

## ARTICLE VI.

## OUR ECCLESIASTICAL LITERATURE.\*

*Plans and Operations of the Board of Publication of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Philadelphia: Published by the Board: 1847.*

*Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth—Annual Reports of the Board of Publication: To 1851.*

The Roman empire was the largest of the four universal monarchies of ancient history. Its palmiest day was during the reigns of Trajan and the Antonines, when Gibbon makes his splendid survey of its greatness. From west to east, it stretched from the Atlantic ocean to the river Euphrates, about 3000 miles. From north to south, it lay between the northern limit of Dacia, and mount Atlas in Africa, about 2000 miles. The empire could never keep northern Dacia for any length of time, and the Danube soon became their northern border line. The empire under Trajan was computed to contain about sixteen hundred thousand square miles. That was a prodigious expanse of territory to be ruled by the sceptre of a single government. The empire of Charlemagne, or that of Napoleon Buonaparte, was but an earldom, or a county, compared to that of Trajan. The old thirteen United States of America, which first set up independence, with their territories, contained, we believe, a somewhat larger geographical boundary than the Roman empire under Trajan. After the acquisitions of Louisiana and Florida, the Union and its dependencies contained 2,300,000 square miles. With the more recent acquisitions of Texas, New Mexico, Utah and California, the territory of the Union is

\* NOTE.—In inserting this article, the Editors do not wish to be understood as expressing any want of confidence in those who manage our Ecclesiastical Boards. The suggestions found in the following pages will no doubt receive the attention of the parties especially concerned, and lead them to inquire how far they can properly put forth an influence to accomplish the aims of the writer, and how far the subject is beyond their control.

*Eds. S. P. Rev.*

a little more than three millions of square miles; that is, nearly double the size of the grand Roman empire, in the palmy days of Trajan and the Antonines. This is the sober dictum of figures of arithmetic, not of those of rhetoric. It stands in chain and compass surveys; not in metaphor and exaggeration.

The conduct of the Abolitionists in Congress, since the passage of the recent Compromise measures, makes it certain that the Union cannot be of long continuance. That basest of factions known to history, have never ceased agitation on the subject of the Southern domestic institutions; and it is now plain that they never will cease agitation, while Southern men are within earshot of their fanatic fury and insult. But while the Union lasts, it is the grandest field for domestic missions that ever yet lay under the sceptre of a single government. With slight exceptions, one language can be read all over it. It is bound together by the cords of a single post-office establishment. Freedom of religion is common to all its States and Territories. To conceive of the whole masses of its population, as animated by the principles of a thorough and vivid spirit of evangelical religion, is to conceive of the most powerful source of influence over the world that ever yet was in it; the most copious fountain of good influences, humanly speaking, that ever sent its streams abroad. So that the motives to vigor, in the work of domestic missions, are the strongest possible. The earthly glory of the Redeemer, the whole weight and worth of the salvation of millions of souls, the influence of wholesome religion on the future permanency of our free institutions, as direct motives; and then, as an indirect consequence, the providing, by evangelization at home, of a place to stand, from which to move the world in the same happy direction.

Every motive which can affect a Christian man calls aloud on the Presbyterian Church to use most diligently the time during which the fell spirit of fanaticism may leave the States in unbroken Union. And, indeed, if anything can change the prospect, and repeal the seeming destiny of the land, it is the thorough evangelization of the country.

It is clear that the management of such Boards as those of Domestic Missions, and of Publication, in our Church,

requires practical talent, executive energy, and Christian statesmanship of the highest order. The Board of Publication has, at the present time, (Sept. 1852,) we believe, no Corresponding Secretary, *functus officio*, but a Secretary elect, and undecided as to his acceptance of the office. That of Domestic Missions has a Secretary, whose praise is wide in the churches—a good and able man, working earnestly, and loving the cause. He has presented reports of a character very superior. But still there is room for greater changes in this respect. The reports of our Boards might be more terse, compact, and readable. There might be less of the *κοινή διαλέκτις* of slipshod literature in them; less of mere exhortation and pious common-place; more of those calm, and clear, and masterly combinations of the ecclesiastical statesman which are so appropriate to the subject, and would be so instructive and refreshing to the Church. The subjects are not, and never can be, dull, uninteresting ones to Christian ears. What is wanted is simply that depth, and strength, and point, and power, which statesmanlike study alone can impart to them. It is a question well worthy of the Secretaries of our Boards, to what extent the fault is their own, and is to be found simply in the style of the writing, when those reports do not command the attention of the whole Church; and how much of real good fails in their hands when they are not so written.

It is, however, of the books and tracts which the Board of Publication are issuing, that we wish to speak particularly at this time. This Board has such a power for good in the land, the sphere of its operations is one of such peculiar importance for the times, and its work will be of so blessed consequences if well done, that it would seem no Christian heart that accepts the pure system of doctrine which its publications embody, could be satisfied not to pray for it, and pray fervently, and pray frequently, till its power shall go forth mightily, and every impediment be removed from the way of its chariot wheels.

The first ten years of the existence of this Board, as the property of the whole Church, terminated in the spring of 1848. During the first nine years, ending in the spring of 1847, it issued two hundred and twenty-one volumes, together with a number of smaller publications, in the form

of tracts. During the year ending March 31, 1848, it added to its catalogue twenty-one new books, amounting to 24,500 copies; during the year ending March 31, 1849, it added seventeen new books, amounting to 25,500 copies; during the year ending March 31, 1850, twenty-five new books, amounting to 31,500 copies; and during the year ending March 31, 1851, the Board added to its catalogue nineteen new books, amounting to 33,800 copies. The Report for the year ending March 31, 1852, has not yet been received by the writer. In addition to the above, the Board have also issued a large number of Tracts and Catechisms. Down to March, 1851, they had published three hundred and three books. During the four years, from that ending in March, 1848, to that ending March, 1851, inclusive, the whole number of copies of books published was 115,300. And allowing about the same amount of work to have been done during the nine years previous to that period, the infancy of the Board, which is probably about a fair estimate, we shall have, as the whole work of the Board, in the book department, down to March 31, 1851, about 230,000 copies of three hundred and three different books. The aggregate number of books and tracts to the present time, we suspect, is nearly two millions. On surveying this vast mass of printed testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus, scattered broadcast among such a people as ours, our first impulse is to arise and give thanks to Almighty God that he put it into the hearts of wise and valiant men to establish this Board, in what he doubtless saw to be its due season. It propagates a form of truth which the world never loved, and never will love, until the earth shall be wrapped in the glories of the millenium of holiness. It wields a power independent of the smile or frown of President, or Senate, or Supreme Court, or Legislature; it hangs not on the sleeve of King, Emperor, Czar, Khan or Sultan. It asked nothing of the powers of the world, in the beginning, but leave to put forth into life its own vital energies. It asks nothing of the powers of the world now, but to be let alone. We adopt with joy the language of the great Puritan *Vates*, of other days—poet, prophet, and sage, he was—over the times when the printing of books was about to be loosed from its shackles of star-chamber

tyranny: "Now, once again, by all concurrence of signs, and by the general instinct of holy and devout men, as they daily and solemnly express their thoughts, God is decreeing to begin some new and great period in his Church. Behold, now, this vast city—a city of refuge, the mansion house of liberty—encompassed and surrounded with His protection; the shop of war hath not there more anvils and hammers, waking to fashion out the plates and instruments of beleaguered truth, than there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas, wherewith to present, as with their homage and fealty, the approaching reformation."\*

We are sorry to lose the hallucination of this first joyous impulse. But "wiser and sadder" we must awake from it. Let us endeavor to look soberly at the facts. Has the actual influence of our Board been such as might have been expected from its three hundred published works, and its two millions of copies of them? We believe decidedly that it has not. It has published much of the rich wine of the old religious literature, such as Halyburton's *Great Concern*; Vincent's *Spirit of Prayer*; Charnock on the *Attributes and on Regeneration*; Fleming's *Fulfilling of the Scriptures*; Goodwin's *Return of Prayers*; Bradbury's *Mystery of Godliness*; Scott's *Force of Truth*, and *Synod of Dort*; Owen on *Justification*, on *In-dwelling Sin*, and on the *Holy Spirit*; Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; Sherlock's *Trial of the Witnesses*; Guthrie's *Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ*; Baxter's *Saint's Rest*, and *Call to the Unconverted*; Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, with some other works of the same description. And the Board would not have been established in vain, if it had done nothing but this. Yet, through reverence to the mighty and gifted saints of other days, we must not disguise the fact that much of the excellence of their works depended on the pith and point with which they adapted them to the times in which they were written. And while much of their adaptation to the human soul, under the influence of divine truth, must remain while the world stands, yet many of those finer sensibilities which genius embodies

\* MILTON on the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing.

in books, and on which their chance of being read mainly depends, are lost to us in the works of the ancient mighty men of God. It is freely admitted that there are exceptions to this remark. But it is nevertheless firmly believed to be a general truth, and one which a history of the reception with which our books have met, in the community, would fully establish. Where then is the really powerful original book, among these two millions of copies of three hundred different works? Of which book of our Board have the reading and thinking men of the land felt the attraction and the power? Where is the scholarlike, finished, classic book—full of Christ and his cross; full of sound learning, adapted to the American mind, so written that men will not willingly let it die; commanding the attention of those who always love to be spectators of the human mind engaged in heroic thought; alluring wild and unsettled young men, by its exquisite taste and finish; winning its sweet way to the centre-tables of ungodly young ladies, by its silver tones and its pure Christian sensibilities; staring the very skeptics and scoffers firmly in the face; clad in the universal respect which it has commanded; alluring, winning, enticing, commanding, compelling many every way, at least to hear its report? We do not believe that such a book is an impossibility. But where is there a book with the impress of the Presbyterian Board of Publication which approaches this description? None that we know of. They have published Dr. Alexander on Family Worship; Fairchild's Great Supper; Cumming's Christianity from God, and Newman Hall's Christian Philosopher Triumphant over Death." And we have heard of good influences from all of these works. They have told upon society in some measure. They have demonstrated the importance of freshness, and adaptation to the times, as qualities of religious books. Neither of them, however, is on a sufficiently broad ground to meet the description which has been given of a really and extensively effective book. And neither of them, so far as we know or believe, is anything like such a book. We have no quarrel with the Board of Publication—and can have none—unless it shall set itself up as constitutionally exempt from searching criticism; by virtue of its connection with the General As-

sembly—as if the control of the Assembly dispensed with the necessity of discussion, and the spread of light, in the whole body of the Church from which the Assembly is annually chosen! And even on this ground, to which the Board of Publication has been thought, in days long past, to have a little inkling, it would be more appropriate to stand amazed and silent at the fatuous lapses of good and wise men, than to quarrel with our own Board. Yet, we do not think that this Board has already attained, either is already perfect, or can count itself to have apprehended that for which it was brought into existence by the Divine Head of the Church. We pray that it may, in the due sense of the words, forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before—pressing toward the mark for that shining and glorious prize of honor in extensive and durable well-doing, which is within its reach.

There is not space in this article to review the operations of the Board in the work of colportage. We have no fault to find of it, except that there is not an hundredth part enough of it done; no wish to express concerning it, except that the spirit of God may send unto all Presbyterian hearts in the land such a love for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, that they may put an hundred fold more of their money into this work; no other remark to make, except that this work of colportage for the instruction and salvation of unenlightened classes of the country, excellent as it is, does not release the Board of Publication from the duty of providing a literature fraught with good taste, with true refinement, and with all that is good in genuine art and genius, for the higher classes of society.

It is grievous to have heard it said, as we have, that the Board looks, with an indifference almost akin to hostility, on any higher range of literature than that which is adapted to the laboring classes of the country. That charge is not intended to be brought against it here. It is freely admitted that there are perplexing difficulties attending the questions involved. The good and true men of the Church, who have been managing this matter, have, no doubt, done what they thought best for our Zion, and most for the glory of her King. It was, no doubt, better in the

beginning, to issue a plain Christian literature, breathing a solid, and thorough, and sober gospel, coming fully down to men's business and their bosoms, and intelligible to the simplest reader, rather than fine-spun volumes of affected and sickly rhetoric, full of vain philosophy, and science, falsely so called. But what was well in the beginning, will not answer the whole ends of the Board in time to come. The work of providing a plain Christian literature has been, we hope, well nigh accomplished. It has been well done too. Whatever supplementary works may be demanded, from time to time, by peculiar exigencies, ought, of course, to be added, as they are presented to the attention of the Publishing Committee. Ample room will be left for supplying the wants of the higher thought of the country. This can be done without hindering or portage, without restricting unduly the issue of a plain Christian literature—without, by any means, narrowing the base of the pyramid while its apex is builded higher and more beautiful. We should be sad to think that such a cause needed to be much urged, especially among Presbyterians, who have no rotund and rolling Liturgy, no fanatic ordinance, no doctrine fostering spiritual confidence and impudence, with which to allure men to their banners as a denomination; but who exist, humanly speaking, simply by means of the cultivation of the human mind, and by planting in it a thirst for higher attainments of grace and knowledge than are to be found at the common level.

“Philosophy, baptized  
 In the pure fountain of eternal love,  
 Has eyes indeed; and viewing all she sees  
 As meant to indicate a God to man,  
 Gives *him* his praise, and forfeits not her own.  
 Learning has borne such fruit in other days  
 On all her branches; piety has found  
 Friends in the friends of science, and true prayer  
 Has flowed from lips wet with Castalian dews.”

Those hallowed and often quoted words of the pious poet speak mightily for us in the present argument, and we hope that few readers will object to seeing them again, though it may be for the twentieth time.

The question will have occurred to the reader before this: “then what kind of books would you have the



Board of Publication to issue, for what you style the higher intellect of the country?" Some hints at an answer to that question have already been given. But it is intended to meet it more fully.

It is not certain to us that the right idea of a Christian book for wide circulation, addressed to the more cultivated minds of the country, has yet been clearly seen. And we stop not to clear ourselves of the charge of arrogance, which illiberal minds might be tempted to impute, while we undertake to contribute some small share of suggestion, to facilitate the production of so excellent and desirable a work.

A book ought, in fact, to be a work of art, just as much as is a marble statue of Washington, or a painting of the Declaration of Independence. It must not only handle an important subject, in an able and intelligent manner, with sound doctrine, and in a pious spirit, but must so handle that subject as to win favor with the reader, and array his reason, his judgment, his conscience, his tastes, and even his imagination, if possible, against sin, and in favor of the cross of the Lord Jesus. It is of no avail how excellent the matter may be, and how pious the spirit, if the manner of the composition be not such that it will be read and respected. A good book, coarsely, carelessly, loosely written will not be much read, and will soon pass out of notice; while a bad book, replete with the charms of bold and high intellectual processes, adorned with the elegances of a rich and classic style, and coming down broadly to the daily feelings and impulses of human nature, with elegant and insidious falsehoods, will be read, and will do manifold mischief. We cannot think that a Board of Publication, appointed to provide (at least a supplement to) the religious literature of a people, is in the performance of its whole duty, if it does not enter into a competition with wicked books, for influence over such minds as can be influenced only by elegance and taste. It is much desired by the writer that he may speak without dogmatism on this point, and with submission to the judgments of those who may be better acquainted than he, with the exigencies of the country and of the times. But to him it does seem that among the ruinous mistakes of the times, concerning religious writing, is the opinion, that style, and

manner, and maturity, and classic finish, are less to be regarded there than in other productions; the error of being in a great hurry in the production of a religious book, of skimming off the mere froth of religious meditations, convictions, and impulses, and calling the records of them literature. It is not every thought of a strong mind, nor every impulse of a pious heart, nor every conception of a gifted imagination which is worth being recorded, or of which the record is worth being read. Do not undertake to serve me on the printed page, any more than in the pulpit, with a strain of mere extempore thought, which you have not yourself deliberately examined and pondered, to see whether it is indeed true, appropriate, and in good taste. The great musician Haydn was a long time employed in the composition of his masterly Oratorio, the "Creation." When some friends urged him to bring it to a conclusion, he replied: "I spend a long time upon it, because I intend it to last a long time." The same remark will hold good in the production of a book. This is conceded. It is true in the production of a religious book. This is not so generally conceded. For it seems to be thought that the soundness, the truthfulness, the piety of a literary production will attract readers to it, let its artistic merits be what they may. There would be a certain propriety in this reliance, if all persons for whose perusal religious books are designed, were lovers of soundness, truth and piety. Even then there would not be a complete propriety in it. For the more finished and beautiful work would make a deeper impression on the minds of its readers, while it continued extant; and it would continue extant a longer time to make that impression. And according to this plan, the Board which issues books, irrespective of their artistic excellence, must suppose itself to be publishing only, or mainly, for those who are already pious. In other words, it must yield the aggressive and missionary feature in its organization. There is little propriety in such a rule, as applicable to persons not pious, and not piously inclined. If we may suppose a crudely and hastily written book, and a classic and elegant one, to be published, side and side, by the same press, to be bound in the same style, with the same soundness of matter, and to be borne through the country in the hands of

agencies and colportage, with the same zeal and with equal commendations, it is but a truism to say, that the latter would be by far the more valuable of the two. And as soon as the experience of perusal came out in relation to them both, the value of the one would wax, and that of the other wane, indefinitely to the end. We believe solemnly that a majority of readers of all classes, and a vast majority of irreligious readers, are now, and are to be in a much greater degree hereafter, attracted to the perusal of religious books by the taste, and elegance, and maturity of finish, and power of thought, displayed in them.

We do not choose to place in doubt at all, in this place, the ardent piety, the intellectual mightiness, the eagle-eyed visions of the truth as it is in Jesus, of those men of other days, whom the lying tongue of detraction has been compelled by an over-ruling and Divine Nemesis, for once to speak truth, in calling PURITANS. They stamped their greatness so deeply upon the things of earth and of time, that the pen of malignant history has not been able to murder their good names among men. And while God shall dwell in immortality on high, and shall continue to send out upon this earth from his lofty throne, the messages of that Nemesis, to raise up the struggling truth, and crush down to dust the crested lie, their memories will continue to flourish among pious men on earth. On that dependence their good name has long rested. There it may safely still be left to rest. We do not acknowledge any band, or any section of modern fanatics, to be their legitimate successors, or their true spiritual children at all. We shrink not from the duty—we claim the right—to cut deeper their records on the crumbling stone, and to twine their tombs with honors ever green. It is as much as could have been expected of them, to uphold truth and liberty against tyrants and Sadducees, in their generation, as they did. Let that generation make light of them that has done a greater work than they did, and has done it more nobly. If they rest in peace till then, they will sleep long in peace.

But the Puritans did not see, all things correctly. It is not given to any generation of men to be free from all error and mistake. Their great mistake was an attempted separation of the spirit of pure religion

from the spirit of the beautiful. We do not quarrel with the Ironsides of Cromwell for breaking out the idol-images of the Virgin and Son, from the cathedral windows of England. For it was probably designed as an insult to the Protestant feeling of the country, when Laud and his semi-papists had them put there. Nor do we quarrel with John Knox for such destruction of the cathedrals in Scotland as was necessary to drive away from their nests the lazy and iniquitous monks of that day. But simply, we do dissent from all men who think that there is sin in things beautiful, of themselves, and when disconnected with superstition, with carnality, and with pollution of manners. We say no word in favor of the theatre, the circus, the mass, the gaudy and superstitious procession on the days of the saints. Yet it is astonishing how large a part such things as these continue to bear, even in the literature of the present day, which is devoured with greed by many of the people of the United States. *Mankind run after false beauty in literature, for want of the proper exhibition of the true.* Look, then, into the Bible, and behold how beautifully the finger of God has written it. Look, then, into the pages of the visible creation, and behold how much that is beautiful the hand of God has fashioned in it. Look, then, upon the pages of the book of history and of Providence, and see how many things noble and beautiful are in the records of the moral world, wherever the waves of sin have been, in any degree, beaten back from its shores. If man will never give me another book, in which pure religion is mingled with the light of cheerful hope and sinless joy; in which not only have righteousness and peace kissed each other, but truth and beauty have embraced in ever-during wedlock—still I have one such book, at least, and that book is the WORD OF MY GOD. I have another such a book, in fact. We may read solid and sacred truth in the mountain and in the forest, on the earth and in the sky, in the face of the day and in the face of the night. And around them all there hang the wonderful robes of beauty in which their Maker dressed them. The living and holy God is no enemy of the beautiful. He stretched the robes of glory over the work of his hands, and he breathed into man the power to enjoy it. Most devoutly

do we wish that our ecclesiastical literature might be fashioned after such models as these. We believe it would be one considerable step in advance towards the spread of a sound and sober religion over the continent of America, if we could make our ecclesiastical literature graceful and elegant.

It would be another mighty step in the same direction, if we could diffuse a broad light of *cheerfulness* over it. Neither the piety of the Protestant world, nor the record of that piety in religious biographies, is yet free from fanaticism. Men have not yet entirely escaped the influence of the ancient mistake, that it is the nature of religion to be sour and distressing. We do not seem yet to have learned as effectually as it would be well to learn, that a gloomy and morose temper of life, is not to be attributed to the influence of the grace of God upon the soul of man, but to a deficiency of that influence. That first great and necessary effect of divine grace and truth upon the soul, by which it is awakened to its own lost condition, and convinced of the aggregated guilt of sin, of course marks a gloomy period in the history of the soul. So far from thinking that deep impressions of demerit in the sight of God is a mark of fanaticism, as some ungodly writers, who are enemies to the cross of Christ, use the word in modern times, we believe that there can be no sound religion, ordinarily, but that which has its foundation in such a conviction. *I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came sin revived, and I died.* And that remarkable period in Christian life, ought to have a very distinct and ample place of record, in a complete religious literature. But the records of the soul, even at that time, are not altogether gloomy. The darkness is intense, it is true. The conflict is often severe. But the Lord Jesus is at hand. The hideous forms of horror, which the law sets upon the soul, stop their pursuit, and drop their murderous implements, when the soul finds refuge in Him. Every Christian probably looks back to that period with deep, earnest, seriousness of feeling. But is it a feeling of gloom and sorrow with which he looks back to that period of his life? Did any man in his senses ever sit down and grieve over the fact that a knowledge of the divine law, and knowledge of himself, had scourged him out of all

self-dependence, and stripped him of his own miserable self-righteousness, and driven him, by fierce and relentless pursuit, to take refuge in God's own appointed stronghold? Certainly not. That period of Christian life is not gloomy to subsequent contemplation. It is the foundation of the soul's eternal thanksgiving, the birth of eternal life, the dawn of hope, the first of many days of the triumph of victorious, sovereign, electing grace.

There are often periods of gloom in Christian life, it is admitted, which are to be recorded in Christian biographies. But they are records of imperfectness, and ought to be so treated. We have no right to describe such periods as patterns for the experience of others. A greater portion of the sacred Scriptures is devoted to the comfort of God's people than probably to any other single practical subject, except their duty to keep clear of sin. A Christian life, therefore, which is gloomy, is either one which does not rest with a proper faith upon the promises of God, or it is one upon which there rests the guilt of some undiscovered and unrepented sin, or it is owing to some physical cause. Upon this deeply interesting point, upon which we could wish to dwell for a greater space than it is proper here to occupy, we could wish our ecclesiastical literature not to take Jonathan Edwards, or David Brainerd, or even Henry Martyn, for their models. They are books, which, excellent in many respects as they are, we never lay down without some gloom, for which we do not think religion is responsible. We may not be able to say exactly what that gloom is owing to. We think, however, that it is this: that such books leave with the reader the impression that the struggle of the Church, to bring this world to the allegiance of the Lord Jesus, is a more hopeless and desperate struggle than the Scriptures represent it to be. There is not in them enough of the light of assured hope, which the revealed purposes of God fully justify. We could wish our Board rather to adopt, as its models, the grand intellectual and spiritual joyousness of John Howe, the earnest, glad, hearty piety of Samuel Rutherford, and the wonderfully placid and happy genius of John Bunyan.

Refreshing indeed it would be, to see among the issues of our Board, now and then, at least once in a lustrum, or

a decade, some sacred classic, as finished and elegant as Hall's sermon on Modern Infidelity, as thoroughly religious as Cecil's Remains, or Newton's Cardiphonia; freely opening itself to all the innocent emotions, all the sweet charities, on every side, which cluster, like a choir of Graces, around social Christian life; and employing with thankfulness, every ray of joy, spiritual or natural, which God has made to shine upon the pious heart;—a cheerful book, without vanity or pride;—a happy book, without carnal sensuality;—an attractive book, without reckless and blaspheming ungodliness;—a pious book, without fanaticism;—a classic book, without a stoical or heathenish spirit; an American book, without crude and slipshod haste.

But you are setting up a mere ideal standard of perfection, to which the mind of man never did attain, and to which it never can attain!—says some ever-ready oracle of despondency. We do not believe this oracle of despondency to be true. We believe that the oracle *Philipizes*, as Demosthenes charged the oracle, at Delphi with doing, during the struggle between Athens and Macedon. We believe that its tongue twists to the side of the strong despotism of *common-place*, which is gathering the whole republic of religious letters in its grasp; and that it does not speak from the inspiration of heavenly or of terrestrial truth.

The American mind is not really imbecile, effete, or worn out in any respect. With all the recklessness or party rage, too often attributable to literal drunkenness, which shows itself in the American congress, we still firmly believe that there is as much of genuine intellect, in the aggregate, in the two houses of that body, as there ever was at any former period of our history. Speeches have been delivered there during the session which has just closed, which would have done honor to any session which has been held since the formation of the Federal constitution. *Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.* Letter-writers go about at the seat of government, to scrape up news for papers of all descriptions, who are not specially opposed to the retail of defamation, because that spicy article is admirable season-

ing for one of the epistles in which their occupation consists. Especially when one of these epistles is threatened with that disease of vacuity, which nature and news-mongers both abhor, they occupy the space, and blacken the fair sheet, with lamentations over the follies of Congress, and the degeneracy of the times. It is true that the mighty men, whose light has been in those halls for forty years, and who belonged, in fact, to a foregoing generation, have nearly all passed away. The great Carolinian, and the great Kentuckian, both sleep in the soil of the States which so loved and honoured and cherished them while living. And the great man of the North, their contemporary and their rival, who, like either of them, would have been *facile princeps* of any other three men of the times, yet lingers on the stage, obviously but for a short time,\* while they, in whose giant wars he has borne his part, have nearly all passed by. *One generation passeth away and another generation cometh.* Their successors, we do not rashly say, their equals, have sprung up, and are springing up, and will spring in the broad states.

There is not a single sign extant upon the horizon, that the God of Nature intends to stint his gifts of wisdom and of worth, to the generation which now is, or to those which are to come, of the human race. Freedom of thought and action is one thing which brings out strong minds, and that we have. Objects of real magnitude and importance, constitute another circumstance necessary for the development of the highest mental gifts; and they are here to an extent which exaggerating rhetoric itself cannot hide from view. And another circumstance adapted strongly to contribute to the vigour of the human mind, is a natural form of civilization, not encrusted with artificial distinctions in society, or with the soulless traditions of a ceremonial religion; but one which sets the powers of man to work with natural and real force, that he may strive, and his strength may grow, from conflicts which necessarily belong to the mystery of this life. These great elements of a powerful literature are not wanting in this country. When the era of emigration shall have, in a great measure, passed by, and the intellect of the country shall have gone

\* Gone! before this sentence could be issued from the press.—*Eds.*



steadily to work with the circumstances around it, it will then be seen, if we mistake not, that these conditions of a high mental development, are to be found here more than they have ever been found elsewhere.

If the mind of any European race, or of all the European races is *effete*, that is still not a reason to conclude that the American mind is so at all. We employ the English language chiefly, it is true. And our earliest colonies were from that island. Yet we are not simply a scion of the English stock. Nor are we a French race simply, even in our Huguenot settlements. Nor are we a pure Scotch-Irish race, even in western Pennsylvania and the valley of Virginia. Nor are we a Dutch race, even on the Hudson river. Nor are we a Spanish race, even in Florida and Texas. We are simply an American race—such a mingling of all those races, as will secure us for many generations to come, from either physical or mental degeneracy. We are rapidly losing all similarity to those who remain in our aboriginal seats in Europe. We are fast assimilating to each other, and assuming one or two definite types of character. The world has never witnessed circumstances of this description, better adapted to, or more requiring, high intellectual gifts, a high, pure, powerful, evangelical literature.

When the habits, manners and customs of our people become formed and settled, in a definite type, befitting the institutions of the country, there must be about them, much of that republican simplicity, in all the deed and speech and thought of life, in which nature prevails and shows itself, more than under other forms of civil government. We have not got the ruined abbeys and the haunted castles, and the traditionary ghosts of the European countries. We have, in our annals, no Montrose, no Dundee, no Wallenstein, fighting for false principle, and embalming the memory of corrupt superstitions, by a wild and picturesque chivalry. We have, on the other hand, no Prince of Orange, no Gustavus Adolphus, no Cromwell, maintaining with sword and pike, the truth of God, at periods of time picturesque beyond all others, in their outward shows, and with a pious heroism worthy of eternal record. Yet we have some history of our own, which is not mean in heroes and heroic deeds, of which fourth-of-July ora-

tions speak but too much, and of which there is not time here to speak. Only it has not in it the worship of kings, nobles, and bishops ; it gapes not after palaces and pomps, abbeys, castles and cathedrals. That is, it is natural and republican. And we have the hand of God's providence, working its own wonders in human life, public and private—showing nature at work in her eternal freshness, and leading us more deeply into those wonders of human nature which are really worthy of study, than we could go under the antiquated and artificial systems of Europe. And it is not crowns, coronets, ribbons, garters, or hoary superstitions, which render the providence of God interesting. It is how His hand leads the noblemen of his own creating, with genuine piety, and true heroism, and unsullied purity, through a life of wise and practical usefulness on earth, shining with many good and noble deeds, to honorable and worthy closes of life, and a death of real glory, and a sure entrance upon a happy immortality. We trust that by and by we shall see such things recorded in graceful and classic books, full of the spirit of a pure gospel, in an American language, addressing itself warmly to American hearts. To this we may add the hope that spiritual religion may get the start of the hierarchical spirit, in consecrating to itself the scenery of our country, by a classic literature, breathing its spirit around cascade and cave, lake, bay, river, and mountain, and all notable objects of the land ; and the further hope that religious literature may not continue to neglect, as it has done, the peculiar political phenomena of the country ; but that it may utter its voice of instruction and warning, stating the principles of Christian morality, irrespective of political parties, which apply to presidential canvasses, and all electioneering contests, and to the proceedings of legislative bodies, and to the judgments of the judicial bench, and to the deliberations of the executive chamber, and to all the actions of man—his interests, his duties, his hopes, and his fears—as the citizen of a free republic on earth, and the subject of a sovereign God in Heaven.