EULOGY

ON THE

LIFE AND SERVICES

OF

HENRY CLAY,

DELIVERED BY

JAMES V. BROOKE, Esq.

IN WARRENTON, VIRGINIA,

On Saturday, July 31st, 1852.

BALTIMORE:
PRINTED BY JOHN MURPHY & CO.
No. 178 Market Street.
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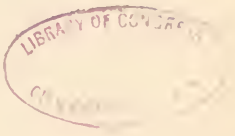

BALTIMORE:

PRINTED BY JOHN MURPHY & CO.

No. 178 *Market Street.*

1852.

Warrenton, *August* 3, 1852.

Dear Sir:

Having listened with deep and lively interest to your eloquent address, delivered on Saturday last, on the Life and Public Services of Mr. Clay, and convinced that it deserves a place where its merits may be more extensively known and appreciated, a sense of justice to yourself prompts us to ask of you, for ourselves and others, a copy of the same for publication. Hoping that the request will be favorably considered, we remain,

Your fellow-citizens,

Thos. M. Monroe,
Wm. F. Phillips, Jr.
John S. Byrne,
Marshall T. Smith,
A. D. Pollock,
James F. Forbes,
Wm. N. Bispham, &c. &c.

To James V. Brooke, Esq.

Warrenton, *August* 3, 1852.

Gentlemen:

Your favor of this date, in which you honor me with a request for "a copy of my address delivered on Saturday last, on the Life and Public Services of Mr. Clay;" has been handed me. While I am conscious that I fell far short in that address, of doing justice to the exalted worth and eminent services of the patriot and statesman who formed its subject, I cheerfully comply with your request. In doing so, however, I defer rather to your *wishes* than to the *reasons* which you give for making it.

With esteem, your friend,

Jas. V. Brooke.

To Messrs. Thomas M. Monroe, and others.

Eulogy on Henry Clay.

Time marks his path with ruins. The crumbling arch and tottering column, the ivy-mantled tower and deserted temple, forms of things once beautiful and grand, that moulder to decay—are but the trophies which this destroyer scatters from his triumphal car. Unresisted and irresistible, he rushes onward, bearing down in his progress all that is glorious in the achievements of human art, and laughing to scorn those monuments of man's creative skill which seem most proudly to defy his power.

Death, more relentless still, drives the plough-share of ruin deep into the broad bosom of Humanity itself. Manhood's prime, the gentler grace of womanhood, and infancy's soft sweetness—the brightest shapes in which immortal wisdom stands shadowed forth to mortal eyes—sink each in turn before his withering approach, and the earth rings hollow with the myriad graves that sepulchre his victims. Yea, oftentimes before the fabric reared by his own hand has yielded to the assaults of Vandal time, we behold the mighty architect himself droop to the dust, and rise no more.

And can it be that while *decay* is written upon all the works of nature and of art alike, Man, god-like man, stamped as he is with the impress of his Divine original, shall be the most fleeting of them all? No, never, never! The hand of revelation has thrown back the veil that hides the future, and brought the immortality of man to light; and we look upon him as a flower destined to perish hence, only that he may renew his being in another and eternal sphere.

> "Our proudest monuments no more
> May rise to meet the sky;
> The stately capitol o'erthrown
> Low in the dust may lie;
> But mind, sublime above the wreck,
> Immortal, cannot die."

The only thing like death which man can know, is to be forgotten by the generations that succeed him—to fade from the remembrance of mankind like a passing cloud—to vanish from the earth and leave no memorial to survive him. But even this much of death the great and good can never suffer. The "deep, damp vault" may claim its prey; but even as the casket moulders into dust, the hand of fame will snatch the

jewel from the grave and enshrine it in the great temple of a world's memory, there to shine forever. Thus the eloquence of a Tully echoes freshly from the ruins of the Forum; and the name of Pericles will be uttered with pride when the Parthenon shall no longer throw its swan-like shadow upon the dark waters of the Saronic gulf.

Even the *tomb* of departed greatness becomes a treasure-house of valuable lessons. From amid the gloom and shadows that shroud death's vaulted chambers, there oftentimes flash out upon the world bright gleams of instructive truth, of more than Delphic wisdom. The character which shone with imperfect lustre through the haze of time, becomes refulgent in the broad light of eternity, and the example, impotent of good before, gathers immortal energy from the grave.

Around such a monitor, fellow-citizens, are we this day gathered. The volume of a well written life has at last been closed. A brilliant star hath shot from the firmament of America's living greatness and gone darkling into night. The stern edict of an inevitable destiny has been uttered, and Henry Clay, the great, the wise, the patriotic, is no more! On the 30th day of June last past, in the seventy-sixth year of his age and of his country's independence, calmly and peacefully he breathed his spirit forth, and slept.

That form of more than Roman majesty towers no more amongst us. That voice whose every tone was music, has echoed for the last time along the corridors of your capitol. That eagle eye, beaming with the brightness of the genius that burned within, has thrown its parting glance upon the beautiful of earth, and closed in death.

> "Now is the stately column broke,
> The beacon light is quenched in smoke,
> The trumpet's silver sound is still;
> The warder silent on the hill."

But we come not to mourn the mighty dead. He fell when age had ripened him for the grave. He fell when the current of life was ebbing and flowing feebly in its well-worn channel. He fell, but not until he had wreathed his fame around the very pillars of old Time. He died, but it was as the Christian only dies, with the tranquillity of an undaunted courage upon his brow, and the power of an unshaken faith within his heart. "*After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.*" The night-winds that sigh above his sepulchre, but echo the deep utterance of a general sorrow; and the early zephyr scatters upon his tomb the dew-drop glistening in the eye of morning, fit emblem of a nation's tears.

To meditate for a while together upon the genius and character of Henry Clay—to unfold before us the map of his eventful life—and to contemplate with pride those elements of

moral and intellectual greatness, which invested his nature as with a robe of living light, these are the motives which have brought us here to-day—motives high, honorable, worthy of American citizens, worthy of freemen.

Elevated, fellow-citizens, to the position I occupy by the unmerited confidence of your committee, I trust I am neither insensible to the honor conferred nor to the obligations imposed upon me. I stand before you to-day, not the representative of a party, nor aiming at party ends, but of a people, willing to do honor to one who has done honor to the name of American and of Man. My theme is a national one, and as such I mean to consider it. And if, from the necessity of the case, the current of my remarks shall lead me hard by the confines of party, in the opinion of some, I beg of them to pardon me, and to believe that nothing is farther from my wish than to make this mellowed scene an occasion for awakening jealousies, over which, I trust, the shadow of the cypress has fallen with a becalming influence.

Nor do I mean to abandon the true province of Eulogy. It, like Biography and History, is but a voice through which the past speaks to the present and the future. The silent sleeper hears not its sound. Alike indifferent to him are the gentle accents of the world's approval or the deep mutterings of its censure. It is for those upon whom the lesson of example or of warning may tell for good, that memory unlocks the cabinet of finished time, and points us to those monuments of human greatness or of human folly that here and there rise above the common surface of the world's affairs.

Viewed in this light, that species of eulogy which draws no confirmation from the facts of history and biography, is to all intents and purposes an instrument of ill. It may exalt its subjects, but it will depress mankind. It may throw a tinsel glory upon *mediocrity*, but even thus will it withdraw the aspiring gaze of young ambition from the heights of greatness, and fix it upon attainments, which, though meaner, seem enough for fame.

Remembering these things, I shall endeavor in this address, to hold the mirror up to truth, assured that in the lineaments which it reflects we shall find something to praise, much to admire, and more to love.

On the 12th day of April, 1777, (O. S.) Henry Clay was born, in the county of Hanover, in our own Commonwealth. The circumstances which marked his natal hour were propitious to greatness. His native county had already been rendered famous by the eloquence of a Patrick Henry, his native State was even then illustrious as the mother of warriors and statesmen; and the stars which shone above his cradle were the planets of the Revolution—planets upon which our eyes now

delight to dwell, as we behold them rolling far up the ecliptic of renown. Thus his moral horoscope was bright and cheering.

But otherwise the coincidents of his birth and boyhood were far less favorable. His father, who was a Baptist clergyman, died when HENRY CLAY was but four years of age. He was thus deprived of those advantages which are found in the daily intercourse between father and son, and the consequent influence of paternal example in forming the character and guarding the impressions of youth. It is true that this loss was greatly lessened by the care and counsels of a mother eminently qualified to evoke and establish those principles of integrity and manly worth which adorned so conspicuously his after life. The lessons received from her doubtless dwelt in his memory and nestled about his heart; for when the dews of death were stealing over his forehead and the outer world was growing dim in the distance, that sainted image floated before his failing vision, and his lips breathed tenderly her long unuttered name.

Left at that tender age, the fifth of seven children, to the care of a mother whose circumstances were extremely limited, HENRY CLAY was forced to content himself with the acquisition of those humbler branches of learning which form the nucleus of education; and abandoning all hope of pursuing a regular course of study, devoted his energies to the labors of the field—labors perhaps not entirely congenial to his spirit, but sweetened by the consciousness of a holy duty discharged to his surviving parent.

Following the career of HENRY CLAY a little further, we find him a clerk in a small retail store in the city of Richmond. A few years later, we behold him, a boy of fifteen years of age, engaged in the office of the Court of Chancery in that city. His modesty and intelligence attract the attention of distinguished friends, and under their auspices he undertakes the study of the law. In the twentieth year of his age he is licensed to practice his profession, and takes his departure for the far off West, whither his mother, having married a second time, had already preceded him. He settles in Lexington, Kentucky, (to use his own expressive language,) "without patrons, without the favor of countenance of the great or opulent, without the means of paying his weekly board, and in the midst of a bar uncommonly distinguished by eminent members."

Tell me, ye who know not the indomitable spirit of genius, when born under the kindly tendencies of republicanism, tell me, what shall be the destiny of this youth, who thus goes forth to buffet the rude storm of life, unfriended and alone? Wielding no influence but the power of an energetic will, and possessed of no heritage but the talents which God has given him, can his pathway from the cradle to the tomb be otherwise

than humble and obscure? Must it not be his to be swallowed up in the ever-whirling vortex of human life, and pass away from earth almost as unobserved as the leaf that the autumn wind shakes from the forest?

Your conjectures, formed on the basis of common probabilities, would be unfavorable. But to him who has explored the hidden springs of intellectual greatness—to him who has studied, in the light of reason and experience, the power of republican institutions in developing the germ of genius—it will seem no marvel that the "Mill-boy of the Slashes" is ere long discovered climbing with giant strides

> "The height where Fame's proud temple shines afar."

Although cramped by adverse circumstances, the genius of Mr. CLAY was not long in displaying itself.

> "Unlike our common sun, whose gradual ray
> Expands from twilight to intenser day,
> His blaze broke forth, at once, in full meridian sway."

A brilliant speech in the Village Debating Society attracted public attention to the youthful stranger. Observation ripened into confidence, and he who but a while before gloated over the sight of a fifteen shilling fee as a vision too enchanting to be real, rushed at once into a respectable and lucrative practice.

Where was the secret of such unexampled success in the midst of such formidable competition? It could not have been attributable to his superiority in professional learning, because he had not yet passed through the "lucubrationes viginti annorum," nor fathomed the almost bottomless depths of legal science. It could not have been found in legal acumen and research, in familiarity with authority and precedent, for in these respects he could not have stood upon an equality with a Breckenridge, a Nicholas, a Murray, and others, who had grown grey in ministering at the altar of justice. No, the secret was not here. Then where was it? I answer, it was in his thorough acquaintance with the springs of human sympathy; it was in his power over the emotions of his auditors; it was in the skill with which he could summon feeling to the aid of thought; it was in the heaven-inspired faculty of eloquence, upon which thousands have since hung enraptured, as if enchanted by some magic spell. There was the secret.

But the possession of talents of such an order forbade a complete dedication of his time and attention to the profession which he had adopted. Popular favor soon opened up before him a new field for their exercise. His able advocacy of post-natl emancipation—his effective opposition to the alien and sedition laws—and his conspicuous agency in electing Mr. Jefferson—had already marked him, to some extent, as a politician, and in 1803, during his absence, and (as he informs us) without his

knowledge or previous consent, he was elected by a large majority to represent his county in the General Assembly of Kentucky.

Can it be necessary for me, before an American audience, to follow step by step a life which from this point becomes merged and identified with the political history of our country? I might speak of him as a Senator of the United States at thirty years of age; as Speaker of the House of Representatives at thirty-four; of his eloquence and patriotic advocacy of the war of 1812; of the ability which he manifested as a negotiator at Ghent in 1814; of his struggles in behalf of South American independence in 1818 and 1820, and of the liberties of Greece in 1824; of his distinguished services while Secretary of State; and of his ardent and long-continued devotion to those measures which distinguish one of the leading political parties of the country. But I forbear. Some of these circumstances, and others of his personal history, I may touch upon; but I will not attempt to consider them all, nor either of them perhaps, as fully as I might.

The great theatre upon which Mr. Clay has played so important and conspicuous a part, is one peculiar to free governments. Beneath the iron sway of despotism, and the restrictions which it imposes upon individual sentiment or popular combinations, parties are little likely to be found. Where gyves and fetters are the unanswerable arguments for unanimity, there are not apt to be more than one set of sentiments afloat—those which bend to the pride of power and circle about the throne. There the prominent politician becomes either a *courtier* or a *rebel*, and the path he travels terminates either in the *palace* or the *prison*, as it coincides with or diverges from the wiry track of State. Not so with governments reared upon principles congenial to man's nature. They feel their dependence upon the power of public opinion, and therefore break the fetters which restrict its expression; and wherever Republicanism has thus appeared, an invariable result has been the formation of political parties, embodying variant sentiments, and each striving to incorporate its own into the public policy of the country, not by sword and bayonet, but through the grand yet simple machinery of the ballot-box.

And if parties must exist under circumstances of this kind, so will there be leaders of those parties—men to whom the great mass will look for the exposition and vindication of their cherished principles, and whose views will to a great extent be regarded as pregnant with authority and weight. Nor is such an homage inconsistent with the true dignity of freemen. It is not the fruit of fear, but of love—not the offspring of education, but the outgushing of nature's fountain—not the reluctant tribute of servility, but the cheerful offering of humanity itself, glorying in its own exaltation and doing honor to its own greatness.

How vast an engine, fellow-citizens, either for weal or woe, does every free State possess in the pervading influence of its leading politicians! How terrible the power of corruption, when clothed with the drapery of genius and wielding the sceptre of party feeling! How benignant the tendencies of patriotism and virtue,

when they sit enthroned over the impulsive powers of a noble heart, and chain in sweet subjection the energies of an indomitable will!

Mr. Clay was emphatically a party leader. Nature made him a Republican, and indeed I know not in what other field the peculiar talents with which she endowed him could have been so efficiently employed, as the Republican arena of party competition. For nearly half a century the acknowledged head of a great political combination in this country, he has been regarded with a devotion to which the annals of hero-worship furnish but few parallels. His opinions have constituted the chart by which many have shaped their political course. If he has not been consulted as an oracle of unquestioned truth, he has at least been respected as a prophet of wisest counsel. In party strife his name has been a watchword and reply, and around his gallant form, ever foremost in the conflict, have rallied hearts as true and loving as ever beat in human bosoms. They stood by him in the hour of prosperity, and when the dark cloud of calamity shrouded for a while his reputation, and the time came for the sycophant and hypocrite to flee, they gathered only the closer around him, and gazing hopefully, confidently upward, waited till the sun of truth should dispel the circling vapors of falsehood, and pour its radiance unobscured around.

But if few men have had such friends, not many have had more bitter enemies. Many, most of them, were honorable enemies, although some have thought a little too implacable. But no one will now deny that there were some few at least who saw in the overthrow of Mr. Clay a consummation which would justify any means for its accomplishment—men whom the scorpion lash of conscience has since tortured into an acknowledgment of their guilt.

With such steadfast friends, to what might not unprincipled ambition have prompted Mr. Clay? With such unsparing enemies, to what might not vindictive revenge have instigated him? Into what excesses of party feeling might not an ordinary man have been betrayed? And yet how refreshing is the thought that all were impotent to move him from the path of patriotic duty. His nature rose infinitely above the temptations of sordid selfishness, and now friend and foe unite in the acknowledgment, that

> "Every end he aimed at was his Country's,
> His God's, and Truth's."

Philosophers have suggested that there is implanted in the nature of every man some ruling, *master* principle, which, as the keystone to the arch, gives shape and consistency to the whole character. One who should look into the inner man of Henry Clay would not be at a loss to fasten upon such a principle. There was in him a constant, ever active, untiring *love of freedom*. Perhaps it may have been inhaled from the breezes that wafted around his infant cradle the fragrance of liberty's first blossoms. But at any rate, it was there!—a hidden spring of feeling, a deep fountain of enthusiasm, that often poured forth in streams of impassioned eloquence, sparkling, bright, resistless.

When the Republics of South America had shaken off the yoke of servitude and maintained their independence against the armies of their oppressors, first and foremost in the effort to procure from our government a recognition of that independence, was Mr. CLAY. From his place in the House of Representatives he denounced the tyranny of Spain, he plead the cause of South American emancipation, as one would plead for a brother's life. For awhile he was unsuccessful, but finally he triumphed, and the hand of our country was extended to her younger sister of the South.

And so, when that land long bowed beneath the curse of Ottoman oppression—the land of Leonidas and Homer—rose from the ashes of her degradation, and with a valor not unworthy of her old renown, upreared the standard of freedom, the first voice that from these Western shores hailed its relumined light, was that of HENRY CLAY. Side by side with the giant intellect of our country and our age, he stood up the bold and fearless champion of a people endeared to us, as he declared, "by every ancient recollection and every modern tie." In his speech on that occasion we may behold an epitome of his powers. Eloquence is there seen weaving its golden thread into the strong fabric of thought—argument borrowing point and pungency from wit and sarcasm—and all glowing with the warmth of an earnest and devoted heart.

Nor can we forget that other illustrious monument to Mr. CLAY'S love of freedom, which rises from the Western shores of Africa. Planted by the hand of American philanthropy, side by side with the dark abodes of superstition, the Republic of Liberia is seen to-day, throwing the light of civilization, art, and science through the surrounding gloom. And when that time comes, as come it will, when in point of political and commercial importance that Republic shall rise to a position of equality with the great powers of the earth, the name of HENRY CLAY will be cherished with gratitude, as one of its earliest, truest friends.

In fine, the student will seek in vain through the annals of America for the last forty years for a single movement towards freedom, founded on principles at all consistent with the genius and welfare of our government, which has not received from Mr. CLAY an active, zealous, efficient support. Attached as he was to his party, its fetters could not tie him down to a policy of indifference to the sufferings of mankind; for we hear him declare in his speech upon the Greek question, in 1824, "*If it were possible for Republicans to cease to be the champions of human freedom, I would cease to be a Republican and would become a Federalist.*" I say, then, this principle with Mr. CLAY was both uniform and strong. But in it there was nothing Quixotic. He was no knight-errant of a modern chivalry, ready with couched lance and glittering halberd to do battle for every new fangled notion touching the rights of nations or of man. His devotion was ardent, but discreet. The homage which he rendered was the homage of a freeman, but it was no less the homage of a wise, reflecting, patriotic American statesman.

The love of freedom made him a lover of his country, because he beheld bound up in the destiny of America the hope of republican liberty throughout the world. He saw his country holding up to the benighted nations of earth the blazing torch of her history, to guide their wandering footsteps;—and could he hazard the hopes of his country and of mankind by casting that torch into the maddened waves of foreign revolution? No, no! he dared not do it. He dared not, because he feared, and feared wisely, lest perchance its hallowed flame might be extinguished, and the obscurity of a starless night enwrap the world's great future. Peace with all the world, but "entangling alliances with none," was the policy which recommended itself to him, not only by its safety and conformity with the spirit of our institutions, but by considerations of philanthropy itself.

Anxiously did our country await the result of that interview, when the exiled patriot of the Old World stood face to face with the dying patriot of the New. She had seen the passions of her citizens aroused by the damning story of wrongs inflicted upon struggling freedom. She had beheld them charmed by the classic eloquence of the hero, and blinded by the sophistries of the politician; and when she remembered the chivalrous and impulsive spirit of her sons, she trembled for the safety of her time-honored policy. Nor upon the mind of HENRY CLAY himself had the melting appeals of despairing freedom fallen in vain. He had felt his blood, chilled by disease and age, rush with a quicker, warmer flow along his veins, at the tale of Austrian tyranny, upheld by Russian arms; and now, when the great Magyar stood before him the representative of bleeding liberty, his eye kindled with the light of yore, and his quivering lips attested the power of the emotions that struggled in his breast. But when, turning from the tragic narrative of his country's woes, the Hungarian exile hints at what he deems the true policy of our government, a cloud passes over the brow of the venerable listener. His mind is perhaps busy with the scenes of '76 and '89; he remembers the hitherto glorious progress of his country; he speaks—speaks tenderly, yet resolutely—speaks the language of sympathy, but of patriotism; and sober American feeling has since approved the wisdom of his words. They parted, those wonderful men; never to meet again on earth, but the influence of that interview yet lingers amongst us. May it be perpetual in the upbuilding of a sound, practical, conservative Americanism, the last lingering hopes of freedom throughtout the world!

I shall not detain you by showing that in the course of Mr. CLAY upon this subject there was nothing inconsistent with his position as the advocate of Grecian and South American independence. Even then he declared," I am no propagandist. I would not seek to force upon other nations our principles and our liberty, if they do not want them. I would not disturb the repose even of a detestable despotism." In those cases the question was as to the recognition of an existing goverment—not the interference of our own government, as such, with the tottering and unsettled institutions of the world around us.

But more hostile was Mr. Clay to that odious form in which a pretended love of freedom has sought to embody itself—the principle of domestic intervention as held, to some extent at least, by one section of our country. That fell spirit of fanaticism which, under the guise of philanthropy, has been scattering its seed of darkness and of death over the fair bosom of our land, ever found in him a foe. Mr. Clay did, it is true, lend his favor more than once to the scheme of gradual emancipation, in his own State. But there was no congeniality, either of motives or of means, between emancipation, as contended for by him, and abolition. They are as different as light from darkness—as variant as reason and folly—as inconsistent as a sound rational philanthropy, with a fiendish, ill judged, reckless fanaticism. The designs of the one was to let in the light of freedom upon darkened eyes, with a gradually increasing radiance; the aim of the other, to unveil it at once in all its blinding, scorching, withering intensity of heat. The effort of the one was to let the pent-up waters of slavery escape as it were drop by drop; the purpose of the other to tear down all obstructions and suffer the torrent to sweep madly and destructively around.

Indeed, we find Mr. Clay charging upon Northern madness, not only the defeat of his own measure, but of every hope of improvement in the institution against which it warred. In his speech on abolition petitions, in 1839, he avowed the opinion that abolitionism "has thrown back for half a century the prospect of any species of emancipation, gradual or immediate, in any of the States." He denounced, at all times, as it deserved, the conduct of those whose reckless zeal would seem worthier the days of a Salem superstition, did it not find vent now, in other delusions, fit parallels to its folly.

The statesmanship of Mr. Clay was eminently *national* in its character. He had lived under the imperfect workings of the Articles of Confederation. The evils of that system, so well understood by those of the present day—its deficiency in all instrumentalities for securing the common defence and promoting the general welfare—in a word, its incompetency to fulfil all the essential purposes of union, and the distress which attended it—all these were facts familiar to him among the recollections of his boyhood. Upon the other hand, he had witnessed the formation of the Federal Constitution; he had seen the first dawning of the bright day of its history; he had grown up with the goverment of which it was the charter and the chart, and had rejoiced, day by day, in its expanding greatness and renown.

Such was his experience, and it implanted in him an ardent (some may say, overweening) love of the Union, which had achieved so much. His observation had not detected any fault in the working of the mighty engine, when unmolested by the tampering hand of innovation. He looked upon the constitution, not as a galling chain holding together conflicting and inharmonious elements; but rather as a golden cord of love, binding the yielded powers of separate sovereignties into the fasces of a glorious and imperishable Union.

And yet he was no Consolidationist. Far from it. In his speech upon internal improvements, in 1818, he said: "I am a friend, a true friend, to State rights. The States have their appointed orbits; so has the Union; and each should be confined within its fair, legitimate, and constitutional sphere." It was against those theories which would dissipate into thin air the powers of the general government, and reduce it to the weakness of the Confederation, that he professed his opposition.

Whether his views as to the auxiliary powers of the general government were or were not too liberal, it is not for me to say. Certainly we may all agree that, in advocating those measures of public policy with which his name stands indissolubly connected, his object was the prosperity and independence of his country; and we may therefore pardon what we may not be able to approve.

Mr. Clay was a bold, manly, original political thinker. We do not find him following the lead of public opinion or popular excitement. The conclusions which he adopted were always the result of his own investigation, and therefore relied upon with an implicit confidence in their correctness. The opinions which he promulgated were invested with a power and earnestness that could not fail to give them general circulation and moral weight. His policy was not to adapt himself to prevalent notions, but to shape those notions according to his own established standard. How well he succeeded, we all know. Perhaps no man has lived in our country or our times, who could boast so potent an influence in the manufacture of public sentiment, and yet cared so little whether he stood with the many or the few. He did not wait to catch the indications of the political barometer. Conviction seemed with him almost intuitive; and while others might vie with him in the maintenance of a position once assumed, few could equal him in the unhesitating promptness with which he assumed his positions. Doubtful as might be sometimes the locality of others, no difficulty was ever experienced in locating Mr. Clay. He fought with his visor up. He took his place prominently and fearless of results, and therefore the scrutiny of malice itself has never detected in his course any attempt at duplicity or deception with regard to his political views.

The charge of inconsistency, the great bugbear of little demagoguing politicians, could not frighten Mr. Clay from the course which duty seemed to point out. He had a sufficient acquaintance with human nature to have discovered that inflexibility of opinion, under all circumstances, is indicative either of bigotry or folly. He had learned from his experience in the history of his country, that the political economy of one age may not be exactly suited to the next; and he suffered his views, as to the expediency of any measure, to be governed by the existing circumstances of the country; and thus too, upon one subject of public policy at least, he cheerfully acknowledged that his views previously expressed had been modified by subsequent experience.

Still, Mr. Clay held his opinions by no slight tenure. It was his nature to feel deeply, as well as to think strongly: and no

power, save his own convictions of duty, could shake his devotion to any measure which he might once adopt. Perhaps, indeed, the strength of grasp with which his mind held its impressions, may have sometimes manifested itself in an appearance of self-confidence, and contempt of the opinions of others; and many mistook the zeal of an ardent, enthusiastic nature, for the outbursts of a haughty and dictatorial spirit. Really no man could be less worthy of the appellation of Dictator than Mr. Clay. He was bold, intrepid, sometimes impetuous in his assaults upon error; but his earnestness was the earnestness of truth, seeking to produce conviction, not the ebullition of a haughty self-esteem, impatient of contradiction, and eager only for its own aggrandizement. The charge has been made, but it is more than abundantly disproved by those scenes in the history of our country in which he has stood forth the friend of Conciliation, Concession and Compromise.

Thrice has our government been called to pass through the deep waters of a fierce civil dissension; thrice has the tempest of tumultuous faction raged wildly around her; and thrice has she beheld yawning visibly before her, Disunion's horrible abyss. Some before me now, remember the gloomy and portentous cloud which the Missouri question threw over the councils of our country and the hearts of its people. The patriot trembled, the wheels of government were stopped, and the floors of Congress were but the scenes of continual animosity, where the champions of the opposing parties either indulged in mutual crimination, or regarded each other in sullen silence. The dissolution of the Union seemed inevitable.

Nor less alarming was the condition of this country when in 1832, the power of South Carolina stood arrayed against the authority of the Union. A new era had arrived in the history of our government. A crisis had developed itself when, in place of the gentle sway of its Constitution, the untried agency of force seemed necessary to maintain its dignity. The patriot foresaw the horrors of such a contest, while the enemy of republican freedom gloated with a savage joy over the anticipated reign of discord, anarchy and death.

I have no desire to glorify Mr. Clay at the expense of truth; but I will not belie the veritable facts of history by hesitating for a moment to assert, that it was to him, more than to any other man—to his efforts more than to any other cause—that our country owed its deliverance from the dangers that impended over these two stages of its history. This much no candid man can doubt. Why else, upon his appearance in Congress late in the session of '20–'21, was every eye turned upon him as the herald of approaching peace? Who else then toiled, as he did, to restore harmony to its distracted councils? Who could have borne up, as he did, against defeat? Who would have devised those plans of adjustment which were at last crowned with success? The importance of the compromise act of 1833 can never be fully appreciated, because the storm which it averted was not allowed to break upon us. But if the condition of things at that period could be ascer-

tained, we would begin to realize our obligations to him whose arduous labors, public and private, whose readiness to sacrifice his dearest schemes upon his country's altar, and whose personal influence, contributed greatly to the preservation of our glorious Union.

In both those serious emergencies, Mr. CLAY had found in concession and compromise the only means of safety; and the time was to come when he would be compelled again to test their efficacy. Those were troublous times which preceded the adoption of the Peace Measures of the thirty-first Congress. The subject which thirty years before had agitated the country, had now again stirred up the passions of the community. Section stood arrayed against section. Language of threat and intimidation came up from the halls of State Legislatures. A convention of Southern States was called for the purpose of devising measures that looked to disunion; and between the Scylla and Charybdis which on either side threatened the ship of State, many expected to see her dashed to fragments or engulfed beneath the billows of a bloody sea.

It was then that every patriot's eye was turned in one direction. To the quiet shades of rural life our Cincinnatus had years before retired. He had forsaken, as he declared, *for ever*, the theatre of political strife, to spend his declining years amid the calm pleasures of domestic peace. He was old. The frosts of more than seventy winters had fallen on his brow—

> "And his grey hairs, in happier times, might well
> To their last pillow silently have gone,
> As melts a wreath of snow."

But his country called, and at her call he came. The trumpet sounded "the alarum," and before many a younger spirit had recovered from its consternation, the old warrior had buckled on his armor for the fight. He felt that he owed his country a life, and he was ready to pay the debt. He saw before him death's gaping chasm, yet with a Curtius like devotion, plunged into the darkness, fearless and undismayed. There was patriotism, more than Roman, here.

The appearance of HENRY CLAY in the Senate of the United States, was hailed as an angel of mercy. The hearts of patriots in and out of Congress grew strong in the confident assurance of coming peace. His very presence, like a sun, seemed to dispel much of the darkness that brooded over the future,

> "*And Hope enchanted smiled and waved her golden hair.*"

How well these anticipations were realized, let the annals of Congress and of the country tell. Once more upon the field of his fame, and the advocate of compromise, "Richard was himself again." The light of other days seemed to throw its radiance about him. The fire of feeling flashed again from his fading eye. His form was, as it were, invested with the vigor of early manhood. His voice rose and fell, as of old, along the chords of modulated harmony,

"And e'en reluctant party felt awhile
His gracious power, as through the varied maze
Of eloquence, now smooth, now quick, now strong,
Profound and clear, *he rolled* the copious flood."

It was sublime, the spectacle which then presented itself. The exertions of the "old man eloquent" were giant-like. Political and personal animosities vanished from his bosom. Old grudges were forgotten or buried; and above the altar of his country's safety he joined hands with friend and foe alike. His aim was peace, and he was again successful. In that last act of his noble life, he reared an Ossa upon the Pelion of his fame. In it was seen the setting sun of his political career, throwing its resplendent beams around the venerable ruins of his physical nature, and tinting with celestial hues the brightening Iris of immortality which now over-arches his tomb.

I have spoken of Henry Clay as the ardent yet discreet lover of human freedom; as the sincere and indefatigable patriot; as the national, bold, original, conservative, and compromising statesman. In doing this, I have necessarily touched upon many of his qualities as a man. He, more than any other man within my limited acquaintance, had had the faculty of throwing himself into his subject and his cause, so that his speeches and his acts are in fact exponents of his nature. Frank and generous in his disposition, chivalrous and fearless in his spirit, affable and courteous in his demeanor, a true and lasting friend, an open and generous foe, he won to himself more favor by the attractiveness of his own character, than by accommodating himself to the peculiarities of others. His popularity was attained by no arts of low demagoguism or party chicanery. He would have despised the elevation to which such means alone might bring him. With him the sense of honor was no common principle, but acute and tender to a fault. I say, to a fault, because it more than once forced him into positions which his reason and his conscience alike condemned. But if in this respect he exhibited weakness, it is a weakness from which too few have been exempt, and which will continue to manifest itself till sound public sentiment has branded the "code of honor" with the stamp of ignominy and of shame.

Mr. Clay was bold, ardent, even ambitious. But those qualities so dangerous in some natures, were in him moderated and controlled by a judgment rarely at fault, and a strength of moral principle that was proof against corruption. An examination of his character, no less than a review of his life, endorses the truth of the exalted sentiment which he uttered in those memorable words, "I had rather be right than President."

His mind was cast in the mould of true greatness. Its various faculties were so nicely balanced that it is difficult to determine which was predominant. Quick in its perceptions, powerful in analysis, vivid in imagination, yet solid in argument, his intellect was a polished weapon that gleamed and glistened as brilliantly in the dignified discussions of the Senate Chamber, as in the lighter displays of the forum. It was in the universality of his

powers that his greatness consisted. No occasion could find him unprepared to do justice to it and to himself. Whether it was the convivial assemblage of friends, or the stern conflict of statesmanship; whether the weapons to be used were those of solid argument or graceful declamation, his mind faltered never for a moment, but rose full-armed at once and equal to the emergency. Doubtless there have been other men, even in our country, superior to him in some particular faculty. Calhoun may have been a keener logician; Webster a more finished statist; Prentiss more polished in imagination; but in the rare combination of all those powers which contribute to intellectual greatness, I doubt seriously, honestly doubt, whether our country or the world has ever produced his equal. Verily in him was the picture of the poet realized, for,

> "The elements
> So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, *This was a man!*"

The eloquence of Mr. Clay was indescribable by reference to any model of antiquity or later times. There was in it the power of Demosthenes, linked with the grace of Cicero; the stirring pathos of impassioned feeling mingling with the solid grandeur of deep thought. It was formed after no pattern; and therefore, to be understood, must have been heard. His reported speeches are but the skeletons of their inspired originals—the frame-work which upheld the brightest creation of oratory that ever charmed, while they dazzled, the mind of man.

Is it not a mortifying reflection that a character so exalted and public services so distinguished, could not have escaped the viperous tongue of calumny? Yet so it was The poisoned shafts of unsparing malevolence flew thick and fast against the ægis of his fame; and though he appealed to the great Searcher of Hearts for the purity of the motives which had ever actuated him, there were still found some who would proclaim the slanderous charge of bargain and corruption. That heartless calumny which some believed for a while, has had its day with the good and virtuous. It has served perhaps the end of its conception, but it has failed, and *utterly* failed, to throw the shadow of a stain upon the character of Henry Clay. It was exploded even before his death, and he was permitted to behold his reputation untarnished by even the imputation of dishonor. Fortunate man! fortunate in that thy fame needs not the gilded garniture of place or station to add to its embellishment. Fortunate man! fortunate in that thy name hath come unscathed from out the seething caldron and seven-fold heated furnace of base traduction. Fortunate man! yea, fortunate *above thy fellows*, in that benignant heaven did not refer the vindication of thy character to posterity, but permitted thee, even from this side the grave, to hear thy worth extolled by lips that just now spoke in censure, and thy purity maintained by pens that once essayed to chronicle thy shame!

But even yet I hear the mutterings of a few unconquered enemies. Public sentiment has forever silenced their slanderous false-

hood, but now they modestly suggest that the name of HENRY CLAY is unassociated with any permanent measure of statesmanship, and will perish from the memory of man.

> "Blush, Calumny! and write upon his tomb,
> If honest eulogy can spare thee room,
> Thy deep repentance"

of so base, so reckless, so ungenerous a thought. The history of your country and the world, uproots the basis of your calculation, and time will prove the falsity of your prediction.

No, the life and services of HENRY CLAY will never, never be forgotten. Rooted in the memory of four continents, his name will be handed down from generation to generation of their children. It will cheer the youth upon whose pathway poverty and orphanage have shed their blights. It will breathe new spirit into struggling freedom, when about to sink beneath the weight of its oppression. It will nerve the heart of the American patriot, when the skies are dark above him and the wild winds rage around, by whispering in his ear those words of hope and consolation, "Never despair of the Republic." The Southern maiden will sing his praises by the silvery wave of the La Plata and upon the slopes of the Andes, and the bush-boy of Africa, among his first lessons of civilization, will learn to repeat with reverence his hallowed name. Nor will the voice of Greece, fallen though she is, be silent. Even now, methinks, I hear a song of lamentation and of love rising in choral harmony from her sacred groves. Louder and louder still it swells, till old Parnassus catches and rolls back the anthem to far-off Helicon, and the Vale of Tempé answers to the distant Isles,

> "Where burning Sappho loved and sung."

To-day the column of his fame is seen rising like a mighty obelisk to greet the skies. Beside its base the Anglo-Saxon hails the dark-haired Greek, and the Southern Creole welcomes the child of Ham. Their varied voices blend in one grand symphony of praise, as they behold the hand of *Death* planting the capstone of *Immortality* upon the lowering splendor of so great a *life*.

In an acclaim so universal, Americans, Virginians, let us too mingle our voices. Let us venerate the character and imitate the virtues of HENRY CLAY. Let us cherish and cultivate those principles of genuine patriotism which adorned his life. Let us love the Union which he did so much to save. Thus may we find in the national heritage, the common treasure, the unappropriated glory of his character and fame, a new, unbroken link in that chain of love which should ever bind together those who, in the midst of a world crushed with tyranny, can boast the rich inheritance of freedom. Then indeed will our country exhibit a spectacle before which human oppression will gradually disappear, until

> "Even the smallest habitable rock
> Beaten by lonely billows, hears the songs
> Of humanized society, and blooms
> With civil arts."