

*The Autobiography of*  
Gurdon Saltonstall Hubbard



Introduction by Caroline M. McIlvaine

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## The Autobiography of

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Mr. John Jacob Astor about this time instructed Mr. Matthews to engage twelve young men as clerks, and one hundred Canadian *voyageurs*, and to purchase a quantity of goods for the Indian trade, to be transferred in *batteaux* manned by these *voyageurs*, and to report therewith to Ramsey Crooks, manager at Mackinaw, Michigan. This expedition was to leave Montreal early in May, 1818, and to proceed as rapidly as possible to its place of destination.

Visiting my friend Dyde one evening, he told me of this, and that he was trying to prevail upon his father and mother to procure for him an engagement with the Fur Company as one of the twelve clerks. He being then but eighteen years old, his parents opposed it on account of his youth, and Mr. Matthews also discouraged the idea; yet he continued his efforts, and finally obtained their consent, and informed me of his good fortune.

The expedition was the subject of frequent conversations between us, and I also became desirous of being employed; my disposition to go increased each time we met, and I finally ventured to mention the subject to my father and mother, but they only laughed at the idea, saying Mr. Matthews would not engage John, as he wanted men, and not boys; that John was not eighteen and I not sixteen. And though I was thus put off, I was not wholly discouraged.

Time passed on and April was near at hand.

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## Burdon Saltontstall Hubbard

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One morning John came into the store, his countenance beaming with joy, and announced that Mr. Matthews had promised to take him. "Oh!" said he, "I wish you could go with me, but it is of no use to try. It was hard work to induce Mr. Matthews to take me, because I was not old enough, and besides I am the twelfth, and the youngest by four years. I am to get one hundred dollars advanced to purchase my outfit." I don't know what induced me to make any further effort, but I still felt there was a chance.

I could not help crying, and when West, the oldest clerk, inquired the cause, I told him. "Why, Gurdon," he said, "you don't want to go among the Indians. You could not endure the hardships. What a fool you are to think of it. Don't give it another thought. We all like you here. Stick by us, and rise as you will be sure to. Mr. Frothingham has not a word to say against you. He knows you have done your duty, and in time will advance you. So give up the idea."

Just then Mr. Frothingham came in, and, noticing me, asked what was the matter. I did not reply, but cried. When West told him, he said I had a foolish notion.

I requested leave of absence for the day and night to go home (my father then living at the foot of the mountain), which he granted. I was not long in reaching home, though it was about three miles.