E 178
.6
.S45

Class

Book

The Destiny of America.

SPEECH

OF

WILLIAM H. SEWARD,

AT THE

DEDICATION

OF

CAPITAL UNIVERSITY,

AT COLUMBUS, OHIO.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1853.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
1882
CITY OF WASHINGTON.

ALBANY:
WEED, PARSONS & COMPANY, PRINTERS.
1853.

E178
.6
.S45

GEG Ap. 28/6.

THE

DESTINY OF AMERICA.

This scene is new to me, a stranger in Ohio, and it must be in a degree surprising even to yourselves. On these banks of the Scioto, where the elk, the buffalo, and the hissing serpent haunted not long ago, I see now mills worked by mute mechanical laborers, and warehouses rich in the merchandise of many climes. Steeds of vapor on iron roads and electrical messengers on pathways which divide the air, attest the concentration of many novel forms of industry, while academic groves, spacious courts and majestic domes exact the reverence always eminently due to the chosen seats of philosophy, religion and government.

What a change moreover, has within the same short period come over the whole country that we love so justly and so well. High arcs of latitude and longitude have shrunk into their chords, and American language, laws, religion and authority, once confined to the Atlantic coast, now prevail from the Northern lakes to the Southern gulf, and from the stormy Eastern sea to the tranquil Western ocean.

Nevertheless it is not in man's nature to be content with present attainment or enjoyment. You say to me therefore with excusable impatience, "Tell us not what our country is, but what she shall be. Shall her greatness increase? Is she immortal?"

I will answer you according to my poor opinion. But I pray you first, most worthy friends, to define the greatness and immortality you so vehemently desire.

If the Future which you seek consists in this: that these thirty-one States shall continue to exist for a period as long as human foresight is allowed to anticipate after coming events; that they shall be all the while free; that they shall remain distinct and independent in domestic economy, and nevertheless be only one in commerce and foreign affairs; that there shall arise from among them and within their common domain even more than thirty-one other equal States, alike free, independent and united; that the borders of the Federal Republic so peculiarly constituted shall be extended so that it shall greet the sun when he touches the Tropic, and when he sends his glancing rays towards the Polar circle, and shall include even distant islands in either ocean; that our population now counted by tens of millions shall ultimately be reckoned by hundreds of millions; that our wealth shall increase a thousand fold and our commercial connections shall be multiplied, and our political influence be enhanced in proportion with this wide development, and that mankind shall come to recognize in us a successor of the few great states which have alternately borne commanding sway in the world—if this and only this is desired, then I am free to say that if, as you will readily promise, our public and private virtues shall be preserved, nothing seems to me more certain than the attainment of this Future, so surpassingly comprehensive and magnificent.

Indeed, such a Future seems to be only a natural consequence of what has already been secured. Why then shall it not be attained? Is not the field as free for the expansion indicated as it was for that which has occurred? Are not the national resources immeasurably augmented and continually increasing? With telegraphs and railroads crossing the Detroit, the Niagara, the St. Johns and the St. Lawrence rivers, with steamers on the Lakes of Nicaragua, and a railroad across the Isthmus of Panama, and with negotiations in progress for passages over Tehuantepec and Darien, with a fleet in Hudson's Bay and another at Bhering's Straits, and with yet another exploring the La Plata, and with an Armada at the gates of Japan, with Mexico ready to divide on the question of annexation, and with the Sandwich Islands suing to us for our sovereignty, it is quite clear to us that the motives to enlargement are even more active than they ever were heretofore,

and that the public energies, instead of being relaxed, are gaining new vigor.

Is the Nation to become suddenly weary and so to waver and fall off from the pursuit of its high purposes? When did any vigorous nation ever become weary even of hazardous and exhausting martial conquests? Our conquests on the contrary, are chiefly peaceful, and thus far have proved productive of new wealth and strength. Is a paralysis to fall upon the national brain? On the contrary, what political constitution has ever throughout an equal period exhibited greater elasticity and capacity for endurance?

Is the union of the States to fail? Does its strength indeed grow less with the multiplication of its bonds? Or does its value diminish with the increase of the social and political interests which it defends and protects? Far otherwise. For all practical purposes bearing on the great question the steam engine, the iron road, the electric telegraph, all of which are newer than the Union, and the Metropolitan Press, which is no less wonderful in its working than they, have already obliterated State boundaries and produced a physical and moral centralism more complete and perfect than monarchical ambition ever has forged or can forge. Do you reply nevertheless that the Union rests on the will of the several States, and that, no matter what prudence or reason may dictate, popular passion may become excited and rend it asunder. Then I rejoin, When did the American People ever give way to such impulses? They are practically impassive. You remind me that faction has existed and that only recently it was bold and violent. I answer that it was emboldened by popular timidity, and yet that even then it succumbed. Loyalty to the Union is not in one or many States only, but in all of the States, the strongest of all public passions. It is stronger I doubt not, than the love of justice or even the love of equality, which have acquired a strength here never known among mankind before. A nation may well despise threats of sedition that has never known but one traitor, and this will be learned fully by those who shall hereafter attempt to arrest any great national movement by invoking from their grave the obsolete terrors of Disunion.

But you apprehend foreign resistance. Well, where is our enemy? Whence shall he come. Will he arise on this conti-

nent? Canada has great resources and begins to give signs of a national spirit. But Canada is not yet independent of Great Britain. And she will be quite too weak to be formidable to us when her emancipation shall have taken place. Moreover her principles, interests and sympathies assimilate to our own just in the degree that she verges toward separation from the parent country. Canada, although a province of Great Britain, is already half annexed to the United States. She will ultimately become a member of this confederacy if we will consent, an ally if we will not allow her to come nearer. At least she can never be an adversary. Will Mexico, or Nicaragua, or Guatimala, or Ecuador, or Peru, all at once become magically cured of the diseases inherited from Aboriginal and Spanish parentage, and call up armies from under the earth and navies from the depths of the sea, and thus become the Rome that shall resist and overthrow this overspreading Carthage of ours? Or are we to receive our death stroke at the hand of Brazil, doubly cursed as she is above all other American States by her adoption of the two most absurd institutions remaining among men, European Monarchy and American Slavery.

Is an enemy to come forth from the islands in adjacent seas? Where then shall we look for him? On the Antilles, or on the Bermudas, or on the Bahamas? Which of the conflicting social elements existing together, yet unmixed, there, is ultimately to prevail? Will it be Caucasian or African? Can those races not only combine but become all at once aggressive and powerful?

Shall we look for an adversary in Europe? Napoleon said at St. Helena, "America is a fortunate country. She grows by the follies of our European Nations." Since when have those nations grown wise? If they have at last become wise, how is it that America has nevertheless not ceased to grow? But what European state will oppose us? Will Great Britain? If she fears to grapple with Russia advancing towards Constantinople on the way to India, though not only her prèstige, but even her empire is threatened, will she be bold enough to come out of her way to seek an encounter with us? Who will feed and pay her artizans while she shall be engaged in destroying her American debtors and the American consumers of her fabrics? Great Britain has

enough to do in replacing in Ireland the population that Island has yielded to us, in subjecting Africa, in extending her mercantile dominion in Asia and in perpetually readjusting the crazy balance of power in Europe, so essential to her safety. We have fraternal relations with Switzerland the only Republic yet lingering on that continent. Which of the despotic powers existing there in perpetual terror of the contagion of American principles will assail us and thus voluntarily hasten on that universal war of opinion which is sure to come at some future time, and which whenever it shall have come, whether it be sooner or later, can end only in the subversion of monarchy and the establishment of Republicanism on its ruins throughout the world?

Certainly no one expects the nations of Asia to be awakened by any other influences than our own from the lethargy into which they sunk nearly three thousand years ago, under the spells of superstition and caste. If they could be roused and invigorated now, would they spare their European oppressors and smite their American benefactors? Nor has the time yet come, if indeed it shall come within many hundred years, when Africa, emerging from her primeval barbarism, shall vindicate the equality of her sable races in the rights of Human Nature, and visit upon us the latest, the least guilty and the most repentant of all offenders, the wrongs she has so long suffered at the hands of so many of the Caucasian races.

No! no, we cannot indeed penetrate the Eternal Counsels, but reasoning from what is seen to what is unseen, deducing from the past probable conjectures of the future, we are authorized to conclude that if the national virtue shall prove sufficient the material progress of the United States which equally excites our own pride and the admiration of mankind, is destined to indefinite continuance.

But is this material progress even to the point which has been indicated the whole of the Future which we desire? It is seen at once that it includes no high intellectual achievement, and no extraordinary refinement of public virtue, while it leaves entirely out of view the improvement of mankind. Now there certainly is a political philosophy which teaches that Nations like individuals are equal, moral, social, responsible persons, existing not for ob-

jects of merely selfish advantage and enjoyment, but for the performance of duty, which duty consists in elevating themselves and all mankind as high as possible in knowledge and virtue; that the Human race is one in its origin, its rights, its duties and its destiny, that throughout the rise, progress and decline of Nations, one divine purpose runs—the increasing felicity and dignity of Human Nature—and that true greatness or glory, whether of individuals or of nations, is justly measured not by the territory they compass, or the wealth they accumulate, or the fear they inspire, but by the degree in which they promote the accomplishment of that great and beneficent design of the Creator of the Universe.

"The great end and object of life," (said Socrates) "is the perfection of the intellect, the great moral duty of man is knowledge, and the object of all knowledge is one, namely Truth, the Good, the Beautiful, the Divine Reason."

So also Plato taught that "Man ought to strive after and devote himself to the contemplation of the ONE, the ETERNAL, the INFINITE."

Cicero wrote, "There are those who deny that any bond of law or of association for purposes of common good exists among citizens. This opinion subverts all union in a state. There are those who deny that any such bond exists between themselves and strangers, and this opinion destroys the community of the Human Race."

Bacon declared that there was in man's nature "a secret love of others, which if not contracted, would expand and embrace all men."

These maxims proceed on the principle of the unity of the race, and of course of a supreme law regulating the conduct of men and nations upon the basis of absolute justice and equality. Locke adopted them when he inculcated that while there was a "law of popular opinion or reputation," which in society was "the measure of virtue and vice," and while there was a civil law which in the state was "the measure of crime and innocence," there was also a divine law which extended over "all society and all states, and which was the only touchstone of moral rectitude."

Guizot closed his recital of the decline of Roman civilization, with these equally true and momentous reflections—"Had not the

Christian Church existed at this time the whole world must have fallen a prey to mere brute force. The Christian Church alone possessed a moral power. It maintained and promulgated the idea of a precept, of a law superior to all human authority. It proclaimed that great truth, which forms the only foundation of our hope for Humanity, that there exists a law above all human laws, which by whatever name it may be called, whether Reason, the Law of God, or what not, is at all times and in all places the same, under different names."

It ought not to excite any surprise when I aver that this philosophy worked out the American Revolution. "Can anything," (said John Adams, in replying to one who had apologized for the stamp act) "Can anything not abominable have provoked you to commence an enemy to Human Nature?"

Alexander Hamilton, though less necessary to the Revolution than John Adams, was even more necessary to the reconstruction of society. He directed against the same odious stamp act the authority of British law as he found it written down by Blackstone. "The law of Nature being coeval with God himself is of course superior to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries, and at all times. No human laws are of any validity if contrary to this; and such of them as are valid derive all their authority mediately or immediately from this original." Then, as if despising to stand on any mere human authority, however high, the framer of the American Constitution proceeded, "The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written as with a sunbeam in the whole volume of Human Nature, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power."

How justly Knox conceived the true character of the chief personage of the Revolution, even at its very beginning, "The great and good Washington, a name which shall shine with distinguished lustre in the annals of History, a name dear to the friends of the Liberties of mankind."

La Fayette closed his review of the Revolution when returning to France with this glowing apostrophe: "May this great temple which we have just erected to Liberty always be an instruction to oppressors, an example to the oppressed, a refuge

for the rights of the Human Race, and an object of delight to the manes of its founders."

"Happy," (said Washington when announcing the treaty of peace to the army) "thrice happy shall they be pronounced hereafter, who shall have contributed anything, who shall have performed even the meanest office in erecting this stupendous fabric of freedom and empire on the broad basis of independency, who shall have assisted in protecting the Rights of Human Nature and establishing an asylum for the poor and oppressed of all nations and religions."

You remember well that the Revolutionary Congress in the declaration of independence placed the momentous controversy between the Colonies of Great Britain on the absolute and inherent equality of all men. It is not however so well understood that that body closed its existence on the adoption of the Federal Constitution with this solemn injunction addressed to the People of the United States, "Let it be remembered that it has ever been the pride and boast of America, that the Rights for which she contended were the Rights of Human Nature."

No one will contend that our Fathers after effecting the Revolution and the independence of their country by proclaiming this system of beneficent political philosophy, established an entirely different one in the constitution assigned to its government. This philosophy then, is the basis of the American Constitution.

It is moreover a true philosophy, deduced from the nature of man and the character of the Creator. If there were no supreme law, then the world would be a scene of universal anarchy, resulting from the eternal conflict of peculiar institutions and antagonistic laws. There being such an universal law, if any human constitutions and laws differing from it could have any authority, then that universal law could not be supreme. That supreme law is necessarily based on the equality of nations of races and of men. It is a simple, self-evident basis. One nation, race or individual may not oppress or injure another, because the safety and welfare of each is essential to the common safety and welfare of all. If all are not equal and free, then who is entitled to be free, and what evidence of his superiority can he bring from nature or revelation? All men neces-

sarily have a common interest in the promulgation and maintenance of these principles, because it is equally in the nature of men to be content with the enjoyment of their just rights, and to be discontented under the privation of them. Just so far as these principles practically prevail, the stringency of government is safely relaxed, and peace and harmony obtain. But men cannot maintain these principles, or even comprehend them, without a very considerable advance in knowledge and virtue. The law of nations, designed to preserve peace among mankind, was unknown to the ancients. It has been perfected in our own times by means of the more general dissemination of knowledge and practice of the virtues inculcated by Christianity. To disseminate knowledge and to increase virtue therefore among men, is to establish and maintain the principles on which the recovery and preservation of their inherent natural rights depend, and the state that does this most faithfully advances most effectually the common cause of Human Nature.

For myself, I am sure that this cause is not a dream, but a reality. Have not all men consciousness of a property in the memory of human transactions available for the same great purposes, the security of their individual rights and the perfection of their individual happiness? Have not all men a consciousness of the same equal interest in the achievements of invention, in the instructions of philosophy, and in the solaces of music and the arts? And do not these achievements, instructions and solaces exert everywhere the same influences, and produce the same emotions in the bosoms of all men? Since all languages are convertible into each other by correspondence with the same agents, objects, actions and emotions, have not all men practically one common language? Since the constitutions and laws of all societies are only so many various definitions of the rights and duties of men, as those rights and duties are learned from Nature and Revelation, have not all men practically one code of moral duty? Since the religions of men in their various climes are only so many different forms of their devotion towards a Supreme and Almighty Power entitled to their reverence and receiving it under the various names of Jehovah, Jove and Lord, have not all men practically one religion? Since all men are seeking liberty and

happiness for a season here, and to deserve and so to secure more perfect liberty and happiness somewhere in a future world, and since they all substantially agree that these temporal and spiritual objects are to be attained only through the knowledge of truth and the practice of virtue, have not mankind practically one common pursuit, through one common way, of one common and equal hope and destiny?

If there had been no such common Humanity as I have insisted upon, then the American people would not have enjoyed the sympathies of mankind when establishing institutions of civil and religious liberty here, nor would their establishment here have awakened in the nations of Europe and of South America desires and hopes of similar institutions there. If there had been no such common Humanity, then we should not ever since the American Revolution have seen human society throughout the world divided into two parties, the high and the low—the one perpetually foreboding and earnestly hoping the downfall, and the other as confidently predicting and as sincerely desiring the durability of Republican Institutions. If there had been no such common Humanity, then we should not have seen this tide of emigration from insular and continental Europe, flowing into our country through the channels of the St. Lawrence, the Hudson and the Mississippi,—ebbing, however, always with the occasional rise of the hopes of freedom abroad, and always swelling again into greater volume when those premature hopes subside. If there were no such common Humanity, then the peasantry and the poor of Great Britain would not be perpetually appealing to us against the oppression of landlords on their farms and workmasters in their manufactories and mines; and so, on the other hand, we should not be, as we are now, perpetually framing apologies to mankind for the continuance of African slavery among ourselves. If there were no such common Humanity, then the fame of Wallace would have long ago died away in his native mountains, and the name even of Washington would at most have been only a household word in Virginia, and not as it is now, a watchword of Hope and Progress throughout the world.

If there had been no such common Humanity, then when the civilization of Greece and Rome had been consumed by the fires of

human passion, the nations of modern Europe could never have gathered from among its ashes the philosophy, the arts and the religion which were imperishable, and have reconstructed with those materials that better civilization which amid the conflicts and fall of political and ecclesiastical systems has been constantly advancing towards perfection in every succeeding age. If there had been no such common Humanity, then the dark and massive Egyptian obelisk would not have everywhere reappeared in the sepulchral architecture of our own times, and the light and graceful orders of Greece and Italy would not as now have been the models of our villas and our dwellings, nor would the simple and lofty arch and the delicate tracery of Gothic design have been as it now is, everywhere consecrated to the service of religion.

If there had been no such common Humanity, then would the sense of the obligation of the Decalogue have been confined to the despised nation who received it from Mount Sinai, and the prophecies of Jewish seers and the songs of Jewish bards would have perished forever with their temple, and never afterwards could they have become as they now are, the universal utterance of the spiritual emotions and hopes of mankind. If there had been no such common Humanity, then certainly Europe and Africa and even new America would not after the lapse of centuries have recognized a common Redeemer from all the sufferings and perils of human life in a culprit who had been ignominiously executed in the obscure Roman province of Judea; nor would Europe have ever gone up in arms to Palestine to wrest from the unbelieving Turk the tomb where that culprit had slept for only three days and nights after his descent from the cross; much less would his traditionary instructions, preserved by fishermen and publicans, have become the chief agency in the renovation of human society through after coming ages.

But although this philosophy is undeniably true, yet it would be a great error to believe that it has ever been or is likely soon to be universally accepted. Mankind accept philosophy just in proportion as intellectual and moral cultivation enable them to look through proximate to ultimate consequences. While they are deficient in that cultivation, peace and order, essential to the very existence of society, are necessarily maintained by force.

Those who employ that force, seek to perpetuate their power, and they do this most effectually by dividing classes and castes, races and nations, and arraying them for mutual injury or destruction against each other. Despotism effects and perpetuates this division by unequal laws, subversive of those of reason and of God. Moreover, a common instinct of fear combines the oppressors of all nations in a league against the advance of that political philosophy which comes to liberate mankind. Those who inculcate this philosophy, therefore, necessarily encounter opposition and expose themselves to danger; and inasmuch as they labor from convictions of duty and motives of benevolence, with such hazards of personal safety, their principles and character are justly regarded as heroic. Adams, Hamilton, La Fayette, Knox and Washington, although they were the champions of human nature, a cause dear to all men, were saved from the revolutionary scaffold only by the success of their treason against a king whom the very necessities of society required to reign. Milton's "Defence of the People of England," which was in truth a promulgation of the same philosophy which we have been examining, was burned by the public executioner, and its immortal author only by good fortune escaped the same punishment. The American colonists derived this philosophy chiefly from the instructions of Locke, Sidney and Vane. Locke fled into exile, and Sidney and Vane perished as felons. Cicero, an earlier professor of the same philosophy, fell on the sword of a public assassin, and Socrates, who first inculcated it, drank the fatal hemlock, under a judicial sentence, in the jail of Athens.

Still this philosophy, although heroic, is by no means therefore to be regarded as unnecessary and visionary. The true heroic in human thought and conduct is only the useful in the higher regions of speculation and activity. If Republicanism, or purely popular government, is the only form of political constitution which permits the development of liberty and equality, which are only other names for political justice, and if Republicanism can only be established by the overthrow of Despotism, then this philosophy is absolutely necessary to effect the freedom of mankind. All the citizens of this republic agree with us thus far. But with many this is rather a speculation than a vital faith, and

so they hesitate to allow full activity to the principles thus acknowledged, through fear of disturbing the harmony of society and the peace of the world. Nevertheless, it is clear that the same philosophy which brings republican institutions into existence must be exclusively relied upon to defend and perpetuate them. A tree may indeed stand and grow and flourish for many seasons, although it is unsound at the heart; but just because it is so unsound, its leaves will ultimately wither, its branches will fall, and its trunk will decay. It is only the house that is built upon the rock that can surely and forever defy the tempests and the waves. The founders of this republic knew this great truth right well, for they said:—* "If Justice, Good Faith, Honor, Gratitude, and all the other qualities which ennoble a nation and fulfil the ends of government, shall be the fruits of our establishments, then the cause of Liberty will acquire a dignity and a lustre which it has never yet enjoyed, and an example will be set which cannot but have the most favorable influence on mankind. If, on the other side, our governments should be unfortunately blotted with the reverse of these cardinal virtues, then the great cause which we have engaged to vindicate will be dishonored and betrayed. The last and fairest experiment of human nature will be turned against them, and their patrons and friends will be silenced by the insults of the votaries of tyranny and oppression."

The example of Rome is often commended to us for our emulation. Let us consider it then with becoming care. Rome had indeed forms of religion and morals and a show of philosophy and the arts, but in none of these was there more than the faintest recognition of an universal Humanity. Her predecessor, Greece, had, in a brilliant but brief and precocious career, invented the worship of nature, or, in other words, the worship of deities, which were only names given to the discovered forces of nature. This religion did not indeed exalt the human mind to a just conception of the Divine, but, on the other hand, it did not altogether consign it to the sphere of sensuality. Rome unfortunately rejected even this poor religion, because it was foreign and because it was too spiritual; and in its stead she established one which practi-

* Address of the Continental Congress, 1789.

cally was the worship of the state itself. The Senate elected gods for Rome, and these were expected to reward that distinguishing partiality by showing peculiar and discriminating favor to the people of Rome, and the same political authority appointed creed, precepts, ritual and priesthood. Does it need amplification to show what the character of the creed, the precepts, the ritual, and the priesthood thus established necessarily were? All were equally licentious and corrupt.

As was the religion, so of course were the morals of Rome. Ambition was the sole motive of the state. At first every town in Italy, and afterwards every nation, however remote, was regarded as an enemy to be conquered, not in retaliation for any injuries received, nor even for the purpose of amending its barbarous institutions and laws, but to be despoiled and enslaved, that Rome might be rich and might occupy the world alone. Fraud, duplicity and treachery might be practiced against the foreigner, and every form of cruelty might be inflicted upon the captive who had resisted in self-defence or in defence of his country. Military valor not only became the highest of virtues, but exclusively usurped the name of virtue. The act of parricide was the highest of crimes, not however because of its gross inhumanity, but because by a legal fiction the father was a sacred type of the Roman state. The sway of Rome, as it spread over the world as then known, nevertheless gravitated towards the city and centered in the Order of Patricians. The Plebeians were degraded and despised because their ancestors were immigrants. Below the Plebeians there was yet a lower order, consisting of prisoners of war and their offspring, always numerous enough to endanger the safety of the state. These were slaves, and the code of domestic servitude established for the captured Africans and their descendants in some parts of our own country is a meliorated edition of that which Rome maintained for the government of slaves as various in nation, language and religion as the enemies she conquered. These orders, mutally hostile and aggressive, were kept asunder by discriminating laws and carefully cherished prejudices. The Patricians divided the public domain among themselves, although Plebeian blood was shed as profusely as their own in acquiring it. The Patricians alone administered justice,

and they even kept the forms of its administration a profound mystery sealed against the knowledge of those for whose safety and welfare the laws existed. The Plebeian could approach the Courts only as a client in the footsteps of a Patrician patron, and for his aid in obtaining that justice which of course was an absolute debt of the state, the Patrician was entitled to the support of his client in every enterprise of personal interest and ambition. Thus did Rome, while enslaving the world, blindly prepare the machinery for her own overthrow by the agency of domestic factions. Industry in Rome was dishonored. The Plebeians labored with the slaves. Patricians scorned all employments but that of agriculture and the service of the state. And so Rome rejected commerce and the arts. The person of the Patrician was inviolable, while the Plebeian forfeited liberty and for a long period even life by the failure to pay debts which his very necessities obliged him to contract. The slaves held their lives by the tenure of their masters' forbearance, and what that forbearance was we learn from the fact that they arrayed the slaves against each other, when trained as gladiators, in mortal combat for the gratification of their own pride and the amusement of the people. Punishments were graduated, not by the inherent turpitude of the crimes committed, nor by the injury or danger resulting from them to the state, but by the rank of the offender. What was that Roman liberty of which in such general and captivating descriptions we read so much? The Patrician enjoyed a licentious freedom, the Plebeian an uncertain and humiliating one, extorted from the higher order by perpetual practices of sedition. According to the modern understanding of popular rights and character, there was no people in Rome. So at least we learn from Cicero. "*Non est enim consilium in vulgo. Non ratio, non discrimen, non diligentia. Semperque sapienter ea quæ populus ferenda non laudanda.*"

The domestic affections were stifled in that wild society. The wife was a slave and might be beaten, transferred to another lord, or divorced at pleasure. The father slew his children whenever their care and support became irksome, and the state approved the act. In such a society the rich and great of course grew always richer and greater, and the poor and low always poorer

and more debased; and yet throughout all her long career did Rome never establish one public charity, nor has history preserved any memorable instances of private benevolence. Such was the life of Rome under her kings and consuls. She attained the end of her ambition, and became, as her historian truly boasts, "*Populus Romanus victor dominusque omnium gentium.*" But at the same time the city trembled always at the very breathing of popular discontent, and every citizen and even the Senate, generals and consuls were every hour the slaves of superstitious fears of the withdrawal of the favor of the gods. The people sighing for milder and more genial laws, after the lapse of many centuries recovered the lost code which the good king Numa had received from the goddess Egeria. Do we wonder that the Senate interdicted its publication, lest it might produce agitation dangerous to the public peace? Or can we be surprised when we read that Cicero, whose philosophy was only less than divine, when he found that the Republic was actually falling into ruins, implored his new academy to be silent?

You know well the prolonged but fearful catastrophe, the civil and the servile wars, the dictatorship, the usurpation, the empire, the military despotism, the insurrections in the provinces, the invasion by barbarians, the division and the dismemberment and the fall of the state, the extinction of the Roman name, language and laws, and the destruction of society, and even civilization itself, not only in Italy, but throughout the world, and the consequent darkness which overshadowed the earth throughout seven centuries. This is the moral of a state whose material life is stimulated and perfected, while its spiritual life is neglected and extinguished.

And now it is seen that the Future which we ought to desire for our country involves besides merely physical prosperity and aggrandisement, corresponding intellectual development and advancement in virtue also. Has our spiritual life hitherto improved equally with our material growth?

It is not easy to answer the question. We were at first a small and nearly a homogeneous people. We are now eight times more numerous, and we have incorporated large and various foreign elements in our society. We were originally a rural and agricultural people. Now one-seventh of our population is found

in manufacturing towns and commercial cities. We then were poor, and lived in constant apprehension of domestic disorder and of foreign danger, and we were at the same time distrustful of the capacity and stability of our novel institutions. We are now relatively rich, and all those doubts and fears have vanished. We must make allowance for this great change of circumstances, and we must remember also that it is the character of the great mass of society now existing that is to be compared with, not the heroic models of the Revolutionary age, but with society at large as it then existed.

It is certain that society has not declined. Religion has, indeed, lost some of its ancient austerity, but waving the question whether asceticism is a just test of religion, we may safely say that the change which has occurred, is only a compromise with foreign elements of religion, for who will deny that those elements are purer and more spiritual here than the systems existing abroad from which they have been derived? Nor can it be denied that while the ecclesiastical systems existing among us have been, with even more than our rigorous early jealousy, kept distinct and separate from the political conduct of the state, religious institutions have been multiplied relatively with the advance of settlement and population, and are everywhere well and effectually sustained. At the era of Independence we had little intellectual reputation, except what a bold and successful metaphysician and a vigorous explorer in natural philosophy had won for us. We have now, I think, a recognized and respectable rank in the republic of letters. It is true, indeed, that we have produced few great works in speculative science and polite literature, but those are not the departments, which during the last half century have chiefly engaged the human mind. A long season of political reform and recovery from exhausting wars has necessarily required intellectual activity in reducing into use the discoveries before made; and we may justly claim that in applying the elements of science to the improvement and advancement of Agriculture, Art and Commerce, we have not been surpassed.

I do not seek to disguise from myself, nor from you, the existence of a growing passion for territorial aggrandizement, which often exhibits a gross disregard of justice and humanity. Nevertheless,

I am not one of those who think that the temper of the nation has become already unsettled. Accidents favoring the indulgence of that passion, have been met with a degree of self denial that no other nation ever practiced. Aggrandisement has been incidental, while society has nevertheless bestowed its chief care on developments of natural resources, reforms of political constitutions, melioration of codes, the diffusion of knowledge, and the cultivation of virtue. If this benign policy has been chiefly exercised within the domain of State authority, and has not reached our federal system, the explanation is obvious in the facts that the popular will is by virtue of the federal constitution, slower in reaching that system, and that we inherited fears which seemed patriotic of the danger of severance of the Union, to result from innovation. If we have not in the federal government forsaken as widely as we ought to have done, systems of administration borrowed from countries where liberty was either unknown or was greatly abridged, and so have maintained armies and navies and diplomacy, on a scale of unnecessary grandeur and ostentation, it can hardly be contended that they have in any great degree corrupted the public virtue. Inquiry is now more active than it has heretofore been, and it may not be doubted that the federal action will hereafter, though with such moderation as will produce no danger and justify no alarm, be made to conform to the sentiments of prudence, enterprise, justice and humanity which prevail among the people.

Looking through the states which formed the confederacy in its beginning, we find as general facts, that public order has been effectually maintained, public faith has been preserved, and public tranquillity has been undisturbed, that justice has everywhere been regularly administered and generally with impartiality. We have established a system of education, which, it is true, is surpassed by many European Institutions, in regard to the instruction afforded, but which nevertheless is far more equal and universal in regard to the masses which are educated; and we are beginning to see that system adapted equally to the education of both sexes, and of all races, which is a feature altogether new even in modern civilization, and promises the most auspicious results to the cause of Liberty and Virtue. Our literature half a century

ago was altogether ephemeral and scarcely formed an element of moral or political influence. It is now marked with our own national principles and sentiments, and exerts every day an increasing influence on the national mind. The Journalist Press, originally a feeble institution, often engaged in exciting the passions and alarming the fears of society, and dividing it into uncompromising and unforgiving factions, has been constantly assuming a higher tone of morality and more patriotic and humane principles of action. There are indeed gross abuses of the power of suffrage, but still our popular elections on the whole, express the will of the people, and are even less influenced by authority, prejudice and passion, than heretofore. Slavery, an institution that was at first quite universal, has now come to be acknowledged as a peculiar one existing in only a portion of the states. And if as I doubt not, you, like myself, are impatient of its continuance, then you will nevertheless find ground for much satisfaction in the fact that the foreign slave trade has been already by unanimous consent of all the states condemned and repudiated, that manumission has been effected in half of the states, and that, notwithstanding the great political influence which the institution has been able to organize, a healthful, constant, and growing public sentiment, nourished by the suggestions of sound economy and the instincts of justice and humanity, is leading the way with marked advance towards a complete and universal though just and peaceful emancipation.

It must be borne in mind now that all this moral and social improvement has been effected not by the exercise of any authority over the People, but by the People themselves acting with freedom from all except self imposed restraints.

Of the new states it is happily true that they have almost without exception voluntarily organized their governments according to the most perfect models furnished by the elder members of the confederacy, and that they have uniformly maintained law, order and faith, while they have with wonderful forecast been even more munificent than the elder states in laying broad foundations of liberty and virtue. On the whole we think that we may claim that under the Republican system established here, the people have governed themselves safely and wisely, and have enjoyed a

greater amount of prosperity and happiness than under any form of constitution was ever before or elsewhere vouchsafed to any portion of mankind.

Nevertheless this review proves only that the measure of knowledge and virtue we possess is equal to the exigency of the Republic under the circumstances in which it was organized. Those circumstances are passing away and we are entering a career of wealth, power and expansion. In that career it is manifest that we shall need higher intellectual attainments and greater virtue as a nation than we have hitherto possessed, or else there is no adaptation of means to ends in the scheme of the Divine Government. Nay, we shall need in this new emergency intellect and virtue surpassing those of the honored founders of the Republic. I am aware that this proposition will seem to you equally unreasonable and irreverent. Nevertheless you will on a moment's reflection admit its truth. Did the invention of the nation stop with the discoveries of Fulton and Franklin? On the contrary those philosophers if they could now revisit the earth, would bow to the genius which has perfected the steam engine and the telegraph with a homage as profound as that with which we honor their own great memory. So I think Jefferson and even Washington under the same circumstances instead of accusing us of degeneracy, would be lost in admiration of the extent and perfection to which we have safely carried in practice the theory of self government which they established amid so much uncertainty, and bequeathed to us with so much distrust. Shall we acquit ourselves of obligation if we rest content with either the achievements, the intelligence or the virtue of our ancestors? If so, then the prospect of mankind is hopeless indeed, for then it must be true that not only is there an impassable stage of social perfection, but that we have reached it, and that henceforth not only we but all mankind must recede from it and civilization must everywhere decline. Such a hypothesis does violence to every power of the human mind and every hope of the human heart. Moreover these energies and aspirations are the forces of a divine nature within us, and to admit that they can be stifled and suppressed is to contradict the manifest purposes of human existence. Yet it will be quite absurd to claim

that we are fulfilling these purposes if we shall fail to produce hereafter benefactors of our race equal to Fulton and Franklin and Adams and even Washington. Let us hold these honored characters indeed as models, but not of unapproachable perfection. Let us on the contrary weigh and fully understand our great responsibilities. It is well that we can rejoice in the renown of a Cooper, an Irving and a Bancroft, but we have yet to give birth to a Shakspeare, a Milton and a Bacon. The fame of Patrick Henry and of John Adams may suffice for the past, but the world will yet demand of us a Burke and a Demosthenes. We may repose for the present upon the fame of Morse and Fulton and Franklin, but Human Society is entitled to look to us ere long for a Des Cartes and a Newton. If we disappoint these expectations and acknowledge ourselves unequal to them, then how shall it be made to appear that freedom is better than slavery, and Republicanism more conducive to the welfare of mankind than Despotism? To cherish aspirations humbler than these is equally to shrink from our responsibilities and to dishonor the memory of the ancestors we so justly revere.

And now I am sure that your hearts will sink into some depth of despondency when I ask whether American society now exhibits the influences of these higher but necessary aspirations? I think that everywhere there is confessed a decline from the bold and stern virtue which at some previous time, was inculcated and practiced in Executive councils and in Representative chambers. I think that we all are conscious that recently we have met questions of momentous responsibility, in the organization of governments over our newly acquired territories, and appeals to our sympathy and aid for oppressed nations abroad in a spirit of timidity and of compromise. I think that we all are conscious of having abandoned something of our high morality in suffering important posts of public service at home and abroad to fall sometimes into the hands of mercenary men destitute of true Republican spirit, and of generous aspirations to promote the welfare of our country and of mankind,

> "Souls that no hope of future praise inflame,
> Cold and insensible to glorious fame."

I think that we are accustomed to excuse the national demoralization which has produced these results on the ground that the practice of a sterner virtue might have disturbed the harmony of society, and endangered the safety of that fabric of Union on which all our hopes depend. In this we forget that a nation must always recede if it be not actually advancing: that as Hope is the element of progress, so Fear admitted into public counsels betrays like Treason.

But there is nevertheless no sufficient reason for the distrust of the national virtue. Moral forces are like material forces, subject to conflict and reaction. It is only through successive reactions that knowledge and virtue advance. The great conservative and restorative forces of society still remain and are acquiring all the while even greater vigor than they have ever heretofore exercised. Whether I am right or not in this opinion, all will agree that an increase of popular intelligence and a renewal of public virtue are necessary. This is saying nothing new, for it is a maxim of political science that all nations must continually advance in knowledge and renew their constitutional virtues or must perish. I am sure that we shall do this because I am sure that our great capacity for advancing the welfare of mankind has not yet been exhausted, and that the promises we have given to the cause of Humanity will not be suffered to fail by Him who overrules all human events to the promotion of that cause.

But where is the agency that is to work out these so necessary results? Shall we look to the Press? Yes, we may hope much from the Press for it is free. It can safely inculcate truth and expose prejudice, error and injustice. The Press moreover is strong in its perfect mechanism, and it reaches every mind throughout this vast and ever widening confederacy. But the Press must have editors and authors, men possessing talents, education and virtue, and so qualified to instruct, enlighten and guide the People.

Shall we look to the sacred desk? Yes indeed, for it is of divine institution and is approved by human experience. The ministers of Christ, inculcating divine morals under divine authority with divine sanctions and sustained and aided by special co-operating influences of the Divine Spirit, are now carrying

further and broadly onward the great work of the renewal of the civilization of the world, and its emancipation from superstition and despotism. But the desk also must have ministers, men possessing talents, education and virtue, and so qualified to enlighten, instruct and guide mankind.

But however well the Press, the Desk, and the popular Tribune may be qualified to instruct and elevate the People, their success and consequently their influence must after all depend largely on the measure of intelligence and virtue possessed by the People when sufficiently matured to receive their instructions. Editors, Authors, Ministers, Statesmen and People, all are qualified for their respective posts of duty in the institutions of popular education, and the standard of these is established by that which is recognized among us by the various names of the Academy, the College and the University. We see, then, that the University holds a chief place among the institutions of the American Republic.

I may not attempt to specify at large what the University ought to teach or how it ought to impart its instructions. That has been confided to abler and more practical hands. But I may venture to insist on the necessity of having the standard of moral duty maintained at its just height by the University. That institution must be rich and full in the knowledge of the sciences which it imparts, but this is not of itself enough. It must imbue the national mind with correct convictions of the greatness and excellence to which it ought to aspire. To do this it must accustom the public mind to look beyond the mere temporary consequences of actions and events to their ultimate influence on the direction of the Republic and on the progress of mankind. So it will enable men to decide between prejudice and reason, expediency and duty, the demagogue and the statesman, the bigot and the christian.

The standard which the University shall establish must correspond to the principles of eternal truth and equal justice. The University must be conservative. It must hold fast every just principle of moral and political science that the experience of mankind has approved, but it must also be bold, remembering that in every human system there are always political superstitions upholding physical slavery in some of its modes, as there

are always religious superstitions upholding intellectual slavery in some of its forms; that all these superstitions stand upon prescription, and that they can only be exploded where Opinion is left free, and Reason is ever active and vigorous. But the University must nevertheless practice and teach moderation and charity even to error, remembering that involuntary error will necessarily be mingled also even with its own best instructions, that unbridled zeal overreaches and defeats itself, and that he who would conquer in moral discussion, like him who would prevail in athletic games, must be temperate in all things.

Reverend Instructors and Benevolent Founders, this new institution by reason of its location in the centre of Ohio, itself a central one among these thirty-one united communities, must exert an influence that can scarcely be conceived now upon the welfare and fame of our common country. Devote it then I pray you to no mere partizan or sectarian objects. Remember that the Patriot and the Christian is a partizan or a sectarian, only because the constitution of society allows him no other mode of efficient and beneficent activity. Let "Capital University" be dedicated not to the interests of the beautiful city which it adorns, nor even to the interests of the great and prosperous state whose patronage I hope it will largely enjoy, nor even to the Republic of which I trust it is destined to become a tower of strength and support. On the contrary if you would make it promote most effectually all these precious interests, dedicate it I enjoin upon you, as our forefathers dedicated all the institutions which they established, to the cause of Human Nature.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 011 527 305 A