

ORATION,

ON THE

HISTORY OF THE FIRST DISCOVERY AND SETTLEMENT OF THE NEW WORLD,

WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY, ETC.,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE CINCINNATI LITERARY SOCIETY,

AT ITS

FOURTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION,

BY

JAMES F. CONOVER, ESQ.

AN ODE,

DELIVERED ON THE SAME OCCASION,

BY

MR. THOMAS H. SHREVE.

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LITERARY SOCIETY.

Hall of the Cincinnati Literary Society,

January 16, 1835.

At a regular meeting of the society, held this evening, the following resolutions were offered, and unanimously adopted.

Resolved, That the thanks of this society be presented to J. F. Conover, esq., and Mr. T. H. Shreve, for the oration and poem delivered this evening; and that a copy of each be requested for publication.

Resolved, That a committee of three be appointed to carry into effect the above resolution.

Whereupon Messieurs Frazer, Wheeler and Semmes, were appointed said committee; who, in obedience to the above resolution, addressed letters to Messieurs Conover and Shreve, who politely consented to comply with the request of the society.

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ORATION.

MR. PRESIDENT, AND GENTLEMEN:

The blow by which Hercules despatched the Næmean lion, was not more fatal to its victim, than the glimmering torch bursting upon the enraptured vision of Columbus on the night of the eleventh of October 1492, was destructive of the welfare of the credulous Aborigines of the New World, then first unfolded* to the delighted wonder of that intrepid mariner and his brave associates. Little did those Aborigines imagine, in that night of unsuspecting security—then most probably enwrapped on the cold bosom of their native land in slumber as profound as the darkness of the forests that surrounded them—that *that* torch, (listlessly kindled, by one more wakeful than the rest,) was the hapless beacon which lighted the way, to the speedy injury, consuming wretchedness, and final extinction of their race.

When we specially contemplate the vast results of that seemingly trifling event, our imagination runs riot on the boundless field which lies open before us, and we are irresistibly reminded of an analagous, though infinitely more important and sublime event, the kindling of that other flame, when the Omnipotent fiat went forth in those words of fire, "let there be light!" Both events discovered to man a world; yet with this wide distinction, the one taught him his weakness, the other his power. And though the blaze of that poor Indian's torch, must, to the remnant of that miserable race which still lingers amongst us, seem to have been fringed with blood and streaming with tears, yet by the white man, it has ever been hailed as the glorious flame which directed him to a new world, to wealth, happiness and renown.

On the succeeding morn, the sun rose in his usual splendor, and poured upon the scene his beneficent rays—for the white man had yet been guiltless of wrong to the Indian. Columbus, then, arrayed in gorgeous robes, and brandishing in his hand a naked sword, accompanied by his attendants, proceed-

*Robertson's America, p. 55.—Irving's Columbus, vol. 1, p. 100, new edition.

ed, under the roll of the drum, and in martial pomp, to effect a landing.* On reaching the shore, they prostrated themselves upon the earth in humble thankfulness for their success. The untutored Indians, who had there congregated in great numbers, beheld this scene with astonishment and timidity, and supposing their new visitors to be children of the sun, knelt in adoration. No manifestations of hostility were displayed by the red men, but, on the contrary, with signs and gestures they presently endeavored to indicate a cordial welcome to the mysterious strangers.† Columbus then exhibited to them tokens of pacific intentions, and presented them with glass beads and other trifling gew-gaws, with which they were delighted; and soon the two parties mingled with each other in the confidence of social friendship. Such was the first interview between the people of the two hemispheres; and would to God, that the white man, from that hour to the present, could bury the injuries of the Indian in eternal forgetfulness!

Before I proceed farther with the remarks, which, on this occasion, I intend offering to your consideration, it may be well to disclose to you the topics on which it is my purpose chiefly to dwell. It is not my design to confine my observations exclusively to any particular subject, but I shall attempt to sketch some of the most important and interesting incidents in the history of the discovery and primitive settlement of the New World, and especially of the Mississippi Valley. In doing this I shall aim to illustrate that whatever of injury the white man has received from the Indian, has been the result of the cruel aggressions of the former upon the latter in the early intercourse of the two races; and that, therefore, the responsibility of all the horrid butcheries of each other, which have been so often witnessed on this continent, rests upon the conscience of the white man. I shall also, as I progress, remark upon the character and motives of some of the leading personages identified with that history, and shall intersperse the whole with such general observations relative to the rise, character and prospects of the Mississippi Valley, as may seem to me useful and interesting. As mutual improvement and instruction are among the paramount objects of our society, an examination of the foregoing topics, appears to me, to come within the legitimate scope of the task you have done me the honor to confide to my performance.

We have seen that the first interview between the white

*Rob. Am., p. 55.

†Ib. 56. Irving's Columbus, vol. 1., p. 103, new ed.

and red men, on this Hemisphere, was pacific and friendly, and especially so on the part of the latter. In that interview however, Columbus did every thing in his power to inspire the natives of the New World with sentiments of awe for his character, and a sense of their own inferiority. Nor did he hesitate to overreach their ignorance by giving them in exchange for their gems and precious metals, useless toys and valueless baubles. Observing that most of his new acquaintances wore small plates of gold pendant from their nostrils, Columbus eagerly interrogated them as to the place whence they were acquired. They directed his attention to the south, where, by signs, they gave him to understand, gold abounded. This intelligence fired his imagination with the hope of soon reaching a region of exceeding opulence, and thither he immediately resolved to direct his course. Ere he departed he gave to the place of his landing the name of "San Salvador,* now known as one of the Lucayo or Bahama islands, and proclaimed himself admiral and viceroy. Taking with him seven of the deluded natives, he set sail for his anticipated Eldorado, and in his progress south, saw a number of islands, at several of which he touched. But finding them to correspond in all their general characteristics with his first landing place, and their inhabitants possessing the same friendly dispositions with those of San Salvador, and alike pointing to the south in answer to all his ardent inquiries for gold, his stay at each of them was of short duration. Pursuing his golden delusion, his ship, through the carelessness of his helmsman, struck on a rock, in the night, near the island of St. Thomas.†

"Her giant bulk the dread concussion feels,
 "And quivering with the wound, in torment reels.
 "At length asunder torn, her frame divides,
 "And crushing, spreads in ruin o'er the tides."‡

The sea being smooth, the crew were safely rescued by the boats of the *Nigna*, one of the accompanying vessels. In this season of calamity, the natives of the island, instead of taking advantage of the misfortunes of the Spaniards, speedily repaired to their assistance, and lamented their distress with "tears of sincere condolence."|| Through the instrumentality of this benevolent interference, every thing of value was saved from the wreck.

*Rob. Amer., p. 56. Irving's Columbus, vol. 1., p. 138, new ed. †Ib. p. 59. ‡Falconer's Shipwreck. ||Rob. Amer., p. 59.

Columbus now determined to bend his course homeward; and leaving upon the island thirty-eight of his crew, and taking with him several of the natives from the different islands he had discovered, he, on the 16th of January, 1493, unfolded his canvass to the breeze, on his return voyage.

“The natives, while the ship departs the land,
 “Ashore with admiration gazing stand;
 “Majestically slow, before the breeze,
 “In silent pomp she marches on the seas.”*

Here, on the billowy wave, let me leave the undaunted mariner, (to whom unquestionably belongs the transcendent glory of being the first discoverer of the New World,†) while I turn your attention, for a few moments, to the first discovery of this continent, and a few of the earliest adventurers to the American coast.

The glorious adventure of Columbus is well known to have been conducted under the auspices, and sustained by the coffers of the Spanish monarchy. Not so the brilliant enterprise of the first discoverers of the American continent. For this we are indebted to the laudable energy, and private resources of a single family—that of John Cabot, a Venitian merchant, residing at Bristol, England, at which place we may date the nativity of his celebrated son Sebastian.‡

Under a patent from Henry VII, dated in March, 1496, and containing many highly exceptionable restrictions and exactions, but conferring power upon the patentees to take possession, as subjects of the English crown, of any islands or continents they might discover, before unknown to christian people, John and Sebastian Cabot, in a vessel fitted out at their own expense, joyously embarked on a voyage for the West.

“O’er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
 “Their thoughts as boundless and their souls as free,
 “Far as the breeze can bear the billow’s foam,
 “Survey their empire and behold their home.”‡

Attempts have been made to snatch from the father the honor of having accompanied the expedition; but his claim is established by the most satisfactory authority.§

The son was a youth of transcendent powers, possessing a rare combination of every qualification that seemed requisite

*Falconer’s Shipwreck. †Bancroft’s U. S., p. 7. ‡Bancroft’s U. S. p. 8 and 12. Commencement of Byron’s Corsair, slightly altered. §Bancroft’s U. S., p. 10.

for a bold and successful navigator. His unostentatious benevolence and captivating courtesy, appeared to be equaled only by his unwonted valor and gigantic wisdom. To such a mind, the dazzling achievement of Columbus could not have been revealed in vain. The path of renown lay open before him, and it required not the spear of Ithuriel to direct him to its goal.

On the 24th of June 1497, therefore, he and his father found themselves on the coast of Labrador, whose barren cliffs and dismal glens, gave them ample assurance that a new continent lay, in its rude majesty, before them. It was the continent of North America; and it had never before been visited by a white man!

Welcomed here by nothing but polar bears, Esquimaux Indians, and sterile promontories, the intrepid adventurers could perceive no inducements for a protracted stay, and they consequently, without delay, set sail for the purpose of bearing the glad tidings of their discovery to their friends, kindred and king. The noble ship glided gaily on her homeward career, and

“Where'er she moved, the vassal waves were seen,
“To yield obsequious, and confess their queen.”*

Thus the banners of Spain first floated over the islands of the new hemisphere, and those of England over the cliffs of the new continent.

The discovery of the Cabots was effected about fourteen months anterior to the memorable era, when Columbus, on his third voyage, hailed the main land—and nearly two years before Americus Vespucci sailed west of the Canaries.† Is it not, therefore, truly remarkable, that this latter personage should have had the courage and address to identify his name with that of the New World, when the immortality undoubtedly belongs to either of the others in preference, but especially to Columbus?

The success of these voyages having spread with the rapidity of the lightning's flash throughout the whole of Europe, most of the christian nations became ambitious to perform something on the field of discovery that would redound to their power and glory. With this view, the king of Portugal took pride and pleasure in patronizing an expedition to the New World, which, in the year 1500, embarked under the command of Gaspar Cortereal. Having reached the shores

*Falconer's Shipwreck.

†Bancroft's United States, page 11

of North America, Cortereal ranged the coast for a distance of six or seven hundred miles, making strict scrutiny of the country and its inhabitants. He attained a point as far north as the fiftieth degree. A portion of the country along which he passed, challenged his admiration for its luxuriant display of fresh verdure and flowering forests. Previous to his departure, with a heart alike rapacious of avarice and indifferent to cruelty and crime, he freighted his vessel with fifty of the innocent natives, whom, on his return he basely sold to slavery. His avaricious propensities being highly gratified by this profitable traffic in human flesh, he soon determined upon another voyage. From this expedition, however, he never returned. Retributive justice seemed to have overtaken him at the very culmination of his crime. During a combat with the natives, whom he was attempting to kidnap, he fell a victim to their just vengeance. And this, "perhaps, is the only permanent trace of Portuguese adventure within the limits of North America."[†]

Exaggerated reports of the beauty and fertility of the American soil, and of the rich mineral treasures contained within its bosom, having now become widely disseminated, numerous adventurers, from the different European states, entered the field of competition for the wealth of the new continent.

The French were among those who essayed with alacrity upon this new theater of glory. So early as the year 1505, the fisheries of Newfoundland were known to the rugged mariners of Brittany and Normandy;[‡] and in 1506, a map of the gulf of St. Lawrence, was drawn by John Denys, a native of Rouen. Two years afterwards Thomas Aubert, from Dieppe, made an expedition to the country now denominated Lower Canada, and, on his return to France, carried with him a number of the Aborigines.^{||} A few years subsequently[§] to this period, a celebrated Florentine, John Varrazani, under the patronage of Francis first, likewise embarked for the West. He landed on the coast of North Carolina, near the present site of Wilmington. As he approached the shore, his eyes dilated with gladness at the beauty and richness of its groves: Shrubs and flowers redolent with exquisite odors, yielded their perfumes in grateful profusion: Flora seemed to be abroad with all her blandishments! Hummingbirds, in their gaudiest plumage, buzzed near his vessel's prow, and amid the trees, at a distance, was heard the cooing of the

[•]Ban. U. S. p. 16. [†]Darby's U. S. p. 17. [‡]Ban. U. S., p. 16. ^{||}Dar. U. S., p. 17. [§]In 1524,

forest-dove. These fired his imagination with delightful anticipations of a new Eden, and seemed to afford him felicitous tokens of a cordial welcome. The natives, in great numbers, pressed forward to meet him with friendly salutations—and a young sailor, who had been nearly drowned, was resuscitated by their courtesy and kindness.* They had not yet learned to fear and hate the strangers; and therefore met them with their native hospitality. Yet these voyagers, ere they departed, with fiendish rapacity, robbed one of the Indian mothers of her child, and attempted to kidnap a young woman whose simplicity and beauty specially attracted their cupidity.

On another occasion, worthy of particular notice, the hospitality of the Aborigines was requited by a kindred, but yet more scandalous outrage. An expedition under the command of a distinguished Spaniard, Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon, was fitted out by a company of seven, for the purpose of procuring slaves for their plantations at St. Domingo. Vasquez directed his vessels to the southern border of South Carolina, where the natives had not yet learned to dread the chicanery and merciless avarice of the Europeans. Their home and firesides had not yet been remorselessly invaded. When they sunk to repose at night, they did so in the full confidence of rising with the morning's dawn to pursue their accustomed avocations. When they went forth with the sun, his setting rays, they did not doubt, would find them securely surrounded by their family and friends. If they fled as the ships of the strangers approached, "it was rather from timid wonder, than from a sense of peril."† The Spaniards, however, had scarcely landed, ere the natives manifested towards them a "liberal hospitality." By courteous attentions, gifts of tinsel, and other devices, the strangers soon succeeded in ingratiating themselves into the confidence of the savages. This accomplished, the Indians were alluringly invited to visit the ships, which they cheerfully did in multitudes. Soon as the decks were filled, the anchors were weighed, and, with demoniac exultation, the Spaniards unfurled their sails, and bent their course to St. Domingo. Alas! what consternation and wretchedness were now concomitants of the scene. With hideous lamentations, the natives implored their liberty. "Husbands were torn from their wives and children from their parents," and all the endearing ligaments that bind kindred and friends together, were, by this cruel stratagem, relentlessly sundered. "Thus," says an excellent historian, "the seeds of

*Bancroft's U. S., p. 18. †In 1520. ‡Bancroft's U. S., p. 42.

war were lavishly scattered, where peace only had prevailed, and enmity was spread through the regions where friendship had been cherished."* The justice of Heaven would not suffer this deed of wickedness to go unavenged. One of the returning ships foundered at sea, and with it the guiltless and the guilty sunk to a common grave; many of the captives in the other, sickened and died.† But what freeman would not prefer death to a master's chains?

I shall now pass to the first discovery and settlement of the Mississippi Valley. This was effected by Juan Ponce de Leon,‡ an aged Spaniard, who in his youth had distinguished himself in the military service of Spain: and in his riper years, had the good fortune to be one of the prominent companions of Columbus, in his second voyage. For his gallantry in the wars of Hispaniola, he had been rewarded with the government of one of the provinces of that island. Subsequently he was appointed governor of the island of Porto Rico. Here he amassed great wealth, but his severity and oppressions rendered him detestable to the people; and his commission being thought to conflict with the claims of the family of Columbus, policy and justice seemed to require his removal.¶ He was accordingly displaced. His ambitious spirit did not permit this disappointment to drive him into retirement; nor had age yet quenched his indomitable love for dangerous adventures. He had heard of a tradition, prevalent among the natives of Porto Rico, that in one of the Lucayo islands,§ there was a fountain of such transcendent virtue as to renew the youth and renovate the vigor of every person who should bathe in its stream, or drink of its salutary waters.¶ This tradition, to us so idle and visionary, seems to have been fully accredited in Spain by the people of every rank and condition. His mind had also become tinctured with the mania for gold, which so generally prevailed among the Spaniards, whose enthusiastic imaginations had pictured it to lie in profusion upon the surface of the soil, and which, though undiscovered, they vainly believed was nearly within their grasp. Imbued with these fascinating hallucinations, Ponce de Leon longed to embark in pursuit of those invaluable treasures; and fitting out, at his own expense, a squadron of three ships, he set sail from Porto Rico for his fairy-land. Ranging from island to island without finding any trace

* Bancroft's U. S., p. 42. †Ib. ‡Rob. Amer. p. 101.—Flint's Geog., p. 159.—Darby's U. S., p. 28.—Irving's Companions of Columbus, p. 315. ¶Bancroft's U. S., p. 36. §The island of Bimini. ¶Rob. Am. p. 101. Bancroft's U. S. p. 37. Irving's Companions of Columbus, page 312.

of his rejuvenating fountain, he directed his course to the south-west, and, on easter-Sunday, March 27, 1512, discovered land hitherto unknown. The Spaniards call this day *Pascua Florida*, in honor of which, and from the gay and magnificent appearance of the forests, which were then profusely decorated with delicate blossoms and ambrosial flowers, the veteran commander gave to the new territory the name of Florida.* The Indian name was Cautio.† He attempted to disembark at several places, but the natives had learned that the track of the white man was stained with blood and desolation, and they, therefore, opposed with violence, the landing of the strangers. At length, however, Ponce de Leon succeeded in making a lodgment‡ near the present site of St. Augustine, and took possession of the territory in the name of Spain. Here he remained for several weeks for the purposes of observation, and establishing a settlement. But finding the Indians decidedly hostile, and despairing, with his slender force, of accomplishing all he had anticipated, he returned to Porto Rico, leaving one of his most intrepid followers to pursue the search for his imaginative treasures.

The Spanish monarch was highly gratified at the opening of this new avenue for the commerce of his subjects, and conferred on Ponce de Leon the government of Florida, in requital for its discovery. The dignity was granted, however, upon condition that Ponce should colonize the country over which he was appointed to preside. Unavoidable circumstances creating a considerable delay, it was not until the year 1521 that he accomplished his return to the Floridian coast. Disembarking from his two ships for the purpose of taking possession of his new province, and of selecting a site for a colony, his company were assailed, by the natives, with invincible fury, and were driven back to their ships with great slaughter and precipitation. Ponce de Leon, himself, was severely wounded by an arrow, and with difficulty was enabled to reach the island of Cuba to die.|| Thus ended the ambitious discoverer of the Mississippi Valley. How illusory and vain were his dreams of perpetual youth, and immeasurable wealth!

During the interval between the two voyages of Ponce de Leon, several other adventurers succeeded in descrying land and touching at different points in the regions of the Gulf

*Bob. Amer., p. 101. Ban. U. S., p. 37. Darby's U. S., p. 28. Flint's Geography, p. 159, new ed. †Irving's voyages and discoveries of Com. of Columbus, page 316. ‡On April 2, 1512. ||Irving's Voy. and Dis. of Com. of Columbus, p. 321. Ban. U. S. p. 39.

of Florida and Mexico; but without any important results. And in the year 1513, the momentous discovery of that portion of the Southern or Pacific ocean, which forms the gulf of St. Michael, was accomplished by the celebrated Balboa, whose remarkable perseverance, bravery and toil, in crossing the isthmus of Darien, in furtherance of that discovery, are well known, and have never failed to excite universal commendation.*

But let us turn to the adventure of Pamphilo de Narvaez, whose expedition to Florida,† with permission of the Spanish monarch to invade that territory, forms the next interesting page in the history of the Mississippi Valley. This adventurer, though not remarkable for either virtue or talents, is somewhat distinguished for the ludicrous result of his attempt to make a prisoner of the renowned Cortes. Sent for that especial purpose by the governor of Cuba, Narvaez himself, fell an easy prey to the conqueror of Mexico. When brought before the man he had boastfully promised to capture, he remarked to him, "esteem it great good fortune that you have taken me captive." Cortes replied with cutting indifference, "It is the least of the things I have done in Mexico."‡

The present expedition of Narvaez was as replete with disappointment as his essay against Cortes. Its disasters render it alike interesting and memorable. He landed with his party near the bay of Apalachee, and in eager search for the precious metals, immediately struck into the interior. Wandering through the forests, without any definite knowledge where they were or whither they were going, they blindly followed the directions of the natives, who, with sagacious caution, in order to rid themselves of danger, adroitly represented the distant territory as abounding in gold. Thither the Spaniards bent their course, with hearts gladdened at the prospect of accumulating amazing riches. Alas! how transitory the delightful anticipation! And, O, God! how melancholy thy inscrutable dispensation! Soon the gnawings of famine and the ravages of pestilence thinned their ranks; the want of concert with the ships, and the errors of judgment in the commander, contributed to melt away their now emaciated numbers; and the hostility of the natives found no difficulty in accelerating the work of desolation. After rambling about in forlorn wretchedness for seven or eight hundred miles, the miserable remnant of this unfortunate expedi-

*Rob. America, p. 103. Irving's Com. of Columbus, p. 184. †In 1526. ‡Bancroft's U. S., p. 44.

tion finally succeeded in again reaching the coast near the bay of Pensacola, then called Ochus. "Here they manufactured rude boats, in which none but desperate men would have embarked; and Narvaez, and most of his remaining companions, after having passed nearly six months in Florida, perished in a storm, near the mouth of the Mississippi."* Of three hundred robust men, who composed the expedition, only four or five succeeded in returning to their homes; and these, with romantic exaggerations published an account of their adventures, in which they perfidiously persisted in representing the country they had visited, as the richest and most beautiful in the world.

To their tales of marvel, no one, perhaps, gave a more fatal and credulous ear, than Ferdinand de Soto, a native of Xeres. This individual had been a prominent and successful actor in the conquest of Peru; and had, in that achievement, not only the good fortune of becoming the favorite of Pizarro, but of acquiring, by his discretion and valor, an enviable portion of affluence and renown. On his return to Spain from his Peruvian triumphs, his reception was such as would indicate the progress of an imperial conqueror. Loaded with riches and honors, he was the favorite of the great, the learned and the gay, and all classes bowed to him in humble deference.

In addition to the universal belief in the existence of great mineral wealth in Florida, there was a very general impression among the Spaniards, that in the interior of that region, there lay concealed gorgeous palaces and extensive cities, outstripping in magnificence and opulence, any of which they had before heard.† These romantic visions were not too chimerical for the credulity of the chivalrous Soto; but, on the contrary, yielding to them a ready acquiescence, his imagination became kindled with such schemes of glory, as he confidently believed, would elevate his fame much beyond its already dazzling altitude. Not even the aspirations of Alexander could have been more extravagant than were those of our hero. Thrones, kingdoms, and masses of gold, his feverish fancy pictured to be awaiting him in the New World, as a portion of his destiny.

Flushed with these delusive conceptions, he repaired to Charles V, from whom he solicited permission to conquer Florida at his own expense.

At this early period, the whole of the Atlantic coast, in

*Bancroft's U. S., page 45. †Bancroft's U. S. page 47.

America, was known only by the names of Newfoundland, and Florida; and the entire south-western portion of it was designated by the latter term, in which was included the interior territory to an indefinite extent.* Kentucky and Ohio, therefore, at that time, formed a part of Florida.

The request of so distinguished a commander as Soto, was readily granted by the Spanish monarch, and the government of the island of Cuba, with absolute powers over the immense country before referred to, was accordingly conceded to his charge.† So brilliant were the prospects of the enterprise, that thousands flocked to the new governor, anxiously desiring permission to enroll themselves under his banner, as volunteers. Among these were men of high distinction, noble birth, and rich inheritance. From the multitude who presented themselves, Soto selected for his companions, six hundred in the prime of manhood, and full of enthusiastic ardor for the adventure.

The fleet set sail amid the joyous acclamations of the cheerful party, and as the land faded in the distance, the eyes of Soto were intently turned towards his happy home. Though his imagination glowed with pleasurable anticipations, yet, at this juncture, he could not repress an unwelcome sigh, which seemed to escape from his bosom with prophetic sadness, and whisper in his ear something of evil. A slight cloud, for an instant, threw a shade of gloom over his countenance.

“ ‘Farewell! my Spain, a long farewell,’ he cried,
 “ ‘Perhaps I may revisit thee no more,
 “ ‘But die, as many an exiled heart hath died,
 “ ‘Of its own thirst to see again thy shore.’ ” †

But quickly rousing himself from this uncongenial fancy, he again participated in the general gaiety. Propitious gales soon wafted his ships to Cuba. Here he was welcomed with luxurious festivals and protracted rejoicings.

At length, every thing being in readiness, the expedition weighed anchor, and in a fortnight|| arrived in safety at the destined harbor.§ Transported with joy, the whole party speedily disembarked, and stood on the shores of Florida. As if in welcome of their landing, the redolent breath of the wild flowers seemed to lavish upon the air its delicious perfume, and they inhaled its sweetness in grateful ecstasies. The horses, of which there were nearly three hundred, appeared

*Darby's U.S., p. 17, note, and p. 28. †Ban. U. S. p. 48. ‡Don Juan. ||In May, 1539. §Spiritu Santo.

to feel a new impulse, and "champed the bit" as if impatient for the march to the interior.

Confident of success, Soto, in imitation of Cortes, would not retain his ships, but despatched them for Cuba, lest they should invite inducements to retreat.

"And now," (in the language of an elegant historian,) "began the nomadic march of the adventurers; a numerous body of horsemen, besides infantry, completely armed; a force exceeding in numbers and equipments, the famous expeditions against the empires of Mexico and Peru. Every thing was provided that experience in former invasions, and the cruelty of avarice could suggest; chains for captives, and the instruments of a forge; arms of all kinds then in use, and bloodhounds, as auxiliaries against the feeble natives; ample stores of food, and as a last resort a drove of hogs, which would soon swarm in the favoring climate, where the forests and the Indian maize furnished abundant sustenance. It was a roving expedition of gallant freebooters in quest of fortune. It was a romantic stroll of men, whom avarice rendered ferocious, through unexplored regions, over unknown paths; wherever rumor might point to the residence of some chieftain with more than Peruvian wealth, or the ill-interpreted signs of ignorant natives might seem to promise a harvest of gold. Religious zeal was also united with avarice; there were not only cavalry and foot-soldiers, with all that belongs to warlike array; twelve priests, besides other ecclesiastics, accompanied the expedition. Florida was to become catholic, during the scenes of robbery and carnage that were to follow. Ornaments, such as are used at the service of mass, were carefully provided; every festival was to be kept; every religious practice to be observed. As the troop marched through the wilderness, each solemn procession which the usages of the church enjoined was scrupulously instituted."*

The bay of Spiritu Santo laved the shore where the adventurers first landed; and their wandering, during the first season, brought them east of the Flint river, and in proximity with the bay of Appalachee. The Indians proving continually hostile, the march of the Spaniards was full of toil and dangers. Purposely led astray by their guides, they were frequently obstructed by impenetrable forests, and involved in perilous morasses. The hostile Indians who were made prisoners, were sometimes put to death, and at others enslaved. The latter were led in chains, with iron collars about

*Bancroft's U.S., pages 50 and 51.

their necks, and were doomed to the service of grinding maize and carrying the baggage.* From the continual discouragements with which the adventurers met, most of them became dispirited, and urged Soto to return; but he resolutely refused doing so, until he should see, (as he remarked,) the poverty of the country with his own eyes. While roving from place to place they discovered the harbor of Pensacola, where they found opportunity to send a message to Cuba, directing that supplies should be forwarded to them, at that place, in the succeeding year.

Early in the ensuing spring, (that of 1540,) the adventurers renewed their march, attended by an Indian guide, who professed to be able to lead them to a country governed by a woman, where gold existed in profusion. In search of this ignis fatuus, they ardently followed the footsteps of their deceptive guide towards the north-east. Passing the Alatamaha, they continued their journey to the Ogeechee, and on their march had occasion to admire the fertile valleys of that region. Being disappointed in not finding the object of their pursuit, and being informed by other Indians that no such country existed, within their knowledge, the governor ordered the treacherous guide to be burnt.

They now bent their course to the north, to the neighborhood of the Cherokees, where indeed gold is now found, but was not then known. They wandered for several months in that region, and then taking a southwardly direction, passed through the rich valleys, known at present as belonging to Alabama. They stopped at Tuscaloosa for a short period, and then proceeded to a large Indian town, then and now known by the name of Mobile. The Spaniards attempted to take possession of the place, but were resisted by the inhabitants. A ferocious battle ensued, and the Spaniards, by the aid of their cavalry, succeeded in vanquishing their adversaries. The town was burnt, by order of the Governor, and with it 2,500 Indians are reported to have been destroyed. Eighteen only of the Europeans were killed, and one hundred and fifty wounded. Twelve of the horses were slain and a great number badly injured. The whole of the baggage of the Spaniards, being in the town at the time of the conflagration, was consumed. In the course of this campaign, the Spaniards, occasionally, suffered severely from the want of salt, meat, and other necessary provisions. Superadded to this, their numbers were continually diminishing by sickness and the hostile aggressions of the natives.

*Bancroft's United States, page 52.

Ships from Cuba had now arrived at Pensacola, but Soto was too proud to acknowledge his disasters; and therefore declined sending any intelligence of himself, until he should succeed in the purposes of the expedition. He had yet made no important discoveries—his coffers were more empty of the precious metals than when he left Spain; the conflagration at Mobile had destroyed all the curiosities he had collected in the New World, and the number of his companions had already been reduced to five hundred. These tidings were not such as he was ambitious of conveying to his friends, and he therefore prohibited their promulgation.

With indomitable perseverance, he resolved to pursue the phantoms after which he sighed. For another month he continued his wanderings, when he arrived at Chicaca, a village of the Chickasaws, situated in the upper part of the state of Mississippi, and probably on the western bank of the Yazoo. There he determined to remain for the winter, which proved to be one of severity and discontent. The poverty of the Indians, and their miserable wigwams, furnished but scanty accommodations for the imperious Spaniards, who were yet constrained to forego the luxuries of the opulent cities and splendid palaces, on which their imaginations had, in the outset, so fondly feasted.

Soon as the blossoms of spring began to evolve their fragrance, Soto, as was his custom, demanded of the chieftain of the tribe, two hundred Indians to carry the burdens of his expedition. To this demand the Chickasaws observed a sullen silence—till in the solitude of the succeeding night, like the patriots of Athens and of Moscow, the flames of their own dwellings, kindled with their own faggots, by their own hands, gave assurance of a horrible response. Sheets of fire burst from the roofs in every direction, which, with the appalling yells and fatal arrows of the Indians, gave melancholy tokens of a scene of woe. The Spaniards fought, and the horses fled in wild confusion. Had the Chickasaws known their power, and pursued their terrible onset with “calm bravery, they might have gained an easy and entire victory.”* But being unacquainted with weapons of steel, and dreading the destructive qualities of gunpowder, they trembled at their partial success, and retired from the contest. Eleven of the Spaniards, most of their clothing, and many of their horses, perished in the flames. Reduced now to nakedness and want, many of the adventurers began to lament in bitter anguish.

*Bancroft's United States, page 57.

their wretched condition. But their disasters, "far from diminishing the boldness of the governor, served only to confirm his obstinacy by wounding his pride."* He who had made such glowing promises of immeasurable booty and renown, could not listen to the humiliating idea of returning as a "defeated fugitive," struggling with poverty, and other distressing calamities.

The search, therefore, was again renewed for some wealthy region. Bending their course in a westwardly direction, they, for several days, toiled through dense forests and execrable marshes, when they arrived at some Indian settlements near the banks of the Mississippi. For centuries had the waters of that mighty river, unseen by any white man, been sending their impetuous waves to mingle with the blue Atlantic. The Indian canoe was the only barque with which the sinuous stream had yet become acquainted. No steamboats were then, as now, in rapid succession, passing between its wild and romantic banks, in felicitous illustration of the gratifying reality, that though monument after monument, erected to the genius of Fulton, might pass away, yet another and another, through all coming time, would speedily supply the place of the one that had departed. Instead of the hissing steam, the yell of the savage, and the scream of the panther were then the most familiar sounds which echoed from its shores. But now a new era had arrived; and a majestic white man, for the first time, stood gazing on its fretted bosom, in wonder from its bank. That man was Soto, the intrepid leader of the adventures! *His* eyes, among all those of Europeans, had been preserved through many a bloody and perilous battle, for the vast distinction of first beholding the aorta of the new continent. Looking attentively upon its turbid waves, their russet hue suggested to his imagination, an apparent consanguinity with the dusky natives, who roamed upon its borders.

Soto had been guided to the Mississippi by his Indian captives, who led him to a point, from which the natives usually crossed, and which is believed to be at the lowest Chickasaw bluff, near the thirty-fourth parallel of latitude.† Here the exploring party were compelled to remain a month, for the purpose of preparing boats capable of transporting them across the turbulent current—the canoes of the Indians being too frail to bear the burthen of cavalry. Every thing being at length prepared, Soto and his companions were launched

*Bancroft's United States, page 57. †Ib. p. 58.

upon the bosom of the Mississippi, and Europeans, for the first time, were thus borne to its western shore.*

The inflexible Governor had heard that there was great mineral wealth in the neighborhood of the Kaskaskias Indians. This tribe then occupied the south-western province of Missouri; and thither he immediately determined to direct his steps. Traversing, for nearly a month, with invincible fortitude and perseverance, through brambles, forests, and horrible morasses, he at length arrived at a place, near the Mississippi, called Pacaha, the northernmost extent of his toilsome march. A part of the country over which he passed, abounded in wild fruit, of various descriptions, which afforded ample luxuries to his party, as well as the natives. At Pacaha, Soto and his companions remained forty days, in fruitless search for his golden mountain. Wherever he went, the realities of his march differed so widely from the pictures which his imagination had drawn to his fanciful anticipations, that we are perpetually reminded of the deceptive apples of Sodom, so exquisitely fascinating to the eye, but at the touch, falling to ashes. While at Pacaha, "fish were taken," remarks an accurate writer,† "such as are now found in the fresh waters of that region; one of them, the spade-fish, the strangest and most whimsical production of the muddy streams of the West, so rare, that even now, it is hardly to be found in any museum, is accurately described by the best historian of the expedition."

August had now arrived, and no important object had yet been effected. Soto, therefore, without farther loss of time, directed his course to the west, and penetrated the forests in that direction, about two hundred miles beyond the Mississippi, to the highlands of White river. Being disappointed here also, in finding splendid cities, and banks of gold, he led his companions to the south. Passing through numerous Indian towns, we next "find them among the Tunicas, near the hot springs and saline tributaries of the Washita."‡ Thence they directed their course through the country of the Kappaws, to the town of Autiamque, on the Washita river, where they remained through the winter. The natives of the whole of this region were found to be less hostile, and more advanced towards a state of civilization, than any the governor had before met. They were decidedly more agricultural in their pursuits, than devoted to the chase. Notwithstanding their friendly disposition, the Spaniards did not hesitate to treat

*In May, 1541. †Ban. U. S. page 59. Flint's Geog. p. 85. new ed. ‡Ban. U. S. p. 60.

them with rigorous contumely, and shameless cruelty, or press them as slaves, into their service. So detestable were their cruelties, that on slight suspicions, the hands of the Indians, for purposes of intimidation, were cut off in great numbers; and for trivial offences, their bodies were occasionally devoted to the flames. The governor, nevertheless, is said to have possessed a heart by no means delighting in cruelty. His conduct, therefore, can only be accounted for, from the fact, that the happiness and life of an Indian were estimated as things of the least possible importance.

In the spring of 1542, Soto once more renewed his march, and determined to trace the Washita, till it should mingle its waters with the sea. But he soon became bewildered among the numerous bayous and marshes which pervade the borders of the Red river and its tributaries. He at length found himself near the Mississippi, in the then populous country of Nlco. Pursuing his travel, he subsequently reached the point where the Red river discharges itself into the swelling torrents of the gigantic Mississippi. Here he inquired of the natives, the distance to the sea, but none was able to make a satisfactory response. In answer to his interrogatories, "the lower banks of the river were represented to be, an uninhabited waste." Incredulous to this "disheartening tale," he ordered eight of his horsemen to descend the banks and examine the country. Obstructed by bayous, canebrakes, and thick forests, they were eight days in progressing thirty miles. Soto heard this intelligence with perceptible emotion; his bosom heaved with anxiety, and a deep gloom pervaded his countenance. Disappointments and distresses appeared to thicken around him in burthensome clusters. He was environed by enemies, injured, subtle, and implacable. A tribe near Natchez had "sent him a defiance," and he no longer possessed the ability to "punish their temerity."* His men and horses were dying around him. Repeated disasters had rebuked his vaulting ambition, and his stubborn pride seemed yielding to a "wasting melancholy."

"A change came o'er the spirit of his dream."† In this extremity he thought of home—of the fascinating wife of his bosom, (whom he had left at Cuba,) and of the gay and happy friends, in whose cheerful circle he had so often moved, the favorite and the pride. In that moment of agony, he must have felt, that, to him, in the New World, there was "no place like home."

*Bancroft's U. S., page 63. †Byron.

“Dear native land, how do the good and wise,
 “Thy happy clime and countless blessings prize!”*

“Under a conflict of emotions” his “health sunk rapidly,” and the grave seemed to open before him. A fever ensued, and the meager comforts that surrounded him, contributed nothing to check its devastating progress. Impressed with a deep conviction that his death was at hand, he submitted to the entreaties of his companions, and “named a successor.”†

On the following day he yielded to his inexorable disease, that life, which had been so eventful, ambitious and renowned. His wretched end, peculiarly attracted the attention of the world by its remarkable contrast with his early prosperity and meridian greatness. His companions loved him, and they wept over their loss in bitter sorrow. Fearing his death might be discovered by the natives, his friends wrapped his body in a mantle, and in the stillness of midnight, silently and sadly sunk it in the middle of the stream; and there his companions left him

“Alone with his glory.”‡

“The discoverer of the Mississippi slept beneath its waters!”||
 What an affecting lesson, is thus afforded us, of the inscrutable dispensations of Divinity! And how forcibly are we reminded of the weakness and mutability of man!

With how much justice and with what admirable applicability, could Soto have exclaimed, on the eve of his death, in the touching language of the unfortunate Wolsey:

“Farewell, a long farewell to all my greatness!
 “This is the state of man: To day he puts forth
 “The tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms,
 “And bears his blushing honors thick upon him:
 “The third day comes a frost, a killing frost;
 “And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
 “His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,
 “And then he falls, as I do. I have ventur’d
 “Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders
 “This many summers in a sea of glory;
 “But far beyond my depth: my high blown pride
 “At length broke under me; and now has left me,
 “Weary and old with service, to the mercy
 “Of a rude stream, that *must forever hide me.*”§

Deprived now of the skill and energy of Soto, the adventurers resolved to proceed to New Spain with all possible expedition. Moscoso, the new governor, was especially anxious to

*Menand. †Bancroft's U. S. page 63. ‡Burial of Sir John Moore. ||Ban. U. S., p. 63.
 §King Henry VIII.

reach a place where he might participate in the comforts of his distant countrymen, and once more, in security and quiet, enjoy the luxury of an entire night's repose. After consultation, it was deemed too perilous to proceed by water, in such rude boats as they might construct, and they therefore determined to "seek a path to Mexico through the forests."* A faint hope still lingered among them, that their march might yet reveal some splendid cities, or opulent territories, which might ultimately reward them for all their toils and sufferings. Once more they penetrated the wilderness, nor relaxed their progress until they arrived in the country of the Natchitoches. Here they found the Red river so swollen, that its passage was impracticable. Chagrined and mortified, they wandered up and down, through the forests, they knew not whither, being purposely led astray by their Indian guides. Becoming completely disheartened at the prospect, they formed the desperate resolution of retracing their steps to the Mississippi, and of following its current to the ocean. Surmounting every obstacle, they at length arrived once more upon the banks of that noble stream, at a point called Minoya. With the energies of desperate men, they immediately commenced the structure of seven boats, which they humbly trusted, would float them to the haven they so longingly desired. Every scrap of iron they could gather was now brought into requisition. Even the fetters of the poor Indian captives were unriveted, and by a small forge (the Spaniards had constructed,) were moulded into the more befitting instruments of nails and spikes for the boats. Meanwhile a destructive epidemic arose, and the christians and enslaved savages, in great numbers, fell martyrs to its desolation. Famine, too, began to press upon them, and their horses were made the necessary sacrifice. The neighboring tribes were plundered of every vestige of food, and were reduced to such extremities as to be constrained to implore from their plunderers "a few kernels of their own maize." Amidst all these difficulties and distresses, the fragile barques of the Spaniards were at last completed; and an opportune freshet aided in launching them in safety in their destined element. In seventeen days, the remnant of the adventurers, (now reduced to three hundred men,) succeeded in reaching the gulf of Mexico; and pursuing their hazardous navigation coastwise, for more than fifty days, with invincible difficulties, they at length entered the river Panuco.† in their miserable shallops, grateful to God, for having thus

* Bancroft's U. S., p. 65. † Ib. p. 66.

delivered them from their protracted toils, sufferings and perils.

Such were the circumstances under which the New World, and the southern portion of the Mississippi Valley, first became known to the Europeans. The intrepid adventurers, who vainly imagined the latter region to be studded with populous cities, and mines of gold, became, in the pursuit of their flattering visions, so familiar with grief and disaster, that they could look unmoved on misery, and smile at desolation. But though we are indebted to them for having led the way to the glorious inheritance, of which *we* are the happy participants, yet we cannot be unmindful of the horrid calamities, which have flowed from their avaricious aggressions and inexcusable cruelties. We have seen that until the Indians felt the lash of the white man, and learned in blood and tears, that their rights and liberty were made subservient to his cupidity and barbarity, they were his friends, and every where received him with a "liberal hospitality." Cajoled, flattered and seduced, they were made the slavish dupes of the white man's caprice and treachery. Remorselessly torn from friends, kindred and home; tortured, plundered and contemned; deprived of country, subjugated and murdered; who can wonder that their patience became exhausted, and that their reverence and friendship changed to hatred and revenge? Had the white man always treated them with inflexible justice and unwavering kindness, think you that we should have had cause to deplore the heart-rending butcheries and massacres, which for centuries have desecrated our land, and fertilized it with the blood of our countrymen? Think you, we should have witnessed a free, bold, and numerous people, in the occupancy of their own soil, dwindled to a miserable remnant, driven from the graves of their kindred, besotted with vice and wasting with penury? Think you, we should have had to mourn over the faithless vows of our progenitors, or witnessed the violated promises of our contemporaries? Think you, we should have been called upon to behold the escutcheon of our national honor stained by a perfidious observance of our federal compacts? No, no, my friends! We should then have been spared this melancholy humiliation! And for those scenes of wretchedness and war,

———"Peace tinkling on the shepherd's bell,
"And singing with the reapers,"*

would have been the delightful and consoling substitute!

Be assured that the wrongs of the Indian are registered in

*Bird's Gladiator.

heaven, and that their miserable condition is the work of the white man! Pity, folded in her sable mantle, weeps over their wretchedness; and Justice, with vengeance in her eye, points at us a bloody finger! Would to God, that an acceptable atonement may fall to *our* allotment, and that some means may yet be devised to rescue our *country* from reproach, and *them* from their downward career!

It was my intention, Mr. President, to have sketched, in the course of this address, several other interesting incidents in our early history, and especially to have directed your attention to the settlement and massacre of a French colony near St. Augustine; and, likewise, to the discovery, by the French, from their settlements in Canada, of the northern borders of the Mississippi Valley. But I find that the fruitful topics, on which I have descanted, have already swelled my remarks much beyond my expectations. I shall, therefore, trespass but a short time longer on your patience.

Though more than three centuries have elapsed since the Mississippi Valley was first discovered by Ponce de Leon, yet it was not until within a very few years, that it ceased to be under the entire dominion of the Aborigines. Only sixty-six years have passed since the populous state of Kentucky first began to be peopled by white men; and our own great state owes its first settlement to a period twenty years later. So recent as the year 1790, the whole Valley contained a population of only about one hundred and fifty thousand white inhabitants;* and since that period, it has increased to the enormous extent of four and a half millions—an advance so rapid, as to render it at once startling and extraordinary.

The first steamboat on the western waters, was built at Pittsburgh, so late as the year 1811; and it was not until 1816, that the practicability of navigating the Ohio by steam, was considered established. The first successful voyage, by steam, from New Orleans to Louisville, was made in 1817, in twenty-five days, by that bold and enterprising gentleman, captain Henry Shreve, whose late invaluable invention, for the purpose of removing snags from the western rivers, entitles him to the public gratitude. There are now on those waters, about five hundred steamboats; and the trip from New Orleans to Louisville, is frequently performed in nine days. Anterior to the era of steamboats; the navigation in the West was carried on by pole boats, whose average trip from New Orleans to Louisville was about *three months!* The contrast is wonderful!

These few statistical facts, in conjunction with the salubrity

* Tanner's Em. Guide, p. 54. Flint's Geog. p. 130, new ed.

of the climate, and extent and fertility of the soil, must, of themselves, suggest to every enquiring mind, the vastness of the destiny of the Mississippi Valley. With an area of one million three hundred and fifty thousand square miles, at the foregoing ratio of increase of the population, the imagination can scarcely grasp the numbers it is destined to contain. An ingenious geographer,* after careful calculation, and an accurate survey of the whole subject, estimates the population of the Valley to increase, by the year 1850, a period of only fifteen years from the present time, to nearly thirty-three millions—almost tripling the present population, of the whole United States. Ere a century shall have passed away, how astonishing may be the numbers, wealth, character and resources, of the central region we are contemplating! Who can tell what strides it may then have made in learning, military skill, and physical resources? Who can tell to what perfection it may then have arrived, in morals, science and the arts? Perhaps some dazzling character may then have arisen within its confines, whose transcendent greatness may even bedim the clustering glories of our beloved Washington! Some mighty orator, whose eloquence may leave in impenetrable shade, the vivifying sublimities of Cicero or Demosthenes! Some touching poet, whose lines may breathe a purer fire and sweeter pathos, than ever flowed from the enchanting pens of Homer or of Milton! Some resplendent genius, whose philosophy may penetrate to deeper recesses than the astute conceptions of Locke or Newton! Some bewitching muse, whose lyre may vibrate to more exquisite melody, than ever fell from the fascinating strings of Orpheus or Erato! Some accomplished artist, whose pencil may trace a more admirable perspective, or imitable shade, than the magical touches of Raphael or Corregio! Some ingenious sculptor, whose chisel may mold a more perfect form, than ever grew into being under the plastic hands of Chantry or Canova! Some chivalrous hero, whose valorous exploits may obscure the martial deeds of Cæsar or Alexander! Some magnificent temples, or colossal monuments, that may far excel the architectural achievements of all former ages! Or, possibly, *Religion*, with all her genial influences, and consoling treasures, may then have spread her ample wings over the entire Valley, and gathered within their capacious folds, the people of every age, sex and condition! Oh, how delightful would be the dominion of universal virtue! The prospect is eminently cheering; and may God grant a “consummation so devoutly to be wished.”

*Darby's U. S. p. 445.

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ODE, ON KNOWLEDGE.

NIGHT, long and deep, had been upon the earth—
And slumbering mind, unconscious of its birth,
Its destined brightness, and creations vast,
Deemed freedom but a fiction of the past.
Aloft, her banner Knowledge then displayed,
Its bright folds streaming on the sombre shade;
Her cheering voice wide o'er the darkness broke,
And man's hushed Thought to a new era woke;
The glad'ning echoes, leaping o'er each sea,
Bade him arise, and struggle, and be free!
Proud Tyranny then heard the deathless sound,
And, old in sin, sank nerveless to the ground.
Fell Superstition glanced far o'er her track,
And, as the light approached, retreated back.

Choose, while ye may, between enlightened mind
And iron fetters which most darkly bind:
To rise on high—wild—chainless—proud and free—
Or bend to Ignorance the slavish knee.
Prone to the earth let manacles be flung,
And win the freedom that from Heaven first sprung—
Which wings the spirit for its farthest flight,
And lifts the curtain from the scenes of light.
He who knows not the bliss which knowledge brings,
And hath not tasted mind's perennial springs,
Can never share the banquets which are spread
For him on whom Intelligence has shed
Her all-illuming rays—his soul has brought
No beauty forth, and darkness shrouds his thought.

List to Ambition—she, with visions bright,
Will lead you onward to the dazzling height
Where Thought, enthron'd, waves high her scepter-wand,
And myriad splendors rise at her command;
And whence Creation opes her varied store
Of endless beauty and abundant lore.

Unto her vot'ries Knowledge will dispense
 Charms brighter far than those which touch the sense.
 The changing seasons then will bring delight,
 And every change enchain the raptured sight;
 While every sound that greets the listening ear
 Will calm the spirit or the heart will cheer.
 When Spring rejoices o'er fell Winter's dearth,
 And flings her mantle o'er the naked earth—
 When Summer from her lap of plenty strews
 The land with flowers that glow in rainbow hues—
 When Autumn winds have through the forests sighed,
 The blighted foliage strewing far and wide—
 When Wint'ry snows dance lightly on the breeze,
 Or diamonds glisten on the ice-decked trees—
 'Tis living beauty—and each change of dress
 But adds new charms to Nature's loveliness.

When Knowledge on the mind of man hath shone,
 He hath a bliss which she imparts alone.
 Nature for him exhaustless treasures spreads,
 And on his soul perpetual sunlight sheds.
 In the lone watches of the silent night,
 Through azure fields he wanders with delight;
 Entranced he views the glittering array
 Of starry hosts as on they wend their way:
 Or contemplates the comet in its course
 Careering on with wild, impetuous force.
 Then fiction weaves her spirit-stirring spells,
 And wakes night's genii from their shadowed dells;
 And visions rise and fall before his sight.
 Surpassing truth in witchery and light.

Those who have dwelt on the historic page,
 In thought have lived with each preceding age.
 From Time's vast scenes, Oblivion lifts her pall,
 And nations rise, and live, and have their fall;
 Empires that swayed their scepters o'er the world,
 From giddy heights again, as erst, are hurled—
 Proud in their strength—inglorious in decay,
 Like forms in clouds, their grandeur fades away.
 At Fancy's call, the olden time transpires,
 And e'en the dead awake—earth's hoary sires
 Break from the bondage of the cheerless tomb,
 And in the shadowy distance dimly loom;
 They fling the cerements of the grave aside.

And seem to move where once they moved in pride.
 The grey-haired sages of old Greece appear,
 And strains of music charm the listening ear—
 Such as Athena heard, when wisdom woke
 The voice of Zeno, or when Plato spoke.
 Rome lights her fires upon her seven hills;
 The vast extent a flood of radiance fills;
 And, as of yore, within its blaze are seen
 All who her glory, or her shame, have been—
 The godlike heroes who achieved her fame,
 And flung a halo round the Roman name.

Knowledge, 't is said, is ever bought with tears,
 And the long labor of successive years—
 Steals from the eye its fire, the cheek its bloom,
 And leads the spirit to an early doom.
 Believe it not;—she amply will repay
 The night's lone vigil and the toil of day—
 The waning hope that dim o'er shadows gleams—
 The restless spirit and its flickering dreams:—
 And for each sigh which is from anguish wrought,
 She freely gives magnificence of thought;
 And for the toil that with long thought is twined,
 The freedom of the universe of mind!

Knowledge from youth demands no sacrifice
 Of feeling, hope, or aught which man should prize.
 When the young heart rejoices in its pride,
 And starry visions with the spirit bide—
 When hope is bright, and recks not of decay,
 But tells of life as of a summer day—
 When in true faith, at blushing beauty's shrine,
 The fond soul worships what it deems divine—
 When Fancy's fiction wins the trusting heart,
 And tears of rapture from their fountains start—
 True to herself she comes before his sight,
 And opes to mind a heaven of pure delight;
 Gives to each pleasure being more intense,
 And adds a charm to every raptured sense.

But when the eye hath lost its youthful fire,
 And the heart throbs not with its strong desire—
 When Memory waves the scepter from that throne,
 Which erst in youth Hope tenanted alone—
 When Fancy's empire has dissolved away,
 And Truth exacts obedience to her sway—

When the chill blood creeps lazily along,
And the ear heeds not Beauty's syren song—
When on the brow the long, white lock appears,
And the deep wrinkle tells of lengthened years,—
Then Knowledge cheers the weak and weary one,
And glory gives to life's departing sun.

The constant friend, who with mysterious power
Can cheat the Spoiler in his chosen hour,
Rolls from the mind the shadowings of gloom,
And tells of hope and amaranthine bloom;
And when the soul its last faint strife hath given,
Illumes its pathway to the gates of heaven.