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PUBLICATIONS
LOUISIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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PUBLICATIONS

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NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA.

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LOUISIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

The Louisiana Historical Society, now domiciled in New Orleans, La., presents to its members and friends the sub-joined report of its annual meeting, held in Tulane Hall, January 16, 1895. As a fitting preface to the interesting proceedings on this occasion the society has printed the valuable report made in 1893 by Prof. Alcée Fortier, as chairman of the Committee on Work and Archives. A list is also given of the officers and the members of the society.

REPORT OF PROF. FORTIER.

Prof. Alcée Fortier, chairman of the Committee on Work and Archives, made the following interesting report :

It gives us pleasure to state that we found that the Louisiana Historical Society possesses very valuable books and documents pertaining to the history of the colony under the French and Spanish dominations and we desire to express our high appreciation of the work done by our distinguished historian, Charles Gayarré, in making the collection now in the possession of our society and at the State library. His intelligent labors in collecting valuable documents and books in France and in Spain, his energy, his patriotism in writing and rewriting in three different works the history of Louisiana entitle Mr. Gayarré to the gratitude of all Louisianians and will associate his name forever with all investigations and studies in the history of the colony and of the State. We must now endeavor to continue the work so ably done thus far by Mr. Gayarré, we must try to obtain complete copies of all papers concerning Louisiana in the archives of France and Spain, and we must, first of all, make an accurate catalogue of the books and documents in our possession and at the State library.

We examined carefully the books and documents belonging to our society, of which the following is the list :

that in our private libraries there are many curious and precious historical treasures. For an opportunity to examine a number of these the society is specially indebted to Dr. Devron, Judge Seymour, J. Cruzat, Esq., Felix Limongi, Esq., and H. L. Favrot, Esq.

Much pleasure, moreover, has been derived from the labors of the president, who, with the enthusiasm of the true antiquarian, has dived into the musty old boxes belonging to the society and brought forth a number of interesting facts concerning the early families and historical personages of the State.

I may add that the society has elected as honorary and corresponding members a number of distinguished gentlemen in this and other States, who have shown their warm appreciation of the honor conferred upon them. Every effort, also, has been made to bring the society into close touch with the other historical societies of the Union. In order to attain this object, however, we recognize the necessity of publishing our proceedings and the original documents which we possess, so that we may have something to give in exchange for the publications of these societies.

Encouraged by what we have accomplished in the past, we enter upon the new year with quickened anticipations of greater success in the future.

In conclusion, I wish to say that the executive committee believes that nothing could conduce to the success of the society more than the presence here this evening of the distinguished divine who will deliver the annual oration.

The oration of Dr. B. M. Palmer, the orator of the occasion, was as follows :

THE TRIBUNAL OF HISTORY.

The most elaborate oration of the great Pericles, as recorded by the historian Thucydides, was that pronounced over the soldiers who had fallen in the Peloponnesian war. The nice sense of Athenian honor did not allow the slain to be disgraced upon the field of battle. To this sentiment of na-

tional pride was added the deeper instinct of religion, which, amongst the Greeks, enforced the strict performance of funeral rites, without which the restless shades were doomed to wander upon the banks of the gloomy Styx, forbidden to pass to the Elysium beyond. Even amidst the carnage of battle the bodies of the slain must be rescued from the foe, and be borne with solemn pomp for interment in their native soil; whilst the memorial shaft blazoned their heroic deeds, in double testimony of a soldier's prowess and of a nation's gratitude. It was fitting, too, that the pageant of a public funeral should be illustrated by the highest eloquence; and the first orators of Greece, such as Demosthenes and Lysias, did not disdain the opportunity for the display of their loftiest genius.

It was after the disastrous campaign of the summer, 431 B. C., when all Attica had been ravaged by the Spartan legions, and her whole population was compressed within the walls of Athens, that Pericles, whose name is imperishably linked with Athenian empire, ascended the bema to speak the honors of the Athenian dead. It was, however, no empty panegyric, the filigree and frostwork of mere rhetoric, but statesmanlike and grand in the utterance of practical convictions. As described by Grote "it was comprehensive, rational and full not only of sense and substance, but of earnest patriotism—impersonal and business-like, since it is Athens herself who undertakes to commend and decorate her departed sons, as well as to hearten and admonish the living." In the most rapid and suggestive style Pericles "traces the effect of her democratic constitution, with its diffused and equal citizenship, in calling forth not only strong attachment, but painful self-sacrifice," as also "the liberty and diversity of individual life at Athens, as opposed to the monotonous drill of Sparta." Having thus presented "the many-sided social development" that prevailed in the city of Minerva, "bringing out the capacities both for action and endurance," the orator points the conclusion of his argument: "Such is the city on behalf of which these warriors have nobly died in battle, vindicating her just title to unimpaired rights; and on be-

half of which all of us here left behind must willingly toil—drawing the lesson that the conflict is not for equal motives between us and our enemies, who possess nothing of the like excellence.”

I have detained you, ladies and gentlemen, with this lengthened preamble for the purpose of justifying an inference which will be found to underlie all that I shall pronounce in your hearing—to-wit, that war is not always the mere outburst of human passion; but that when projected on a large scale and protracted through a long period, and especially when occurring between members of the same race, it is the result of an antecedent conflict of opinions, which, having sought arbitration in vain, appeal finally to the sword from the simple necessity of settling the question of supremacy. With the whole of Grecian history before us, for example, it is evident that the thirty years' war between Athens and Sparta was but the culmination of the struggle between the Doric and Ionic elements of the Grecian stock, which emerged at the earliest dawn of authentic history. From the outset these two became the exponents of two opposing systems of government and social discipline. Lacedæmon espoused a policy which may be defined as continental and oligarchic; whilst Athens represented the ideas of commerce and democracy. Sparta sought to consolidate the Continental States of Greece under the supremacy of the few; Athens, to weld the Maritime States into a Democratic confederacy, of which she should be the centre and soul. The antagonism was fundamental, and the two nations struggled together, like Jacob and Esau, even in the womb. So ancient was the feud that the armed invasion of Persia only composed it for a time—to break forth at last in the Peloponnesian war, so fatal in its issue to the independence of both. All this is, however, not a whit more clear to our critical philosophy than it was to the statesmanlike discernment of Pericles himself. We, who stand on the top of so many centuries and survey the whole landscape of the past, understand perfectly that the wildness of individual freedom, so fatal to the permanence of her power, was yet the only condition through which Athens

worked out her mission and became "the school-mistress of the world." The largest liberty of speculative thought and the utmost freedom of social life, under the stimulus of a popular Constitution that woke every individual into action, were perhaps the only conditions under which those exquisite models of poetry, eloquence and art could in the first instance be created, which succeeding ages have been content simply to reproduce. And beyond the glory of her sculpture and her song, which throw such a halo around the name of Athens, is the glory of presenting the first demonstration upon the page of history of equal citizenship in a free State. All this, however, is traced, as with a needle's precision, by this sagacious statesman, who, in this splendid specimen of forensic eloquence, has adroitly linked the sepulture of the heroic warrior with the exposition and defence of the principles for which he bled. The orator was right. With the instinct of genius, he struck the keynote of that solemn dirge which weeping Greece was chanting over the tomb of her slain. It was not the sentiment of natural affection alone, seeking to hallow the remains of brothers, husbands, and sons. It was not the impulse of haughty honor only, rescuing the brave from the iron hoofs of an insolent foe. It was the deep, though possibly unpronounced, conviction that the dead were martyrs to a cause for which their own blood might have as easily flowed. This made Greece weep as she drew her mantle over the slain and gave their names to lasting marble: and Pericles was eloquent simply because he interpreted the silent thought in a thousand souls, that death for a just principle was a sacrifice to the gods.

But Athens is not the only State which has mourned its dead and the principles for which they vainly fought. The wail of many such is borne on the winds of night, appealing to the judgment of posterity in the weird language of the Gaelic bard: "Our harp hangs upon a blasted branch. The sound of its strings is mournful; did the wind touch thee, O Harp, or was it some passing ghost? Another song shall rise." It shall chant "the chiefs of other times departed; who have gone without their fame. Our fathers shall hear it

in their airy hall. Their dim faces shall hang with joy from their clouds. Fingal shall receive his fame. The voice of Ossian has been heard. The harp has been strung in Selma."

I have drifted insensibly into the theme of my discourse to-night; which is to place before your eyes *the solemn tribunal of history*; before which all the generations of men shall bring their deeds to be adjudicated; and in whose final verdict the good and the true shall find a proximate vindication. It looms up through the perspective of coming centuries, when passions of the past are dead, when historic criticism shall have purged the record of prejudice and calumny, and when impartial truth shall plead before a panel beyond the reach of seduction or of fear. But is there such a tribunal this side of the great Assize, when the Ruler of the Universe shall pronounce the destinies of men? The skepticism of this inquiry I propose now to meet, by asserting a judicial process continually going forward in the Court of Time, and reversing the judgments which are rendered under the passions of the passing hour.

I. There is in the human breast a sense of justice, the noblest relic of that image of God in which man was first created. Our nature is majestic, even in its wreck. As the broken column, half hidden in the sand, reveals the ancient glory of a Baalbec, so, amid the ruins of the fall, we discover traces of the grandeur of soul with which man was originally endowed. The achievements of science reveal the splendor of his intellect, though darkened by sin. The sweet charities that bloom still in the desert he has made, disclose him as once the peer of the angels in love. The very superstition that cowers in fear before its bloody altars proves his early priesthood amongst the worshipers of God. And so this rugged sense of justice remains—shattered and defaced it may be, blinded by passion, warped by prejudice, blundering through error and ignorance into a thousand mistakes; yet there it is, a permanent attribute in man, answering back through conscience as its organ to the justice that is in God.

Indeed it is just this principle that underlies the whole framework of government and law. The magistrate would

bear the sword in vain, and all the insignia of empire would be a mockery, were not the instinct of obedience planted in the human breast. The whole machinery of justice in our courts would lock, unless driven by this spirit within its wheels. Conscience becomes the organ of law, simply because it interprets before its secret tribunal that unpronounced sense of justice which lies at the foundation of our moral nature. Hence, whenever this becomes corrupt or fails to be duly educated, men wax impatient of the artificial restraints of law, and those gigantic systems of despotism are created which simply overwhelm resistance by the exhibition of brutal force.

The argument to our conclusion is very short. If there be in man this ineradicable principle of justice, the corner-stone by which the entire fabric of society is held together, then should we expect to trace its operation through the whole domain of history. It is no dormant property of our nature, but one lying at the root of all human activity in every sphere and relation of life. It may be overlaid for a time, so as to be apparently suppressed. It may vacillate in its judgments, from the conflicting evidence upon which it rests. It may oftener still take a false direction and render verdicts unsafe and untrue. It may be blinded by the mists of passion, distorting the objects presented to its view. But from these very causes will arise an unsatisfactoriness in its earlier decisions, begetting a suspicion as to the truth of the finding. It will then go back upon its path, sifting its own prejudices, breaking through the obstacles with which malevolence and ignorance block up its way, placing itself in all the crosslights shooting upon its search, until a verdict is found that shall lay its unquiet spirit to rest, and the final decision is nailed against the walls of its Chancery, which the universal conscience of mankind shall recognize as "true and righteous altogether."

It will, however, be asked where are the chambers of this High Court of Commission, before which old issues are to be thus retried? What judges sit, from whose decision there can be no appeal except to the bar of God? Whence the advocate,

who flings his broad indictment over the defamations of all the centuries? These are questions not difficult to answer. The Forum where this high adjudication is held is the broad world itself. The public conscience is the judge, roused to honesty by the very responsibility of his function. The intelligence and virtue, the truth and candor of the race, constitute the panel before which the cause is pleaded. And a sublime Providence raises up the advocates who speak—men of a judicial build, and who have a lofty scorn for all the shams and cheats which have been the idolatries of the past. Look at Motley—drawing from the archives of the Escorial the damning evidence which had slept these three hundred years, upon which the Second Philip is convicted as the blackest felon that ever disgraced the purple. On the same page too stands the silent William, in all the relief of contrast: the man who, out of the loss of every battle, wrung even from defeat and massacre the redemption of his country; and who in matchless endurance and moral sublimity is the only prototype in European history of the American Washington and of our own immortal Lee. Look again at Carlyle, with his rugged honesty piercing the flams and falsehoods circling around the corridors of history; and in his uncouth, inverted style, rescuing Cromwell from the crime of regicide. Planting his burly form against the billows, he rolls back from the Puritan Protector the tide of prejudice which had swelled against his just fame these two hundred years. At the touch of his disenchanting wand, the motley fools-garb, in which the wit and satire of England's great novelist had clothed those pragmatistical Round Heads, falls aside, and to-day the verdict of history stands recorded that all of constitutional liberty which England enjoys is due to those men of robust principle, who beneath the mask of a fantastic piety were yet loyal to truth, and had the stubborn will to place law and freedom upon the throne of the Stuarts. And then Macaulay: whose gorgeous colors throw upon the canvas the long conflict of 1648 to 1688 as the struggle between prerogative and privilege, upon whose issues hang all the chartered rights possessed this day on either side of the Atlantic. Who

too could have dreamed that, under a pure sense of historic justice, the Socinian Bancroft would come forth from all the prejudices of his cold philosophy to be the special advocate of the great Calvin! Or that the free-thinking Froude would stand before the University of St. Andrews to pronounce the eulogy of the Genevan hero in the memorable proposition, that "whatever may be thought as to the truth of his dogmatic creed, the only men who have wrestled successfully in life's great battle and rescued it from defeat have been the men who, under some form of philosophy or religion, have recognized the ordinations of a supreme will ruling over the contingencies of this earthly sphere."

Surely all this does not happen by mysterious chance. These are not solitary and accidental revelations, through a wayward fancy stumbling haphazard upon the truth. Consider it well and you shall find illustrations of this historic justice crowding upon you, unraveling the dark deeds of the past and bringing you face to face with prejudices that are hoary with age. Somehow, the good who have been stabbed by slander will not sleep in peace. Their restless ghosts wander above their historic tombs, flitting in the dim moonlight, until their spell is cast upon some champion of their wrongs. Passions, too, that have shaken the world to its centre, subside at last. The mists of error roll away after hanging their curtains long around the truth. A holy Providence gives the token of its own judicial process by and by in that lower tribunal it has erected in the human breast, and eternal justice throws its great shadow upon the earth in these solemn historic retractions—the last judicial findings in its court of appeal.

II. But we are not remanded to purely abstract reasoning in this matter. History is but the record of theories and principles, the scope of which can be fully understood only in the results they produce. And God has so conditioned this probationary life that, whether it be for good or evil, these results are allowed to accrue with little of intervention or restraint. By consequence, history is throughout the progress of a trial. The actions of men are brought under criti-

ical review in the light of the fruits they produce. In the long unfolding indeed of these, contradictions continually emerge which are the opprobrium of Providence. Hence men of every faith, and men of no faith, stumble over the scandals of the Divine government. Good and evil are jumbled together in a strange mixture. The virtuous and the vile move together on the same plane, apparently under the same protection and in the enjoyment of equal blessings. Nay, the discrimination seems often to be against the good, who, though declared to be in favor with God, go with their heads bowed like the bullrush, while the wicked prosper in the earth until their eyes stand out with fatness, and men in their partial induction leap rashly to the Epicurean conception of a Deity in stately repose, wholly unmindful of the affairs of earth. The mistake lies in forgetting the disciplinary character of life. They measure the arc of their little segment of Providence and think it the diameter of the entire circle. His comprehensive plan takes in the breadth of all the ages. The limits even of time are overstepped, and the threads broken by death are woven into a new fabric beyond the stars. Not till the vast tapestry is unrolled before us in the pavilion above, and the constituent figures are seen to be traced with an exquisite unity of design, are we prepared to form a judgment of the whole. But though we may not be able to sum up all the equations of this problem, there is nothing to hinder the application of the great principle at each stage of the calculation. If the whole dispensation of Providence would be understood, if gathered into its final result, we may surely try the separate portions by the proximate fruits which they yield. Indeed, we are shut up to this by simple necessity, and these conclusions become stations along the highway of history by which we measure our progress and at which we pause for momentary repose. They constitute new points of departure for succeeding observations, which we hang up as lanterns in the darkness of the path which we are treading.

Accepting then the disciplinary character of life, we have a clue to the interpretation of history. We no longer wonder

at the strange tolerance of evil, which has ever been the opprobrium of Providence. God's method, we see, is to afford man his opportunity. His true character will work itself out; and the nature and the worth of his principles will be determined by the issue. Nothing is wanted but the element of time. When his career is fully run, the world will pronounce its irreversible judgment. As with individuals so with nations. These, too, run their allotted course, with full liberty to develop the principles on which they are based. Every false theory of government, like the flaw in cast-iron machinery, reveals itself as soon as it has had time to grow warm by friction, and the unusual strain presses against the weak spot. It may lie hidden long, far down among the principles untested as yet, but when the crisis comes its unsuspected power is disclosed, and with it the crash that astounds the world.

Here then is the second joint in our argument. Misrepresentation and calumny may becloud many an honorable name, and the world lavish its praise upon the traducers for a time—and for a time so long that the decree may seem fixed forever which assigns the historic position of both. But when the policy of each shall be fully ascertained, and the remote effects as well as the near have been traced through centuries, an indignant world rises up in judicial resentment against the fraud practised upon its credulity, and takes reprisal for the wrong in the complete reversal of its previous judgment. The decision pronounced is final, because rendered in a court of appeal, and because the evidence is perfect upon which it rests.

Indeed, this is the only species of retribution which can be visited on States as such. Individuals stand in personal relations to the divine law and retribution meets them in another world. But corporations are impersonal and limited in duration to this lower sphere. If then the Providence of God extend over them at all, it must manifest itself in the misfortunes which befall them here. The deep conviction of this earthly retribution finds expression in the proverbs, which so pithily represent the collective conscience and reason of the

race. "The mills of the Gods grind very slow, but they grind very small." "The Gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make instruments to scourge us;" which is but another reading of the inspired aphorism, "They shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices." And what was that fine conception of the Greek Nemesis, checking the extravagant favors conferred by fortune and the avenging Deity who sooner or later overtakes the reckless in their faults, but an impersonation of this earthly justice; which on its lower plane is the type of the divine and "vindicates the ways of God to men?"

The illustration of this from the facts of history would involve the transcription of almost the entire record. Let a few examples suffice. Every reader knows how the fierce struggle between the plebeian and patrician orders ran through the stormy history of the Roman Republic. But not until the entire history of that martial people had been subjected to re-examination was it discovered to be the secret yet real cause of their overthrow. It had its origin in the aristocratic sentiment which identified the State with the founders of the imperial city. Its population, daily increasing by conquest, was admitted only to a qualified citizenship—forming no healthy middle order, but really the subjects of a governing class. It was inevitable that they, who bore the burdens and did the fighting of the State, should clamor for the recognition of their power; and their open mutiny brought the infant Republic more than once to the verge of ruin. The catastrophe was delayed through the political idolatry of the State, which was the peculiar feature of Roman history. Interminable wars resulted in the gradual absorption of the Italian States; and then Rome, stepping from Sicily upon the shores of Africa, entered through the destruction of Carthage upon those imperial conquests which made her the mistress of the world. In the words of another, "her empire spread like a vast arch over the Mediterranean basin, with one foot resting upon the Atlas and the other upon the Taurus." But there was not the inherent strength to support the mighty superstructure. With no grand commonalty with clearly de-

finer rights, there was nothing to which the conquered races could be assimilated; and no bulwark could be raised against the corruption flowing upon the bosom of such enormous wealth. "The Roman aristocracy was intoxicated, insatiable, irresistible—the middle class was gone—there was nothing but profligate nobles and a diabolical populace." Such is the language of Draper, who tersely adds: "And now it was plain that the contest for supreme power lay between a few leading men. It found an issue in the first triumvirate. * * * Affairs then passed through their inevitable course. The death of Crassus and the battle of Pharsalia left Caesar the master of the world. The dagger of Brutus merely removed a man, but it left the fact. The battle of Actium reaffirmed the destiny of Rome, and the death of the Republic was illustrated by the annexation of [Egypt]." Thus, after the lapse of 2000 years, do we summon ancient Rome before the tribunal of history, to be weighed in the scales of equal justice. Thus do we trace the secret cause of that strange metempsychosis by which she slipped from a republic into an empire, back to a fatal schism in her original constitution, preventing her people from being welded into a homogeneous State. And thus do we see the long reproach lifted from her Gracchi; who pass from beneath the censure of an offensive Agrarianism into earnest patriots, who vainly sought to heal the wounds of "the gored State," and to stay the ruin by which it was finally overwhelmed.

Turn your attention next to Spain. Early in the sixteenth century, by the annexation of Portugal and a political combination with Austria and England, as well as by her immense possessions in the new world, overshadowing all Europe with her greatness—beneath which the other powers stood shivering with fear. Yet in the bosom of her fierce despotism lay the seeds of her early dissolution. In the language of the writer whom I have already cited, "it was her evil fortune to ruin two civilizations, oriental and occidental, and to be ruined thereby herself." Her intolerant bigotry lost her the Netherlands, just rising into opulence and power, through which she might have controlled the commer-

cial interests of the Continent. Her expulsion of the Moors, who had become the children of her soil, enriching her with the learning, industry and art of the East, robbed her of the opportunity which England seized of becoming through her manufactures the mart of Europe. The daily importation from her mines in America, and the consequent diversion of her people from those pursuits by which alone national wealth can be created, sunk her into the condition of a mere broker in the precious metals. Now for generations she has stood, as Draper says, "a hideous skeleton among living nations"—a terrible example of that avenging Nemesis following upon the track of guilty nations and scourging them for their crimes.

Shall I point you to the Communists of modern France ? The fatal song of the Syrens, luring the unwary mariner upon the rock of Scylla, breathed no more seducing accents than those of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," which roused the passions of the wild enthusiasts dancing around the Tricolor of the French Revolution. But the true import of those insane ravings was soon read amid the horrors of the Bastille and the Guillotine, until the world stood aghast at the frightful spectacle of crime and blood. And the burning Paris of but yesterday, spared by the conquering Prussian only to smoulder beneath the torch of her own incendiaries, tells the bitter fruit of that Radicalism sweeping like a whirlwind over Europe and America; and which, unless checked by the power of God, will yet sack the world and lay the earth in ashes at His feet.

III. The last consideration to be urged will be presented in fewer words. It is that, whatever doubt may hang around the truth of particular and isolated facts, there is in every portion of history an amount of generalized truth, in reference to which skepticism would be simple affectation. A remarkable effort has been made in our day to reduce history to the category of a positive science, by the statement of the necessary laws under which human actions are produced. In an elaborate work treasuring the labors of a studious life, but arrested before completion by the hand of death, Mr. Buckle pushes the reign of

inexorable law into the sphere of the variable and contingent. Not content with the proposition that the volitions of the human will are determined by a law of their own, inscrutable to the reason but perfectly consistent with freedom and responsibility, he boldly pronounces that the connections of cause and effect are as traceable here as in every other department of nature—where from given conditions the consequences may be anticipated by the processes of logic. He proceeds, therefore, to analyze the elements of human character, and to enumerate the possible conditions of human conduct; deducing the conclusion that history, in all its forms, is a natural development, like the growth of a tree. This, at least, is the representation of his theory given by his reviewer, Mr. Froude, who, besides being a philosopher, is also an historian, and who, on the other hand, objects that the facts of history never repeat themselves—and that we have not that recurrence and periodicity upon which the inductions of natural science rest. He concludes, therefore, that “it would be just as easy to calculate men’s actions, by laws like those of the positive philosophy as it would be to measure Neptune with a foot-rule, or to weigh Sirius in a grocer’s scale.”

All this is immensely typical. Between these extremes, all along the dotted line, there is every shade of credulity in the facts and deductions of history, and every phase of skepticism as to both. With those who encounter disaster and defeat, there is a prevailing tendency to spurn the testimony of all human records. They are in a condition to see how history is manufactured for a purpose; how an impudent partisanship manipulates the facts; how the truth which one personally knows, is suppressed; how gross fictions are stereotyped by endless repetition; how the brand of injurious epithets is freely used to stamp falsehood with the seal of truth; how misrepresentation and calumny are stuffed into books and circulated around the world to preoccupy the minds of men. Is it strange that some should morbidly infer all history to be a romance at best, if it be not also a libel and a slander? To which I reply that, with all the uncertainty hanging about this or that particular fact, there is a

residuum of truth which can not be destroyed, and which constitutes a basis for a safe appeal to the judgment of posterity. For instance, throw into fable all the achievements of Semiramis and Sesostris; still Assyrian and Egyptian histories will survive—which, in the aggregate, we are able to measure, and whose precise value we can determine. History delves amid the ruins of Nineveh and Persepolis, walks around the hanging gardens of Babylon, surveys the temples and tombs and pyramids of Egypt, calculates the physical force that lay in all those ancient despotisms, and then pronounces her decree. It is that this long succession of gigantic empires simply held the world, until the light of freedom could break from the West; until, out of the bosom of a better civilization, philosophy and science could rescue it from a superstitious and fantastic imagination. It points the wholesome moral, that of all things on earth nothing is weaker than what men call force; and in its calm, judicial tone, utters a withering sarcasm upon the ambition and achievements of the sword.

Regard the siege of Troy as a myth; renounce all belief in the existence of Hector and Achilles; discount the more veritable records of Xerxes binding with foolish chains the angry Hellespont—or of Leonidas holding at bay the hosts of Persia in the pass of Thermopylæ; or the sublime story of Themistocles gathering her population within the wooden walls of his fleet, and, standing on the prow of his own ship, exclaiming “This now is Athens.” Yet when you have winnowed Grecian history of a thousand legends, and even of many of her accredited facts, there it stands before you with its indented coast-line, and you pronounce to-day just how much Greece has been worth to the world. In the vast Pantheon of history she has a niche which no nation on the globe can occupy but herself.

Let Niebuhr with his dissecting criticism prune away the legends of ancient Rome; let the stories of Romulus and the she wolf, of Numa and the nymph Egeria, dissolve like the mountain mist; yet Roman history will remain in rugged grandeur, throwing its bleak form against the background

of the sky—working out the great problems of government and law, and laying the broad foundation on which rest the systems of jurisprudence and the constitutions of civil government still obtaining amongst men. In like manner we pass through all the galleries of modern history and unlock the chambers in which the dusty archives of European diplomacy are kept—assigning to each country its proper place, and the contribution made by each to the common civilization.

What I affirm then is this: That the value of these final generalizations is scarcely impaired by the doubt as to this or that minute fact. Contemporaneous history written in the interest of prejudice or passion may be largely a libel, and future criticism may be sorely puzzled to distinguish between the truth and its travesty; yet in the aggregate result these, by a strange smelting process, are sifted out as not material to the issue. As we may poison a fountain but can not poison the ocean, so we may corrupt single facts, but can not transmute the whole history of a people into a lie. A thousand hints of the truth will lie imbedded in the record, which antiquarian research will disentomb. The long silent voices will deliver their testimony in the court of final adjudication, and in these solemn historic retractions, the last judicial finding in its court of appeal, the good and the brave will find an honest vindication.

Ladies and gentlemen, the application of this discourse is left to silence and to you. That which hath been, is now; and that which is to be, hath already been. Invective and reproach will continue, in the sacred name of history, to be poured upon those who deserve only her applause. The faithful witnesses of the truth will go in cloud and sorrow to the tomb, burying their principles only in a protest. But they will do it in the certain faith of a resurrection. As for their own fame, they can afford to wait. Eternity is long, and it is their lifetime. Upon the lip of that boundless sea their prophetic gaze is fixed upon the burnished throne which human justice makes its last tribunal, and before which the nations and the centuries are arraigned for trial. Defamation

and slander rest as lightly on their calm spirits as the salt spray that crystallizes upon the silent rock. If, too, the warnings of the past, like the prophecies of Cassandra, are heard only to be disbelieved—still let the despots of earth know they are but sowing the Dragon's teeth of an armed and fierce retribution. Constitutional freedom has not come forth from the conflict of ages to be stifled now when her broad shield is thrown over two continents. She will reappear again and again amid the birth-throes of regenerated States; for regulated liberty is to the commonwealth what piety is to the church, the very law of its life. Both have struggled through corruption and decay to a more complete realization. But if the day should come when despotism shall so far consolidate its power as to crush all human freedom beneath its iron heel, then will be consummated the second apostasy of man after the flood in the usurpation of Nimrod. History will have completed its cycle, and nothing will remain but the call to the universal judgment.

To the society which I have the honor this evening to address I may be allowed to say that in the doctrine of this discourse is to be found the reason of its existence. Each generation, as it takes its place in the long succession, owes a debt to the past and to the future. The obligation is most sacred to collect every shred of testimony throwing light upon the history of the past and of the present, and to transmit the record to the ages that come after. Only thus can the evidence be accumulated upon which a final judgment can be safely pronounced. Whilst contemporaneous testimony may be tinged with prejudice and passion, historic criticism will censure it only as the iron in the marble which sometimes discolors its polished surface.

No State in the Union has a more romantic history than Louisiana. Having its root in three of the proudest nations of Europe, it mingles the characteristics of them all. As the fusion becomes more complete, a composite character is being formed which should be as noble as it is unique. It is a work of love appealing especially to those who live at the

present juncture, which should rally under your banner every generous citizen and cultivated scholar throughout the commonwealth.