

Gentlemen:

Every now and then the careful student of the Law finds himself called upon to be grateful for the fact, that in the definition of personal rights it has proceeded so far as it has. This is my condition with respect to your "Encyclopedia" since the receipt of your letter of the — 3 inst. led by my personal request from Mr. Gilmore, I answered his request, by furnishing the information he asked. I am now very grateful that the Law gives me the undoubted right to demand and enforce the return of that communication, which I hereby do. Enclosed you will find a postage stamp to pay for each return.

I have no doubt that you are entirely right in regard to my personal merits and the engrossing interest the present and the future we likely to feel in my personal appearance. I can quite understand, too, that a publisher might well hesitate to expend the sum of \$70 - each for a portrait of each of ^{the} 6000 people who are to be honored with lineal immortality by your book and I can easily understand that with \$42,000. contributed at the outset, by anxious contributors for fame, your venture can hardly fail of great financial success. I see no reason, either,

why you may not, by a proper application
of the flattering testimony you have wasted on
me, secure enough contributions of this sort
to give you a fair profit on the work before
a single copy is printed. I do not at all doubt
that by proper applications of familiar methods
you will find that number of very worthy men
and women, who are willing to take pity on
posterity and for the sake of themselves and their
"friends" and their "fame", see to it that the world is
provided, with a just, "authentic, and to them satisfac-
tory likeness", of themselves.

For myself, I confess that I have not any special
sympathy with posterity in this respect. I do not think
a familiar knowledge of my physical nature is absolutely
essential either to its happiness or prosperity, and for
the present, I think I could satisfy the yearnings of
my admirers much more cheaply and probably
quite as satisfactorily otherwise. Seventy dollars would
go a good way in tin-types, you know.

I must request you, therefore, not only to return
the matter sent, but also to abandon all thought
of including me in the number of those favored
ones who have to be admitted to the pages
of your valuable work.

While I am not without a certain pride in having fairly earned by ~~my~~ honest endeavor a certain prominence in the thoughts of today, I must confess that I could not think of myself as one of a company of 6,000 who had paid \$70 each to have his features reproduced for the sake of posterity, without blushing. Such things are usually termed hippodroming. It is in a sense no doubt a legitimate business enough, but I confess I have no relish for it and greatly prefer not to be mentioned in a volume constructed on that plan. I do not doubt that I am losing a great opportunity to please and benefit the world, but I cannot help the inclination to consider my own feelings more than them.

I have no doubt your sagacious boldness will meet with the success it merits, and I shall look for the appearance of your very remarkable work with the utmost curiosity and interest. What a treasure-house of

self-complacent philanthropy ^{it} will be ^{with} those
6,000, self-advertized specimens of famous
Americans paying \$70 - specie to have their
faces etched upon this new tablet of fame!

Please accept my thanks for an oppor-
tunity to become one of this immortal
company and forgive me for that absurd
scrupulousness which prevents me from accept-
ing your wonderfully cheap and generous offer.

I confess that he is but a mere - spiritual
fellow who is not willing to pay \$70 - for im-
mortality, but I don't believe I could be tempted
to pay even ~~the~~ twenty-five cents for it.

Sincerely Yours

William D. Taft