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A DISCOURSE
ON THE
FORMATION AND DEVELOPEMENT
OF
THE AMERICAN MIND.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE
LITERARY SOCIETIES OF LAFAYETTE COLLEGE,

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He hath not dealt so with any nation.
PSALM CXLVII.

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BRECKINRIDGE'S DISCOURSE, &c.

THE fashion of this world passeth away. Even as we use its highest gifts, they perish beneath our trembling hands. Its most enchanting beauties fade while we gaze delightedly upon them. Its noblest monuments turn to dust, as with unsteady feet we traverse their august courts. Its awful names cut into its most costly marbles, live dimly in characters, distorted or well nigh effaced: and those mighty institutions which made these names sacred, vanish away, even more completely than they. Amidst this grand and mournful scene, the great human herd passes onward as heedlessly as if it trod not on the ashes of the glorious dead; hearing no voice from the mighty ruins of the past,—seeing no promise in the majesty of coming events. And they whose hearts burn with inward fire amidst events so vast yet so evanescent, they too are borne onward by the same resistless tide, that sweeps all else away; the glory for which they sigh, the mere reflexion of the ruins over which they hasten, and the very works which should win it for them, buried under the fragments of those systems they were intended to commemorate.—

Yet it is a fair and blessed world; and in it there is opened before us a theatre for every high and virtuous effort, for all beneficent and noble influences. We may not perpetuate our own obscure names, nor give lasting continuance to our most cherished plans for good. We cannot blunt the iron tooth of time, nor break his leaden sceptre, under which all former states, and all possible institutions have been broken and consumed, and to which all that shall yet arise may be obliged to pay the same fearful tribute. But there is a subtle and mighty influence, which time itself cannot weaken, which long

ages, as they pass away, hardly dilute. Generation sweeps after generation in its brief career, as wave chases wave on the bosom of the deep, and when each dashes against the shore, it is lost forever. But the spirit that pervades these fleeting and nameless generations, perishes not with those in whose breasts it ruled, nor passes away with the monuments erected to illustrate and enlarge its reign. Here our work for good or ill, is almost immortal. The laws of Solon are no longer laws; his people have for ages scarcely known his name; and for twenty centuries the principles of his polity have been banished from his native city. Yet the spirit of the Athenian people, of their laws, their liberty, their institutions, and their literature, has influenced every succeeding generation; and at this hour burns more brightly and warms the human heart far more intensely, than in the freest and most glorious days of Greece. So too shall it be, with this great republic. The names of its wise and virtuous citizens, except a very few, must be forgotten; the details of its thrilling and romantic history may perish, leaving behind only the grand outline of its origin, its struggles, and its triumphs; its simple and noble monuments may all decay; nay, even its glory may be obscured, its strength depart, its sacred principles be all subverted—and the plough-share of ruin be driven deep and wide through its sacred bosom. Alas! that were indeed a sad day for man. But even then we shall not have lived in vain. The name of Washington will electrify all coming ages, and in the shock of battle nerve the souls, and in the day of triumph rule the evil passions of all who struggle for liberty. The light of our glorious career will forever illuminate the path that leads the weak and the oppressed to freedom, strength and boundless prosperity.—The spirit of our laws, manners and institutions will abide upon earth the redeeming spirit of succeeding times, resisting all the efforts of ignorance, barbarism and tyranny, living in the very core of the world's heart, and defying all attempts to extirpate it,—until the whole mass shall be warmed and enlightened, and the flame, like that the ancients fabled, shall break forth at once in ten thousand places, and fill the earth itself with brightness.

This is our theme to day. We would trace briefly, the origin and growth of this glorious spirit in our republic; *the formation and de-*

velopment of the American mind. Thus shall we see most clearly how a wise and beneficent providence has made us what we are—the manner and extent of our ability to bless mankind, the nature of the benefits we are able to confer, and the evidence that whatever may hereafter befall us, our spirit must at last pervade the world. The greatness of the theme, will hide as with its shadow the meanness of the attempt at its discussion.

I. Our land has been from the beginning a land of wonders. Every step which has marked its discovery, its settlement, its early history, its glorious revolution, and its astonishing subsequent progress, has exhibited events which were in their individual and separate importance of thrilling interest to the human family, and which have formed unitedly a chain of incidents before unparalleled. A rapid sketch of the most striking of these, with some general elucidation of the times which gave them birth, and the heroic actors in them, will reveal to us most clearly the school in which the national mind was trained, the noble stocks from which our people sprung, and the deep foundations on which our principles and character are laid.

The discovery of America, was undoubtedly the most important physical event to civilized man, that had ever occurred in his history. Nor shall we err greatly if we add that it was the result of a combination of great qualities, perhaps never before or since so united in a single individual. That there must be such a continent, was the clear and profound induction of a great mind, after long, patient and intense thought, directed by all the knowledge that age possessed, to guide its investigations. That it could be, and ought to be reached, was the ultimate and immovable conclusion of a mighty and daring spirit, which surmounted every obstacle that weakness, ignorance, meanness, rivalry, the ills of poverty, the caprice of courts, the ingratitude of kings, the cowardice and superstition of man, and even the wasting power of time could oppose to its sublime force and singleness. Of all the injustice of mankind, none exceeds the long refusal to award to the great discoverer of the new world, the foremost rank in all earthly renown. Who shall estimate the value of a gift which in its issues doubled the earth it-

self, with every blessing it contained, and changed its whole aspect, with all the former currents of its wealth, its habitudes, its thoughts, its very spirit and mind!

Well was that glorious deed worthy to stand amidst the galaxy of great events, which marked the awakening of the human mind after ten centuries of death-like sleep. A double apostacy had bound the human soul in chains of adamant, and the glories of the eastern and western empires seemed to have alike expired under the weight of brutal ignorance, and ferocious superstition. Hoards of fierce barbarians inundated the latter of the two, and the leaven of Roman civilization worked in the high and unshapen mass for a thousand years, before the gigantic monster began to be fairly quickened into life. Then, as if to make barbarism repay humanity for the evils it had wrought, new and unnumbered hoards smote the feeble descendants of Constantine, and scattered over the world the relics of knowledge not yet extinct. The Greek mind and literature fell like an electric spark into the throbbing bosom of awaking Europe; and for the third time Greece conquered man. Cast now into the scale the kindred and almost cotemporary events. The use of new and better methods in the investigation of truth, if not perhaps the complete discovery of those, whose exposition and defence made Bacon so illustrious, in an after age. The perfection, if we may not say the invention of the mariner's compass; and the total revolution which it immediately wrought not only on human intercourse, but also on thought and knowledge. The manufacture of gunpowder, by which the whole art of war was thoroughly changed, and so much of its bloody spirit extracted; but above all, by which the weak have found at last a remedy against the oppressions of the strong, the naked multitude been armed in proof against their mailed tyrants, and science and genius elevated to the rank which brute force and the animal passions occupied before. The invention of printing, that engine of inconceivable power, by means of which immortal youth is bestowed on greatness,—knowledge made the first necessity of the human race, more urgent than bread itself,—and a sympathy established in every breast of man, with all his fellows, through which a blow well stricken, no matter where, will vibrate throughout the earth, and for successive ages. Oh! glorious gift of God; well worthy to usher in that mighty reformation of the

church and world, which was amongst the first fruits of its proper use, and which was itself the most illustrious of those grand incidents which clustered around the birth of our new world. Oh! blessed reformation; without which, knowledge had been in vain, the progress of light impossible, the extension of the human family but an increase of ignorance, suffering and sin, and the enlargement of the world itself, a deep woe, over which the whole creation should have groaned.

The circumstances connected with the first peopling of this continent by the European race, were in all respects such as to exercise an unspeakably great and beneficent influence over its future character. And whether we direct our attention to the extraordinary posture in which the early emigrants found themselves on their arrival on our shores,—or to the events which drove them from their respective father lands—or to their own peculiar adaptedness for the gigantic work which God had called them to perform;—we shall perceive in all, concurring elements in the formation of an empire meant to be unparalleled.—

We behold spread out before the enchanted gaze of a world burdened and staggering under the accumulated woes of thirty eight centuries, another new and lovely world—rejoicing in liberty—smiling in beauty and abundance—and beckoning from the verge of creation and beyond the limits of the curse of power and mis-named civilization, all who had sorrows to bewail, or wants to supply, or injuries to conceal, or threatened wrongs to fear, to seek a refuge, a home, a safe and honoured habitation, far, far away under the setting sun!—Who can doubt that in every land—there were thousands panting for such a deliverance?—Who does not know that for three hundred years, the living tide has set with constant and increasing force ceaselessly upon our shores?—Or who would be surprised if whole nations had stood with outstretched arms, sighing for blessings which they could never call their own—and hastening with one accord to the very margin of the sea, that they might follow with anxious voice and eye, those whom a happier star guided to the distant land of promise and of hope?

Under the first movements of such an impulse it would of necessity occur—that the new world must receive from all nations, even the most unlike and hostile, crowds of colonists; and that from

every quarter the most vigorous of those who sought for change, would always emigrate first—and while the rivalry continued, and the means were insufficient for all,—the irresolute and weak would always be left behind. In laying the deep foundations of American character,—here are drawn together elements from every portion of, what was to us, the ancient world, the whole that is, of civilized Europe; and from every part the very materials best fitted by nature, by sufferings, by character for the new and mighty enterprise before them. It is not one people built up from the useless fragments thrown off in the progress of another's growth. It is not even like the ancient colonies, a new state, founded by portions of the old, selected by choice, by lot, or even by hard necessity, to bear Ilium to Rome, or Greece to other shores. It is a people gathered from all other people; and so gathered that the evils of each might be corrected by opposing good,—and the good from all be strengthened by the common will. They bring from every land their tribute, and a committee of the world in the noiseless but severe ordeal of their new condition, rejects the worthless, confirms the good and useful, honors the great,—and all correcting all, is fitted for its use and rank in the new structure in which human society is ready to be cast.—

But it is not alone to the action of such general principles, however clear and powerful might be their influence, that we must look if we would fully understand the character of those early colonists to whom we are so much indebted for all our country has been, or shall yet become. We must search amidst the troubles and contentions of their respective countries for the events which formed those, who in turn formed us. We must detect in the grounds for which our fathers suffered in their native lands, the principles which they brought with them across the mighty deep—and the spirit which actuated their conduct in their new abodes. We must read the first lines of the states they were about to found in the directly opposite lineaments of those who drove them forth despised, and houseless wanderers—the great proto-martyrs of a new creation.—

Of all human history there is not one field from which patient industry will return laden with richer treasures—nor one in which the wise and generous spirit can expatiate with more delight

—than that which develope, the connexion of the settlements of this continent, with the rise, progress and results of the mighty European convulsions, of the sixteenth seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thanks be to God there is a point beyond which human sufferings cannot be pushed, without on the one hand exterminating the victim of oppression—oron the other driving them to despair and forcing them to smite their tyrants with the broken fetters which have so long eaten into their own hearts. To this last point of most extreme endurance had Europe come under the long and pitiless tyranny of Kings and Priests—of fraud and violence, of corrupt ignorance and brutal superstition, united to cruel, selfish and hardened power. The great living, suffering mass, crushed beneath the weight of thrones and altars, welded to each other and heaped on them, had but to sink into the dust and perish in silent brokenness of heart, or to rise up and in the quickened majesty of out-raged nature, shake from their necks the maddening weight of wrongs and woes—and live again to freedom, truth and virtue. The torch of expiring religion was kindled anew from heaven—and its bright and hallowed beams glanced widely over the earth; and as it gleamed upon the towers of cruel superstition they fell before it,—and as it flashed upon the haggard features of down trodden nations, the voice of prayer and praise issued anew from their sobbing hearts.—The spark of liberty was struck afresh in the deep spirit of man; and as it caught from breast to breast and from land to land, thrones rocked and the brows of tyrants turned to ashes. Truth, long banished from the world revisited again her ancient haunts—and as she hastened thro' the earth, cells burst open to behold her face—cities and palaces spread wide their heavy gates at her advancing step—and the great crowd of suffering men bowed their adoring heads as her sweet voice entered into their souls! —Oh! it was a goodly and sacred spectacle! And tho' the clang of arms rang for two centuries above the hum of praise and drowned the voice of nature; yet better so than to return again to darkness and despair.—Tho' in many lands the rising spirit was oft times put out in fire and blood—glorious and honoured—yea blessed those who fell with their falling country—rather than live to see and share her former woes. Tho' many a weary exile, fled trembling from the smoking ruins of his native village—and many a bleed-

ing soldier dragged from the last field where expiring virtue struggled, limbs hewn and worthless,—and many a patriot went forth weeping over lands that scorned their love—and many a man of letters shrunk away from the stern rebuke of mitred ignorance, restored to power and borne aloft on arms red with gore,—and many a child of God and many a minister of Jesus Christ made trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, and after that, of want and banishment; yet all, nay more ten thousand fold,—is long ago repaid. Their tears and blood were precious seed. Look far and wide upon our happy land, and see its ripening fruit. Look up and down in our large heritage, and learn the lessons of their wisdom—the fruits of their toil. Read in our long catalogue of good and glorious names, the records of their children's children!—Yea, if, in all other lands, all the blessed results of those stupendous events in which all our fathers were actors, and of which so many were victims—could be this day effaced, and the black tide of ruin roll back upon them its fearful wave, still here alone, are fruits enough to repay beyond compute, all the vast price at which the world has bought these blessings.

During the last quarter of the sixteenth century Europe began in earnest to plant colonies in the new world: and with little intermission till near the middle of the eighteenth, new settlements—of new bands from almost every European nation, were formed from point to point along our whole Atlantic slope, from the snows of Canada to the mild skies of Florida and Louisiana. During that hundred and fifty years what grand events crowded upon each other throughout all Europe! What obstinate and endless wars!—What ceaseless and fervid mental effort, strife and rivalry!—What trying of all things, by new and fiery processes!—And amidst it all, what grand progression of the human race!—Throughout all lands their victories and their defeats alike furnished colonists to us. And whilst in them all their own historians place their golden ages, within this very period, it was ordered that from them all our first emigrants should come in strange connection with their most striking eras; and so that whether by glory or defeat the gain was still to us. If the cruel and perfidious Stuarts ruled, the sweet villages of England, the misty hills of Scotland, and the green fields of Erin, gave us in turn crowds of men, who forsook home and country for

religious liberty. If the glorious Commonwealth spread its proud banner over Britain—a misguided, but heroic legality, drove into distant exile the defenders of the throne.—And on these shores they who signed the death warrant of Charles Stuart, and they who plotted against the life of Cromwell sat down, beneath the shade of the same boundless wilderness. The vast plains of Germany drenched in the blood of its bravest children, fed with new victims, wars which seemed to have no other object but to restore the empire of darkness, and no end but in the extinction of the human race. But at every gleam of peace,—crowds of patient and laborious people sought in the new world a respite from the ills which seemed their heritage at home.—The Danes, the Sweedes, the glorious United Provinces, marked the most thrilling eras in their respective histories, by colonies sent out to us; and Spain, and even Italy, forsaken Italy, upon whose lovely plains, and gorgeous cities the light of reviving letters and religion so early and so brightly glowed and was so soon put out in tears of blood—they too sent to us, exiles laden with gifts rejected by themselves. France too, heroic France, so beautiful, so brave, whose children nothing consoles for having lost her, and whom nothing but stern necessity can drive forth from her bosom; even she gave to us and to the earth her best and wisest. In human story, there are few pages so full of remorseless priestly cruelty and ferocious kingly love of blood, as that on which is written the tale of the immortal Huguenots. Disciples of a pure faith—subjects whose loyalty and truth knew no stain—soldiers without fear and without reproach—brethren of the best King France ever had, this noble race embracing a fifth part of the entire population of France, was given over as accursed of God, and delivered up to the rack, the scourge, the dungeon, and the stake;—their marriages annulled, their children bastardized, their goods confiscated, the doom of exile enforced against such as would have staid, and death inflicted upon such as tried to fly! A bleeding remnant, found its way, into our wide heritage, and mixed its blood with all those rich streams which warm our hearts to day—and threw the leaven of its noble character into our mighty mass.

We see the instruments,—chosen by God, and how he formed and brought them to their appointed field. We see the field

itself. Such men, so situated, could not fail to be impressed with the grandeur of their new position. To them the ancient world was dead; and they were launched into a new existence, where their own destiny, and that of ages upon ages yet unborn, was waiting to be shaped by their own hands. With minds thoroughly alive to all the great questions which had already convulsed the world; actors themselves in the vast movements before which all states still reeled, victims of every form of ancient evil, or victors in every varied strife which the reborn, waged against the dying Europe, they stood upon the margin of a second world and a new futurity,—strangely august.

In the midst of this sublime scene there are two points which so command the whole, as to require specific notice. The first is explained in this reflection, namely, that the great principles which then agitated the world, partly because many of them were unsettled as yet by any compromise with ancient abuses, partly because those holding various modifications of them were called to act in concert, in forming a new order of things, and partly because that order was strictly and in every respect new;—on these accounts these master principles were laid, deeply, simply, and broadly—in strict obedience to reason, justice, and common sense. Or is it more just to say, that these latter were themselves the strong foundations upon which all else was built? At present we pause not on such distinctions: for in either case the final result is equally remarkable and the same.—Behold in every community, sprung from whatever race, or planted in whatever clime of our broad empire—the same grand model,—the same pervading spirit—the one majestic fabric built by man, for man, and therefore unique as his own nature!

The other consideration is not less important. It lay in the boundless greatness of the field itself. These were indeed mighty men; yet were they men—subject to passions like our own. Tho' they did more than other men had done before them—yet in some few things they marred their own glorious work,—in others came short of their grand destiny.—But in this vast continent spread out before them, they all had room to try their weaknesses, as well as to confirm their strength. Some false principle admitted into a system, would soon be made manifest by the superior action of some neighbouring system; or finally be destroyed by the opposing effica-

cy of the great truths associated with itself. And while it endured, those who should become subjected to its evil influence, or be unwilling to endure it, had a world before them, inviting to new settlements, and the formation of other states on better and surer grounds. Here too we behold one of the chief causes of that multiplication of sovereign bodies, an element of our general system, which, in the various forms in which it enters into it, and has always modified our character and acts, has been from the beginning, one of the most influential ingredients in the formation and development of the *American mind*.—Indeed, the play of both these latter principles has been incessant;—and while the action of the parts upon the whole, and of the whole upon the parts, has been unspeakably important, that of the parts upon each other has been so constant and decisive, that from the earliest period of our history the whole current of change in all the parts has been to make each more closely resemble all. The colony at Plymouth might err in decreeing a community of goods; but surrounding example and fair experiment soon corrected the strange mistake. Massachusetts Bay might hang the Quakers and banish Baptists and Prelatists;—and Virginia refuse to tolerate any form of religion but that established by law in England. But by and by Virginia set up religious liberty on its eternal basis;—one of her loftiest spirits besought that his simple monument might record that he was the author of that act; and Massachusetts at length followed her bright example. Massachusetts might forget for a time the great principle on which her people came wanderers to her shores—and not only establish a peculiar state religion—but disfranchise all who could not embrace its tenets. But under the peculiar circumstances which these striking cases are cited to illustrate, this intolerance had as its great result the formation of two sovereign and enlightened states (Rhode-Island and Connecticut;)—and as its end, the total change of these hurtful and absurd notions and practises of the state itself—under the influences already stated.—

The Colonial history of North America, to be understood must be considered in two entirely different aspects. From the first planting of the respective colonies, to the declaration of American independence—their foreign and exterior affairs were so far regulated by the states which planted or the corporations, or proprietors who

governed them; as to reflect always the features of the old rather than of the new world: while those affairs which were strictly interior and which alone could truly exhibit the real character of the newly formed settlements, were themselves for a long time subject to the same controlling or at least disturbing influence. The violence of the contending states of the old world, was always communicated to their respective colonies in the new—and every European contest for nearly two centuries, found responsive passions on this side of the Atlantic, and again and again involved one part of our continent in wars with another, and every part successively with the aboriginal inhabitants.—These were the bitter fruits of European policy and of the ancient social system, which reckoned justice to be subordinate to interest and revenge,—and the blood of man well repaid by plunder.—In the progress of the new social developement, the opposing elements of European influence and American principle can be distinctly marked, at every step in the progress of internal affairs.—With the growing strength of the colonies, collisions more repeated and serious, could not fail to occur between parties and principles thoroughly unlike and steadily acting upon each other. The respective tempers of the parties, pointed out from a very early period the conduct that might be expected from each, when the time for the final settlement of all these great controversies should have fully come; and the whole history of the past, had already demonstrated that every such question, between such parties, has no final umpire but the edge of the sword.—For when did power ever loosen its iron grasp, but as that grasp relaxed in death? Or when did the brow of man, once lifted up to heaven in sacred freedom, willingly bow down again in galling servitude? Let man but taste one morsel of his birth-right,—and he will purchase with his blood, its extremest crumb! Or suppose it were not so,—who that saw Virginia arm for the Stuarts against the Commonwealth merely from a proud loyalty—could doubt what she would do—when bleeding freedom screamed for succour at her knees? Who that saw above a century afterwards, the flame lighted up throughout the continent by the stamp act,—could err as to what must come, when distant fears of evil, should be realized in acts of insolent and cruel wrong?—

The declaration of American independence was indeed a national event unequalled for its sublimity.—But it was an event, which under its attending circumstances could not but have occurred. The glorious contest from which it sprung—and whose triumphant principles embodied in it, were borne to final victory thro' scenes which should live forever in all generous hearts—and by men whose names deserve to stand in the first rank of fame—was one that first or last must needs have come,—and could scarcely have ended differently.—All that hallowed contest, incalculable as are its influences upon us, and upon man, was itself the result of the grand influences which had gone before. And while the warm and grateful heart recalls its story with tears of constant joy, the philosophic mind must see that any different result would have been almost impossible. Glorious era:—pregnant with the whole destiny of man! Glorious generation: worthy of such an era!

The region over which we have heretofore passed belongs to history; and time and truth have already stamped upon it, a verdict never to be effaced. In regard to it, to speak with hesitancy were only to make manifest a culpable want of knowledge. But now, our rapid sketch brings us upon a period whose furthest verge is yet within the range of present being, and whose great events gather in successive and increasing majesty around our foot-steps.—History begins where all the angry passions die,—and he who writes it, must stand sufficiently remote to catch the true and vast proportions of his theme. Yet even now we may anticipate the coming praises of a long posterity—wrung even from unwilling breasts—and heaped upon our great career.—

The history of our country might naturally be divided into three great eras; the first beginning with the discovery and settlement of the country—and extending down to the planting of the last of the original colonies, (Georgia) in 1733: the second including the colonial and revolutionary history, and reaching down to the close of the old confederation; the last covering the last half century—commencing with the establishment of the Federal Constitution—and reaching to our own day.—The first is our seed time,—the second our harvest,—and the last our season of strength and rejoicing which these blessed fruits have yielded. Oh! may its duration and its fulness, know neither stint nor limit.—May the noble

form of government our fathers have built for us, be a stranger to decay forever. May the great and blessed land bestowed upon us, be the free and unpolluted habitation of our children's children to generations of generations. May the mighty instrumentalities operating to enlighten and save the people, spread and thicken, till the infant of days shall be wiser than the aged man. May the inheritance of glory and prosperity we have received be transmitted untarnished and undiminished to others wiser and better than ourselves;—and all the noble and precious principles which have come to us at so great a cost,—and conferred on us such priceless blessings, be cherished by our country with all the fervour of her primeval love, and scattered in her speech, and by her acts, till they shall enlighten all the habitations of man, and fill the earth itself with peace, freedom and abundance!

II. The course of our subject now conducts us to other contemplations. We have sketched feebly, events which have no parallel; it remains to develop the principles which produced, and those which flowed from these grand transactions. We have seen the acts which give lustre to our early history;—let us view the rules which guided them—the maxims to which they led, and which unitedly have nourished as well as illustrated,—have formed and do still develop that spirit which already shakes the earth. The American mind is not more striking in its formation, than in its great developement.

Upon every page and every event of the history of our fathers is written, their unwavering and heroic devotion to principle. No trials have ever shaken their constancy, for a single moment. No heighth of prosperity has seduced them into a momentary forgetfulness of their settled purposes,—nor any temptation of advantage allured them from the great ideas which formed the basis of their character. When they have erred, it has been thro' some false analogy, or by reason of some mistaken application, of great and unquestioned truths; and uniformly and speedily, have they returned, as light and truth made the unwilling error manifest. In vain will the keenest search be made—for the unworthy compromise, the wilful violation, or the complete and purposed surrender of any one of those great principles, for which any one of our colonies mi-

grated to the country,—on which any one of our states have been formed,—or which have from the beginning guided the spirit of the nation.—Inflexible lovers of justice, their laws are all equal, merciful, and wise. Ardent disciples of liberty,—true and real,—absolute and universal liberty,—step by step has this sacred principle been ceaselessly developed, in our whole history, mounting higher and higher with every age, and confirmed, enlarged and illustrated by every monument in all our annals. The firm and enlightened advocate of peace, equity and perfect independence in all national intercourse, again and again has our country resisted occasions when interest and enthusiasm alike invoked a departure from its principles;—and curbing by reason its own passions, and by force, when need required, those of foreign states, she has held the strong and even current of her way. Friends of general knowledge and of perfect civilization,—the earliest settlers laid with the foundations of the republic,—and by their side, those for the complete instruction of the people and the amelioration of all the evils and sorrows to which man is incident; and thenceforward what schools have been scattered over the nation's bosom, what charities have adorned her whole extent, what ample and increasing efforts to effect these cherished plans! Disciples of an unfettered, simple, cheap, and public social system—they have, in all directions and at every period held fast by their wise preference; and neither the mad violence of popular phrenzy—has tempted any to arm the state with unusual powers; nor the height of general wealth provoked even a proposal to depart from our severe simplicity; nor any pretence of urgent danger given birth at any time to any movement, however slight, towards cloathing our public acts of whatever kind, with dubious secrecy. It is a land whose fathers entered with fixed devotedness to principle, as such; and all its people, may safely challenge until this hour, the world's approval of their steadfast and faithful walking in the same bright career.

Some of the points now stated in illustration only, need more ample notice; yet may we pause for a single moment to contemplate the amazing influence of this great characteristic upon a nation's destiny. Such is the mixed condition of all human things, and such the power of outward circumstances, that most kinds of social order, which are long and fixedly adhered to, may at last not

only be made endurable, and mould their subjects conformably to their will, but rise to much power and greatness. The prime internal cause of weakness in all states, lies first in want of *any*, and secondly of *fixed* efforts. How vast, incalculably vast, then must be the prosperity and grandeur of that people—whose ardent, wise and practical spirit,—free to choose the noblest ends by the best means,—is guided from age to age, by an unchanging love for what is right,—to a fixed support of what is just, beneficent and true! Who shall limit the rise of such a commonwealth at home: who estimate its power abroad? What can resist the action of such principles within a state; or who without, will long contend with those, who before all contention will do from principle, more than any contest could wring from them; and who, against principle, will give nothing, to save life itself?—Sacred force and majesty of right!—How does our story illustrate its deathless power—its countless triumphs!

Every outward circumstance in the state of the country itself and in that of the first emigrants to it, rendered the formation of many separate communities necessary; and the various interests, and established order in all these communities, conspired with the necessities already stated, to modify the character of the entire nation, when it became one, and to shape the form of its general institutions. It was never possible at any time in the past history of this country, to have formed one general government and constitution—upon any other than these two principles,—namely, that the nation must be formed of confederated but independent states, and that the constitution must be written, precise, and limited. Centralism was the very opposite of all the possibilities of the case; nationalism was possible only to a limited extent, and on fixed points, after mutual concession and upon precise terms;—and out of these sprung of force, a defined and written constitution.

What a multitude of reflections crowd upon us here; and what fundamental principles of all our greatness, and all that distinguishes our political system in its public action, are here developed! The union of the states for all purposes strictly national;—a union upon whose foundation has been built all the prosperity, glory and strength of the republic,—all the sacred monuments which make our country's name immortal, and all the power to make our immense

continent the garden of the world, and our glorious principles the heritage of man. A union pregnant in all the past only with blessings and triumphs, and full in future promise only of honour and usefulness. A union, which every child should be taught to love next after liberty,—every man to cherish next after independence—and every statesman to venerate next after the blessings it was formed to win and to secure. And yet in every statement of the rise and nature of that union, it must be manifest that it is a confederacy formed by the free and unanimous choice of sovereign states, who cannot and never should be bound beyond the terms and nature of the act itself: and who are admonished by all their own experience, and all the light which the past has to give, that in such governments, the disturbing and dangerous tendency is towards the strengthening of the central power. Of all forms of human government, this has been found in practice to be the most enduring,—the most difficult to be abused to ends of violence,—the easiest to be restored to its own proper action. And none who either read or think, can fail to see, that by it above all others, are knowledge and civilization advanced: for by it, are formed a multitude of separate centres,—each giving increased activity to every thing within its reach, and thus far greater impetus to all human movements;—and each affording in times of trial and darkness—a refuge and shelter against the errors and crimes of all the rest. Here too, we find reduced to practice the grand idea of written covenants, binding alike the general will and the active agents of it:—the clear subversion of the pretended power of rulers derived from any source but the consent of the governed; or to be used for any end, but the general good;—and the prescription by the true sovereign, of the true principles on which active authority should rest, the true ends for which it shall be exercised, and the clear limits in which it shall revolve. Here also, the great conception of reserved rights seems first embodied: not only that sovereignty does not reside in those who rule us, for our own purposes and by rules prescribed by us:—but that there are modes by which we will withhold vast powers from all our rulers; powers which rulers need only to oppress,—confederacies only to ingulph their forming states; powers not only never to be intrusted to mortal hands,—but in whose ample scope we will remodel, or at our will withdraw, other and smaller pow-

ers already given to form, whatever government. And last of all, we see here, the germ of that long hidden but precious truth, that states and laws are made for man, not man for them; and therefore that the less they model us and the more free and perfect play they give to human effort, the higher will be the destinies of man. Lycurgus made a code and wrought his people to it. Solon found a people, and made a code that should only repress the evil and give free developement to all the good it found. Here was a code for man, and there man bent and hardened to a code. In Sparta nothing breathed or acted but by this iron code,—and even her noblest monuments told only that Lycurgus lived.—At Athens man lived, tho' Solon was forgot. And the free, active, glorious spirit, that conquered at Salymis when Sparta would have fled, and won its bloodiest trophies at Marathon, which Sparta shunned, once and again at the loud call of eloquence which still thrills the world—repulsed the victors of the earth; not for conquest's, nor for plunder's sake, but only for freedom's sake, and that the voice of Plato and the schools might not be hushed amid their wonted shades, nor Phidias', broken marble lie beneath barbarian feet,—nor the sweet sounds of eloquence expire along those sacred streets, nor all the muses weep amid their costly halls.—Here also lies the grand distinction between the Jewish and the Christian states; the one a state, so ordered and so circumstanced that it must always be small and singular; the other so simple, so perfect, and so clear, that if contrived for universal empire, it could not be otherwise. The one exact and rigid in forms that will not be denied, and which reject all that cannot be made into their own precise image:—the other august in its few and sacred principles,—a spiritual state confederate of all in every land who love its glorious head.—It is the spirit of man and of the age to accumulate the means of power and greatness;—but to do it by gathering in one, a multitude of separate and perfect parts. And in these various principles lie some of the first and surest elements of all our greatness—as well as some of the clearest developements of our pervading character.

In the formation of such a state, various forms of original constitution might have entered into the parts, various tempers pervaded each, and several opposite characters been stamped upon the nation thus composed. There have been confederacies in which all the

parts were pure democracies; others of simple monarchies; others made up of other forms;—and others still, into which all forms entered. So there have been confederacies where every part was actuated by the same, and some peculiar spirit;—others with a spirit directly the reverse; others still with portions mixed of each. As the papal states of Europe united to suppress the reformation,—the united Belgic provinces leagued to uphold religious liberty,—and the papal and reformed Swiss Cantons united for the protection of national independence.—With us, one spirit, one object, and the same principles, pervaded every element that formed the nation—and every breast in every separate colony and state. A few of the chief of these should be illustrated.—

With one accord our ancestors have built up all their fabric, upon the great truth of absolute human freedom and equality.—The first postulate of all our systems is, that man is capable of self-government,—and entitled to its exercise. If this great democratic principle be false—we and our country are undone. If it be true, no mortal power can estimate the height of grandeur waiting to receive us—nor compute the depth and thoroughness of that tremendous change which the influence of our spirit must operate throughout the earth. Our fathers have attested by their blood, their faith in this great truth; and by our works and lives we set it to our souls, that they judged rightly. They and we have frankly periled all upon it; and oh! how rich the stake which they and we have won!—Who are the tyrants of the earth but men? Who the proud oligarchs but men,—often most base, corrupt, and impotent of men?—And are not we too men? And shall they rule us and themselves also, being but men; and we incapable to rule ourselves yet being men?—Yes they shall do it—when they are wise, or strong, or brave enough to bind us again with broken fetters. Till then, we rule ourselves.

The influence of this simple principle upon the duration and grandeur of states, and of course upon the national and individual character of men, is immense, almost beyond conception. Man as we have found him commonly,—not man degraded by long misgovernment, and heartless tyranny,—not every man, nor possibly at every era, men of every clime, but man in general, is fully competent to rule himself;—this is the grand truth. And if there be de-

partures from it, they will be found not less, perhaps more frequently above than from beneath the common level of the race;—upon the thrones, and in the palaces of princes, often as grinding at the mill, or toiling in chains. Man is competent to rule himself, and therefore competent to settle the principles chosen for the direction of the state,—to expound and to apply these principles,—and to do this by the consent of the majority of wills. Now such a state must be secure forever, from ruin from within,—while men continue competent to rule themselves.—For to suppose otherwise, is to suppose the greater number not content with their own will;—nor even content to change it;—but bent on war against themselves. Or else that the smaller number shall deny the first principles of the social state itself, in which they live, and shall be stronger than the larger number, and so by force, subvert the state. But of all authorities the hardest to subvert, is that to which the greatest number give consent; and of all forms of government that which is surest to have this surety is that which is most popular. Men can be prevented of their will, at last, only by force. The bayonet or popular consent, are the naked final causes of all control. The greatest strength must always come at last into the hands of the greatest number—and therefore—they at length must every where decide the character of all authority; and better surely take it as their consent, than by their force. Better prepare those now unfitted for this trust, than waste in useless contests, what had otherwise been saved. Better take part with us, for man, than cling to the mouldering ruins of the past, and die inglorious victims of departing tyranny. He who would estimate the nature of the struggle, which otherwise must come, need only ask his heart the price at which it values the issues staked upon it. He who would estimate its result, must count the palaces, and then the hovels of the earth. He who would learn the origin and trace the progress in modern times, of this great controversy, now ready to be renewed, must seek its germ, its first expansion, its earliest fruits—and greatest promise, in the same events, amid which he traces the story of our country and our principles, their birth, their trials, and their fruits. There he will learn how impotent are all things that oppose themselves to the strong will and brave arm of man, roused to contend for sacred right. There will he see the utter worthlessness of all ficti-

ous things not based in truth and nature; the strength of settled principle, the power and majesty of real greatness.

In such a state as this, the actual power and influence, are, of all states, most likely to reside in fitting hands. There are no lasting distinctions but those which are purely personal; and to a great extent all such depend upon the man himself. Hence the necessity for constant effort,—and hence that effort on the part of all. Hence the paramount value of knowledge, and therefore, its wide diffusion,—for want of knowledge in such a state, is the only real and hopeless poverty; and of all knowledge that which is most practical is most esteemed. Hence too the universal communication of thought, by voice and pen; the cultivation of eloquence and taste;—the wide, if not controlling influence of the school, the rostrum, and the press. Hence also the grand and true progression in all real learning, and the disuse of all its trifles and vanities;—the wide diffusion of light,—the general spread of knowledge upon all, but especially all popular affairs;—the profound impulse communicated to the national spirit, the gradual approximation of all to the same lofty standard—and the intense stimulus to all, to exert in every department of life their best efforts, by the best methods, to the best results. To say that this picture is over drawn, is only to assert that we have not as yet fully perfected our social institutions, nor perfectly accomplished our immense plans and hopes. But who in a thousand years has gone so far, as we in fifty, in reducing all things that are factitious to the dust, and elevating real worth and virtue to their just rank;—and in furnishing the means of universal preparation for usefulness to all, and eminence to the most deserving. Well may we point to what we have already done, nor blush to own that we have still larger purposes, and confidence that daily grows to certainty, of ultimate complete success.

They who bewail the array and bitterness of parties,—their vile contentions,—their base ends, and their mean jealousies,—do but bewail the common frailty of our kind. This spirit is the rust of human systems;—better to brush it off by a free action, than that it eat into the heart. But who can truly charge ours, or any popular institutions with its evil influence, more than all besides? Who shall dare to say that the highest aristocracies upon earth and its most privileged classes are not more completely the slaves of all

personal and selfish influences—than the most untutored populace of all that ever they despised or sold? Where all may be misled by passion, or deceived by prejudice—all forms of government may some times be endangered even by their friends; and where none are free from weaknesses and frailties, and many prone to gross corruption—every state may be thus endangered also. But if reason teaches us one clear lesson, it is that all men's interests are safest in their own hands:—for in no age of blindness or corruption have any people yet willingly undone themselves;—but oh! how many have been undone by false and blinded rulers!—There are however many important respects in which the parties in free states differ from others. Here the fundamental principles of all,—those great principles which give distinctiveness to our whole system are always remarkably the same; they differ chiefly where honest differences do really exist, in their modes of application, their methods of exposition or their policy in daily use. But in all other states the opposing parties fight over the vitals of society itself;—and at this moment there is no land but ours, in which some thorough change in great and established principles of the governments themselves, is not involved every party contest. With us too, change even to the last degree of party heat, may be made in peace: for the right to change and even to abolish and reconstruct the government itself, is a right admitted and defined,—yea often exercised without commotion, and sometimes with much advantage. But in all governments differently constructed, every change is in itself a revolution; and if it be thorough, is often treason to propose,—and always reached through blood. From hence, as from the whole tenor of our principles, result the mild and equal spirit of our laws,—the humane character of all our public punishments,—the kindness, purity, and mildness of all our national manners and amusements. Where are our gladiatorial shows? Where the bloody combats of inferior animals to gratify a ferocious public sentiment? Or where the brutal pugilistic sports that still disgrace some states, not backward to celebrate their high civilization?—Here all are citizens, and therefore we neither murder nor degrade each other to feast the polluted eyes of bloody oligarchs, or a brutal populace, shouting for "*bread and games!*" All are equal in the law's eye, all have one privilege and right—and therefore cruel and unnatural

punishments are not required to protect the special claims of any. All have serious and weighty duties to perform,—and therefore the food of light and idle minds is foreign from us, and corrupting sports useless and despised. All know their duties,—their rights,—their dignity,—and therefore all know how to shun offence,—as well as to respect in others, the sacred treasures so precious to themselves. To utter all at once, our principles imply a state where man is free—and then enlightened.

Freedom is much,—knowledge perhaps not less,—but knowledge and freedom may be social evils without virtue. In themselves considered and simply in personal respects, freedom is good and knowledge is good. But as social elements neither is good for those on whom we act, if virtue do not direct them. Here too our whole principles are most peculiar;—and with characteristic singleness of purpose we have frankly periled all upon their truth. Religion is the only parent of virtue,—as God is the only source of every good. The will of God revealed to us, is the only sufficient guide to virtue, and the only solid basis of all true religion;—for God is the great object of all pure religion,—and the only author of all real virtue. Alas! how signally has every age illustrated by its errors these simple, but unknown truths. Men have won by their great deeds immortal praise, and yet have turned and worshipped stocks and stones!—Men have braved death in fearful and hideous shapes with stern composure, yet trembled at the low chirping of a bird, or the hoarse bellow of a stupid ox—which they called God! Nations have risen, even to the pinnacle of learning, elegance and all the arts,—for a brief space,—whose souls were dark as midnight on eternal things; and others have won release from grinding wrongs, and borne on their victorious flags, freedom to many lands,—upon whose hearts was graved, *there is no God!* And even they who knew the truth, with one accord mistook the way, by which alone it could most highly bless the world. For ages Bishops and Kings laid the united burden of their staves and sceptres upon the necks of men, and ground down the earth, calling aloud on order and religion. For ages still longer—black and tedious ages—he who proclaimed himself vicar of God, and therefore sovereign of the whole earth,—Bishop and King at once in his own person, and therefore Lord of all who were either, among

men,—sat with consuming wrath upon the world's heart and brain, smothering and maddening the human spirit;—with his two swords cleaving down, upon the right hand knowledge—upon the left freedom; with his two keys, locking up heaven, and opening hell; and with the fearful weight of his great tripple crown, crushing all hope, all peace, all virtue, into fine powder like the small dust of the balance! Yea all have erred:—for even in those better days, vouched safe to many prayers and struggles—how hard it is often to recognize in most of our father-lands—the humble apostles of our Lord, in mitred and titled wealth and pomp; and the mild, free and upright spirit of his word, in systems decreed by kings,—richly endowed by states,—and upheld by harsh, unreasonable and exclusive laws!

If man is free in view of earth—who shall bind his soul in view of heaven? If it be good to deprive the state of power to bind man's will and acts—except so far as clear necessity requires in temporal things,—that rule applies with far more force and clearness in spiritual things. For if the state desire an engine to oppress its people—none has been more near at hand or more effectual in every age than a state religion; or if a faction should desire to use the state for evil purposes, no principle resides in man, to which so many and so effectual appeals have been made, as to a perverted religious sentiment. Then if people or governments desire security,—let every state and all religion be always separate. Not that a state shall have no God; for then most surely will God reject that state. But as factions in the state are not the constitution—so let not sects in religion become the government. And as all political opinions are free, so also let all religious opinions be: but as all overt acts that endanger the public security, peace or order, are to be published tho' they be called political, and even proceed from settled principle—so also overt religious acts that threaten or hurt society are not to be allowed, altho' men say they have exclusive reference to God. Religion of all things may be most free,—because of all things, most of its varieties may well consist with public security,—which is the great end of law. And besides, the whole subject, so long as it confines itself to acts not hurtful to society,—is one, out of all human reach; except our minds and hearts should be seduced to embrace the established faith, by such temptations as corrupt all

religion, or forced to its profession by cruelties which prove that all religion is extinct; and in either case the cruelty or corruption is a gratuitous evil to society and useless to those employing it—as true religion suffers, and that established—gains but in name. In religion then, absolute freedom—and thorough independence of the state, is best for itself and safest for the world. The state must punish acts of open wrong, and suppress practices which hurt the public peace or decency; not because they are religious acts or practices—but because they are hurtful, indecent, or unjust. And so far there it is a great and sacred duty on every commonwealth, not fully understood by us,—because not often required to be performed; but which may yet demand a constant watchfulness and frequent interposition of the laws; for already are prisons erected in many portions of the country, under the name of religious houses, and much corruption of manners, and many crimes are creeping in under the pretext of religious profession. Beyond this, no government can interfere without great injury;—nor ours without the grossest usurpation of forbidden power. Religion is the strongest necessity of the human soul; no people have done without it,—none ever will. Rather than have no God, men worship things which they themselves see to be both corrupt and despicable. Sooner than be destitute of some settled faith, they will attempt to credit things too gross to be believed—and do things too cruel to be detailed. They who at any time have escaped this mighty influence, have done so only after having discovered the vile delusions, by which they had been misled, and the terrible pollution of those who seduced them into sin, professing to guide them to God; and even these have soon returned again submissive to the all pervading power of nature—which even while they pretended to cast off, they showed their proneness to obey, by every freak of superstition and credulity. All commonwealths may trust as implicitly that man must be religious, as that he is capable to rule himself. His rule may be unwise,—his religion false and corrupt; his rule may be subverted, and his religion itself destroyed. But as there is no better security on which to build a state, than to rely on his ability to rule himself; so there is no certainty so great and yet so safe that religion will exist as to rely on man's proneness to it. Here ends the duty of the state and here begins that of the church of God. The way is free and

wide; the heart of man, tost to and fro, is panting for that it never finds but in the peace of God;—and here the heavenly messenger is sent to teach, to guide, to quicken, sanctify and save. Here is our commonwealth, and there our church. Here is our agent to consolidate our freedom, to secure our rights, to guard our growing greatness, to watch and provide the means, whereby the humblest citizen may be prepared for honest competence, and real though obscure usefulness. But yonder is our home, our last and blessed abode, not built of men, but God;—and he, his word, his spirit, his messenger, his glorious grace, need little help of human governments far less their guidance,—titles—power and riches,—and least of all their glittering swords, or noisome dungeons to win our father's children to the skies. A stranger's voice they do not know; a stranger's steps they will not follow; and from the voice of man's authority, their spirits shrink—and at the sound of the armed tread of power, the timed bird of peace flies backward into heaven. Oh! that the wise would learn, that in their carnal wisdom, they are but fools with God; and the strong know that God's weakness is mightier than their strength!

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III. In estimating the probable influence upon the nations of the earth, of such a system as the one whose origin and development we have now faintly sketched,—a field of illimitable speculation is spread out before the mind. The mental history of the world has never yet been written. The true progress of human opinion, if it can ever be exhibited with tolerable accuracy, will be found to be one of the most striking and extraordinary, as it has been one of the most neglected branches of knowledge. The brother of Seneca in the pride of cold and skeptical philosophy, in the politest age of the world, spurned from his tribunal, as a mere question of useless words, that system of religious truth, which from that day to this has borne in one hand the destinies of the world that now is, and with the other taken fast hold of all the stupendous issues of that which is to come.—The feeble voice of an unknown monk, was heard in the silence of his narrow cell, far off amid the rude and sluggish people of the north; and the sleek and pampered ministers of ignorance and corruption, smiled in scorn, as they drew their purple robes around them, and set their heels more firmly on the dead con-

science of the universe they had enslaved. But a resistless might dwelt in that low whisper; and by and by it swelled into the loud cry of many nations cheering each other onward in the way of truth and knowledge.—A band of despised men, few and distantly seated almost beyond the pale of human fellowship, rose up in the sublime power of right, and uttered the simple cardinal truths of freedom and independence—while the world laughed in mockery—and its rulers gnashed their teeth in mortal hatred. To day that heroic company, is but just passed away; and already what thrones have fallen, what sceptres been broken, what victories won for bleeding liberty! Nay rather what secret habitation of cruelty and darkness has escaped wholly the entrance and the life-giving power of their sacred principles! Majestic power of sentiment and thought! Sublime force of human sympathy to propagate itself! When true and wise, and rightfully directed, resistless for all good: when evil or misguided, terrible for ill. A principle grand and uniform; yet oh! how much perverted, neglected or unknown!

Upon this principle alone, so far as direct national influence could be exerted, have we rested the hope of influencing for good, the nations of the world, through ours. We make no conquests. We bury the implements of blood deep from human sight, and weep when insupportable wrong forces us to dig them up. We abhor all aggressive war. We offer to mankind the light of our example; we lay before all people our simple principles. There is our story; let the wise read it. Here is its issue; let the hearts of men be glad as they behold. Time, that great witness for the truth, is doing his work with a rapidity and thoroughness, that ought to satisfy the most impatient,—to quicken the most sluggish. And every development of the state of free opinions throughout the earth, makes more and more manifest the close connexion of our history with their progress, and the growing influence of our spirit over their character. The spark that lighted up all the mighty revolutions of the last half century, was caught from our altar of '76. And though the flame thus kindled has sometimes threatened to consume the nations with its fearful and indiscriminate violence,—and been again and again extinguished in blood, yet even the excesses of liberty are fewer and less protracted than those of the cruel tyranny which always engenders them; and its final aspect, the most serene and

constant which society can possibly assume, will bless and repay the lands that bled for it, a thousand fold, for all their sufferings in such a cause. Yea within the narrow compass of those fifty years, even if liberty itself were deemed a curse to nations,—the contests which have been waged for it, and the spirit which has been engendered in their midst, have so thoroughly renovated all human things, that for this service alone every coming generation would rise up and bless our memory. The spirit of ancient evil, was too strong to be resisted by any spirit but that of liberty. If the strong man that unbound the nations, tore down some gorgeous palaces and shining temples, to make free passage for the enslaved to sally forth; or if he cooled the heated chains he could not rend, with some blood of kings; or if he trod with his mailed foot upon the carcasses of the blind and deaf herd of princes and their armed slaves, who rushed furiously to break themselves against him: men will forgive the stern physician, and the sharp remedies, when they remember that the dark spell of ages is at last broken—the madness of the nations, well nigh cured—and life from the dead entered into them. But these are most extreme admissions. For they who sow the wind, are in the nature of the case obliged to reap the whirlwind. And they to whom is left the single choice,—to perish, or to gather in and quell the storm, must put forth a strong arm and an unflinching courage.—We have taught this lesson to a world anxious to learn and practice it. Its first attempts have broken vile and corrupt states against each other, like the potter's worthless vessels. Its ripened skill, will settle all things which cannot and should not be shaken, upon foundations which will be removed no more forever.

It was not to have been expected that the world could long remain indifferent to the nature, or ignorant of the source of such new and mighty influences. On the one hand, all who hoped in the future, saw in our history the proof of what man could accomplish, and in our system the model towards which his highest efforts should be directed: while on the other, all who saw only danger in improvement, and ruin in the overthrow of ancient abuses, directed towards us an eye of jealous watchfulness, and increased in malice against us, as our influence for good augmented; until at length the overthrow of our institutions has become a settled point of that policy which their own preservation dictates. Nothing would be

easier than to prove that the anti-liberal party in Europe has desired our ruin from the very commencement of our national existence; and that for a number of years past, a large, influential and increasing portion of it, has actually plotted and contrived means to effect it. From the dawn of the American revolution to the present moment, there has flowed over Europe one incessant stream of falsehood and detraction in regard to this country, and all that is peculiar in our manners, institutions and social state, until at length the public mind is sunken into a condition of ignorance and prejudice towards us, at once mournful and amusing. At intervals, these clouds have been dispersed; and then the hearts of the people have broken forth in overpowering sympathy for us,—at the same moment that they have been maddened in convulsive efforts for themselves. And each successive throe becomes continually more violent than the one preceding it, as increasing knowledge gives increased power and urgency to the motives which actuate those who struggle for long with-held rights. This too, the rulers of the earth have learned; and therein they have perceived the necessity of stronger measures against us, in proportion as greater watchfulness became needful in the changed position or clearer aims of their own subjects. As long as general ignorance, a numerous police, a bloody code of punishments, and fierce and endless foreign wars were sufficient to make tolerably sure, their own seats upon their people's necks, slander of us was deemed enough to guard against the entrance of light from this quarter. But when the altered circumstances of the nations and the silent spread of the spirit which has worked so deeply of late in the souls of men, forced a change of their domestic policy, a corresponding change towards us is visible. At all times we have beheld a sleepless watchfulness on the part of foreign states to intrude into our political and social questions, at the very period, when they were most critical, and into the very questions that seemed to be most trying to our institutions; in so much that at different times, parties have been denounced as the Spanish, the French, and the British party, at several eventful periods of our history. At the present moment, there is a wide spread organization in this country, operating recklessly against the peace of the nation, the union of the states, and the integrity of the constitution, under the pretext of hostility to one of the domestic rela-

tions in the southern states; a party which is in all its spirit, aims, and sympathies, as well as in its origin, a foreign party, alien and hostile to the republic,—led by men, some of whom have affected shame for their country, others denounced and slandered it and its institutions, abroad,—and others received foreign treasure to support their enterprises. At the same time hundreds of thousands of foreigners are launched into the bosom of the nation,—many indeed worthy of a cordial reception, and able to repay by their virtues, the blessings they receive,—but multitudes of others driven out for crimes, or discharged from jails and poor-houses and sent hither at public charge and by public authority,—while still more are in total ignorance of all human knowledge, and especially of all that concerns the duties and privileges of freemen. From another quarter we see millions of money, and herds of foreign ecclesiasticks finding entrance into the land through all our ports; the money contributed by foreign princes, and people of a strange religion, avowedly to proselyte the nation to a system hostile to liberty; and the ecclesiasticks planting themselves over the country and seeking to engross the direction of public morals and general education,—while they confessedly receive their appointments, their authority, and their fantastic honours, from a foreign potentate, whose predecessors for thirteen centuries have denounced, as they say by the direct and infallible authority of God, every principle which is precious and peculiar to us! Here is indeed a fearful combination. The ignorance, the crimes, the superstition, the fanaticism, and the anti-social spirit of the age, united against our beloved country, and directed against its glory and its stability, if its not its very being, by the priests, oligarchs, and bigots of Europe, sustained by its press, its riches and its thrones. And as if to make full trial of us, to the last degree at once,—a portion of our own people seem ready to embrace each new absurdity; a portion of our public press to be misled by every wild extravagance; and a portion of the religious community itself to be imbued with strange disorder.

Never was there a moment when the nation was more imperatively called to manifest its clear comprehension of its great principles, and its thorough devotion to them. If indeed we know these things, blessed shall we be if we be found faithful to our fathers and to posterity, in so great a crisis. Let no man's heart fail,—let no

man's purpose waver; nor let any cast about for new expedients, as if the principles we have so highly praised, and the power we have in former days so signally put forth, were not sufficient for the present, and for all coming trials. Let us stand nobly by the great landmarks of our code, and make manifest the same courageous steadfastness in what is right, that sheds such lustre around our past career; and new triumphs and final security await us. Such a system as ours presents, from its very nature, as has already been shown, the utmost possible means of resisting evil influences from within; both as it is most dependent on the general will, and therefore most dear to the common heart, and because its capacity for self-adjustment is most perfect—and its centres of influence and security most multiplied; insomuch that it would be necessary that a great absolute majority of the whole, and a concurrent majority in every part should be corrupt and alienated from the great principles of the system itself, before it could be defeated in all its strong holds; and while even one remained, it might eventually redeem the whole. Nor is its capacity for resisting hurtful influences from without, when they come in the shape of open force, less decisive, or less favoured by the character and action of our whole principles and institutions. Powerless in aggressive war, which we repudiate, and which is foreign to all our habits and views,—if man can be impelled to irresistible energy in self defence, and human interests can be so arranged as to be out of the reach of foreign violence, that fortunate conjunction exists with us. Nay it exists fortified by the separate geographical position of the United States, with reference to the other great powers of the earth; and direct interference by force, already twice repelled, is at length become nearly hopeless, by reason of the greatness of the country itself. And it is well that it is so, in the present juncture. For connected with the portentous indications already pointed at, is the growth of another faction which contents itself, while others seek our ruin, with preaching to us, the sinfulness of self-defence. To such dreamers, if indeed they be deceived themselves, or traitors if they be not—there needs but this reply. As long as the Bible teaches us that the defence of our country, our liberties, and our mercies, is often a high christian duty to be performed under the guidance of the spirit of God; as long as history informs us that every nation which now en-

joys freedom, independence, the free spread of knowledge, or the unmolested practice of true religion, does so, only because God blessed the victorious arms of its valiant people upon the field of battle; as long as every monument around us most signally owned of heaven, is sprinkled with the life blood of our heroic ancestors;— we pity the honest errors, and despise the shallow guile of such as would thus bind us hand and foot, defenceless victims to a crowd of mortal foes, ourselves recreant to the loftiest destiny and the sublimest trust, ever committed to the hands of men !

But the evils which threaten us, from without, bear on their front, no hostile image. They come to us in forms so adapted to our condition, and veil themselves under pretexts so accordant with our common rights, that the nation has been slow to realise the greatness of the threatened danger, or the reality of the alleged conspiracy against its liberties. At length it begins to be awakened to the truth of its position, and before its open glance danger will flee away. Let the public sentiment be fully enlightened, roused and concentrated; let the laws have free course, so that they who come hither fugitives, or missionaries of evil, shall not be allowed to practice habits and follow courses suited only to the thralldom they have escaped; let the patriotic spirit of the country be thoroughly aroused and directed to the evils which threaten us from foreign parties at home, and foreign nations cast like deluges upon us; let the protestant and christian feeling of the whole republic be stirred up to arrest the swelling tide of dangerous and cruel superstition, and pour the streams of gospel purity over the unwashed multitudes who flock in all their defilement to our shores; let the school-master bestir himself in every corner of our land, and shed the light of knowledge upon the whole mass of human intelligence; let the free and noble spirit of our country have full scope, to transform the children of those sent to undo us, into enlightened champions of our sacred cause; in short let our principles have complete exercise, in proportion to the greatness of the present exigency, and the world will see that their transforming power is equal to their capacity for self adjustment, and their efficiency in resisting open violence. To day men may be Britons or Germans, strangers or barbarians to us. Tomorrow they are all Americans. The first generation born upon the soil, shall be a native generation; American in all its feelings,

principles and aims. And thus in the providence of God, that very portion of the human race, which could never have been controlled at a distance by our mind and spirit, is brought near to the fountain of influence, and transformed by its power into new beings, fit to enjoy and propagate blessings they were destined to subvert. Thus too, by the reactive power of truth, new entrance will be obtained for it into habitations of darkness where, else, it never could have found its way; until the very instruments of tyranny and superstition, shall become apostles of truth and liberty,—and the fetters with which they would have bound the free, be converted into implements with which to hew in pieces, every throne of wickedness, with all who set upon them.

There is one aspect of the relation of the United States to the great human family, and the possible influence of the American mind upon the entire race of man, which invests this whole subject with surprising magnitude. We behold the human race divided into three great families, which, however they may be again subdivided, preserve every where the characteristic which mark the respective descendants of Shem, Japhet, and Ham. In general terms it may be stated, that from the earliest dawn of knowledge up to a period not long preceding the commencement of the christian era, the first of these stems was principally used by God in promoting all the grand results which affected the whole race of man; and that to the family of Shem the world was not only chiefly indebted for all it possessed worth having for almost four thousand years of its existence, but that with comparatively small exceptions it was absolutely under its control, during the greater part of that long period. For the last two thousand years the stem of Japhet has been the depository of human excellence, power and grandeur; and it has steadily progressed from the rise of the Greek power until the present day, in the same degree that the race of Shem has declined, until its empire, whether moral or physical, it become absolute and undisputed—and every great and blessed possession its exclusive heritage.—Who can read in the dim future, the destiny of Ham? Shall it indeed be his hard lot to know a servitude to his brethren, that has no end nor mitigation? Or is it the will of God to retain for him, a final reign of unparalleled civilization, illustrious as it was long deferred? This at least is remarkable, that those portions of

the earth which seem from the progress of modern arts, manners, and refinement to be most indispensable to man, and to yield most abundantly, if not exclusively those productions which have become most valuable and important to all conditions of society, are precisely those which Ham alone can occupy, or to which at least, he is most congenial.

But what is striking to observe, in the posture of our country, is this. If God design in the latter days, great things for Ham, it must be manifest at a glance, that the position, the state, the relations of our country to this unhappy race, and to the lands most congenial to it, point out the United States, as the nursing mother of its destiny. Oh! what a recompense to virtue and humanity. To receive slaves, to give back freemen. To receive savages and heathen, and restore civilized and Christian men, laden with fruits, not the less precious, that they have been gathered in sorrow and bedewed with tears. To receive helpless individuals to whom the very idea of nationality is unknown, and out of them to construct the first elements, of what is now the grand desideratum of civilization, a great Hamite commonwealth in some tropical clime! What a bright and beneficent providence, that such results should flow exactly through that channel, where the very spirit and impulse which must at last control the world, should have been embibed even in the cradle, and absorbed into the blood, with the earliest national attempts of a race, destined it may be, to behold such stupendous revolutions in its condition.

But suppose it should be otherwise, and that the race of Japhet shall hold forever the mastery over his brethren, and control their destiny at will. Even then, the influence of our country in future ages would appear to be only increased, and the highth of glory to which its instrumentality may carry the fortunes of this renowned stem, beyond conception. At this moment the commerce of the world, and with it all exterior influence, is almost engrossed not only by a few kindred nations, but substantially by one other with ourselves,—both Japhetan, both protestant, both essentially sprung from the same illustrious original, amongst the subdivisions of their common stem—and both using the same noble speech, honoured throughout the earth for the great deeds it records, and blessed to man by the treasures it contains. What triumphs has not this

strangely glorious race already achieved; and what difficulties are beyond the compass of its present power? What land even now is ignorant of the Anglo-Saxon name? But oh! what wonders will that name have wrought, when Britain shall have become as free and just, as she is great and wise; and when we shall recount our acts by centuries instead of days!

It is an august subject of contemplation, to look back upon the series of great empires which have been thinly scattered through the track of past ages, and behold how each has in its course accomplished for man, its mighty though perhaps undesigned, or even unknown good; and then, laid aside by the same almighty hand that made it great for its own purposes, gradually melted back into the common mass of human littleness. From the empire of Nebuchadnezer to that of Napoleon, how immense has been the distance, and how diverse the work which they, and each intervening one,—the Median and Persian, the Greek, the Roman, and that of Charlemagne, have all performed, that the condition of human affairs might be precisely what it is this day? How stupendous have been the revolutions which were required before the many could be taught that the world was theirs; and the few be made to see that their claims to rule the bodies, and brutalize the minds, and kill the souls of men, were as horribly absurd as their own numbers were infinitely insignificant! How has this fearful and protracted contest, which has burned through such ages of strife, changed not only the agents and implements but the very theatre of its warfare, until it has left no spot of earth which has not been stained with its bloody track! Springing up with the empire of the Babylonians in the centre of Asia,—Cyrus with his Medes and Persians exposed it to the farthest verges of that nursery of mankind. Alexander transferred it into the fairest provinces of Africa, and drew it across the Hellespont into Europe. The stern soldiers of old Rome covered the earth with the shadow of their glory and their strength; and heaved up to the most northern frontiers of Europe, the empire, which under Charlemagne and Napoleon, only struggled to shake off the incumbent mass of corruption, ignorance and oppression which the barbarism of countless hoards of savages, and the superstition of centuries of apostasy had accumulated. At length northern Europe, a wilderness when this conflict had its origin, had

become the only theatre on which man struggled; and pushed, as has been exhibited in the early part of this discourse, the great victims of it across the atlantic, to build up here an impregnable strong hold, from which freedom, knowledge and religion, might turn back their streams, to fertilize again the parched regions consumed by so many and so great misfortunes.

From that hour the current of all things is changed. The tide has struck the pole; and now it rolls backward to the equator its resistless and sacred wave. Let the nations hail the coming waters; for verily the hour of their deliverance is come. The knell of tyranny is struck. The only Lord of men returns to claim his great and long abused heritage; and where his spirit is, there is peace and freedom.

For ourselves, if our course were already finished, our name, our example, our spirit, our mind would live forever to illuminate and cheer mankind. Upon the brightest page of the world's history would be recorded, as a divine episode amidst its bloody details, our surprising story; and all coming ages would blush or rejoice, as they found in it the image of their virtues and success, or the lasting condemnation of their cowardice and crimes. But as Greece gave her literature, and Rome her civilization to the world—it is ours to give it liberty. This vast continent is yet to be crowded from shore to shore with a free, educated, and virtuous population; and the banner of our republic wave over an empire unparalleled in the greatness of its extent, as unequalled in the wisdom, justice and humanity of its institutions. Our brethren of the races of Shem and Ham now weeping in our midst, or neglected around our wide frontiers, must yet rejoice under the shadow of our protection, and be repaid for sufferings too long protracted. Streams of blessings must issue from our land, to make the nations smile in the same prosperity, exult in the same freedom and light, and rejoice in the same divine Lord who has done all things for us. Yea vast and sublime is the work yet laid up in store for us; and peerless the glory dependent on its wise and faithful performance. And when it is done, what boots it afterwards, whether the God of nations shall continue to our country an interminable career of blessings and renown as one united people;—or whether this immense continent shall be studded with a hundred separate republics, all built

upon the foundations we have laid, all consecrating the principles we have made immortal, and all perpetuating the felicity which God has raised up our country to win and to illustrate?

To make any system attain its highest degree of developement and perfection, it is necessary that every particular portion of it should perform with exactness and regularity, its appropriate function. In the judgment of enlightened reason, nothing is small, nothing great, except relatively as it is effective upon all other results, or in turn affected by them. But especially in every social system, must it inevitably occur, that the perfect accomplishment of its ends, will depend on the degree in which every individual embraced in it, perfectly comprehends its scope, is thoroughly imbued with its spirit, and completely devoted to its propagation and defence. In such a case, failure could result only from the inherent evils of the system itself: while in all others, the best intentions and the amplest arrangements may be defeated by imperfect sympathy, or still worse by direct hostility, between the parts and the whole, or between one part and another.

But of all organizations, ours most imperatively demands this cordial action of the universal will, which is indeed its vital breath,—this complete and intelligent devotion of the popular affections, upon which its entire strength reposes. And who can exaggerate the dignity and grandeur of those motives which are set before the American people, and which urge us with constant importunity to be all that such a system requires, all that such a heritage, such a destiny, such mercies, such privileges demand! Every field of usefulness, happiness and greatness lies open before us, enticing every generous spirit to all good and noble enterprises. And whatever may be the theatre or nature of our pursuits, whether in private or public life, whether studious or practical, or however various or diversified—there is not one honest course approved of God, which will not conduct our patient and laborious steps, to competence and honour, at the same time that it obliges us to contribute to the common glory of our country, and the general welfare of our race. Happy people! Blessed country! Singular and sublime destiny!

But oh! let us evermore remember that all these paths are beset by manifold temptations; that these unprecedented mercies are all held by us as stewards of God, and as trustees for generations of generations, and so must be accounted for before earth and heaven; and that in the eye of God, and in the enlightened contemplation of this great and thrilling subject, we have set before us, but one end worthy of our efforts, or our regard, namely, to do good here—and to be blessed forever.

THE END.





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