

The Progress of The Age.

AN

ADDRESS

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ADDRESS.

HUMAN PROGRESS presents a most interesting subject for contemplation. The Peasant, as well as the Philosopher, watches with pleased attention the unfolding of the physical and mental powers of the infant. From the moment when, tottering on feeble limb, it can but lisp its parent's name, until it stands erect in full manhood, the gradual expansion of its faculties delights the beholder and arouses thought. The successive stages of improvement, from infantile weakness to strong manhood, from childish ignorance to maturity of intellectual powers, present phenomena which both charm our sensibilities and awaken reflection.

And when we turn to the contemplation of aggregate thousands—when, instead of the growth of a single being, we behold the germination and progress of an Empire, the prospect from being simply interesting and beautiful, becomes august and sublime! A dwelling may be the scene of the one development, a continent is the theatre of the other. In the one case, the actor is a single being—the time at most but threescore years and ten; in the other, the persons of the drama are massive millions, and centuries the period of action. If we search for the infancy of empire, we behold, perchance, a little exiled band wending their way over pathless deserts, or through untrodden forests, or tossed in trembling barks upon an angry ocean. The perils of their journey over, they stand a handful upon the banks of a Tiber, or the shores of a newly discovered continent. Like earnest men, they wrestle with the thousand obstacles which impede their progress, or threaten their existence. They triumph; and the germ of a future nation lives. Slowly the young colony increases in strength—its borders are extending—its population multiplying—its resources augmenting, and the period of youth and trial passed, its name is enrolled

in the catalogue of nations. The handful has in turn been a town, a city, a province, a kingdom, a mighty host; and now, taking its place in the army of empire, marches on with gigantic strength. The desert of its youth is no barrier to its advance;—the forest, whose labyrinths had almost enclosed in death its founders, bends before its onward sweep, and the ocean of its childhood, that tossed it rudely in its white arms, with alacrity bears its armaments to victory. Laughing at opposition, in the pride of national manhood, it strides forward in the van of empire, its huge frame glowing with health, and its great heart driving the life-current into the distant parts of its continent-covering body!

But sublime as is the spectacle of a nation's advancement, there is a field of observation where the law of progress finds an ampler range, and where its results surpass those at which we have glanced, as far as an empire exceeds in importance an individual—as a world excels a continent—as mind transcends matter, as eternity, time! We refer to the Progress of Humanity.

By this, we mean the progress of the whole race, including the countless myriads that have thronged the earth in ages past, the teeming population that now heaves upon its surface, and the crowded generations that shall yet arise to play their successive parts in the vast drama of time. The race is one great family—separated, it is true, by the succession of ages, sundered by seas and diversity of tongues, and scattered over earth's wide domain by that Providence who shapes their destiny; yet still one family, marked by unity of origin and unity of history—each part exerting a reciprocal influence on all the rest, and all contributing in various ways to a unity of progress. True, should we narrow our scrutiny, and judge of the race by the history of single nations, we might doubt whether, indeed, the tendency was not to retrogression. The earth is strewn with the relics of dead empires, which, like the exhumed bones of the mastodon, show what giant races and colossal kingdoms have been swept from the globe. Glory and decay have been inscribed upon the fairest fabrics of human power. A few years, or centuries at most, have beheld their cradle, their growth, their grandeur, and their tomb. Their magnificence, depending chiefly upon that which is material, and having little relation to indestructible mind, earth soon knows them not, save in their ruins, and succeeding ages behold them only in the

vista of the past, as seen through the lense of history. Of every isolated nation it may with truth be said, earth is its birth place and tomb, time the measure of its existence, and decay its mournful heritage.

But there is a spirit of progress pervading the race, which, however it may be repressed in one nation, or in one land, or in one age, is still living and rife. If at times it slumbers, yet is it deathless. Born coeval with the race, enduring through all time, animating successive generations, it is the prerogative of this spirit steadily to advance the great interests of humanity, as cycle is added to cycle in the lapse of time; and when time shall end, she will plume her wings for a loftier venture, and speed boldly forward into the depths of eternity, elevating man in an interminable ascension, for ever approaching, but never reaching his God. She visits all nations and all lands by turns. She secures their aggregate advancement, and when they perish, she rises unharmed from the wreck of empires, intact amid their falling greatness—a thing of invulnerable life, in a world cumbered with the spoils of death. Generations come and pass away; cities flourish and decay; kingdoms rise and fall; centuries are numbered with the past; systems of philosophy are promulged and exploded; superstitions spring up and wither: yet the Spirit of Human Progress walks the world, like the fabled Jew, untouched by old age, unwearied by her ceaseless course. Catching the mantle of a departing age, she flings it upon the youthful shoulders of its successor, whispering in the ear of each generation her cheering motto—"Onward, onward." This spirit is the emanation of divine wisdom, delivering humanity from the ruins of sin and death, and imparting the elements of a new life, to be developed in an endless progression. Magnificent theme of thought! Sublimest of human sublimities!

The long ages of the past afford abundant illustration of this general subject; and it might be interesting to begin with the morning of time, and trace the advancement of our race through its successive epochs. It would be delightful to take some lofty stand-point, whence we might survey the progress of the past; and whence, also, imagination, inspired by the retrospect, might sweep boldly forward, and speculate upon achievements yet to be made, and glories yet in reserve for our race. But our youthful wing would tire and droop in such a venturesome flight. Be ours an humbler task, and one, we trust, more

practical. The past is gone, and belongs to history. Upon the future rest the shadows of uncertainty. But with the present we have to do. Narrowing the range of our remarks, we invite your attention to a consideration of THE PROGRESSIVE CHARACTER OF THE AGE.

Of all the characteristics of the present age, as contrasted with the past, none stamp it with a more marked peculiarity than its accelerated progress. Other epochs have exhibited prodigies in particular departments, and start into prominence, like mountains rising from the plain. But this age has boldly seized upon all the results of the progression of precedent times, whilst it has added to their number and augmented their efficiency. The elements of our rapid advance existed, and were partially known centuries back; but it was reserved for the departing and the existing generations to develope and apply their power.

Let us then glance, first, at the improvements of our age in all that concerns the physical relations and temporal comfort of man. And here, an almost boundless prospect lies before us; for within its range lie all the recent discoveries in the Arts and Sciences, as applied to furnish the necessaries, the comforts and luxuries of existence. Some, perhaps, who hear me, can compare the modes of life, the conveniences of every day use as now abounding, with those of the beginning of this century. What wonderful improvements in our clothing, our dwellings, and in all those countless appliances of civilized existence, the value of which we scarcely appreciate, but the want of which would be severely felt. What mighty changes have been wrought in the economy of human industry, by the application of the power of steam! The whirl and clatter of machinery—the rush of the railroad car, as with the speed of the winds it glides over mountain, valley and plain—the floating palaces which move with majestic rapidity over ocean, lake, and river, indifferent to the change of tide, and wind, and current—almost annihilating time and space—all these attest the amazing power of that mysterious agent, and illustrate man's progress in controlling and applying the elements of nature. By this triumph of the genius of a Fulton and a Fitch, men walk the water, plunge through the mountain, fly over the valley, skim the plain, yea, sweep around the globe! By this the oceans are narrowed and continents brought near. Inter-course between distant nations has ceased to be a formal and

heralded event, occurring at long intervals of time; but has already become the sociality of neighbours. By this, too, the curse of labour has been wonderfully alleviated. Machines of countless forms, and for a thousand various purposes, impelled by steam, perform, like things of life, with magic rapidity and exactness, the processes of production, which once demanded long continued and patient toil. In a geometric ratio, the products which minister to human comfort and embellishment have been augmented. All over the globe progress in the Arts is felt, and not only the necessaries, but the luxuries of life also have been rendered abundant; so that the masses enjoy appliances of comfort, which, half a century ago, none but the wealthy few could command. Startling discoveries in Science have been applied to the development of the resources of nature; and the surface of the earth has been compelled to augment its bounties, whilst its unexplored depths have revealed untold mineral wealth. Thus has the progressive spirit of the age tunnelled mountains, filled up valleys, converted deserts into gardens, spanned the ocean as with a bridge, and enabled man to walk its depths as on dry land, supplied the most widely separated climes with their interchanged productions, increased mechanic power tenfold, raised Agriculture to the dignity of a Science, reduced war to a matter of calculation, and marvellously lifted from man the weight of that curse which was pronounced upon him when driven from Eden's bliss. And yet more daring has humanity been; for with Promethean hand, it has snatched the lightning from the darkening cloud and made its lurid wing the messenger of thought; and outstripping the sun, and distancing the courier-winds, speeds intelligence from pole to pole with the velocity of light. And more wonderful still, the subtle element that constitutes the medium of vision, whose mysterious nature and mode of existence philosophy has as yet been unable to determine—even light itself—has become the executor of man's behests, and portrays upon the surface of the polished plate whatever he may present as a subject for its magic pencil. Indeed, so rapidly have wonders been added to wonders, in the progress of our day, that the power of amazement seems almost palsied and the most startling discoveries fail to astonish us.

Nor has the intellectual advancement of the age been less remarkable. The feature which most clearly distinguishes the exertions of mind in this day from those of all other eras, is,

that all its discoveries have a practical bearing upon the general good. They are not confined to the brain or the books of their discoverers, nor are they communicated only to the rich, powerful, and learned. But a new principle is speedily applied to some valuable purpose in practical life, the knowledge of the principle and its application is quickly imparted to the multitude, and thus it is made to produce the greatest benefit to the largest number. The progress of this age, more than that of most others, has been such as to elevate and bless the masses rather than the few. Illustrations of this connection between the intellectual progression, and the ameliorated condition of the physical relations of the race, will so readily suggest themselves, that they need not be mentioned.

There is in the human soul, even when unenlightened by revelation, a vague apprehension of immortality. It beholds the birth, the beauty, and decay of matter, and knows that its frail body too must moulder. But the mind itself is instinct with immortality, and frets against the bars of its clay prison, and looks wishingly forward, in expectation, or rather in hope, to another state of existence, stretching on, boundless and eternal. And even this chaotic consciousness imparts to the mind a mercurial vigour, awakening an eager desire to enlarge its powers, and to extend its sphere of action. But when this chaos is dispelled by light divine, and the soul awakes to a full knowledge of its heavenly origin, its spiritual nature, and its immortal destiny, new elements of being, new impulses of life are imparted; its brightened eye looks forward into the boundless future with a steadier gaze and through a more transparent medium. This consciousness of immortality affords, at once, the loftiest motive and the mightiest impulse to intellectual progress, and will prove enduring as the mind itself. At times some Lethæan draught may lull this consciousness to sleep—some Syren's song may lure the soul aside from the glorious path of progression, and human improvement may cease. But this mighty prompter of the march of intellect cannot always slumber, but under its impulse the race must go forward. And it has been reserved for this age to witness a more general rousing of this consciousness, and a consequent unexampled stimulation of that insatiable desire for knowledge which possesses the universal mind. We do not mean to say, that there are greater intellects now than formerly, but that there are vastly more of them that think for themselves, and the amount of information possessed

is much increased. The masses of the world have had a revelation of their own power, and nature, and immortality made to them; and knowledge of all kinds pours in upon them, such as their ancestors never conceived of obtaining. The empire of mind has begun. That of brute force is waning. Its sinews are shrivelling up beneath the influence of that power, which, though intangible, is not unfelt. And it is not the least encouraging characteristic of the progress of the age, that intellectual greatness is no longer deemed the heritage of the high-born. Indeed it claims, perhaps, profounder homage when the cottage is its birth-place. As the lightning's flash, or the hues of "heaven's ærial bow" are more vividly relieved, the darker the cloud behind them; so does genius appear more lustrous, and intellectual greatness more magnificent, when they bound forth from the vale of poverty, or flash out from the clouds of obscurity. The fields of exertion are no longer closed against the sons of poverty and humble birth, and open only to the offspring of rank, and wealth, and power. The arena for magnificent achievement is free to all; and in the glorious rivalry for intellectual superiority, class is not arrayed against class, but all are welcomed to a generous equality.

And what has been the effect of opening thus wide the lists? What but to increase the numbers, and stimulate the energy of the competitors? Or, to change the figure, the proclamation that all may freely labour in this intellectual mine and enrich themselves with its glittering ore, has filled its deep recesses with earnest miners, who are rapidly disclosing its exhaustless treasures. We begin to realize, that not only to the earth, but to the whole universe around us, man sustains solemn and important relations. All nature is adapted to minister to his comforts. Its laws were enacted for his good, its measureless resources created for his advantage, and if he does not realize all the happiness that was designed to result therefrom, the fault will be his own, in not searching its hidden depth, elaborating its concealed good, and in not subjecting all material things to his control. The knowledge of this fact has generated that spirit of inquiry and enterprise which is so eminent a characteristic of the age. The surface of the entire globe has been examined—unknown lands discovered—land and sea mapped—the tribes of the air, the waters and the forests—the insects that crawl the earth or sport in the atmosphere—the shells upon the shore—the stones upon the land—the currents

that regulate the climates—the streams that control the ocean—all have been examined, classified and named, so that even to read all the books which have teemed from the press upon these subjects, during the last quarter of a century, would seem impossible.

Nor have man's researches been confined to the mere surface of the globe. The geologist pierces the crust of the earth, exhibits its construction and develops its exhaustless wealth. The chymist, with amazing analytic power, has gone far to unfold the elements of things, and has furnished an opiate than can put to rest the most wracking pain. The philosophic geographer illustrates the wisdom of God in the construction of the globe, and explains the bearings of physical geography upon the eras of history, the character of races and the happiness of mankind. The astronomer bids you walk with him the firmament, whilst he presents to your delighted gaze, stars, and worlds, and suns, and systems, that crowd the realms of space, but which, a quarter of a century ago were wholly unknown, or deemed but nebulous matter wandering through infinitude. Heights after heights in mental attainments have been reached, and still the mind is not satisfied—an avarice for knowledge has seized upon its every power that is insatiable. And it does not, as the circle of its vision is enlarged, fancy that omniscience has been attained, and that all discoverable things are discerned. True science is humble, and confesses that her light is like that of a lantern at midnight. Whilst some things are disclosed as its blaze grows brighter, others lie beyond and in the dark. Nor is she disheartened by the thought that her knowledge is so trifling and superficial—that so small a portion of the universe has as yet been examined; but cheered by the retrospect of what has been attained, she girds herself with renovated patience, and presses onward to renewed toil.

The time was, when there were those who arrogated to themselves the divine right of holding the keys of knowledge. But it has passed away never to return. No Galileo now languishes in prison—no despot presumes that his edict can close the avenues to the Temple of Science. It is true, that, in some countries, their rulers do still attempt to keep their subjects from becoming enlightened, lest they should rise up in the majesty of their strength, and trample their oppressors beneath their feet. But the spirit of the age, undoubtedly and unmis-

takeably, tends to the utmost possible diffusion of knowledge. And actuated by this spirit, great progress must be made, for we possess advantages over all other eras and generations. Had they been animated by an equal desire of improvement, the means of gratification were wanting. Where one generation ended, its successor began, and to all that was valuable in the achievements of precedent ages, ours has added with a perfect prodigality. Gutenberg lived and died in the fifteenth century, and yet how little, comparatively, did the press accomplish during the first two centuries and a half of its existence! It would probably be much within the facts of the case to assert, that more pages have been printed, circulated, and read, during the last twenty years, than in the whole three hundred and ninety previous. The wonderful improvements in mechanics have been applied to this mighty engine; and a newspaper can now be printed at the rate of ten thousand impressions per hour. Books have been scattered like the leaves of autumn over every land, and are furnished at so cheap a rate as to place them within the means of the humblest artizan. Nor are the triumphs of the press confined to lands already civilized; but this mighty engine is at work in regions where gross darkness lingers. And even greater victories than these have been achieved within our own recollection. Oral languages have been reduced to written ones, in order that they might be printed, as in the case of some of the dialects of the aborigines of our own continent.

And in connection with this increase of the power of the press, we may notice the almost equal advance of popular education. Schools, academies, colleges, universities, have sprung up in nearly every land, and the means and appliances of education have been so vastly augmented, that all excuse for ignorance is swept away. Nor is this educational spirit found only in nations free in their form of government. Even in some of the old monarchies of Europe it has compelled the tyrant who would fain repress it, to yield to its demands for light, and to establish systems of popular education. This mighty element of human advancement has been most efficiently employed during the last quarter of a century; and, judging from present indications, we may hope, that wherever there are human beings to share their benefits, all around the globe, the school and the press will be found to spread their blessed influence.

Retort not upon us the fact, that there are millions on the earth, and multitudes in our own land, who cannot even read the language they speak. I am dealing with the past—the work which has been done in the present age, not with what remains to be accomplished. Ignorance does hang like night over the world—perhaps, above the greatest portion of its surface. But when I endeavour to gaze into the darkness that shrouded our race a century, a half a century ago, and compare it with the depth and extent of the darkness still resting upon it, I do see through the clouds the light breaking and dispelling their gloom. A few faint streaks of morning's dawn are seen shooting up towards the sable zenith; and O! how blessed is that light! I hail it as the benighted wanderer hails the morning star, sure token, that this long night will be succeeded by a glorious day—as a proof, that God's own law of human progress is working out His blessed designs—that the time is hastening on, when the earth will bask in the unobstructed rays of that Sun, whose brightness will banish all the shades of ignorance and error!

Resulting from, or accompanying this advance of mind and general diffusion of knowledge, we should expect to find a correspondent movement in the political relations of man. The history of past ages exhibits the fact, that, for the most part, the world has been governed by the few. The millions who have gone down to the grave have been mere human machines, kept in motion for the benefit of their masters. Ignorant of his own nature and destiny, how could man fully perceive and feel, that to be deprived of the privilege of self-government is to be robbed of his birthright! He plodded on, unconscious of that robbery, and really believing, that those who held the power, were born to rule, and were gifted with supremacy by a divine right. But wherever a gleam of light has entered and revealed to him his chains, he has instantly endeavoured to break them. Hence the perpetual struggle for freedom. There is a law of political progress in the earth, the workings of which we notice with delight, as we ponder the history of by-gone centuries. Most thrilling have been the scenes that the application of this law has produced; and amid all the records of the past, no pages are more absorbing in their interest than those which tell of man's struggles for liberty.

The cause of freedom had made wonderful advances in the

ages immediately antecedent to our own. Influences long and silently operating, have been preparing, beneath the very foundations of old social institutions, the elements of explosion. Agencies have been at work for centuries to produce the uprising of the millions; and the reasoning mind could not expect, but that beneath the influence of enlarging light, a vast political progress should mark this period of our world's history. And whilst all else has been moving onward, has the cause of man's civil liberty been alone stationary? Has all the knowledge which has poured in upon his mind, failed to cause him to see his true relations to his oppressors? Has the influence of the Republic of Washington been unfelt? No! The mighty ocean of society has been agitated by the principle of liberty, and its billows have dashed onward with inconceivable rapidity and wondrous power. Into nations prostrate in political death, the Almighty has breathed the breath of life, and they have arisen from their degradation exceeding great armies. Many hardly contested battles for freedom have been fought with desperate resolution, and the watchword of disenthralled nations has been, as they have placed their feet upon the necks of their conquered oppressors, "*Sic Semper Tyrannis!*"

Nor has the hold of despots been easily broken, or willingly resigned. Power is ever grasped with eagerness, retained with tenacity, and relinquished with reluctance. But in this age, kingdoms that had their origin in the distant past—dynasties, white with the age of centuries—thrones, whose foundations seemed embedded in the very structure of the societies where they were reared—governments, that had interwoven their influence into the entire web of social existence—sovereignties, allied with systems of aristocracies and with forms of religious superstition, so as by reciprocal influences to strengthen each other—all these have been shaken by the swelling tide of political progress—over many the waves have rushed, whelming them in ruin—and all shall yet be swept to destruction. The disenthralment of nations is not the work of a moment, to be accomplished with magic quickness. Days and months, it may be years and tens of years, must circle away, blood must flow like water, the tramp of battle must shake the earth, cities must be captured, treasures be spent, reverse and victory succeed each other, long periods of patient endurance and untiring, energetic and united effort pass slowly on, ere the great

consummation be effected. And all these have been and are taking place in this our own day, with a rapidity of succession and a startlingness of character, magnificent beyond what any bygone age has witnessed.

Turn your eyes toward the South American Republics. They have been struggling up beneath the foetid waves of oppression, moral and political, gasping eagerly for the same pure air of freedom which fans our own hills and valleys. Behold the convulsions which have rocked their social fabrics to their very foundations, with the power and shock of their native earthquakes. True, they are unprepared for the enjoyment of rational liberty. The light which has revealed to them their chains, is yet too dim to guide the hand that would break them. Yet still, their frantic efforts to rid themselves of their tyrants, show that some light has fallen amid their gloom. And though they may be nearer the shore, and not borne forward with the same rapidity with which others are, yet the current of the age is bearing them onward.

Behold that land of classic memory, which boasts a Marathon, a Platea, a Salamis, and a Thermopylæ—"beloved Greece." After a degrading sleep of ages, she too arose from her slumbers, and with something of the Spartan spirit, shook off the Moslem's yoke. Cheered on by the aid and sympathy of the friends of political progress, her liberty was purchased at the price of her best blood, and the banner of her independence waved in triumph over Missolonghi and the Acropolis. The jealousy of crowned heads imposed a form of government less free than her valour had deserved; and a limited monarchy exists where a republic ought to stand; yet even this is an advance from the stupid despotism of the sullen Turk. The ancient Grecian republics are brilliant proofs of the inadequacy of man's own power, unaided by light from on high, to effect his redemption from the curse of tyranny; but when Christianity shall have pervaded the "Isles of Greece," then will her political regeneration be consummated, and she will smile with the gladness of the soul.

Shortly after, in the "pleasant land of France," another revolution swept over her vine-clad hills. It was not of the same violent character as those which had preceded it, but was a comparatively calm change from the royalty and tyranny of the Bourbons to the less objectionable form of a limited monarchy, and Louis Philippe was made "King of the French."

Incontestibly, that strange, mercurial people, had advanced many steps in political freedom since the bloody days of the "Reign of Terror," and since the glories of her first Consul and Emperor went down behind the rock of the ocean.

And now, as our century culminates to its meridian, what do we behold among the nations? The very elements of monarchical governments seem to be in a state of fusion. Systems, whose strength appeared iron, suddenly exhibit a mixture of mire and clay; the awe that bade the people bow at the footstool of royalty, has given place to the noble bearing which indicates a returning consciousness that they too are men; and kings are trembling, thrones are tottering, and have been torn to atoms, and scraps of their velvet have been sent across the waters, that republican eyes might see, as a curiosity, a relic of a throne!

From Dunkirk to the Pyrenees, and from Alsace to Bretagne, another revolution has rolled and freed France from every vestige of monarchy. Starting from the Champs Elysees, its influence went forth and reached the remotest valleys, and caused those thrilling scenes which have scarcely yet faded from our view. The Tuilleries were taken, the royal throne was torn to fragments, and its regal occupant fled before the resistless populace and died an exile, unhonoured and unregretted. Titled nobility, too, fell prostrate before the swelling tide of reform, and, from the ruins of a monarchy, destroyed beyond the capability of resurrection, the Republic of France arose! Confusion and blood have resulted, excitement the most intense has caused the democracy of the world to hold their breath in trembling fear, lest another deluge of death should whelm the hopes of freedom beneath its terrible waves. A system of government, modelled somewhat like our own, has been established; a President has been elected; minorities have yielded to the popular will; ministries have been formed and dissolved obedient to the opinion of the majority; the republic has been in partially successful operation for more than three years, and we think there is far less cause to doubt its final success, than there was that of our own country in 1789, although the causes for fear differ materially. Time will not permit us to show the reasons why we tremble for the fate of the new republic, and we will only say, that the great element of stability lacking, is a controlling moral principle. . But while we watch with anxiety her course, we cannot

but rejoice that her people are so much better prepared for self-government than ever before; and we cannot believe, whatever may be the fate of the present system, that another absolutism will ever sway its sceptre over her realms of beauty.

Ireland, too, still heaves with the throes of an enslaved people. Beneath the curse of civil and spiritual sufferings she has groaned for years; and tortured by the accumulated woes of a half century, she again thrilled with the symptoms of another revolution. But the uprising of 1848 was a failure. England's grasp was too strong to be so easily shaken off; and we fear it will not be relaxed, until the despotic will itself becomes changed by the force of popular opinion at home, or a movement shall there take place which will loosen the bonds that bind unhappy Erin. And we think the careful observer of the political condition of England herself will notice, that, while the surface may seem but slightly agitated, a mighty ground swell is heaving beneath. There are political advances to be made in the British Isles which cannot be prevented; but possessing so much of liberty, events may not be precipitated, and some time may yet elapse, ere the genius of another Cromwell will visit those Saxon hills and proclaim another Commonwealth!

On the Continent of Europe, however, we may expect the most rapid political progress. Vast numbers of the degraded and oppressed population of the despotisms that there govern, have fled to our own land, and their reflex influence could not but be great and effective. And this expectation has been fully realized. Some of the most exciting scenes that history has ever recorded, have recently been enacted during the struggles for freedom which have agitated the nations of the old world.

With what a thrill of delight and surprise did we hail the tidings, that Hungary had arisen from thralldom, and had become a Republic! She proved herself a nation of heroes! Glorious, if unsuccessful, have been her efforts! The enthusiasm of her people was wrought to the highest pitch; hope shed its blessed light around them; joy filled their hearts, and determination nerved their arms. Bloody war waved its ghastly scourge over their homes; battles were bravely fought, and victory gloriously won. The combined armies of leagued despots were routed by the valour of serfs just risen into the attitude of men. The names of their generals became household words wherever freedom had a home; and the power of steam, the

rush of the waves and the lightning flash of the telegraph, were all too slow in telling us the latest news from the fields where her heroes struggled. Hope had well nigh become fruition, when treachery relinquished what valour had almost won, and Hungary's liberties were cloven to the earth, her children butchered, and her noble Kossuth, driven from home and country, was forced to accept from the Follower of Mahomet that protection and hospitality which Christian Europe denied him! Instead of the expected shout of joy, a wail of woe sighed over the waters—the Magyars were fallen!

When we ourselves see such a powerful movement as this in the very midst of despotic powers—in a land hemmed in by governments most tyrannical in their character—even though the effort be a glorious failure, yet we cannot shut our eyes to the fact, that the cause of freedom is rapidly gaining strength in Europe. Throned monarchs are aware of this, and hence they tremble, and combine to crush the people wherever they may attempt to rise.

But, perhaps, the most decided recent evidence of the political progress of the age has been exhibited beneath Italian skies, even in Rome herself. The spirit of Brutus has revisited the theatre of his former glory—the indomitable Rienzi again walks the Sacra Via! Notwithstanding the awe and superstitious reverence which the Pope exercised over the minds of his subjects, they rose up and drove him from his throne, and he fled a lonely wanderer. For five months Rome's latest Commonwealth governed with a mildness of sway, that was again shedding light and gladness over her seven hills, bidding the darkness and sorrow of centuries depart. The Roman revolution was one peculiarly of the people themselves, directed against a power that tyrannized over soul and body, and a prince whom they were taught to regard as God's vicegerent; and to it they were urged by no persuasion of demagogues, who hoped to attain power in the confusion incident to change in government. And when we behold a whole people, circumstanced as these were, thus calmly, deliberately, and wisely banishing their sovereign, assuming their right to govern themselves, and with little effusion of blood establishing a Commonwealth, surely we are justified in saying, that this age has beheld more wonderful social progress than any that preceded it. And had not *republican* France and despotic Austria so basely interfered, and drenched the very tombs of Rome's

great dead with the blood of her latest heroes, there can be no doubt, but that the Republic of Italy would now have been blessing her people with the institutions of freedom!

We have but glanced at the glorious revelations which the last half century has made, illustrative of this portion of our theme; yet the prospect has glowed before our vision, and we have been led into more detail than we intended. But enough has been shown to exhibit the spirit which is energizing the masses of the world's population. There is an unmistakable movement going on, which will topple to destruction the towers and turrets of absolutism, grown gray with years; and although the end may be delayed, the consummation is certain, for the giant man is awaking from his long slumbers, and these pigmies, who have been governing by divine right, will be hurled to the dust from whence they sprang!

There remains to be considered another element in the progressive character of the age, and certainly not the least important. We have said before, that a knowledge of his own origin and immortal destiny, is the spring of man's progress. And if this be true, it would be strange were he to advance in every other department, except in that which reveals and illustrates the dignity of his nature, the amplitude of his power, and the eternity of his existence. After all the wisdom and genius of heathendom had exerted their utmost powers, the loftiest conclusion they reached, was, that man was something different from the dust that composed his body, and that he might be immortal. But all was doubt. The true manhood was not seen by them; and they could not boldly pass beyond the grave, rend the separating veil, and gaze confidently into the future. It was reserved for that gospel which brings life and immortality to light, to unfold the true views of humanity; and just in proportion as these ideas have been spread, has the race been elevated and advanced. It is only when man learns his true relations to his Maker, that his improvement becomes firm and enduring. Some of heaven's light revealed, in a dim, shadowy form, these thoughts to several of the nations of antiquity, and they became cultivated and refined in many things. But the radiance of their arts was dimmed by their moral debasement, and unguarded by a sound morality, they perished, and are known only by their ruined relics. The pyramids have for centuries beheld the sands of the desert covering up Egypt's godless civilization; and the elegance and learning of Babylon,

Persepolis, Athens, and Rome, have long ago, with fragmentary exceptions, been lost beneath the wave of oblivion. Man's improvements in his physical, intellectual, and political relations, may be, and have been, magnificent: but they must be subservient to his moral relations, in order to be permanent. It is when man is contemplated upon the platform of eternity, as a child and heir of his Maker, endowed with powers capable of illimitable expansion, that he is beheld, far exalted above the positions he held here on this atom of the universe, as a man, a citizen of a nation, a dweller on one of God's worlds.

In the present age, the progress of civilization and liberty, and the advancement of Christianity, are nearly identical; and in time to come, the unity of movement will become more complete. And a comparison of the moral state of the world at the present day with what it was at the opening of this century, would demonstrate this to be the case. Here we cannot enter into detail, nor is it necessary, for this subject is so often presented to your consideration in this very place, more ably and fully than we can do it. We will only remind you of the facts, that there is scarcely a land beneath the sun where there is not a herald of the cross; that the Bible has been translated into one hundred and fifty languages; that copies of the holy volume, and tracts and religious books have been scattered all around the globe; that Christianity has civilized and humanized whole nations; that toleration has been gained for it in almost every land; that false religions are losing their hold upon their votaries; that whilst it is the parent of all valuable human achievements, yet all come back to swell its triumphs and follow in its train. And in every item of this long detail, we find proof, no matter how much we may mourn the dreadfully immoral condition of vast portions of the world, and even of lands nominally Christian, that our race, as a whole, has been progressing rapidly toward a millennial state.

We have now hurriedly glanced at some of the most prominent indices of the progressive tendency of the age. Of course, minute details was impossible. But imperfect as our review has necessarily been, we think no candid mind can doubt the position designed to be established. And the mass of the civilized world begins to entertain the same views. The idea of the "golden age," when all was happiness and man in his most perfect state, is fading away. The reverence we naturally feel for our ancestors, combined with that mellowing light

which distance lends, has added a more beautiful and perfect appearance to that which is seen through the lengthened aisles of past centuries. Our fathers, too, as the halcyon mornings of their lives have lingered in their fond memories, have told us, that the race in their youth was better far than now. Man has yielded too much to this human weakness, and he is beginning to discover that his *golden age* lies in the future, not in the past. He now refuses to bow down to old orders of things, simply because they are old; nor can he sympathize, as once, with that feeling which prefers the dust and cobwebs of the antique, to the positive improvements and comforts of the present. Public opinion, indeed, has been held so long to this side, that, like the pendulum, there is danger of its vibrating to the other extreme. The progress of the times, especially in our own land, seems inclined to abolish every thing that even wears the semblance of age. It would lay its sacrilegious hand upon religion itself, and forgetting that truth cannot be changed, that its applications only can be wrong, it assails the oldest and best established principles. And it is the confounding of truth with error that constitutes the great danger of the reforms of the day. Men become so absorbed in those improvements which concern the mind and body—their physical, intellectual, and political relations—that they neglect the heart and the duties which they owe to their Maker. Impart to the unsanctified intellect the loftiest conception of its own indestructible nature, and its indefinite capability of improvement—give it a view of that landscape of divine beauty, which lies stretching interminably onward, until its loveliness fades behind the horizon of the wearied vision, and at once it may bound forward with Titan strength in the march of immortality; but if guided only by the light of reason, and governed by its own native passion, its progress will be fitful, and it will soon plunge into difficulties which will put an inglorious end to its career. Enlighten the mind as you please—exalt reason—refine the man physically and intellectually—arm him with weapons that glitter with polish, whose keenness is perfection; but withhold from him *moral* culture, and you unbind a phrenzied giant—you produce a dangerous fiend—you start a mighty engine with no hand to guide its course or to arrest its desolating rush! That this is mournfully true, is proven by all the records and relics of heathenish civilization, and finds many a bloody demonstration upon the page of history. We see it in the confusion and crime which so

frequently attend the formation of new governments. And hence the fanaticism of the day. Man would reject all the teachings of the past, all its principles, its laws, its religion, its social bonds, and even the sacred ties which hold society together, inflated with the idea that this is an age of miraculous progression, and confounding divine principle with the old errors which past generations have bound to it. These extremes must be avoided. Let us not tie ourselves to the past with the cords of memory and affection, but let principle govern the reforms of the day. Truth is an immortal, and with such a pilot, by the blessing of Heaven, the ship of progress will not dash against the rocks, but glide safely into a port of peace.

The age, like some mighty comet, is rushing on towards a sun, which it ever approaches, yet never reaches—its head blazing brighter and brighter as it advances, and dragging behind it a huge train, whose last particles seem lost in the distant darkness. The advance of other eras seems as nothing, compared with what a few years now accomplish. Hitherto the race appears to have been growing in the shade. The spring of man's existence has been backward, and now, the genial warmth of a glowing summer is calling forth the intenser energies of his nature, a mere earnest of more wondrous exploits. And, as in the days immediately preceding the birth of the Saviour, there was a dim presentiment all over the globe of some remarkable event about to take place, as was indicated by the Eastern Magi and their guiding star; so now, an undefinable expectancy of mighty events impending—a great shadow—pervades the nations. Despotisms totter—thrones are rocked as by an earthquake—the hearts of kings fail them—social institutions that have grown strong with the roll of centuries, seem dissolving—superstitions that have outlasted ages, now exhibit the decrepitude of age—in times of an almost general peace, a feverish looking for of wars prevails—an unquiet movement agitates the populace of every land—civilized man looks anxiously forward, and beholds in all this, the preparation of the earth for those magnificent scenes which God has revealed as part of His plan in the government of the world, while uncivilized men partake vaguely of the fearful presentiment. No one can fail to observe these signs of the times, if he but glance over the face of human society. The wheels of progress are glowing as their velocity is daily accelerated; and we feel, that we are soon to acquire a speed, to

which our present wondrous momentum will be as nothing. And when we reflect how vast a proportion of the race breathes not the pure air of liberty, political and moral, and that the night of error and ignorance broods in desolation over millions on millions, let us not grow disheartened, but contemplate the almost six thousand years which have been numbered with a past eternity since human progress began; and compare the slowness of its earlier advances with the geometric ratio which has characterized the progression of the present century, and the still more accelerated rapidity of advance which we have reason to expect will be made in the few years just beyond us in the future, and we will thank God, that he has cast our lot in the nineteenth century! Or, if even this retrospect will not drive from your saddened memory the perishing myriads who throng the earth, the mere creatures of sensual enjoyment, turn your eyes from the darkness and wrong that is around you, spread the wings of a sanctified imagination, and boldly waft your flight over, and beyond the abyss of death, and gaze upon Human Progress, as it expands with god-like energies, and divine aspirations, and an immortality of being, in those worlds of inconceivable glory, where Creature and Creator shall harmoniously dwell!

GENTLEMEN OF THE GRAHAM PHILANTHROPIC AND
WASHINGTON LITERARY SOCIETIES:

The pleasing duty to which your kindness called me, has now been performed. It was with difficulty that I procured my own consent to occupy this place, which might have been filled by an older and an abler head—but allow me to add, not by a more willing heart. And in the selection and discussion of the theme which has now engaged our attention, I have made no attempt, as you have heard, at originality. The subject is one of too great extent, to be fully considered in the brief period allotted to such an exercise as this. But I am not without the hope, that this hurried and imperfect view of this trite, but interesting theme, may not be without its practical importance. Self-knowledge has been deemed necessary to a proper performance of duty since the days of the Grecian sage: and the people of every age should have thorough knowledge of its spirit. In order to an intelligent and effective employment of them, man must be aware of his own abilities; and he must likewise observe the ebb and flow of the tides which heave

the great ocean of humanity. He should be well apprized of all its currents, rocks and quicksands, lest his bark be tossed, or stranded, or whelmed beneath its conflicting waves.

And to those who soon must leave these Academic Halls, to engage in the active business of the world, an adequate and abiding knowledge of this great progressive spirit of the age is indispensable. Each in his sphere must act his part and exert an influence; and if he do not recognize this leading characteristic of the field of exertion, he is in danger of being trampled beneath the advancing column, or left behind in the onward march of the world.

And as I look around me, I see those to whom, in part, the destinies of this great Commonwealth are to be committed. Sons of the "Old Dominion," you are placed in very responsible positions. You boast an ancestry, unexcelled by that of any country. Your whole land glows with the lingering glories of the Revolutionary struggle. Your natural advantages are unsurpassed, your physical resources inexhaustible, and your scenery a landscape of glowing beauty. And as the young Virginian looks back upon the past history of the State of his birth, thronging as it does with such a host of noble actors, I do not wonder that his heart thrills with pride as he exclaims, "This is my own, my native land!" But is he to be contented with the past, and repose upon the laurels of his ancestry? Will the magnificence which lingers around the tombs of your mighty dead, and hovers over the once-embattled field, and the recorded grandeur of their deeds, which glows upon the pages of your historian, satisfy your aspirations? Is such a state of feeling consistent with the progressive character of the age?

Look around you then. Has your noble Commonwealth been keeping pace with other communities in the march of empire? Is she in company with the rest of the world, in the physical, intellectual, social and moral progress of the times? Or, is she lagging behind in all these various departments? Have her sons been developing the vast resources of her exuberant soil—reaping from her bosom the golden harvests which she should produce—felling her gorgeous drapery of forest—disclosing her vast mineral wealth, and covering her magnificent domain with a network of internal improvements? Has her mind been growing and increasing its stores of knowledge; and have the school, the college, the newspaper, the

press, and all the appliances for disseminating knowledge been established throughout her borders? Has she redeemed the promise which her early history gave?

These are the practical questions which our subject suggests for your consideration. It becomes not a stranger to ask, or to answer them; but whatever may be the true response, of one thing he is certain, you cannot make too great advances. We expect wonders in this day: and I know of no State from whence we have a right to look for more, than from this noble "Old Dominion," whose very soil seems to have been prolific of mighty men. And has that race of giants dwindled down to dwarfs? Do all Virginia's great ones belong to the past? Far from it. For we yet behold them honoured ministers at foreign courts; and in the Capitol of the Republic, we see the assembled representatives of a whole nation crowding around, and listening with breathless attention to the eloquence of Virginia's sons. But these men too will soon pass away and rest with their fathers; and upon you, will devolve the duty of sustaining the character of the State and keeping her, at least, in the front rank. And never let it be forgotten, that the age in which you live is *pre-eminently progressive*. Be not content with the past, nor with the present; but fix your eyes upon a more glorious future. And when this spirit shall dwell in the breast of every son of Virginia, then will the pledge which her founders gave be redeemed—then will she continue to be a strong and beautiful pillar in this magnificent temple of human liberty; and Virginia will still deserve the honour of having given birth to a WASHINGTON!