to appreciative townspeople. He had none of the quick and bitter wit of Charles Prentiss. Nor did he excoriate Boston for not recognizing his talent, as Joseph Dennie did.

Every evidence identifies Lathrop as an unassuming person of quiet dedication whose good intentions outran his ability to fulfill them. His father was a prominent Boston clergyman, an ardent patriot, and a kindly pastor, a gentleman, said a late

contemporary, 'highly respected for his virtue and good sense.'¹ He was to become a senior member of the Corporation of Harvard and secretary to its Board of Overseers, a counsellor and librarian of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and president of the Massachusetts Congregational Charitable Society. In 1783 he was honored with a D.D. from Edinburgh, was subsequently elected a member of the Royal Humane Society of London, and was awarded a diploma by the Literary and Philosophical Society of Preston, England. An orator, a historian, and quietly a leader 'who was toasted, honored and beloved as a man of faultless excellence,'² he was a father who invited either imitation or resistance.

His son seems to have chosen the latter. He entered Harvard at fourteen, in the class of 1789, and before his undergraduate years were over, had turned poet. The *Massachusetts Magazine* featured as its musical insert for May 1789 'The Invitation. Written by J. Lathrop,' and set to music by another, though anonymous, 'Student at the University, at Cambridge.'³ It is a bright vernal song, much like hundreds of others, but with a clear briskness that suggests its author was not inexperienced in rhyming. Its first stanza invites,

Come, my fair, while blooming Spring
Clothes the fields and meadows gay;
Come, and hear the linnet sing,
Taste the joy of pleasant May.

That fall, a second poem 'Written by J. Lathrop' appeared,

¹ Samuel L. Knapp, *Biographical Sketches of Eminent Lawyers, Statesmen, and Men of Letters* (Boston: Richardson and Lord, 1821), pp. 175-76.

² 'Sketch of the Character of the Rev. John Lathrop, D.D.,' *Polyanthus*, n.s., enlarged, 1 (November 1812):57-59; Andrew P. Peabody, 'The Unitarians in Boston,' *The Memorial History of Boston*, ed. Justin Windsor (Boston: Joseph R. Osgood and Company, 1881), 3:471; and *Monthly Anthology* 2 (February 1805):95, where he is described as of 'amiable temper and benevolent heart,' qualities inherited by his son.

³ *Massachusetts Magazine* 1 (May 1789):322-24. The composer is identified only as 'the author of "Pursuit,"' a poem which, when it had appeared in the magazine four months earlier (January 1789, p. 59), had been said to have been written by a 'Student at the University.'

called 'The Pensive Shepherd . . . Set to Musick by Mr. S. Holyoke.'⁴ The seasons having changed, now

How gloomy are the fields and plains,
 How joyless all the languid swains;
 No more the pipes or tabors sound,
 Or nymphs dance in the verdant ground,
 For Daphne's dead, and pleasure's gone,
 And silence reigns o'er mead and lawn.

The same issue of the *Massachusetts Magazine* contains an 'Ode, Humbly Inscribed to the President of the United States of America,' signed 'J.L.,' which liltingly asks, 'Can the muse add a laurel to Washington's brow / Or swell the loud notes of his fame?'⁵ Of course not! 'J.L.' appears again in the next issue with a facilely rhymed 'The Lover's Complaint,'⁶ in which, though

Nature is plum'd in red array;
 The feather'd songsters sweetly sing;
 Melodious notes from every spray,
 Proclaim the gay return of spring,

the poet is overcome with sadness:

Alas! to me no spring returns,
 Successive winters sadly reign.

Therefore

Your sprightly lays, rude warblers, cease,
 No pleasures paint the cheek of morn;
 Despair shall every heart embrace,
 And sorrow rule the gloomy lawn.

In December, 'J.L.' supplied appropriately pious lines 'On Christmas,' in which his 'humble muse attempts in artless lay / To pay her tribute to this glorious day.' He wished that his verse could 'with Milton's rapture flow,' to echo heavenly music 'to worlds below.' For Christmas-time held promise of an-

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1(September 1789):588-89.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 584.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1(October 1789):656.

other time when people of all the world, including even the 'Turk, and Tartar, and the Africk,' would join to 'swell the theme divine,' and hasten the millennium's 'joyful reign, / When the Elysian fields will bloom again.' In January, a 'Translation of the II. Ode, 4th Book of Horace' was submitted by 'J.L.' because its author thought there was a similarity between Roman pride in Augustus and America's grateful pride in Washington.

The last two poems were submitted from Cambridge, so that if 'J.L.' was in truth John Lathrop, Jr., the young man had lingered at the college for some time after his graduation on July 12, 1789, when he had publicly recited 'An English poem'⁷ that apparently has not survived. By fall, Isaiah Thomas, editor of the *Massachusetts Magazine*, was speaking of him as 'a real favorite of the Muses' whose 'easy vein in poetry' made the editor wish that he would more often 'turn the streams of Helicon toward our office.'⁸ But it was Benjamin Russell of the *Columbian Centinel* who published Lathrop's 'Ode for July 4, 1791' two days after it was ceremoniously sung at Braintree where, following 'a military parade, . . . strangers and citizens of distinction—among whom was the VICE-PRESIDENT of the United States—dined together under a temporary arbour' estimated to be one hundred feet long: 'Fill, fill to Washington, . . . Let the toast pass! . . .'

Now war's rude clangours cease,
And olive scepter's peace
Reigns all around.
Raise high the cheerful song,
Heaven shall the notes prolong,
And the angelic throng
Echo the sound.

These early verses present a fair foretaste of Lathrop's literary leanings. He knew the poets of England, and had a deft

⁷ See *Boston Gazette*, July 20, 1798.

⁸ 1(November 1789):686.

imitative touch. Like almost any young versifier, he mourned life's fleeting pleasures, the transience of joy, the inevitability of sorrow. His patriotism, tailored by his time, seems to have been more than lip service to a patriotic ideal: it was built solidly on foundations in Roman literature that both celebrated and warned against the authority of leaders who, Washington excepted, loomed just a little larger than life. Beneath it was a sustaining and never quite unorthodox conviction that guiding the gropings of people toward happiness or truth was a commiserating God who would finally ordain a time of universal peace and serenity, of prosperity and justice. Meanwhile, Lathrop would speak of these things as a poet.

But verse-making in Boston at the end of the eighteenth century made no young man a living. So Lathrop read law in the office of former Gov. Christopher Gore, with whom Daniel Webster would later study with larger success. For he is reported, 'even in the law office,' to have stolen 'moments to sacrifice to the Muses, and became better known to the public as a poet than as a lawyer.' He would open an office in Boston, where he 'had many friends and some business, but not sufficient to answer his expectations,' for people mistrusted a lawyer who scribbled verses.⁹

Meanwhile, on being called back to Harvard to receive the degree of master of arts, he delivered at the public commencement on July 18, 1792, a poem on 'The Influence of Civil Institutions on Moral Faculties,'¹⁰ in which he described himself as the 'humblest bard who ne'er dar'd claim, / One smile applauding or one wreath of fame,' but who sought only

The pensive pleasures of retirement's shade
Where no cold fears nor ruthless cares invade,

⁹ Knapp, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 176.

¹⁰ *Massachusetts Magazine* 4 (July 1792):452-54; see also *Columbian Centinel*, July 21, 1792.

and where

The *sympathies* with kindred souls unite
 Warm *friendship's fervor*, love's *intense delight*;
 Those *winning graces* that so sweetly charm,
 Soft musick's soothing notes, which rage disarm;
 The *lively wit* whose dart inflicts no pain,
 And mild humanity, and virtue's reign.

Nature's laws required social bands and wise codes, not party rancor nor passion, but principles based on the rights of all people. Like a good law student, he footnoted his poem with quotations from Blackstone's *Commentaries* and Powell on contracts.

At the same commencement, Paine, receiving his first degree, read verses on 'The Nature and Progress of Liberty.' No less conventional in phrase, his lines, however, glowed with confidence as he traced the migration of freedom to the Western world, praising his New England ancestors, welcoming the rise of liberty in France, excoriating Edmund Burke, bitterly denouncing Negro slavery, and glorying in 'COLUMBIA's freedom,' based so solidly on 'the rights of man.' Paine would rise in public esteem, celebrated as the 'bard of Boston' whose 'golden harp' was tuned to every occasion.¹¹ Even as an undergraduate, he had received pleasant notoriety because of his public exchange of rhymed compliments with Mrs. Morton, he as 'Menander,' she as 'Philenia.' Paine was a facile but contentious man. Two years after his graduation, he became the editor of the *Federal Orrery*, violent in attack on political enemies: no longer was Burke a foe; the rights of man became now a phrase of censure. Paine received a gold medal and much renown for the prologue that he wrote for the opening of the Federal Street Theatre. 'The Invention of Letters,' delivered at Cambridge on his receiving the master of arts degree in

¹¹ *Massachusetts Magazine* 6(February 1794):113-14; Paine's valedictory poem was printed in the *American Apollo* 1(August 3, 1792):341-45, and is collected in *The Works in Verse and Prose of Robert Treat Paine, Jun. Esq.* (Boston: J. Belcher, 1812), pp. 70-77.

1795, when published, brought him a profit of five hundred dollars.¹²

Lathrop never did as well. Samuel L. Knapp, some ten years younger than they, remembered barbed raillery between these two, in anonymous or pseudonymous verse contributed to Boston periodicals. He recalled Paine as the more facile, 'quick in retort and sometimes fearfully sarcastic,' and Lathrop as more 'modest, learned and poetical, . . . with more chastity in style.' Between them stood Prentiss, amused both at Paine's 'parade of learning' and Lathrop's 'sentimental solemnity.' Some rancor seems to have developed, Paine 'perceiving how much purer the taste of Lathrop than his own,' and Lathrop feeling 'no small disturbance at the unbounded fame of his rival.' In all, Paine had 'the advantage; for boldness and strength, and even coarseness and sarcasm, are better comprehended by the generality of men than refined irony and polished satire.' They applauded the tomahawk chop, not noticing the rapier thrust. They enjoyed rockets of wit, but mistrusted those who ignited them.¹³

The only identifiable remnant of that quarreling discovered in the newspapers of the period seems to be 'The Merited Retort: or, a Hint to the Malignant Mind,' that appeared in ridicule of Paine in the *Boston Gazette* on February 5, 1795, over the signature 'J.L.'¹⁴ Paine had become both a devotee and critic of the newly opened Boston theater, apparently involved, or said to be involved, in altercations in the pit and green room,

¹² James Spear Loring, *The Hundred Boston Orators* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1855), p. 286.

¹³ Knapp, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 176. Knapp repeats this testimony in his *Lectures on American Literature* (New York: Elam Bliss, 1829), p. 177, describing Lathrop as 'a man of considerable talent and taste, and a pure, sensible writer. . . . His poetry was not so lofty as Paine's, nor so witty as Prentiss's; but was more regular, equal, and classical than either. He was the more regular scholar, better acquainted with rules than his rivals; and, probably, most of his productions are destined to more enduring praise than theirs.'

¹⁴ Though there were verse bouts indeed in such Boston papers as the *Columbian Centinel* and the *Boston Gazette*, I have not been able to identify any others as certainly involving Lathrop, Paine, or Prentiss.

including having been slapped for impertinence by Mrs. Powell, the company's leading lady. If 'J.L.' was John Lathrop, he now revealed some surprisingly bitter bite beneath the quick rhythm of his raillery:

Should profligate P—e, not quickly refrain,
 From preposterous, lewd imprecation;
 He justly will find, a Person inclin'd,
 To cure him of his ill Perturbation:—
 So I'd have him beware, of the fatal laid Snare;
 Nor further proceed in his Evil;
 But relinquish all Claim, to his infamous FAME!
 And no longer favour the Devil:—
 Tho' many suppos'd HE last Season had clos'd
 His Villainy after the Fray,
 Yet it plainly appears, that the boxing his Ears
 Enrag'd him to a dastard display:
 With heroic Pride, (his Foes to deride,)
 He boasting Recruits (to engage,)
 A few College *Boys*, to make a d—'d Noise;
 And to hiss them all off the Stage:—
 —But to his Disgrace *they* stopt for a Space:
 While the DOME with his Enemies rung!
 To expel him some flew, while his Comrades withdrew,
 'Till Worth silenc'd Infamy's Tongue.
 Aghast he shrank back, from the eager attack;
 And hung down his muscle-clad Face;
 While held forth to shame, was his stigmatiz'd Name,
 And himself hurl'd to public Disgrace!—
 But should he again, to that Rancour attain,
 Unconscious of ills that are past;
 Not all his Reaction, shall avail as one Fraction,
 To screen him from Horror's stern Blast!!!

But Lathrop had time for other things besides quarreling, even in playfulness. His marriage in April 1793 to Jane Pierce, daughter of a Boston merchant,¹⁵ must have made settling into some kind of competence seem especially necessary. On June 25, 1794, 'J.L.' submitted to the *Columbian Centinel* his transla-

¹⁵ *Columbian Centinel*, April 27, 1793.

tion of 'Lines Written under the Bust of the Celebrated American Philosopher and Patriot, Dr. Franklin,' providing in its last lines a quizzical commentary on the longevity of virtue:

Franklin, the illustrious patriot and the sage,
The reverend glory, of a glorious age,
Who from the tyrant's hand the sceptre hurl'd,
With WASHINGTON gave freedom to a WORLD
Liv'd a long life, and only died to show,
Perennial virtue cannot bloom below.

When on October 20 of that year he delivered and published *An Oration Written at the Request of the Officers of the Boston Regiment*,¹⁶ he argued, as a good Federalist should, that in times of peace no standing army was necessary. A 'well regulated and disciplined militia' made up of patriots rather than mercenaries was sufficient 'to preserve the freedom and independence' of the new nation. He ended with a fervent apostrophe to 'Happy America! May thy felicity bloom perennial! May thy honor remain untarnished, thy prosperity uninterrupted, and thy peace undisturbed!'

Lathrop's reputation seems to have been that of a patriot who could speak without intrusive partisanship. In May 1796 he was appointed by the people of the town of Boston to prepare its prestigious Fourth of July oration on the twentieth anniversary of American independence.¹⁷ As delivered on that day, it was acclaimed 'a spirited and elegant' performance, as 'honorary to the Orator as it was gratifying to the audience,' and worthy of instant publication.¹⁸ Again, it was a fervently patriotic but pacific address, meant to quiet the roiled political waters of Boston where during the past year tempers had risen and blows been exchanged. Intelligence, not rancor, Lathrop told his audience, 'is the soul of liberty.' An 'enlightened, hon-

¹⁶ It was immediately published by Weld and Greenough, and advertised for sale in the *Federal Orrery*, on the day that it was delivered.

¹⁷ See *Columbian Centinel*, May 14, 1796.

¹⁸ It was announced for publication by Benjamin Edes a week later; see *Boston Gazette*, July 11, 1796.

est, and independent people,' he said, will not submit to intrigue and faction. He spoke New Englandly, with home-bred assurance: 'Americans,' he said, 'were elected by God to redeem from bondage the miserable victims of arbitrary power.' They might in confidence 'view a distant prospect of scenes illumined with Liberty's full and perfect day.' His peroration was in verse as he foretold that soon

Peace on earth shall hold her easy sway
 And man forget his fellow man to slay—
 To martial arts, shall milder arts succeed;
 Who blesses most, shall gain immortal meed.
 The eye of pity shall be pain'd no more,
 With victory's crimson banners stained with gore.
 Thou glorious aera come! Hail blessed time!
 When full-orb'd Freedom shall unclouded shine,
 When the chaste Muses cherish'd by her rays,
 In Olive groves shall tune their sweetest lays—
 When bounteous Ceres shall direct her ear,
 O'er fields now blasted by the fires of war—
 And angels view with joy and wonder join'd,
 The golden age return'd to bless mankind.

By this time, Lathrop had embarked on his first large literary venture. Early in 1796 he projected a completely belletristic periodical to be called *The Nightingale*. It would be subtitled, with a twenty-four-year-old's apparent confident assurance that a transatlantic aura would attract, a 'Melange de Litterature.' It would be pocket-sized, with twelve pages in each issue, and would appear three times a week, on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings. A prospectus printed in Paine's *Federal Orrery* on January 25 promised that its 'pages would never be blackened with dust, festooned with cobwebs, or embrowned in the oven of an "unweeting" pastry cook.' It would be tailored to every taste. The 'excellence of its contents, and the stile of excellence in which their typography would be executed' would provide not only 'ornamental volumes in the li-

brary of the man of taste and learning,' but volumes that would also attractively 'adorn the bookcases of the gay and thoughtless who—never read at all.' No longer would the 'names of Philenia and Menander, in some Society's lumber-hole, meet with no more respect from the corroding book-worm than the poetaster's nonsense, or some lovelorn Corydon's grievous complaints.'

In its first issue, on May 10, 1796, Lathrop thanked subscribers for having joined with him in an attempt to add 'to the stock of their country's literary fame.' If, he said, *The Nightingale* ('The least, and loveliest of the tuneful choir') can 'cheat one hour of its irksomeness, cause one smile to dimple the cheek of beauty, pour one balmy drop on the wounded heart, and deserving, receive the approbation of our patrons, our most sanguine hopes will be richly realized, our highest ambition most amply gratified.' For in 'our American republic,' he said, 'there are more virtues and fewer vices to be found than in any other division of the globe.' His magazine would therefore avoid slander and indecency in public attack. Its single purpose would be to 'please and inform' in reasoned observations on the peculiar 'nature and quality of man.'

It was a brave endeavor. Literary magazines had not done well in Boston. Four years before, Jeremy Belknap had set up his son Joseph as editor of the *American Apollo*, a weekly, which, in spite of becoming the repository of the proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, lasted only two years. Paine's *Federal Orrery* became, after its first issue in the fall of 1794, increasingly political and expired after twenty-eight months. Prentiss's *Rural Repository* in nearby Leominster, which in the fall of 1795 promised 'dainties' for the 'literary epicure,' eighteen months later changed its name to the *Political Focus*. Joseph Dennie, after an attempt in the spring and early summer of 1795 to establish a literary reputation by displaying his wares in *The Tablet, a Miscellaneous Paper, Devoted to the Belles Lettres*, blamed its failure after four months on the

'waywardness of the times,' but mainly on 'the dullness of Bostonians' who were both tasteless and mercenary.¹⁹

The Nightingale flew on broken wing from its beginning. Contributors did not respond. Carriers were careless about delivering it to subscribers.²⁰ Its first issue presented as 'a brilliant specimen of American literature' a biographical sketch of the Rev. Samuel Seabury, 'enlarged, corrected, and improved' from a sketch that had appeared in the *Federal Orrery* some months before—thus presenting some not quite verifiable evidence that Lathrop may have contributed to Paine's short-lived periodical. An 'Epitaph' on the death of Captain Patrick Phelan was attributed to the editor of Boston's *Columbian Centinel*, Benjamin Russell. A 'Monody Sacred to the Death of Miss Dorcas Doubleday' was signed 'L.': 'A moral band invites you to the tomb, / Come see the victim of untimely fate.' 'Peter Pepper,' who just might have been Charles Prentiss, scolded Lathrop for having in his prospectus denounced scandal, for 'Scandal,' said Peter, 'is like the cayenne with luscious viands—it preserves the taste from satiety. . . . It is the salt of society.' A dash of scandal, he advised, can 'make your Nightingale monstrously entertaining.' Without it, 'the ladies will assign your uninteresting paper to the high office of singeing turkies or bottoming patie-pans.'

Paine had submitted an 'elegant communication' for the first issue, but it had arrived too late, Lathrop explained, therefore 'we are necessitated to postpone its insertion.' But, he continued, 'We congratulate the public that Menander,' so long immersed in politics, 'has resumed his lyre, and again charms with his sweet melody and classic song.' The following issue, on May 12, contains ten unsigned lines on 'Spring' and twelve unsigned lines on 'Hope' that may be presumed to have been

¹⁹ Laura Greene Pedder, ed., *The Letters of Joseph Dennie, 1768-1812*, University of Maine Studies, 2d ser., no. 36 (Orono, Me.: The University Press, 1936), pp. 151, 158.

²⁰ *Columbian Centinel*, May 11, 1796.

written by Paine. Neither appears in the large volume of his *Works* that Prentiss and other friends put together more than fifteen years later, but lines from the latter poem which complain that 'Lo! the flowers fade; but all the thorns remain: / For me the vernal garland blooms no more' may well reflect the unhappiness of a young man of twenty-two who had been forced, as Paine had been, to sell his own, once literary *Federal Orrery* only the month before, had married an actress, and had been, for that, disowned by his family.²¹

This second issue of May 12 featured the first installment of what would become a series of eleven essays called 'The Microcosm; or, Man as He Is.' It was signed 'L.,' as would be the installments of May 26, July 7, and July 25. Others were unsigned, except for that of June 16, signed 'T.,' and the final installment on July 28, signed with the Shandean pseudonym 'Johannes Hafen Slaukenbergius,' which may be suspected whimsically to designate Lathrop himself.²² Stylistic differences among 'The Microcosm' essays suggest a multiple or shared authorship of the series. Those signed 'L.' bear the stamp of Lathrop's easy acceptance of things as they are and his use of homely analogue. Man is depraved certainly, he admits in the first of the series. His 'heart is deceitful, and . . . the

²¹ Both of these poems sit unhappily beside Paine's later two poems 'To Truth,' but snuggle familiarly beside his earlier lines 'On Sensibility' and his 'Ode to Winter' in *The Works in Prose and Verse of the Late Robert Treat Paine, Jr.* (Boston: J. Belcher, 1812), pp. 25, 109-10, 142-43. The two poems, however, seem to express so much of the *Wellschmerz* characteristic of Lathrop at this time that it is possible to conjecture that Paine, with characteristic umbrage, withdrew his contributions, and that Lathrop substituted verses of his own.

²² Hafen Slawkenbergius figures prominently in Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* as the patiently persistent author of a treatise on noses. In *The Nightingale*, the surname is misspelled and a first name added, to make what has been suggested as a quizzical play on the name John Lathrop, Jr.: to wit, *Johannes* translates directly to *John*; *Lathrop* can be broken down (with the *OED* as guide) to *Law* meaning *mount*, and *throp*, a small village or haven, which becomes *hafen*, a haven or harbor (Boston's?); *Slauken* gives trouble—perhaps is a pun on *slacken* or *diminish*, which might suggest *Jr.*; *Bergius* is patently mountain. The whole then becomes John of the small mount (Beacon Hill?) by the haven or harbor, junior, diminished or thwarted in an attempt to scale, again, the mountain, this time of literary fame. The whole, then, John Lathrop, Jr. Tenuous? Perhaps, but so was the young man who may have concocted it.

catalogue of his offenses is long,' but he is not so 'desperately wicked' as the demons of hell, creatures who are immensely more fractious than even 'a Boston mob, or the actors in a political melon frolic.'

'L.' appears again in the third issue as author of the first of what will become a series of nine essays called 'The Moralist,' which piously begins, 'There is no virtue more acceptable to God, and in practice, more conducive to human happiness, than resignation to divine will,' and ends with a fifty-line rendering in closed couplets of Habbakuk's prayer of humble submission, observing that without compliance 'no one can pretend to the character of a Christian.' Lathrop's own placid acceptance of what providence provides is tested as he asks:

O Lord, why did thy blazing chariots roll,
Why did thy lightning flash from pole to pole;
Did raging streams thy dreadful wrath provoke,
Or ocean's waves deserve the avenging stroke?

If it can be assumed that contributions signed 'L.' are by Lathrop, he is then revealed as the author of several occasional poems, including a 'Sonnet to a Beloved Wife' on May 20, ominous lines on June 4 which warn that 'Dread distress and sad turmoil, / Soon shall bid all blessings cease,' a 'Sonnet to Evening' on July 9. In addition to these, it seems probable that much of the unsigned verse and some of the prose was his also. But not all. The essay series called 'The Theorist' seems certainly to have been contributed. The long essay 'On Shakespeare,' appearing in two parts in May 31 and June 2, was surely by John S. J. Gardiner, the literary and sometimes contentious clergyman who had also contributed to Paine's *Federal Orrery* and, it can be suspected, to Dennie's *The Tablet*. Few in Boston wrote with such certainty as he.

But the task of filling twelve pages three times each week apparently became onerous. By the third issue, the editor found it necessary to complain, 'Many promised FAVOURS are not re-

ceived.' To supply their lack, verses were pilfered from other sources. The 'Lines on Female Genius,' praising Mrs. Morton's *Ouâbi*, was lifted from the *Massachusetts Magazine* of December 1790 and identified as 'by a gentleman no less eminent for his poetical talents, than for knowledge of the laws of his country, which enables him to discharge the duties of a dignified office in the judiciary department, with honor to himself and advantage to the Commonwealth'—certainly Thomas Dawes who in 1793 had been appointed to the Supreme Court of Massachusetts. The 'Elegiac Ode, Sacred to the Memory of General Greene' on May 21—'a production which a DRYDEN or a POPE would have gloried in numbering among their immortal compositions'—was lifted from the Universalist clergyman George Richard's collection *The Declaration of Independence* (and other poems) published three years earlier. 'The Drunken Soldier' on July 12 was from Philip Freneau's *Miscellaneous Works* of eight years before. Excerpts from William Bartram's *Travels* fattened several issues; Chesterfield was extracted, and Hugh Blair. Poems by Samuel Rogers, Joseph Wharton, William Shenstone, and other 'elegant extracts' in prose or verse filled many pages.

By July 2, 1796, one correspondent complained that *The Nightingale* had 'become rather imitative, than inventive.' But the fault, he was careful to explain, was not the editor's. Boston had never supported a paper of its kind. Even Dennie's *The Tablet*, 'a work of merit,' had 'instantly expired for want of sufficient encouragement.' And the reason was that Bostonians were so 'emers'd in pursuit of riches' that they had time for little besides. Even students at Harvard, so often eager for instant renown, failed to respond to *The Nightingale's* plaintive cry for assistance. Was literary ambition completely lacking in the young nation, even among the people of its most favored region?

Three weeks later, on July 23, an essay from Dennie's *Farmer's Weekly Museum* in Walpole was printed, commenting

even more vigorously on the 'paucity of original material' in *The Nightingale*. Stay away from those students at Harvard, it warned. Let them continue to submit their 'whipped syllabub' as ornamentation to Isaiah Thomas's doughty *Massachusetts Magazine*. Move beyond them. Cross the seas to discover British authors, for 'there is a woeful lack of brilliant composition in Boston. The inhabitants of that mercantile place are so completely engaged in gazing at the rates of insurance, or the manifest of a ship's cargo, that they have few reading hours.' They 'prefer a crowd on 'Change to a lounge in the library.' What 'a loss to the republick of letters' and 'what treason against taste' that Boston fails to recognize its own—its Belknap, its Minot, its Gardiner, among others, and its lovely Philenia.

With the issue of July 30, 1796, *The Nightingale* suspended publication. Though 'she has not offered universal satisfaction,' wrote Lathrop, 'she has not suffered *any* disappointment of expectation, or *much* injury of feeling.' Perhaps she had been too small a bird, in flight too often. As for her 'borrowed notes,' they must be imputed to an 'excess of modesty, which gave to other birds, a preference to her own.' But, like the phoenix, she would rise again. Lathrop promised to produce a new *Nightingale* that would appear only weekly and in a larger format: 'It will contain a correct account of all the productions of American genius, their real character, their merits and demerits, their blemishes and beauties.' Meanwhile, he provided subscribers with a title-page for the first volume, a table of contents, and a preface, so that the whole might be bound for display on library shelf or parlor table.

Proposals for the second volume were submitted, he said, with 'diffidence and apprehension,' but nonetheless with confidence 'that a literary periodical publication can be supported in America.' Commercial Boston was to be respected for what it so solidly was. But might not even merchants cherish 'hours when the mind requires amusement and relaxation' in 'tranquil retirement from the cares and anxieties of life?' Lathrop did

not abandon confidence in his fellow townsmen. 'Let it not be said,' he insisted, 'that in the pursuit of gain, Literature and the Muses are left at a distance, and that a solid lust for gold has banished every delight from the bosom of avaricious Bostonians.' And, he concluded, 'God forbid, that any foe of our country shall ever have reason to say that our native town is the residence of Ignorance, though it be the emporium of Plutus!'

But *The Nightingale* did not fly again. On April 12, 1797, 'J.L.' contributed 'Stanzas on M. De La Fayette' to the *Columbian Centinel*. 'Mourn, victim of oppression, mourn,' he counseled the French friend of America who had been long imprisoned in the bastille at Olmutz, 'Thy griefs, tho' great must yet be borne':

The galling chain, the shiv'ring floor,
 The long us'd straw spread thinly o'er,
 The wasting limbs that know no ease,
 The pang that speaks the heart's disease!
 All these, and more, must yet be borne!
 Mourn, victim of oppression, mourn!

Thy wife torn from thy bleeding side,
 Thy children's soothing charms denied,
 The cursing thought—that each may share
 Those suff'rings scarce THYSELF can bear!
 All these, and more, must yet be borne!
 Mourn, victim of oppression[,] mourn!

The insult of the vulgar mind,
 The last farewell to all mankind,
 The sob that suffocates the brave,
 The silent death—the unknown grave!
 All this, by thee, must yet be borne.
 Mourn, victim of oppression[,] mourn!

A victim himself, if not of oppression, of the failure of his fellow townspeople to respond to his offer to provide them with appetizing literary fare, Lathrop soon left Boston to open

a law office in nearby Dedham. When clients did not rush to his door, he took on additional duties as clerk of the Court of the County of Norfolk.²³ On July 4, 1798, in response to an invitation from the citizens of that town and its vicinity, he delivered an oration in which disappointment in the present and optimistic hope for the future jostled for preeminence. When encouraged to publish it, he submitted, for, he said, 'I despise the miserable coquetry that affects to receive applause with indifference; I glory in my sensibility to every token of approbation by my fellow citizens.' If what he had said had any merit, it consisted in '*its truth and American federalism.*' His own experience had suggested that among 'the victims of ambition and avarice,' which together were 'the present *scourge of the globe*, alas—our dear America is numbered!' We 'have been rendered suspicious of each other.' A 'pestilential spirit of party' has 'nearly dissolved all those bonds of confidence, mutual affection and friendship that hold society together.' But now America can do better. Lathrop was not the first poet, nor would he be the last, to plead for Roman courage that could lead to Arcadian simplicity, pastoral delights, and agrarian plenitude, as he concluded his address with confident rhyme:

With dauntless valour—such as glow'd sublime,
 When Rome's proud eagle soared through every clime,
 Spring boldly on, your Country's rights to save,
 Or nobly perish in a gloomy grave!

But come, sweet peace! in radiant charms array'd,
 Return! a bleeding world requires thine aid!
 Columbia calls! on eager pinions fly,
 Ere virtue sink, and meek ey'd pity die;
 Restore the golden age, when all mankind,
 In one blest league of brotherhood were join'd.
 Thine be the sway, and then through every grove,
 Shall gentle muses tune their lyres to love,
 O'er blood-drench'd plains shall waving harvests spread,
 And sportive nymphs Arcadian dances tread,

²³ Knapp, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 176; see also *Columbian Minerva*, May 2, 1799.

And hardy freemen, o'er the teeming field,
 Their fav'rite arms of agriculture yield.—
 The useful arts shall speed in fright no more,
 From war's dread front and garments roll'd in gore,
 But where mad rage in horrors wrapt the vale,
 Their cheering notes shall float on every gale.²⁴

Late in January 1799, 'yielding to the solicitations of many, perhaps too many partial friends,' he proposed the publication in Dedham of a volume of his collected writings in prose and verse. He would call it *The Norfolk Album*. 'Some of the pieces in it,' he advised in the Dedham *Columbian Minerva*, 'have appeared in print over fictitious signatures; but most of them have lain, unnoticed and unknown, in his closet.' Though he would 'not venture to attach much merit to his prose or poetic labors,' he did hope that 'his little book should . . . be deemed worthy a place in the library of a man of taste.' The volume would appear, 250 pages of it, in 'an elegant type, upon the best paper,' the whole 'ornamented with a handsome copper-plate frontispiece,' and 'would be put to press as soon as 500 copies are subscribed for, at one dollar a copy.' If it did well, a second volume would be published, 'with all possible expedition.'²⁵

To be sure that the proposed volume came to the attention of a larger audience than reached by the Dedham newspaper, late in February he presented his proposals again, this time in Benjamin Russell's influential *Columbian Centinel* in Boston.²⁶ By mid-April, in an apparent effort further to prime the pump, he asked 'those gentlemen who have assisted in procuring Subscriptions . . . to forward the numbers obtained on their several lists, . . . on or before the first day of May.' Though the 'subscription will be kept open for the work until it is ready for

²⁴ *An Oration, Pronounced on the 4th Day of July, 1798, at the Request of a Number of the Inhabitants of Dedham and Its Vicinity* (Dedham: Minerva Press, 1798), pp. 4, 16, 18-19.

²⁵ *Columbian Minerva*, January 24, February 7, 14, 1799.

²⁶ *Columbian Centinel*, February 23, 1799.

delivery,' he was encouraged, he said, by 'the respectability of the patronage . . . already received, . . . to put the ALBUM to press immediately, and ventures to promise it complete by the beginning of . . . August.'²⁷

But the volume seems never to have appeared. Dedham having also failed him, he returned to Boston, hoping to discover there some means of supporting his growing family²⁸ without compromising his career as a man of letters. But Boston offered little more except the embarrassment of being beholden to family and friends. At twenty-eight, he toyed, then, with plans for adventuring abroad, in search of fortune, and perhaps also fame.

The death of George Washington, news of which came to Boston just as the 1700s ended, brought him again briefly to public notice. For more than a week the town was in solemn public mourning. January 9, 1800, was set aside as a day for ceremonial remembrance. Church bells tolled at intervals throughout the day. Solemn services were held at the Old South Church, featuring a eulogy by George R. Minot and a hymn by the Rev. John S. J. Gardiner of Trinity Parish: 'Yes our sad fate we must deplore,' he intoned, for 'Columbia's hero is no more.'

Lathrop did somewhat better. That evening at the Federal Street Theatre his 'Monody on the Death of Washington' was spoken by Mrs. Barrett, the actress-wife of the manager, 'in the Character of the Genius of America weeping over the tomb of her beloved HERO,' amid 'a solemn march of Officers, Drums, Fifes, Band of Music—Soldiers with Arms and colors reversed, forming a Grand Processional Dirge.' For something written quickly, Lathrop's dramatic 'Monody' was not badly done, and Mrs. Barrett in 'manner, attitude and pathetic voice' seems to

²⁷ *Columbian Minerva*, April 18, 25, May 9, 1799.

²⁸ According to Knapp, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 185, Lathrop had four children, only one of whom was living in 1821, the year after their father's death.

have drawn from his lines every available emotional charge:

Hung be the Heavens in black, with pallid gleam,
Portentous moon, effuse thy specter'd beam!
Earth! wrap'd in sable shrouds, in solemn state,
Expressive, *muse* thy loss, and mourn thy fate—
A nation's tears o'er worth divine are shed,
For god-like, matchless WASHINGTON, is dead—
Afflicted nature looks, but looks in vain,
Among her sons to find his like again;
The drooping Muses to their grove retire,
And breezes sigh thro' each neglected lyre,
While holy Freedom views with sad dismay
Thy victory, death! thy most triumphant day!—
Her saviour gone, ah! whither shall she fly?
Where turn her steps, or rest her anxious eye?

Columbia's genius to her tomb repairs,
Deep—deep the gloom, her brow majestic wears!
Fix'd to the sacred spot the mourner stands,
And views with frenzied glare her martial bands;
Recalls that form, which long before them strode
With soul and force, and motion like a God—
And sees that sword, which, when a foe was nigh,
Flam'd like Jove's lightning darting thro' the sky.

See where yon hardy veteran weeps his friend;
Well may the soldier o'er the hero bend,
Cold is that heart, whose patriotic fire,
Could coward hosts with dauntless rage inspire,
Nerve the weak arm, a conqueror's sword to wield,
And bid VICTORIA *thunder* o'er the field—
Ah! he who oft our firm battalions led—
To fame—to freedom—WASHINGTON IS DEAD.

From realms of glory, sainted spirit deign
To guard and guide *Columbia's* grateful train,
Still in the Senate, be thy wisdom found,
Still may thy virtues in our lives abound—
Thou art not lost while pensive memory pays,
To thy long services, her willing praise.
Each mighty deed a bright example shines,
Exalts the mind and every sense refines.

Tutor'd by thee, ingenuous youth aspires
 To place his name among yon starry fires,
 Follows the track thy feet with zeal pursu'd
 And heart devoted to the public good.

Behold the Chief!—sublime he mounts on high—
 What light unusual spreads along the sky?
 From East to West the gates of heaven unfold:—
 How blaze immortal thrones with gems of gold,
 Angels approach to pay him honors due—
 Imperious splendors hide him from our view, }
 Oh! radiant saint! our guardian God—ADIEU. }²⁹

Three weeks later, an 'Ode on the Decease of the Illustrious Washington,' written by Brother John Lathrop, Jr., was among the 'several original and select odes' sung at the Concert Hall by members of St. John's Masonic Lodge, before a 'full and very respectable' gathering. He wrote now with fewer dramatic flourishes:

RECITATIVE

Why this unusual gloom? The sabled skies
 Lament the *EASTERN Light*, that cheer'd our eyes—
 The *LIGHT* whose ray benign, such blessings shed,
 Far from our darken'd hemisphere has sped!

AIR

From realms of bright day, blest seraph repair;
 Assist in our *honors*, and join in our *care*,
 Bring a sprig of *Heaven's Cassia*, embalm'd with its dew,
 'Tis a tribute of merit, to *WASHINGTON* due.

Let his virtue, his glory, emblazon'd by fame,
 Spread *wide* as the spheres, and *illumine* like his name,
 For his generous heart—to philanthropy true,
 Claims the *Cassia*, a wreath to such excellence due.

In his presence—no brother's breast heav'd the sad sigh,
 He wip'd ev'ry tear from the widow's dim eye,
 No orphan, distress'd, ever pass'd from his view,
 But assigned him the *Cassia*, humanity's due.

²⁹ William W. Clapp, Jr., *A Record of the Boston Stage* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1853), pp. 70-72; see also *Boston Gazette*, January 9, 1800.

When the earth bursts in flames—and each far glowing world
 By the fiat Olympic, to ruin is hurl'd—
 The Grand *Master Divine*, to his principles true,
 With *Cassia* will crown him; 'tis WASHINGTON'S due.³⁰

Writing ceremonial verses, however, did not fill a larder nor keep a woodpile stacked. So Lathrop, as his friend Joseph Dennie had and as Charles Prentiss would,³¹ left Boston, and New England also, for what seemed fairer fields. It seems likely that it was late in 1799 or, more probably, early in 1800³² that he boarded a ship bound for India, apparently not taking his family with him.³³ Though 'it was painful to leave his friends and his home, for a far distant country, . . . in doing so there was something romantic which suited his disposition, and he persuaded himself,' said Knapp, 'that in a few years he would return with a rich harvest of wealth.'³⁴

³⁰ *Columbian Herald*, February 8, 1800.

³¹ Dennie left Boston in 1795 for Walpole, N.H., where he gained large reputation as editor of the *Farmer's Weekly Museum* until 1799 when he moved to Philadelphia, there to become editor of the influential *Port Folio*; see Harold Milton Ellis, *Joseph Dennie and His Circle*, University of Texas Studies in English, no. 3 (Austin, Texas: University of Texas, 1915), pp. 90-140 passim. Prentiss, after editing the *Rural Repository* in Leominster from 1795 to 1797, went to England in 1804, and spent much of his life after 1810 as a newspaper editor in Baltimore and Georgetown; see Joseph T. Buckingham, *Specimens of Newspaper Literature*, 2 vols. (Boston: Redding and Company, 1852), 2:268-75.

³² Knapp, *Biographical Sketches*, pp. 178-79, says, 'In 1799, not being satisfied with his success in the profession of law, Lathrop determined on a bold push to better his fortunes, and embarked for India.' His monody and ode commemorating Washington, however, must have been written very late in 1799 or early in 1800, for news of the former president's death on December 14, 1799, did not reach Boston until almost a week after the event. It can be presumed that Lathrop did not leave Boston until after the presentation of his ode before St. John's Lodge on February 5, 1800; but see p. 83 below for an apparent semiautobiographical statement setting a date of departure early in December 1799, patently an impossibility.

³³ My presumption, which I have not been able to document, is that Lathrop's wife had died. Lawrence S. Mayo states in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, without indication of source, that Lathrop was married a second time, ca. 1801, to Jane Thompson, and a third time, ca. 1808, to Grace Eleanor Hamilton. Knapp, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 195, speaks of his marriage in Calcutta 'to the daughter of a respectable merchant' there 'by the name of Bell' (who just may have been a widow, née Bell, whose former husband had been named Hamilton), who returned to America with Lathrop in 1809, and went back to India after his death. Details of Lathrop's personal life seem not to be easily available. I shall appreciate any further information that can be offered.

³⁴ Knapp, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 179.

The voyage was long and tedious.³⁵ Lathrop's mind was beset, he said, with 'gloomy contemplations, and melancholy reveries' that he attempted to allay by writing on shipboard a long poem, called *The Speech of Caunonicus*, presenting an account of the creation of the world and of the creatures in it, and of its progress through peace, then war and final defeat, as discovered in legends of the Narragansett tribe of American Indians. Besides recollections of what he had heard from missionaries among the Indians and notes made from the collections of the Historical Society in Boston, his sources were Thomas Hutchinson's *History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay*, Jedidiah Morse's *American Geography*, and Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*—all books that he might have had in his sea bag beside him.³⁶

When published in Calcutta in 1802,³⁷ *The Speech of Caunonicus; or an Indian Tradition* was dedicated to His Excellency Richard Marquis Wellesley, governor-general of India. A year later it was reprinted in Boston, where it apparently had limited circulation.³⁸ When noticed briefly in the *Boston Weekly Magazine* on May 20, 1803, it was described as 'entitled to high recommendation for its poetical excellence, as well as the historical notices which it contains, of the traditions and mythology of the aboriginal inhabitants of America.' Its versification was thought to be 'chaste and harmonious,' though its style 'in some instances rises into that hyperbolic strain characteristic of the genius and taste of the people where the author resides.'

³⁵ I have not discovered in Boston newspapers of late 1799 or early 1800 any records of vessels sailing for India; but such a voyage was, however, indeed long: on July 31, 1800, the ship *Perseverance* arrived in Boston from Calcutta after a voyage of 151 days, and late in October 1800 the ship *Winthrop and Mary Coffin* arrived after a voyage of 178 days; see *Columbian Centinel*, August 3 and October 29, 1800.

³⁶ *The Speech of Caunonicus; or an Indian Tradition: A Poem, with Explanatory Notes* (Boston: David Carlisle, 1803), p. 10. Quotations from this volume will hereafter be identified in the text by page numbers in parentheses following the matter quoted.

³⁷ Printed by Thomas Hollinbery, Hircarra Press.

³⁸ Even Knapp, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 179, a year after the poet's death reported it 'never to have been published in this country.'

That estimate is in some respects unjust, for the poem proceeds for the most part with simple directness. It tells of Caunonicus, venerable chief of the Narragansetts, who, 'having reached his 84th year and finding his infirmities daily increasing, assembled his people around the Council fire.' Before 'resigning his authority to his nephew,' he would inform his people 'of their nature, origin and approaching fate.' The time is 1620, shortly before the arrival of white settlers in Plymouth. For many years

Beneath the foliage of their native wood,
Vigorous and happy lived a tawny race,
And o'er them reigned CAUNONICUS the good—
Their chief in council, battle, or the chace.

A mighty prince, of venerable age,
A peerless warrior, but of peace the friend;
His breast a treasury of maxims sage—
His arm a host—to punish or defend. (p. 6)

But the Indian's time is over. Glories past are only a remembrance. As he prepares to leave them, Caunonicus reminds his people of how they had begun and how inevitably they would end (p. 14). He speaks as an oracle of the Great Spirit, Countontowwit, who lived before time began, alone in a mild southern region. There he created a pantheon of lesser gods: Manitoo, his regent; then Keesuchquand, keeper and controller of the sun; Paumpagussit who ruled the winds and waves; and Yotaanit, the master of fire. Then from 'mother Earth's prolific womb, / . . . groves aspired and meads began to bloom' (p. 15). Next beasts were formed, and birds and fishes. Chief among them was Mammoth, of mighty strength:

Creation groan'd when with laborious birth,
MAMMOTH was born to rule his parent earth,—
MAMMOTH! I tremble while my voice recounts
His size that tower'd o'er all our misty mounts.

Lathrop would create a native legend about the mysterious great imperial mammoth whose fossil bones, discovered some

years before beside the banks of the Ohio river, had so intrigued Franklin and Jefferson, and after them the sometimes doubting scientists of Europe. No dragon of antiquity was more awesome than Lathrop's hulking beast. Paul Bunyan's ox would loom small beside Mammoth,

His breath a whirlwind. From his angry eye,
Flash'd flames like fires that light the northern sky;
The noblest river scarce supplied him drink.—
Trampling through forests would the monster pass,
Breasting the stoutest oaks like blades of grass! (p. 16)

Creation completed, the Great Spirit presented himself with a holiday, and for 'twice two hundred suns profoundly slept.' Then, on waking, he traveled northward 'with parent care, / To view his creatures and his love declare.' But Mammoth and his offspring had defied the god's peaceful plan. They ran rampant through the forests, subduing all before them.

Not the gaunt wolf, nor cougar fierce and wild,
Escaped the tusks that all the fields despoil'd,
No beast that ranged the valley, plain or wood,
Was spared by earth's fell chief and his insatiate herd. (p. 17)

In anger, the Great Spirit hurled thunderbolts and forked lightnings at the marauding beasts. All were slain except Mammoth himself, whose 'maily hide' and 'shagged front' the 'thunderbolts defied,' until, at length, 'one shaft discharg'd with happier aim, / Pierced his huge side and wrapp'd his bulk in flame.' Then,

Mad with anguish at the burning wound,
With furious speed he raged along the ground,
And pass'd OHIO's billows with a bound,—
Thence o'er the WABASH and ILLINOIS he flew,—
Deep to their beds the river gods withdrew,
Affrighted nature trembled as he fled,
And God alone, continued free from dread.
MAMMOTH in terrors—awfully sublime,
Like some vast comet, blazing from our clime,

Impetuous rush'd. O'er ALLEGANY's brow
 He leap'd, and howling plung'd to wilds below;
 There, in immortal anguish he remains,
 No peace he knows;—no balm to ease his pains (p. 18).

And there on the banks of the Ohio, where the monster's bones awaited discovery many years later, the Great Spirit created in Mammoth's place a 'man of oak and quickened him with breath,' proclaiming him the 'lord of earth and all its race.' Next, he created woman as 'sole compeer of man.' Eden was in America, and there the parents of the race were joined in wedlock. Their progeny increased, and pastoral bliss abounded. The Great Spirit dispatched his favorite crow with a kernel of corn and a single bean, one to be planted in each ear of the tutelard god Paugautemisk, who caused them greatly to increase for the advantage of the newly created people.

But in time envy, rage, and strife descended on these people. The ill-fated love and horrid deaths of the sixteen-year-old Onega, 'the forest's fairest child, / Sweet as the violet, as the turtle mild,' and of her warrior sweetheart Oswego, the 'pride of Narragansett's plain' (p. 19), bring war and destruction to the Indian tribes, so that they must leave their fertile fields for 'distant woods' in 'western lands.' Caunonicus explained this as a decree of Heaven. In their place new conquerors would prevail. New chieftains from across the Atlantic, more temperate in passion, would spread art and science through the land, and 'on our ruins raise a deathless name' (p. 27).

In the creation of native myth, even in the retelling of Indian legend, *The Speech of Caunonicus* falls considerably short of what it must be supposed Lathrop hoped it might be. The verse is often bound by convention in phrase and rhyme. The fable lacks cohesion. Narrative is too often interrupted by explanatory platitude. The Indian is at one time fiercely contentious, at another poised and deliberate, and at still another a kind of prelapsarian infant innocently nourished on bounties freely given. Like Mrs. Morton's *Ouábi*, a decade earlier, *The Speech*

of *Caunonicus* celebrates 'the virtues of nature,' but those virtues are overridden by the Indian's propensity for war.

The poem thus becomes a white man's apologia: had the Indians been less prone to quarrel, among themselves and with transatlantic invaders, they might have remained peaceful neighbors of the English colonists. Their banishment was Heaven's decree. Like Mammoth, they had disrupted God's beneficent plan. New settlers in the New World would see the promises of that plan fulfilled. Lathrop apologizes in his preface that, 'although the Indians were very averse to the admission of such formidable foreigners among them, as were the English adventurers, yet the idea of taking from them their lands . . . was never entertained by the honest, though enthusiastic pilgrims of New England' (p. 6).

The Indians had none but themselves to blame. Lathrop was careful to substantiate every statement about them in twelve pages of notes appended to the poem, six pages of which linger over the discovery of and speculations about the mysterious large bones found near the Ohio. Mammoth, like Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, becomes quite the most memorable of Lathrop's personae. He is the great beast, the fierce but familiar force that lurks behind consciousness and must be slain. Whatever his origins in transatlantic legend or Indian lore, Lathrop introduced him to the literature of the New World. Half a century later, Herman Melville would provide him immortality by transforming him to whale. But Lathrop's Mammoth was there first. The pity is that he was not ushered in among better company.

Of Lathrop's adventures in India there is little record. Knapp, who seems to have received his information from the poet's widow, says that he had gone there to make his fortune. But in this, as in other things, he was destined to disappointment, for, Knapp continues, all 'places of profit were filled,' and English colonial officials 'were jealous of adventurers of other nations, and particularly at this period, when continental Europe was in

a paroxysm of liberty, and every thing bold and free in literature and politics was dreaded.'

Eventually, he set up a school in Calcutta, 'but was of course . . . narrowly watched by the government, and very much limited in his plan of instruction.' Authorities 'were willing that he should teach elementary knowledge, but feared an extensive system of education, as full of evils to their political establishments.' When he proposed 'a plan of instruction, at which the youths of India might receive an education, without going to England for that purpose,' the governor-general is said to have replied, 'O, no, Sir, India is and ever ought to be a Colony of Great Britain; the seeds of Independence must not be sown here. Establishing a seminary in New England at so early a period of time hastened your revolution half a century.' As a son of Harvard, Lathrop can be imagined to have listened with pride sufficient to dull his disappointment.

Meanwhile, he seems to have kept his hand in poetry. Besides the publication of *The Speech of Caunonicus* in Calcutta in 1802, he is said to have contributed occasionally to the *Morning Post* of that city, and to *Hircarrab*, a more literary periodical, files of neither of which have been discovered for the period of his residence. At any rate, reports Knapp, 'these papers were so trammelled by governmental restriction' that no 'freedom of remark, no boldness of discussion was allowed in their columns.' Accustomed to the freedom of the Boston press, Lathrop 'shrunk from politics and the Aegus eyes of despotic power,' and instead 'indulged in the playful and sentimental sort of writing in which he certainly excelled.'

Knapp speaks of having seen a poem written 'on a visit to the burial ground in Calcutta' that was 'full of deep and solemn reflections, . . . truly sublime,' as Lathrop mused over 'the ashes and the monument of Sir William Jones.'³⁹ And Lathrop apparently spent some time in turning a prose translation of the Indian poem 'Sukoontula' into blank verse which made, he

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 181-82.

said, its 'first public appearance about the year 1802.'⁴⁰ Recognition of a kind came to him when he was asked to deliver a series of public lectures on natural philosophy at Wellesley College in Calcutta during the winter of 1807-8.⁴¹

But little beyond this has been discovered of Lathrop's years in India. His residence there, says Knapp, brought him 'many pleasures, as well as many inconveniences.' With the same opportunities another man 'of common prudence might have amassed wealth very rapidly, with half the labour' that Lathrop 'bestowed in this pursuit,' for during the years in India the poet 'passed a life of labour and fatigue; of luxury, splendour and ill health; but the labour was compensated by gain, although pain followed enjoyment.'⁴² All of which seems to mean that he did well enough, but with no spectacular success nor reason to expect either fame or fortune there.

Returning to Boston in 1809, Lathrop planned again to establish another literary periodical. But friends convinced him that the time was not ready. Other men, many of them younger than he, had four years before begun to issue the *Monthly Anthology*, directing Boston taste away from native writers and presenting in their place, as Dennie had advised, extracts from poets abroad. So Lathrop, who in India had 'learned nothing but how to advise others,'⁴³ again turned to teaching, as a preceptor at the Salem Street School.

As he approached his forties, he seems to have made a truce with literary ambition. 'Soon the season of the singing bird is over and gone,' he said. 'The rose pressed with too familiar a hand, has revealed the thorn.' This he told the Masons of

⁴⁰ 'The Moral Censor, No. X.,' *Polyanthus*, n.s., enlarged, 2(July 1813):170.

⁴¹ 'A Course of Lectures on Natural Philosophy, Delivered under the Patronage of the Honourable Council of Wellesley College in Calcutta, in the Years 1807 and 1808; and Afterwards in Boston in the Year 1811,' *Polyanthus*, n.s., enlarged, 1(October 1812):9.

⁴² Knapp, *Biographical Sketches*, pp. 183, 188.

⁴³ Knapp, *Lectures on American Literature*, p. 177.

Charleston in June 1811. He spoke then of the 'strange perversity of human desire; this baffling interference of disappointment, between the end of our pursuit, and its means of attainment,' brought about by 'our errors and mistakes in selecting the course that will lead to happiness.' Only when talents are made 'the means of communicating happiness to others' shall we 'find them the source of happiness to ourselves.'⁴⁴

Lathrop therefore became a useful person. In the late winter of 1811 and the following spring, he repeated in Boston the lectures on natural philosophy that he had given in Calcutta four years before, proposing them as the first in an annual series of lectures to be sponsored by a permanent local Institute for Scientific Study. He seemed confident of its success: 'Funds sufficient for the purchase of a superb and ample Apparatus for Experiments,' he announced, had already 'been supplied by the munificence of those who have approved the plans.' His hope was 'to carry the project to full effect early in the summer' of 1812. Meanwhile, tickets of admission for this, the first lecture series, to be delivered at the Exchange Coffee-House, might be purchased at the bar at that place or from Lathrop at his academy. The price for the series, for one gentleman and family, was \$8.00. One gentleman and two ladies might attend a single lecture for \$1.00. Gentlemen wishing to subscribe for a permanent institute, however, would be entitled to attend five courses of lectures, with their families, for \$25.00.⁴⁵

But Boston did not respond to Lathrop's plan for a new scientific institute, though his series of lectures seems to have been moderately a success. They were later printed in eighteen installments in Joseph T. Buckingham's *Polyantbus* from Octo-

⁴⁴ *An Address Delivered before King Solomon's Lodge, Charleston, on the Anniversary of St. John the Baptist, June 21, A.L. 5811* (Boston: Russell and Cutler, 1811), pp. 16, 20.

⁴⁵ *Synopsis for a Course of Lectures, on the Following Branches of Natural Philosophy, viz. Matter, and Its Properties—Mechanics—Electricity—Hydrostatics—Pneumatics, and Astronomy. The Introductory Lecture to Be Delivered at the Exchange Coffee-House, on Monday, the 4th. Feb. 1811. By John Lathrop, A.M.* (Boston: Russell and Cutler, 1811), pp. 3, 16.

ber 1812 to June 1814. In introducing them there, Lathrop confidently quotes Alexander Pope that, however mysterious, 'whatever is, is right' (November 1812), and in his own voice declares, 'With the increase of our knowledge, may we find an increase of virtue and happiness; and may our wisdom, the friend and companion of religion, not only promote temporal advantages and enjoyments, but conduct us to a world, where the reward of our intellectual toils, and moral exertions, shall be the perfection of knowledge and eternal felicity.' For

Of Wisdom's scope what mortal can discern,
Or who her depth, extent, or being learn?
Who dare attempt to estimate her end,
Or tell where all her views and wishes tend?
(December 1812)

And he challenged his countrymen as he instructed them in mechanics, electricity, hydrostatics, geology, and astronomy: 'let us take courage and move forward. . . . United America is rich in means; and talents are not wanting, where they are cheerfully rewarded' (June 1813).

Meanwhile, he had been compiling *A Compendious Treatise on the Use of Maps and Globes*, which he described, when it appeared in September 1812, as 'a cheap and useful manual for the teacher and pupil,' offering 'a plain and comprehensive introduction to the practical knowledge of geography and astronomy,' together with 'a brief view of the solar system.' As 'an instructor of youth,' he said, 'I have long experienced the want of a concise and familiar introduction' to these studies. He dedicated the volume to the President, Trustees, and Proprietors of the Salem Street Academy. It was officially approved by them through a committee appointed to examine it, as 'a work promising much usefulness' and worthy of recommendation 'to the particular attention of the associated instructors of youth in the town of Boston.'⁴⁶ Buckingham reported it to have

⁴⁶ *A Compendious Treatise on the Use of Globes & Maps; Compiled from the Works of Keith, Ferguson, Adams, Hutton, Bryan, Goldsmith, and Other Eminent Authors; Being*

met 'with general approbation,' and to have 'already been introduced into a number of the more respectable academies' of the area.⁴⁷ 'Should it prove useful,' wrote Lathrop in introduction, 'I shall feel grateful to that Divine Being who has enabled me to contribute even an humble mite toward enriching the minds of the rising generations' (p. viii). It did well enough to require a second printing after Lathrop's death.⁴⁸

At the first anniversary of the Associated Instructors of Youth in Boston and Its Vicinity on August 13, 1813, Lathrop delivered an address in which he traced the history of education among the Greeks and Hebrews, celebrated Milton, Fénelon, and others as master schoolmen, pled for 'admission of females to the advantages of public education,' and spoke with some fervor on the necessity of a pension system for teachers.⁴⁹ Some months earlier, he had assisted printer Charles Williams in the compilation of *The Gentleman's Pocket Almanac for 1813*. It was an anonymous cut-and-paste job, of interest only because it records, along with those of such eminences as Washington, Franklin, Newton, and Mahomet, the birth and death dates of Lathrop's friend Robert Treat Paine, Jr., identified simply as 'the poet.' In 1814, an expanded almanac appeared, this time with Lathrop identified as its compiler,⁵⁰ featuring a brief 'His-

a Plain and Comprehensive Introduction to the Practical Knowledge of Geography and Astronomy. Containing also a Brief View of the Solar System; a Variety of Astronomical Tables; Numerous Problems for the Exercise of the Learner (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1812).

⁴⁷ *Polyanthus*, n.s., enlarged, 1 (November 1811):110.

⁴⁸ In Boston by Wells and Lilly and J. W. Burditt in 1821.

⁴⁹ *An Address Delivered before the Associated Instructors of Youth in Boston and Vicinity, on the First Anniversary of That Institution, August 19, 1813* (Boston: John Eliot, 1813), pp. 14, 17-18.

⁵⁰ *The Gentleman's Pocket Almanack; for the Year of our Lord 1813: The First after the Bissextile or Leap Year. Containing besides the Calculations Usual in an Almanac, a Complete Ecclesiastical, Chronological, and Political Calendar, with a Number of Valuable Tables, Which Will Be Found Very Useful to the Man of Business* (Boston: Charles Williams, 1813) and *The Gentleman's Pocket Almanack; and Free-Mason's Vade Mecum. For the Year of Our Lord 1814. Containing an Unusual Number of Useful Tables, Chronological, Astronomical, Ecclesiastical, and Masonic Calendars—Terms of Court, &c. Calculated for the Meridian of Boston; Lat. 42 deg. N.—Long. 71 deg. W. By John Lathrop Jr. A.M.* (Boston: Charles Williams, 1813).

tory of the Rise, Progress, and Derival of Masonry' in Europe, an example perhaps of the 'literary fagging,' from which, says Knapp, Lathrop 'knew no rest.'⁵¹

Meanwhile, he had responded to new requests for ceremonial verses. His 'Ode, Written for the 17th Anniversary of the Massachusetts Fire Society'⁵² on May 11, 1811, celebrated the heroism of William Brewster whose 'intrepid conduct and personal exertion' had saved the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York 'during the late conflagration in that city,' and of a Bostonian named Harris, 'who by a similar act of heroism, extinguished the flames of the Old South Church in this town, last winter.' Lathrop's ejaculatory lines were meant for recitation, and they recite well. However conventional in theme, they move with confident and practical competence:

See on the sacred Temple's spire,
 The impious Demon's ruthless hand,
 While half the city sinks in fire,
 Has fix'd the wildly blazing brand—
 His red right arm with mighty power,
 Launch'd the fell instrument of woe—
 And lo a desolating shower,
 Pours on the humbler roofs below.

Aghast the trembling croud survey,
 The sparkling torrent from on high!—
 Ah, what can now the ruin stay,
 Unless some aid divine be nigh?
 As well may human art presume,
 To quench the glorious orb of light,
 Or reach the meteors that illumine,
 The brilliant clouds of arctic night.

And yet they gaze, behold with speed
 The dauntless *Brewster*, eager springs!
 Angels, who noble actions heed,
 Uphold him with your guardian wings!

⁵¹ Knapp, *Lectures on American Literature*, p. 178.

⁵² Printed in Benjamin Pollard, *An Address to the Massachusetts Charitable Fire Society; Delivered before the Members at Their Seventeenth Anniversary Meeting, May 31st, 1811* (Boston: Russell and Cutler, 1811), pp. 25-26.

He swiftly mounts on Franklin's rod,
The steeple's smoking height ascends,
Preserves the threaten'd house of GOD
And calms the fears of Virtue's friends.

Such was the deed that lately sav'd,
Our sister City's beauteous domes;
The Champion's image is engrav'd,
On hearts secure in peaceful homes—
Nor *Harris*, shall the muse's lays,
Unmindful of thy well-earned fame,
Refuse the grateful meed of praise,
Due to thy worth—thy valour's claim.

While sweet Benevolence regards
Each generous hero's bold emprise,
And bids him read his bright rewards,
In Gratitude's expressive eyes,
She hails the Charitable band,
Who sooth the houseless wanderer's care,
Relieve the poor with liberal hand,
And cruel Fortune's wrong's repair.

In an ode recited on April 30, 1812, before the Washington Benevolent Society of Massachusetts on the thirtieth anniversary of the inauguration of the first president of the United States,⁵³ the poet's tired talent rose briefly in response to a favorite theme as he wrote with genuine admiration of his subject and workmanlike control of his craft:

When erst Columbia's Chief retir'd,
His country sav'd and peace restor'd,
With patriotic joy inspir'd,
Th' illustrious hero sheath'd his sword.
Then in his native Vernon's bowers,
His mind devis'd the glorious plan,
Whose wise restraints and balanc'd powers
Secur'd the sacred rights of man.

⁵³ Printed in William Sullivan, *An Oration Delivered before the Washington Benevolent Society of Massachusetts on the Thirtieth Day of April, 1812, Being the Anniversary of the First Inauguration of President Washington* (Boston: John Eliot, 1812), pp. 25-26.

Three more stanzas celebrate Washington's accomplishments and virtues, after which Lathrop vauntingly concludes,

Long as Time's rapid current rolls,
 Columbia, shall thy rights remain;
 The free-born sons with gallant souls,
 Will never wear a Despot's chain.
 To Heaven appeal in danger's hour,
 Thy God again will aid afford,
 And arm thy mighty hand with power,
 To break the proud oppressor's sword.

A year later, when war did threaten the young republic, he composed a hymn to be sung at the nineteenth anniversary of the Massachusetts Charitable Fire Society,⁵⁴ and proved again that he could supply effective lines for almost any occasion. He had become master of themes to which an audience would respond, as he wrote,

Hence, 'tis consecrated ground!
 Baleful passions, haste away!
 Hush'd be War's terrific sound,—
 List to Pity's seraph lay,
 Breathing sentiments divine,
 As she tunes her silver lyre,
 From Religion's holy shrine,
 Soothing symphonies aspire.
 Sorrow smiles through Rapture's tear,
 Angels lean from heaven to hear.
 Happy days of early time,
 Now your native charms disclose,
 Ere the fatal deed of crime
 Death produc'd, and all our woes;—
 Ere from Eden's rosy bowers,
 Adam, wretched exile, strayed,
 Doom'd to close life's toilsome hours
 In the grave's oblivious shade.

⁵⁴ Printed in Alexander H. Everett, *An Address Delivered before the Massachusetts Charitable Fire Society, at Their Annual Meeting, May 28, 1813* (Boston: Charles Calender, 1813), pp. 21–22.

Happy years! how fast ye roll'd;
Short was Eden's age of gold!

Blessed years! The halcyon bird
Brooded on Time's placid flood,
Till the voice of Hate was heard,
And the earth drank Abel's blood!
Years of peace—of Nature's youth,
Swift on downy wings ye flew,
Calm, as vestal-bosom'd Truth,
Bright, as Hope's celestial view.
Ah! forever set in right—
What shall renovate your light?

Mov'd with mercy for the race
Of frail Adam, doom'd to death,
Mighty in redeeming grace,
God restor'd their forfeit breath—
Pity's supplicating eye,
O'er the stern decree prevail'd;
Choirs of angels from on high
Christ the Saviour's advent hail'd!
Kneel! adore the mystic plan;—
Life's renew'd for ruin'd man!

Love and Virtue, sisters, bind,
Then resum'd their gentle sway,
And their empire o'er the mind
Freedom's willing sons obey—
Fir'd with gen'rous zeal to save,
See, they dare the wat'ry main,
Snatch the victim from the wave,
Light the vital lamp again—
Heav'n rewards the pious care,—
Life and joy succeed despair!

If Disease with fev'rish eye,
Haunt the dwelling of the poor,
Watchful Charity is nigh,
With her skill and balm to cure.
Female orphan round whose head
Sorrow casts her gloomy shade,
See the wholesome table spread,
And a warm Asylum made;

'Tis thy happy lot, to prove
 Gentle WOMAN'S guardian love!
 When the desolated street
 Smokes with ruin, shrieks with grief,
 Charity, on eager feet,
 Hastens to bestow relief;
 See, again the peaceful dome
 Rises from the blacken'd ground,
 And the wand'ers, gather'd home,
 Comfort's cheerful hearth surround,
 Chaunting hymns of praise to thee,
 Queen of Virtues, CHARITY.

On the twentieth anniversary of the fire society on May 27, 1814, he composed another 'Ode,'⁵⁵ this time 'Dedicated to the Memory of Deceased Patrons of the Society,' in which he asked,

If on the haughty warrior's brow,
 Is plac'd the crown of deathless fame;
 And earth's applauding lords bestow,
 Their proudest titles on his name;
 O say, shall Glory's partial hand,
 Withhold the mede of Pity due,
 When plaintive Sorrow's grateful band
 For wreaths to deck their patrons sue?

Then four stanzas recite the name and certain fame of the illustrious Boston dead, among them James Bowdoin, George Richard Minot, Jeremy Belknap, Joseph F. Buckminster, and William Emerson, all 'sainted heroes of the just' and 'departed friends' to whom

we raise our eyes,
 From humble scenes of mould'ring dust
 To brighter mansions in the skies.

⁵⁵ Printed in Benjamin Whitewell, *An Address to the Members of the Massachusetts Charitable Fire Society; at Their Annual Meeting, May 27, 1814* (Boston: Charles Calender, 1814), pp. 21-22.

This was workaday verse, deftly fitted to its occasion. Whatever small glow of originality Lathrop had once displayed was now dimmed.

That is why the series of twenty-three informal essays that he contributed as 'The Moral Censor' to Buckingham's *Polyanthus* from the fall of 1812 to midsummer of 1814 comes as a welcome surprise. His prose is light and bright, bouncing as the series begins in shirt-sleeved informality over subjects familiar to readers of periodical essays almost anywhere. Not since his college days had Lathrop appeared more attractively. Set beside the dextrous mediocrity of his other writings during this period, they tempt suspicion that they are a residue—as indeed some of them are so identified⁵⁶ of the light and sentimental things that he is said to have written in India.

In the first essay, perhaps remembering his early bouts in verse with Paine and Prentiss, he spoke again of 'the folly and criminality of slandering our fellow men.' But if this experience lingered in his mind, he spoke now of straw men. Prentiss had been eking out his career as a political journalist in Virginia, and Paine was dead, a victim of profligacy and ill-temper. But what Lathrop said now could apply to any time, particularly perhaps to Boston, where Federalists still reached for power, pecked at by a dwindling but vocal Democratic Republican minority. 'The scandal of fools,' he said, 'is weak and harmless, and while it evinces imbecility of mind . . . excites no sensation but disgust.' However, 'when men of superior abilities prostitute them in the invention of false, or the circulation of evil reports, the peace not only of individuals but of the whole community is seriously endangered.'⁵⁷

⁵⁶ No. XX (May 1814) is identified as 'composed in Calcutta in June, 1806'; No. XXI (April 1814) was 'calculated for the meridian of Calcutta'; see also p. 82 below, where No. XIV (November 1813) is said 'to have appeared in a Calcutta paper, which for some years I edited.' The mention of mangoes, certainly not a New England delicacy, in No. II (November 1812) further suggests Indian origin. It can be supposed that many, if not all, of 'The Moral Censor' essays had previously appeared in India.

⁵⁷ *Polyanthus*, n.s., enlarged, 4 (October 1812):108-9.

Then, having ridden his favorite hobby-horse, he turned to more sportive, though no less instructive, considerations. He wrote of young Dolly Dash who wishes almost above all else to marry. 'I can suit the young, the old, the grave, the gay,' she wrote. 'I can darn stockings, make mince pies, and pickle mangoes, peppers and cucumbers.' More than that, she can dance and play at cards. But Dolly's mother 'thinks herself too young to be a grandmother, and therefore,' complained the daughter, 'lest I should deprive her of one of her sweethearts, she keeps me confined to my room, while she flirts with gentlemen in the parlor.' But Dolly will have her day. She is desperate for a man:

Be he young—or be he old,
Rich or poor—or short or tall;
Let him laugh—or let him scold,
He shall be my—'all in all.'

Then he presents Jane Wormwood, a contented 'ancient Virgin,' who has discovered that 'a life of celibacy has many advantages.' No man, she boasts, 'without supernatural aid shall ever warm me into love.' But with what 'quirks and remnants of wit' are old maids attacked, and so unfairly! To illustrate her point she submits a 'sarcastic Parody' of Matthew G. Lewis's 'Crazy Jane' that had churlishly been sent to her, its margin 'adorned with emblems of death, and images of horror':

Why, old Maid, in every feature,
Are such envious marks exprest?
I'm a modest, peaceful creature,
Why should hatred fill thy breast?
Do my winning smiles alarm thee?
Trust me, all thy fears are vain;
Foolish thing—I would not harm thee—
Thou'rt beneath me—FRETFUL JANE.

Dost thou frown to see my pleasure?
Thou can'st ne'er a smile enjoy;
Cats and cash, are all thy treasure,
Spiteful cares thy hours employ,

Didst thou ever love sincerely?
Can'st thou ever love again?
No! then frown not so severely!
Try to smile, old FRETFUL JANE.

Did a young man e'er believe thee?
Was he doom'd to love but one?
He, poor soul, could ne'er deceive thee!
Thou wert false—and he undone.

All thy boasted charms can never
Wound a lover's heart again!
Thou art wrinkled more than ever,
Peevish, boasting—FRETFUL JANE.

Now forlorn and broken-hearted,
Thou may'st sigh, and fume and fret,
Thou'rt for ever more deserted,
Still with venom'd thoughts beset.

Thou may'st sing the slanderous ditty.
Thou may'st sadly pace the plain,
None will cry, with melting pity,
Heaven assist thee—FRETFUL JANE.

What a libel that is! What slander! Jane insists that the blessed 'life of celibacy has many advantages,' but that its chief advantage is freedom. 'Instead of being bent by domestic drudgery, she is able to devote her precious hours to those studies which strengthen and enoble the mind. She perpetuates herself by her works, not her children. She is a patriot, a philosopher, a metaphysician, a poet,—a LEARNED LADY.' To appease her, 'Mr. Censor' promised in the future to do what he could 'to encourage all of my sex, to confine their affections to widows and misses in their teens,' so that spinsters by choice 'may receive no kind of interruption in their amusements and studies from the imperiousness of male intruders.'⁵⁸

In the next essay, in December 1812, Jane Wormwood congratulates 'Mr. Censor' for being so staunch and forthright a 'champion of ancient virginity,' and Benjamin Crump responds to Dolly with approval. As an elderly man married to a seven-

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, November 1812, pp. 92-93, 98.

teen-year-old wife, he testifies to the comfortable efficiency of his young Tabitha, 'who warms the flannels to wrap about my gouty joints, prepares the night draught, and amuses the lingering moments of pain, with reading the Arabian Nights, or the laughable Adventures of Don Quixote.' In January 1813 'Mr. Censor' appropriately writes of the unprofitableness of New Year resolutions, but in his next month's essay returns to conjugal concerns, this time the disappointed disillusionment of a man married to a talkative wife:

Sun, gang thee up the eastern skies,
Get out of bed and quickly rise,
Lash on thy steeds, make no delay,
The devil take my bridal day;
Come cheer my spirits, honest light,
For I have had a wretched night,
—My spouse, the best of wives (I swear,
To keep the purse and save my hair,)
When we should go to bed to sleep,
Gives her glib tongue full licens'd sweep.

But the good wife also has complaints in plenty, among them that

My trunks are empty—not a gown,
That is not known to all the town,
My hat, or bonnet, or my veil
Might figure in a rag-fair sale.

Her lamentations, however, are unheard, for the beleaguered husband has taken the husband's familiar way out: 'unmindful of my roaring, / The drunken beast's asound and snoring.'

In other essays, 'Mr. Censor' speaks of preparing for old age, of the peril of attempting to keep up with neighbors in 'expensive distinctions of dress and equipage,' and in 'The Tough Drumstick' tells a short moral story about an apprentice condemned at his master's table to be served only the most unchewable part of a chicken, until he comes into money, goes to the city, lives there a life of rout and dissipation, and then

returns, certified a gentleman: now at his former master's table he is served the choicest portions—'no more tough drumsticks.' Then 'Mr. Censor' considers 'the art of fainting gracefully,' which he was happy to observe had 'ceased to be an accomplishment of the American fair'; he recounts the churlish adventures of Dick Wildgoose, the rascality of Lawyer Doubleface, and the misdemeanors of a club of widows whose tears of mourning 'live in an onion' as they lament not so much 'the loss of a husband . . . as the want of one.'

Such subjects, though handled lightly, with confident ease, were the common property of periodical essayists everywhere. As the series continued, 'Mr. Censor' began to repeat himself—more remarks on marital misadventures, more animadversions on spinster ladies. But then Lathrop either ran out of material or became surfeited with so bland a fare. With essay number ten, in July 1813, he began to change direction, presenting then a blank verse rendering of a selection from the 'celebrated Indian poem Sukoontula,' reciting the loveliness of a girl from India who

Beamed in full radiance every perfect charm
Of womanhood: and graceful levity
Of sprightly youth, by modesty restrained
To captivating gaiety of thought and deed,

but whose mercurial disposition and mischievous levity 'give alternate joy and pain to all.' The poem survives only as a fragment. Perhaps for that reason its blank verse occasionally stumbles in search of meaning.

Three more essays then appeared, on old maids, disappointed lovers, and on the art of dancing—the cushion dance, the kissing dance, indigenous forms, so much superior to the Irish Coolan or the Scottish Lilt with which proper Bostonians entertained themselves. But in November 1813 he turned to India again, to tell of the unhappy fate there of a half-breed girl, named Indiana, whose father was a European and whose mother was a native woman. Taken from her mother, as cus-

tom decreed, and educated at her absent father's expense, she was displayed as a marriageable commodity to whom adventurers were drawn because of the dowry that her father had settled on her. Sometimes she was attracted to men who proved to be unworthy. At other times, she set too high a standard for suitors. She became choosy, sometimes a flirt, and remained unhappily unmarried. This proved, said 'Mr. Censor,' that 'the force of love and the penalties of coquetry, are the same in India as in Boston.' For one thing he had learned: 'Different as the inhabitants of different nations are,' some feelings were common to all, 'and the *traveller* will find himself at *home* . . . wherever he may be carried by his fate or his inclination.'

The account of Indiana's sad experience had first appeared, said 'Mr. Censor,' in 'a Calcutta paper, which for some years I edited,' a statement that may be only the essayist's convenient invention, or just may say something of Lathrop's own experience. It introduced a new subject to the series, announced as 'Sketches of Life and Manners in Bengal,' with which 'I propose,' said Lathrop in a note to the editor of *Polyantbus*, 'to occupy a few of your succeeding numbers.' Boston was to have a new treat. Not before had an innocent gone abroad to return with such good-natured accounts of foreign manners.

The next four essays, from December 1813 to March 1814, then recount 'The Adventures of Peter Pilgarlick in India.' Peter seems to be, with some literary license allowed, a quizzical self-portrait of Lathrop himself. He was 'an unfortunate young man,' who had been 'ruined by the *dreams* of fond and partial friends.' Prepared by education 'for a distinguished station in society,' he soon discovered, he said, 'that no immediate advantage accrued from my accomplishments and erudition,' and 'I was viewed . . . as an encumbrance to my relations and friends.' He had studied law, but had soon 'paid his devoirs to that shrine of hypocrisy.' Footloose, he became a prey to whim, his own or that of someone else.

For his grandfather had dreamed a marvelous dream of having embarked—he specifies the date as on December 5, 1799—on a voyage to a distant land where ‘he beheld trees, whose luxuriant branches were bent beneath the weight of golden coins,’ where hedges were ‘whitened with silver medals,’ and herbage ‘sparkled with diamonds.’ Even the eyes of fishes were illumined with sapphires. All ‘nature teemed with fecundity and ever-varying brilliance.’ This was India, a promised land. Age prevented the old man from seeking it out for himself, so ‘he cast his eyes on me,’ said Peter, ‘as the true and legitimate prop and support of family honor and opulence.’ Therefore, ‘notwithstanding my reluctance to leave my native land, I was obliged to embark on a fool’s errand to Bengal, to gather rupees . . . from bushes and trees’ (December 1813).

He set forth at once, ‘by the earliest convenience,’ which was a ship bound for Madras on which he obtained place as an assistant to the captain’s clerk. Having ‘little business to perform,’ he lounged, he said, ‘all day in my cot, either fantastically employed in building castles in the air, in reading novels, or composing essays or poems.’ When he arrived at Madras Roads in June 1800, he was unceremoniously swept toward shore ‘like a dead pig’ as his landing craft was upset in the surf. Rescued by Indian boys in a catamaran, he finally set foot in the promised land ‘drenched, half-drowned, and bruised to death.’ How the natives stared at so strange a sight as he! But brandy, applied externally and taken internally, soothed both wounds and spirit. Then for weeks, while he remained close to port at the captain’s command, he ‘continued to dream away all . . . leisure moments,’ waiting for riches. Not until August was he relieved of shipboard duties, to proceed by towboat to Calcutta, where he arrived, head held high, ‘with a manuscript volume of essays and poems in one hand, and a wrapper containing three letters of recommendation in the other.’

Peter found the people of India neither rich nor cordial. As he walked the city’s thronged streets, his sea chest carried on

the head of an almost naked native dandy, he felt lonely and alone, 'as were our first parents, when they were driven from their original homes.' Pensively, like them, he said, remembering Milton's *Paradise Lost*, 'I took my solitary way, supported by the consoling assurance, that Providence, though his ways were inscrutable, was "My Guide."' He did not yet know, he said, that 'superstitious dependence on an old man's dream, should be the cause of afterwards involving my character in disgrace.' What the disgrace was is not told, but Peter provides some hints as in retrospect he recommends conformity: neither talent nor accomplishment nor good intention can prevail 'unless,' he advised, 'you think and behave according to settled principles.' A person who acts and thinks according to his own conceptions of right and wrong, acts and thinks at his own peril (January 1814).

At Parr's Tavern, where he found lodgings, he was ogled as a curiosity by native servants. As he refreshed his spirits with a cup of tea, he was visited by a white-clad Calcuttan, a 'long, lank, meagre, fret-gizzardd man,' who, with 'a well-timed deflection of body, and an expression . . . of the most abject humility,' offered to become Peter's factotum, his sircar or personal broker, who would make the young man's fortune by selling in the bazaar whatever European goods he had smuggled ashore. Certainly, thought Peter, this was a dream. To convince himself that it was not, 'I blew my nose,' he said, 'pulled my hair, pinched my arms, knocked my elbows, stamped on the floor, broke my nucle [sic] on the table, drew hot tea into my mouth through the spout of the tea-pot, . . . hemmed, roared, bellowed, and jumped about the room until the sircar thought me mad and ran off with his best speed.'

The tavern-keeper also thought him mad, and ordered that his bill be presented at once. Peter, now calmed, without a rupee in his pocket, had some difficulty in persuading his host that, just arrived from sea, though he had no money, his trunk contained papers of inestimable value: 'Alas, my poor manu-

scripts and letters,' he cried. 'We shall soon learn their high destinies, and become acquainted with some of their ludicrous adventures' (February 1814). But we do not. Peter thought of his literary treasures as 'passports to the best society in Bengal,' and as certain 'claims to wealth and fame, if there be a printer of discernment, or a man of taste in India.' But when he presented one of his letters of recommendation to a gentleman of influence, that gentleman advised him to return home at once, even offering to pay Peter's passage back to Boston. 'The harvest of "adventure,"' he said, 'was over, . . . and the field had been gleaned until not a solitary blade remained, to reward the toil and trouble of transversing a barren heath.'

In response to the kindly gentleman's invitation that Peter dine that evening at his house, the young man changed his workaday white jacket for the only other coat that he owned, a blue one that he had quite outgrown so that it was too short for him. As he trudged through dusty streets approaching the house, his hostess, who was 'something of a wag,' and a snob also, pretended to mistake him for a servant. On being assured that he was he, she scolded him for having risked his health by walking in Calcutta heat instead of having acquired a palankeen on which he could be fashionably carried on the shoulders of trotting natives. She viewed him with distaste. 'If you will be so good,' she said, 'as to step to the head of the stairs, the bearer will wipe the dust from your shoes.' Peter was humiliated. And his dowdy blue coat provided 'an additional subject of merriment' among the other guests. He is said to have had revenge by describing the scene in a Hogarthian manner, but the account of his adventures having already been drawn out, it was said, at wearisome length, its author omitted the account, though promising a later 'accurate detail of Peter's mischances, mishaps, blunders, dilemmas, and twenty-seven mortifications' (March 1814).

But Peter promised more than he produced. After four appearances, he disappears, his place as narrator or subject of

narration taken by Simon Steady, an older man, experienced in Indian ways. Having wasted his small fortune in riot and debauchery, Simon had come to India thirty years before. Like Peter, he had been an object of curiosity to natives, from carrier boys to well-fed wealthy merchants. He had become a copying clerk and had set up housekeeping in a small establishment that required the attentions of four troublesome native servants to keep him clean and fed (April 1814). His money running short, he had been tempted by a stout but wealthy widow who had once been a Moorish slave, then a concubine, and finally the wife of a wealthy planter. She 'chewed beetle, played pau-chees, grew fat as a seal and unwieldy as an elephant,' but her 'heart was as soft as a chicken in a dumpling, and warm as a red pepper.' She had tempted him with mangoes, sweetmeats, and curries, and offered 'her own dear self, (a beauty of about twenty stone weight)' and access to her wealth. He had eluded her, but afterwards had been sorry, for two months later she had died, her fortune going to others (May 1814).

Then Simon Steady disappears, and Dan Spondee takes his place, offering in the last three essays fine moral observations on wealth, marriage, and Indian weather. With Dan, the series stumbles repetitiously to a close with the story told again of a wealthy Indian girl courted by a handsome red-coated English officer whom she turned down, only to become a proud coquette, like Indiana destined for an unhappy spinsterhood: 'I shall die unpitied. My name shall perish with me. Nothing shall remain but the story of my shame.'

The best of these 'Sketches of Life and Manners in Bengal' are lively, anecdotal, and sometimes effectively humorous. Had there been a single character to hold them together, they might have achieved a kind of casual comic unity. But Lathrop's attention span seems to have been short, and his originality limited. There is an occasional Shandean lilt to his prose, but his humor is often slapstick, and his themes both repetitive and outworn. With a fresh, new subject in hand, he descended to platitude.

His accounts of the attractive strangeness of people in a strange land becomes layered with moralizing. Whatever was fresh in the young innocent's adventures abroad is finally tintured with sober sententiousness calculated for the meridian of Boston.

Though Lathrop outlived the better known of his literary contemporaries, as he entered his forties, his effective literary career was over. In October 1814 he composed a monody dedicated to the memory of the Rev. John Lovejoy Abbott who had succeeded Lathrop's Harvard classmate William Emerson in the pastorate of the Chauncey Street Church in Boston. But younger men were crowding into place. Edward Everett, hardly more than twenty and recently named minister of the prestigious Brattle Street Church, delivered the funeral discourse, eloquently expressing freshly for his generation 'the feelings, the reason, and the hopes of Christians.'⁵⁹ In the following spring, Lathrop delivered before his Masonic lodge a spirited oration in celebration of the end of the War of 1812. Again, he pled for the necessity, the absolute necessity, for charity in judging men and events.⁶⁰ He might be thought to be asking that his own career be viewed, if with nothing besides, with kindly understanding.

But Boston had moved beyond Lathrop. He had little of the dogged seriousness or single-minded purpose of the new generation that would publish periodicals more successful than his and produce men of letters who wrote solidly and surely, even humorously, of human aspiration. For all his good intentions and convenient skills, Lathrop seems not to have been a person of whom other people expected much. Knapp speaks of his 'habitual carelessness' which rendered him suspect among his

⁵⁹ *A Monody Sacred to the Memory of the Rev. John Lovejoy Abbott, A.M. Pastor of the Church in Chauncey-Place, Boston, Who Died October 17, 1814* (Boston: Munroe, Francis, & Parker, 1814).

⁶⁰ *Oration in Celebration of the Peace Happily Concluded between the United States of America, and Great Britain. Delivered at Boston, March 16, 1815, at the Request of St. John's Lodge; and Sanctioned by the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Massachusetts* (Boston: E. G. House & Co., 1815).

neighbors, as a result of which 'he formed a determination to move to the South, expecting to find congenial souls and a better fortune.'

But fortune continued to elude him. For the remainder of his life he remained inconspicuous, almost to invisibility. Knapp records that he 'continued his profession of an instructor, a lecturer, and a writer in the papers of his day' in Washington and Georgetown. Then through the 'influence of his literary friends he obtained a situation in the Post-Office, which he held for some time.' But he seems not to have liked to be tied down: 'precise duties grew irksome, and were sometimes neglected.' In spite of that, 'from the consideration of his pecuniary wants, his talents, and pleasant disposition,' and especially because of the 'respectability and power' of certain unnamed patrons, 'he was retained when others would have been dismissed for inattention.'

His demeanor was 'so bland, modest and affectionate, his principles so good, his heart so open and communicative' that he was said to have been 'loved and supported, when his negligence of duty, and carelessness of himself would have caste an ordinary man out of elevated society.' Though friends 'were sometimes distressed at his lack of foresight and prudence, and grew cool towards him for a while, . . . such was the sweetness of his temper, and his freedom from envy, malice, or any bad passion, that he was received again into favor.' His warmheartedness was remembered, his generosity, and his sometimes misplaced confidences. 'The joys and sorrows of a man of feeling,' Knapp concludes, like 'the accidents in the life of a man of letters, are subjects, however painful, we . . . dwell on with a sort of melancholy pleasure.'⁶¹ Lathrop died in January 1820, shortly after his forty-ninth birthday.

His claim to remembrance is not large, but Lathrop's talent seems to have been more genuine than that of many of his literary contemporaries. His failure may have been the conse-

⁶¹ Knapp, *Biographical Sketches*, pp. 187-88.

quence of the personal deficiencies of which Knapp speaks. It may have resulted from the temper of his times that required of literature a purpose beyond that of pleasing. He may be thought of as one of the few pure poets of his generation, a person who seldom submitted his verse to personal or political acrimony. Ardently a patriot, his lines were meant to arouse, not anger. If nothing that he wrote is faultless, nothing is marred by more than a kind of innocent, misplaced literary ambition. He did not surmount the literary conventions of his time. He rarely speaks in a voice that can be guaranteed his own.

Yet his early verse is unobtrusively melodious, imitative of course, but controlled by taste. Perhaps the best that can be said of his later occasional verse is that it challenges comparison with any verse of its kind written in English at the beginning of the nineteenth century. His one volume of verse, *The Speech of Caunonicus*, looks hesitatingly toward later and better legends of a world threatened by mysterious evils, not the least of which is contention among people. His periodical essays are often deft and winsome, at their best unembarrassed beside the capricious vagaries of such later contemporaries as Thomas Greene Fessenden or young Washington Irving. Those that tell of adventures in India open, though tentatively, a fresh, new field for whimsical enjoyment. A gentleman, without sustained force in mind or word, Lathrop, as person and poet, deserves a brief memorial. With Knapp, we may 'weep at his misfortunes, pity his frailties, and gather up his virtues to imitate them.'⁶²

⁶² Ibid., p. 196.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.