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ADDRESS AND SPEECHES

DELIVERED AT

MANCHESTER

ON THE 23RD AND 24TH OF APRIL, 1862.

BY THE

RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE,

CHANCELLOR OF HER MAJESTY'S EXCHEQUER.



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ADDRESS AND SPEECH

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ASSOCIATION OF LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE
MECHANICS' INSTITUTES.



LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—Although the duty in which we have just been engaged is a cheerful one, the season at which I come among you is, but too notoriously, a season of gloom in the district, and even in the city. In this busy region, all the forms of human industry are grouped around one central stock, which gives them their vitality; and they droop and come near to dying when, as now, the great cotton harvest is no longer wafted over the Atlantic to employ and feed the people. If the positive signs of distress do not glare in your streets, it is, I apprehend, because the manly and independent character of the Lancashire workman makes him unwilling to parade, or even to dis-

close, his sufferings before his fellow men. None can doubt the existence of a torpor scarcely ever equalled in its intensity, and wholly without parallel in its cause. At points of the horizon in these counties, the eye suggests regret even for the unwonted thinness of the canopy of smoke, which bears witness to the partial slumber of the giant forces enlisted in your ordinary service. Rarely within living memory has so much of skill lain barren, so much of willing strength been smitten as with palsy, and so much of poverty and want forced its way into homes, that had long been wont to smile with comfort and abundance. Nor is the promise of to-morrow a compensation for the pressure of to-day. On the contrary, if the present be dark, the signs of the immediate future may seem darker still.

In times like these the human mind, and still more the human heart, searches all around for consolation and support. Of that support one kind is to be found in observing, that trials the most severe and piercing are the lot not of one station only but of all. And perhaps in the wise counsels of Providence it was decreed, that that



crushing sorrow, which came down as sudden as the hurricane, scarcely yet four months ago, upon the august head of our Sovereign, should serve, among other uses, that of teaching and helping her subjects to bear up under the sense of affliction and desolation, and should exhibit by conspicuous example the need and the duty both of mutual sympathy and mutual help. In many a humble cottage, darkened by the calamity of the past winter, the mourning inhabitants may have checked their own impatience by reflecting that, in the ancient Palace of our Kings, a Woman's heart lay bleeding; and that to the supreme place in birth, in station, in splendour, and in power, was now added another sadder title of pre-eminence in grief.

For, perhaps, no sharper stroke ever cut human lives asunder, than that which in December last parted, so far as this world of sense is concerned, the lives of the Queen of England and of her chosen Consort. It had been obvious to us all, though necessarily in different degrees, that they were blest with the possession of the secret of reconciling the discharge of incessant

and wearing public duty with the cultivation of the inner and domestic life. The attachment, that binds together wife and husband, was known to be in their case from the first of an unusual force. Through more than twenty years, which flowed past like one long unclouded summer day, that attachment was cherished, exercised, and strengthened by all the forms of family interest, by all the associated pursuits of highly cultivated minds, by all the cares and responsibilities which surround the Throne, and which the Prince was called in his own sphere both to alleviate and to share. On the one side, such love is rare, even in the annals of the love of woman; on the other, such service can hardly find a parallel, for it is hard to know how a husband could render it to a wife, unless that wife were also Queen.

So, then, She, whom you have seen in your streets a source of joy to all, and herself drinking in with cordial warmth the sights and the sounds of your enthusiastic loyalty, is now to be thought of as the first of English widows, lonely in proportion to her elevation and her cares. Nor let it be thought that those, who

are never called to suffer in respect to bodily wants, therefore do not suffer sharply. Whereas, on the contrary, it is well established, not only that though the form of sorrow may be changed with a change in the sphere of life, the essence and power of it remain, but also that, as that sphere enlarges, the capacity of suffering deepens along with it no less than the opportunities of enjoyment are multiplied. Therefore all the land, made aware, through the transparent manner of it, what was the true character of her life, has acknowledged in the Queen not only a true, but a signally afflicted mourner. And rely upon it that even in the midst of desolation she is conscious of our sympathy, and has thrilled more deeply to the signs of her people's grief on her behalf than ever, in other days, to their loudest and most heart-stirring acclamations. (Applause.)

And you, my friends, such of you in particular as have felt by your firesides the touch of this most trying time, if perchance many among you, turning in the day of need and trouble to the Father of all Mercies,

have mingled with your prayers for your own relief another prayer, that She may be consoled in her sorrow and strengthened for her work during what we hope will be the long remainder of her days, that loyal prayer will come back with blessing into your own bosom, and in the effort to obtain comfort for another you will surely be comforted yourselves. (Applause.)

If the mourning of the nation for the Prince Consort's death was universal, yet within certain precincts it was also special. One of those precincts surely must have been the Association, to promote whose purposes we are gathered here to-night. You had in him a Head; and a Head standing towards you in no merely titular relation, but one who, as his manner was, gave reality to every attribute of his station, and in lending you his name imparted to you freely of his thought and care to boot. His comprehensive gaze ranged to and fro between the base and the summit of society, and examined the interior forces, by which it is kept at once in balance and in motion. In his

well-ordered life there seemed to be room for all things. For every manly exercise, for the study and practice of art, for the exacting cares of a splendid Court, for minute attention to every domestic and paternal duty, for advice and aid towards the discharge of public business in its innumerable forms, and for meeting the voluntary calls of an active philanthropy : one day in considering the best form for the dwellings of the people ; another day in bringing his just and gentle influence to bear on the relations of master and domestic servant ; another in suggesting and supplying the means of culture for the most numerous classes ; another in some good work of almsgiving or religion. Nor was it a merely external activity which he displayed. His mind, it is evident, was too deeply earnest to be satisfied in anything, smaller or greater, with resting on the surface. With a strong grasp on practical life in all its forms, he united a habit of thought eminently philosophic ; ever referring facts to their causes, and pursuing action to its consequences. Gone though he be from among us, he, like other worthies of mankind who

have preceded him, is not altogether gone; for, in the words of the poet,—

“——— the religious actions of the just
Smell sweet in death, and blossom in the dust.”

(Applause.) So he has left for all men, in all classes, many a useful lesson, to be learnt from the record of his life and character.

For example, it would, I believe, be difficult to find anywhere a model of a life more highly organized, more thoroughly and compactly ordered. Here in Manchester, if anywhere in the world, you know what order is, and what a power it holds. Here we see at work the vast systems of machinery, where ten thousand instruments are ever labouring, each in its own proper place, each with its own proper duty, but all obedient to one law, and all co-operating for one end. Scarcely in one of these your own great establishments are the principles of order and its power more vividly exemplified, than they were in the mind and life of the Prince Consort. Now this way of excelling is one that we all may follow. There is not one among us all here gathered, who may not, if he will, especially if he be still

young, by the simple specific of giving method to his life, greatly increase its power and efficacy for good. (Applause.)

But he would be a sorry imitator of the Prince, who should suppose that this process could be satisfactorily performed as a mechanical process, in a presumptuous or in a servile spirit, and with a view to selfish or to worldly ends. A life that is to be active like his, ought to find refreshment even in the midst of labours; nay, to draw refreshment from them. But this it cannot do, unless the man can take up the varied employments of the world with something of a childlike freshness. Few are they, who carry on with them that childlike freshness of the earliest years into after-life. It is that especial light of Heaven, described by Wordsworth in his immortal 'Ode on the Recollections of Childhood:' that light—

“ which lies about us in our infancy,”

which attends even the youth upon his way;
but at length—

“ the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.”

Its radiance still plays about a favoured few:

they are those few who, like the Prince, strive earnestly to keep themselves unspotted from the world, and are victors in the strife. (Applause.)

In beseeching, especially, the young to study the application to their daily life of that principle of order which both engenders diligence and strength of will, and likewise so greatly multiplies their power, I am well assured that they will find this to be not only an intellectual, but a moral exercise. Every real and searching effort at self-improvement is of itself a lesson of profound humility. For we cannot move a step without learning and feeling the waywardness, the weakness, the vacillation of our movements, or without desiring to be set up upon the rock that is higher than ourselves. (Applause.) Nor, again, is it likely that the self-denial and self-discipline, which these efforts undoubtedly involve, will often be cordially undergone, except by those who elevate and extend their vision beyond the narrow scope of the years—be they what we admit to be few, or what we think to be many—that are prescribed for our career on earth. An untiring

sense of duty, an active consciousness of the perpetual presence of Him who is its author and its law, and a lofty aim beyond the grave—these are the best and most efficient parts, in every sense, of that apparatus, wherewith we should be armed when with full purpose of heart we address ourselves to the life-long work of self-improvement. And I believe that the lesson which I have thus, perhaps at once too boldly and too feebly, presumed to convey to you in words, is the very lesson which was taught us for twenty years, and has been bequeathed to us for lasting memory, by the Prince Consort, in the nobler form of action, in the silent witness of an earnest, manful, and devoted life. (Applause.)

But, although this world embraces no more than a limited part of our existence, and although it is certain that we ought to tread its floor with an upward and not with a downward eye, yet sometimes a strong reaction from the dominion of things visible and carnal begets the opposite excess. A strain of language may sometimes be heard among us which, if taken strictly, would imply that the Almighty had

abandoned the earth and the creatures He had made ; or, at the least, that if He retained any care at all for some portion of those creatures while continuing to be inhabitants of the world, it was only care how to take them out of it. It is sometimes said that this world is a world only of shadows and of phantoms. We may safely reply that, whatever it is, a world of shadows and of phantoms it can never be ; for by shadows and by phantoms we mean vague existences which neither endure nor act : creatures of the moment, which may touch the fancy, but which the understanding does not recognise ; passing illusions, without heralds before them, without results or traces after them. With such a description as this, I say, our human life, in whatever state or station, can never correspond. It may be something better than this ; it may be something worse ; but this it can never be. Our life may be food to us, or may, if we will have it so, be poison ; but one or the other it must be. Whichever and whatever it is, beyond all doubt it is eminently real. So surely as the day and the night alternately follow one another, does every day when it yields to dark-

ness, and every night when it passes into dawn, bear with it its own tale of the results which it has silently wrought upon each of us for evil or for good. The day of diligence, duty, and devotion leaves us richer than it found us; richer sometimes, and even commonly, in our circumstances; richer always in ourselves. But the day of aimless lethargy, the day of passionate and rebellious disorder, or of a merely selfish and perverse activity, as surely leaves us poorer at its close than we were at its beginning. (Applause.) The whole experience of life, in small things and in great, what is it? It is an aggregate of real forces, which are always acting upon us, and we reacting upon them. It is in the nature of things impossible that, in their contact with our plastic and susceptible natures, they should leave us as we were; and to deny the reality of their daily and continual influence, merely because we cannot register its results, like changes of the barometer, from hour to hour, would be just as rational as to deny that the sea acts upon the beach because the eye will not tell us to-morrow that it is altered from what it has been to-day. If we fail to measure

the results that are thus hourly wrought on rock and sand, it is not because those results are unreal, but because our vision is too limited in its powers to discern them. When, instead of comparing day with day, we compare century with century, then we find that land has become sea, and sea has become land. Even so we can perceive, at least in our neighbours—towards whom the eye is more impartial and discerning than towards ourselves—that, under the steady pressure of the experience of life, human characters are continually being determined for good or evil; are developed, confirmed, modified, altered, or undermined. It is the office of good sense, no less than of faith, to realise this great truth before we see it, and to live under the conviction, that our life from day to day is a true, powerful, and searching discipline, moulding us and making us, whether it be for evil or for good. (Applause.)

Nor are these real effects wrought by unreal instruments. Life and the world, their interests, their careers, the varied gifts of our nature, the traditions of our forefathers, the treasures of laws, institutions, usages, of languages, of litera-

ture, and of art; all the beauty, glory, and delight, with which the Almighty Father has clothed this earth for the use and profit of His children, and which Evil, though it has defaced, has not been able utterly to destroy; all these are not merely allowable, but ordained and appointed instruments for the training of mankind,—instruments true and efficient in themselves, though without doubt auxiliary and subordinate to that highest instrument of all which God has prepared to be the means of our recovery and final weal, by the revelation of Himself. (Applause.)

Thus, then, we arrive at a point which plainly exhibits the ennobling tendencies and high moral aims of an institution such as this, when it is worked in the spirit that alone befits our nature and condition.

Let me now address to you a few words on a marked feature of the institution—that feature with which in particular we are to-night concerned—I mean its examinations, to which reference is made in the eighth paragraph of its printed list of its objects. They evidently form not only a living and chief por-

tion of its practice, but also a test of its power over the people; and it is manifest, from the results they have produced—from such results as with our own eyes we have witnessed in this hall to-night—that they have struck deep root in the mind of the community around you, and are likely to exercise in future a material influence upon conduct.

The use of examinations in this country, not alone, but with honours and prizes variously attached to them, as a main stimulus and support to mental cultivation, is in a very great degree peculiar to the present century. Examination may be said to have constituted, nearly from its commencement, the basis of the practical system of our ancient Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Perhaps those Universities have been the means of commending to the country the example it has so largely followed. These examinations have acquired progressively more and more of weight in the public schools. They now supply the only passport to the Civil Service of India, richly endowed as it is with emoluments, and heavily charged with duties and responsibilities. Admission to the Civil

Service at home had been long the subject only of a political patronage which was, erroneously as I think, believed to be an essential part of the machinery of the Constitution, and the sole effectual substitute for the ruder methods of government formerly in use by prerogative and force. But it is now in some degree admitted that the privilege of entering the Civil Service of the country—and, indeed, the service of the country generally—ought to be thrown open, as widely as may be, to its youth at large. (Applause.) And some progress has been made, by the method of examinations, both in securing the State against the intrusion of the unworthy, and in widening the way of access for those who aspire to prove themselves worthy of the honours and rewards of civil office. (Hear.) The same engine of competitive examination has been more freely applied to the highest—I mean the scientific—department of the Army. At about the same time with the adoption of these last-mentioned improvements, the University of Oxford instituted, with great wisdom and forethought, that system of circuits for local examination throughout the country, which

met at once with public acknowledgment and approval, and which was speedily and happily imitated from one or more other quarters. But none of these efforts touched the great masses of the people. They too, however, have been at least partially reached by the widening circles of the movement. A proposal is, as you know, under the consideration of Parliament, which aims at the establishment of the principle, that the merit of the pupils, proved by elementary examination, shall henceforth be, if not the sole, yet the main condition on which the money of the State, supplied by the taxes of the country, shall be dispensed in aid of primary schools. (Applause.) This, it may be said, is still prospective. But at least we have, in the Association of Lancashire and Cheshire Mechanics' Institutes, one living proof of the progress made, without aid either from old endowment or from the public purse ("hear, hear"), by the principle of examinations, with the condition of competition and the attraction of honour or reward. (Applause.) How strictly true is this assertion must be more familiarly known to many among you than to me.

I will not attempt to draw here, and now, a full picture of the Association, but will only give in proof of what I have said a very few facts and figures. First, as regards the general condition of the district. We find that the compulsory leisure forced on the population by the contraction of the cotton trade has been attended by a decrease of crime. In Blackburn, for instance, where the crisis is felt with the utmost severity, the charges heard by the borough magistrates in the first quarter of the year 1857 were 721; in the first quarter of the year 1862, although the population must have grown, the charges were only 524. ("Hear, hear," and applause.) Now, we may naturally expect a decrease of drunkenness to accompany popular distress, because the means of indulgence have been contracted. But, on the other hand, we might not be greatly surprised if there were a positive increase of those offences to which men are tempted in a principal degree by want. Applying these considerations to the case of Blackburn, we find the following results:—The charges other than for drunkenness in the first quarter of 1857 were 464; in 1862 they

were 380. (Applause.) There is, my friends, consolation in these facts, which I hope will long survive the painful occasion that has brought them into view. (Hear, hear.)

It also appears from the returns, that, speaking generally, while crime has decreased, the attendance upon classes, and the use of the means of mental culture, have increased. Now, my friends, there are beautiful and famous passages in ancient writers, where statesmen and orators describe the refreshment with which literature had supplied them, amid the cares of life and of public affairs. Without any disparagement to such representations, it is a far more touching picture to behold the labouring man, shut out by no fault of his own from the occupation that gives him bread, yet unconquered in spirit and resource, and turning to account his vacant hours in pursuits which strengthen and enlarge the faculties of his mind. (Applause).

It would, however, be unjust to set down to the credit of this Association, or of those Institutes which it binds together, more than a modest share in the general improvement of your social

state. But let us observe more closely their own progress. The members, formerly 2000, are now from 6000 to 8000. Four years ago 500 persons passed the preliminary examinations; this year there are 1500. (Hear, hear.) Four years ago 214 passed the public and final examination; this year there are 730. (Hear, hear.) What is more remarkable than all this is the fact, that of 180 persons who have to-night received honours and certificates, the number who draw their subsistence from weekly wages is no less than 177. (Applause and cheers.) Two of these are wholly unemployed; 83, between men and women, are weavers; fully 150 appear to belong, in the very strictest sense, to the labouring class. Again I say, here are the signs, for that class especially, of hope and real progress; of hope which will, I trust, bear its fruit, and abide with them as certainty, long after the clouds of the present visitation shall, if it please God, have passed away. (Applause.)

I have said to you, my friends, that the extended use of the instrument of examinations is eminently characteristic of the age in which we live. I would almost venture to

say that, amid all the material and all the social changes, by which the period has been distinguished, there have been few that are greater or more peculiar than this. The older methods of education, which had been in use in European countries, generally invited from students, with more or less of strictness, voluntary performances, which were intended to afford general evidence of competency; and which, where they were regularly exacted, were made conditions of the certificates of proficiency given by Universities and other learned bodies, and by them called Degrees. These exercises and exhibitions were the invention of remote ages, and were in all probability well adapted to the exigencies of those periods. But in the time of your immediate ancestors they had become generally and even grossly ineffective; and the instinct, so to speak, of the present age has prompted it, instead of reviving the ancient forms which had died out, to have recourse to the new method of examinations.

These examinations are in a great number of instances competitive; that is, they offer to the candidates one or more specific prizes, the

possession of which by particular competitors involves the exclusion of others. This form of examination has great advantages. It raises to a *maximum* that stimulus which acts insensibly but powerfully upon the minds of students, as it were, from behind; and becomes an auxiliary force augmenting their energies, and helping them, almost without their knowledge, to surmount their difficulties. It is not found in practice, so far as I know, to be open to an objection which is popularly urged against it—namely, that it may elicit evil passions among the candidates, because it makes the gain of one the loss of another. I believe that, on the contrary, the pursuit of knowledge is found to carry with it in this respect its own preservatives and safeguards. Even in athletic sports, the loser does not resent or grudge the fairly won honours of the winner; and, in the race of minds, those who are behind, having confidence in the perfect fairness of the award, are not so blindly and basely selfish as to cherish resentment against others for being better than themselves. (Hear, hear.) Again, it is a recommendation of purely competitive examinations

that they bring the matter to the simplest issue ; for, in nice cases, it is a much easier and safer task for the examiner to compare the performances of a candidate with those of another candidate, than to compare them with some more abstract standard, existing only in his own mind. On the other hand, it is a disadvantage of this system that the honours given at different times, purporting to be equal, are given to unequal merit : for the number and excellence of the competitors varies from one occasion to another ; and the winner of one year may, on this account, be inferior to the loser of another.

Much may, in truth, be said in praise or in disparagement of one method of examination as compared with another. Into controversy of this kind I do not propose to enter, further than to say that I think the highest value belongs to the competitive species in cases like that of admission to the civil service of the State, where a main object is to bar the way against the action of corrupt or inferior motives in those who appoint. In the long run, the simple, clear, and self-acting method of an open

competition will probably be found more adequate, than any other agency, to contend against the wakeful energies of human selfishness, ever on the alert, first to prevent the adoption of improvements, and then to neutralize and mar their operation. (Applause.)

But what I would, on the present occasion, specially endeavour to bring to your attention is the general character of this instrument of examination, as it is understood and as it is applied in the present century, and in the institution with which we have now to deal. The essential character of it I take to be this—that the candidate, instead of himself producing a piece of work, and asking to be judged by it, offers and opens his mind to the examining authority to be tested, searched, and, so to speak, even ransacked, in such manner, and by such questions and processes, as that examining authority shall choose. The adoption, or wide extension, of such a method as this marks an epoch in the history of study. It shows that we have overlived the time, when the greater part of those who engaged in the pursuit of knowledge were enamoured of its beauty, and

loved it for its own sake, with a devout and tender love. In the childhood of mental culture, it was the prerogative of a few, and the mere possession of it constituted a high distinction. So, likewise, as in those days legal rights were ill defined and protected, commerce was circumscribed, nations were sharply severed, and but few of the careers of active life were open, it naturally happened that in the case of many persons mental culture had little to compete with it for their regard. In circumstances like these, it might not be needful constantly to apply a strong stimulus from without. The very novelty and freshness of knowledge, in ages just emerging from darkness and disorder, gave it a powerful charm for the imagination, over and above its hold upon the intellect; it was pursued by a spontaneous movement from within, with passion as well as with conviction; and those who so pursue it do not need to be goaded in their onward course; their service is a service of love, and, like the love of youth for maiden, it is its own incentive and its own reward. (Applause.)

But when society has passed into what is dis-

tinctively, and in many respects truly, termed a progressive state; when the personal rights of men are as secure in the outer world as in the closest retirement; when a thousand new careers of external life are opened, and its attractions in a thousand forms are indefinitely multiplied; when large numbers can engage, not merely in labour for subsistence, but in the pursuit of wealth; and when a desire to rise upon the social ladder takes possession of whole classes, if not on their own behalf, at least on behalf of their children; then there is a compound danger — first, lest the value of knowledge for its own sake should be wholly forgotten; and, secondly, lest even its utility in innumerable respects for the comfort and advancement of life should pass, in great measure, out of view.

Now, my friends, it is in such an age as this that we are living. That same attraction or necessity of wages, which takes the poorer child, either in town or village, from school at too early a period, is but the exhibition for one class of a pressure felt by all. With the wealthier it is pleasure, with the needier it is

gain; but all classes and all circles are alike in this—that our youth are in danger of undervaluing solid mental culture, and of either neglecting or shortening its pursuit by reason of the increased allurements or the more urgent calls of the outer sphere of life. Although knowledge is in so many ways auxiliary to art and to commerce, yet this is a matter not so palpable to the individual that we can rely on it to enable him, as it were, to speculate upon a distant benefit, which concerns others as well as, or it may be more than himself, and to forego for its sake advantages which lie nearer at hand, which appertain directly to his own career, and which are on the level of every man's understanding. Long, accordingly, after trade and manufactures had begun, one hundred years ago, their upward spring, education and art seemed rather to decline than to advance among us. At length a day of awakening came. Christian philanthropy, we may do well to remember, was first in the field on behalf of the masses of the people (“hear, hear”); but after a while, it found itself in partnership with an enlightened self-

interest on the part of individuals, and with the political prudence of the Government. Now, for a long course of years, all three have prosecuted their work in remarkable harmony one with another. Long may their union continue, and its golden fruits teem and glow over all the surface of the land! (Applause.)

A principal form in which they have each developed their united activity has been the form of examinations; and I must in candour say that, among all the particular applications of this principle, I have seen none more remarkable than that, which we have met to-night to commemorate and to encourage. (Hear, hear.) For here it is not leisure, wealth, and ease, which come to disport themselves as athletes in intellectual games: it is the hard hand of the worker, which his yet stronger will has taught to wield the pen; it is Labour, gathering up with infinite care and sacrifice the fragments of time, stealing them, many a one, from rest and sleep, and offering them up like so many widows' mites in the honest devotion of an effort at self-improvement. (Applause and cheers.)

There are those, my friends, who tell us that

examinations, and especially that competitive examinations, are of no real value; that they produce the pretence and not the reality of knowledge; that they give us, not solid progress, but conceit and illusion. I freely admit that this modern method is likely to rear, as far as we can judge, no greater prodigies of learning than did the simple and spontaneous devotion of the olden time; perhaps, if we are to look only at individual cases of pre-eminence, none so great. But I say that the true way to imitate the wisdom of the olden time is this,—to watch the conditions of the age in which we live; to accept them thankfully and freely, as at once the law of Providence for our guidance, and the gift for our encouragement: and when we learn by experience that the tools with which other generations wrought are not suited for the work that is given us to do, then to find, if we can, some other tools which are. (Hear, hear.)

It is not too much to say that the experience of half a century, as well in the Universities as elsewhere, appears to have shown that the method of examinations is the best, and perhaps the only method, by which, in the

England of the nineteenth century, any due efficiency can be imparted to the general business of education. I do not, indeed, deny that a certain trick or craft may be practised in them ; that some may think more of the manner of displaying their knowledge to a momentary advantage, like goods in a shop-window (laughter), than of laying hold upon the substance. But I say that these abusive cases will be the exceptions, not the rule. I say that those, who so unjustly plead them against the system, forget that this very faculty of the ready command and easy use of our knowledge is in itself of immense value. It means clear perception, it means orderly arrangement. And, above all, they forget what I take to be the specific and peculiar virtue of the system of examinations, namely this, that they require us to concentrate all the faculties of the mind, with all their strength, upon a point. In and by the efforts necessary for that concentration, the mind itself, obtaining at once breadth of grasp and increased pliability and force, becomes more able to grapple with great occasions in the subsequent experience of life. (Hear, hear.)

Therefore, my friends, again I say let us accept frankly and cheerfully the conditions of the age in which our lot is cast, and let us write among its titles this,—that as it is the age of humane and liberal laws, the age of extended franchises (“hear, hear”), the age of warmer loyalty (“hear”), and more firmly established order, the age of free trade (cheers), the age of steam and railways; so it is likewise, even if last and least, the age of examinations. Let me add, it is the age in which this powerful instrument of good, formerly the exclusive privilege of the more opulent, has been extended, perhaps most conspicuously of all by this Institution, to the people. And I give you this for my concluding word; that, if that Prince, of whose bright career and character I lately spoke, were now among us, none, we may be sure, would more cordially than he claim honour for a system which, in such thorough harmony with the whole spirit of English laws and institutions, aims at enabling every one, in every rank of the social scale, the lowest like the highest, to give proof of what mettle he is made, and to turn to the best account the gifts with which, by the

bounty of his Heavenly Father, his mind has been endowed.

After a vote of thanks to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for his conduct in the chair, he rose and said:—

MR. MAYOR, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN,—I trust that you hardly need from me the assurance that I am deeply affected by the tokens of kindness and approval which you have just been pleased to bestow upon me in no common manner and degree. It is not for me to question or canvass the language of eulogy, I fear by much too warm, of which you, Sir, and my honourable friends who moved and seconded the resolution,* have been so good as to make use. I am too grateful, and too glad to stand in your good opinion, to be myself a fair or impartial judge of those expressions. But I am glad to meet you, Gentlemen, at all times in this great metropolis of our productive industry—I am glad to meet you in Lancashire, the county of my birth and the scene

* Mr. Bazley, M.P., and Mr. Cheetham.

of my boyhood (cheers)—I am glad to meet you within this noble hall, itself the monument of one of the most beneficent among the peaceful triumphs that have been wrought in the social and civil history of man. (Cheers.) And I assure you that, although you, Sir, are pleased to give me credit for ability to bear the duties of my place, I myself am so sensible of their weight and pressure that, under ordinary circumstances, great as the attractions would have been, I could not have undertaken to visit Manchester for a purpose such as that of to-night during the Parliamentary session. But the circumstances under which my friend Mr. Bazley made known to me the desire entertained here, led me at once to feel, as I communicated to him in reply, that I had no choice to exercise. It was an opportunity which I too dearly prized, because, although unhappily any token of sympathy that it is in my power to render you must be feeble and barren for the occasion, yet that token of sympathy, such as it is, it was impossible for me to withhold. And, Sir, if I felt that the occasion required me to come—if I felt before I had had experience such as

this meeting has afforded me that the object of this Association was a noble and a worthy one,—I assure you that after what I have seen to-night that conviction is deepened and strengthened in my mind. It was impossible to see the candidates who have successfully entered into the examination for certificates and prizes, to watch their demeanour, so modest and yet so manly, as they passed across this platform, without emotion. And I beg now to assure them, one and all, that the few words of compliment or congratulation which I hastily endeavoured to address to them on their way were no words of idle form or ceremonial (cheers), but that they express a feeling deeply seated in my heart. It was impossible to regard them without interest for what they have done, for what they may yet live to do, for the example which they are setting to their own generation, and for opening the path of duty and of honour to those that shall hereafter succeed both us and them. (Cheers.) They are happy, Sir, in this respect, that they live in times when the rising energies of youth are not met on every side, as was

once the case, even in merry England, with difficulty and with discouragement. There may be many here who have made themselves acquainted with a book that cannot be too widely brought into public notice—I mean the recent publication of a popular author, Mr. Smiles, entitled ‘The Lives of the Engineers.’ (Cheers.) There may be those here who have read the ‘Life of Brindley,’ and perused the record of his discouragements in the tardiness of his own faculties, as well as in the external circumstances with which he determined to do battle, and over which he achieved his triumph. There may be those who have read the exploits of the blind Metcalfe, who made roads and bridges in England at a time when nobody else had learnt to make them. There may be those who have dwelt with interest on the achievements of Smeaton, Rennie, and Telford. In that book we see of what materials Englishmen are made; and I am happy to say that of these materials Lancashire, and surely Cheshire too, possess at least their share. (Cheers.)

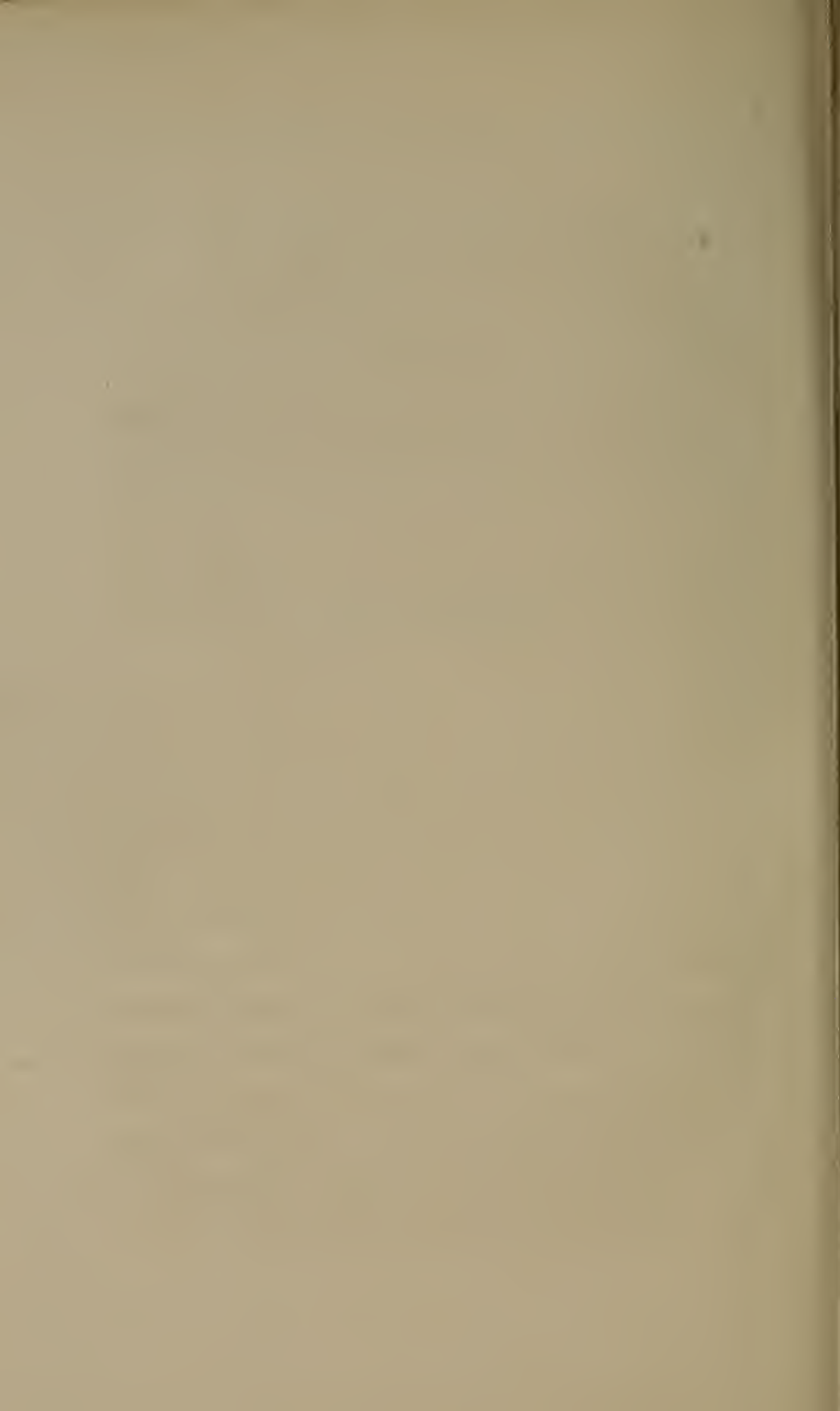
These men, whose names have now become

famous among us, had no mechanics' institutes, no libraries, no classes, no examinations to cheer them on their way. In the deepest poverty, amidst the greatest difficulties and discouragements, their energies were found sufficient for their work, and they have written their names on a conspicuous and a glorious page in the history of their country. May you, my younger friends, be enabled in like manner, bearing up, where it touches you, against the pressure of the present times, to put your trust, as they put theirs, in an Almighty Providence! May you be enabled to imitate their noble example, to develop by patience and by resolute labour the gifts that lie within you! and rely upon it, that earnest strength of will and humble courage will never lose their reward. You have human friends around you, and you have inward aids afforded to you, for the Almighty has given to every man who desires to improve himself and serve his country the means to effect that aim and render that service. May His favour be with you and prosper you! May your numbers multiply from year to year, and may the

success you individually have thus far achieved be to you, not merely testimonials for the past, but harbingers for the future! May you live the life which on your deathbed you will desire to have lived; and may its course be cheered, for every one of you, by every encouragement and reward which your industry and ability may justly have deserved! (Cheers.)

This brought the proceedings of the evening to a close.

SPEECH.



S P E E C H

IN ANSWER TO

AN ADDRESS PRESENTED BY THE CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE, ON THE 24TH APRIL, 1862.

THE CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER, on stepping forward to address the meeting, was greeted with vehement cheers. He said:—

MR. MAYOR, MR. ASHWORTH, AND GENTLEMEN,—You have in this address appropriately reminded me of the gratifying occasion when I received a similar testimony of your confidence and goodwill now nearly nine years ago. And that circumstance naturally suggests some comparison between the state of things in which we then stood and that in which we now find ourselves. Great changes have occurred during these nine years. The political temper of the country is not what it was. I am bound to say, not without some regret, that I think a moment of comparative lethargy has come over the

spirit of the Parliament and of the people. (Hear, hear.) There are particular questions, which it would be easy to point out, in the treatment of which some of that comparative lethargy may be traced. One, perhaps, I may name for a moment, in the expression of my own individual opinion. It is the question of the elective franchise. (Hear.) In the treatment of that question, the indications of such a lethargy can hardly be mistaken. But, Gentlemen, let me upon this subject make two remarks. In the first place, I believe that in this country we have had, upon the whole, during the last thirty years, a period of legislative activity as well as of social progress—but I speak now especially of legislative activity—almost entirely directed to good and noble objects, with great skill, great energy, and great success, such as, perhaps, had never before marked our history. I believe that if you compared the whole legislation of the country from the Revolution of 1688 down to the year 1830, with our legislation between 1830 and the close of the twenty-three years which elapsed before the Russian war, you would find that

those twenty-three years comprised an amount of honest labour in the public service on the part of the Houses of Parliament, as great, when measured by its results, as had been discharged within the previous century and a-half; and, perhaps, although we may regret, we cannot wonder if, after such a period of activity, nations and Parliaments as well as men, feel some temptation to repose. But the other observation that I would make to you is this: we are still in possession—and are still marked in no small degree among the nations of the earth by the possession—of our invaluable institutions; and so soon as the spirit of the people of England shall assume a more active tone, then, in this truly self-governing country—the most self-governing country, as I believe, in the world—the temper of the Parliament will answer faithfully to the temper of the nation; and that which the settled convictions and cultivated intelligence of the people may demand will be fully represented in administrative and in legislative action. (Hear, hear.)

Now there is one particular contrast between

the two periods of 1853 and 1862 respectively, to which my friend Mr. Ashworth has referred, and which is especially connected with the department that I have the honour to administer. I cannot but avow to you that the condition of our finance is not what it was when I met you last. (Hear, hear). In the year 1853 we had with little less than an expenditure of $55\frac{1}{4}$ millions, a revenue of little less than 59 millions; and this too although 1853 was a year in which from three to four millions of taxes, if I recollect rightly, were reduced. We had then a surplus of $3\frac{1}{2}$ millions of income over our expenditure. That was an honest, a sound, and a healthful state for the finances of this country. (Hear.) We stand now in a position materially different. It is all, or more than all, that we can do to bring about anything resembling a balance of revenue and expenditure. The utmost we can say to you is that we have not been drawn into that vortex into which almost every other country has been dragged—we have not been begging for loans in the money-market to carry on the Government in time of peace. (Cheers.) Now, there

are those who, naturally enough, tell you that this state of our finance, which I hold forth to you as unhealthy, is owing to the misconduct of the Government, and almost entirely, perhaps, to the delinquencies of a particular individual. (A laugh.) There are those who would say, "If you had imposed some more taxes, or if you had reduced fewer, we should have been able to show a better state of the account, a more satisfactory posture of affairs." Gentlemen, with all the conviction of my mind, and in the broadest sense, I deny that statement. (Hear, hear.) The taxes we have reduced have been taxes in which the receipts of the Exchequer bore no just proportion to the burden imposed upon the people. Even if, at the moment, they are not fully replaced, it is our business not to confine our view to the moment. After the lapse of one, two, or three years, we know that the result of such measures wisely chosen has ever been to make the Exchequer richer; and also that, in the mean time, their effect is, under a great weight of taxation, to induce, dispose, and enable the people to bear its pressure. What, Gentlemen, has been the state of things in this

respect? During the last three years our revenue has been on the average $70\frac{1}{2}$ millions. I may say with substantial truth that this is the largest revenue which has ever been raised in this country, not only in time of peace, but even in time of war. In the three years of the Russian war, when the income-tax was at $16d.$ in the pound, the revenue raised was $70\frac{1}{4}$ millions. In the last three years of the great Revolutionary war, when the income-tax was at $2s.$ in the pound, the revenue raised was $70\frac{3}{4}$ millions. But as this last-named amount of revenue was raised in a currency materially depreciated, the $70\frac{1}{2}$ millions, which we have been raising for the last three years, considerably exceed in real power the revenue of the last three years of the Revolutionary war. Now, that is the state up to which our revenue has been brought. And, Gentlemen, I often in my own mind draw a contrast between the two periods at which I have myself been called upon to administer the finances of this country. The office of the Chancellor of the Exchequer is never a popular office. A very large part of his time is, even under the happiest circum-

stances, spent in saying to those who demand public expenditure, "No, no, no." (Laughter.) Well, when I first held that office, I found the function not altogether agreeable, but still practicable. During the second time that I held it I have found at once that all the powers of resistance and of negation, so to speak, were taxed infinitely more, and that the results were infinitely less. (A laugh.) The time of great expenditure, gentlemen, is the time when the Chancellor of the Exchequer is not in a paradise (laughter)—I will not describe his condition by any stronger or more positive term. But the reason why I mention these matters to you, and point out to you that the present state of affairs is one not compatible in my opinion with a thoroughly healthy finance ("hear, hear"), is because, as I have said, this country is in the main a self-governing country. The expenditure, which has been brought about, has not been forced by the Government upon the Parliament, nor by the Parliament upon the country. I am in your hearing, Gentlemen, and under your correction, when I say that partly, no doubt, this expenditure has been a

right and justifiable increase connected with the increasing wants of the country, connected with the growth of education, connected with real civil or military necessities ; but, taking it as a whole, it has been demanded and called for by the public voice. (Hear, hear.) If we are, therefore, to have prospectively an alteration, it must be an alteration brought about by an alteration in the turn of the public mind. (Hear, hear.) I cannot say to you that I don't believe—for I do believe—not indeed that we can go back to the rate of expenditure we had in 1853, but that, with judgment and firmness, material reductions may progressively be made. (Hear, hear.) We are not even now as far from the mark as we have been. It is not the fact that, as far as the state of our establishments and of our estimates is concerned, the expenditure is at this moment increasing. Of course, I cannot answer for what extraordinary circumstances may require during the present year, but the figures of the year on which we have now entered show that, in the absence of those extraordinary circumstances, we shall have a real reduction of expenditure, compared with last year, of,

as far as we can judge, more than a million of money. But at the same time, it must mainly rest with the nation itself to determine what is to be its own future course in this respect. If it be the pleasure of the nation to press upon its representatives the advocacy of all kinds of measures, warlike or peaceful, or both peaceful and warlike—I can draw no distinction—if it be the pleasure of the nation to urge those measures upon the Parliament, the Parliament will urge them upon the Government; and it is not in the power of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, let him do what he will, effectually to resist a tide which flows in upon him from every quarter, and which, while he is spending his powers of resistance at a given point, breaks in upon him from many others. (A laugh.) If, on the other hand, it be the desire of the people, founded upon a perception of the true state of affairs, and founded also upon the knowledge that we have not now that thoroughly sound and good position in finance which we had nine years ago, that we should contract in some degree the scale of our expenditure, and re-establish a perfectly sound relation between

the outgoings of the country and the resources of the Exchequer, then I say, Gentlemen, that you know as well as I do that it will take no long time to bring that result about. (Cheers). So much, then, for the subject of our expenditure, on which I could not but offer a few words, in which I hope that I have avoided, alike as to the past and as to the future, all exaggeration, because, after having done what in me lies within the limits of my department to repress the tendency of that expenditure to extravagance where I can, my next duty, and perhaps my weightiest duty of all, is never to practise or suffer concealment before the country, but to endeavour to bring home to the mind of the people, whether in my place in Parliament, or where any other legitimate opportunity may be afforded me, the true and real state of things. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Mayor, and Gentlemen, I now come to points which more particularly touch the state of your own district and community. We stand here at a time when, but for one unfortunate event, it is probable that you and your workpeople would alike be enjoying a great

prosperity. That one unfortunate event you have described, and I think truly described, in your Address, as "the deplorable struggle in which the two sections of the great American Republic are now engaged." It is, Gentlemen, a deplorable struggle. We are not of those, if such there were, who envied the greatness of the American Republic. (Hear, hear.) We could have been well content to see her enlarge her borders from year to year, gradually increasing in her wealth and strength. We should have retained the consciousness that on our part nothing would be done to prevent the continuance of the most friendly and peaceful relations, and the admiration with which we regarded the energy of that nation would have been totally untinged either by envy or by fear. (Hear, hear.) But the struggle has come about through no fault of ours. Still I think we cannot but feel that the position and attitude of this country with respect to the United States have not on the other side of the Atlantic been quite fairly or impartially judged. (Hear, hear.) Now, I am not going to make this a matter of complaint. Let us sympathize with our Ame-

rican brethren in their difficulties. Let us allow that under the excitement of those difficulties, and of a desperate and agonizing conflict, the minds of men are not in that state of tranquillity which renders them the best judges of the conduct of their neighbours. In such circumstances the proportions of objects alter before the eye, and expectations are formed and thought to be just, which in a dispassionate moment will be seen and felt to have been unfounded. Why, Gentlemen, there was a demand made upon us by the public voice in America at the outset of this deplorable struggle for what was called sympathy. What was the real meaning of that demand? Now I hope that in what I say I shall not use a word inconsistent with that fraternal feeling which I desire to cherish towards all men, and especially towards our kindred beyond the Atlantic. But, practically, the meaning of that desire and call for sympathy, as far as I understand it, was this,—that we should take such a course by our language and by our public acts, as would place the 6,000,000 or the 10,000,000 of men of the South—I care not which manner of estimating

their numbers you adopt—in permanent hostility with us. (Hear.) Now, we may have our own opinions—and I imagine we all have them—about the institutions of the South, as, unfortunately, we may also have occasion to hold our own private opinions about the countenance that has been given to those institutions in the North. (Cheers.) But that is no reason why, on the one side or the other, we should pursue a course of conduct that is to lay the foundation of a profound alienation of feeling, and of permanent hostility, between ourselves and those who may hereafter be a great nation claiming to enter into peaceful relations with us. (Cheers.) Why, no doubt, if we could see that this was a contest of slavery or freedom, there is not a man in this room—there is hardly, perhaps, a man in all England—who would for a moment hesitate as to the side he should take. But we have no faith in the propagation of free institutions, either social or political, at the point of the sword among those who are not prepared to receive them (“hear, hear”); it is not by such means that the ends of freedom are to be gained. Freedom, to be real, must be freely

accepted—freely embraced. You cannot invade a nation in order to convert its institutions from bad ones into good ones (cheers); and our friends in the North have, as we think, made a great mistake in supposing that they can bend all the horrors of this war to philanthropic ends. Indeed, Gentlemen, there are those among us who think—and I confess that I, for one, have shared the apprehension—that if in the course of the vicissitudes of the war the Southern States of America should send an embassy to Washington, and should say, “Very well, we are ready to lay down our arms on one condition; we are ready to renew the compact and ready to make it perpetual; we are ready to attach to it every security and guarantee that you can imagine for holding us fast, but upon this one condition,—that you shall assure us that there shall be no interference with our domestic institutions;”—ah! Gentlemen, we have heard of the fear that that application—if it were made—would receive a very favourable reply. (Cheers.) I think it was well stated by my noble colleague, Lord Russell, that this was a struggle on the one side for supremacy, and

on the other for independence. (Cheers.) Now, I cannot but sympathise with those who are described as making the struggle for supremacy. It is painful to surrender a great, an imposing, and a magnificent national unity. We, the English people, in other times have felt that pain. (Hear, hear.) We know what it was. Old George III. upon the throne, whether you approve his policy in all things or not, had all the feelings of an Englishman; he was a true Englishman in heart and sentiment. He felt his heart rent in twain by the laceration of the empire when the American Colonies were parted from us. But the experience we have had in our own national history supplies us in some degree with means of judging of the prospects of this American struggle better than those which are possessed by the Americans themselves. We have found that after the pain of that severance was over we came at length to recognise it as a good; and we are thankful that the American Colonies were parted from us, because we now perceive that we could not have governed or held them for their good or for our own advantage as they have been enabled to govern

themselves. (Hear, hear.) Some persons may say that the Northern States are a great deal stronger than the Southern, and therefore they must win. Now, England was in former times a great deal stronger than Scotland, but Englishmen as well as Scotchmen now know that when it was the object of England to establish by force her supremacy over Scotland the Scotch proved themselves to be what are called "very ugly customers" (laughter); and at length it was not the exercise of force, but a sense of policy and prudence on both sides, dictated in the main perhaps by physical circumstances, which led to the political union of the two kingdoms. But the position taken by the Northern States is this: "We won't let you go;" while the position taken by the Southern States is, "We are determined to go." ("Hear, hear," and a laugh.) Well, Gentlemen, you are men of business, and I ask you if one of you has got a partner, and that partner wants to separate from you, whether in the long run it is not very difficult to hold him. (Laughter and cheers.) But, supposing that you were able to hold that partner, supposing you could contrive some indenture of

partnership by which he should abdicate his free-will and tie himself to you like a captive at the chariot wheel of a victor, he still retaining an alienated heart, no common interest in the business, having a desire to trip you up and embarrass you; why, I say, you would not upon such terms hold that partner if you could. (Cheers.) The Northern States of America have undertaken a military enterprise of enormous difficulty. It is but fair, I think, that we should record our sense, I mean our admiration, of the vast and gigantic energies which they have unfolded in the prosecution of this enterprise. They have had of late various successes in the field. These may or may not continue. Let us suppose they do. Then, here again I fall back on our English experience. Revert to the annals of the War of Independence between the American Colonies and this country, and see where was the balance, the large balance, of successes in the field. It was not for want of such successes that we did not conquer those colonies. It was because we found that when we had been successful in the field we were no nearer our fixed object than before. (Cheers.)

No doubt it was foreign intervention which brought the American war to an end. But that intervention, as I believe, only accelerated the crisis of the struggle. Had France not intervened, we should probably have continued to conquer on the field, and to find that while conquering we had failed. For, when men are endeavouring to conquer a country, the question is not whether you can break up its embattled armies and drive them off the plain where you have contended with them in fight. The question is this, and this alone—whether the heart of that country is set upon separation? (Cheers.) If it is not set upon separation, it may be conquered; but, if the heart of the Southern States is set upon separation, and if the same spirit and force of resistance, which animated Washington and the men of Virginia in his day, still incites and sustains those who inhabit the Southern States, then it seems almost impossible that the military object should be effected: and, even if it were, the civil and political difficulties remaining would render that military success itself a curse and a misery to those who had achieved it.

(Cheers.) Well, Gentlemen, we in this country are in the habit of plain speaking; and, considering the nearness and intimacy of our relations with all those who inhabit the North American continent, it is well, I think, that we should test and probe our own minds in regard to the sentiments with which we view what you have well described as this "deplorable struggle." Further, when we have so probed and tested them, it seems hardly permissible for us to remain silent upon a matter which so nearly touches the welfare not only of America but of the whole civilised world. It is vain and mischievous to bring railing accusations against either the policy of the North or the institutions of the South. I hold it a duty to avoid, with all possible care, every irritating expression; but with these reservations I cannot do otherwise than tell out plainly what I think of this hopeless and devastating war. May the Almighty Disposer of all hearts bring the struggle quickly to an end! If for our own sakes in part, yet more and much more for the sake of the Americans themselves — may the frightful conflict quickly reach its termination!

(Cheers.) May that issue arrive, not which we wish or may prefer, but which is for the peace, the happiness, and the welfare of the inhabitants of that country, be they white or be they black! (Hear, hear.)

However, Gentlemen, we also see the painful effects of this struggle upon ourselves—it is impossible to deny them—and not upon ourselves alone, but upon the other countries of Europe likewise. France is suffering, Belgium is suffering, every country that has a cotton manufacture is suffering grievously,—more grievously in proportion to the numbers employed than in this kingdom, because they do not profit in the same way with ourselves by the Indian supply, and because in those countries there is not quite the same sense of independence, there is a greater disposition to lean on the Government for help, than happily prevails among ourselves. But when we are told by any organ of American opinion that Europe or that England has behaved unhandsomely by America, I feel the utmost confidence that the final verdict of history will be this:—That there never was an occasion in which not

England only but the civilized nations of the world in general bore, and were content to bear, so much real misery resulting from a civil and municipal quarrel in another State without interference in that quarrel, as has been patiently and silently endured on the present occasion. (Cheers.)

If we look at the pain that is brought upon our people, it is a grievous thought. In another point of view, it is a remarkable testimony to the real progress of civilising and peaceful ideas among the nations of the world. It is in homage to what is called an abstract principle that all this misery has been borne;—this remarkable conduct has sprung from a sense of the danger and mischief of interference, unless upon grounds alike legitimate and urgent, in the intestine quarrels of other countries. And the deference that has been paid to that principle of international policy by England and by all the nations of Europe is, I say, among the remarkable features that will hereafter determine the character of history as applicable to this nineteenth century. (Cheers.)

In your own district, Gentlemen, it is impos-

sible to move from place to place without being struck, on the one hand, by the menacing character of the time, no man knowing whether to-morrow will not be darker than to-day, or whether another month will not show a great advance in the tale of suffering upon the month that is now running. On the other hand, the moral and the social signs which the darkness of this period has brought into view, though the eye might not have discovered them amid the glare of prosperity, are such as at once touch the heart and cheer the mind of men with the hopes that they open for the future. We are told that the people cannot be trusted—that they are fit for nothing except to earn daily bread—that you must not call them to the exercise of higher functions, or look to them for enlightened views. I ask what a practical evidence of enlightened views are the working men of Lancashire and Cheshire now affording (cheers)—in their patient endurance, in their mutual help, in their respect for order, in their sense of independence, in their desire to be a burden to no one, in the resignation with which they

submit to positive and sharp privation ! And, having spoken of the workpeople, let me add thus much, that, if I am able to judge, the masters who employ them are worthy of those workpeople, and I can give them no higher praise. It is a satisfactory, ay, it is an ennobling spectacle, to see and know the way in which in this city, and I believe throughout the district, according to their means, employment is given ; the steam-engine is kept going ; the factory, if not on all days, on some days is kept at work, not with a hope of profit to the master, but in the face of known and positive loss, in order that even under the pressure of difficulty they may not desert and abandon the noble workmen they employ. Gentlemen, this is a sight good for us all. It shows us that in this country class is bound to class by something better than merely pecuniary and economical relations. It shows that in the community you have something of a common heart. And the day may come when you will look back upon this time of crisis as a period which was blessed to you in this, that it united you more closely

than ever before to the workpeople among whom you live. (Hear, hear.)

Gentlemen, I am sensible that I have detained you for a long time ("No, no," and "Go on"); and I am also conscious that it is hardly necessary for me to dwell at any length upon those matters to which my friend Mr. Ashworth has referred—I mean, those important economic truths, once so sharply contested, which have made gradual and peaceful way, which have obtained in England, thank God! we may say, an undisputed sway, and which we trust are now spreading—silently, calmly, but effectually spreading—from England to the other nations of the world. There is but one of all the changes that have taken place, to which I think it needful to advert. Only, I must also in passing offer a single criticism on a passage in the speech of Mr. Ashworth. It is not my business to canvass minutely any language of eulogy which you, in the warmth of your feeling, may be disposed to employ towards me; but I cannot with justice allow myself to be associated, even in a complimentary speech on a complimentary

occasion, in terms approaching to equality with my late chief and lamented friend Sir Robert Peel. I was nothing but the subordinate officer of the Government of Sir R. Peel, whose duty it was, in 1841, for the first time in my life, to turn my mind to questions connected with the economical system, and the fiscal and commercial legislation of this country. The result of that application was at once to undermine and break up any traditional or political regard which I might previously have had for a protective system. (Hear, hear.) And from the year 1842, not always in a conspicuous position, but, I trust, with consistency, and certainly with a sincere purpose of heart, I have laboured to prosecute that great work of gradual emancipation in which Sir R. Peel has achieved so much more conspicuous a place. (Cheers.) And it has been my happiness, in the prosecution of that work towards what may well nigh be called its completion, both to be supported by the confidence and approval of those who have applied their minds to the subject, and I trust, likewise, to be the humble instrument

of conferring some benefit on my country.
(Cheers.)

There is, then, Mr. Mayor, only one other subject to which I will refer. It is one with regard to which, though I took a part, the merit of what has been done does not belong to me. I mean the Commercial Treaty with France. It has been my delight on every occasion, in Parliament and out of Parliament, to record my sense of the immense obligations which this country is under to Mr. Cobden (loud and continued cheers), for his enlightened, his exhausting, but his unwearied labour, in the achievement of that great act. It is a great act, Gentlemen. (Cheers.) It has been the subject of cavil; it was met with objection and opposition. You will hardly believe what I now tell you, and I will not name the name; but one Member of Parliament there was, sufficiently bold to say, during the discussions on the French Treaty, that he regarded it as fraught with mischief so virulent that he would rather we were at once plunged into war with France, than that that treaty should take effect. (Cries of "Shame!")

Well, Gentlemen, that was an error of opinion. The treaty has been made. The treaty has given a great and a timely stimulus to business. It has done less for you than it has done in some other districts; but even here, under the difficult circumstances of the time, its influence may have been felt. It has commercially answered thus far all our expectations; and we entertain sentiments of admiration and gratitude for the enlightened views which prompted the Emperor and Government of France boldly to conclude that instrument, as well as for the distinguished and conspicuous part played by our friend and fellow-countryman, Mr. Cobden. But, Gentlemen, great as has been the development of our trade with France consequent upon that treaty, that has not been all. As is so justly stated in this Address, an evidence has been afforded, in this relaxation of the protective system of France, that our example has begun to influence Continental nations. Already we see beginnings elsewhere. In Italy (cheers) great revolutions in the tariff have accompanied the progress of rational liberty, and the foundation of institu-

tions in that country which it would, perhaps, not be too much to say are likely in no long space of time to be, more than those of any other great nation in the world, akin to British institutions. (Cheers.) In Belgium, in Germany, the indications of a like movement are exhibiting themselves. The example of England in the path of free trade, as long as she stood alone, was not readily effective with the rest of the world. A kind of cant phrase was in vogue in foreign nations, such as that "England has made herself great by Protection, and she now wants to kick down the ladder by which she alone has mounted." (A laugh.) But the example of France is a far more telling argument. France was known to be a country thoroughly protective in spirit, and my belief is that the silent force of her example, rather than any more direct influence, will produce a most beneficial effect in gradually relaxing international restrictions, and thus promoting the trade and commerce of the world. But it is not even this view, extensive as it is, which exhibits the whole scope of the benefits that have been aimed at, and are likely to be achieved, through the

French Treaty. It is the silent growth of civilizing and peaceful influences, to which I think we have a right to look as the crown and the flower of all the advantages that such a treaty is calculated to convey. (Cheers.) It is not, Gentlemen, the impression of the moment, not what may be said or thought at the moment, upon the particulars of the treaty, or upon the political aspects which it may in the ideas of some persons present. In my opinion those political aspects are most important, and were from the first a material portion of the motives for prosecuting the enterprise to its end, because I believe there is nothing at all to be compared with the political harmony of England and France for giving security to peace and order in the world. (Hear, hear.) But it is not even this in which, in my opinion, the last and greatest advantage of the treaty consists. It is in the silent, the unseen, but the continued and innumerable kindly influences, which it brings into constant operation between Englishmen and Frenchmen. I mentioned in the House of Commons a circumstance even more interesting, in my view, than the increase

of commerce; it was the increase of letters between the two countries. (Hear, hear.) I am not sure that I recollect the figures, I think the increase had been four millions, but I remember this more distinctly—that whereas before the treaty the letters between this country and France increased at the rate of about 4 per cent. per annum, the immediate consequence of the treaty was that they increased by 20 per cent. (Hear, hear.) Well, now, what do these letters mean? They mean the conduct in each case of transactions which of themselves have a calm, a quiet, an unperceived, but an inevitable, tendency to generate kindly and fraternal feelings. They are each of them, as it were, a slight and tender fibre, the fibres combined into threads; and the threads into strong tissues not easily to be torn. Will you allow me, in bringing these remarks to a conclusion, to illustrate my meaning for a moment by referring to a poem written by a divine now living—the Dean of Westminster—who also holds no mean place among the poets of our time? He visited in Italy the scene of one of the great battles between the Carthagi-

nians and the Romans. He saw that all was peaceful. But he recollected that, at the time when that battle had been fought, houses were destroyed, woods were burnt, crops were devastated, the ground lay strewn with corpses, and the whole face of nature was made hideous before Heaven by the work and hand of man. Meditating within himself how Nature had set herself quietly and calmly to work on that torn and mangled battle-field to remove the traces of that bloody day, and finding at the time when he saw it that not one of those vestiges remained, he wrote as follows:—

“ With what success has Nature each sad trace
Of man’s red footsteps laboured to efface!
. . . . This spot appears
Guiltless of strife when now two thousand years
Of daily reparation have gone by
Since it resumed its own tranquillity.”

(Cheers.) It is even so in the moral as in the physical world. Some bloody quarrel, some diplomatic controversy portending strife, some state of the public mind fraught with anger and animosity, or fraught, it may be, with terror and suspicion, produces estrangement

between nations in a moment, and threatens even the last extremities. Well, Gentlemen, that alienation, that anger, that suspicion which prevails on both sides constitutes a dangerous state of preparation for actual warfare. You cannot reason with it. When men are in that state of excitement it is vain to think that it can be suddenly allayed. All you can hope to do is that you may be able to circumvent it. If you can place those nations, upon a distinct and separate ground, in friendly relations with one another—if you can cause them to meet each other as brethren in the ordinary business of life—if you can extend and multiply the occasions of their so meeting—if you can put them in a position in which they will be constantly learning to appreciate and confide in each other's virtues, and to be thinking mildly of each other's faults or failings—if you can teach them how much good, as well as how much evil, it is in the power of man to do to his brother man in the world in which we live—then, Gentlemen, silently, gradually, imperceptibly, but effectively, even like the kindly action of Nature upon the arena of deadly fight, you too may

efface the traces of anger and of wrath—you may gradually, from day to day, from month to month, and from year to year, be causing them to pass into oblivion, and you may bring the minds of these two nations at last to a state in which they shall represent as fair a face of harmony and concord as did that ancient battlefield, teeming with its beautiful and luxuriant vegetation, after the lapse of two thousand years. (Cheers.) This, Gentlemen, I do not hesitate to say is, in my sense and view, the highest aim and purport of that great instrument the Commercial Treaty with France. (Hear, hear.) I am not so sanguine as to believe that it is in itself an infallible specific—such specifics you cannot have. It is not given to us to alter the fundamental conditions of human society. We must be content to meet them when they confront us, and to deal with them as we may. But let us, at any rate, do what we can; and if we have to fear that in the vicissitudes of human affairs differences will continually arise between nation and nation, at least let us take pains to bring, if we can, counteracting forces into play, to give to those forces the utmost

development in our power, and to prove, if it please God we may, before the face of the civilised world, that the cause of commerce, in which you are engaged, is also in no small degree the cause of peace, and of the welfare and happiness of mankind. (Loud and prolonged cheers.)

THE END.









