

THE PURITAN CHARACTER.

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AN

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY

OF THE

CITY OF MONTREAL,

DECEMBER 23, 1857.

BY

REV. ASA D. SMITH, D.D.,

PASTOR OF THE FOURTEENTH STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW YORK.

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1858.

MONTREAL, Dec. 24, 1857.

Rev. ASA D. SMITH, D.D.,

*Dear Sir* :—The undersigned, members of the Committee of the New England Society of Montreal, having listened with deep interest to your Oration, on Wednesday the 23d inst., respectfully request a copy for publication.

Very truly yours,

CANFIELD DORWIN,  
NATHANIEL S. WHITNEY,  
WILLIAM T. BARRON,  
CHAMPEON BROWN,  
CLARK FITTS,  
EBNEZER C. TUTTLE,  
HENRY W. ATWATER,  
HORATIO A. NELSON,  
SAMUEL G. BROWNING,  
SETH B. SCOTT,  
CALVIN P. LADD,  
ALFRED M. FARLEY.

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New York, January 12, 1858.

GENTLEMEN :

In compliance with the request so courteously conveyed in your note of the 24th ult., I herewith submit to your disposal the Address delivered before the Society which you represent.

Very respectfully and truly yours,

ASA D. SMITH.

Messrs. CANFIELD DORWIN,  
NATHANIEL S. WHITNEY,  
WILLIAM T. BARRON, and others, *Committee.*

## ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY :

THE celebration to which we gather here, has, in the eyes of some of us—of some even of the sons of New England—a certain aspect of novelty. Not that we have failed to cherish, as becomes us, the memory of the Pilgrims. Their names and their deeds have been as household words to us. Musing upon them till the fire has burned, we have told them to our children, and have sounded them forth in the chief places of concourse. As from year to year this anniversary has returned, we have given heed to the summons of other like societies,—hard by the rock of Plymouth itself; or in the old Puritan capital; or in the great metropolis of the nation; or in its newer regions, prompt to confess, in their matchless progress, the presence and the power of the New England spirit. We meet to-day, however, without the bounds of the land of the pilgrims. We are on British soil, within the sound of that drum-beat whose echoes girdle the globe.

The same royal banner waves over us which was flung to the breeze at Marston Moor, at Naseby and at Worcester. We sit under that same sceptre which was borne by Henry VIII, the veritable Bluebeard of our nursery terrors, by "bloody Mary," at whose name the cheek of our childhood was blanched, and by James I, who threatened, and was "as good as his word," to "harry" our forefathers out of his realm.

But unique though the scene is, it has no repulsive or ill-boding aspect. Its spirit is peace, and its omens are all of good. It is not only of high historic import, it has a grand prophetic significance. Out of the fires of Puritanism, the British sceptre has come, as the most loyal admit, more finely tempered. The mists of prejudice dispelled, it is seen now, by all who have eyes to see, how great is the debt which even Old England owes to the men and the principles we celebrate to-day. Her "meteor flag" waves us not defiance, but a welcome. Like the stars and stripes of our native land, it is a symbol to us of liberty. Though on British soil, it is a free air we breathe, an air the freer, as our British friends will be prompt to admit, for the mighty Puritan winds that have stirred it. We are brothers all, of one priceless heritage, of one great mission, and in all that is dearest to humanity, we trust, of one glorious destiny. We who are strangers here, yet feel ourselves at home. The very face of nature deepens the impression. It is a New England sky that is arched over us. It is

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our own wintry landscape that stretches about us. Holding in abeyance some more recent and sadder memories, the very soil of the province is hallowed to us by the mingled blood — that of the two Englands shed in the same cause — with which in the earlier times it was drenched. Well, then, may all minor diversities be forgotten, as we open our hearts to the joy of this festive occasion. There are no "malignants" here ; there are no "fanatics." With something more than a mere international comity, with a oneness which, having its roots deep in the past, will send many a blessing far into the future — a oneness which will be more and more, we are persuaded, that of the two great empires represented here — we assemble to-day to commemorate the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers.

The orator at your last anniversary discoursed with great felicity, both of thought and diction, on the "Vision" of the Puritans. A fitting topic was this, and especially appropriate, as the first in your series of anniversary addresses. Out of what men see, comes evermore what they do. We look in vain for achievement, where there is no discernment. So it is written, "Where there is no vision the people perish." Both discernment and achievement are the issue of *character*, and they both react upon character. That is the resultant of all moral forces, the condensation and crystallization, the fountain and the sum of all human excellence. We make, then, some little advance in the course of thought, or at all events call you to a new stand-point, when

we announce as the theme of the present occasion, **THE PURITAN CHARACTER.** We shall present it as growing out of certain great principles, partially apprehended at first, but in process of time more fully eclaircised ; principles aided, both as to their development and their moulding influence, by the force of circumstances — the outward, as ever happens, co-working with the inward. We shall take into view not only its nascent state, in the early struggles with the throne and the hierarchy, nor even its more advanced and yet imperfect stage, when it sought a refuge in the western world, but its mature manifestation also in the settled aspects and habitudes of New England life. As nothing mundane is quite faultless, so here we may take note both of defects and excrescences. And as human nature is essentially one, and moral excellence in its aptitudes cosmopolitan, we may not forget that the true Puritan spirit has had a lodgment in many other than Puritan bosoms. It wrought mightily in Germany. It animated the exiled Hugonots. It had a home in the valleys of Piedmont. Even to the Romish communion, as the lives of Savonarola and others like-minded bear witness, it has not been utterly a stranger. We claim for the nonconformists of England no monopoly of goodness. We utter no unseemly words of bigotry or uncharitableness. Yet we are constrained to hold, not only that the type of character we set forth is one of the noblest the world has ever seen, but that the Puritans themselves are its best exempli-

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fication. If we speak freely and boldly, it will be remembered that this is no less a British than a New England privilege. Something will be pardoned to filial feeling, to patriotism, and to the occasion. That saying will be borne in mind, moreover, that God sifted three kingdoms to find seed for the new world. Our British auditors especially will remember, that whatever commendations of New England we utter, are to the praise also of the Fatherland. For not only had the excellences we celebrate their root there, they live there still,—already among its noblest and fairest treasures, and destined clearly to a still ampler growth.

First among the distinguishing attributes of Puritan character, we name *individuality*. We name it first, because in the scope we give it, it is most fundamental. It has its origin in the depths of the moral nature—in the profoundest and most unalterable religious convictions. It is radicated in the richest and deepest soil of Puritan history. It is involved in the clear, vivid sense of personal responsibility to the Judge of all. It is wrapped up in the right of private judgment. When the priest is the soul's conscience-keeper, and the particular worshipper is the mere appanage of an overshadowing hierarchy, there can, of course, be little of true and ennobling individualism. The loftiest faculties of humanity held in duress, stifled and well nigh crushed out of it, and its course downward, by consequence, toward a miserable

chattelism, what likelihood, nay what possibility, of any proper personal development? There is nothing left to develop. But the moment the great system of spiritual brokerage is set aside, as by Luther and his compeers,—the moment the soul stands erect before God, in its proper individual sonship,—praying for itself, through the one sufficient Mediator,—answering for itself, and so judging for itself,—then does it stand erect also before its fellow-men—not in religious matters only, but in all others. Spiritual freedom secured, civil freedom follows, as a thing of course. The whole individual being is exalted, and its sphere enlarged. With self-government come self-reliance, independence of opinion, and that free unfolding of individual character, according to its idiosyncracies, without which there is no possibility of the highest general advancement.

Such is the outline of what may be called the Puritan development. Of the correctness of our representation as to the connection of political with religious liberty—the *vital* connection, not the merely accidental or mechanical—let all history bear witness. Let English history especially testify. When Magna Charta was granted at Runnymede, it was not, be it remembered, with the favor of Rome. Rome sided not with the intrepid barons, but with reluctant and faithless John. Nay, so far as lay in her power, she soon wrested from its place that corner-stone of British liberty. By Pope Innocent III, Magna Charta was formally ab-



rogated ; and its principles were fully carried out only as Puritanism leavened the nation. Wickliffe, it is true, fitly styled "the Morning Star of the Reformation," was so far favored by king and court, that though papal bulls called for his blood, he died peacefully in his bed. It was not till the reign of Henry VI, that by order of the Council of Constance, his bones were publicly burned, and the ashes thrown into the stream that flows near the church at Lutterworth. He took the king's part, it must be remembered, however, in regard to certain onerous exactions of the Papacy. The full scope of his teachings, besides, was not, at that time, generally perceived—not even, it may be said, by Wickliffe himself. Only the faint dawn then brightened the hill-tops. In the lapse of time, the hostile bearing of his principles on all absolutism, became apparent. It was seen also, as Thomas Fuller has so quaintly said, that as the stream into which his ashes were cast took them "into the Avon, Avon into the Severn, Severn into the narrow seas—they into the main ocean," so those ashes became "the emblems of his doctrine \* \* \* dispersed over all the world." Then did all absolutism arouse itself to the battle. Laws were enacted from reign to reign against the hated Lollards. Royal proclamations were issued. Persecutions were set on foot. The tribunals of justice were subsidized. The reading of the Bible, that great fountain of Puritan thought and argument, was prohibited. In Henry VIII, the two

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despotisms, civil and ecclesiastical, were formally united, each giving strength and intensity to the other. Hunted liberty had indeed a breathing time under the youthful Edward. But the archers made ready their bows again, and for a more terrible onset, as Mary ascended the throne. Though Elizabeth was Protestant in name, she showed no favor to the nonconformists. She claimed the most absolute supremacy in matters of religion; and to crush all who questioned it, established the Court of High Commission. Yet she acted not in this with reference to religion alone; she had her eye also on her civil supremacy. It was in view of this, probably, that the Duke of Cumberland replied, when she asked his opinion of the two martyrs, Barrowe and Greenwood, that he judged them the servants of God, but "dangerous to the state." It was in the heart of Elizabeth to say with the French monarch, "I am the State." Matters pertaining to it were all at the disposal of her sovereign will. Not even parliaments might touch them. "Still less," says Hume, "were they to meddle with the Church." Least of all was the individual worshipper to judge for himself. It might lead, and it probably would, to judgments in other directions. Clearly was this likelihood seen by that vaunting professor of kingcraft, James I. "My Lords," said he to the Bishops, "I may thank *you* that these Puritans plead for my supremacy; for if once you are out, and they are in place, I know what would become of my supremacy—for *no bishop, no*

*king.*" Such were the sympathies between despotism in the State and despotism in the Church. And so it happened commonly, that as religious liberty was abridged, the spirit of civil tyranny became more rampant; or as the rights of the individual conscience were secured, the prerogatives of the Crown were happily curtailed. Well may Hume say, as notwithstanding all his prejudices he does, "The precious spark of liberty was kindled and was preserved *by the Puritans alone*;" and it is "to this sect, \* \* that *the English owe the whole freedom of their Constitution.*"

The element of character thus potent in English history, lost nothing of its force as borne across the sea. With a new field, affording new opportunities and incentives, it had a new and larger manifestation. It gave shape to the civil institutions, the grand pattern whereof Puritan hands had constructed in the cabin of the Mayflower. It discarded the ancient maxim, the individual for the State, and replaced it by that other,—liable, indeed, to great abuse, but yet full of all wisdom and benignity,—the State for the individual. It asserted the rights of the personal conscience; not, indeed, we are free to say, without occasional faltering and inconsistency. There has been something of misapprehension and exaggeration on this point; the age and the circumstances, perhaps, have been too little considered. Yet, after all, we cannot but acknowledge, with reverent regret, that our Pilgrim Fathers did in some instances infringe their

own principles. This is only saying, that though great men, they were but men. As the Puritan spirit, however, accomplished its full informing work, the law of toleration gained unbroken dominancy; and a high individualism marks now, it must be admitted, all the forms and outgoings of the New England life.

The genuine Yankee has a great horror of spiritual despotism in all its modifications. He respects the clergyman, but he will not blindly follow him. He will even talk over the sermon after meeting, and catch the minister tripping if he can. As he may think for himself about divine things, you may be sure he will make free with human. He has an opinion about everything, and he hesitates not to utter it. He is trained to do this, with a training begotten of what it nurtures. The deliberations of the school district and the town meeting, the debates of the lyceum, the various political discussions, the exercise of the elective franchise, with the broad range of judgment which it calls for, all give scope to the individualism of his character. There is a wide reach to this proclivity. It enters not merely into practical matters, but into the highest spheres of metaphysical speculation. Between those opposite poles of philosophy, nominalism and realism, you need be in no doubt, exceptional cases apart, as to which he will choose. Unless, indeed, as is most likely, he seeks a golden mean between the two. Downright realism, to borrow a Yankee phrase, "stands but a poor

chance" in New England. The elder Edwards did, indeed, ingraft it, to some extent, on the great banyan tree of his theology; but it has never been thought to grow well. It has been deemed an excrescence by most of his successors, and they have been diligently striving to prune it away. You seek in vain to get into the brain of a thorough-going New Englander, the idea of a species, as an actual entity, apart from the individuals. With his sharp logic, he will "whittle" away such a theory till it ends in nothingness. There is, it must be admitted, a liability to excess in this direction. The individualizing habit needs to be watched and guarded, in relation as well to its theoretic as its practical tendencies. We welcome, in this view, that dynamic method which, in modern thinking generally, is taking the place of the atomic and the mechanical, and which is making all science more vital and organic. While it runs occasionally into a haziness and dreaminess, less to be tolerated than the baldest nominalism, it will exert, on the whole, a happy restraining and modifying influence. It will not annul—it will only, we trust, render more effective—that characteristic of New England which, after all proper abatements, must be deemed one of the chief elements both of her excellence and her power.

The value of this trait may further appear as we pass to that natural offshoot of it, *originality*. The more of a mere vassal one is, in whatever sense, the more he loses himself in the mass, the less

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likely is he to be fertile in invention. His habit is, to think others thoughts, and walk in ways which they prescribe. Not trusting his own judgment, it of course falls into hebetude. Hardly at liberty to adopt new things, why should he seek for them? But with self-consciousness, self-assertion, and self-reliance, comes a new vigor of imagination, and a new boldness of research. Thinking for himself, and thinking freely, he is likely to encounter new thoughts—of which never did free spirit fail. And if they be good, as well as new, why should he reject them? Why should not *he* make progress as well as others? Seeking no monopoly in discovery, he allows none. He bows to no intellectual autocracy. He has no superstitious reverence for the past. His hope of the future enlarges, rather, with his enlarged conceptions of that humanity for which its treasures are to be unfolded.

To just this original cast of mind did all the Puritan history tend. What a pioneer was Wickliffe, in a large domain of thought! Not more adventurous was he who, a century afterwards, made his way over unknown waters to this western world. Not stranger were his theories to the doctors of Salamanca, than to the great mass of men the principles which the father of Puritanism set forth. No Luther had then arisen to cast up in the desert a highway for the Lord. It was an untrodden path which he took, over rough places, and through tangled thickets of error. Easy is it for us to apprehend truths, so amply vindicated and

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tested as to commend general acceptance. The most timid, drivelling copyist can talk at large now of the rights of conscience, and the principles of civil liberty. It was quite another thing to reverse the judgment of centuries; to take a stand against councils and universities; to question dogmas which had come to be regarded almost as first truths; to oppose an authority which, by the allowance of the whole Christian world, sat "as God in the temple of God." This Wickliffe did, and this to some extent did the Puritans of succeeding ages. The light, it is true, gradually brightened. Precedents were multiplied. The line of nonconformist argument had less and less of novelty about it. Yet down even to the reign of James I, usage, prescription, old dogmas and creeds, old petrified conventionalities, were largely against them. Such a lingering was there of the old absolutistic habit of thought, even in the days of the Long Parliament, that for the sake of the impression upon the people, the very forces to be employed against the king were levied in his name. And when Charles was led, at last, to the scaffold—not here to discuss the justice or the expediency of the deed—it indicated, at least, in its relations to the general sentiment of the world, a bold originality of thought, of which history affords hardly a parallel. "The truth is," Carlyle justly remarks, "no modern writer can conceive the then atrocity, ferocity, unspeakability of this fact. First, after long reading in the old dead pamphlets, does one see the

magnitude of it. To be equalled, nay to be preferred, think some, in point of horror, to the crucifixion of Christ. Alas, in these irreverent times of ours, if all the kings of Europe were to be cut in pieces at one swoop, and flung in heaps in St. Margaret's church-yard on the same day, the emotion would, in strict arithmetical truth, be small in comparison!"

With such historic antecedents and associations, it is no marvel that originality so characterizes the land of the Pilgrims. It marks all her institutions. It permeates all individual and social life. In the line of inventions and discoveries pertaining to the material interests of men—to take the lowest view—while the nation at large holds honorable competition with the old world, the records of the Patent Office give an unquestionable primacy to New England. Her brain has wrought more largely in this direction than that of all the country besides. For whatever notable novelty—from a razor-strop to a spinning-jenny—from a cooking stove to an electric telegraph—from a box of curiously compounded pills, that will almost set a fractured limb, to a subtile fluid that will steep the senses in a more than Morphean forgetfulness—you look no where so hopefully as to a scheming Yankee.

Nor is the originality of New England less manifest in higher relations. We see it in her literature. It is, indeed, a human, nay, an Anglo-Saxon literature; and it must, therefore, have something in common with that of the Fatherland. Nor do



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we deny that here and there, on this side of the water as well as the other, the vice of plagiarism may be detected. What we affirm is, that as in what we *are*, so in what we *write*, there are marked peculiarities. The idiosyncrasy is manifest. The fruit bears the flavor of the soil. Foregoing, as we needs must, all analytic or inductive proof, we may sustain ourselves here by the very testimony of our defamers. Certain of our English and Scotch critics are perpetually demolishing, though with a singular unconsciousness of it, their own fabrics of misrepresentation. In the very same breath in which they find fault with us for having no national literature, for servilely copying transatlantic models, they are out upon us incontinently for our villanous Americanisms. And not merely for those peculiarities of expression, many of which are but the natural outgrowth of our peculiar national life ; they berate us for that very life itself, as it is breathed through our writings. "Why will you so imitate?" say they. "Why not give expression to your own proper character?" And they wind up by very consistently adding, "Why are you so vehement, and intensive, and exaggerative, and explosive? Why not keep quiet as we do? Why not write like Oliver Goldsmith or the Spectator? Why not speak like Sir Robert Peel or my Lord Chatham?"

No where has the view we now take ampler confirmation than in the domain of various philosophy, and the sphere of divinity. The whole history of

New England has been a commentary on that noble saying of John Robinson, "I am very confident that the Lord has more truth and light to break forth out of his holy word." She has been even subject to reproach in this regard. A land of wild and pestiferous *isms* has she been denominated; and in no quarter have heresy-hunters had a wider range. It should be remembered, however, that in the fertile soil weeds grow as well as the golden grain—that only absolute sterility is sure of exemption from them. It is only stagnant intellect that escapes all perversion, save only that greatest of perversions, stagnancy itself. Individuality and originality, such as mark New England, may sometimes go astray. Now and then we may see ruin in their wake. Yet, on the whole, what good have they achieved, not only in shedding light on many an old and familiar path of science, but in opening to the world many a new one.

We pass here naturally to a third element of Puritan character, *intelligence*. This, as preceding remarks have indicated, is intimately connected with those already considered. With an unfettered conscience, a sense of individual responsibility, an immediate and elevating communion of the soul with the Infinite One, such as hierarchical formalism forbids; with a deepened impression, by consequence, of the magnitude of all personal interests, and an independent and scrutinizing originality; it is impossible that ignorance should be tolerated. In such mental habitudes, the desire to

know is involved ; the effort will follow, of course, and the means will be secured. Those habitudes, indeed, are born of intelligence. They sustain to it the relation both of cause and effect. It is only by clear thought that the Puritan principles can be duly appreciated. Whatever association they may at any time have had with intellectual darkness, has been not natural, but abnormal. As the flower leans toward the sunlight, so has it ever been with them ; and the brighter the radiance around them, the more have they thriven. In all ages of their progress, their leading advocates have been among the mightiest thinkers of the times and of the race, and the most zealous friends of popular enlightenment. It is in no strain of undeserved or fulsome panegyric that a modern writer has pronounced "*the Puritans* a title of intellectual as well as moral nobility."

Time would fail us to speak at large of Wickliffe, who, besides his other acquirements, was an adept in scholastic divinity, especially in the Aristotelian philosophy ; of Tyndale, the translator, who was able to vanquish in controversy even the erudite Sir Thomas More ; of the eloquent Hooper, and the learned Whitehead ; of Sampson, President of Magdalen College, Oxford ; of Humphreys, described by Neale as "an able linguist, and a deeper divine ;" of John Knox, of whom it has been said, "his tongue was a match for Mary's sceptre ;" of Miles Coverdale, and Cartwright, and Fox the martyrologist, and other men of high men-

tal culture, who, in the three centuries preceding the reign of James I, were variously imbued with the Puritan spirit. Nor need we pause to show how as, from reign to reign, acts of uniformity were passed, and enforced by the Star Chamber and Court of High Commission, the well-educated ministers were largely driven from their pulpits; and in many instances, to use the just language of the times, "men of no gifts," "shiftless men," "men altogether ignorant," "serving men, and the basest of all sorts," were put in their places. Passing to the seventeenth century, what a constellation of illustrious names breaks upon us! A wonderful age was that in all that related to mental achievement. It may well be doubted if, in this regard, the world owes an equal debt to any other. The Puritan mind had, indeed, been in training for ages. It had been tasked by earnest discussion on the most momentous themes. It was no holiday affair, that grappling with questions on which hung all the dearest interests of life, nay often life itself. No faculty could slumber, or fail to do its utmost, when to our fathers, as well as to Luther, the point in debate seemed the "*articulus stantis vel cadentis*." More than their own lives to them, as the dungeon and the stake bore witness, were the welfare of the church and the glory of God. And so intellect wrought on, mighty events as well as mighty debates stirring it to its lowest depths. Nor was its action confined to a single sphere; the movement was universal. In all the domain of thought, "there were giants in those days."

What noble old Puritan forms throng upon the mind's eye as we speak. There were the parliamentary orators,—“King Pym,” as he was called, for the power wherewith he touched all the cords of the human heart, and Hampden and Hollis, his sagacious and far-seeing compeers. There was John Locke, discoursing not only in bland phrase of toleration, but in a serene, philosophic spirit, of the mysteries of the human soul. There was “one Milton,” singing not only of “Paradise Lost” and “Paradise Regained,” but of

“ Slaughtered saints, whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold.”

There was Owen, “the Prince of Divines;” and Bates, the “silver-tongued;” and Howe, with his majesty and depth; and Flavel, with his tenderness and practical insight; and Baxter, with his pungency and fervor; and Charnocke, with his vigor and discrimination; and Matthew Henry, with his quaintness and scripturalness. There was the dreamer of Bedford jail, too, whose word-panorama of the “Pilgrim's Progress” shall attract the gaze of the nations till time shall be no more.

As the Puritan character took root in New England, it had the same element of high intelligence. Of the four hundred volumes in the library of Elder Brewster, sixty-four were in Latin, and others in Greek and Hebrew. Governors Bradford and Winslow, though they had not received a University education, were men of no mean acquire-

ments. The ministers of the new settlements were generally well trained for their work ; some of them were eminent for learning. John Cotton was able to converse in Hebrew. Norton had been a scholar of the highest rank at Cambridge. Dunster was a great proficient in Oriental literature ; and Chauncey had been Professor of Hebrew and Lecturer in Greek at his alma mater. It is not strange that some of the first thoughts of such men should be about education. Not only was Harvard College founded, but in due time other institutions of learning. The Common School system was established. A free State, they were convinced, could hardly exist without free schools. Knowledge and self-government must ever go together—so knowledge and the right of private judgment. Self-government else were self-destruction, and a free conscience an unchained maniac. To their wisdom and painstaking in this direction, and to the popular sentiment which has come down from them, New England is mainly indebted, both for her present excellent system of educational appliances, and for the general intelligence of her people. Nor is she alone a debtor. What she has thus received, she has, in the true Puritan spirit, been ever diffusing. A great boon has she conferred, in giving to the rest of the country the idea and the pattern of the common school. She has held out, besides, her own elevated type of the College and the University. The nation has been stirred by it. As field after field has been reached by the advancing tide of

population, not only has the example of the founders of Harvard, of Yale, and of Dartmouth been influential, so that the higher seminaries of learning have been early established,—those seminaries, at first, of necessity, rude and imperfect, have been continually drawn upward by the magnetic force of the Eastern models.

The schools of New England, moreover, have benefited other sections of the country, through the individuals they have trained. These have been going forth in every direction, impelled by the spirit of enterprise and of thrift, many of them to occupy chairs of instruction, more to exert in other ways—in the pulpit, at the bar, in the medical profession, in mercantile life, and even in industrial pursuits—a quickening influence on the common mind. Much has been said at the East, and said justly, of the loss resulting from such emigration. Yet is there gain in it—yea, exceeding glory. New England is working thus in her proper vocation. Though she were stationary in an economical view, or even “minished and brought low,” yet might we deem her, in this higher respect, lifted up and enlarged. Just here is the hiding of her power. Be it that other parts of the great national organism have more of growth in the grosser sense—of the broadening of the chest, and the outstretching of the limbs, the hardening of bone, and the strengthening of muscle and sinew. The growth here is of the cerebral tissues. It is the glory of New England to be as the brain of the nation—to

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send forth to all the extremities those vital forces without which the hugest bulk is but

“*Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum.*”

For the highest manifestation of the intelligence of a people or a class, we look to their literature. Young as the Western Republic is, it is fast gaining, in this regard, an honorable position among the nations. The time is past when it was said tauntingly, “Who reads an American book?” The time is at hand, yea, it now is, when it may be rather said, Who has not read one? And of all American literature, that of New England undoubtedly has the pre-eminence. We say this in no mean spirit of envy or detraction, but with a readiness to render due justice to all other parts of the land. In the whole range of school-books,—to begin at the beginning,—from the tiny primer, to the quarto dictionary—from the first lessons in arithmetic, to the highest department of mathematical science—from the rudiments of geography, to the fullest exposition thereof—from the alphabet of chemistry, up to the structure of the universe,—from the barest outlines of mental and moral science, to the complete system of “*Empirical Psychology*,”—the sons of the Puritans have had almost a monopoly. Hardly less eminent have they been in the more general walks of literature. How large their contributions to theological science. What lustrous names cluster in our memory as we speak—Edwards, of world-wide fame; Hopkins, and Bel-



lamy and Dwight, those master spirits of their day ; the great logician of Franklin ; the ardent exegete of Andover, fitly called the father of hermeneutical science in the country, and his clear-minded colleague in the chair of systematic divinity—not to speak of others hardly less worthy of note. Meagre comparatively would be the catalogue of American authors in theology, were the men of New England omitted. By our Puritan thinkers, the loftiest heights of philosophy have been scaled—by some who sleep with their fathers, and by others who are yet among us. In the historical line, wherein philosophy teaches by example, we can point, among the living, to our Motley, our Prescott, and our Bancroft, all an honor to their sphere, the last scarcely inferior to his most brilliant European contemporary. In the department of legal lore, we have had our Danes, our Pickerings, and our Stories ; in the medical line, our Olivers, our Jacksons, and our Warrens. What prominence has been awarded to the periodical literature of the East, especially in its weightier issues, I need not say. Its *Bibliotheca*, its *North American*, and its characteristic *New Englander*, will at once occur to you. With all our gravity and utilitarianism, even our prose has been adorned by some of the most curious fabrics of the imagination. Female fingers have been busy in this direction, as of our Hale, and Child, and Stephens, and Sedgwick, and Stowe. Artists of the other sex have given us “ Mosses from an old Manse,” and strange “ *Scarlet*

Letters," and fantastic "Snow Images," and queer old "Houses with Seven Gables." They have presented "Life" to us as in a kaleidoscope, giving us now its "Reveries," and now its "Dreams," and now its strangely woven "Threads," and its most fascinating "Romance." Great is the power of eloquence, both as it falls from the lips of the living and as it is echoed along the track of ages. New England has not been unmindful of this. Largely did she avail herself of it in the olden time. Nor has her recent history been a stranger to its triumphs. The men of this generation have looked on a living trio, the like of which, it may be doubted if the world can furnish. Need I name him, the sleeper at Marshfield, the clear shining of whose logic was as the fullness of noontide; or him of Cambridge, the light of whose genius comes gently and winningly over us, like that day-dawn which he has so exquisitely painted; or him at the head of the Boston bar, the outburst of whose vivid imagination is as the rainbow for mingled beauty, and as the meteor for startling strangeness—yea as a shower of shooting stars, or a whole hemisphere suddenly illumined by auroral splendors? We forget not the sweet influence of poesy, of great potency whether in ballads or in epics. We listen gratefully and exultingly to the "Psalms of Life," and the unique forest melodies, which Longfellow has poured forth; to the grave and "soul-like" tones of Dana's harp; to Whittier's hymns of lofty cheer for honest toil, and his clarion notes of rebuke for

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the proud oppressor. At the bidding of Pierpont, the "Airs of Palestine" float around us, and the Mayflower rides again upon the wintry sea. As the most musical voices of birds, the strains of Stoddard soothe us. The merry laugh of Saxe rings out, clear and stirring as the tinkling sleigh-bells of his own northern home. And he of the healing art shows that his wit is keener than his scalpel, and that rhymed mirth, at least, "doeth good like a medicine." With bright gems of feeling, of life, and of faith, Willis charms us. Lowell, while he decks virtue in her fairest robes, daguerreotypes grimly before us drivelling cant and brazen hypocrisy. The measures of a Sigourney and of a Gould find a welcome at our ears; those of the one simple and sweet as the hum of bees, or the murmur of crystal brooks,—those of the other more finely wrought, like the strains that fall from the lute or the guitar. With manlier notes, Lunt and Burleigh stir us to noble deeds. We muse with Bryant on the banks of his own "Green River," the peace of the scene passing into our hearts. Or in more solemn mood, as befits pilgrims and strangers upon earth, we listen to the funereal tones of his "Thanatopsis."

To the traits of character already named, *conscientiousness* must be added. It is indeed involved, as we have seen, in a true individuality, but it deserves, for its importance, a brief separate notice. By all who estimate aright man's moral relations, it must be deemed the noblest of all qualities. It

is the chief link between the visible and the invisible, the clearest impress of the divine upon our being. In the old Puritan life it was ever prominent. We have already had occasion variously to glance at its workings. We need not say at large, what careful ponderings of duty it undertook, what bold and uncompromising decisions it reached, what a lofty superiority to human opinion it manifested, what burdens it bore, or what sacrifices it made. I need not remind you what moral transformations it wrought, how dissoluteness of manners gave place to strictness and sobriety, and a high spiritual tone, manifest not only in the more elevated walks of life, and in the leading minds, but in the humbler and less cultivated classes. That all was gold that glittered, that there was nothing of cant and hypocrisy, especially at the period when Puritanism held the reins of civil power, we do not affirm. In the most precious ore from the mine we look for something of alloy. Ever, in the history of our world, when the sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord, Satan comes also among them. Yet Macaulay tells us, that the very army of Cromwell, renowned as it was for valor, was chiefly distinguished "by the austere morality and the fear of God which pervaded all ranks." "It is acknowledged by the most zealous Royalists," he says, "that in that singular camp, no oath was heard, no drunkenness or gambling was seen; and that, during the long dominion of the soldiery, the property of the peaceable citizen, and

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the honor of woman were held sacred." To what general elevation of Puritan character do facts like these bear witness.

That in some directions the scruples of our forefathers were pressed too far, the profoundest reverence for their virtues does not require us to deny. I can hardly sympathize with them, to give a single example, in their dislike of that simple and beautiful token of plighted faith, the marriage ring. Yet we must bear in mind the age in which they lived, and the special reason they had for a godly jealousy as touching ill-meaning ceremonies. It was not the mere form that troubled them—so they often testify. It was the import of that form—its associations and suggestions—its conventional and symbolical power over men. Who does not know that little things may in this way become great? Who needs to be told that the rite or the usage which in some circumstances is perfectly harmless, may in others be properly discarded as of evil influence? Not he, surely, who has heard the noble Paul exclaim, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth."

There is one point, at least, in which we think the descendants of the Pilgrims are in advance of their fathers;—in their estimate, we mean, of the esthetic element. That was a just analysis of the old philosopher, which resolved all excellence into the true, the beautiful, and the good. And quite as just was that judgment of his which gave to the

good the pre-eminence. So—with all self-denial, even unto martyrdom—did the old Puritans. Their error was not in subordinating, but in undervaluing the beautiful. There is a true Christian use of it, as accordant with our spiritual aptitudes, as with our emotional and imaginative nature. It has been well termed the shadow of virtue. In all virtue it inheres. We read often in the Scriptures of the “beauty of holiness.” And as God has touched all creation with it, he designed it, doubtless, not only as itself an innocent source of enjoyment, but as a help to the soul in its loftier aspirations. It has a typical significancy. According to that law of correspondence, by which all inferior good has a certain analogy to something higher, we have in all natural loveliness an emblem of spiritual. It has, besides, an assimilating influence. Its tendency, as it passes before us, is to conform us unto itself.

“The attentive mind,  
By this harmonious action on its powers,  
Becomes itself harmonious; wont so oft  
In outward things to meditate the charm  
Of sacred order, soon she seeks at home  
To find a kindred order, to exert  
Within herself this elegance of love,  
This fair inspired delight; her tempered powers  
Refine at length, and every passion wears  
A chaster, milder, more attractive mien.”

This was but imperfectly understood by the early Puritans. They restrained unduly, besides, what may be called the play-element of our nature. How it struggled for vent may be seen,

we think, even in Cromwell, in those occasional and sometimes inept pleasantries, which Hume and others have recorded. Yet here, again, we must take due account of the times. We must remember against what reigning frivolity our forefathers had to contend, and what is the natural and almost irresistible issue of a great reaction. Who shall stay the pendulum just midway in the arc of its vibration? They erred, certainly, on the safe side. The sternest stoicism is better than unbridled epicureanism. If we must choose between the two, give us the unbending gravity of the most rigid old Roundhead—give us even the scruples which most provoked the merriment of the Cavaliers—rather than that laxness of conscience which has come to question whether there be any “higher law,” and that effeminacy and self-indulgence which leaves to religion often but an empty name.

We complete our outline as we add, that the Puritan character is marked by *strength*. That is but to condense into a single statement all that has been said. From the traits already named, nothing else could be inferred. They are all elements of strength,—the self-reliant individuality that can stand alone against a world—the originality that ventures fearlessly into untried paths—the intelligence that walks ever in the sunlight—the conscientiousness which arms the soul as with a divine energy. To a like result has the whole Puritan history tended. What might of patience, of perseverance, of self-sacrifice, of courage, of achieve-

ment, did the long struggle in England evince. And how was strength increased by it. Well might the sojourners at Leyden say, "It is not with us as with other men, whom small things can discourage." Else their feet had never trodden the soil of Holland; or they had lingered there; or they had turned away from the forbidding shores of New England, to seek a resting-place in a more genial clime. In the *Lusiad* of Camoens, as Vasco de Gama, on his voyage of discovery, reaches the Cape of Good Hope, which never navigator had doubled before, the genius of the hitherto unknown ocean is represented as rising out of the sea, amid tempest and thunder—a huge phantom towering to the clouds—and with terrific looks and tones warning away the bold adventurers. What phantoms were those which warned away our Pilgrim Fathers! The storm-king met them on the coast. The famine-fiend was there. The demon of war menaced them. The angel of death spread his dark wing over their dwellings. In three months half their number were sleeping beneath the snows of winter. Yet neither of the stalwart men nor of the gentle women who survived, did a single heart falter. When in the spring the *Mayflower* returned to England, not one of them took passage in her. They had found what they sought, "a faith's pure shrine," and "freedom to worship God." They still clung to the hope with which they sailed from Delft-Haven, "of propagating and advancing the Gospel of the



kingdom of Christ." Why should they turn back? Burdens and sorrows were upon them, and perils around them. But with a strength born of faith, and both tried and enhanced by all the past, they were equal to the great emergency. Even while their tears were bedewing the graves of the newly fallen,

"They shook the depths of the desert's gloom  
With their hymns of lofty cheer."

Well was it, both for them and their descendants, that the glowing descriptions of Sir Walter Raleigh lured them not to the milder skies and fairer landscape of Guiana. New England was just the region for a new development of the Puritan character. It was designed by the Great Maker, not as a couch of ignoble sloth, or a garden of sensuous delights, but as a field of bracing toil, a physical and moral battle field. No relaxing tropical heats are upon it. Stern wintry blasts have still their mission among its hills. The soil, to great extent, is hard and rough, unmarked by alluvial fertility, and yielding its harvests only to the hand of the diligent. Even now, if men gain a livelihood there, it must be by that sweat of the brow, which, while it exhausts, by one of nature's paradoxes, increases strength; and by those exercises of keen sagacity, clear judgment, and rigid self-control, so germane to all true manliness and effectiveness. It was a noble laboratory of character, to which the pilgrim voyagers were led, a matchless stand-point from which to leaven and to mould the whole broad empire of freedom.

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As we rejoice to-day in our birth-right, Brethren of the New England Society, let us diligently copy the virtues which have made it so precious. Nay, let us give to our thoughts and our hopes a still wider range. With the progress of science and art, and the consequent facilities for intercommunication, the world is fast tending to unity. An amalgam of character looms up in the future, in which the Puritan element shall, indeed, be prominent, but which shall be enriched and graced by whatever is beautiful and noble in our diversified humanity. We may say of it, in the language of the Apocalypse concerning the heavenly city, "they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it." How naturally does this high ideal connect itself with the novel but grateful associations and reciprocities of the present occasion. Let us keep it in view ever, even amid the dearest ancestral memories, and the strongest emotions of a laudable patriotism. So shall we not only recognize in every man a brother, but shall best apprehend and advance the true brotherhood of the nations. So shall we hasten the coming of that day, when

"Springs the crowning race of human kind."