

ADDRESS  
OF  
Hon. JOSEPH B. CUMMING

BEFORE THE  
Georgia Teachers' Association,

AT TOCCOA, GA.

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AUGUST 9, 1877.

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Such an audience as this, and the occasion which has brought it together, would suggest that no theme for an address would be appropriate except the profoundly interesting and highly important one of Education. To discuss any other topic than one of the many phases of this subject would seem to fall little short of impertinence. You have assembled here for a definite purpose, and to exchange views upon a given subject, not to be entertained by essays on miscellaneous themes; and no one who occupies any portion of your valuable time can be excused for introducing any other subject, however attractive. You have come together to reap and glean this particular field, not to wander at will, culling wild flowers along any pleasant path.

I have felt the pressure of this very proper restriction, and have preferred to prose rather than to transgress. I have chosen, therefore, one view of the general theme which engages your deliberations.

One situated as I am incurs this risk: the subject is new to my thoughts, it is very familiar to yours: views of it may bear to me the aspect of novelty, while to you they will appear trite; I may endeavor to establish by labored argument propositions which, to your mind, are axiomatic. If this turn out to be the case in this instance, then at least I shall have the consolation of knowing that no greater evil can ensue than the loss to you of the time which your courtesy has assigned to me, while I discuss, in a plain way, both in the abstract and with reference to Georgia, the relation of the State to Education.

Georgia, in the last few years, has done much towards shaking off her prejudices and indifference. But while I believe that most of us will live to see the time when our citizens will be divided in their views of the right, the expediency and the duty of the State to furnish general education by taxation, no more than they are now divided in their sentiments as to habeas corpus, yet at present there are thousands in the State who deny, or doubt, or disapprove. Any word which will tend to produce harmony of sentiment and concert of action on this great subject will be fitly spoken. Anything that is done firmly to establish an enlightened and progressive system of general education as a normal and matter of course part of our economy, is done in season. Whoever contributes in any degree to the confirming, improving and per-

fecting such system, will have a share in the magnificent result of increasing the wealth of the State, of enlarging the happiness of her people, and even of making her fair face still fairer; for intelligence cannot become general, and now unseen resources not be discovered; wealth cannot accumulate, and the uncultivated places not blossom and bloom; the heart and mind of man cannot be enlightened, and new beauties not spring up around his home and about his path.

One class of those who deny, or doubt, or disapprove, do so from a common and useful spirit of opposition to everything new. They are ultra conservatives. They look on the support of education by the State as a modern invasion of individual rights. I propose, by a few general observations, to show that these objectors are mistaken in fact; that there are few things older than the practice, to some extent, of States educating the citizen or subject. Whenever the State has needed a trained soldier, that State—whether a pure Democracy or an absolute monarch, like Louis XIV, who said of himself, "I am the State!"—has not hesitated to take the public money and educate the soldier; nor has it ever entered the mind of citizen or subject to question State education in this form; for, in such a case, the expediency of educating the soldier in the art of war has been apparent—the benefit to be derived by the State obvious and direct. Hence, preceding State schools for instruction in other duties of citizenship, we find military schools established and maintained by the State and approved by the people. What, too, is an established Church but an institution supported by the State for the education of the people? The fact that the instruction imparted by it is mainly religious affects not the principle. Through that part of history which we call the Middle Ages, almost all the intellectual food provided for the masses of Christendom came from the Church; and, dark as those ages were, they would have been overhung by a still blacker pall but for the feeble light which the teachings of the Church imparted to the masses of the people. It is true that the Church drew much of her revenues from the endowments of pious founders, but it may be laid down as a proposition substantially correct, that the Church was supported from the coffers of the State; and we wander not far from the truth when we say that in this way such education as the people had, the State provided. If we turn back further to those States whose records have come down to us least impaired, and to which the scholar turns most lovingly.

we find not a little of State education. It is true we do not, or at least I do not, know much about public schools in Greece or Rome, but it is quite certain that both Athens and Sparta had educational laws: that in Athens at least the orphans of soldiers killed in battle were educated at the public expense, and that all children in Sparta were taken from their parents and sent to public schools. But there was other education furnished to the people more or less directly at the public expense. Many prisoners brought Caesar and other conquerors home to Rome, whose ransom did the general coffers fill, and much public money acquired in this way, and in others, was at Rome, and in the cities of Greece, laid out in public buildings and in works of art. Was there no education in the masterpieces of statuary and architecture which adorned Athens and Rome? Was there nothing elevating in the constant presence of these embodiments of the beautiful and sublime? Who could look at the Acropolis and not feel the stirrings of his better nature? Who could live in the daily presence of the works of the masters—know them as familiarly as the tools of his trade, and not enter somewhat into the spirit of the master, and be lifted somewhat near the master? And was there no instruction to be had in the Agora, when Pericles discoursed of high themes there? And did not the masses who crowded the forum to hear Cicero become more enlightened while he philosophised? That this idea is not merely fanciful, let a little reflection on the populace of Rome determine. It was as keen, and sprightly, and quick-witted a people as ever lived—good judges of public men and public measures; people of ideas and taste withal—some of the commonest of them uttering sentiments which have come down through the ages. Think how superior they were to their neighbors—neighbors in time and space, in intelligence, in those mental and moral qualities which make a State great. How superior we must admit them, in many respects, to the uneducated masses of our own people. Take, for instance, their appreciation of oratory. Imagine a son of old Rome—some Gracchus, or Claudius, or Fabius, or Antony, ascending the rostrum in the forum at the Comitia, and treating this keen, wide awake, practical Roman audience to such a speech as your average Georgia politician dispenses from the stump. Imagine him, after the manner of our fellow citizen, shouting the whole of his speech from the exordium all through the peroration with the same monotonous vociferation, with sublime contempt for

grammar, ungraceful, awkward, violent in his gesticulation, slovenly in his pronunciation, and commonplace sadly in the matter and manner of his discourse generally. In other words, take our average Georgia "public man," put him in the forum, array him in a toga, let him talk Latin as badly as he talks English; let him bawl as lustily at the Comitia as he does at the barbecue; let him savour the soft Italian atmosphere as he does the free air of Georgia; in short, let him make such a speech on the public affairs of Rome as he is ready to favor you with whenever called for; let him give his Georgia manner and style to the inhabitants of the eternal city, and what fate would you expect for him? I am not accurately informed what treatment was usually accorded by a disgusted Roman audience to an intolerable bore; but such as it was, be sure our Georgia friend would have received it, full measure, heaped up, pressed down, and running over. Now, what was the cause of this superiority? Is it not to be found, to some degree at least, in the public education furnished, more or less directly, by the State to the Roman citizen—an education that came to him from the public assemblies, the public buildings, the works of art, which Consuls and Tribunes of the people, out of the public coffers, put before him, on his right hand and on his left?

But I cannot dwell on this part of my subject. I meant only to throw out some few observations in opposition to the idea entertained by many that this thing of education, furnished at the public expense, is a new invasion by Government of individual rights. I have endeavored to show, by a few general observations, that in remote times States have more or less directly furnished some sort of education to the people. I rather apprehend that the difference in this respect between the past and present is to be found in the greater regularity and uniformity of operation, and obviousness and directness of connection. Then the raising of money for public purposes was not so much as now a matter of rule. It was not, as now, when if a dollar of public money is spent for any purpose, it must be seen and known of all men. In other words, in these days State education requires an educational tax, and this question is thus thrust upon the notice of every man: "Ought the State to use one man's money for the education of another man's children?" And the fact is left out of view, that to some extent, with more or less directness, through various ways of spending the public money, civilized States have always done this thing.

The exact proposition of the objectors is this: The State has no right to take money from one man to educate another. This objection would be found most naturally with, and would come with most force from, the childless rich. Is it not met and answered, or do I only convince myself by the question—is not one man's blood spent for the benefit of another? War lowers upon the confines of the State; does the State hesitate to send any of her citizens to the front? The man taken may have very little at stake. The invading army can do him but little harm. His hut is safe in a sequestered glen of yon rugged mountain. The vine and the fig tree, beneath which his humble life would have passed, smooth and peaceful, would not be wasted by the spoiler. The scanty acres, sufficient for his frugal wants, would not be coveted by the conqueror. It is the waving fields of the rich that will be trampled. It is those abodes of wealth and luxury that will attract the plunderer. It is yon defenceless cities of the plain that will feel the shot and shell, and will vanish in fire and smoke; and he might witness their overthrow in the same security and with more indifference than Lot, looking from the mountain at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Successful invasion might sweep the land, one government be overthrown and another succeed, tribunes be cast down and a throne set up, and the even current of his life flow undisturbed, and the contented domestic circle be unbroken. But the State summons him to the frontier, and that the wealth of the land may be spared, there he must bleed and die. Shall the State have all the blood of this man to defend the property of the rich, and not have a pittance of the property of the rich to enlighten this man? But there are no wars. The commercial intercourse of the country occupies chief attention. High roads for travel and trade must be constructed and kept in order. Who is most interested in this subject, the poor man who has neither time nor money for travel, who goes not to market because he has no surplus to sell, and no money to buy withal; or the rich, who has his surplus crops or his merchandise to transport. And yet Georgia, at least, has always required the labor of every man alike for this purpose.

Leaving out of view for the present the great blessings she derives to herself from educating her citizens, and putting the question upon the lower ground of returning service for service, the State, or society—for under our system these are convertible terms—owes something to every citizen. She extracts everything of every one that her normal wants or



pressing emergencies demand. She is content with his sweat and his money, if they suffice; she will have his blood, if it is needed.

What will she give him in return? All are agreed that she owes him something—at least food and raiment, shelter and burial, if his own efforts cannot provide them. Witness our poor houses and potters' fields. Upon what principle does she owe these? Will it be said that humanity demands this much? Most true, humanity does demand this much. But upon what principle do the claims of humanity, if the State can respond to them at all, stop with the care of the body and leave the mind and soul to starve?

I only seek, in this dull, labored way, to advance a little from well established positions. These established positions I understand to be, that the State, or society, claims ordinary or extraordinary services from the citizen, even to his life, according to her exigencies; that the State, or society, has long admitted some counter claim on the part of the citizen, and has provided for the preservation and burial of the body. The position to which I move in advance of these established propositions is this: That no principle of law, of political ethics, or private rights, or of humanity, limits the action of the State to these admitted obligations; that the obligation to give what she does give is not in the nature of thing more binding than the obligation to give more; that her right to tax for those things for which she habitually taxes is not in principle better established than her right to tax for other things; that whether the State will sustain a liberal system of public instruction by taxation, is a question not of right, but of expediency, to be dealt with like any other matter of established right. This is a safe committal of the subject to the forum of enlightened expediency. Our people is an eminently safe people. They are calm, reasonable, conservative; they will deal with this question in practical wisdom; contests will be waged over it, as over every interesting subject of public policy. There will be your enthusiast, unable to see any proper appropriation of the public money except for educational purposes—who will believe in his heart that a liberal school system will be a panacea for all ills, political, social, financial; he will be at one end of the list. At the other will be your constitutional grumbler, who would neither give millions for defence nor a farthing for tribute—who conceives himself robbed whenever he pays his poll tax—who hates new things—who loves, if he loves anything, the abuses of



the past—who (that I may sum up in one sentence his depth of darkness on this subject), if he had to be taxed at all for education, would return to the old Inferior Court poor school system, of which more anon. But neither of these extremists will prevail. The people of Georgia have never failed in the long run to deal in wise moderation with every problem of State policy, and this one they will settle with due regard both to the progress of the age and the sacredness of private rights.

So much for the relation in the abstract of the State to education. What has been her relation historically to this subject? She has never been, since her independence of the crown, wholly apathetic and indifferent. What she has done or attempted may be considered under the two heads of the common schools and the University. I adopt the names which the laws gave them. Both these designations were inappropriate. There were no common schools until recently; there has never been a University.

First of the schools: In 1785 the Legislature, in a flaming preamble to one of its acts, set forth the importance of education. In 1820 it exempted real estate of academies from taxation. In 1821 it passed an act for the permanent endowment of academies and common schools. This act set apart \$500,000 of bank stock owned by the State and appropriated the dividends of it to free schools and academies. The yield from this source, if the stock remained intact, could not have been more than \$40,000 per annum. From that time until 1843, while hardly a session of the Legislature passed without some legislation on this subject, it was nothing but tinkering and botching a wretched and wholly inadequate system. The scope and purpose of such legislation was ordinarily to alter some trifling detail of a bad plan, such as to prescribe who should take the census of the children, whether the Justices of the Peace or some other person; what amount of bond should be given by the treasurer of the poor little fund; what form of oath should be taken by the half paid teachers, as if such changes could transform an extremely faulty system into a perfect one. Such were the efforts of the State until 1843. The act of 1843 codified, as it were, all the previous legislation on the subject. In the meantime, part of the bank stock—that of the Bank of Darien—had disappeared; and this act of December 27, 1843, set apart about \$260,000 of stock of the State Bank and of the Bank of Augusta. The yield from this source was about \$20,000 per

annum. These dividends, and such additional fund as the Justices of the Inferior Courts might levy by taxation on the recommendation of the grand juries of their respective counties, composed the educational fund. Most of us can remember how reluctantly such a tax was laid, how small it was, how little it swelled the pittance derived from the State, how contemptible was the aggregate amount.

Inadequate as it was, it was administered honestly but not wisely. The stewards of it were the Justices of the Inferior Court. That respectable magistracy was in their time overwhelmed with gratuitous services to the public. They were Pontifices Maximi, or chief bridge builders; they managed the roads, the finances, the public buildings, the jail, the poor. They were a Court of Common Law, and the Court of Ordinary, and a Criminal Court, for the trial of felonies among negroes. A more patriotic set of men no country could show, but there were not selected ordinarily with reference to any special enlightenment on the subject of education. They meant well, doubtless, and they managed the educational interests of their counties not much worse than they tried law cases, but a good deal worse than they made roads and bridges.

The fund thus administered by these respectable gentlemen, was from the time of its creation, in 1821, until 1840, known indifferently to the law as the free school fund, the common school fund, and the poor school fund. There never was any appropriateness in the name of common school—the schools which, by its feeble aid, “languishing did live,” were not common to the children of the State. In 1840, some legislator, with an eye to the eternal fitness of things, had the name made to conform to the thing, and thenceforward by law it was, what it had always been in fact, in more senses than one, the “Poor School Fund.” This sapient legislator would have done well to disregard absolute symmetry in this respect. He dealt a serious blow to the already sickly system. Without this name, it had already too many distasteful features for the poor. In fact, under this system, education—which, in its own right, is associated with ideas of dignity and ennoblement—presented itself to those to be benefitted by it in the guise of social inferiority. The act of December 22, 1828, in so many words, made “extreme indigence” the qualification of admission to these schools. It had for the parent or the child of spirit, the objection of charity given almost contemptuously. It was presented as one of the branches of

pauperism; it stood in the minds of men on the same footing with the poor house; it smelt of broken victuals. Education acquired in this way was at too great a cost to natural and respectable feelings of the human heart, and doubtless many a parent preferred for his child, and many a child preferred for himself, perhaps with false but insurmountable pride, ignorance and equality, rather than "the three R's" with social inferiority. The teachers themselves did not wholly escape the shabbiness of the system. They were miserably compensated, and the pittance they received was paid them only after their oath that they had done their simple duty. The whole system was a poor one, based upon fundamental errors. As much was done as could be, by giving it degrading names, and throwing around it an atmosphere of contempt and meanness, to make it as unattractive as possible, it is not strange that it accomplished little or no good. The best that can be said of it is that it showed that the great heart of our mother was burdened with solicitude for her children and could not rest. She must be doing something for them, albeit ineffectually and foolishly.

In 1850 the benefits of the system, thitherto confined to the poor, were extended in theory to all alike; practically, the poor children had the preference. This was an important step in the right direction. It was at least a partial recognition by the State of her duty to supply education to all her children. This change of theory, and the addition, under certain restrictions, of the net earnings of the State Road to the educational fund, brings the school system down to what I shall call its Modern History, that history commencing with the Constitution of 1868.

Let us now turn to the "University." The act of 1785, before referred to, was "An act for the more full and complete establishment of a public seat of learning in this State." The language of the preamble is so full of grand expectations that I recite it, and let it speak for itself:

"As it is the distinguishing happiness of free government that civil order should be the result of choice and not necessity, and the common wishes of the people become the laws of the land, their public prosperity, and even existence, very much depends upon suitably forming the minds and morals of their citizens. When the minds of the people in general are viciously disposed and unprincipled, and their conduct disorderly, a free government will be attended with greater confusions, and evils more horrid than the wild, un-

cultivated state of nature. It can only be happy where the public principles and opinions are properly directed, and their manners regulated. This is an influence beyond the stretch of laws and punishments, and can be claimed only by religion and education. It should, therefore, be among the first objects of those who wish well to the national prosperity to encourage and support the principles of religion and morality, and early to place the youth under the forming hand of society, that by instruction they may be moulded to the love of virtue and good order. Sending them abroad to other countries for their education will not answer these purposes, is too humiliating an acknowledgement of the ignorance or inferiority of our own, and will always be the cause of so great foreign attachments, that upon principles of policy it is inadmissible.

"This country, in the times of our common danger and distress, found such security in the principles and abilities which wise regulations had before established in the minds of our countrymen, that our present happiness, joined to the pleasing prospects, should conspire to make us feel ourselves under the strongest obligation to form the youth, the rising hope of our land, to render the like glorious and essential services to our country.

"And whereas, for the great purpose of internal education, divers allotments of land have at different times been made, particularly by the Legislature at their session in July, 1783, and February, 1784, all of which may be comprehended and made the basis of one general and complete establishment: Therefore enacted."

What rolling sentences! What magnificent expectations! What immense superiority over all foreign institutions of learning is foreshadowed! As we read we begin to feel almost sorry for the departing glories of Oxford and Cambridge waning before this one general and complete establishment. All this magniloquence of the preamble rolling in our ears conjures up before us nothing less than Salamanca, with its 12,000 students, and Bologna, with its 13,000. The lame and impotent conclusion was Franklin College. Following this tremendous flourish there was, through a long series of years, any quantity of legislation in reference to the "University," but it was all petty and barren of good results. It was mainly, from time to time, to increase or diminish the number of trustees, to prescribe the time of meeting of the *Senatus Academicus*, to perfect titles of purchasers of the

University lands. There was enough of this patching and tinkering to keep the Legislature in remembrance that they had a University, so-called; but it did not advance that institution one step nearer the position arrogated to it by its high sounding name. Silver and gold for this beggar, sitting at the beautiful gate of learning, the State had none, but such as she had—trustees—freely gave she unto it. To look through the legislation of this subject of the "University," one could hardly escape the conviction that the Legislature thought—its views fluctuating between giving and taking away—that Franklin College was to be made what the preamble to the act of 1785 contemplated, "the one general and complete establishment" of learning, by the addition and subtraction of trustees, and that the cause of advanced learning was fixed on a firm foundation when the trustees assembled in august senatus academicus. Little had this legislation to do with that, without which there could be no improvement—money. When it could spare time enough from making and unmaking trustees, the Legislature, on two occasions, loaned the "University" \$5,000 and \$10,000, having good care to secure the repayment. The permanent endowment became in 1821 \$8,000 per annum, less than one-third of the sum now raised annually by Richmond county to suppliment the State aid to her common schools. Not much could be expected, of course, from such an institution. It was in vain that it had honorable and learned and zealous professors. Dependent for his support upon private tuition, it had to debase its curriculum and lower its standard so far that none inclined to apply should be rejected, and none ever admitted should thereafter be cast out. The consequence was inevitable. The instruction it imparted was that of a tolerable academy, and the degree it conferred alike on the proficient and the unlearned had neither value nor honor. I do not mean to say that there are not many ripe scholars among the alumni; but I do say that its curriculum and its standard were not calculated to make scholars. It would be more agreeable to myself, and doubtless more popular among my hearers, to speak of the "University" in different terms. But we are dealing with this subject as men seeking to improve. We shall not improve while we make that which is unworthy the subject of commendation. But I do not speak of the Franklin College of the present hour. I confess my ignorance of its actual condition. I trust that there have been improvements of which I have not heard.



So much for history. We are now confronted with the immediate present. What shall we do? Fortunately, we have not now to commence in this consideration with first principles. The Constitution of the State, the course of legislation under it, and, more important still, public opinion, recognize the fact that the State must foster a system of general and advanced education. It is no longer an answer to the advocacy of such measures that they require taxation. So do Courts and the administration of civil and criminal law; but no one dreams of closing the Courts on this account. Public opinion is prepared to recognize that the sustaining a liberal system of education is a legitimate and desirable exercise of the powers of government. How shall this power be exercised in Georgia? At your invitation, I give my crude views for what they are worth.

I would say: First, The State should furnish directly a system of primary schools, as free and as universal as wide air. The sum necessary for this branch of the system should be appropriated directly from the Treasury of the State. The primary schools should be recognized as one of the prime necessities of the State—neither subject to the apathy or prejudices of local interests, nor dependent upon the fluctuations of particular funds. Right here I would say that I would divorce the fortunes of education from those of circuses and the retail of liquor, which are now wedded by our law. It is a most unnatural alliance. I am assailing neither the retail of liquor nor the exhibitions of the circus and of negro minstrels; but it is rather a fantastic result of our legislation, that its direct tendency is to make the friends of education desire the spread of bar-rooms and welcome the coming of a clown as a great boon.

By common consent, it seems to be agreed that the studies in these primary schools shall be reading, writing and arithmetic; but, as I shall presently show, I would have this matter regulated by the University—the University of the future. But, university or no university, I would have as a part of this primary instruction, presentation in simple narratives of the characters of great and good men and women. This primary department is the only part of the system sure to reach every child; and I would give him, before he goes out into this common-place world, a higher ideal of humanity than he will be apt to encounter in his actual experience—not omitting from my sketches those glorious old heathens who, however much theologians may be puzzled to locate their



departed spirits, played here in the flesh grand roles of virtue and true greatness. In this way ingenuous youth might be led to lift his eyes to better models than the small men, to whom it is the disgusting practice of the times to accord cheap apotheosis.

The practical qualification of the beneficiaries of this part of the system would be a minimum age. No better can be devised. As a rule, children reaching a certain age are capable of receiving corresponding instruction. In the interest of the little things, I would not have the minimum age too low. Between the universal primary schools at one extreme of the system and the University at the other, I would have too other grades of schools, the admission to each grade to be restricted by examination and by a minimum of age—lack of proficiency or lack of age to exclude. I would have this minimum of age so low that no bright child should run the risk of staying out of school altogether, or in a lower department, which he had already mastered. These two intermediate grades, also, like every part of the system, I would have supported by the State, but these two by that portion of the political State which acts through the counties. The primary department is universal; the census determines the number of its beneficiaries. The second and third grades will each grow smaller than the preceding, and their numbers will not be so easily ascertainable in large areas. By the time the second grade is reached many will have dropped out from various causes. Not least among them will be the discovery, among the children of the rich and poor alike, that many have taken in all that their minds can hold. In the condition of the poor—the inequality of which is of God's ordinance, and which human institutions cannot wholly remove—many a bright little scholar, having received his quantum of the rudiments, must come even now to the work of life. His services are needed to take care of the little brothers and sisters, or his puny efforts may be valuable in weeding the small garden or in tending yon scanty flock. This general cause of depletion of the schools will operate more forcibly in each higher grade. The workshop, the store, and the farm will make inroads upon the ranks of scholars, and the particular effects of these causes can be best measured and provided for by local authorities. As, too, these higher grades are less a matter of necessity than the primary, I would leave the system as to them more flexible and more dependent upon the fluctuations of local prosperity.

As I would have the broad base, the primary schools, supported directly by the State, so also with the apex, the University. I would have a University in its true sense, with its college of literature and its colleges of law, medicine and philosophy, meaning by the last the sciences; should have it not only a University, but one of a high order, if good professors, selected without favoritism and fairly paid, could make it so. It should be the fountain of instruction, from which streams should flow all through the educational system. It should license the teachers; it should prescribe the curriculum of the schools. This latter duty was, under our old system, performed by the Justices of the Inferior Court. This was ludicrously absurd. Is it much better when it is left as it now is, in many instances, to county officers, selected without reference to fitness for this thing? The weakness of the system, apart from its poverty, has been in the past, that it expected the performance of a special act as an incident of offices having no reference to it, whereas it is a high and difficult specialty, to be performed, if at all well, by those whose specialty it is.

The State of Georgia is a great country. I know that love of country is a sentiment most apt to mislead. Not least among its provisions for human happiness, Providence has ordered that to each man that land on which his eyes have first opened, and upon which ordinarily they will last close, shall be to him the happiest and best of earth.

“The shuddering tenant of the frozen zone  
Boldly proclaims that happiest spot his own;  
Extols the treasures of his stormy seas,  
And his long nights of revelry and ease.  
The naked negro, panting at the Line,  
Boasts of his golden sands and palmy wine;  
Basks in the glare, or stems the tepid wave.  
And thanks his gods for all the good they gave.  
Such is the patriot’s boast, where’er we roam,  
His first best country is at home.”

There is on the West coast of Iceland, about ten miles from it, a group of islands called the Westman Isles. They rise 900 feet of perpendicular rock out of the stormiest sea that rolls. The only inhabited one of the group—Heimaey—does not contain ten square miles. Not a tree can rear its head from the barren rock, or could withstand the unceasing

gale. No verdure is there no nourish flock or herd. The food of the inhabitants is fish and the flesh and eggs of sea birds. This unwholesome diet slays their little ones with a slaughter almost as general as King Herod's. No harbor indents that iron-bound coast save the narrow crater of an extinct volcano. Not more than twice a year can any craft leave or approach those storm-swept cliffs. There the few inhabitants live and die in almost absolute isolation, in a dreary waste of rocks and waters, a desolation of wind and storm; and yet, to them, it is "that happiest spot on earth." In 1627 one of the few calm days vouchsafed to that stormy coast came fraught with dire disaster to those poor islanders. A vessel of Algerine pirates, cruising these seas, swept away all the inhabitants of Heimaey. Most of them died in captivity. The survivors, few in number, ransomed by the King of Denmark, having the whole world to choose from, impelled by that universal feeling, love of country, preferred their desolate rock to all other parts of the earth, and thither they returned.

Notwithstanding such warning as this against the blinding effect of love of home, I think I may reasonably say that Georgians have a heaven-favored land. In extent, an empire; in natural characteristics of endless variety; in capabilities for the future of boundless promise. One can within her borders breathe the bracing atmosphere of the mountains, and be fanned by the soft airs coming up from the not distant tropics. Great rivers flow through her wide territory, and the boundless ocean receives them at her own doors. Her fertile plains wave with plentiful harvests; her hills are covered with priceless timber, and the sides of her mountains barely conceal the rich mines they hold. What may we not expect from such a land when universal enlightenment shall cover it as with a mantle, and the mind of knowledge shall inform, the eye of science scrutinize, and the hand of taste adorn?





