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“Our Historic Mission.”

*Smithsonian Institution
Washington City*

AN ADDRESS

D.C.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

EUNOMIAN AND PHI-MU SOCIETIES

OF

LA GRANGE SYNODICAL COLLEGE,

JULY 7, 1858.

BY B. M. PALMER, D. D.,

OF NEW ORLEANS.

NEW ORLEANS:

“TRUE WITNESS” OFFICE, 88 GRAVIER STREET.

1859,

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CORRESPONDENCE.



LA GRANGE, TENN., July 8th, 1858.

Rev. B. M. PALMER, D. D.

DEAR SIR—Having listened with great pleasure and satisfaction to the very able address delivered by you before the two Literary Societies in La Grange Synodical College, on the evening of July 7th, we are authorized to request of you, a copy of the same, for publication.

By complying with our request, you will not only confer a great favor on us, but on many others, who had not the privilege of hearing you on that occasion.

We are very respectfully yours, &c.,

R. F. LANIER,
W. R. PARHAM, } PHI-MUS.
J. L. GRIGGS.

HENRY F. SCOTT,
JOHN C. CAMPBELL, } EUNOMIANS.
JNO. A. MOODY.

LA GRANGE, TENN., July 8th, 1858.

To Messrs. H. F. SCOTT and others, *Committee*:

GENTLEMEN—I am fully aware of the defects of the address which you request for publication. Yet as it was prepared for you, it is perhaps your property; and as such I herewith submit it to your disposal.

I am, Gentlemen,

Respectfully and truly yours,

M. B. PALMER.

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ADDRESS.

THE student, in his attempt to achieve a competent knowledge of universal history, naturally pauses beneath the frowning shadow of so colossal a task ; just as the traveller stops to measure with his eye the steep ascent of some rugged mountain, lifting its head into the blue heavens above. This spell of despair is soon broken by remembering with Frederick Schlegel, that “as the individuals who can be termed historical form but rare exceptions among mankind, so in the whole circumference of the globe there are only certain nations that occupy a historical and really important place in the annals of civilization.” The amazing bulk of history is at once compressed within attainable limits. Thus with the exception of Egypt and the Mediterranean coast, the whole of Africa may be disregarded, as contributing nothing to human progress. So with all Polynesia ; with the vast territory of Northern Asia ; and with the continent of America, until by a transfer of languages and institutions it became a “second Europe.” A geographical chart of civilization is accordingly drawn by him in a belt of country of considerable though disproportionate width, from the south-east of Asia to the north-western extremity of Europe—presenting a chain of fifteen historical lands, whose records, classified in their respective periods, will afford a continuous history of the race from primitive antiquity to the present time.*

* The Philosophy of History, by Frederick Schlegel, Bohn's Ed.; pp. 108—114.

It would open a wide field of speculation to inquire how far these historic nations have been distinguished by characteristic traits, imparting a strict individuality to each. For example, whether in the panorama of Asiatic history, its leading countries, such as China, India, and Persia, would present to the eye of an observer a separate historical physiognomy, marked by such peculiarities of feature and expression that no transposition of them upon the canvass would blend them as historic personages in a confused and motley picture? Or, as the Gulf Stream throws its waters in a separate current far into the Atlantic waste, whether the separate channels of English, French, German, and Italian history can be as distinctly traced in the wide sea of European politics and civilization? Regarding all history as a unit—not the mere aggregation of single events bound up in chronology—but as a concrete whole, preserving, like the human body, its organization amidst the fluctuation and change to which it is subject; whether it is possible to specify the individual contributions made by these respective historic nations to that civilization which is the joint product of them all?

A lively French writer—whose speculations I have been permitted to peruse only in a partial translation in one of our leading Quarterlies—undertakes to show that each of the three divisions into which the human family was separated after the Flood, has been occupied with a distinct mission through the entire tract of their history. Thus, the race of Shem was providentially selected as the channel for transmitting religion and worship; and in this sacerdotal mission all its branches have consciously or unconsciously embarked. Through two thousand years the Hebrews were the chosen depositaries of an inspired faith. For the cultivation of this, they were remanded to the contemplation and quietude of pastoral life; were enclosed as in a park in the centre of the world,—in a land where the forms of nature presented their thoughts with

a poetic dress ; and were endowed with a language peculiarly fitted for the utterance of deep religious emotion. So too the Arabians, of the same stock, in a position likewise insulated and central, gave birth in later times to the most stupendous religious imposture the world has ever known. Blindly occupied with what may be termed their Shemitic function, they devised a religion without a mystery and without a sacrifice : and a religious enthusiasm transformed into sanguinary fanaticism has given form and color to Arabian history through twelve centuries, since the Hegira.

Japhet and his race—to condense still further the suggestions of Mons. Rougemont—seem designated to be the organ of human civilization, in cultivating the intellectual powers. Dividing historically into two great branches, the Japhetic whites, spreading over the diversified continent of Europe, through a protracted discipline develop the higher powers of the soul in politics, jurisprudence, science, and art : while the Asiatic Japhetites dispersed over a more monotonous continent, embark in those pursuits of industry fitted to the lower capacities of our nature.

The descendants of Ham, on the contrary, in whom the sensual and corporeal appetites predominate, are driven like an infected race beyond the deserts of Sahara, where under a glowing sky nature harmonizes with their brutal and savage disposition.*

If we prefer to descend from these wider generalizations to the contemplation of individual states, no philosophic reader can hesitate in determining the mission of ancient Greece, or in recognizing her influence upon the culture and progress of mankind. She was placed by God in the midst of the three

* The above paragraphs are a condensation from memory of an article to be found in an old number of the Bibliotheca Sacra. Not being in possession of it, however, the language could only be partially recalled, so that it could not be specifically quoted.

old divisions of the earth, to educate and refine the world. In the speculations of philosophy and in the cultivation of the arts, in whatever is most profound in thought or beautiful in sentiment, the creations of her genius are the accepted models to be imitated, but never surpassed. Her language, the most rich and harmonious ever spoken by man, is the repository of all the science and learning of the past, and has been consecrated by God for conveying the sublime mysteries of the Christian faith. Achieving for antiquity the work which in modern times Providence has more sparingly distributed between Italy, Germany, and France, we feel that to extinguish Greece would simply be to quench that civilization which now bathes the world in its splendor.

Rome also accomplished her mission in the practical, not less important than that of Greece in the æsthetic. She conquered the world with her legions, only to legislate for it through her statesmen and jurists. She evolved the idea of the State; and wrought out a system of jurisprudence which, equally with the philosophy of Greece, has become the common heritage of man.

Nor is it more difficult to trace the characteristic differences of modern nations. Germany is the land of speculation and intellectual activity. England, like ancient Rome, is the modern representative of state policy, working still upon the old problems of government and law. France excels in science and the culture of society; and Italy, through her elegant arts, is still the home of beauty and the ideal. Even those barbarous tribes, which from their nomadic life take no rank in the scale of nations, seem to have been providentially reserved to recruit the wasted energies of decaying civilization. Bursting from the recesses of their gloomy forests, or pouring like an avalanche from their mountain cliffs, they invigorate the races which for a time they overwhelm. Christianity, for instance, which did not regenerate corrupt and stubborn pagan Rome, easily seized upon the free and pliant elements of invading

Saxon and Gothic hordes; and by the aid of these transformed Europe, laying the foundation of her present mighty commonwealth of nations.

In this comprehensive view, history becomes an organic whole, whose different members, knit together by joints and bands, grow with a common growth and are instinct with a common life. But as all members in the body have not the same office, so every truly historic people is marked by its own characteristic traits; and will contribute its quota to complete that civilization which is the joint product and property of them all.

But, gentlemen of the Phi-Mu and Eunomian Societies, I have not raised these questions with the design of enticing you into the labyrinth of historical research. The limits of a brief address will not allow even a coarse profile to be drawn of all human history. And were it practicable, its mere coast-line of projecting headlands and receding bays, would reveal nothing to you of the landscape and scenery which would charm the eye of an explorer. I wish simply to indicate the steps by which I have ascended to the subject which I now propose to lay before you: a subject sufficiently practical to meet the demands of this popular occasion. Are we, in the sense already described, a historic people? or shall we permit Schlegel and other writers of the philosophy of history, to classify us as "a remote dependency, the mere continuation of old Europe on the other side of the Atlantic?" If we may justly claim an independent rank in the historic scale, what are the traits impressing us with the stamp of individuality? What great social and political problems are given us to be solved under conditions which meet in the fortunes of no other people? And what rank shall we hereafter occupy in the great temple of history, when its topstone shall be laid, and the nations of the earth meet in one mighty orchestra to swell the anthem of praise to Him who shall then unfold the finished scheme of Providence?

The want of a public national character has been too rashly charged upon us by those who overlook the peculiar circumstances under which our national career was begun. It is forgotten by many that we entered upon the political race already in possession of a high civilization, the slow accretion of past ages, the accumulated experience of other races; a civilization too stubborn to be worked over or essentially modified, the changes in which are inappreciable except through a very long tract of time. It has not been considered that our population is drawn from no single source, but is rather the confluence of all the tribes and tongues of Europe, and cannot therefore be expected to present the marked peculiarities of a strictly individual race; that this eclectic population is daily recruited by the accession of new immigrants, with all their traditional opinions and usages—that hitherto it has been diffused thinly in groups over a vast continent, never yet compacted by outside pressure, nor subjected to any discipline, severe enough to render it homologous. Yet in the face of all these admissions, the charge itself may be denied as not true, certainly to the extent alleged. Even under these disadvantages, a wise discrimination will discover traits which deserve to be considered national and distinctive. To the innate toughness bequeathed us by our Saxon ancestry, and to the wise conservatism derived from our more immediate English origin, we have added an independence which enters freely upon untried paths, guided neither by prescription nor authority. With these have been united a sturdy self-reliance, which pauses at no obstacles, and a heroic courage which estimates no dangers. The practical genius, too, of the American people will arrest the attention of all who attempt the analysis of their character: a practicalness rendered intense by the necessity of subduing a savage continent, and of developing its hidden resources; which may sometimes have judged by a false standard of what is substantial and true, which perhaps has impeded

our refinement in culture and embellishment in art, and which often in the individual degenerates into the coarseness of avarice and the idolatry of wealth: but which, as a national trait, spurns at theory and tramples upon speculation, when neither can be embodied in some useful and tangible result. By its quiet and silent force, it has however built a mighty empire in the bosom of a once unbroken wilderness—it has substituted commerce for conquest, and supplanted the sword and spear of the warrior by the plow and the axe of the colonist. It has achieved wonders more strange and romantic than are to be found in Eastern story, so that its facts impress the imagination equally with the gorgeous fictions of the Arabian Nights. Despite, too, the faithlessness to covenants which, in some portions of our confederacy, mars the record of passing events, I must add the finishing touch to this national portrait in that sublime subjection to law and love of order, which has ever characterized the American people. Indeed this is but the form in which is exhibited the proper self-respect of a people, who are conscious that the laws which they obey emanate from their own sovereign will; and with whom insubordination would only be the abdication of their own supremacy.

It is conceded that none of these attributes are purely original, as from the causes already mentioned they cannot be. A people so entirely composite as the American, can be expected only to reflect the traits which distinguish its constituent parts. Indeed the elements of character are too few in number to allow any other originality than that which arises from varied combination and the new direction imparted by altered circumstances. As in the human face the features are few, yet the artist's pencil reveals how the addition of a hair line, or the variation of the smallest angle, will give new expression to the whole: or as the elements in nature are exceedingly limited, yet the different proportions in which they are combined give us the endless variety of the physical universe:—so the traits which enter into

what we call character, both in the individual and in the nation, may be mingled in such diverse proportions and receive by outward causes so many directions, as to create distinctly individual personages who form new features in the world's history.

These preliminary suggestions need not be expanded.—American character finds its best exposition in American history. Let the caviller closely connect in his own thoughts the era of 1620 with that of 1776, the feeble beginnings of the one with the heroic achievements of the other, and trace the vast expansion of less than a century later. The scepticism which can resist the evidence of such a comparison would scarcely be satisfied with apologetic discourse and would deny a forceful and massive character to any people beneath the sun. But whether we are entitled to the consideration of a truly historic race will best be determined by the political problems, upon the solution of which our very destiny depends. The problems of all history, however difficult, are fortunately for mankind few in number. They may be reduced to four: the first *political*, touching personal freedom and national independence; the second, *ecclesiastic*, touching the conservation of religion; the third, *intellectual*, touching the whole education of a people: and the fourth, *economic*, touching the adjustments of the entire social scale. Around these four centres all the great movements in history will be found to sweep in constant and fearful eddies. Will it shock your faith, if I add that old as the world now is,—its history teeming throughout with political experiments,—not one of these problems has yet been worked out to its final result: and the nearest approximation to a satisfactory solution is that afforded in the history of our our country? Never, since the institution of civil magistracy in the death-penalty commanded to Noah, has a nation existed upon the face of the globe, under conditions so favorable for working out the problems of the historic calculus and giving its grand equation to the world. Never did a people so start exactly from the point of all past

human experience, yet so completely set loose from the trammels of old political formulas. Never was a population so peculiarly sifted out as the pure grain, and sown over a domain so ample and so exclusively its own. The future only will disclose whether we are to rejoice in the glory of complete success, or be covered with the shame of ignominious failure. Permit me now, gentlemen, to pass rapidly in review the four problems already named and to show how they form the four sides of the square upon which all American history is to be built.

I. *It is remitted then to us to prove, upon the largest scale, the possibility of self-government.* In the construction of all governments the aim is to secure the vigor necessary for protection, and to restrain as little as possible the liberty of the individual. In the progress from the simplicity of patriarchal times, the pursuits of men become more diversified and the interests of society correspondingly more complex. Power must accordingly be lodged somewhere to restrain the disorders arising within a community from the continual play of individual selfishness and passion. Since, too, the human race is broken up into distinct communities, which can never be united under one jurisdiction, power must reside somewhere to repel foreign aggression. Yet all experience has shown that the power which is created for purposes of protection tends, by usurpation and abuse, to become itself an instrument of oppression: and those nations which now rejoice in constitutional governments have attained to them only through a long and bitter struggle between Prerogative on the one hand and Privilege on the other. It would seem, however, upon the bare statement, that a government based upon the Democratic idea would necessarily be the most free: that is to say, a government where the sovereignty resides in the people—where the ruler is only a magistrate, holding his power by the suffrages of the governed, and periodically remitting his trust to the hands from whom it was first received. It surely is competent in such a

government to infuse sufficient vigor into all its departments—legislative, judicial, and executive, to afford protection to the subject; and at the same time, by a wise system of checks, by means of a written constitution, and especially by limiting the term of office and holding periodically all parties to a rigid account, so to define and limit power that it shall not impinge upon individual freedom. The construction of such a government was the work undertaken by our forefathers upon the rupture with the mother country; and it is instructive to observe how Providence had so shaped the conditions of things that no other experiment remained to them. Mr. Macaulay has finely described the conservative spirit of the English people, that “distaste for whatever is abstract in political science,” which leads them to eschew all legislation *in thesi*, and always to deal with the concrete and the real.* The history of the American revolution affords a striking illustration of the same spirit in their descendants on this side of the Atlantic. The statesmen of 1776 were no visionary constitution-makers, like those of the present day who attempt to fit capricious France to a political costume; nor were they restless radicals, pulling down existing institutions to make room for model governments of their own invention. They fought not for abstract rights, which they claimed as men; but for chartered rights, which they claimed as Englishmen. Monarchy was not so much repudi-

* The passage referred to is as follows: “In the English legislature the practical element has always predominated over the speculative. To think nothing of symmetry, and much of convenience; never to remove an anomaly merely because it is an anomaly; never to innovate except when some grievance is felt; never to innovate except so far as to get rid of the grievance; never to lay down any proposition of wider extent than the particular case for which it is necessary to provide: these are the rules which from the age of John to the age of Victoria generally guided the deliberations of our two hundred and fifty parliaments. Our national distaste for whatever is abstract in political science amounts undoubtedly to a fault; yet it is perhaps a fault on the right side. That we have been far too slow to improve our laws must be admitted. But though in other countries there may have occasionally been more rapid progress, it would not be easy to name any other country in which there has been so little retrogression.” History of England, vol. 3d, pp. 67-68, Boston edition.

ated, as liberty was sought: and if republicanism came forth as the result of the struggle, it was because divine Providence had ordained that a palpable advance should thus be made in the progress of mankind to freedom. If any branch of the royal family had resided upon these shores and had sympathized with the passionate struggle of a young nation to be both great and free, the conservative spirit of our forefathers would doubtless have led to the establishment of monarchy upon this continent. There was not, however, even a titled class, having the prestige of nobility and rank, from which a king could be chosen. In all countries where monarchy exists, the wide interval between the commonalty and the throne must be filled with an intermediate class, which shall render the ascent less abrupt and precipitous; and in the absence of this class, it was simply impossible to lift a single family from the uniform level of society to a permanent presidency over the rest. All these conditions of monarchy failing, the framers of our government showed their practical wisdom in boldly throwing aside what no conservatism could retain. They dwelt however too much in the light of the past to inaugurate a system of pure democracy. Herodotus, I believe it is, said long ago, that democracy becomes impracticable as soon as the population swells beyond five thousand. Through dissension and anarchy it is either speedily disintegrated, or reacts into military despotism. Certainly, a pure democracy projected upon the scale of our own country would have foundered almost as soon as launched, in the first political crisis. This accordingly was not attempted. The thirteen colonies being already furnished with the machinery of government, in their judiciary and domestic legislature, modelled somewhat after the English parliament, were simply united in a federal republic, with a written constitution strictly defining the trusts delegated to their common agent, and with all those checks and balances found in two deliberative chambers, the presidential veto, and State sovereignty.

This is not the occasion for minutely dissecting the mechanism of our government, nor am I the best expositor of its principles. It is enough to say that, under republican forms, this government of the people, covers now an area of more than three millions of square miles, nearly twice the expansion of the Roman [empire in the days of Trajan and the Antonines. The population which was at first scattered in hamlets upon the margin of the Atlantic, soon overtook the frowning barrier of the Alleghanies. From that point the Mississippi appeared like a silver thread just beneath the distant horizon, which now is recognized as digging a great trough in the very middle of the continent. The swelling human tide poured onward; and as we looked to see it surge and break at the foot of the Rocky mountains, by a mighty providential impulse it has overleaped this last barrier of nature, and pauses only where the setting sun hides his disk in the waters of another ocean. Even as I speak, this empire of a free self-governed people lifts its battlements in the front of Asia, as not long ago it put on its crown in the face of indignant and astonished Europe. The proud bird which bears our escutcheon in his beak, flaunts it over one quarter of the globe; as poising upon the highest peak of the Rocky range, he dips one wing in the Atlantic and the other in the Pacific, across the breadth of a continent.

I do but give utterance to an American thought, when I say that no other government than that of the people themselves is at all possible with us. A lapse into monarchy can only happen through the judicial displeasure of God; like ancient Israel, of whom it is said, "He gave them a king in his anger." The future history of this continent is wrapt up in the successful issue of this mighty experiment of self-government. If it fails, we must go "slouching down upon the wrong side of our crisis" into inextricable barbarism and ruin. The only point open to debate, is the scale upon which we shall succeed in working out this momentous problem. Hitherto the national

sentiment as a principle of cohesion, has been stronger than the combined elements of explosion. But whether the public virtue shall be sufficient to temper the violence of party, to restrain the collisions of sectional interests, and to check the rage of a frantic fanaticism; and above all, whether the moral power of this government shall be able to mould the countries which at no distant day it must either absorb or take under the wing of its protection, so as to assimilate them with their foreign institutions to itself; these are the unknown terms in the historic equation, upon which its final solution depends. But, if under adverse influences, this confederacy should be rent into sections, each large enough to make an empire as great as the proudest of ancient or modern times, the American principle of self-government by the people must still in these segments be applied; so that the problem itself shall only be affected in the grandeur of the scale upon which it shall be wrought out. The philosophic coolness with which this alternative is stated, will not, I trust, be construed into indifference as to the choice which should be made. Apart from the dread of innovation, and the imminent peril attending the framing of new constitutions in an age so radical as the present—apart from the fact that the inheritance we have in the glory of the past, is a joint inheritance, incapable of partition and distribution, no patriot or philanthropist but must desire this experiment of self-government to be achieved precisely under the conditions under which it was inaugurated. My own faith is not weakened in the stability of our political fabric. The rapid extension of our territory does not necessarily forebode ultimate ruin; since by it may be created new interests securing by compromise the good of the whole against the blind selfishness of section: just as the weight of the superstructure only binds more firmly the arch by which it is supported. The agitations and strifes through which we are passing do not appal me; for no operative principle in society was ever elaborated but in “the

working-house and forge" of human conflict and passion. In all this we are simply undergoing that discipline of probation necessary for the working out abstract principles into potential and historic facts. There is moreover a wonderful elasticity in every good government, by which it springs back from the constraint of temporary pressure. It may come once and again to the verge of dissolution, and by its own instinct of self-preservation recoil from the fatal plunge into the boiling abyss below. Certainly, the political crisis through which we have hitherto passed have only served to give a practical determination of great political principles. Though it may seem a paradox, all constitutional governments are the more secure for the very ease with which they may be shaken and convulsed; like the famous hanging rock of which I have somewhere read, so exactly balanced upon its own centre of gravity, that whilst it trembles beneath the finger of a child, it cannot be dislodged by the violence of the tornado, or through the heavings of an earthquake. If, a century hence, this soil should be pressed by a hundred millions of freemen, dwelling in their respective tribes, Ephraim not vexing Judah, nor Judah Ephraim, and adjusting all their differences in one august national council; the perpetuation of such a government upon this scale of grandeur, would be a monument to our praise beyond all the pyramids, the statues and obelisks which attest the heroism of other races. The historic mission of this country is the erection of such a shaft, piercing upward to the very stars, having a whole continent for its pedestal, enduring as the granite beneath our mountains, and bearing the prayer of a world, in its simple but sublime inscription, *esto perpetua*.

II. The second experiment in American history, involving the problem Ecclesiastic, has been carried to a triumphant issue *in the separation of the Church from the State*. These two communities are so distinct in their ends, which they achieve by instruments so diverse, that the wonder is how they were ever

confounded or commingled. Yet in almost all periods of time, and in all lands, the welfare of society has been supposed to depend upon an alliance between them. Bishop Warburton may be selected as the expositor of the theory which has obtained greatest currency in relation to this subject: that both are independent and sovereign societies, proposing different ends and hence not clashing even though the same persons are under the jurisdiction of both; that civil society labors under certain defects in attaining its ends, because it can only restrain from open transgression, because it cannot enforce the duties of imperfect obligation, and because it often inflames the appetites it proposes to correct; that religion having the sanction of rewards, while civil government has only that of punishments, exactly supplies these defects, and so the church becomes necessary as the complement of the state. A union is therefore formed for their mutual benefit, in which the state pledges itself to protect, endow, and extend the church, and the church to lend her whole influence to the state. The reciprocal concessions are that the church resigns her supremacy by constituting the civil magistrate her earthly head and by submitting her laws to the state's approval; and the state, in compensation, gives to the church a coercive power for the reformation of manners, and secures her a seat and representation in the national council. From immemorial antiquity this union has subsisted, justified sometimes by one theory, and sometimes by another. In the Jewish theocracy, of course, the state existed for the church, and was simply the ark which enshrined it. The founder of Christianity, it is true, distinctly proclaimed his kingdom to be not of this world, and uttered the words of divorce between them, when he said, "render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's." Certain it is that during three centuries the church not only sustained herself separately from the state, but sustained herself against the whole power of the latter; and was most characterized by vigor and expansion during this very period when she was known as "*ecclesia*

pressa." Yet no sooner did she come to empire through the conversion of Constantine than the fatal union was again formed with the state, and has been perpetuated ever since with all its pernicious results. In every one of the countries of Europe, as they emerged from the chaos of Gothic barbarism, the social fabric was constructed upon the consolidation of the two. The Reformation in the sixteenth century, which brought life and purity again to the church, brought no repudiation of this unnatural alliance; which rather found a home in all the constitutions political and religious which it produced. Within the last one thousand years, since the formation of Charlemagne's empire, it has not been possible in any one country upon the globe to attempt the separation of the two. The political and ecclesiastical threads have been so thoroughly interwoven, that the elimination of either would have involved the destruction of the entire tissue. The construction of our own government presented the first occasion in modern history for separating functions that are really so diverse; for which reason I have ventured to assign it as one of the great problems given us to solve for the benefit of mankind. Precisely by the same necessity which caused monarchy with an hereditary nobility to resign to primitive republicanism, did the established church likewise disappear. Before a church can be established by law, it must embrace the overwhelming majority of the population; it must be cherished with their most pleasing associations; it must enjoy the prestige of long antiquity. At the period of the Revolution, no one church possessed any of these requisites. Dissent had previously won its way in those countries from which our population was mainly supplied; and the churches, which had grown up under the frown of existing establishments, were transplanted here side by side. There was clearly the same impossibility, under existing circumstances, that any one of these should take precedence of the rest so as to be established by law, as that a single family should achieve and entail a perpetual dictatorship. There was no alternative but to throw

off all alike from any connection with the state, that no longer sucking the breasts of kings, they should live and grow by their inherent vitality. Our ancestors were wise enough to see at a glance the peculiarity of their position, to waive instantly all prejudices arising from education and habit, and to seize the true idea which alone could be realized. The question of an established church, like that of a monarchical government, was decided by them not upon abstract principles, but for political reasons, which nevertheless impelled them in the right direction.

We are so familiar with the peaceful operation of both in their respective spheres, as perhaps not duly to appreciate the wisdom and independence exhibited in initiating this experiment against the common judgment of mankind; and perhaps to overlook the glory which attaches to American history in the brilliant success with which it has been crowned. Probably there is not one American heart, amidst all the clashings of party politics, and the jarring of denominational strifes, that would tolerate the thought of their re-union. During eighty years the state has been free from all those perplexities which arise from its complication with the spiritual power; and the church unfettered by political intrigue, has kept pace with our spreading population, covering the land with the institutions of Christianity, and has exhibited in her foreign work the true aggressive spirit of the gospel more than in any period since the apostolic. When however in these days we see the pulpit, which, like the mercy-seat above, should be the place where men meet for reconciliation and peace, converted into a political rostrum, and the ambassadors of heaven degraded into jobbing politicians, it is a melancholy illustration how the secret principle of error often survives the destruction of its embodied form. Distinctly as we have in theory repudiated the union of church and state, we have yet to unlearn somewhat more the fallacies of former centuries. It only remains to draw forth the pious benevolence of the church, and to render voluntaryism more entirely competent to its high trusts, in

order to carry the argument forward to complete demonstration, and to crown our history with the glory it will shed upon it.

III. The third, or Educational problem, I approach with diffidence in the presence of so many who are charged with the management of this great interest. The crude suggestions of the speaker will however, I doubt not, be received as kindly as they are modestly ventured. It would be superfluous to argue that a government like ours, must rest at last upon the intelligence and virtue of the people. As they form the ultimate tribunal before which all questions must be submitted, their will must be enlightened; or like the prophet-judge of old, they will blindly lay hold upon the pillars of their liberty, and bury themselves beneath the ruins of their own political temple.

In all free governments a system of oral instruction obtains, the value of which to the masses is apt to be depreciated in an age of scholastic culture like the present. Yet it was precisely under this training the greatest nations of antiquity reached the proud pre-eminence we are compelled to assign to them. Under certain conditions, with a homogeneous people crowded upon a small territory, and with interests thoroughly interwoven, it is peculiarly effective in creating a public sentiment, and forming a national taste. Thus in old Greece, while philosophers distilled their wisdom in golden proverbs to the select few of the Academy, the "great commons" received a substantive education from other teachers and through other sources. The fanes and temples which crowned every hill-top in their beautiful land—the popular myths associated with every stream and lake and forest-glade—the statues of their illustrious dead—the battle plains consecrated by the blood of the martyrs of freedom—the Agora in which they wrangled—the Bema from which orators thundered forth such matchless eloquence—the recitations and poems chaunted at the national games and festivals, creating the very taste to whose criticism they seemed to bow: these were the methods of popular education under which Greece rose to the highest pitch of intel-

lectual greatness, and became "the mother of eloquence and the arts."

The political training of our own people is accomplished by very similar agencies. The frequent recurrence of elections necessitates the continual statement and discussion of political principles before the whole constituency of the country. As freedom of opinion gives rise to parties, great political issues are commingled with personal considerations in selecting between candidates for popular favor; while every presidential canvass draws the whole population into the vortex of political discussion, in determining the policy and creed of each succeeding administration. Nothing is done in a corner. The official acts of every magistrate, from the highest to the lowest—the proceedings of all our legislatures, domestic and national, are subjected to critical inspection—and the principles of every political party are perpetually sifted and analyzed. Through continual harangues by orators at the hustings, and by discussions in their primary assemblies—to say nothing of the influence of the newspaper press, which has become a recognized estate, or power in the realm—the work of indoctrination is carried forward until, ignorant of whatever else, our people are singularly enlightened upon political subjects; and are thus prepared for that substantial share which they have in the administration of the government.

In like manner, the importance of our whole judicial system as an educational institute should not be overlooked. This influence may not be so distinctly felt in cities, where men continually educate each other through the competitions and interlacings of business; but in the rural districts our courts of justice become great schools for the education of the masses in the most valuable species of knowledge. All the principles of equity and law—the immutable distinctions of right and wrong—the fundamental rules of human society—the disorganizing tendency of all sin—even the superior sanctions of conscience and religion: these great themes are continually discussed, and

discussed in their practical and immediate relations before the multitude, composed of clients, witnesses, and jurors, and the still more crowded lobby of curious and interested listeners.

The legal profession constitutes thus a priesthood, ministering in the temples of justice, whose influence is most potential in forming the character of the people ; to such an extent indeed, that the character of the bar being given, we may almost precisely determine the average virtue and intelligence of the community within whose precincts they officiate. It is by virtue of this moral and intellectual influence that it becomes in a country like ours, the open avenue of political and civil preferment ; and because of this, as well as because of the sacred functions to which it is ordained, it is the noblest vocation merely earthly to which an ambitious youth may aspire.

But the term education must be taken in its more modern and restricted sense ; denoting not so much the varied influences by which the character of a people is formed, as that scholastic training by which our youth are fitted for their different positions in life. Valuable as may be that oral instruction of which I have spoken, it yields in efficiency to the method which the art of printing and the multiplication of books have introduced ; by which through a prescribed curriculum of study, the intellectual powers are more certainly developed, and knowledge is rendered more accurate and fixed. The instrumental agencies however, by which this education is accomplished, will of course be diverse in different lands, according to the temperament of the people, the genius of their institutions, and the peculiar circumstances that surround them. No mistake can be more fatal than the attempt to transfer bodily the educational methods of one country to another, without those modifications which a practical wisdom would suggest. In the small and aristocratic island of Great Britain, for instance, two imperial universities, such as Cambridge and Oxford, may control its educational interests. But it were simply absurd to suppose that any two similar institutions, however magnificent, can cast

their shadow over this broad land. Admire too, as we may, the gymnasia and universities of Germany, or the general educational arrangements of Prussia, neither the one nor the other is sufficiently adapted to the genius and circumstances of our people, to be accepted without material changes. It appears to me that unconsciously, perhaps, we have been steadily working out a system of education stamped with all the features of the American character. With a population distributed over a wide area; broken up moreover, as this population is into many separate, and to some extent, independent communities; with different social interests predominant in different sections of the land: from these and other causes, which cannot now be even suggested, the tendency to centralism in education is completely counteracted. Whether we look at the preparatory training of undergraduates, or at the schools of professional culture in theology, medicine, and law, the jealous independence of the American people too obviously forbids that the mind of the country shall be cast in any single mould. The complaint therefore against the multiplication of seminaries of learning is sheer waste of breath; as it is the result of causes that operate with all the silent efficiency of the occult forces of nature herself. The problem with us is unquestionably to carry education, and that of a somewhat high grade, as near as possible to every hamlet and home in the land. The difficulties in its achievement are not inconsiderable. Although to no public enterprize is the wealth of our people more freely consecrated than to this, it is no small effort to accomplish at once the endowment of a large number of institutions rising up simultaneously for support. The demand, too, which these institutions suddenly create for a large number of experienced and competent instructors, is more than can easily be met from a class so small as the literary class still remains. With the attractions of wealth afforded by the agriculture, commerce, and manufactures of the country drawing in the one direction, and the political prizes attracting the ambitious in the other,

the number is exceedingly limited of those who pursue letters from a pure and simple love of learning. Yet with all these difficulties it has been distinctly assumed by our own people to distribute the facilities of a solid education over the whole land.

The temporary result of this system, it cannot be disguised, is the depression of the tone of education; or to speak with more precision, it retards its elevation to that pitch which all lovers of true learning ardently desire. It requires an immense force silently exerted through ages to lift the bed of the entire ocean and roll its waters into other basins: so time, with combined and sustained effort, can alone raise such a diffused education to the highest summit-level. The fact itself should not however be blinked, since its recognition must antedate all measures to repair the defect. The point then to be immediately compassed, is to superinduce upon our present system of general education a method by which those of a higher order of mind and of a sufficient opportunity may be conducted through the higher regions of philosophy, science, and literature. The alternative which has hitherto suggested itself to me, was either to found a very limited number of institutions rising a grade above our existing colleges, in which all branches of learning should be taught in their highest forms; admission into which should be afforded only to those who have finished the curriculum of study of which a college diploma is regarded the voucher: or else, to throw back into the academy most of those studies pursued in the first two years of a college course, thus relieving those institutions of the whole process of drill to which they are now condemned. It would be easy in that case to fill up the term of four years with those higher studies necessary for the production of the noblest style of scholars. Whilst in the act of framing these suggestions I have been pleased to find another method proposed by one who is practically conversant with the whole subject of education which he elaborately discusses in a letter addressed to the

Directors of the University over which he so ably presides.* It is to separate the studies with which a college course is now overburdened into two grand divisions: the first embracing those studies which, according to the original idea of college education, are intended to train and develop the intellectual powers, and which should admit to the degree of Bachelor of Arts; and the second, all those studies which advancing science has of late so abundantly furnished, which shall afford the material of knowledge, and which after a second course shall admit to the second degree of Master of Arts. This method appears to me, upon the first glance, more feasible than any other, because more in harmony with the general principles underlying the whole system of American education; and because it is capable of immediate application in all existing institutions. But whether this method shall be generally accepted, or some other be devised, it is gratifying to know that practical minds are working out the problem of American education in this direction, that it may not longer present the appearance of a truncated cone. But whilst supplying the apex that is wanting, it is necessary to work also at the base of the pyramid. A system of general education should be so graduated as to embrace the lowest form of society as well as the highest. Perhaps it has been the fault of our system that it has attempted to place our whole people upon one absolute level; disregarding the stubborn fact that while society continues it must be separated into grades. Multitudes can never command the leisure for extended mental culture, who yet require an elementary training to fit them for the practical duties of life, and to rescue them from the power of base and designing demagogues. It is not proposed of course, to drive the partitions of caste through the community, than which nothing can be more repulsive to the com-

* See the recent letter of Frederick A. P. Barnard, LL. D., President of the University of Mississippi, addressed to the Board of Trustees of that Institution.

mon sentiment of our people, and opposed to the very character of our civilization. It will always be possible for individuals, with industry and opportunity, to rise by the aid of the lower to the enjoyment of the higher grades of culture. But it may be questioned whether the happiness or usefulness of men is promoted by educating them above the sphere in which they must providentially live: and whether the very attempt to educate all too high does not in effect deny any education to large masses, who thus fail in the first step in the ascent to equality with others. Upon the State, as the common mother, it most devolves to apply such a system of common school education—but it devolves upon all the friends of true learning to mature such a graduated scheme as here suggested: the result of which shall be that not one freeman in this broad land shall be debarred the right to place his feet upon the ladder whose successive rounds may conduct him to the highest table-land of knowledge—or failing in this, shall at least prepare him to fill with propriety and honor the humbler sphere in which he is content to move.

IV. The fourth, or economic, problem I had intended to discuss far more elaborately than I now find space to do. I must pass with the same rapid and suggestive touches over this as over the preceding topics, without an effort to take the soundings of the great deep over which we are coasting.

The familiar terms, capital and labor, express the two opposite poles, upon the adjustment of which the entire harmony of society depends. As in the material world, the serenity of the atmosphere depends upon the equilibrium of the two electricities, upon the disturbance of which storm and tempest, hail, thunder and lightning, the tornado and whirlwind ensue; so in the social world, insurrection and mutiny, anarchy and civil war result as soon as the antagonism is brought out between these two. For they are really antagonistic. Capital seeks to increase its profits by exacting labor at the lowest wages: labor, on the other hand, in self-defense seeks from

capital the largest remuneration for the smallest services. Thus the two are perpetually grinding against each other, like the upper and the nether millstones. You have only to suppose a condition of society, nearly approximated in some portions of the world, in which labor shall stretch its brawny limbs upon the rack to the limit of endurance without obtaining the means of subsistence, and the crisis in this great problem is reached. All appeals to the prudence and fears of men—bristling bayonets and moral suasion—will be equally ineffectual to appease the multitudes whom hunger has rendered savage, and who can see nothing in submission but famine and a lingering death. The foundations of society shall be upheaved, and government, religion, and law must go down together through the parted crust. This startling issue has again and again been providentially postponed: but political philosophy has failed to furnish a solution of the problem itself, which like a grim and ghastly spectre haunts the future and fills it with the most dismal apprehensions. The only hope for that future is afforded by a firm faith in that sublime providence which has hitherto staved off the fearful issue by methods surpassingly wonderful. The immense waste of life through disease and war has, during the past, partially served to keep population below the point of redundancy. On the other hand, the progress of science, the multiplication of the arts, and the stupendous increase of wealth in every civilized land, have in the main given employment and subsistence to the population which is steadily swelling upward to this dangerous point of explosion. During hundreds of years the feudal system, which, for many reasons that I cannot take time even to hint, was entirely transitional, offered an awkward but tolerably successful mediation between these opposite interests. But upon its abolition in the general march of European civilization, the conflict was renewed, and not a solitary expedient has since been suggested to appease a strife daily increasing in bitterness and fury. Then followed, before the great climax was reached, the discovery of this western hem-

isphere ; as though God had reserved half the globe to relieve the crisis in human history, and afford man other centuries of reflection and experiment before it is finally confronted. During three of these centuries, Europe has been pouring her redundant population upon the new world, which under the management of a wise and great people is probably destined to feed hundreds of millions from her fertile bosom. But the end must come at last, and it draws on with accelerated pace. The progress in medical science, by its triumphs over disease, is daily lengthening the term of human life. The benign spirit of christianity, together with the soft influence of true civilization, is gradually banishing war as an obsolete evil. Commerce too is throwing out her delicate fibers, and weaving the fine network of a common interest over the globe. With the iron bands over which she drives her busy traffic she knits the nations into a confederacy of peace ; and converts the world into one vast whispering gallery, as she lays her electric wire like an auditory nerve upon the ocean's bed. If on the one hand the causes are removed which retard the increase of population, on the other mechanical invention is daily substituting limbs of iron and sinews of steel for those of the human frame ; and labor is thrown by a double process more entirely at the mercy of its relentless foe. What is to be the end of all this ? Grant, if you please, that through economy and prudence men may learn to live on much less than they now consume ; still there is a limit to retrenchment itself. Grant that through industry and thrift the means of subsistence can be largely increased, still there is a boundary to human acquisition. Grant that through the discoveries of science the productiveness of the earth may be almost fabulously stimulated, so that every rood of ground shall maintain its man ; yet the earth can give no more than she has, while there is no limit to the locusts that devour it. Upon all these suppositions you do but postpone the evil, which is aggravated by that delay. Possibly, God might interpose to regulate the law of increase, when the earth shall groan beneath

the heaviest pressure of population she can sustain ; yet that is a venture setting aside every law from which men obtain the data for their conclusions. Possibly, in mercy he may bring the world to an end before this consummation of human misery is reached. Perchance this itself may be the catastrophe which shall effect its dissolution, when "the moon shall be turned into blood," and the sun go out in darkness, and the earth be rolled up as a moth-eaten and worn-out garment. But postulating, as political science must do, the continuation of man upon the globe under the same laws which it now observes and classifies, what is the end to be, when Europe shall be full—and America shall be full—brimming over with a restless race that never learned to be quiet, and cannot, as the myriads of listless Asiatics, live and rot like the luxuriant vegetation on the very spot where it grows ? These sad and hard questions are useful if they compel you to see that this great problem of all history is yet unsolved ; that no reconciliation between capital and labor has yet been achieved ; and that the crisis is only postponed to fall with more crushing ruin upon the generation whose fate it shall be to meet it. Yet if human wisdom from below shall ever devise its solution, or God give inspiration from above, there is no people beneath the arch of heaven under conditions so favorable to grapple with its difficulties and to master its dangers. If it fails of an answer at our hands, I do not see but the last hope of mankind perishes in the acknowledgment of our defeat. With a whole continent for our domain, whose virgin soil scarcely bears as yet the scars of human tillage ; with vast tracts of territory absolutely vacant of habitations ; with a population which, compared with the millions into which they shall multiply, is only as the acorn to the spreading oak ; with a government, free almost as the air, and elastic as human hope ; with institutions that are the simple outgrowth of our national character ; with the noblest race that God ever gave for the noblest ends to dwell upon the earth, and with that race standing upon the

top of all past human experience; above all, with full time before us ere the pinch of this great question can be felt: verily, who better than ourselves deserve to be held as trustees for mankind, and responsible for the resolution of this knotty point in political economy, if indeed, it be capable of any, in such a world as ours? Should it be the mission of our country to achieve this problem, human history shall with us have reached its culmination; and the splendor of the sun at noon shall not outshine the glory of the American name in giving this day of brightness to a world in anguish.

I cannot forbear tracing the connexion between this subject and the question which for twenty-five years has so deeply agitated the civilized world. It is the fashion of mankind to go periodically mad upon some politico-moral question—to beat up a wild crusade which history never fails at length to stamp as stupendous folly. The prevalent fanaticism upon the subject of slavery will form no exception to this broad statement. When the storm bursts in its fury upon the ocean's bosom, and her waves seem to dash themselves against the very stars, there is a calm in the great deep below where the sea-nymphs sing in their grottos of pearl, like the peace of eternity: such a calm prevails in the serene deep of history which the billows of this angry strife have never touched. The storm will pass—the heavens shall smile again upon the sea, and history shall scarcely know that the rude breath of this fanaticism ever ruffled its surface.

Say what men may against slavery, in the patriarchal form in which it exists amongst us, it does reconcile, so far as it goes, this mighty conflict between capital and labor. Capital owns the labor, and must protect and cherish it in order to secure a return from its own investment: and it is precisely in this economical view that the question of slavery is finally to be settled, if settled at all. Christendom may lift its voice to denounce it as the plague spot upon American history, the fretting leprosy which is to waste and destroy the body politic. Yet

those who have considered the teachings of history know well that it is the "peculiar institution" of no period or clime ; and that servitude, in some of its forms, has been the only solution of this difficult problem ; the only mediation by which, in all the past, this bitter strife has been composed. We might, I know, as well address a remonstrance to the whirlwind crashing on in its pathway of ruin, as seek by words of reason to lay the spirit of a wild fanaticism. They must both blow on, till they crack their cheeks and find at last they cannot shake the earth off its axes. But we should ourselves understand that this question of domestic slavery is but one aspect, grave and solemn, of this momentous problem of political philosophy. If under given circumstances there are nations who repudiate this system for themselves, be it so : they are only working out this same great problem under one set of conditions, and we under another. That is all the difference—and until some approximation to a safe result shall attend their experiments, it were simple infatuation in us to surrender our historic position, and give up the only solution which the experience and wisdom of six thousand years have as yet devised. During a short life I have seen more than one revolution of public sentiment on this whole subject. Once the only language heard was that of crimination, and of weak apology ; and the censures of mankind were parried by pointing to the providential necessity which had implicated us in an evil that could not be removed. Then ruder assaults compelled a closer investigation ; and the question was studied as one of social order, of morals, and of religion. By statesmen, statisticians, philosophers, and divines, the argument is now conducted with an earnestness which should convince the world that it turns not as before upon the compulsions of interest, but upon the profoundest convictions of right and truth. It is time however, to put this question upon the historic basis, upon which as one of general politics it must at last be adjudicated. Let us say, with all the distinctness and emphasis with which words

of destiny are ever uttered, that we will conserve this institution of domestic servitude, not only from the pressure of necessity, and from the instinct of interest—not only from a feeling of trusteeship over the race thus providentially committed to us—not even at last from a general conviction of the righteousness of our course—but also from a special sense of duty to mankind. Least of all can we think of surrendering it, when over all the globe the crust bends and sways upon which the nations tread; threatening at every step to part asunder and engulf all that is stable and fair in the sea of molten fire that rolls its flood beneath. With the world under press of sail driving forward to its fearful crisis, and with this great problem unsolved, upon which its fate must turn—all portions of this confederacy may well be invoked to unite their wisdom and their patriotism in its solution. This highest achievement of American statesmanship will be the accomplishment of our historic mission, and win for us the eternal gratitude of the human race.

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