

WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

From S. L. Lowry
THE

S. L.

NATION'S STABILITY.

From S. L. Lowry
AN ADDRESS

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BY CALVIN ELIAS STOWE.

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WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE THE NATION'S STABILITY.

It has long been familiarly said, that "it takes all sorts of people to make a world;" and in these days we may with great propriety add, it takes all sorts of people to govern a world! At any rate, all sorts of people appear determined to take their turn in governing this world; it seems the decree of Providence that all should have their turn; and it is certainly the part of wisdom to make the best of what cannot be avoided.

Patriarchs and heads of families first governed, afterwards priests and men of learning—successful warriors have had their turn—hereditary sovereigns and nobles by aristocratic birth have held a long dominion—wealth and talent also have forced their way to empire and seized it in spite of regal authority and oligarch hostility—all have had their time of standing at the head except the great mass of the people, those who are neither patriarchs nor priests nor men of learning nor warriors, those who have neither regal nor aristocratic blood in their veins, and no pretensions to distinction for wealth or talent—and their turn comes next, and they will have it. Numbers is now the crown-prince and heir apparent to the throne by regular succession, the sceptre is already within his grasp; and those who mean to stand high under the new dynasty, are hastening to pay their most obsequious homage to NUMBERS.

There is always inconvenience in passing from one dynasty to another; especially to those who have had the ascendancy and must lose it. It was deadly hard for the monarchs and nobles of the last era to acknowledge the power and submit to the mandates of vulgar wealth and talent unsustained by high birth—and it is equally hard for talent and wealth to give way before the might of mere numbers. But come it must, and all the indications of society show that this era is now at hand, or rather that it has already commenced.

When an opulent family could hire servants at its own price, and control them by the power of dismissing them without character and thus depriving them of employment elsewhere, it was very convenient for the family—and now that servants command their own price, and families cannot get another unless the last in their employ has given them a good character for politeness and light work, it is very inconvenient for the servants. When the rich could procure dresses which were inaccessible to those less favored by the gifts of fortune, and in the promiscuous assembly could be distinguished from all others by the superiority of their external decorations, it was very gratifying to the pride of the gentlemen and ladies who could live without work—and now that the richest articles of dress usually worn by the opulent can be obtained by a few weeks of industry and ordinary skill in almost any employment, and the public assembly can show little difference in external appearance between the rich and the industrious, it is no less gratifying to the pride of the gentlemen and ladies who work for their living.

And why should any one complain? Why should not *the people* have their turn of standing at the head? In the old world they have had a long and weary season of oppression and penury; and why, in this new world, should they not have a chance to reign and be the sovereigns? They will probably treat their subjects as well as any sovereigns who have preceded them; indeed they can scarcely contrive to treat them worse. Yes, let worst come to worst, and the reign of *Numbers* can scarcely be more disgraceful to the sovereign or more disastrous to the subject than that of Charles II. of England, or Louis XIV. of France, and these, so far from being the foulest specimens of hereditary misrule, are but a fair medium between the best and the worst. The accession of Charles to the throne is to this day annually celebrated with devout thanksgivings in the national church of England as an *unspeakable mercy*, and Louis is *Le Grand Monarque*, of whom all France is proud. Sovereigns have human nature as well as other men, and seek their own happiness; and if the sovereigns are the great majority of the people, probably the greatest happiness of the greatest number will be more zealously sought after under this new dynasty than it has ever been before. Even if they do not find what they seek, it will be no new phenomenon in the history of man. All states of society have their peculiar advantages and disadvantages; and happy is the man who has *learned, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content*. There are sometimes pleasant and improving things in a monarchy, and a republic also has its conveniences and advantages.

Government, at least so far as the mass of the people is concerned, rests on opinion and feeling, on personal attachments and fanciful associations, rather than on abstract principles of right—and surely a well educated, clean looking maiden of twenty, of decided character and a generous spirit, entitled by her birth to reign during life and transmit the throne to her posterity after her death, must awaken a more glowing and kindly enthusiasm in the bosom of a nation, than a red-whiskered republican widower of sixty, who has risen by climbing on the people's shoulders, and must so soon give way to another who ascends by the same ladder. But when this same youthful queen is fond of riding horseback, and the people must furnish 300,000 dollars to build her a single stable, and other expenses in proportion, we cannot help thinking they pay very dear for their whistle; though it cannot be denied that we republicans also sometimes buy very dear whistles too. And the fair maiden, alas! soon becomes a man's wife, and that destroys more than half the poetry; and if she had not done this, she would inevitably, had she lived long enough, been (with reverence be it spoken) an *old maid*, and that is exceedingly prosaic—and who can tell what will come to the throne next? But while our people choose their own president, they will probably choose the man they like best; and if they are satisfied, who has any right to complain?

Some affect to sneer at the respect which is paid to high birth, on the ground that there is nothing meritorious in it, because it is a mere accident in which the individual has had no agency. Allowing it to be a mere accident, is it not as meritorious an accident as personal beauty? Yet even in this republican country, native beauty, in the production of which the beautiful individual has had no agency, is altogether more admired than the beauty which is produced by the skilful or meritorious application of paints and curls and ornamental dress. What are distinguished talents to

the individual who possesses them, but a fortunate accident? But are they the less admired on that account? Does wealth that is inherited, give a person less consideration in society than wealth acquired by personal industry? Our admiration is seldom graduated by the real merits of those we admire, of which indeed we are often very incompetent judges, but by the qualities which interest us, without much reference to the agency which has produced them; and high birth in countries where it exists, as naturally and as rationally excites admiration, provided the personal character does not debase it, as beauty, or genius, or wealth, which though not acquired by one's own exertions, always give to those who possess them a decided advantage in our estimation, which cannot be counteracted except by great personal baseness.

But is not the state of society which disregards high birth, and is not over obsequious to talent and wealth, notwithstanding some little inconveniences attending it, on the whole most propitious to the best interests of the human race, to the greatest happiness of the greatest number? Is it not the condition which the principle of the progressive improvement of man would lead the philosopher to anticipate, as the final result of complete civilization? Such a state of society can be realized only by a far greater amount of intelligence and good principle in the great body of the community than has ever yet existed in any country; and the more power the mass of the people have, the stronger is the inducement, the greater the necessity of putting forth every effort to make them intelligent and right principled. Such is the selfishness of our nature, that if the great body of the people could be kept under by force as they have been for many ages past, there is little probability that any adequate efforts would be made for their intellectual and moral elevation; but now that there is laid upon the more favored classes of society the strong necessity of *doing or dying* in the great cause of universal education, it is to be hoped that exertions in some degree commensurate to the vast work, may be called forth. And should there be success in the effort to make the whole community capable of a just, judicious and safe self-government, the highest form of society which can be conceived, will then be attained, and the most ardent anticipations of the philanthropist realized. It will be a fulfilment of the sublime prediction respecting the best condition of the human race, when *wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of their times and strength of salvation, and the fear of the Lord their treasure*. But this implies a much higher degree of mental cultivation and a more elevated standard of moral purity than is often supposed. It is not mere *knowledge*, but *wisdom* also, which is requisite to produce *stability* in such times; and the *fear of the Lord* must be coextensive with *political freedom*, or it will prove a curse rather than a blessing to the human race; and there will be no strength of salvation—for *let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly—for a stone is heavy and the sand weighty, but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both*. And is not this the country where Providence intends this great problem shall be solved? and is not this the generation when the great work must be taken hold of right heartily and in serious good earnest to ensure a favorable result?

Intelligence and right principles universally diffused are manifestly the only foundations on which such a state of society can rest; and in illustration of this idea I will here endeavor to show.

1. How intelligence and right principles promote the improvement and happiness of a community—and
2. How ignorance and the consequent viciousness produce disorder and wretchedness.

The whole universe, material and intellectual, with all its individual movements, is governed by fixed and unalterable laws, which were established by the Creator in the beginning. It is a knowledge of these laws which constitutes intelligence; and the approval of and obedience to them, which constitute religion and morality. There is no species of intelligence which does not imply a knowledge of some general law established by the Creator; and any kind of information which does not reach to this, is isolated in the mind, unsusceptible of practical application, and undeserving the name of intelligence.

Is a man an intelligent mechanic? Then he understands the fixed and unalterable laws that regulate mechanical movements, which were established by the Creator when the material world was called into being. Is a man intelligent in respect to his fellow men, so that he knows how to influence them, and what calculations to make as to the result of any particular combination of influences upon them? Then he has knowledge of the fixed, unchangeable laws which God has established in respect to human nature and the action of mind. Is a man an intelligent farmer? Then he has a knowledge of the laws which God hath established to regulate the growth of vegetables, and their application to the support of animal life, for in this lies the whole mystery of agriculture. Thus every species of intelligence resolves itself into a knowledge of some general law; and it is only when a given item of information is referrible to a general law that we can make any practical application of it. We may have felt in a particular instance that the edge of a knife, pressed against a particular part of our bodies, will cut and give pain; but if we did not thence infer a general law which applies equally to all sharp instruments and all parts of the animal frame, this painful experience could add very little to the sum of our intelligence.

Religion and morality consist in an approval of the divine laws and obedience to them; for the same being who established the laws which regulate mechanical motions and the growth of vegetables, also established the laws which fix the relations and determine the duties that exist among moral agents in respect to each other and in respect to their Creator. The laws which regulate the moral and religious order of the universe have the same fixed and unalterable character as those which regulate its physical order.

All these divine laws have this peculiarity, that they are self-executing; that is, if any law which God hath established, whether physical or moral, be transgressed, the transgression itself brings the punishment without any other interposition. When a human law is violated, a penalty must be inflicted by other agencies than those employed in the transgression, and as these are not always at hand or cannot reach the criminal, he may often escape. But in respect to the divine law it is very different. Here the only created agency necessarily employed in the punishment, is the very agency employed in the transgression; and until the transgressor can divest himself of himself, or run away from himself and leave himself behind, he can never escape the penalty due to his crime.

These laws are all established for the highest good of the creatures of God, the

violation of them can produce only evil; and to warn us of the evil and deter us from the commission of it, every instance of transgression is attended with pain, and the habit of obedience with the feeling of pleasure. To illustrate this idea by a few examples. That the body may grow it must have food, and without food, it would wither away and die. God might have informed us of this, and commanded us to supply ourselves with food at regular intervals, under severe penalties to be inflicted at some future period; yet, if the transgression of the law were attended with no pain at the time, such is the heedlessness of man that probably very few would take sufficient care of themselves to grow up to manhood. This would be like human laws. But God has made an arrangement far more efficient. He has made the violation of this law for a single day to be attended with such gnawing intolerable pangs of hunger that every one is compelled to seek food at all hazards whenever it is needed. From the operation of this law there is no escape. The poor sailor on his frail raft in the midst of the barren ocean, who is there without any fault of his own, feels the pangs of hunger as keenly as the ungodly wretch who by his vices has deprived himself of all means of subsistence. Again, fire when applied to the body will destroy it. God might have informed us of this, and commanded us under severe penalties to avoid exposing ourselves to fire; but had the action of fire on our frame been attended with no pain, the monition would frequently be unheeded. But to secure obedience, the action of fire on our flesh is attended with such intolerable agony, that having once felt it, we instinctively shrink from the touch of fire. This law is unalterable and is never modified to accommodate particular circumstances. The poor helpless child, who is burned in its own dwelling at midnight, suffers the same agony of bodily torture as its wretched mother by whose drunkenness both have been made a prey to the flames.

So it is with all the physical laws which God hath established. If they are violated, under whatever circumstances, there is no escaping the penalty. No sorrow, no repentance, no agony of regret, which comes after the penalty has begun to take effect, and when it is unless to restrain from further violation, ever induces him to abate one iota of the established punishment.

Equally fixed, unalterable, and certain in their operation, are the laws which regulate the moral affairs of God's universe. The man who gives himself up to the influences of ambition or avarice, will assuredly, both in this world and the next, feel pangs of agony, of which starvation is but a faint emblem; and he who is addicted to lust or intemperance, will undergo torture in comparison with which the consuming of the living body by the action of fire is a pain that can easily be borne. The Christian system, it is true, provides for an escape from the penalty due to sin on condition of repentance and faith in the Redeemer; but this has respect to future punishment, and not to the natural consequences of sin in this world; and the system exhibits, besides, a tremendous array of positive punishment, beyond the natural consequences of sin, for every one who rejects its merciful provisions.

In a fallen world like this, by the action of physical laws, physical pain is often brought on men without any direct fault of their own, and therefore any degree of corporeal suffering can be borne with composure provided the mind be free and calm; but agonies purely mental are, directly or indirectly, the result of our own sins, and

therefore beyond all conception intolerable. *The spirit of a man sustaineth his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?* Often do we see this exemplified in the miserable life and torturing death of the miser and the drunkard, the malefactor and the adulterer.

Such, then, being the unalterable character of the laws of God, such the impossibility of escaping the penalty of their violation, and there being in every human breast an intense dread of pain and desire of pleasure—just in proportion as a knowledge of these laws prevails and extends, the motive to regard them becomes stronger and less capable of being resisted; and just in proportion as they are regarded the happiness of the whole is increased, because it is their great object to secure happiness and prevent the occurrence of misery.

Right principles are principles which are in strict accordance with these laws; and in order that such principles may be formed, these laws must be known.

Thus it is that intelligence and right principles promote the improvement and happiness of society. In a community, just in proportion as it is intelligent and right principled, the physical and moral laws which God hath established for the government of the universe, are known and observed; and the consequences which God hath attached by an indissoluble tie to their knowledge and observance, namely, improvement and happiness, invariably follow. As certainly do they follow, as a rich vegetation will be the consequence of a good soil, a genial climate, a favorable season, and judicious culture. As the Scripture hath declared, in this respect every good man is *like the tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper*. And the same sentiment is equally applicable to whole communities, and the law as certainly takes effect in reference to a community as in reference to an individual.

It must be noticed, that the kind of intelligence here spoken of, implies much more than isolated items of information on various topics—it implies a well disciplined mind, a well exercised judgment, sound, settled grounds of reasoning, the power of generalizing, the habit of thinking and acting on fixed, general principles. Whether a whole nation can be elevated to such a degree of intelligence, is the problem which the citizens of the United States, as they value the present form of their institutions, must successfully work out.

Is this possible? it may be asked. Surely there is no natural impossibility in it. Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Patrick Henry, were three of the most carefully disciplined and best cultivated minds employed in our Revolutionary struggle, and they had no other advantages than what may come within the reach of any hard working mechanic or farmer in the country. A life of labor, then, is not inconsistent with the highest order of intellectual and moral culture; and if, with the meagre and imperfect advantages of those times these men could raise themselves to so elevated a rank, certainly, when full opportunities and facilities are given, men may be found in every village and hamlet in the land, who with less force of natural talent, and in exigencies less pressing, can attain an equal elevation. Talent and character in humble life have never yet had a fair chance to develop themselves; but once give them open field and fair play, and it will soon be seen that God hath made all men of one blood.

After what has already been said, it is easy to show—

2. How ignorance and the consequent viciousness produce disorder and wretchedness.

Though all vice, in a depraved world like this, be not directly attributable to ignorance, yet all ignorance tends to vice. For what is vice but a violation of the laws, physical and moral, which God hath established? and where can this violation so easily occur as where these laws are unknown, or the awful consequences attending their transgression unheeded? The more a man knows, the more easy it is to make him see that the paths of virtue and happiness are coincident, the more easy it is to get his understanding on the side of truth and goodness; and the less a man knows the more difficult it is to get a sound, well grounded motive to take hold of him. The intelligent are always susceptible of influence from sound argument, and every sound argument is in favor of obeying the order which God has established. The unintelligent are not, to any great extent, susceptible to the influence of sound argument, but are rather led by prejudice, by accidental associations, by noise and passion; and though these may sometimes be employed in the service of truth and goodness, they are much more appropriately and more efficiently used in the cause of wickedness and error. Hence in ignorant communities, the rational advocates of good principles are sure to be outrun by the noisy abettors of bad principles.

An intelligent man who has given himself up to the influence of wickedness, may resist the convictions of his understanding and listen only to the voice of passion, and an unintelligent man may follow his virtuous impulses rather than his vicious ones; but the intelligent villain can never be a successful one except in an ignorant community, and the well disposed ignorant man can seldom maintain his integrity, except in an intelligent and virtuous community. We see, therefore, that notwithstanding individual exceptions, the great principle as applied to communities, is strictly and universally true. If there were no ignorance, villany would be too unprofitable to be very extensively practised; if there were no dupes, there could be but few knaves. The well disposed ignorant men in ignorant communities, are the very tools which the unprincipled make use of to carry their purposes; for they have goodness enough to gain for themselves some influence with their ignorant associates, to gain their confidence and serve as a curtain for their wicked employers to hide behind; but they have not wisdom enough to detect the villany of their leaders or perceive the vile uses they are put to. The knowing rogue would be entirely out of business for want of tools to work with, were it not for the honest simpleton, who furnishes him with what he would otherwise be destitute of, a show of moral character for his schemes, to cheat the ignorant with; and in regard to such it may be truly said, the more honest they are the greater mischief they do, for the more honesty they have the broader mask do they afford to hide the ugly face of their wire-puller from the dupes over whom they have influence; and being very conscientious in their wrong-headedness, it is impossible to turn them. Thus honesty itself when allied to ignorance, often proves mischievous.

The ignorant are not only at the command of the designing, as tools prepared for the execution of their schemes, but in proportion as the reason is less exercised, they are the more subject to the sway of the fiercest passions. The wrath of the fool is terrible while it lasts, and the object of his wrath is according to the caprice of

the moment. The injury he does is not measured by the injury he imagines himself to have received, but only by his power of inflicting evil; and so fickle and uncertain is he, that he will tear a man limb from limb to day, for having assisted him in doing the same to his neighbor yesterday. The annals of the French Revolution afford numberless instances of the terribleness and fickleness of the wrath of fools. It is because communities so generally have been ignorant, unstable and vicious, that many have settled down in the conviction, that men are incapable of self-government, and that the least among many evils, is a hereditary sovereign who can govern them against their will, who can employ one third of his subjects with weapons of butchery in their hands to keep the other two thirds at work for the maintenance of their oppressors.

A community ignorant of the general laws which God has established, and without disposition to obey them, will continually be incurring the evils and sorrows which their violation irretrievably brings. The blessings of Providence are turned to curses; waters intended to refresh and purify are used to destroy, and fires designed for warmth and comfort are employed for torture and death—the passions are all awake and the reason asleep. As an open boat in a stormy ocean without oar or rudder must soon fill and sink, or be cast upon the shore, unless saved by extraneous aid, so such a community must either destroy itself or fall under the dominion of a more intelligent neighbor.

Our own country has taken the lead in the establishment of popular institutions, and most of the democracy that now exists in the world originated or has been fostered here. Free institutions were here established under the most favorable circumstances, and with the greatest probabilities of success, and here they have had their freest and most unconstrained development. Here the people at large really possess all the power, they are daily becoming more and more conscious of it, and they do and will exercise it.

We may then, with peculiar appropriateness and interest make application of our general subject to the present condition and future prospects of the United States.

We have set a hazardous example to the world, and commenced a fearful experiment, and we are sacredly bound to make it good if possible. It is our solemn duty to ourselves and the world to make every effort to sustain the attempt which was so happily begun, and prove that men can enjoy equal rights without being a curse to themselves and others. The history of civilization, the progress of society, the predictions of Scripture, all seem to indicate that the time is approaching when such a condition of society will be fully realized throughout the world; and yet when we look at our own country as the vanguard and standard-bearer in this great movement, there are many things to occasion painful apprehension and call for strenuous exertion. Let us look at them fairly, without self-flattery or weak despondency, and see what we have to do, and act accordingly.

All our institutions, as is well known and universally acknowledged, proceed on the supposition that the people are intelligent and virtuous, and capable of self-government; and if this supposition fails to be realized in actual experience, our institutions fail as surely as an arch falls when the key-stone is knocked out. When the foundations of our government were laid, this assumption was much nearer the truth than it is at the present moment; for though great improvements have since

taken place in the methods of moral and intellectual culture, yet these improvements have by no means kept pace with the rapid increase of our native population, the increased temptations attendant on our national prosperity, the widely extending settlements over our vast territory, and the influx of untaught foreigners to our shores. Our fathers did not foresee such a mighty flood of immigration, and made no provision to meet it. Our native population could be educated in the principles of republicanism; but what can be done with the myriads who flock to us without any preparation for the rational enjoyment of our privileges? Almost as soon as the immigrant lands here, he is led to the polls, and urged to exercise all the rights and claim all the privileges of a citizen before he knows anything of our form of government, or even understands a syllable of our language. The ignorant, the vicious, the reckless and the debauched have free access to the ballot-box; and the vote of the most idle and miserable wretch about the streets counts the same as that of the most intelligent, industrious and praiseworthy citizen; and the worst of men and the worst of passions exist in abundance for the unprincipled to rise upon. This matter is well understood, and ambitious men make their calculations accordingly.

An aspiring demagogue in one of our states was once starting the project of a new political party, by the force of which he could rise to office and distinction. A friend assured him that it would be impossible to raise such a party in the state, because the settled convictions of the great body of the people were entirely against its views. "Not impossible at all, but the easiest thing in the world," (replied the sagacious aspirant,) "and I will tell you how: In the first place we will make it for the interest of all the *knaves* to join us, and the knaves will go whither their interest leads, and here we have at once a very respectable party in point of numbers. In the second place every knave can on an average bring over at least two fools, and then we shall have a clear majority of two-thirds of the whole people." The result in this instance showed that the man's calculations were right; for he succeeded beyond all expectation and was elected to Congress in less than two years.

It will be pretty generally acknowledged, that the affairs of our country are not always under the exclusive control of the intelligence and virtue which actually exist among the people, but rather the contrary. It is certain that an amount of public vice which would scarcely be felt in older and more despotic forms of government, would be enough to shake us to anarchy; because our government rests on the supposition of intelligence and virtue, and cannot exist without it. It is difficult to conceive, and scarcely possible to describe what would be our fate, if the natural consequences of our public vices were to take full effect upon us. The wealthy, the refined, and the intelligent, deceived by the enjoyment of present advantages, are fondly dreaming in fancied security, as were the inhabitants of the old world before the waters of the flood; little considering that should the whirlwind of anarchy come, they must themselves be the first victims, the severest sufferers, both because they have the most to lose and the keenest sensibilities to their losses. The wealth of the rich is the first object of attack to a lawless revolutionary mob, the families of the refined are the earliest victims of their reeking lust; and the intelligent they regard as their natural enemies.

In various parts of our land, the mob have already laid violent hands on what is not theirs, and passed unrebuked. They have already tasted blood, and with impu-

nity. And there are those who excuse them on the plea of necessity; and because, as they allege, there are certain offences which no law can reach. And this rotten plea, this excuse of every wilful tyrant for his most tyrannical deeds, has found its way into places of high authority, and there has been in consequence a growing disregard of the authority of law, and an increasing recklessness of dishonesty among those whose duty it is to enforce the law. The same spirit has affected even ecclesiastical proceedings, and found its way into assemblies which call themselves courts of Jesus Christ. I have been told that a Presbyterian minister was a few years ago complaining to Gen'l. Jackson of the unprincipled violence of party politics and lamenting its deliterious influence. "Ah!" (replied the Gen'l. with a sort of rogueish solemnity,) "I know it is very bad, but nothing distresses me like the troubles in the Presbyterian church!"

What, think you, must be the effect of such exhibitions of reckless political ambition, as we have witnessed within a few years past, upon the aspiring young men in the land? They see that the unscrupulous partisan is the man who rises, that it is he who is sustained and rewarded; while he who refuses to sacrifice his principles to his party, will often be sacrificed by his party. They enter on public life, therefore, with little expectation of succeeding, if they adhere rigidly to principle; and it is almost only those whose principles set loosely about them, that have any strong expectations of eminent political station. Did those honest and well meaning men, who suffer themselves to be made the dupes of the designing, did they but see how directly the course which they are pursuing tends to corrupt and vitiate the most active and ardent young men of the nation, they would surely pause before they would any longer consent to excuse or palliate vices and frauds, because they occur in their own ranks and seem to be profitable to their own party.

In arbitrary governments, where power does not originate with the people, the vices of public life do not always afford an index of the state of national morals; but in a country like this, where all power and office are in the gift of the people, and betowed on the people's favorites, the character of the public men is a tolerably fair representation of the character of a majority of the people. What then are the qualities most likely to secure success in public life among us, at the present time? Are they good sense, consistency, disinterestedness, dignity of character, purity of morals, an abhorrence of all that is mean and base and vicious?

There are undoubtedly three classes of public functionaries and candidates for public favor among us. There is a class of honorable, upright, intelligent and patriotic men, who have the sagacity to perceive what is right and the disposition to pursue it. There is also a class of arrant knaves, entirely selfish, and unscrupulous as to any means which they imagine may advance their own interests; men who, as Lord Bacon expresses it, would burn their neighbors houses, were it but to warm their own fingers by the fire; men who would willingly see this glorious country and all its institutions, the best hope of the world, sacrificed to their mean ambition; and who do not hesitate to corrupt the public morals for the sake of rising on the wreck of public virtue and happiness. There is a third class of honest, weak-minded men, who have more ambition than capacity, and who, though they mean no harm, more readily sympathize with the knaves than with the upright, because a knave will condescend to flatter them and contribute to their advancement, and

use arts which an honorable man would despise. The same three classes also exist among the people at large; but I cannot here undertake to determine the relative numbers of these several classes. I will only remark, that our institutions are founded on the assumption that all, or at least the great majority of the people, are intelligent and virtuous, and, in view of this, inquire, can they subsist if less than one third should be found to possess the character, which the theory supposes to exist in all?

For I very much fear, that until the great mass of the people are sufficiently educated to understand broad general principles, and draw sound deductions from them, to comprehend the great universal laws which God has established, and foresee the remote results of particular combinations, till they are generally gifted with *wisdom and knowledge* and the *fear of the Lord*, the second and third classes mentioned will be far more numerous than the first.

What then? Must we give way to despair, and say that nothing can be done? Has not enough already been accomplished to inspire gratitude and hope and the strongest confidence for the future? Where is the nation that has ever had a half century of such prosperity, improvement, and general happiness as we have had since we became independent? It is entirely a new thing in the world's history, that so vast an extent of country should be so rapidly settled and laid under cultivation, and covered with the works of a vigorous, intelligent, and happy people. I speak of our *free states*, and I mean the *whole people* and not any one or two *favoured classes*. The highest anticipations of our revolutionary heroes and sages have been more than realized; a solid foundation of intelligence and virtue still lies at the bottom of our national greatness; our advantages and improvements are substantial, firm, and numberless; while our evils are comparatively few, partial, and easily susceptible of remedy. We shall not succeed without effort, but there is every possible assurance that all well directed, well considered efforts will meet abundant success. Recreant shall we be to our vocation, and utterly unworthy the place we occupy in the world's history, if we do not transmit to our posterity, not only unimpaired, but greatly improved and extended, the rich inheritance of civil and religious freedom which we have received from our fathers.

I have already stated, and attempted to prove, that it is *wisdom and knowledge* which must be the *stability of our times and strength of salvation*, and the *fear of the Lord our treasure*. In enumerating the means, therefore, which must be employed for the securing and perpetuating of our invaluable national privileges, I shall endeavor to indicate the best methods of diffusing through the great body of the people the blessings of *wisdom and knowledge and the fear of the Lord*.

Among these means the first place must be given to our COMMON SCHOOLS, and other kindred educational institutions.

Intelligence and good principles are not the natural growth of the head and heart in this depraved and imperfect state, but can be produced only by assiduous cultivation. Parents generally have neither the time nor the capacity to give their children anything like a sufficient education in the bosom of the family. It must be done in a public school, or it will not be done at all. The great difference between those communities where public schools are sustained by law and where they are unknown, shows at once how essential an element they are in the process of civili-

zation and social improvement. Our revolution could never have been successfully achieved but for the common schools of New England; and Scotland at this day would have been more wretched and degraded than poor Ireland itself, were it not for the common school instruction introduced by John Knox. Imperfect as has been the instruction both in Scotland and New England, poorly qualified as most of the teachers have been for their great work, short as the time has been, and wretched as have been the means and the accommodations,—yet these schools have been among the greatest blessings which the human race has ever received, and, considered in all their bearings, have done more for the elevation of the great mass of the people and the vindication of the rights of man as man, than all other human institutions together. Compare the people who have been brought up under the influence of these institutions with any other people that have ever existed; contrast the amount of popular intelligence, capacity and susceptibility of improvement among them with what is found anywhere else; and you must be compelled to acknowledge that even an imperfect system imperfectly executed has wrought stupendous miracles of improvement, and that the idea of universal intellectual and moral elevation, so far from being a chimerical one, is more than sustained by the wonderful results already produced by a system of means hitherto so inadequate. It is true that in both these countries there was a solid religious basis for improvement; and without this little can be expected, even from the more perfect systems of popular instruction which have recently been introduced into other countries.

The common school is almost the only ground left, on which we can all meet together and co-operate harmoniously for the general good. We are so divided into religious sects and political parties, hostile to each other and jealously watchful, that most of our spheres of effort are miserably circumscribed and hedged in; but here is a most important and interesting field, where as yet there has been no considerable division, and the people generally are of one heart and one mind. It is the most appropriate and efficient instrumentality for good that can be devised, for it is the very purpose of the school to promote intelligence and sound principles, to sow the seeds of all that is virtuous in the very spring-time of life, while there is the surest promise of the production of an abundant harvest. If the school be not sustained and receive a right direction, there is no substitute for it; there is no other way in which the children of all classes can be so effectually brought together and trained up for usefulness and happiness. The republics of Greece and Rome had no common schools and no Bible, and therefore they fell. It is one of the most interesting features of these institutions, that they are suited to bring together children of all ranks in life, of all political parties, and of all religious creeds, give them a common education, make them acquainted with each other, and thereby break down prejudice and alienation, and fit them, when they come to adult years, to feel and act together as one harmonious people. This is of the utmost importance in our nation, which is made up of so many heterogenous elements that must be amalgamated before we can have peace or stability. Every attempt to pervert the common school funds so as to accommodate children of different languages or different religions with a separate education, should be steadily resisted by every true friend of his country. It is a death-blow at the whole system, and so I believe it is intended to be by the leaders of those who are making the attempt.

The common school is an institution already well established and secure in the confidence of the people. Shall it be neglected, overlooked, and deserted? Shall the funds which have been so liberally provided for its support, be misapplied, perverted, and wasted, through the neglect of those who ought to take the deepest interest in them?

The common school should be made adequate to all the common wants of the people, and so elevated that it will not be the school for the poor only, but where all classes would feel it a privilege to be educated. This can easily be done, provided all classes unite in endeavoring to effect it; and the nature of our institutions renders it peculiarly necessary that our children should be educated together. We shall all be obliged to live together in pretty nearly equal ranks; and it is sound policy as well as Christian duty, to attempt in the most appropriate way to prepare all to live together happily, by giving them as nearly as possible the same general habits of thought and equal opportunities for improvement. If the common schools are in so bad a condition that the morals of a child are not safe there, they certainly should not be deserted till the most strenuous efforts have been made for their purification; for they are the only schools which two-thirds of the people can ever have opportunity to visit, and if they are sources of corruption instead of improvement, we are indeed fast hastening to ruin. If bad children are disposed to come to the school, this surely is an important step towards reformation, and one means by which the labor of attempting something in their behalf is very much shortened and lightened. If they be not reformed in youth, they will soon grow up to be vicious men and women, when their influence will be the strongest, and you can no longer keep your children from associating with them. We cannot keep our families pure by secluding them; for do what we can in this way, if evil exist in such a society of equality as ours, walls of stone and gates of brass cannot prevent its entering our households. God has brought upon us the greatest possible amount of motive that can be conceived, to labor for the moral welfare of the whole community; for he has made our own moral welfare, that of our children to depend upon it. As well might we in the Lord's prayer pray for forgiveness without forgiving others, as to labor in our families for the improvement of our own children while we make no effort for the spiritual and moral advancement of the families around us. There is money enough already expended for educational purposes to accomplish this object, if it were judiciously applied. Many a parent is at as much trouble and expense in sending his children abroad for education, as it would require to establish a school in his own neighborhood, that would educate not only his own children, but those of his neighbors also.

Let the common schools be well established, and I have no fears that we shall be destitute of academies and colleges, and the higher institutions of learning. By the schools properly conducted, the desire for improvement will be excited, the means for endowing and filling academies and colleges will be created; and the result is as certain as that fruit will be produced when the roots of the right tree have been properly planted in a genial soil. Why is New England the country of all others, in this new world, for academies and colleges? Because it is the country of common schools. Here in these schools are formed the founders, the teachers and the students of the colleges—and without them the colleges could not exist.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL is another most important element of social improvement and political safety among us. Reason and all experience show, that intellectual education is of little avail for the general good without a solid religious basis to rest upon. The sects among us are so numerous and so jealous of each other, that sufficient religious instruction can scarcely ever be given in our public schools. Sunday schools, which are voluntary associations under the care of the different sects, supply this deficiency; and though the instruction in them differs in respect to form, it is plain, from the books prepared for their use, that the great and leading principles of moral and religious duty, taught in all of them, are substantially the same. If there are exceptions, they are few and local.

Their advantages are extended to those whose situation may exclude them from sufficient attendance on the common school, the instructions are given on a day which, if not devoted to intellectual and moral improvement, is generally a day of destructive idleness and demoralization; the source of instruction is the Bible, the book of all others best calculated to make a happy impression on the youthful mind; the circumstances under which the children meet are the most favorable to a salutary discipline; the labor of the teachers is a labor of love, and therefore the more improving; they engage in their work from benevolent motives, and the influence of their own character on that of their pupils is generally of the most valuable kind. The efficient, unpretending Sunday school teacher is a far more active friend to his country than those open-mouthed and close-fisted declaimers about patriotism, whose voice is always heard where offices are to be had, but whose hands are seldom seen in any work that does not help to fill their own pockets.

THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION must be sustained, and the preaching of the gospel encouraged and promoted. All social difficulties originate in ignorance and depravity, and as the school is the cure for ignorance, so the gospel is the cure for depravity. The gospel indeed is intelligence and virtue combined; for it communicates the same sort of information respecting the moral and religious laws of the universe, which the school imparts respecting its physical and social order. It shows that the violation of God's moral and religious laws is visited with the same severe, unrelenting and irretrievable retribution that attends the transgression of his physical laws; and by explaining what those laws are and how their demands may be fulfilled by fallen man; it lays open a way of hope and eternal life to all who believe and obey. The weapons of the faithful, enlightened minister of Christ are indeed not carnal, yet *mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God*, and bringing proud, selfish man to obedience to the heaven-descended precept, *all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*. It is this disposition and this only, which the gospel alone inculcates and enforces, that can fit men to live happily together on terms of equality. It is the gospel which has produced all the pure morality and real freedom which now exist in the world; and by the gospel only can they be preserved and perpetuated.

The principles of the Christian religion, faithfully and fully proclaimed, and enforced on the understanding and conscience in all their simplicity, gentleness, loveliness and power, are the only adequate remedies for Sabbath-breaking and profane-

ness, for intemperance and licentiousness, for lying, dishonesty, and self-conceit, for oppression, injustice and cruelty, and for all other crimes with which we as a nation are justly chargeable. The power of the gospel should be relied upon to effect this great object, and its principles applied with the appropriate spirit.

The West especially, where all the institutions of society are in their infancy and the foundations of many generations are now to be laid, needs a well-trained, efficient, intelligent gospel ministry. We can no longer rely on men from the older states, or on their institutions; we must have men and institutions of our own. The incipient colleges and professional seminaries of the West, which are reared with so much labor and expense, amid so much of discouragement and hostility, must be sustained by the young men of the West, or they cannot succeed. To what purpose is all our labor and self denial in endowing institutions and collecting in them all the advantages of the seminaries of the East, if the young men among us still go abroad for their education? Must the West always depend on the East? Will our institutions ever be *as old* as the Eastern? And how are they ever to get reputation and standing except by the character of the young men who resort to them? On the young men of the West, on those who are seeking education, devolves the responsibility of deciding, whether we shall have educational institutions of our own, or whether we shall always depend on the East.

The PERIODICAL PRESS is a most important vehicle of popular intelligence, to which every friend of his country and kind should labor to give the most judicious direction. Every body reads newspapers, and no man can speak to the public so extensively or so effectually as through them. We have some good newspapers, but the great mass of them are unspeakably miserable. The good that is hindered and the evil incurred, the mischief, negative and positive, of this condition of the periodical press, is incalculable. He who sustains or tolerates a bad newspaper, is like him who allows a murderer to poison his neighbor's well.

The supply will be according to the demand; the people will patronize such editors as please them. We must educate and elevate the people that we may have a better periodical press, and we must have a better periodical press that we may educate and elevate the people. The furnishing the people with a better kind of reading by the circulating of interesting and useful books, especially by the establishment of district school libraries, is one of the most efficient aids to reformation. The chief reason why bad books and bad newspapers are circulated and read so much more extensively than good, is, that bad men are altogether more earnest and industrious to promote their own interest than good men are to promote the interest of the public.

Finally, our POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS must be regarded with veneration, our public officers respected, and the laws sacredly and carefully obeyed. Our political institutions are the grandest monument of talent, patriotism and integrity which the world has ever seen, and as such are entitled to our highest veneration; our public officers are the free choice of the people, they are the powers ordained of God, and as such we are bound to respect them: and as all governments which are not maintained by brute force, must be sustained by the power of public opinion and the energy of continued habit, our institutions must be venerated, our magistrates respected, and

the regular operation of our laws rigidly adhered to, or our whole foundation is gone.

Good men must feel their responsibilities as constituent parts of the commonwealth, and act accordingly. Our institutions were founded by religious men on religious principles and for religious purposes. Their founders never supposed they could exist, and never intended they should exist, without religion, and, as is perfectly obvious, their whole structure takes for granted the prevalence and predominating influence of moral and religious principle among the people at large. They labored for the establishment of such institutions as the world's last, best hope; for this purpose they sacrificed ease and comfort, friends and country, and life itself; and shall we, their degenerate sons, just as they had succeeded in launching the ship, refuse to do duty on board, and leave it to be swallowed up by the waves of ungodliness, and ourselves perish in the wreck?

If good men generally would determine that they would never vote for a bad man of any political party for public office, the vulgar and disgraceful brawls of the last winter in our Congress would never be re-enacted. Soon would every political party find it for its interest to select candidates from men of intelligence and principle. How is it at this time in your own state (Indiana)? During the most arduous political struggle you have ever experienced, the opposing candidates for the office of chief magistrate are both of them men of intelligence and principle, both of them, I will say, are Christian gentlemen, for whom a good man can vote without violating his conscience. The leaders of both political parties knew that there are many voters in Indiana, who, whatever their party predilections may be, will not give their vote to elevate a vile man to the office of governor; and therefore both parties were careful to select a candidate whose personal character is unexceptionable. This is the kind of political influence which good men are bound to exert, and which they can most efficiently exert without involving themselves in party strife. Let them exert it, honestly and consistently, and our country is safe.

Young Gentlemen of the Euphonian Society, I know not that any apology is necessary for obtruding so commonplace a topic on your notice at this anniversary. My motive has been a strong and growing conviction, that all the intelligent men in the country must feel their obligations to make their intelligence available for the benefit of the people at large, or we cannot succeed in our career as a republican nation. Even literary men must descend from their elevation and become familiar with the wants and engage the sympathies of the people, in order to enlighten and elevate them. Literature must always pay its respects to the sovereign, for by the sovereign it must live or die; and where the people are sovereign, literature must pay its respects to the people.

Every man is bound to contribute his quota of intelligence to the general stock; for if we are to live by intelligence and virtue, the whole that there is in the community will be none too much for us; and the literary man, who is supposed to have the most of it, is not to be exempted from furnishing his share. We are all embarked on board the same ship; and if the fore-castle sinks, the cabin passengers will not long keep afloat. All will yet be well if every man in his own place will do his own duty; but if men who have the highest advantages withdraw themselves

from the people at large and make no effort for their improvement, they must not be surprised if they lose the confidence and sympathy of the people, and find in the hour of trial that the influence and advice of others prevails over their own. We have undertaken an experiment on human nature; let us carry it through. We have given the world an appetite for self government—let us furnish them with the means of gratifying it. It is no time to begin to tame a lion after we have thrown ourselves into his paws—but if we find ourselves within the reach of one already partly tamed, let us use all proper means to keep him gentle.

The government of the people will be established, not only in this country, but throughout Christendom. The experiment will be made, the event must come. God has so decreed. We have time and means to prepare for it; and if the people are prepared, it will be the greatest blessing that ever visited the human race; if unprepared, the greatest curse. Who, then, who that has any ability to assist in this great work, can withhold his aid, and die with a guiltless conscience? There is this strong encouragement in the matter. The people at large have no motive to do deliberately wrong. The general interest is their own interest, and if they do wrong, if they go against the general good, which is their own, it is only when they are misled by selfish men. When they know what is right they are willing to do it; for, if no other and higher motive exist, they know that their own interest is best promoted by doing right. The responsibility of their wrong-doing generally rests with those who mislead them, or with those who, having the means to inform them, neglect to do it.

NOTE RESPECTING IMMIGRANT SUFFRAGE.

The evil from this source (alluded to on page 11,) is perhaps sufficiently guarded against by our naturalization laws; but these laws are often and notoriously violated, as they always will be till, we have a general law for the registry of voters. The United States is the only great nation that pursues a liberal policy towards foreigners, The national policy of Great Britain, in this respect as in almost all others, is illiberal and selfish in the extreme. Not only can no foreigner become naturalized or even hold real estate in Great Britain without special enactment, but every one born of British parents within the empire, is held to perpetual allegiance, whatever may be his relations to other governments. Every naturalized immigrant from Great Britain or Ireland in this country, is still considered by British law a subject of the British crown, and if ever found in arms defending his adopted country, is liable to the pains and penalties of treason.

The United States will not suffer, but be the gainers by their liberality, provided our immigrant fellow-citizens will take pains to inform themselves respecting the nature of our institutions, will drop the prejudices and prepossessions of the countries from which oppression has driven them, and adapt themselves to the circum-

stances and the customs of the land, which, with such unwonted liberality, receives, protects, and cherishes them. The noble stand recently taken by the German citizens of Cincinnati in behalf of the German-English free schools, and the determination they have manifested in the face of powerful opposition, to have their children educated in the English language, afford encouraging proof that this part of our immigrant population, at least, understand their rights and their duties. Let the just and magnanimous sentiments contained in a recent number of the VOLKSBLATT,* on the subject of the German Free Schools, be received and acted upon by all our immigrant fellow-citizens, and immigration, so far from being an evil, will be a great blessing.

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