

VII. Progress of Culture

Address Read before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge, July 18, 1867.

Nature spoke
To each apart, lifting her lovely shows
To spiritual lessons pointed home,
And as through dreams in watches of the night,
So through all creatures in their form and ways
Some mystic hint accosts the vigilant,
Not clearly voiced, but waking a new sense
Inviting to new knowledge, one with old.

From high to higher forces
The scale of power uprears,
The heroes on their horses,
The gods upon their spheres.

We meet to-day under happy omens to our ancient society, to the commonwealth of letters, to the country, and to mankind. No good citizen but shares the wonderful prosperity of the Federal Union. The heart still beats with the public pulse of joy that the country has withstood the rude trial which threatened its existence, and thrills with the vast augmentation of strength which it draws from this proof. The storm which has been resisted is a crown of honor and a pledge of strength to the ship. We may be well contented with our fair inheritance. Was ever such coincidence of advantages in time and place as in America to-day?—the fusion of races and religions; the hungry cry for men which goes up from the wide continent; the answering facility of immigration, permitting every wanderer to choose his climate and government. Men come hither by nations. Science surpasses the old miracles of mythology, to fly with them over the sea, and to send their messages under it. They come from crowded, antiquated kingdoms to the easy sharing of our simple forms. Land without price is offered to the settler, cheap education to his children. The temper of our people delights in this whirl of life. Who would live in the stone age, or the bronze, or the iron, or the lacustrine? Who does not prefer the age of steel, of gold, of coal, petroleum, cotton, steam, electricity, and the spectroscope?

“Prisca juvent alios, ego me nune denique natum Gratulor.”

All this activity has added to the value of life, and to the scope of the intellect. I will not say that American institutions have given a new enlargement to our idea of a finished man, but they have added important features to the sketch.

Observe the marked ethical quality of the innovations urged or adopted. The new claim of woman to a political status is itself an honorable testimony to the civilization which has given her a civil status new in history. Now that by the increased humanity of law she controls her property, she inevitably takes the next step to her share in power. The war gave us the abolition of slavery, the success of the Sanitary Commission and of the Freedmen's Bureau. Add to these the new scope of social science; the abolition of capital punishment and of imprisonment for debt; the improvement of prisons; the efforts for the suppression of intemperance; the search for just rules affecting labor; the co-operative societies; the insurance of life and limb; the free-trade league; the improved almshouses; the enlarged scale of charities to relieve local famine, or burned towns, or the suffering Greeks; the incipient series of international congresses;— all, one may say, in a high degree revolutionary, teaching nations the taking of government into their own hands, and superseding kings.

The spirit is new. A silent revolution has impelled, step by step, all this activity. A great many full-blown conceits have burst. The coxcomb goes to the wall. To his astonishment he has found that this country and this age belong to the most liberal persuasion; that the day of ruling by scorn and sneers is past; that good sense is now in power, and that resting on a vast constituency of intelligent labor, and, better yet, on perceptions less and less dim of laws the most sublime. Men are now to be astonished by seeing acts of good-nature, common civility, and Christian charity proposed by statesmen, and executed by justices of the peace,— by policemen and the constable. The fop is unable to cut the patriot in the street; nay, he lies at his mercy in the ballot of the club.

Mark, too, the large resources of a statesman, of a socialist, of a scholar, in this age. When classes are exasperated against each other, the peace of the world is always kept by striking a new note. Instantly the units part, and form in a new order, and those who were opposed are now side by side. In this country the prodigious mass of work that must be done has either made new divisions of labor or created new professions. Consider, at this time, what variety of issues, of enterprises public and private, what genius of science, what of administration, what of practical skill, what masters, each in his several province, the railroad, the telegraph, the mines, the inland and marine explorations, the novel and powerful philanthropies, as well as agriculture, the foreign trade and the home trade (whose circuits in this country are as spacious as the foreign), manufactures, the very inventions, all on a national scale too, have evoked! —all implying the appearance of gifted men, the rapid addition to our society of a class of true nobles, by which the self-respect of each town and State is enriched.

Take as a type the boundless freedom here in Massachusetts. People have in all countries been burned and stoned for saying things which are commonplaces at all our breakfast-tables. Every one who was in Italy thirty-five years ago will remember the caution with which his host or guest in any house looked around him, if a political topic were broached. Here the tongue is free, and the hand; and the freedom of action goes to the brink, if not over the brink, of license.

A controlling influence of the times has been the wide and successful study of Natural Science. Steffens said, “The religious opinions of men rest on their views of nature.” Great strides have been made within the present century. Geology, astronomy, chemistry, optics, have yielded grand results. The correlation of forces and the polarization of light have carried us to sublime generalizations,—have affected an imaginative race like poetic inspirations. We have been taught to tread familiarly on giddy heights of thought, and to wont ourselves to daring conjectures. The narrow sectarian cannot read astronomy with impunity. The creeds of his church shrivel like dried leaves at the door of the observatory, and a new and healthful air regenerates the human mind, and imparts a sympathetic enlargement to its inventions and method. That cosmical west-wind which, meteorologists

tell us, constitutes, by the revolution of the globe, the upper current, is alone broad enough to carry to every city and suburb, to the farmer's house, the miner's shanty, and the fisher's boat, the inspirations of this new hope of mankind. Now, if any one say we have had enough of these boastful recitals, then I say, Happy is the land wherein benefits like these have grown trite and commonplace.

We confess that in America everything looks new and recent. Our towns are still rude, the make-shifts of emigrants, and the whole architecture tent-like when compared with the monumental solidity of medieval and primeval remains in Europe and Asia. But geology has effaced these distinctions. Geology, a science of forty or fifty summers, has had the effect to throw an air of novelty and mushroom speed over entire history. The oldest empires,—what we called venerable antiquity,—now that we have true measures of duration, show like creations of yesterday. It is yet quite too early to draw sound conclusions. The old six thousand years of chronology become a kitchen clock, no more a measure of time than an hour-glass or an egg-glass since the duration of geologic periods has come into view. Geology itself is only chemistry with the element of time added; and the rocks of Nahant or the dikes of the White Hills disclose that the world is a crystal, and the soil of the valleys and plains a continual decomposition and recomposition. Nothing is old but the mind.

But I find not only this equality between new and old countries, as seen by the eye of science, but also a certain equivalence of the ages of history; and as the child is in his playthings working incessantly at problems of natural philosophy, working as hard and as successfully as Newton, so it were ignorance not to see that each nation and period has done its full part to make up the result of existing civility. We are all agreed that we have not on the instant better men to show than Plutarch's heroes. The world is always equal to itself. We cannot yet afford to drop Homer, nor Æschylus, nor Plato, nor Aristotle, nor Archimedes. Later, each European nation, after the breaking up of the Roman Empire, had its romantic era, and the productions of that era in each rose to about the same height. Take for an example in literature the Romance of Arthur, in Britain, or in the opposite province of Brittany; the Chanson de Roland, in France; the Chronicle of the Cid, in Spain; the Niebelungen Lied, in Germany; the Norse Sagas, in Scandinavia; and, I may add, the Arabian Nights, on the African coast. But if these works still survive and multiply, what shall we say of names more distant, or hidden through their very superiority to their coevals,—names of men who have left remains that certify a height of genius in their several directions not since surpassed, and which men in proportion to their wisdom still cherish,—as Zoroaster, Confucius, and the grand scriptures, only recently known to Western nations, of the Indian Vedas, the Institutes of Menu, the Puranas, the poems of the Mahabarat and the Ramayana?

In modern Europe, the Middle Ages were called the Dark Ages. Who dares to call them so now? They are seen to be the feet on which we walk, the eyes with which we see. It is one of our triumphs to have reinstated them. Their Dante and Alfred and Wickliffe and Abelard and Bacon; their Magna Charta, decimal numbers, mariner's compass, gunpowder, glass, paper, and clocks; chemistry, algebra, astronomy; their Gothic architecture, their painting, are the delight and tuition of ours. Six hundred years ago Roger Bacon explained the precession of the equinoxes and the necessity of reform in the calendar; looking over how many horizons as far as into Liverpool and New York, he announced that machines can be constructed to drive ships more rapidly than a whole galley of rowers could do, nor would they need anything but a pilot to steer; carriages, to move with incredible speed, without aid of animals; and machines to fly into the air like birds. Even the races that we still call savage or semisavage, and which preserve their arts from immemorial traditions, vindicate their faculty by the skill with which they make their yam-cloths, pipes, bows, boats, and carved war-clubs. The war-proa of the Malays in the Japanese waters struck Commodore Perry by its close resemblance to the yacht

“America.”

As we find thus a certain equivalence in the ages, there is also an equipollence of individual genius to the nation which it represents. It is a curious fact that a certain enormity of culture makes a man invisible to his contemporaries. It is always hard to go beyond your public. If they are satisfied with cheap performance, you will not easily arrive at better. If they know what is good, and require it, you will aspire and burn until you achieve it. But, from time to time in history, men are born a whole age too soon. The founders of nations, the wise men and inventors who shine afterwards as their gods, were probably martyrs in their own time. All the transcendent writers and artists of the world,—’t is doubtful who they were, they are lifted so fast into mythology; Homer, Menu, Viasa, Dádalus, Hermes, Zoroaster, even Swedenborg and Shakspeare. The early names are too typical,—Homer, or blind man; Menu, or man; Viasa, compiler; Dádalus, cunning; Hermes, interpreter; and so on. Probably the men were so great, so self-fed, that the recognition of them by others was not necessary to them. And every one has heard the remark (too often, I fear, politely made), that the philosopher was above his audience. I think I have seen two or three great men who, for that reason, were of no account among scholars.

But Jove is in his reserves. The truth, the hope of any time, must always be sought in the minorities. Michel Angelo was the conscience of Italy. We grow free with his name, and find it ornamental now; but in his own days his friends were few; and you would need to hunt him in a conventicle with the Methodists of the era, namely, Savonarola, Vittoria Colonna, Contarini, Pole, Occhino; superior souls, the religious of that day, drawn to each other and under some cloud with the rest of the world; reformers, the radicals of the hour, banded against the corruptions of Rome, and as lonely and as hated as Dante before them.

I find the single mind equipollent to a multitude of minds, say to a nation of minds, as a drop of water balances the sea; and under this view the problem of culture assumes wonderful interest. Culture implies all which gives the mind possession of its own powers; as languages to the critic, telescope to the astronomer. Culture alters the political status of an individual. It raises a rival royalty in a monarchy. ’T is king against king. It is ever the romance of history in all dynasties, —the co-presence of the revolutionary force in intellect. It creates a personal independence which the monarch cannot look down, and to which he must often succumb. If a man know the laws of nature better than other men, his nation cannot spare him; nor if he know the power of numbers, the secret of geometry, of algebra; on which the computations of astronomy, of navigation, of machinery, rest. If he can converse better than any other, he rules the minds of men wherever he goes; if he has imagination, he intoxicates men. If he has wit, he tempers despotism by epigrams: a song, a satire, a sentence, has played its part in great events. Eloquence a hundred times has turned the scale of war and peace at will. The history of Greece is at one time reduced to two persons,—Philip, or the successor of Philip, on one side, and Demosthenes, a private citizen, on the other. If he has a military genius, like Belisarius, or administrative faculty, like Chatham or Bismarck, he is the king’s king. If a theologian of deep convictions and strong understanding carries his country with him, like Luther, the state becomes Lutheran, in spite of the Emperor; as Thomas à Becket overpowered the English Henry. Wit has a great charter. Popes and kings and Councils of Ten are very sharp with their censorships and inquisitions, but it is on dull people. Some Dante or Angelo, Rabelais, Hafiz, Cervantes, Erasmus, Béranger, Bettine von Arnim, or whatever genuine wit of the old inimitable class, is always allowed. Kings feel that this is that which they themselves represent; this is no redkerchiefed, red-shirted rebel, but loyalty, kingship. This is real kingship, and their own only titular. Even manners are a distinction which, we sometimes see, are not to be overborne by rank or official power, or even by other eminent

talents, since they too proceed from a certain deep innate perception of fit and fair.

It is too plain that a cultivated laborer is worth many untaught laborers; that a scientific engineer, with instruments and steam, is worth many hundred men, many thousands; that Archimedes or Napoleon is worth for labor a thousand thousands, and that in every wise and genial soul we have England, Greece, Italy, walking, and can dispense with populations of navvies.

Literary history and all history is a record of the power of minorities, and of minorities of one. Every book is written with a constant secret reference to the few intelligent persons whom the writer believes to exist in the million. The artist has always the masters in his eye, though he affect to flout them. Michel Angelo is thinking of Da Vinci, and Raffaele is thinking of Michel Angelo. Tennyson would give his fame for a verdict in his favor from Wordsworth. Agassiz and Owen and Huxley affect to address the American and English people, but are really writing to each other. Everett dreamed of Webster. McKay, the shipbuilder, thinks of George Steers; and Steers, of Pook, the naval constructor. The names of the masters at the head of each department of science, art, or function are often little known to the world, but are always known to the adepts; as Robert Brown in botany, and Gauss in mathematics. Often the master is a hidden man, but not to the true student; invisible to all the rest, resplendent to him. All his own work and culture form the eye to see the master. In politics, mark the importance of minorities of one, as of Phocion, Cato, Lafayette, Arago. The importance of the one person who has the truth over nations who have it not, is because power obeys reality, and not appearance; according to quality, and not quantity. How much more are men than nations! the wise and good souls, the stoics in Greece and Rome, Socrates in Athens, the saints in Judea, Alfred the king, Shakspeare the poet, Newton the philosopher, the perceiver and obeyer of truth, —than the foolish and sensual millions around them! So that, wherever a true man appears, everything usually reckoned great dwarfs itself; he is the only great event, and it is easy to lift him into a mythological personage.

Then the next step in the series is the equivalence of the soul to nature. I said that one of the distinctions of our century has been the devotion of cultivated men to natural science. The benefits thence derived to the arts and to civilization are signal and immense. They are felt in navigation, in agriculture, in manufactures, in astronomy, in mining, and in war. But over all their utilities, I must hold their chief value to be metaphysical. The chief value is not the useful powers he obtained, but the test it has been of the scholar. He has accosted this immeasurable nature, and got clear answers. He understood what he read. He found agreement with himself. It taught him anew the reach of the human mind, and that it was citizen of the universe.

The first quality we know in matter is centrality,— we call it gravity,—which holds the universe together, which remains pure and indestructible in each mote as in masses and planets, and from each atom rays out illimitable influence. To this material essence answers Truth, in the intellectual world, — Truth, whose centre is everywhere and its circumference nowhere, whose existence we cannot disimagine; the soundness and health of things, against which no blow can be struck but it recoils on the striker; Truth, on whose side we always heartily are. And the first measure of a mind is its centrality, its capacity of truth, and its adhesion to it.

When the correlation of the sciences was announced by Oersted and his colleagues, it was no surprise; we were found already prepared for it. The fact stated accorded with the auguries or divinations of the human mind. Thus, if we should analyze Newton's discovery, we should say that if it had not been

anticipated by him, it would not have been found. We are told that in posting his books, after the French had measured on the earth a degree of the meridian, when he saw that his theoretic results were approximating that empirical one, his hand shook, the figures danced, and he was so agitated that he was forced to call in an assistant to finish the computation. Why agitated?—but because, when he saw, in the fall of an apple to the ground, the fall of the earth to the sun, of the sun and of all suns to the centre, that perception was accompanied by the spasm of delight by which the intellect greets a fact more immense still, a fact really universal,—holding in intellect as in matter, in morals as in intellect,—that atom draws to atom throughout nature, and truth to truth throughout spirit? His law was only a particular of the more universal law of centrality. Every law in nature, as gravity, centripetence, repulsion, polarity, undulation, has a counterpart in the intellect. The laws above are sisters of the laws below. Shall we study the mathematics of the sphere, and not its causal essence also? Nature is a fable whose moral blazes through it. There is no use in Copernicus if the robust periodicity of the solar system does not show its equal perfection in the mental sphere, the periodicity, the compensatory errors, the grand reactions. I shall never believe that centrifugence and centripetence balance, unless mind heats and meliorates, as well as the surface and soil of the globe.

On this power, this all-dissolving unity, the emphasis of heaven and earth is laid. Nature is brute but as this soul quickens it; Nature, always the effect, mind the flowing cause. Nature, we find, is ever as is our sensibility; it is hostile to ignorance,—plastic, transparent, delightful, to knowledge. Mind carries the law; history is the slow and atomic unfolding. All things admit of this extended sense, and the universe at last is only prophetic, or, shall we say, symptomatic, of vaster interpretation and results. Nature is an enormous system, but in mass and in particle curiously available to the humblest need of the little creature that walks on the earth! The immeasurableness of Nature is not more astounding than his power to gather all her omnipotence into a manageable rod or wedge, bringing it to a hair-point for the eye and hand of the philosopher.

Here stretches out of sight, out of conception even, this vast Nature, daunting, bewildering, but all penetrable, all self-similar; an unbroken unity, and the mind of man is a key to the whole. He finds that the universe, as Newton said, was “made at one cast;” the mass is like the atom,—the same chemistry, gravity and conditions. The asteroids are the chips of an old star, and a meteoric stone is a chip of an asteroid. As language is in the alphabet, so is entire Nature, the play of all its laws, in one atom. The good wit finds the law from a single observation,—the law, and its limitations, and its correspondences,—as the farmer finds his cattle by a footprint. “State the sun, and you state the planets, and conversely.”

Whilst its power is offered to his hand, its laws to his science, not less its beauty speaks to his taste, imagination, and sentiment. Nature is sanative, refining, elevating. How cunningly she hides every wrinkle of her inconceivable antiquity under roses and violets and morning dew! Every inch of the mountains is scarred by unimaginable convulsions, yet the new day is purple with the bloom of youth and love. Look out into the July night and see the broad belt of silver flame which flashes up the half of heaven, fresh and delicate as the bonfires of the meadow-flies. Yet the powers of numbers cannot compute its enormous age, lasting as space and time, embosomed in time and space. And time and space,—what are they? Our first problems, which we ponder all our lives through, and leave where we found them; whose outrunning immensity, the old Greeks believed, astonished the gods themselves; of whose dizzy vastitudes all the worlds of God are a mere dot on the margin; impossible to deny, impossible to believe. Yet the moral element in man counterpoises this dismaying immensity and bereaves it of terror. The highest flight to which the muse of Horace ascended was in that triplet of lines in which he described the souls which can calmly confront the sublimity of Nature:—

“Hunc solem, et stellas, et decedentia certis
Tempora momentis, sunt qui formidine nulla
Imbuti spectant.”

The sublime point of experience is the value of a sufficient man. Cube this value by the meeting of two such, of two or more such, who understand and support each other, and you have organized victory. At any time, it only needs the contemporaneous appearance of a few superior and attractive men to give a new and noble turn to the public mind.

The benefactors we have indicated were exceptional men, and great because exceptional. The question which the present age urges with increasing emphasis, day by day, is, whether the high qualities which distinguished them can be imparted. The poet Wordsworth asked, “What one is, why may not millions be?” Why not? Knowledge exists to be imparted. Curiosity is lying in wait for every secret. The inquisitiveness of the child to hear runs to meet the eagerness of the parent to explain. The air does not rush to fill a vacuum with such speed as the mind to catch the expected fact. Every artist was first an amateur. The ear outgrows the tongue, is sooner ripe and perfect; but the tongue is always learning to say what the ear has taught it, and the hand obeys the same lesson.

There is anything but humiliation in the homage men pay to a great man; it is sympathy, love of the same things, effort to reach them,—the expression of their hope of what they shall become when the obstructions of their mal-formation and maleducation shall be trained away. Great men shall not impoverish, but enrich us. Great men,—the age goes on their credit; but all the rest, when their wires are continued and not cut, can do as signal things, and in new parts of nature. “No angel in his heart acknowledges any one superior to himself but the Lord alone.” There is not a person here present to whom omens that should astonish have not predicted his future, have not uncovered his past. The dreams of the night supplement by their divination the imperfect experiments of the day. Every soliciting instinct is only a hint of a coming fact, as the air and water that hang invisibly around us hasten to become solid in the oak and the animal. But the recurrence to high sources is rare. In our daily intercourse, we go with the crowd, lend ourselves to low fears and hopes, become the victims of our own arts and implements, and disuse our resort to the Divine oracle. It is only in the sleep of the soul that we help ourselves by so many ingenious crutches and machineries. What is the use of telegraphs? What of newspapers? To know in each social crisis how men feel in Kansas, in California, the wise man waits for no mails, reads no telegrams. He asks his own heart. If they are made as he is, if they breathe the like air, eat of the same wheat, have wives and children, he knows that their joy or resentment rises to the same point as his own. The inviolate soul is in perpetual telegraphic communication with the Source of events, has earlier information, a private despatch, which relieves him of the terror which presses on the rest of the community.

The foundation of culture, as of character, is at last the moral sentiment. This is the fountain of power, preserves its eternal newness, draws its own rent out of every novelty in science. Science corrects the old creeds; sweeps away, with every new perception, our infantile catechisms, and necessitates a faith commensurate with the grander orbits and universal laws which it discloses. Yet it does not surprise the moral sentiment. That was older, and awaited expectant these larger insights.

The affections are the wings by which the intellect launches on the void, and is borne across it. Great love is the inventor and expander of the frozen powers, the feathers frozen to our sides. It was the

conviction of Plato, of Van Helmont, of Pascal, of Swedenborg, that piety is an essential condition of science, that great thoughts come from the heart. It happens sometimes that poets do not believe their own poetry; they are so much the less poets. But great men are sincere. Great men are they who see that spiritual is stronger than any material force, that thoughts rule the world. No hope so bright but is the beginning of its own fulfilment. Every generalization shows the way to a larger. Men say, Ah! if a man could impart his talent, instead of his performance, what mountains of guineas would be paid! Yes, but in the measure of his absolute veracity he does impart it. When he does not play a part, does not wish to shine,—when he talks to men with the unrestrained frankness which children use with each other, he communicates himself, and not his vanity. All vigor is contagious, and when we see creation we also begin to create. Depth of character, height of genius, can only find nourishment in this soil. The miracles of genius always rest on profound convictions which refuse to be analyzed. Enthusiasm is the leaping lightning, not to be measured by the horse-power of the understanding. Hope never spreads her golden wings but on unfathomable seas. The same law holds for the intellect as for the will. When the will is absolutely surrendered to the moral sentiment, that is virtue; when the wit is surrendered to intellectual truth, that is genius. Talent for talent's sake is a bauble and a show. Talent working with joy in the cause of universal truth lifts the possessor to new power as a benefactor. I know well to what assembly of educated, reflecting, successful and powerful persons I speak. Yours is the part of those who have received much. It is an old legend of just men, *Noblesse oblige*; or, superior advantages bind you to larger generosity. Now I conceive that, in this economical world, where every drop and every crumb is husbanded, the transcendent powers of mind were not meant to be misused. The Divine Nature carries on its administration by good men. Here you are set down, scholars and idealists, as in a barbarous age; amidst insanity, to calm and guide it; amidst fools and blind, to see the right done; among violent proprietors, to check self-interest, stone-blind and stone-deaf, by considerations of humanity to the workman and to his child; amongst angry politicians swelling with self-esteem, pledged to parties, pledged to clients, you are to make valid the large considerations of equity and good sense; under bad governments to force on them, by your persistence, good laws. Around that immovable persistency of yours, statesmen, legislatures, must revolve, denying you, but not less forced to obey.

We wish to put the ideal rules into practice, to offer liberty instead of chains, and see whether liberty will not disclose its proper checks; believing that a free press will prove safer than the censorship; to ordain free trade, and believe that it will not bankrupt us; universal suffrage, believing that it will not carry us to mobs, or back to kings again. I believe that the checks are as sure as the springs. It is thereby that men are great and have great allies. And who are the allies? Rude opposition, apathy, slander,—even these. Difficulties exist to be surmounted. The great heart will no more complain of the obstructions that make success hard, than of the iron walls of the gun which hinder the shot from scattering. It was walled round with iron tube with that purpose, to give it irresistible force in one direction. A strenuous soul hates cheap successes. It is the ardor of the assailant that makes the vigor of the defender. The great are not tender at being obscure, despised, insulted. Such only feel themselves in adverse fortune. Strong men greet war, tempest, hard times, which search till they find resistance and bottom. They wish, as Pindar said, “to tread the floors of hell, with necessities as hard as iron.” Periodicity, reaction, are laws of mind as well as of matter. Bad kings and governors help us, if only they are bad enough. In England, it was the game laws which exasperated the farmers to carry the Reform Bill. It was what we call *plantation manners* which drove peaceable forgiving New England to emancipation without phrase. In the Rebellion, who were our best allies? Always the enemy. The community of scholars do not know their own power, and dishearten each other by tolerating political baseness in their members. Now nobody doubts the power of manners, or that wherever high society exists it is very well able to exclude pretenders. The intruder finds himself uncomfortable, and quickly

departs to his own gang.

It has been our misfortune that the politics of America have been often immoral. It has had the worst effect on character. We are a complaisant, forgiving people, presuming, perhaps, on a feeling of strength. But it is not by easy virtue, where the public is concerned, that heroic results are obtained. We have suffered our young men of ambition to play the game of politics and take the immoral side without loss of caste,—to come and go without rebuke. But that kind of loose association does not leave a man his own master. He cannot go from the good to the evil at pleasure, and then back again to the good. There is a text in Swedenborg which tells in figure the plain truth. He saw in vision the angels and the devils; but these two companies stood not face to face and hand in hand, but foot to foot,—these perpendicular up, and those perpendicular down.

Brothers, I draw new hope from the atmosphere we breathe to-day, from the healthy sentiment of the American people, and from the avowed aims and tendencies of the educated class. The age has new convictions. We know that in certain historic periods there have been times of negation,—a decay of thought, and a consequent national decline; that in France, at one time, there was almost a repudiation of the moral sentiment in what is called, by distinction, society,—not a believer within the Church, and almost not a theist out of it. In England the like spiritual disease affected the upper class in the time of Charles II., and down into the reign of the Georges. But it honorably distinguishes the educated class here, that they believe in the succor which the heart yields to the intellect, and draw greatness from its inspirations. And when I say the educated class, I know what a benignant breadth that word has,—new in the world,—reaching millions instead of hundreds. And more, when I look around me, and consider the sound material of which the cultivated class here is made up,—what high personal worth, what love of men, what hope, is joined with rich information and practical power, and that the most distinguished by genius and culture are in this class of benefactors,—I cannot distrust this great knighthood of virtue, or doubt that the interests of science, of letters, of politics and humanity, are safe. I think their hands are strong enough to hold up the Republic. I read the promise of better times and of greater men.

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