

REMARKS
ON THE
PAST AND ITS LEGACIES
TO
AMERICAN SOCIETY.

"WESTWARD THE STAR OF EMPIRE TAKES ITS WAY."

BY J. D. NOURSE.

LOUISVILLE, KY:
MORTON & GRISWOLD.

1847.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1847, by
J. D. N O U R S E,
In the Clerk's Office of the District of Kentucky.

Morton & Griswold's Power Press.

ADVERTISEMENT.

I venture with great diffidence to lay before the public the results of the thought and reading of some years, compressed by repeated revision into the smallest possible compass. It may seem presumptuous for a young backwoodsman, who has written nothing to prepare the way for the present work, except a little romance, founded on the traditions of his native State, to enter the lists with Schlegel, Guizot, and Macaulay; but I trust my countrymen will give me a fair hearing. I am indebted not only to the writers mentioned but to a host of others, as the auctioneers say, "too tedious to mention."

Bardstown, Ky., }
Dec. 26th, 1846. }

This page in the original text is blank.

PREFATORY REMARKS.

DESIGNED TO BE READ.

IN the prosecution of my favorite study of history, I have thought that I discerned two great events, towards which the movements of society and the arrangements of Providence have converged, in the ancient and modern worlds respectively:—the introduction of Christianity and the birth of the American Democracy. In regard to the former, I have not the slightest claim to originality, and merely aspire to present, in a somewhat striking and popular form, views long entertained by the profoundest of the continental philosophers; but if I am right in the belief that American society is not only the last, but the noblest birth of Time, an American thinker, especially if he be a Protestant, is more *favorably situated* for taking just views of the philosophy of modern history, than one, however able and learned who has grown up in the shadow of those ancient institutions which have outlived their original uses.

In the following pages I have attempted to trace the progress of society down to that remarkable epoch, when the best products of the Christian civilization were transplanted to the virgin soil of America. I have reserved that stirring and productive

period, extending from the commencement of our struggle with England to the end of Napoleon's empire, for a subsequent work, if the success of the present should warrant another and similar undertaking.

The reader will soon discover that the nature of this work precludes the necessity of frequent reference to historical details. Whenever I have made a statement in illustration of a principle, I have been careful to satisfy myself of its accuracy by consulting the best authorities.

In a few of the first pages following, which were written some years ago, the reader may find some resemblance to the peculiar style and topics of Mr. Carlyle. I confess that I love him so much, that were I to meet him knowingly in the streets of the great Babel, I would certainly astound the Cockneys, by giving him the hearty salutation of a backwoodsman, without waiting for an introduction.

I.

THE CROSS.

This page in the original text is blank.

THE CROSS.

HISTORY is the first of sciences. In its widest sense it may be said to include every other science,—all that has been preserved of what has been said, done and written by man since the foundation of the world.

There are two great revelations of God, and of the highest truth, the revelation of nature and the revelation of history.

The Bible is a part of the historic revelation, but by far the most important part, for *it gives us the key of the whole*. The records of Christianity furnish us with a central and lofty point of view, from which we may marshal around us the leading facts of universal history in such order, that we may hope to deduce a consistent and intelligible theory of the existence of man upon earth, and humbly trace the majestic footsteps of Eternal Providence.

Indeed our opinions respecting the Christian records will determine our views of history at large. They will determine whether we shall regard the movements of society, and the revolutions of empires, as a mere aimless tragi-comedy, played off for the amusement of the higher Powers, or as a solemn and mysterious evolution of a mighty purpose and a lofty destiny.

A melancholy thought strikes us at the threshold. Of all the vast materials of history, of all the sayings and doings, manners and institutions, the moral and intellectual manifestations, in short, of the generations that have gone before us, what an infinitely small part has been preserved. Even since mankind emerged from the cloud of mythical tradition

into the clear light of authentic history, their annals have done little more than mark the bubbles that have floated upon that fathomless stream of life, which, issuing from the great deep of eternity past, is lost in the darkness of eternity to come.

If we would trace to their sources the mightiest manifestations of spiritual life, language, religion, philosophy, government and the arts, we are carried beyond the feeble illumination of profane history into the twilight of an almost impenetrable antiquity. A few chapters in Genesis comprise all that is known to us of those mighty ages, the time-defying relics of whose unparalleled civilization startle the traveler in the silent deserts of Upper Egypt, in the "marble wilderness" of Syria, the jungles of India, and the cyclopean ruins of Greece and Italy. What is known of the spiritual manifestations of the past, bears but a small proportion to what has forever perished from the memory of man and the records of history.

Forever, did we say, and is all that has been buried under the "wrecks of time" irretrievably lost? No! Not thus, we are persuaded, does God deal with his rational creatures. There is a volume and a recording angel before His throne, and in the light of that ineffable Presence, the bulletin of the battle between Heaven and Hell, of which earth is the field and Eternity the prize, will one day be published to the Universe. No conquest ever made from the empire of ignorance, sin and misery, however small,—no victory ever gained over evil passions, however obscure,—no dark and fearful struggle with the temptations of the world and the despotism of Nature, shall go unchronicled. No tear of compassion or sorrow has ever fallen unheeded by the Father of us all. No great and heroic deed,—no winged words of light or hope or consolation, though forgotten on earth, shall ever be lost from the memories of Eternity.

Yet the comparatively small part of universal history which is known to us now, is an unfathomable mine, and rich in the ore of thought. A glory breaks out from the tombs of departed generations, and amid the chaos of facts and the ruins of empires, are many bright points of light in the past, that may serve to illumine the present and the future. We will endeavor to collect some of these scattered rays, and if we should discover nothing absolutely new, we may at least refresh and deepen the impression of those old, but not the less glorious truths, which are the wholesome food of spiritual life.

And here I beg leave to enter my protest against what may be called the *un-historical* or *anti-historical* philosophy so fashionable at the present day, especially among the cultivators of the *physical* sciences, a philosophy which is at once the offspring and parent of a shallow scepticism. This school of *illuminati* and radical reformers, looking too exclusively at the errors and imperfections that have incrustated the organized forms, in which the great principles of moral life and social progress have from time to time taken up their residence, have brought themselves to regard the Past, as an inextricable maze of weak self-delusion, or wholesale jugglery.

If deep and life-giving realities, which have given birth to the poetry, chivalry, and religion of the "fervent days of old," have been mixed up with error and superstition, our *philosophers* conclude that all these things have been founded in delusion or imposture. To save themselves the trouble of separating the pure bullion of truth from the alloy with which it has passed current among masses of men, they hastily consign the whole to the limb of exploded chimeras. According to this philosophy nature is a machine, life is the the motion of particles, history is a tissue of folly, selfishness and priestcraft.

The favorite themes of these lights of the world, at least of the most thorough-going and consistent among them, are the folly and ignorance of believing ages, the "march of intellect," and the progress of the physical sciences, which are to regenerate the species, revolutionize our views of man and his destiny, and disenchant life of all those beautiful delusions of our benighted fathers, which have inspired self-devotion, moral heroism and hopes that grasp at infinity.

This spirit is manifestly incompatible with any *definite* religious belief, which must be founded upon historical evidence, corroborated by moral intuitions. Some of our philosophers, it is true, may preserve a prudent and worldly acquiescence in the religion of their country or their neighbors, which is far less worthy of respect than earnest inquiring scepticism. Others may regard religion as an useful humbug, which wise men should tolerate until society is prepared to do without it, but this capitulation with error is scouted by the higher class of sceptics, who hold that truth alone is good, and that no system radically false can be productive of any real or lasting benefit to mankind.

The same spirit, brought to bear directly upon historical inquiry, has given birth to what may be called the "humbug" philosophy of history, of which Hume is perhaps the greatest representative, and which, by making a great show of wisdom and impartiality, has been the source of more fallacy and injustice, than all the most passionate disquisitions of the most enthusiastic partizans. In this school of history, every great, but irregular nature, full of fiery earnestness about matters with which the writer happens to have no sympathy, is a hypocrite, an impostor or a fanatic; every half enlightened but still glorious manifestation of the divinest part of man's nature is sneered at, as an outburst of silly enthusiasm, or a trick of selfish ambition.

Contempt for the past is moral desolation. It excludes

God and His Providence from history, saps the foundation of religion and tends to bring into doubt almost everything which exalts and embellishes society. It is a dreary, soul-chilling, practical Atheism.

Take the following illustration of our views upon this subject:

Nowhere else in the annals of mankind are the traces of a beneficent Providence so clearly to be seen as in the history of the Christian religion. All the vast movements and revolutions of the ancient nations converge to one mighty purpose, the introduction of Christianity. It has been the soul of modern society, the most efficient agent in civilizing mankind, the main life-bearing stem upon which has been engrafted every thing beautiful and glorious in the vigorous, progressive and ever expanding civilization of the Christian nations. According to the "humbug" philosophy, either the Divinity concerns himself not with the affairs of his creatures, or he has chosen as the means of conferring his greatest blessings upon them, a boundless scheme of elaborate imposture.

Contempt for the past, especially in relation to *civil* concerns, is an error to which, from obvious causes, American society is peculiarly exposed, and which it therefore becomes the duty of the American writer to combat. We are in little danger of falling into that opposite extreme, which in Europe takes the form of high conservatism, and with desperate perversity throws itself into direct opposition to the resistless tendencies of modern society. From the nature of the case, toryism can never take deep root in American soil, and it is idle to aim our blows at an imaginary foe, while a real and portentous tendency threatens the extinction of all reverence for the Past, and with it all of that ennobling class of emotions, which are allied to such reverence as their parent stock. This tendency is fostered by the grovelling *dema-*

goguism that curses our country : a moral pestilence more to be dreaded by a people than the greatest physical calamities.

Popular sycophants would fain make us believe that political wisdom and the great principles of liberty, like potatoes and tobacco, are indigenous to American soil; and some are absurd enough to contend for what they call an American education, which shall cut us off from the past and cancel all our obligations to the old world. But no nation ever became great by this process, nor ever will. We must recollect that, if we can see a little farther than those who have gone before us, we stand upon a mental pyramid piled up by the labors of countless generations; that it is our business to carry it still farther towards heaven, not to look down with scorn upon the great works of our predecessors, or become little in the contemplation of our own greatness. Other nations may still have the remnants of old abuses to demolish, *our* task is not to destroy but to preserve and build up. We have nothing to spare of the legacies of the past.

The shallow unhistorical illuminism of radical destructives and materialist philosophers is an evil which with many compensating benefits has been bequeathed to mankind by that tremendous collision between the new and the old, the French Revolution. Or to speak with more precision, it is the offspring of that powerful and pervading tendency of modern society, of which the French revolution was the mightiest and most destructive outburst. In the warfare which freedom of inquiry, and civil equality on the one hand, have waged against venerable authority, and arbitrary privilege on the other, the tremendous assaults, which have been made upon ancient institutions that have outlived their original uses, have not always spared the truth and good which those institutions were designed to perpetuate.

The human mind can entertain but one passion at a time, sufficiently overruling and intense to effect great changes in

THE CROSS.

society, and revolutionary ardor has been so busy with the work of demolition, that it is not wonderful that many should turn their backs upon the *past*, forgetful of its greatness, and their own obligations to it, and look forward to the future with boundless hopes, and chimerical schemes for the radical regeneration of society. Yet there is nothing more certain, than that no moral or political organization wholly severed from the past can live. We may repair dilapidated institutions from time to time, and adapt them to the new exigencies of society ; but we must preserve the old foundations, the great *principles*, or our structures will not stand the test of time and experience. It is the order of Providence, that the new should be evolved from the old in such a manner, that the life and soul of the one should be gradually transfused into the other. Great revolutions may seem to interrupt this order for a time, but after the earthquake has rolled away, the stream resumes its former channel, only clearer, broader, freer from obstructions than before. We may borrow an image from Scandinavian Poetry, and compare the progressive development of man's destinies upon earth to a mighty tree. We may prune it and lop the sapless branches, but we must not forget that the most beautiful flowers of modern civilization, the most noblest fruits which have ripened in the blaze of modern science, have drawn their vital sap from broad roots buried in the remotest antiquity, through a mighty trunk whose growths are eras, and boughs that have battled with the storms of revolutions.

We need not hope to understand any important portion of history thoroughly, without attaining some elevated point which will give us a view of the whole. It is not a line but a web, and each part is intertangled with every other part in the vast and intricate texture of Providential arrangements. Yet by collating facts far separated in time and space, and discerning their relations to each other, and to the evolution

of the vast plans of Eternal Providence, we may hope to frame a general theory of historical philosophy, which will collect the scattered rays that break out in distant ages and different quarters of the globe, and reflect the concentrated light thus gathered from the whole upon each successive portion, as it passes in review before us. I am far from supposing myself equal to so vast and difficult an undertaking. I only hope to throw out a few suggestions which may facilitate the solution of this greatest of philosophical problems.

Without such generalization, we should be unable to catch the true spirit and import of any of the great movements of society, from those meagre delineations of public transactions, which make up the greater part of our histories, and exhibit only proximate or occasional causes. We mark the movements of armies, the doings of politicians and the intrigues of courts, things which float upon the surface of society, while the real fountains of moral and intellectual life are hidden far below in its quiet and silent depths.

Every one knows, that, in the natural world, the mightiest results are brought about by the steady operations of quiet and unobtrusive agencies. The sudden storm at sea may mingle their spray of billows with the clouds of heaven ; but in a few hours all traces of the tempest's rage have vanished, while, in the blue ocean above, the stars in quiet beauty wheel in their everlasting courses, impelled by a power unseen, unheard and only known by its stupendous effects.

The same is true of the moral world. But this is a trite theme and I will not dwell upon it. I cannot, however, refrain from noticing a beautiful illustration of the thought in the Hebrew scriptures, notwithstanding it has often been referred to by other writers. It is one of the most brilliant gems in that exhaustless mine of divine philosophy and inspired poetry.

The Prophet sat upon Mount Horeb, waiting for a visita-

tion from on High. A storm-wind swept through the mountain passes, but the Lord was not in the wind; an earthquake rent the rocks, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; a fire darted through the clefts, and roared among the mountain pines, but the Lord was not in the fire; but there came a still small voice, like soft music from afar, and the thrilling frame and kindling soul of the Prophet acknowledged the presence and power of the Eternal Spirit.

When the natural philosopher discerns in a multitude of facts phenomena essentially the same, though to a greater or less degree modified by peculiar circumstances, he intuitively refers them to certain invariable laws or intrinsic properties of matter, and goes to work to find out the causes that have varied the results in particular instances. We see no reason why the same procedure should not be adopted in historical investigations; for in like manner, while we discern marked peculiarities in the spiritual developments of different nations, there are certain great features of life and principles of action which run through all ages and all tribes and kindreds of the earth, that have attained to any considerable height of knowledge and refinement, or played any important part in history.

Nations have left their original seats and wandered to distant portions of the globe; empires have fallen and their treasures of art and knowledge have been buried beneath their ruins; the world has been a scene where the demons of lust, ambition and revenge have rioted in crime and bloodshed; yet amid all these mighty changes, and world-wide confusions, certain phenomena have been manifested by every age and nation of which any monuments have been preserved.

Among these universal facts, are the belief of a First Cause, and a recognition of his right to prescribe the laws of our being; an *ideal* more or less distinct of the specific

perfection of man and society, and a sense of *actual* shortcoming and moral debasement; attempts by self-immolation and sacrifices of other victims to avert the penalties of the Divine law, not only in the present but a future life, and finally a perpetual struggle between the animal and selfish passions and that higher part of our strange nature which links us to God and Eternity. Nowhere has the human soul been so completely darkened,—at no time have its finer chords been so entirely unstrung, but that through the uproar of strife, the curses of rage and the shrieks of despair, some gushes of heavenly music have been heard from time to time, which have brought solace from above to the pilgrim and stranger upon earth.

In the great tree of moral life there are the main stem of the primitive revelation, growing up through the Hebrew theocracy to its glorious maturity in christianity; the almost sapless branches of Chinese philosophy, and Mahomedan deism; the rich foliage and flowers of Indian and Grecian mythology; the mossy, storm-riven boughs of Scandinavian poetry and Celtic druidism; but withal its roots are far down in Eternity and its top reaches to Heaven.

The materialist, the despiser of the Past, regards these great moral facts, which have lived through all the vicissitudes of savage and cultivated society, as mere chimeras or the fever-dreams of a long night of ignorance and superstition, which the light of modern science is to put to flight forever. According to him this modern science must be a melancholy business. It disrobes the world of the beauties which Poetry has stolen from the gardens of Paradise, and represents nature *not* as a kind, though sometimes stern mother, rearing the sons and daughters of immortality, but as a blind monster sitting on a pile of skulls and devouring her own children.

That profoundest philosophy which recognizes the Divine

and imperishable in man, *always* appears first in the forms of poetry and music, twin sisters and the hand-maids of religion. It is a remarkable fact, that in the earliest periods of civilization, in the robust and fervid youth of great nations, Poetry, that divine melody of thought and words, is always the first language of the newly awakened intellect. Moral reproof and instruction and even the laws of the heroic ages were embodied in the forms, and vitalized by the spirit of Poetry.

As civilization advances, and the cold abstractions of science take the place of the life-like creations of the imagination, Poetry withdraws herself more and more from the domain of the understanding. But though a high state of intellectual cultivation more clearly defines the respective boundaries of science and poetry, it is by no means necessarily unfavorable to the latter, as many have supposed.

It is true that rude ages allow greater freedom to the excursions of the imagination. But what is lost in one respect, is gained in another. Poetry more and more hemmed in by reality, finds in reality new and inexhaustable resources.

The vulgar and trivial details of actual life are apt to blunt our perceptions of its greatness. Yet man, whatever the materialists may think about the matter, is not merely a beast but also a god, and this world is not altogether a *sty* but also a temple of the Divinity, paved with the bones of the dead, but roofed by the starry dome, and peopled by beautiful and awful mysteries. The bright dreams of youth, and the thoughtful sadness of maturer years; the deep communings of the soul with nature and with God; the fond loyalty which cherishes the memories of heroes and great benefactors of mankind; self-sacrificing patriotism which attaches to the idea of country an infinite import, and sacred obligations; rapt devotion, whether it recognize the Divine Presence in the Gothic Cathedral, amid the forest aisles, or

on the sounding sea-shore,—what are all these things but the rising undulations of that deepest part of our mysterious nature, in which are the fountains of poetry and religion.

If we imagine a rational creature upon a level with the highest of our species to reach the maturity of his powers in another state of being, and then to have all his perceptions and sensibilities suddenly opened upon this world in any of its brightest or most fearful aspects, what deep thoughts, what childish wonder, love, or awe, would fill his whole soul! The poetical temperament preserves in a greater or less degree this childlike freshness, which custom withers in other men, and by mysterious affinities draws to itself the poetry of life and nature from the alloy of common place ingredients.

It is unquestionably the greatest triumph of art to idealize the present; for distance either in time or space renders the materials of poetry more pliant. Through the same mists which conceal from us the vulgar and trivial details, the grander features of the scene loom up into shapes of beauty or terror. Campbell's illustration of this thought will occur to every reader. If "distance" "robes the mountain in its azure hue," it also leaves the imagination free to rove through shadowy and sequestered dells or fairy regions, *beyond* the blue summits that seem to prop the heavens.

This fact discloses the true secret of the highest poetical effect, and throws much light on the nature of poetry in general. If we wish to exalt the *actual* into the *ideal*, we must take care not to fetter the imagination by such clear and sharp outlines as leave no room for vague associations and undefined but powerful emotions, which *transcend* the limits of the *partial* present and grasp at the infinite whole. Fantasy must be set free from the chains of the actual.

But what, it may be asked, has all this to do with the philosophy of history? Much, as I hope will be seen hereafter,

if the reader has patience to follow the train of thought which has led me to the views that I entertain upon that subject. There are strong affinities between our opinions upon such subjects, that at first sight seem to have no direct connection. Our views of history must depend in a great measure upon our notions of the nature of man and the purposes of his manifestations.

If man be a machine, and all the purposes of his existence be limited to the present world, then poetry is simply an illusion, and a pernicious one, for those bodying forth of the ideal which fill the soul with an infinite love, or grief, or terror, are the dreams of a distempered imagination, and blind men to their present and real good by fostering vague but glorious anticipations which must be finally disappointed. For, consciously or unconsciously, the poetical temperament links everything finite and perishable with the infinite and imperishable, and our little life here with the boundless and everlasting existence that awaits us. Whatever form poetry may take, and whatever may be the nature of the materials which it draws from the actual world, its essential inspiration is the ineradicable desire of the human soul for a wider, a more beautiful, a more powerful existence than the present.

When the Poet is destitute of religious faith, the mighty cravings of his soul, and a vivid sense of the frightful discrepancy between the aspirations and the supposed destiny of man, may eat into his own heart, tear asunder his whole nature, and fever into despair, madness or suicide. A happier creed may overarch life with the rainbow of hope, and pour over nature the light of eternity. In either case, the poet filled with the ideal and that infinite love and awe which only the ideal can inspire, becomes the unconscious prophet of a deeper and mightier truths than the boasted deductions of science. Even in science no great thing was ever done by a man who had not a spice of poetry in him.

As will appear more fully in the progress of our inquiry, those branches of art and literature, which strive to embody the aspirations of man in forms of ideal beauty or power, have performed a very important part in human culture. It is therefore perfectly consistent for our philosophers, who look upon history as little better than a tissue of delusion, selfishness and imposture, to regard poetry as a pleasant cheat, which may serve to amuse a vacant hour.

Religion is the union of the highest philosophy with the highest poetry. Philosophy has to do with substances, qualities, relations, all which are objects of pure intellect, not of passion; but when those substances and qualities are embodied or manifested in sensible forms, such as may excite love, terror or admiration, they come within the province of Poetry. Religion is the recognition of God, the central sun of all truth, in two modes; first, philosophically as an absolute essence, with certain qualities and relations; secondly, poetically, as manifested in the various forms of life and beauty around us, which call forth our love, admiration or reverence, which is the union of the other two feelings, in proportion as they rise in the scale of being towards the Infinite. In idolatry the poetical element of religion predominates, almost to the exclusion of the philosophical. In cold, absolute theism the exact reverse takes place. Christianity alone has effected in the God-man, our Saviour, a happy and perfect union of philosophy and poetry.

It will not be out of place to remark just here, that all the poetry, which has made any considerable contributions to the progress of society in christian ages and nations, has had a vital connection with the christian religion. This will appear more fully hereafter. Indeed the history of christianity itself, including the life and death of its Divine Founder, the moral heroism of its martyrs and apostles, and the long warfare which it has waged against ignorance, sin and misery, is

a mighty epic, of which God is the author; and the refinements of chivalry, the triumphs of art and the glories of science are the episodes. Religion has directly or indirectly been the source of that poetry of action, which has shed a never-dying glory over the great and stirring periods of modern history.

It is obvious that we use the term Poetry in its general sense of passionate recognition of all beautiful, glorious and sublime things, manifested, not only in verse, painting, sculpture, architecture, but any thing which ennobles man, embellishes life, or refines society, provided it can be embodied in sensible forms, or associated with images more or less distinct. Not only the greatest works of art, but the finest traits and noblest triumphs of civilization, are manifestation of that divine and perennial spirit of Poetry, without which, life would be a poor despicable round of sordid cares and animal gratifications.

In this connection I will venture a few thoughts on the origin and philosophy of civilization in general.

Civilization originally meant the condition of *civil society*, which in the Latin mind was indissolubly associated with *cities*. The term as used by modern writers is more comprehensive. I will define civilization to be that state of society, which surrounds the individual members thereof with circumstances positively propitious to the development of the higher and finer qualities of human nature,—the moral and intellectual faculties, the social sympathies and the poetical sentiments.

There are various modes of awakening the dormant capabilities of a barbarous people. All those high properties that raise man above other animals, and the manifestations of which distinguish refinement from barbarism, and the cultivated from the coarse, are so closely linked together in "the electric chain with which we are darkly bound," that the liv-

ing fire from heaven applied to any part of the concatenation, will soon vibrate through the whole. There is a deep meaning in that old legend, that cities were built by the *lyre* of Amphion.

There is an *internal* and an *external* civilization; and the latter is the natural and necessary product of the former. To illustrate my meaning, suppose the most cultivated people in Paris to be transported into the depths of an American forest, and their parlors and libraries, and places in the scientific institutes and galleries, and churches and courts of justice and legislative assemblies of the metropolis of European civilization, to be filled by a band of Blackfeet Indians. The Parisians would soon create around them the external circumstances of civilized life, while the Blackfeet, unless improved by the example of their remaining neighbors, would suffer the monuments of a refinement which they could not appreciate to fall into decay and ruin. We are to distinguish then between the state of mind—what I have called the internal civilization,—of the individuals who compose a society, and those institutions and other external circumstances, in which the poetical sentiments, the moral and intellectual powers and the social tendencies manifest their supremacy over the mere animal and selfish propensities.

When, by any means, the barbarian, to whom we may apply Plato's definition of man, "a two legged *animal* without feathers," has been thoroughly aroused from his moral stupidity, and rendered sensible of the advantages of civilization, the internal change soon manifests itself in a thousand forms of external improvement; he begins to rise above mere *animalism*, and seeks to embellish his existence by a variety of beautiful and graceful things, which shall incessantly speak to him of a higher destiny than he ever dreamed of in his former state of brutal degradation. He, who once regarded woman as the mere slave of appetite and devour-

ed, like a wolf, the flesh which he has just snatched from the reeking flank of an ox, to disguise the grossness of sensual gratifications with the flowers of sentiment and the effusions of cultivated intellect. The scanty covering of skins is exchanged for decent or elegant attire, and the bark wigwam gives place to the stately edifice. Everywhere a sense not of utility alone, but of beauty, harmony, magnificence, is manifesting itself.

The social sympathies, strengthened and expanded by more enlightened views of reciprocal wants and advantages, extend to larger and larger masses of men, and become the bond of cohesion in great communities. All men are social or *gregarious*, but a very small society and a very slight bond of connection will suffice for the purposes of savage life. The progress of refinement creates new wants, widens the circle of mutual interests, and renders men more and more sensible of the necessity and advantages of association. It is incessantly adding to the number and strength of the ties which bind men together.

The social tendency may be so strong as to prevent a free development of individuality. Such a state of society may be vigorous for a time, while external pressure calls forth its energies, but it will eventually dwarf the mind and bring about a state of spiritual torpor or death. Where the moral element is feeble, and the poetical sentiments rather *disguise* than *restrain* the animal propensities, we have that state of civilization described by Burke, in which "vice loses half its guilt by losing all its grossness," and which nothing but an extraordinary interposition of Providence can save from utter destruction. For habitual immorality gradually clouds the intellect and blunts the finer sensibilities, so that at length even the thin disguise of decency is thrown off, and man descends to the level of the brute. This must be

the case wherever there is not moral life enough in some portion of the society to resist the progress of corruption.

If, when the animal and selfish passions have been subjugated by the poetical and social tendencies, these last in their turn are subordinated to the *moral* faculties, nourished into vigorous life by the wholesome food of everlasting truth, and *individuality*, in other words the spontaneous energy of free minds, is not cramped by despotism or social unity, we may look for an onward and upward progress to which no limits can be assigned. No civilization can be vigorous or progressive, in which the whole complex nature of man does not have fair play, in which every faculty does not find its appropriate objects.

It is thought by some that man was originally savage, and gradually rose by his own unaided exertions into civilization and intellectual refinement. This theory, besides its intrinsic improbability, is unsupported by a single fact in history.—On the contrary, all the facts go to show that savages never could have the least desire or conception of a higher condition than their own, until by some means they have been brought into contact with civilized people, and subjugated by their religion, their arts or their arms. Commerce is an important agent in diffusing a civilization already in existence, but the intercourse of savage tribes is not one of mutual improvement, but of mutual destruction.

There is not a solitary example in all history, of the *spontaneous* growth of that knowledge and refinement which distinguish the civilized from the savage state. We may indeed *assume* without the shadow of proof, that in those few cases in which impenetrable darkness rests upon the origin of a very imperfect civilization, which looks very much like the remnant of something better, as in Mexico and Peru, it *must* have sprung up among themselves. If this assumption were well founded, we would surely have had some

examples of spontaneous development within the range of authentic history, embracing, as it does, a period of nearly six thousand years, and many savage nations of the highest capabilities.

Those very tribes that have shown the greatest susceptibility of improvement, when brought in contact with civilization, have existed for ages on ages in barbarism, undisturbed by the least desire or conception of an higher condition. Wherever we can trace the arts and knowledge of civilized life to their beginnings, we find them uniformly *exotics*, transplanted from some more favored clime, and usually passing through a long period of feeble and doubtful growth, exposed to the rudest blasts, before they have taken lasting root in the new soil.

The truth is, that barbarism is unmitigated *animalism*, a sort of spiritual slumber from which the latent capabilities will never awaken, until some external stimulus be applied. Man seems to be subject to a moral gravitation that weighs him down to the "vile dust from which he sprang." Every thing which ennobles and exalts him, is an *up-hill* business. He *has* eagle wings, yet he would contentedly fold them at his side and feed upon the garbage of earth, did not external or *Divine* culture raise his eyes towards Heaven, and imp his lazy pinions for the upper skies and the free mountain top.

There are instances of nations losing, in a great measure, their social superiority by moral corruption, by the deadening grasp of despotism or the storms of intestine strife and foreign invasion, but not a solitary example of spontaneous civilization.

Our modern refinement is nothing more than a reconsolidation, with additions and improvements, of those remnants of the magnificent civilization of Rome, which were sheltered by the Church, from those northern tempests that overwhelmed the Empire. From Rome, we may trace the

streams of art and knowledge, through Greece, Asia Minor and Phœnicia, to the valley of the Nile and the plains of Chaldea. Here the lights of profane history desert us, and without the Hebrew Scriptures, we should be left in utter darkness.

At the very earliest period of which any authentic memorials have survived, navigation seems to have been more extensive and adventurous, than it ever was afterwards down to the time of Vasco de Gama and Columbus. Egypt was the seat of a refined and intellectual people, whose monuments still strike the traveller with astonishment. Babylon sat upon the Euphrates, the queen of nations, with her hundred gates of brass, her temples, towers and palaces, and the Chaldean sages had already numbered every star that sparkled in the oriental heavens.

Through the mysterious veil of antiquity, we obtain some glimpses of a glorious and wondrous scene in the mighty youth of our world. We catch some rays from a mysterious temple and dwelling of demi-gods, and through the loopholes of time can even see giant shadows flitting along its arches, but are forbidden to enter and look upon its glories. The head-springs of the River of light, as the ancients said of the fountains of the Nile, no mortal eye can ever behold.

It is well known that there are affinities between all the known languages of the earth, which leave but little room for doubt that they are all dialects of one original tongue. Among the countless theories of the *human* origin of language, which philosophical ingenuity has fabricated, it is difficult to decide, not which is most plausible, but which is most sublimely absurd.

The few brief hints of the Mosaic records are worth more than all modern theories. It is easy to believe that he who gave Noah, whether by *internal* inspiration or external communication, minute directions for the construction of the ark,

likewise imparted to his helpless creatures the rudiments at least of the arts and knowledge of civilization. It is very *hard* to believe that they had *any other* origin.

To the same mighty ages, which conceal the sources of language and art and refinement, must be referred the origin of those fundamental principles of religion, which, with more or less defacement, have survived the ravages of time and the revolutions of society, and have ever been sensibly or insensibly the inmost life of all that raises man above other animals. Admitting their divine origin, there is still a question as to the mode of communication. While some have contended for the spontaneous development of innate ideas, others have unjustly depreciated the human mind in their excessive dread of the inroads of reason upon the province of revelation.

It is one of that multitude of disputes, in which one half of the truth has been striving on each side to take to itself the whole ground.

There is mutual adaptation in all the works of God; and all great and beautiful things both in the natural and moral world, are the compound results of reciprocal affinities. The soil is full of the germs of beauty, but without sunshine and rain they would slumber forever. In like manner the moral nature of man requires external culture, yet that culture is worth little unless it conforms to the inmost structure of the mind itself.

Every one knows that there are many truths which he would never have thought of until announced by some one else but, which when so announced he instantly lays hold of, assimilates and forever incorporates with his own intellectual being. For the acquisition of Divine Knowledge a suitable structure of the mind and preternatural communication were both requisite. The characters written upon the soul by the finger of God could be distinctly read only when shone

upon by light from Heaven, as the statue of Memnon was dumb till stricken by the rays of the rising sun. The finest chords of the human soul instantly respond to the touch of a skilful hand, and continue to vibrate after that hand has been withdrawn, though discordant notes soon mingle with, and sometimes almost overpower the moral melody.

To explain myself more fully, I remark that our passions, sensibilities, faculties, our spiritual properties in short are stimulated by the presence of their appropriate objects; either their *actual* presence within reach of our perceptions, or their *virtual* presence by means of memory and imagination. Now it is clear from the very nature of the objects of the moral faculties, that the communication necessary to a vivid apprehension of those objects, could have been at first effected only by some extraordinary process which I call preternatural, because it forms no part of the present known course of nature. All the objects of all the other properties of the first man could have reached his consciousness without transcending the present order of things; but God, his law and its sanctions in a future life *must* have been revealed by some process which has not been perpetuated.

We have therefore good reason to believe that all which was good in the moral philosophy and religious observances of the ancient nations, consisted of traditionary fragments of a primitive revelation which had floated down on the stream of ages from a remote antiquity. From the original fountain of divine knowledge, the purest stream flowed through the Hebrews, who thus became the link between the patriarchal ages and the modern world, and all their institutions were studiously contrived to preserve the truth from the contamination of surrounding idolatry. Next to the Hebrews, the Persians preserved the truth better than any other people, from causes which will be mentioned hereafter. The streams which flowed through other channels, as the Indians and the

Greeks, though verdure and flowers sprang up along their margins, were almost lost in a deadly jungle of popular superstitions. In these two nations, especially, the *poetry* of religion got the better of its *philosophy*, and richly clothed the mysterious realities of the universe with those beautiful mythologies which were no doubt at first profoundly symbolical.

Idolatry, like every other error in practice, is only an excess of what is good in itself. The tendency to embody in living or life-like forms (*idola*) the Supreme Power and all subordinate powers, is an essential part of our nature, and must have been implanted in us for some good purpose. We will see hereafter what use Christianity has made of it. This brings us to the chief subject of the present discourse.

A scheme of historical philosophy which should leave out Christianity, would be like that unlucky playbill, which announced that, in the performance of Hamlet, the part of Hamlet would be omitted, by particular request. The Christian revelation furnishes the only solution of the most difficult problems of history, and throws a strong light upon the most striking and mysterious facts in the existence of man upon earth. In that light, history becomes the development of a scheme for raising man from that absolute dominion of nature, under which his destinies could have been little higher than those of any other animal, by a stupendous *series* of moral providences and supernatural impulses, in which a thousand years are as one day.

Of the progressive evolution of the divine plan for the education of mankind, the introduction of Christianity forms as it were the culminating point, the summit level of the line of communication opened between earth and heaven. Reflected upon the past, it gave meaning and import to many striking facts in the history, not only of the people amongst whom it originated, but of other great nations of antiquity, which

would otherwise have remained inexplicable enigmas ; reaching forward into the boundless future, it became a fresh starting point in the moral providence of God, and has poured its healing streams through the desolate wastes of humanity, causing the moral desert to "rejoice and blossom as the rose."

We make it a postulate, without which any intelligible theory of historical philosophy is unattainable, that man is a fallen being, or in other words, that his moral state has somehow suffered an insurrection, and now lies in ruins. We may speculate as we please as to *how* moral evil entered the world, *that it is here* is not a matter of speculation. *Whatever is is right* may be true in this sense, that no rebellious activity of subordinate powers can effectually thwart the purposes of the Infinite mind, but, on the contrary, will appear to have subserved them in a comprehensive survey of His universal government. Yet every one who would not do violence to his own nature, must admit that the moral world is "out of joint," and that the *actual* condition of our race, even of the highest among them, falls short of that *ideal* which exists in all minds, with more or less distinctness, of the *specific* perfection of humanity. For even in his ruined condition, enough of the divine original survives to show the height from which he has fallen ;—just as amidst the ruins of a Grecian temple, we stumble upon broken columns and exquisitely wrought capitals, which attest the matchless beauty of the ancient structure.

Reason confirms the scriptural account, that man came from the hands of his Maker with a physical and moral structure, perfectly sound and healthy, that is to say with an unbroken harmony of faculties and impulses, and provided with the means of preserving his innocence and happiness. It is obvious that had this original equilibrium of his nature been preserved ; had no propensity ever transcended its legitimate

function, he would have remained a creature of mere impulse, and could never have had any knowledge of *good* or *evil*. For a *moral* quality supposes a certain conflict between motives, which are summoned to the bar of the judgment by passion, conscience and reason.

Why the Omnipotent has permitted the original perfection of his workmanship to be overthrown, and what is the nature of that disturbing force which has brought *discord* and with it death and sorrow into the world, are questions which must return upon the thinking minds of each successive generation, in all their original perplexity, because they admit of no satisfactory answer in the present state of being. In regard to all such matters, we must "wait the great teacher Death and God adore," not doubting that he will finally vindicate to all his intelligent creatures the wisdom of his plans and the justice of his administration.

So far as the Divine counsels can be deciphered from the facts of history, nothing is clearer than that man was not designed for the tame and regular manifestation of a few genial impulses held in perfect equilibrium by the limiting properties of his nature, but rather for a vast, tempestuous existence, resulting from the *polarity* of powerful passions and antagonist tendencies.

Every where indeed, in the physical and moral world, we find strife, antagonism, inordinate activity of forces followed by the re-action of others which had been for a time repressed. Why these things are so we cannot tell, though we may indulge in endless conjectures, which may serve as exercises of philosophical ingenuity. Perhaps we are passing from a lower to a higher standard of perfection, and the first putting forth of power towards the construction of the new building, may have destroyed forever the *proportions* of the original edifice. We may imagine these alternatives to have presented themselves to the Supreme Mind; on the one hand

the complete realization at once of His own Divine *idea* of the world, secured forever with the iron circle of *necessity*; on the other a *progressive* evolution of that *idea*, which must have involved the existence of evil, for without relative imperfection *progress* is inconceivable. That which is perfect cannot be made better. Perhaps out of the apparent anarchy of riotous forces is to arise a more glorious order than would have been attainable without it.

But aside from all speculations, one of these two things *must* be true: either God made man imperfect, or he has permitted some one or more of his spiritual properties to be so *potentiated*, if I may be allowed the expression, as to transcend their proper functions, and thus overthrow the original harmony of human nature. For as disorder, or what we call moral evil, is unquestionably here, it is plain that it must either have formed a part of the original constitution, or have been introduced at a subsequent period. It would be useless to reason with any one who can entertain the former supposition.

Assuming then that man is a fallen, in other words, a *disordered* creature, that the original harmony of his nature has been broken, and that the Eternal Father imparted to his helpless child the rudiments at least of that knowledge which was necessary to guide and sustain him in his mortal struggle with the foes that assailed him, and were lying in wait on every side, we will attempt to point out the chief stages of that great conflict with ignorance, sin and misery, which makes up the history of the race. We will endeavor to trace the progressive evolution of that stupendous plan, by which Providence has made provision for educating the whole complex nature of man, and thereby raising him from the ruins of the fall to that condition most favorable to his well-being here and hereafter.

In my brief survey of the ancient nations, I shall confine

myself strictly to the share which each had in preparing the materials and laying the foundation of the Christian civilization.

The streams of population, wherever we can trace them for any distance towards their sources, invariably lead us towards the banks of the Euphrates, or the country lying immediately to the east of that river. Modern researches have only served to confirm the opinion, that the country lying between the Euphrates and the Indus, was the primitive seat of the human race. The Ark, in all probability, rested upon one of the lofty summits of the Indian Caucasus, now called the Hindoo Coo and Elborz, parts of that stupendous chain extending from the frontiers of China to the Black Sea. It contains the highest mountains on the globe, and in its western valleys and fastnesses, are still to be found the finest specimens, in form and feature, of the Caucasian race. It forms the northern boundary of the region which was the cradle of Art, Religion, Science and Civilization; of the zone of light, which, shooting westward across Europe and America, will have encircled the globe, when the Anglo-Americans shall have peopled Oregon and California, and the English shall have infused new life and vigor into the ancient civilization of India. The light so vivid in the ancient world, along successive portions of this great belt, died away towards the north in the steppes of Tartary, and towards the south in the sands of Africa.

I have already remarked that modern researches leave but little room for doubt, that all the languages of the earth are corruptions of one original tongue. But so strong are the affinities all along the belt I have described, that scholars have grouped the dialects of the nations within it, including at one extreme, the Sanscrit, the sacred language of India; at the other, the English and Spanish, which have reached the western coasts of America, in one class, called the Indo-

Germanic race of languages. The northern limit of the zone of light is a waving line rising in Western Europe to a high latitude, and it is a little remarkable that the *northern boundary of temperate climate*, from causes not yet satisfactorily explained, in like manner rises as it approaches the western coasts of Europe, until it almost reaches the sixtieth degree of latitude. It is as temperate at Edinburgh as in the northern part of Persia. The same phenomenon is observable on the western coasts of America.

Along this great belt, with which the Caucasian race has girdled the earth, we trace the illuminated path of the historical Providence of God. That Providence, in his majestic march to the westward, lingered long upon the lovely shores of the Mediterranean, but all along, the light of his radiant footsteps has grown fainter and fainter towards the north and south, where the nomades of Tartary and the dusky tribes of Africa seem to have been left to the dominion of nature.

The Persians were, in all probability, the primitive nation; but inhabiting a rugged and mountainous country, they were outstripped in civilization by their neighbors who had settled on the rich plains of Chaldea. Yet both countries seem to have been in possession, from the first, of the arts and knowledge and manners of a civilized and intellectual people. The difference was something like that which now exists between the free and hardy mountaineers of the Alps, and the inhabitants of the rich plains of Lombardy.

Nothing that we know of the primitive seats of the human race, gives the least countenance to the theory of a gradual rise from the stupidity of barbarism into civilization and refinement; a theory almost as absurd as the notion that men were originally monkeys, and have gradually ascended in the scale of being.

There is not the least reason to suppose that the Persians, the Chaldeans, the Indians or the Egyptians, ever were barba-

rians. Very simple modes of living were by no means inconsistent with that refinement and elevation of soul, which manifest themselves in the institutions that bless, and the arts which adorn society. The life and manners, of which we have so beautiful a picture in Genesis, may have been universal in the patriarchal ages, when men lived in the presence of God, and the recollections of a miraculous era were still fresh and vivid in the minds of all. Those venerable fathers of the human race ruled their immense families, the germs of great nations, according to laws revealed to them from Heaven, with the aid of councils composed of the elders of the tribe or chiefs distinguished for wisdom and courage. But the Patriarch was not only a ruler, he was also a Priest; and the first care of those progenitors of mankind, was the *worship of God*, which, with its altars, its temples and its sacred music, was itself the *nucleus of a splendid civilization*. An enterprising member of the family might remove with his children, herdsmen and cattle, and pitch his tent under the shade of palm trees beside some fountain in the wilderness. He might remain near enough to the primitive model of patriarchal government, and the primitive seat of Divine worship, to form another little focus of light which would gradually blend with the spreading illumination. Another member of the family might imprudently extend his wanderings so far as to place mountains, seas and deserts, between himself and the centre of the patriarchal civilization, and the unhappy vicissitudes of an inhospitable region, exhaling pestilential miasm. or tenanted by formidable beasts of prey, might gradually efface all ennobling recollections from the minds of his descendants, who would thus degenerate into barbarians.

But there were other causes of degeneracy, besides remoteness from the original seat of civilization. In the ancient world there was no expansive christianity to form a bond of union and sympathy among civilized nations, to pre-

serve a moral life sufficiently vigorous to resist the progress of corruption, and to mitigate the desolating ferocity of war. Its place was imperfectly supplied by *a succession of great Empires.*

While tribes, that had wandered too far from the centre of illumination into inhospitable regions, degenerated into animalism, the Chaldeans, the Indians, and the Egyptians, possessed of the dangerous advantages of an exuberant soil and voluptuous climate, likewise fell from the simple virtue and pure Theism of their Persian ancestors into idolatry and an inconceivable corruption of morals. Such a state of things would probably have been fatal to civilization, had not the mountains of Persia remained a citadel of truth and a home of robust virtues, from which a conquering energy went forth to drive back encroaching barbarism.

There was singular stability in the laws and religion of the Persians. Their country was poor, their manners simple and austere, and they were remarkable for the care which they bestowed upon the education of their children. From these causes the primitive revelation was better preserved among them, than any other people except the Hebrews. Every one knows or ought to know something of that famous philosophy, which has filled so large a space in the history of the human mind. Somewhat corrupted, as it doubtless was, in the time of Zoroaster, it still retained a strong likeness to the true religion. The conflict of the two principles, subordinate to the supreme mind, is in fact substantially recognized by Christianity. The Persian philosophy probably passed into Greece through Asia Minor and Egypt, which latter country became, by means of its extensive commerce, the grand reservoir of the doctrines and science of the eastern nations.

But the custody and propagation of Divine truth was by no means the mission of the Persians. That great work was

allotted to other nations. When civilization was in danger of perishing by the poison of licentiousness, the destructive rage of incessant wars and the inroads of barbarians, the Persian empire brought to its aid a regular administration of comparatively wise and just laws, a venerable priesthood, a chivalrous nobility, and a central power sufficiently strong to form a bond of union, and a common defence to the most civilized portions of the earth.

But if *Christianity* and *liberty* be wanting, all other advantages cannot preserve an empire from decay and final dissolution. I have already remarked that no social superiority can last, in which the whole complex nature of man is not fully provided for. Christianity, which alone fully supplies his moral wants, and liberty, which gives fair play to *all* his powers and propensities, was obviously incompatible with the very qualities which enabled the Persian, the Greek and the Roman empires in succession to protect and extend the ancient civilization.

While the Persian empire was at the height of its glory though vice and slavery were secretly undermining it, a few small tribes around the Mediterranean, either unknown or despised by the "great King" and his magnificent satraps, were slowly but surely laying the foundations of the modern world. These were the Hebrews, the Greeks, the Romans and the Germanic nations.

The Germans belong more especially to modern history, and will be treated of in the next discourse. The great work of preparing the materials of that edifice which now overshadows the world, was parcelled out to the other three nations we have mentioned. To the Hebrews was allotted the custody of moral and religious truth, to the Greeks the empire of reason and imagination, to the iron Romans the power of arms, by which, with their own civil institutions, and the arts, literature and religion of the other two nations,

they were to lay a deep and broad foundation for the Christian civilization. Upon that foundation the free Germans were to build the modern world.

Let us first turn our attention to that wonderful people, who were the bulwark of Europe against Asiatic despotism, and the teachers of mankind in art and literature and philosophy.

The heroic ages of great nations are very much alike in their leading characteristics. In the fervid youth of an intellectual people, such as the Greeks, music and poetry supply the place of science; the glow and vivid coloring of feeling and imagination precede the cold and sharp outlines of accurate narrative, and the forms of heroes and great benefactors of mankind tower aloft into more than mortal grandeur, through the misty but glory-tinted medium of mythical tradition.

The Pelasgi, or aboriginal Greeks, remote from the centre of civilization on the Euphrates, fell into barbarism. After some sparks had been brought from Phœnicia, Lydia, and Egypt, and the lights of knowledge had been rekindled on the shores of Greece, a long period of fermentation and struggle of conflicting elements, preceded the final triumph of intellect over physical force. Wild beasts were numerous and formidable, the seas were infested with pirates, and robbers descended from their strongholds among the mountains to ravage the coasts, where the germs of the new civilization had been planted. Heroes, like Hercules and Theseus, whom we picture to ourselves in all the glory of youthful beauty, matchless strength, and unconquerable fortitude, or great kings, like Minos, generously undertook to subdue those enemies of society. Their achievements were celebrated by the *bards*, who recited their verses beside the watch-fires of predatory bands, in the cottages of peasants, and the palaces of kings. These heroic poems were the

original sources of that literature which has entered so largely into our modern culture.

The early poetry of Greece, as of every other nation was vitally connected with religion, and from the union of the two, sprang that beautiful mythology which has not yet lost its charm for cultivated minds. The affinities between poetry and religion are so strong, that even false taste and false philosophy can effect only a temporary separation. Religious ideas may not indeed show themselves on the surface, but religious or devotional feeling must in a greater or less degree vitalize all true poetry, like the mysterious soul of nature, which, itself unseen, makes its presence known by a thousand glowing forms of life and beauty.

There is no doubt that the aboriginal Greeks acknowledged but one God. This simple and universal faith of the primitive ages was corrupted by the imagination and sensibility, in other words, by poetry encroaching upon, and finally dethroning the understanding. As all men are more or less idolatrous from their very structure, the philosophy of religion might have been wholly banished from the world, had it not been providentially preserved by the peculiar economy of the Hebrews,—a very important, perhaps the most important part of which was the prohibition to make any image or likeness of any thing in heaven above, or the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth.

We have said that all men are idolators. This is only saying, that for every man there is some being that affects his perception, or his imagination, or both, in such a manner as to call forth that intense love which may be termed adoration. Every man of feeling makes an idol of something at some period of his life. The lover idolizes his mistress, the artist worships the creations of his own imagination, the christian adores the divinity in the person of the divine founder of his religion. Every where we see the poetical tendency *idoliz-*

ing the beautiful and divine, that is to say, striving to embody them in living or lifelike forms, which may affect the senses, the feelings and the imagination. No one need be startled by the assertion, that idolatry has been one of the chief sources of our modern culture.

The lively Greek of the heroic ages did not look upon Nature like a modern philosopher of the mechanical school. For him the earth, the air and the waters were peopled by mysterious beings, to whom poetry gave a "local habitation and a name." In a creed which was the offspring, not of cold reason, but of imagination and sensibility, the subordinate powers of nature, clothed in living forms, gradually supplanted the one supreme but incomprehensible source of life and beauty.

We observe further, that heroes and great benefactors of mankind, were supposed to preside after death over the destinies of those whom they had saved by their valor, or enlightened by their wisdom.

From these two sources sprang that wonderful mythology, which was at first merely the aggregate of the modes, in which the mysterious powers of the living world, and the great men of the heroic ages, affected a lively and poetical people, and so far had much truth and beauty in it. Indeed it was the richest, the most glowing, the most suggestive of all the mythical forms which religion has ever taken, and therefore the best fitted to enter largely into intellectual culture, for the readiest mode of access to the dormant powers of the mind lies through the poetical sentiments. The culture of all great nations, as already remarked, has begun with poetry.

The feelings and ideas of the heroic ages of Greece found in Homer, a genius that could give them immortality. The literary controversy, respecting the Homeric poems, which is not yet, and I suppose never can be settled, is not import-

ant to the student of history. For him it is enough to know, that in the time of Pisistratus, these poems were reduced to their present form, and from that period, became the fountains of national enthusiasm, intellectual development and artistic inspiration. By the impulse which they gave to the mind of Greece, they have filled a larger space in the history of human improvement than any other writings except the Scriptures.

That impulse was widened and perpetuated by a variety of concurrent causes. The glorious issue of the struggle in which the little states of Greece defied and overthrew the colossal power of Persia; the subsequent career of Pericles, who, with true Greek versatility, united in his own person the wise statesman, the accomplished orator, the able commander and discriminating patron of letters and the arts; the teachings of Socrates, and above all perhaps the flexibility of that matchless language, which seems to have been made especially for the most intellectual and versatile people on earth, all conspired to bring forth that astonishing array of poets, philosophers, historians and rhetoricians, who conquered the conquerors of the world, and made the Greek literature one of the chief sources of modern culture.

Homer and Eschylus were not more truly the fathers of Epic and Dramatic poetry, than were Aristotle and Plato the masters of all subsequent Philosophers who have been worthy of the name. While the former was chiefly remarkable for that rigorous and scientific method, which gave him the absolute dominion of the human mind in the infancy of modern philosophy, Plato is the great representative of that other extensive class of minds, in which reason, imagination and feeling do not act separately, but in concert, and so mingle in all the processes of thought, that none of its products are the cold syllogistic results of the logical understanding, but assume the imperative form of intuitive belief, and

somewhat of the warm, yet ethereal glow of poetry and passion. As the only faith that is worth anything, is the joint product of reason, hope and love, it is not wonderful that Plato has always been a favorite with Christian philosophers, especially as in parts of his system, his notions of the Trinity, for example, he so remarkably anticipated some of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion.

Yet the Gospel, when first promulged, found no foothold in the opinions of philosophers. The Platonic system was too pure and lofty to retain any hold upon the licentious and unbelieving age which followed the downfall of the Roman Republic, and the deep decay of public and private virtue under the profligate despotism of the Cæsars. It was supplanted by the graceful but shallow materialism of Epicurus, whose reign was scarcely disturbed by the few philosophers, who, from the barren elevation of stoicism, looked down with contempt upon the common feelings of human nature, and the tenderest impulses of the heart.

It is hardly possible to overrate the influence of the Greek language and literature upon the destinies of mankind. They followed the Roman arms to the ends of the earth. Wherever the eagles perched, the masterpieces of Grecian genius soon found an entrance to awaken the powers of the mind, or stimulate a generous emulation.

The Greeks, though politically the subjects, were intellectually the masters of the Romans. That austere and martial people had but little which deserved the name of poetry, philosophy or eloquence, till the Greek models excited a spirit of emulation among them. From that period, Latin literature made rapid advances, and though it never reached the perfection of its prototype, it ranks next to Christianity itself, as an element of modern civilization. But it was not alone through the intermediate agency of its offspring, the Latin, that the Greek literature has helped to form the pres-

ent state of society. We shall find that the revival of the parent literature itself in the latter part of the middle ages, gave an additional and most powerful impulse to modern improvement.

How wonderful are the ways of Providence. Ages on ages of wars, and heroes, and demi-gods, and inferior bards were required to produce a Homer, for the greatest genius can do nothing without fitting materials. That strong stem of heroic poetry, which the genius of the blind beggar first lifted into perennial sunshine, became a great tree and blossomed in the skies, so that the Roman eagles came and rested among its branches, then winging their flight over a prostrate world, sowed the seeds of intellectual culture in the blood and ashes of conquered nations.

This brings us to another set of actors in the mighty drama of history. We have given a brief sketch of the glorious share of the Greeks in developing the divine plan for the education of mankind. Let us turn a little farther to the west, and evoke a dread array of stern and martial figures from the shadowy deep of the past eternity. Their austere countenances, iron mould and haughty tread, under which earth trembles, announce the conquerors of the world.

Rome had her mythic age, and the learned Niebuhr has analyzed her early traditions with that profound and exhaustive research which is characteristic of German inquirers.—But for our present purpose, we are concerned only with her military power and her civil institutions.

He who sees no Divinity in the affairs of men, who recognizes no Providential guidance of nations, will refer the peculiar manifestations of a people to organization, to institutions, to mere external and mechanical causes. But among a people who enjoy any considerable share of freedom, institutions and other external circumstances are rather the effects than the causes of national peculiarities. The truth

lies in the middle, between the opposite extremes of the mechanical and dynamical theories, or rather is made up of both. Individual and national peculiarities are the compound results of inscrutable impulses arising in the mysterious depths of spiritual being, and of external circumstances, acting and reacting in such a manner, that it is impossible to assign to each class of causes their respective shares in the product.

It is stated that, judging from casts, medals and skulls which have been found in particular localities, the Romans must have generally differed from the Greeks in the shape of the head, and it is somewhat remarkable, that the difference is precisely such that, according to the phrenologists, the Roman would have fewer ideas and less sensibility, but far greater intensity of will, than the versatile Greeks. Be this as it may, (it is certainly worthy of investigation) we know that from the first, the Romans were remarkable for their austere, haughty and inflexible temper, their voluntary poverty and contempt of wealth and luxury, and the decisive, remorseless energy with which they crushed and trampled upon all who obstructed their march to universal dominion.

They were men of an *idea*, and that idea was embedded in an iron-bound will, undisturbed by the *variety* of motives which would have alternately reigned in broader and more versatile minds. Nowhere was the *man* ever so completely merged in the *citizen* as at Rome. Nowhere has individuality ever been so utterly annihilated by the one overmastering idea of the State. Sparta may be thought an exception. But the Spartans can scarcely be said to have had any ideas of their own. They were stupified and degraded into semi-barbarians by the most absurd and unnatural institutions that ever enslaved the human mind. They were mere human machines, drilled into a soulless uniformity.

In Rome similar but far greater results were obtained by

the concurrence of free minds. The Roman was the most intensely patriotic of all patriots; he was scarcely conscious of any interest, duty or destiny apart from the great political body of which he was a member. Virtue, among this austere people, was but another name for unconquerable energy and unshaken fortitude, and those qualities were most valued which ministered not to social and domestic happiness, but to the greatness and glory of the Republic.

Of the external sources of the military power of the Romans, perhaps the most important, were slavery and aristocracy. Slaveholders are fiery and overbearing and fond of military life. Accustomed to brook no opposition to their will, and to carry everything by storm, they bring to the management of public affairs the feelings and habits of domestic life. Every free Roman was a privileged person, who considered himself entrusted with the honor and glory of the Republic. Above this class were the haughty patricians, whose leading traits Shakspeare has grouped with such exquisite skill, in the character of Coriolanus, whose unbending pride, disdaining to concede anything to the turbulent rabble he despised, sought refuge from vulgar annoyance in the camp and the field.

Imagine a high-spirited and turbulent democracy of slaveholders guided by a haughty aristocracy, who can keep their places at the head of society only by perpetually diverting the minds of the commons from domestic dissensions to great national enterprises, and it is easy to see that the exuberant activity of such a people must make them the terror and scourge of mankind. Such circumstances infallibly engender a military spirit, and render the foreign policy bold, decisive and overbearing.

Yet as already intimated, all that can be said about external circumstances leaves much in the Roman history unaccounted for, and to be referred to unknown and inscrutable

causes. To the activity and encroaching spirit of a slaveholding democracy, and the fore-sight and prudence of an aristocracy, the Roman government united under Kings and decemvirs, under dictators and consuls, in short, through all the changes of her constitution, a unity of purpose, an inflexible adherence to the same general maxims of policy, and a steady, unconquerable energy, which are absolutely unparalleled, even by those nations where the whole executive authority is lodged in a single hereditary magistrate.

The steady progress of the Roman power during a period of eight hundred years is indeed marvellous, and cannot be accounted for on any ordinary principles. The fierce dissensions, which tore the vitals of the republic, never for a moment interrupted the career of foreign conquest. The very men who, as partizans of Sylla or Marius, drenched the streets of Rome with blood, bore the eagles in triumph over prostrate Asia and Europe. At home they were factious partisans, abroad they were *Romans*, the masters of the world, and filled with the one idea of the greatness of the republic. The fires which raged in the "Demon city," and seemed to threaten her destruction, only quickened her progress to universal empire.

In spite of anarchy and civil war,—in spite of dreadful defeats like that of Cannæ, which would have reduced any other people to despair, consul after consul, generation after generation pursued the same blood-stained path to universal dominion. The ferocity of the Gauls, the genius of Hannibal rolled back the tide, but it only gathered strength for a still more terrible eruption. Victory and defeat were alike in their ultimate results; the tread of the legions was the march of destiny, and every Roman seemed armed with more than mortal might by a consciousness of the stupendous mission of his country.

At the height of her glory, when the spoils of nations

were poured into her lap, and captive monarchs were led in triumphal processions through the streets of the "eternal city," the rage of factions and corruption of manners were preparing the way for that fearful despotism, which finally trampled down all parties into one common abyss of undistinguished slavery. And here the hand of Providence was not less conspicuous than in every other part of that "strange eventful history;" for though the republic could conquer, it required a single despotic arm to consolidate, and hold together that vast and unwieldy dominion.

Before we proceed further with the mission of Rome, let us turn back and trace the history of the primitive revelation, the provision for the *moral* part of our nature. More or less corrupted in all other nations, it was committed to the guardianship of an obscure tribe, of which this precious deposit was, in fact, almost the sole distinction.

Among the monuments of the Hebrews, the book of Job is entitled to especial notice on account of its distinct and peculiar character. There is a breadth, a freedom, a philosophic tone about it, which mark it as a relic of that primitive age before the knowledge of God had passed from the wide field of eastern tradition into the exclusive custody of the Hebrews. The nations had not then fallen into idolatry, nor made it necessary as yet to wall in with the jealous provisions of the Hebrew Theocracy a narrow channel by which the streams of everlasting truth might flow down to Christian ages through the moral wilderness of ancient superstitions. It is probably the oldest book in the world. In the desert tracts of time, which preceded all other extant memorials the drear expanse is broken by this one pure and sparkling fount of philosophic truth, with its clustering palms of oriental poetry. Whether regarded as a narrative of actual facts, or as a sort of moral drama, it beautifully illustrates the manners and belief of the early ages, and abounds with pro-

found thought and sublime imagery, as well as prophetic anticipations of the glorious developments of after times.

The principal scope of this work seems to be the illustration of the important truth, that the misery of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked in this world, should not for a moment unsettle our moral convictions or our confidence in the wisdom and justice of God.

The best men are sometimes the most unhappy, and the sublimest virtues often inhabit the most desolate hearts. Indeed if we consider how often the greatest benefactors of mankind have been rewarded with poverty and contempt, with a life of torture and a shameful death; how often in the noblest natures, constitutional defects of bodily structure, or the nervous diseases induced by the "malady of thought," poison the well-springs of existence; how the very process of exalting and purifying sharpens the moral sensibilities, so that the better a man becomes, the more intensely conscious he is of his remaining imperfections, we may justly conclude that the highest of our race have oft times good reason to exclaim with the apostle of the Gentiles, "if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable."

The book of Job is manifestly designed to teach this important lesson, the very foundation of all religion, that the mysterious facts to which I have referred should not shake our conviction that a just God presides over the destinies of mankind, and that virtue and well-being, vice and ill-being, are connected by the inexorable laws of the universe, but should inspire humility in view of the present limited state of our knowledge, as well as a lively expectation of a future life in which all these anomalies of the present, will be satisfactorily explained. The wisest man on earth finding fault with the Divine government, is like a fly on the surface of a cartoon of Raphael, pronouncing judgment on the whole

matchless performance, from the inequalities within the little circle of his own microscopic vision.

The patriarchal ages of the Hebrews, from the calling of Abraham to the Egyptian bondage, were the period of transition from that primitive and highly civilized era, of which the book of Job is the only surviving *literary* memorial, to that singular economy, which fenced in with the most tremendous sanction a peculiar people from the contagion of error, that was overspreading the earth, and committed to their jealous custody the light from Heaven, which was allowed to be more or less obscured in all other nations, until the way was prepared for its glorious culmination in the Christian dispensation.

Proceeding further, we behold a shepherd of Midian, the refugee of a tribe of slaves, confront a haughty monarch of that magnificent dynasty which built the pyramids; demand in the name of God the liberty of his brethren; finally rescue them from bondage under the most powerful nation of the time; give them a law that yet lives in the moral code and municipal institutions of all enlightened nations, and then ascend a mountain to die alone with his God, and look with his closing eyes upon the splendid inheritance of his people.

The history of the subsequent conquest of the Promised Land must be a great stumbling block in the way of those who pretend to find in the Bible the sickly moral sentimentalism of peace societies and anti-slavery philanthropists. We cannot disguise the fact that the Hebrew dispensation was bloody and terrible, just like all the other mighty evolutions of Divine Providence. The light of Divine knowledge became, as it always does, a consuming fire, and a flaming sword turned every way before the ark of eternal truth. This fact has furnished a favorite cavil to scepticism, but it is strange that any one who believes that there is a God who made and governs the world, should object to the Hebrew

economy for corresponding precisely with a multitude of facts, which, however mysterious they may appear, *actually do happen* in the dominions of a just, all-wise, and all-powerful Being.

There is a fearful as well as a smiling aspect of the Divine government both in nature and history, and it is fit that revelation should exhibit each in its turn. The destroying hosts of Attila and Tamerlane were the "scourges of God, who turned them whithersoever he would as the rivers of water." The storm of war sweeps through a happy and beautiful country. The morning looked out upon green fields, and smiling villages; the evening sheds its "farewell sweet," as if in mockery, upon the dead and dying, and lingers upon the blackened or blazing cottages from which the wretched inhabitants have been driven into the howling waste. Love and terror, life and death, joy and wo strangely jostle each other in this incomprehensible world.

Ye sentimental sceptics, who are shocked by the severity of the God of the Hebrews, what think you of some of the doings of your favorite nature. If many are crushed by the wheels of Providence, how many more are ground to powder by the fearful machinery of the physical world. The earthquake moves on his fiery couch, and the crash of falling cities is mingled with the shrieks of the helpless, and the groans of the dying. The cheerful fruits of industry are suddenly blasted, and famine and misery are the lot of nations. Over broad oceans and lofty mountains the pestilence flies on unseen pinions from city to city, and the deathcart rumbles through grass-grown streets, bearing the remains of vigorous manhood and blooming youth to their long home. The spectres of wo and horror have been guests at every fire-side, inmates of every dwelling, and companions of every bosom. Even the beauty of the earth is a fearful beauty, as of the vines and flowers that wreath a sepulchre.

All great and glorious things the world has had to pay for, and fearful has been the price of heaven's best gifts to man. The fairest plants of human culture have been watered with tears and blood. Under the same Providence from which the Hebrew economy proceeded, modern civilization was ushered in amidst storms; ancient corruptions of society were washed away by the blood-bath of the French revolution, and then we are told that "the new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" shall be born from the fiery agonies of an expiring world.

Such *are* the conditions of our present being, *cant* and cavils to the contrary notwithstanding. The *facts* are immoveable as the everlasting hills, and so desperately intractable that they will not bend to our philosophers' notions of the Divine government.

The Hebrews often went astray and worshipped the gods of other nations, but prophets were raised up from time to time, whose warnings and entreaties brought them back to the right path. The stream of prophetic inspiration seems to have flowed most freely just before the Babylonish captivity, and to have been afterwards withdrawn when it was no longer needed. The religious institutions of the Hebrews derived fresh vigor from the destruction of their national independence.

At the height of her power and glory, under the successors of David, Israel often fell into the idolatry of surrounding and inferior tribes. But after she had sunk into an insignificant dependency of the Persian, the Greek and the Roman empires in succession, her political degradation made her cling more closely to her religious superiority, as the last resource of nationality, and stubbornly resist any intrusion of the philosophy or religion of her conquerors;—spiritual pride thus absorbing and deriving new vigor from love of

country, degenerated into bigotry and fanatical hatred of other nations, unparalleled in history.

There is a striking contrast between the mission and the character of the Hebrews. The most precious jewel was deposited in the most ungainly casket. The institutions of other nations are more or less the reflection of the national character. Those of the Hebrews are foreign to them,—as if they had been made the unwilling or unconscious guardians of a treasure, of the nature and value of which they had very erroneous or inadequate notions. How strange that the most narrow-minded and barbarous tribe which could be ranked at all among the civilized nations of antiquity, had the only pure system of religion, the only rational code of morals! In these respects they were as far superior to the Greeks, as the Greeks were superior to them in everything else. While the moral systems of the wisest people of antiquity have long since perished, or been preserved only as examples of philosophical ingenuity, that of the Hebrews still lives in the hearts and daily business of men in all civilized nations.

The Hebrews had the custody, not only of the great truth of the unity of God, but also of that *moral law* which raises man from the dominion of nature into a higher dignity, involving a mightier destiny for good or evil, than the other animals. But man feels that he has violated, or fallen short of the requirements of that higher law. The Hebrew dispensation foreshadowed, by a multitude of significant symbols, the means appointed by God for healing the breach between the fallen creature and the inexorable law of that *moral government*, of which he had been made the subject by the *superiority of his endowments*. What reasons in the constitution of the universe made it necessary that a Divine victim should quench in his own blood the flaming sword of Eternal Justice, we cannot tell, but certain it is that the notion of *propitiation by sacrifice* is as old as any authentic

traditions of mankind, and as universal as the belief of a God or a future life. This brings us to the last and greatest scene in the drama of ancient history.

The mission of Rome, as I have already intimated, was to lay a broad and deep foundation for the Christian civilization. This she was to do by her own municipal institutions, which I shall have occasion to notice more particularly, when I come to the history of the middle ages; by her civil laws, which were gradually matured into that unrivalled code, to which we may trace most of the improvements of modern jurisprudence, and by carrying the Greek and Latin literature and all the arts and refinements of civilized life, over all the barbarous and semi-barbarous countries which were conquered by her arms.

It was that very remarkable period, when the empire had fairly begun to reduce to order and consolidate into a firm foundation for the modern world all the vast materials which the conquering republic had brought together, which was chosen for the introduction of Christianity. The civilized world, from the Tweed to the Euphrates, reposed under the wings of the imperial eagle. All factions and provincial quarrels had been crushed by a single despotic authority, and one might travel, without interruption by hostile armies or national boundaries, from one end of the earth to the other.

The moral and intellectual condition of mankind was very remarkable. The Greek philosophy was bringing into contempt among enlightened men, the gods and goddesses of the old mythologies, and that deep decay of the popular superstitions had commenced, which in the next age progressed so far, that a Lucian could with impunity set the world to laughing at the beggarly condition of their dethroned majesties of Olympus. This was partly owing to the liberality of the Roman government, which, by permitting the incongruous superstitions of the many nations subject to her sway to be placed

side by side, brought the whole Pantheon into contempt, by filling it with squabbling regiments of national divinities.

As usual in such cases, the old forms of religion had given space to an earthly and sensual philosophy, which might be compressed into the maxim, "eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow ye die." This philosophy might suit the thoughtless and the profligate, yet there were doubtless many deep and earnest natures, to whom this was indeed an hour of darkness and moral desolation.

The temple of Janus was closed, for the sounds of civil war had died away along the shores of Epirus, and the awful majesty of the all-conquering Republic still hovered over the wall of steel, which fenced the civilized world from the deserts of Parthia and the forests of Germany. The Roman power had nearly reached its zenith, and the iron virtues of the Republic began to soften under the influence of Greek literature, eastern luxury and universal peace. The municipal institutions and laws of Rome, and the literature of the Greek and Latin languages, were beginning to mould all the subject nations into one homogeneous civilization, and thus build up all around the glorious Mediterranean (the middle of the earth) a magnificent theatre for new and mightier evolutions of the purposes of God and the destinies of man.

Such was the juncture which had been chosen in the counsels of Infinite Wisdom for the appearance of the Divine Deliverer.

Christianity in its origin was quiet and unobtrusive, like all other great and lasting revolutions. Their beginnings are in obscure and silent recesses, and not until their progress brings them in contact with that upper crust of custom, prejudices and old institutions, which time has hardened into stone, do they begin to shake the world.

An obscure person, whose former life was little known even by his first disciples, issued from an insignificant city of

an insignificant province of the vast Empire of Rome. He walked up and down in Judea healing the sick, consoling the distressed, enduring hunger, poverty and reproach. He was never known to laugh, but he was seen to weep, and he chose the darkness of night and the solitude of rocks and deserts, to pray to his Father. Gathering upon the mountain side or the barren sea-shore, the humble multitude, whom the sanctimonious shepherds of Israel had forgotten in their servility to rank and wealth and power, he taught them a lofty morality at war with the strongest propensities of man, in concise, pregnant, comprehensive maxims, which have never been paralleled. Lifted upon the Cross to suffer a death of shame and agony, when he knew that his work was done, his soul rushed forth in that cry of doom, "*It is finished,*" which shook the frame of nature, and in the darkness that followed, an old era took its flight forever.

I say nothing of the *doctrines* of Christianity. It is not my province. But the Divinity of Christ, his life, his death, and the purport of both are not mere dogmas ; they are facts or they are fables. If it be true that the Divine Word has descended from heaven, clothed himself in human nature, become the second representative of the human family, and quenched in his own blood the flaming sword of inexorable Law ; if he has gone before us as our elder brother through shame and poverty and sorrow and death, to be crowned the conqueror of our last enemy, and ascend on high leading captivity captive, it is plain that here are facts, in comparison with which all other facts are insignificant. In comparison with this glorious embodiment of the poetry of religion, what are all the speculations of philosophy, what are all the cold calculations of prudential morality !

On these facts, as an eloquent writer has observed, the world may be said to have had its foundation for nearly two thousand years, and in them we must look for the chief sources of the

peculiar glories and advantages of the Christian civilization. Surely it is worth while for every man to give these facts an earnest and impartial examination. If the gospel history is even *substantially* true, it is infinitely the most important part of history; properly, the central and loftiest point, from which all history should be looked at.

Here we must look for the fountain-head of that only true Democracy, the essence of which is love, and which teaches us to respect the rights of all men, without regard to any distinctions whatever, either natural, artificial or conventional. If, in the distribution of spiritual favors, the mightiest monarch is nothing more than the humblest of his subjects, neither is the sage who measures the stars anything more than the clown who "walks and wots not what they are." All other dignities are lost in the one great dignity of rational, responsible *man*. A Chimborazo would seem no greater than a mole-hill to an observer in the sun, and to pursue the figure, as the same sunbeam that gilds the tall cedar upon the mountain cliff, kisses the dew-drop from the harebell in the lowest valley, so the light of the Gospel visits alike the palace and the hovel, and its blessings descend alike upon every age and rank and condition of society.

Christianity, as embodied in the precepts and example of its founder, is peculiarly the antagonist of social injustice, and fixes our attention more strongly upon the equality than the inequality of men. What were the trappings of rank and wealth and power to Him who knew the hearts of all men. He chose his Apostles not from the Sanhedrim, but from the humblest of the multitude, and the weak and despised things of the earth were made to confound the mighty. He was the friend of publicans and sinners, and shared with the wretched the shame and miseries of poverty and contempt. He threw a light from Heaven into the lowest abysses of guilt and misery, and brought his message of hope and salvation

to the vilest of earth's outcasts. Enumerating the miracles by which he proved his Divine mission, he mentions as the last and crowning wonder, "that the poor have the Gospel preached to them."

I do not mean that the Christian religion is in itself more favorable to one *form* of government than another. It certainly does not, as has been absurdly claimed for it, give any direct sanction to democratic institutions. But so far as its true spirit prevails, it tends to diminish the burdens and increase the benefits of all government. Genuine liberty implies that justice is secured to all and each, that no man however humble is subjected to any restraints, which are not demanded by the equal rights of others. I say nothing about the *general good*, which is altogether too vague, and has too often been the plea for oppressing individuals and minorities.

Now the entire theory of equal rights is compressed into that maxim; "Do to others as ye would that they should do to you;" or that second of the two great commandments of the law; "Love your neighbor as yourself." As already remarked, the character of Christ was a living embodiment of these two precepts, and whoever loves him will cultivate the same dispositions. It is obvious that just in proportion as men voluntarily yield that respect to the rights of others, which is the object of law to enforce, do they diminish the necessity for strong government, and weaken the apologies for despotism.

I will briefly notice a part of the historical evidence of Christianity which has been the theme of much controversy, arising, as it seems to me, from a want of precision in the use of terms—the source of so many famous disputes. It has been said that a miracle is a violation of those laws of nature which have been ascertained by an unalterable experience. Now the argument, that those books which tell us that miracles have been a part of the experience of mankind, are false,

because they contradict the universal experience of mankind, is so obviously a begging of the question, and its fallacy has been so often exposed, that it would be folly to notice it further. But I think there is some confusion of ideas in the assertion that a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature. By this expression, "the laws of nature," I understand those relations between antecedents and consequents, established by the *will* of the Supreme Lawgiver, relations which in general produce *uniform* results, that His creatures may know how to regulate their own conduct, and to estimate the forces around them. But an interruption of the *usual* uniformity of nature, the exact definition of a miracle, is not necessarily a violation of those laws. It merely requires an extraordinary disposition of the same substances and forces which have covered the earth and garnished the heavens with wonders, that do not confound us, simply because they are common. When Christ turned the water into wine, he was under no necessity to create a single new force or set aside any of the relations of cause and effect, but simply to dispose the materials, all of which were at hand, in a much shorter time than usual, for nature is doing in a few months, all over the vine-clad hills of France and Germany, precisely what the Divine Chemist effected in a moment.

The resuscitation of a dead man is no greater miracle than the entire renewal of the living body, which physiologists tell us is effected every few years. We are, every now and then, startled by some surprising discovery of the hitherto unknown capabilities of nature, and all the occult properties and laws required for bringing about that most stupendous of miracles—the resurrection, not of an individual only, but of the entire population of the grave—may be now in existence, and only waiting for Divine power to make the necessary *arrangements* to bring them into play.

But the truth is, that much more importance has been

attached to the argument from miracles than it deserves. The miracles ascribed to Christ and his apostles, however conclusive to those who witnessed them, are no evidence to us, until *by other means*, we have established the truth of the writings which record them,—that is to say, until we have proved all that we wish to prove. They cannot weigh a feather with any clear-headed inquirer, who does not find in Christianity a supply of his own moral wants, the proper and wholesome food of his own spiritual nature and the source of countless blessings to society. A syllogism may suffice for a single barren proposition; a vast system of life-giving truth like Christianity draws to its support a variety of independent, but mutually corroborating testimonies. Combining the early monuments of Christianity and the evidence which may be drawn from the history of the Christian civilization, with those convictions that spring up in every healthy soul, when its higher faculties are aroused into activity, we have an edifice which may defy the assaults of sceptical philosophy.

One mind will attach greater weight to one portion of this converging evidence; another to another, according to mental constitution or early habits of thinking. It is probable that for the majority of enlightened believers at the present day, the key-stone of the arch which spans the gulf between earth and heaven, is that sort of persuasion in which deep feeling has a much larger share than cold logic. Light alone without heat may play upon its surface, but will never reach the deepest truths. The cold glitter of the logical understanding discloses a desert of rock and ice, where the moral nature would starve, but the warmth of love pierces to the germs of life and beauty that are hidden below, and covers the earth with the bowers of poetry and the fruits of Paradise.

Mark how the warm*faith of a loving soul melts the ice

with which the wintry philosophy of scepticism wraps the dwellings of the departed. He who has stood by the grave of a dear wife or child, and while the hot tears have fallen upon the clay which wrapped the form of one who had been to him the life of life,—has recollected that the Son of God himself died and rose again, as the first fruits of them that sleep in the dust, and has looked across the dark valley and beheld a glorious morning break over the dreary earth, and that loved one arise and stand upon a renovated world, in the radiant glow of immortal youth and beauty,—has a witness within himself of the truth of religion, to which all miracles and other historical evidences whatsoever are merely subsidiary.

The most indubitable miracle of early Christianity was the heroic self-devotion of its first propagators. The Apostle of the Gentiles, of all mere men the sublimest example of moral heroism, travelled from place, supporting himself and his companions by the labor of his own hands, and preaching the truth without fee or reward; well assured, that in whatsoever city he entered, bonds and afflictions awaited him. He fought with wild beasts at Ephesus; he braved the cruelty of the pagans and the hatred of his own countrymen; he stood undazzled amid the classic glories of Athens and the wonders of Grecian art, and proclaimed the new doctrine, unmoved by the sneers of the gayest, the most refined, the most intellectual people on earth. Dragged in chains before the proconsuls of Asia, he made them tremble on their judgment seats; he planted the cross upon the seven hills, at the very gates of the vast palaces of those terrible Cæsars, who made the world tremble from the borders of Ethiopia to the shores of the German Ocean; and crowned his glorious life by a cruel death, amidst the ferocious sports of the amphitheatre.

I need not dwell upon the history of the new religion, which

steadily gained ground, overthrowing temples and altars, until the eagle of imperial Rome veiled his eye of fire before the *Cross*; and reverently taking in his talons that ensign of a spiritual conqueror, bore it in triumph to the ends of the earth.

We now, I trust, have a general view of the laws, the institutions, the literature and religion which were brought together by Rome, and consolidated into a broad foundation for the Christian civilization. One more element was wanting.—It was necessary that the principle of unity which had heretofore confined the human faculties within narrow limits to a few well defined objects, and had merged the man in the citizen or subject, should give place to liberty, to a wider range of individual and national development,—a development which has been tumultuous and disorderly enough, as will appear from the next discourse.

This page in the original text is blank.

II.

NIGHT AND MORNING.

This page in the original text is blank.

NIGHT AND MORNING.

IN our hasty progress through the wilderness of history, we will be guided by great landmarks, and fly from one mountain-top to another, whence views may be obtained of boundless regions sunlit by Divine philosophy; leaving it to inquirers of greater leisure, learning and ability, to explore the intermediate valleys.

The last discourse brought us to the time when Christianity became the religion of Rome—a period which has been fixed upon as the dividing line between ancient and modern history.

The adventurer in Central America, after climbing over range after range of volcanic hills, rising one above another, at length stood upon the dividing summit from which he could see both oceans at once. Turning from the blue Atlantic, its storms and its islands of tropical beauty, before him lay the dark-heaving Pacific, rolling away under the cloud of immensity to those glorious climes, where the dreams of the west had located the paradise of earth. So, at the present stage of our inquiry, we stand upon the stone, that Daniel saw cut out of the mountain without hands, now grown into a sky-piercing pinnacle, overlooking the ancient and the modern world. Behind us are the fairy isles of the ancient civilization; before us another part of the ocean of eternity, where we may trace the courses of richly freighted argosies, some of which have sunk under the waves of time, while others are still ploughing their way into the boundless future, towards what final destiny is known only to Him whose eye

can pierce the clouds and darkness which rest upon that unknown deep.

The political triumph of Christianity, under Constantine and his successors, was fatal to its purity. The alliance of Church and State has always engendered moral corruption and ecclesiastical tyranny. Even before the conversion of Constantine, the love and humility which distinguished the founders of religion, were giving place to intolerant zeal and fierce disputes about dogmas that no mortal ever could understand.

The first Christians had been content to worship Christ as divine, without clearly defining the inscrutable relations between the Father and the Son. The warm glow of love and devotion could dispense with a rigorous metaphysical accuracy, which in truth, from the very nature of the subject, was unattainable. The attempts of philosophic theologians, from time to time, to give more scientific precision to the Christian doctrine upon this subject, paved the way to the quarrel between Arius and Athanasius, which was finally decided in favor of the latter by the sword of the civil authority. Profane wits have made it matter of jest, that two Greek words, differing only in a single letter, by which the two parties vainly endeavored to designate something beyond the reach of the human faculties, divided the church and convulsed the empire.

As human language is not flexible enough for distinctions too subtle to be grasped by the human understanding, it is not surprising that the best writers, and even the same writer, could be quoted on both sides of the Arian controversy. In attempting to fix a fluctuating abstraction, which would not bear the chains of a definition, the language of men might incline to the one side or the other, according to the point of view from which they endeavored to form to themselves a distinct notion of what was in itself inconceiv-

able. There is, in fact, no substantial distinction, such at least as the human mind is capable of apprehending, between the doctrine of Arius and that of the Nicene council.

Meanwhile, that free and ethereal essence, which had hitherto bound Christian societies together, warming each heart with fire from Heaven, began to *crystalize*, if I may be allowed the expression, into a *Church*, with an organization strong enough to withstand the storms that were about to burst upon the empire, and shelter from their fury some remnants of the ancient civilization.

The primitive equality of the humble presbyters gave place to a regular graduation of episcopal rank, which, corresponding with the distribution of the civil authority, was crowned by the patriarchal sees of Rome and Constantinople. Under the later emperors the episcopal authority in the corporate cities was not confined to spiritual matters. This is a fact to which I wish to call the especial attention of the reader. I have already remarked, that one of the great elements of civilization which the Roman empire bequeathed to the modern world, was her municipal institutions, in other words, cities engaged in various branches of industry, with a regular, and to some extent an independent police. In the latter years of the empire, the chief power in many of the towns fortunately fell into the hands of the bishops, who by their moral power over the barbarians, were enabled in a great measure to protect the capitals of their dioceses from the ravages of the northern invaders. Thus, under the sheltering wing of the Christian church, the municipal institutions of Rome survived the wreck of the empire, to become, as we shall see hereafter, the *germs of the modern Democracy*. Thus, the church, at first supported by the state, was finally enabled to repay the debt, by protecting civil society from utter disorganization.

The simplicity of the early worship was supplanted by a

splendid ritual, adapted to strike the imaginations of our barbarous ancestors, part of which was borrowed from the pagan temples, but was none the worse for that—any more than the classic architecture of the buildings themselves, many of which were converted into Christian churches. Music, painting, sculpture, architecture, ceremonies—what are all these things but modes in which men strive to give expression to the deep sense of beauty and sublimity, which often swells their souls with emotions too vast and too indefinite for articulate utterance.

It need not surprise us that even Christianity could not regenerate the Roman people, from whom all freedom and energy departed under the ruthless tyranny of the Cæsars. Every corrupt society and every absolute despotism may reach a stage of disease, in which no remedy can be effectual without an infusion of new life and energy from some external source. Moral and intellectual culture, which gradually softens and regulates the robust energies of barbarous freedom, only adds to the weakness of enervate and spiritless slavery.

I have before remarked that, as the preservation of the natural body requires that fair play be given to *all* its functions, so the health and durability of society of the body politic, requires a free development of *all* its capabilities. In the rear of the moral and intellectual chambers of the brain, are the equally God-created organs of the passions and propensities, and without a proportionate energy of these propelling forces of humanity, which give fixedness and intensity to the will, the former make but a feeble character. The moral part of our nature finds its most wholesome food in the Christian religion, the intellectual and semi-intellectual faculties feed upon science and literature, the passions and propensities grow strong in the eager pursuit and acquisition of wealth, fame, power, domestic pleasures, and the endless

variety of objects that minister to worldly enjoyment. Now the element which was wanting in the Roman empire, and the progressive evolution of which is the key of modern history, was *liberty*, which is nothing more nor less than a free and harmonious development of the *whole man*, as an individual and as a member of society. The glorious facts of modern history, the soul-stirring grandeur and mighty progress of the Christian civilization, have been produced by great energy of the various properties of our nature, involving perpetual antagonism; inasmuch as power of every sort is infinitely expansive, and incessantly strives for absolute mastery.

It is true that the ideal perfection of man and society, in short, of every organization, consists in the unbroken *harmony* of all the forces acting in it; but then there are all sorts of harmony, from the jingling of a jews-harp to the music of the spheres; and unless all the chords of the spiritual harp, from which a Divine hand extracts the music of humanity, were at once miraculously replaced, by which the idea of progress would be excluded, discord must intervene between the lower and the higher harmony. That moral music of humanity was destined to rise through the trumpet-blasts of war, the thunder-drum of revolution, the crash of falling empires, and even the death-song of dissolving worlds, to that lofty anthem, which shall roll forever through the star-fretted arches of the "palace of eternity."

The Roman empire had done its allotted work, in laying a deep and broad foundation for the Christian civilization, and now the deadening unity of an absolute despotism was to give place to tumultuous life, to spontaneity, to *Liberty*. Let us turn to those regions, whence the infusion of barbarous freedom and energy was to be poured into the flaccid veins of the Roman body.

The people who, from time immemorial, had inhabited all

the northern and western parts of Europe, may be distinguished into the Celtic and German nations. The Celts, who inhabited the British isles, Spain and the greater part of France, seem to have had more fire and vivacity than the Germans; yet so great was the similarity, that a picture of the manners of any one of the numerous tribes included under these two general appellations, would answer with little variation for the whole. The Gauls, a Celtic tribe, three centuries before Christ, carried their arms into Greece and Italy, and even took the city of Rome, but as they were impelled, rather by a restless love of war and plunder, than by the desire of making permanent conquests, they were easily bought off, and the republic was saved from irretrievable ruin. Their mode of fighting was marked by the extreme of savage ferocity, and they rushed upon their enemies, less with the courage of soldiers, than with the fury of madmen. They formed the main strength of the army of Hannibal, and it tasked to the utmost the unrivalled skill and resources of Julius Cæsar to subdue these fierce barbarians. But they were subdued—Spain, Gaul and Britain became Roman provinces, made great advances in civilization, and adopted to a great extent the Latin tongue, which, more or less corrupted by provincialisms and admixture of native idioms, gave rise to what are called the Romance languages.

Far other and mightier destinies were reserved for the German tribes. Under this general name I include the Gothic and Vandalic nations, who, emigrating at an early period from Scandinavia, took possession of the country lying between the Baltic and the Black seas. Here they mixed to such an extent with their neighbors of the Slavonic family, that the northern limits of ancient Germany are somewhat indefinite.

While the Celts, as already remarked, were subdued by the arms and civilized by the laws and municipal institutions

and the literature of Rome, the Germans maintained their rude independence. Though often defeated by the legions, it sometimes came to their turn to exact a terrible revenge, and national pride still dwells upon the name of Herman or Arminius, as it has been Latinized, who decoyed a Roman army into the depths of his native forests, and destroyed it utterly.

As our American liberty had its origin in the German forests, we may dwell with some detail upon the manners of our ferocious ancestors. Imagine a village of wooden huts upon the margin of a river, surrounding a building of greater size but equally rude construction, in which the councils and wild revels of the tribe are held. A body of men of tall stature and noble forms, some on foot, some on horseback, their flaxen locks falling upon their shoulders, their sanguine complexions glowing with health, their clear blue eyes lighted up with the animation of the chase, and armed with long spears and bows and arrows, leave the small patch of cultivated ground, and plunge into the trackless forest in pursuit of the deer and wild boar. In the evening they return loaded with game, the women prepare a mighty feast, and the warriors take their seats around the rude table on which it is spread. Beside them are their swords, and their drinking cups made of the skulls of enemies they have slain in battle. Having satisfied their savage appetites, they fill their ghastly goblets with home-brewed beer, or with the fiery wines which they have brought away from their last foray into Gaul or Italy. Then ensue fierce quarrels in which swords clash and blood flows, and the drowsy ear of night is vexed with a hideous uproar of revelry and rage.

Take another scene. The chiefs have recommended some warlike enterprise, and the great council of the tribe, in which all the warriors who have reached the age of maturity, have an equal voice, has met to deliberate upon the mea-

sure. An orator rises, and sets forth with rude but powerful eloquence the wrongs of other times, or the glory and booty to be gathered in the Roman provinces. He is answered by a fierce clashing of swords and shields, and the shouts of his approving audience. Then to inflame the ardor of the warriors, the bards sing the exploits of Odin and the ancient heroes, and promise to all who fall in battle, an immediate entrance into the star-paved dwelling of the Gods. In a storm of frenzied enthusiasm, the crowd rushes into the dark forests and in the awful twilight of that natural temple a mighty fire is kindled, on which the priests offer human sacrifices to the God of war. The whole tribe then prepare to remove, taking with them their families and as much of their property, as they can find means of transporting.

When they were about to meet the enemy, the Germans were in the habit of placing their women and children within a circle formed of their carts and wagons. If their husbands and brothers were cut to pieces, the women sometimes maintained the fight with masculine courage, and when all hope was at an end, saved their freedom and honor by putting an end to their own lives.

The German chiefs were freely chosen by the people, and though birth was not entirely disregarded, the principal grounds of preference were superior courage and ability. Their power seems to have been limited to leading the warriors to battle, and presiding in the popular assemblies, to which all important measures were submitted.

It forms no part of the plan of these essays to follow in detail the frequent inroads of the German tribes upon the declining empire, nor that final inundation which well nigh swept away the humanity and civilization of the ancient world. The struggles of the expiring empire were tremendous, and sometimes, as on the plains of Chalons for example,

revived the recollection of her former glory. When she finally sunk under the repeated blows of her inexorable assailants, Europe presented a scene of wo and conflagration and bloodshed and ruffian violence, such as no pen can describe, nor any imagination conceive. The world resounded with the shouts of licentious and blood-thirsty savages, and the shrieks of their helpless victims. Art, learning, refinement seemed to have perished forever in that deluge of barbarism.

A considerable period after the fall of the western empire is almost a blank in history. The dim gigantic forms of men and things flit shadowy through the night, for a time untouched even by that golden aurora of mythical poetry which always heralds the dawn of authentic history. But happily for mankind, religion survived the general ruin, and when the smoke and dust-clouds that hovered over the wrecks of a demolished world began to disperse, the first glimmer of returning light discloses the dove of Christianity winging her flight over that wild, weltering chaos, with the olive-branch in her mouth, and shaking from her heavenly plumage the seeds of a new and mightier civilization. As of old, when the spirit of God moved upon the great deep, green islets, emerging from the dreary waste, spring up in myrtle bowers of poetry and art, and then the broad, firm earth, begins to appear, teeming with the germs of that vigorous growth, which in after ages was to yield the peaceable fruits of order and liberty, of productive industry and national prosperity. Let us rapidly trace the progress of these changes before entering upon the great revolutions of modern society.

As the literature of Greece conquered the Romans, so the religion of Rome triumphed over the barbarians. Even in that enfeebled and corrupt society, which was overrun by the northern invaders, enough of moral and intellectual power

remained to assert the rightful supremacy of mind over physical force. Some of the German tribes had been converted to Christianity in their native forests by Arian missionaries. Nevertheless, had the empire been overthrown at once by the first great irruption from the northern hive, the triumph of the barbarians might have been fatal to civilization. But the struggle was fortunately protracted; many of the barbarians even enlisted in the legions, and each successive swarm that poured down upon the empire found multitudes of their own countrymen who had adopted the manners and religion of the conquered provinces. Mixing among a Christian people and intermarrying with the subject provincials, or those of their own countrymen who had been converted to Christianity; witnessing the monastic austerities, which to their sensual and superstitious souls appeared miraculous; admiring the imposing ritual of the churches, the dignity and unity of the hierarchy, the zeal, piety and learning of many of the clergy, the German tribes who established themselves in the conquered provinces, were all, by one means or other, brought under the influence of religion. Satisfied with their undisputed martial superiority, they the more willingly acknowledged the moral and mental advantages of the conquered, and knowing that they would always be masters of their teachers, they would be less reluctant to learn from them than from rivals in military prowess.

Many of the chiefs may have professed religion from motives of policy, hoping to find in the attachment of the subject provincials—who, notwithstanding the wanton destruction of life and property, were still, in many parts of Europe, superior in wealth and numbers to their conquerors,—the means of curbing the pride and turbulence of their own refractory clansmen. Others were persuaded by their Christian wives to lend a willing ear to the teachers of religion.

Whatever might be the motives of the chief, his example was followed by all his warriors.

It is difficult to estimate how much the modern world is indebted to female influence, exerted at this critical period in favor of a religion which finds its most congenial soil in the heart of woman. The history of the world might have been totally different from what it has been, but for Clotilda, the christian wife of the terrible Clovis, chief of the Salian Franks. By the conversion of her husband from heathenism, she was chiefly instrumental in bringing over to the side of the true religion the whole of that warlike tribe, who were afterwards the victorious defenders of the Christian civilization against the pagan Saxons and the Mohammedan Arabs. It will be recollected that to female influence must also be attributed the introduction of Christianity among the Anglo-Saxons.

It required ages for the Christian religion, already obscured by superstition, to effect any *appreciable* change in the moral character of the barbarians. But the regard which they paid to the inviolable sanctity of religious institutions, of the churches, the monasteries and the persons of the ecclesiastics, was productive of very important results.

We shall have frequent occasion to observe how even the errors and excesses of men are laid under contribution by Providence for the promotion of beneficent purposes. To speak with greater precision, profound principles of human nature to meet particular exigencies of society, are developed with a power which is sure to run into excesses, and are embodied in institutions, which in a long course of time, especially after they have done serving the purposes for which they were intended by Providence, become incrustated with manifold perversions and abuses,—the inevitable results of the imperfection of human nature. There is no better illustration of these remarks than the history of monasteries.

Asceticism, the soul of monastic institutions, is deeply founded in nature and truth. In some form or other, it has appeared among the devotees of every religious system, from the Hindoo fakir, who stands motionless for years until his body is enclosed in a matted mass of vegetation, to the Calvinistic puritan, who proscribes all those delights of the senses and imagination which may divert the mind from the contemplation of divine things. This self-immolation, if confined to a sincere desire and constant effort, with Divine assistance, to bring our senses and our passions into subordination to the law of our highest well-being, is right and proper. Transcending these limits, it may degenerate into that strange kind of spiritual ambition, which supported Simon Stylites on his pillar for so many years, exposed to the heat and storms of the Syrian deserts.

Notwithstanding the absurd excesses of a few, I am not sure that we ought to censure the mode, in which asceticism generally manifested itself in the early church. Many persons of warm devotional feelings, disgusted with the vices then prevalent, and desirous to devote themselves wholly to the service of God, retired to the deserts of Upper Egypt and Syria, and spent their lives in prayer, mortification and hard work. Perhaps we take a little too much upon ourselves, when we pronounce these men misguided enthusiasts. Men's ideas of duty may in different conditions of society manifest themselves in different modes. If St. Anthony chose to live upon roots which he raised with his own hands, while furnishing an asylum to many poor creatures who were driven into the deserts by oppression and want, I do not know that any one had a right to complain. On the other hand, if it should appear that monastic institutions were extremely useful in the sixth century, it by no means follows that they should be revived in the nineteenth.

The ascetic spirit, first strongly developed in the east,

spread rapidly over the Christian world ; and the dreadful disorders, which followed the downfall of the western empire, drove into the monasteries many men of high moral feelings and cultivated minds, who could have no peace or self-respect in a state of society, where brute force was the law, and physical qualities alone were regarded. The religious houses became the secure repositories of the ancient learning ; and one of the principal occupations of the monks was copying manuscripts. In this way were preserved the Bible, and the literary remains of antiquity, which, after social order had been at least partially reëstablished, were brought forth from their hiding places, and awakened the intellect of the Germanic nations. The monasteries were useful in other respects.—Schools and hospitals were often connected with them. The vast property which they acquired by the donations of superstition and remorse, was, at least in the earlier ages, chiefly devoted to charitable uses, and at a later period, their lands furnished places of refuge from the tyranny of the feudal barons.

Meanwhile the “ eternal city ” became the centre of a new spiritual dominion, which pervaded and gradually subdued the empire of physical force. Though many of the secular clergy were corrupt and ignorant enough, the ecclesiastical state, with the pope at its head, was undoubtedly the stronghold of intellect and morals in their long warfare with ignorant and ferocious animalism. The little learning of the time was almost monopolized by the ecclesiastics, who alone had sufficient power over the minds of the barbarians to restrain their passions, and vindicate the supremacy of intellect over physical force.

In this connection we must not overlook the important fact, that the Latin continued to be everywhere the language of the Church service, and of all ecclesiastical proceedings. Those walls of partition, which the rude dialects of the

German tribes erected between the nations of Western Europe, might have been for ages impervious barriers to the diffusion of knowledge, had not the necessities of the church preserved a common medium of intercourse between the members of that great spiritual commonwealth, which pervaded the entire Christian world. The liturgy, the scriptures, the writings of eminent theologians, the decrees of provincial synods and general councils were all in Latin, and thus the clergy, the most influential body of men in all the Christian countries, were obliged to know something of that language, and became, to that extent at least, identified with the protection and encouragement of learning. One of the best, perhaps the very best, means of mental discipline is the study of a language of very scientific structure and great compass of inflection.

As already intimated, many of the cities, under the protection of their bishops, survived the ruin of the empire, and though their importance was very much diminished, they preserved till happier times, some vestiges of their former prosperity and refinement. They were small points of light, scarcely visible for ages through the darkness that surrounded them, but destined, at a subsequent period, to become the centres of a glorious radiation of intelligence and liberty.

Here we have the rudiments of a robust, progressive and diversified civilization. The fierce independence and undisciplined energies of the German masters, the remnants of ancient institutions and manners, preserved by the subject provincials, and the moral power of the church, restraining violence, protecting the weak, gradually taming the fierce passions of the conquerors, and in general asserting the supremacy of mind over physical force. In that seething mass of blood and ashes, in which the ancient civilization had been trodden out, were sown broadcast the seeds of a new and better order of things. Those seeds had scarcely begun to

germinate, when a new and terrible power arose in the east, which poured over Asia and Africa a resistless torrent of fiery valor, swept away the Gothic kingdom of Spain, and descending like an avalanche from the summits of the Pyrenees, was stayed in its course by Karl the Hammer and his warlike Franks, who snatched Europe and civilization from the paralyzing grasp of the Moslem domination.

The Arabs, to whom we are indebted for much of our knowledge, were undoubtedly a noble and intellectual people. Even the robbers of the desert have always been remarkable for hospitality, a free, magnanimous spirit, and a dignified simplicity of manners, that reminds the traveller of those beautiful pictures of patriarchal life which we find in the Bible. In the Arabian peninsula, the peculiar spirit and striking features of oriental society have always been more fully developed, and more strongly marked than in any other eastern country. In those primitive seats of the human race, a burning sun, a brilliant sky, the strong contrasts of beauty and barrenness, the awful solitudes of black rocks and limitless sands, the sparkling fountains shaded by palm trees, the pastoral valleys and tropical bowers, that load the gales with fragrance, the frequent revolutions and romantic vicissitudes of individuals, the vestiges and recollections of a glorious antiquity and a splendid civilization, all combined to produce a character unknown in the west, at the period of which we have been speaking, in any of its most beautiful and striking qualities. These qualities were least diluted by foreign admixtures among the Arabs, for the simple reason, that they alone, of all the eastern nations, had been able at all times, to maintain their independence.

The foundation, or rather the vital principle, of those beautiful traits of eastern life, which were destined, by means of the Mohammedan conquests, to be embroidered, as it were, upon the stronger but coarser ground of western

character, was an excessive poetical enthusiasm, which transported the mind into a land of dreams more beautiful than the gardens of the Hesperides, and peopled with all the wild creations of oriental imagination. It was this noble idealism which inspired the disdain of vulgar engrossments, the love of literature and science, the romantic generosity, the delicate courtesy and refinement of sentiment which distinguished the Arab conquerors of Spain, from whom was borrowed much of the spirit of western chivalry, and of the inspiration of Provençal poetry.

Like most great men *of action*, Mohammed was an embodiment of the peculiarities of his own people in the highest degree of intensity. Born and brought up in poverty and obscurity, he scarcely acquired even the rudiments of knowledge. But he possessed an independent and penetrating mind, a powerful though undisciplined imagination, and much generous enthusiasm for the great and the beautiful. The underlying principle of his nature, which imparted an overpowering energy to the whole mass of his moral and intellectual qualities, was a fiery and unquenchable ambition to place himself at the head of a great movement of society. He was no doubt unconscious of the extent to which this love of power mixed up with his more generous impulses, for self-deception is the most common of all delusions.

I do not believe that a mere imposture ever obtained a lasting hold upon the human mind. No one will meet with deep and lasting sympathy who is not in earnest himself. He may indeed, upon the principle that the end justifies the means, employ claptrap and dissimulation for the accomplishment of what appears to him a great and good purpose. Something of the Charlatan may appear upon the *surface* of such characters as Mohammed and Cromwell and Napoleon, and even a Luther may not be free from selfishness and dissimulation and vulgar truculence, yet there lies at the bottom

of all such great natures a generous and heart-felt conviction that they have a mission from God, and a great work to do in the world, and they are straitened until it be accomplished. The mighty heart of a great people will not heave in obedience to anything but enthusiastic earnestness. A purely selfish man, a mere impostor, never did and never can gain a lasting hold upon the loyalty of large masses of his fellow-men.

To comprehend the motives of Mohammed, one should take a view of that moral chaos of follies and abuses, which, in his time, had overspread not only Arabia, but all the eastern countries. Many of his own countrymen were given up to a gross and despicable idolatry; the minds of the remainder were over-clouded by the ridiculous fables of the Jewish Talmud, or the equally absurd perversions of a bastard Christianity. It is easy to conceive that such a state of things would be extremely unsatisfactory to an earnest and inquiring mind, and the knowledge which Mohammed gained by his trading journeys into Syria, of the vain wranglings that tore to pieces the eastern churches, as well as the worldliness and corruption of most of the ecclesiastics, was not calculated to diminish his perplexity. Under these circumstances we are told that he often retired to a cave in the neighborhood of Mecca, where he brooded over the moral condition of the world, and conceived his enthusiastic purpose of restoring the worship of the one true and invisible God. Every physiologist will readily understand how such contemplations in such a seclusion would be likely to affect an ardent and imaginative mind.

He first opened his enterprise to his wife and a few friends, who warmly seconded his views. Had he met with the same kind reception from the rest of his countrymen, he would probably have contented himself with recalling their minds in an impressive manner to those great truths, one of which

they had almost entirely lost sight of—the unity of God and future retribution. But the relentless persecutions of his enemies roused all his fiery energies and vindictive passions. It was easy to persuade himself (for the passions are great sophists) that the illusions of a heated imagination were revelations from Heaven. Yet when he described that paradise of sensual delights, which is assuredly the worst feature of his system, the calculations of policy may have mingled with his enthusiasm, for he doubtless well knew that nothing inspires such unconquerable heroism as the rewards and punishments of a future life, when brought home to the passions by corporeal images.

The Christian revelation but partially lifts the mysterious veil which hides the retributions of eternity, and usually employs material imagery in a manner so vague and general, that grave theologians may as well content themselves with the abstract truth that love, humility and faith will be conducive to our *highest well-being* in that future state, while the opposite qualities must have the opposite effects, abandoning to poetic license the scenery and other corporeal details of the realms of light, and the kingdom of darkness. Mohammed, on the contrary, allotted to the faithful champion of Islam a voluptuous harem amid the bowers of Paradise. Let us imagine the slight, but active and sinewy Arab, mounted upon a horse of matchless speed and power, and fully persuaded that if he died in battle, he should be immediately carried by angels to the arms of the black-eyed nymphs of Paradise; let us imagine, I say, a body of such men, sweeping down upon an enemy, like the whirlwind of their own deserts, and we shall have little difficulty in accounting for the fact, that in less than ninety years, the empire of the caliphs stretched from the frontiers of China to the straits of Gibraltar.

The Arab conquests brought the eastern poetry, born and

nurtured under bright suns and cloudless skies, amid the roses of Cashmere and the voluptuous bowers of Yemen, in contact with the more gigantic but gloomy conceptions of the western nations. If we further take into the account the moral ideas derived from the Christian religion, we shall have before us the sources of that noble though extravagant enthusiasm which manifested itself in the romance and chivalry of the middle ages, and through them contributed largely to the progress of society in Christendom.

The Mohammedan civilization was splendid but ephemeral. Everything that was beautiful about it concealed the fatal canker of sensuality. Mohammed borrowed largely from the records of Christianity, but he left behind its spirit. The life warfare against the world, the flesh and the senses, which Christ proclaimed, found no place in that system of pride, ambition and voluptuousness. The Moslem ascendancy had no strong principle of moral life, yet it was followed by a brilliant epoch of learning and refinement. Without any deep root in everlasting truth, but springing up rapidly from the warm and quick soil of eastern life, it was covered with foliage and flowers, while the mighty tree of the Christian civilization was still battling with the storm and slowly climbing into the heavens.

The contrast of their subsequent history and present condition, is a triumphant vindication of Christianity, written by the hand of Providence upon the moral chart of the globe. Both have extended over the noblest tribes of the Caucasian race. All the Mohammedan nations, however diverse in physical circumstances, show a wonderful similarity of leading characteristics. The fatal apathy, engendered by soulless despotism, uninquiring faith and emasculating sensuality, has for centuries been broken only by bloody paroxysms of ferocious bigotry. Even this last species of energy seems now to be extinct, and in contemplating the inevitable divis-

ion of this effete body among the Christian powers, the only difficulty is to determine which shall get the lion's share.

Great disasters and destructive revolutions, under which the Mohammedan nations have sunk lower and lower into a bottomless abyss of hopeless degradation, have only developed the dormant energies and exhaustless resources of the Christian family, who like Anteus have arisen with fresh vigor from every temporary overthrow. While the litanic carcase of Mohammedanism is rotting off from the earth which it polluted, the giant of Christian civilization after a turbulent childhood of a thousand years, is even now in the full vigor of youth, extending his arms to encircle the globe.

Even a long continuance of civil and spiritual despotism has failed to produce its usual effects in Christendom. Men now living have seen a great nation throw off a profligate tyranny of centuries' standing, with a convulsive effort that shook the whole world. They have seen her bleeding at every pore, and sheeted in a storm of fire by the despots of Europe leagued to restore the ancient dynasty. And when the smoke of her thousand battles had finally rolled away, they have seen her *not* gasping in the agonies of death, but, with renovated life, preparing for a new and more glorious career. Let us now search in the chaos of the middle ages for the elements of this astonishing vitality of the Christian civilization.

The fierce tribes of Germany, as already stated, followed to battle and conquest chieftains freely chosen by themselves, and allowed them a portion of the spoils and conquered territory, sufficient to support their dignity, but all substantial power was lodged in the assemblies of the people, and each warrior claimed for himself privileges incompatible with the necessary restraints of government. The original inhabitants of the conquered provinces were left in possession of a large proportion of the land, the remainder of which was

divided among the barbarians, who held it at first allodially, that is to say without any obligation of fealty or service to superiors.

The large tracts allotted to the chiefs in the original partition of the conquered territory, were intended not only to support their dignity, but to serve as a fund for the reward of civil and military service. As the new establishments of the German tribes assumed something of the regularity of civil government, the chief, to whom we may now give the appellation of King, made large grants of the reserved lands to his favorites or to officers who had rendered eminent services to the State, to be held of him on certain conditions.—These grants became the germs of that singular system of feuds, which has been the source of many of the peculiarities of modern civilization.

In the absence of a regular constitution, the practical power of the King depended entirely upon his personal qualities. Unless he happened to possess extraordinary energy and sagacity, his turbulent officers and clansmen left him little more than the shadow of royal authority. Out of the disorders of weak reigns grew the feudal system. It does not make its appearance in history until the sceptre of the Franks had passed from the iron hands of Charlemagne to those of his imbecile posterity. That great monarch, busy as he was with the reorganization of society and the defence and propagation of Christianity, kept in his own hands the chief control of the royal domains, and permitted no intermediate power to grow up between himself and his warriors. But after his death his empire was broken in pieces, and amid the disorders that followed, the Counts of provinces and other great chieftains granted the landed property of the state on conditions of fealty and service not to the sovereign but to themselves. Thus the states of western Europe became little more than bundles of feudal barons, scarcely

held together by a formal acknowledgment of the central authority. This was especially true of France when the feudal system attained its fullest development.

The haughty barons claimed the right among others of redressing their own real or imaginary grievances by private war, and descended from their strong castles, perched like eagles nests among crags and forests, followed by bands of blood-thirsty retainers, to ravage the lands and slaughter the vassals of their enemies. In the perpetual quarrels of the rival chieftains, the most wanton outrages were frequently perpetrated upon the allodial proprietors, who were thus reduced to the necessity of purchasing the protection of some neighboring lord by giving up their land to him and taking it back on the feudal conditions. Thus the feudal tenures, which were at first very limited, gradually supplanted the allodial independence.

There was but little servility in the feudal relations. The obligations were reciprocal, and either party by the neglect or infraction of them, lost all claims upon the other. The tenant, scrupulous in complying with the conditions of the compact on his part, would on that very account be the more tenacious of his rights. If they were violated by his lord he might transfer his allegiance to some other chief, who would always be glad to strengthen himself against his rival by the acquisition of new retainers upon liberal conditions.

In France, the native soil of feuds, the great barons claimed the most enormous privileges and left to the crown the mere shadow of royal authority. The history of that country for ages is the history of a perpetual struggle between the kings and their haughty and turbulent vassals. But in England, where the system was hardly ever completely naturalized, the barons were compelled to court popularity, and there they became powerful guardians of popular rights. In both countries they were the chief, if not the only counterpoise

to the central power, until the cities acquired sufficient consequence to act an important part in European politics.

As the harmony of the natural world is the balance of powers, either of which being infinitely expansive, would, if unrestrained, hurry the whole system into chaos, or consolidate it into one mass of lifeless matter, so the only kind of political order, which is compatible with the freedom and dignity of man, results from the antagonism of classes, interests or tendencies. In a society, like those of Europe in the middle ages, full of energy and turbulent individuality and clashing interests, each of the social forces will rule in its turn, as the re-action of those which, though repressed, are not subdued, brings them in succession to the head of society. They never can subside into an organization so perfect, that some one of them at a time will not be clearly in the ascendant. But woe to that people who suffer any one of the social powers to gain absolute mastery. When all antagonism ceases, justice and liberty are at an end. Even the most furious strife in *church* or state is better than the unity and repose of absolute despotism.

If we would find the sources of our American liberty, of the extraordinary vigor and expansiveness of European civilization, we must look for them in the apparent anarchy of the middle ages, the riotous and energetic individuality, the great diversity of interests and the fierce struggles of classes and tendencies. In my next discourse I shall have occasion to apply these remarks to the reformation, and the unquestionable superiority of Protestant over Catholic countries. At present I shall confine myself to their political bearings.

The germs of a noble and vigorous freedom can be clearly discerned in the feudal constitutions. It is true that the rude condition of the laws, and the weakness of the civil magistrates gave impunity to much violence and outrage. The true principles of social order were little understood,

and perhaps no one had the least conception of that ideal of political society, which is the goal of modern progress, in which the wisest and best are placed at the head of affairs by the free voice of the people, where the limits of authority are clearly defined, and where the powers of the state are distributed among those who, by the tenure of their offices, have not only the disposition but the ability to preserve their respective shares from the encroachments of the other departments. Is it national pride which whispers, that to my own country is reserved the glorious destiny of showing to the world the nearest approach to the ideal of society, which the frailty of man will permit?

The similar circumstances of the western nations gave rise to similar institutions. We may select the constitution of Aragon as the most perfect example of feudal liberty. Here the king could do nothing without the sanction of the legislative assembly, and both were held in check by a great officer, the justiciary, who was charged with the defence of the constitution, and the guardianship of the rights and privileges of all classes.

It will be recollected that among the German tribes, the great council, to which all important measures were submitted, consisted of all the warriors who had reached maturity. After their establishments in the Roman provinces had acquired something of the regularity of civil states, it was found necessary to reduce the vast and tumultuous assemblies of the people to smaller bodies, composed of the feudal nobility, the clergy, and the representatives of inferior land-holders, to whom were added at a subsequent period, the delegates of chartered towns. In France, besides the states-general, as the national legislature was called, there were provincial assemblies in each of the great baronies, composed in the same manner, and possessed of the same powers. The great principle which, as we shall find hereafter, has played so

important a part in English history, that no taxes can be levied without the consent of all the orders of the legislative body, seems to have been more or less clearly recognized in all the constitutions of the feudal ages.

While the barons were fighting among themselves and disputing with the crown the prerogatives of sovereignty, and the clergy were representing that moral power of religion, which gradually tamed the ferocious passions of those rude ages, and silently permeated society with juster notions of the rights and duties of men, another element of social organization was slowly gaining ground, which was destined to fill a very important place in the history, not only of constitutional order and liberty, but of art, literature and scientific discovery.

As we have already remarked, one of the great bequests of the expiring empire of Rome to modern civilization, was *municipal institutions*, in other words, cities with a regular internal police. After her highly civilized provinces had come under the sway of ignorant barbarians, the craftsmen and traders of the towns may have found safety in the contempt of a martial people, who in their native forests had lived in wooden huts and clothed themselves with skins. But the most powerful defenders of municipal institutions were the bishops, into whose hands the government of their diocesan capitals had fallen in the latter years of the empire.

Amid the darkness and storms of the early ages, the cities disappear from history for a time and were doubtless very much reduced in population and importance. But the German tribes, mingling with a more refined though subject people, were not long in acquiring a taste for luxury and splendor, especially in arms and military equipments, and the manufacturing industry of the cities began to revive. It is interesting to think of the thousands of humble and forgotten artizans, who toiled from day to day in the dust and heat of

their forges, making swords and chain armour and other articles of still greater value, utterly unconscious of the mighty revolutions which lurked in their strong arms and patient hearts. Little did they dream that every blow which fell upon their anvils, was striking off a link from the chain that fettered the intellect and social progress of the western world. Little did the haughty barons, who were beginning to adorn the halls of their strong castles with the fabrics of the cities, imagine that the shuttle of the despised weaver was making a mighty network which would one day envelope their own descendants in its fatal meshes, and drag them down from their high places. No effort of honest industry ever was nor ever can be lost. Everlasting honor to the dukes and viscounts and marquises of the *nobility of labor*.

Trade and manufactures slowly revived and the cities increased their population by affording shelter to the wretched provincials, who were driven from their blazing cottages and devastated fields by the bloody feuds of ferocious chieftains. The princes and barons were often in want of money to carry on their perpetual contests with rivals or turbulent vassals, which they obtained from the cities within their domains, on condition of granting to them by charter certain privileges and immunities, which were from time to time extended and fortified by additional guaranties. The people of the towns thus acquired the right of electing their own magistrates, whose jurisdiction usually extended over a considerable part of the adjacent country. The cities of Italy, which enjoyed the advantage of being under the more especial protection of the church, became so powerful at a very early period, as to defy the utmost efforts of the German emperors to break down their independence. There the nobility, instead of secluding themselves in their castles, resided in the towns and acquired great wealth by commerce, which began to be carried on with the East. A taste for intellectual pur-

suits gradually sprang up ; the study of the Latin literature was revived ; the treasures of antiquity were brought forth from the monasteries, and hundreds of men made their living by copying manuscripts ; universities were founded and students flocked to them from every part of Europe, eager to drink of the streams of knowledge which had been sealed up for ages. In other parts of Europe, the representatives of the cities were early admitted as a constituent part of the legislative assemblies, and their franchises were similar, though inferior in extent, to those of the Italian republics.

The internal police and social organization of the chartered towns were very much alike in all parts of Europe. Their ancient customs were reduced to certainty, and usually embodied in the charters of incorporation, but the common councils had the right to make bye-laws not inconsistent with those settled rules. The administration of justice and the entire internal regulation were lodged in the hands of magistrates, freely chosen by the people. Here the *ballot-box*, the symbol of representative democracy, first makes its appearance in modern history.

The citizens were divided into classes or *guilds* according to their respective trades, each of which had its appropriate banner, and was trained to the use of arms, and accustomed to military exercises. These artizans often defended their towns against the feudal tyrants, with a heroism unconquerable even by the extremity of famine. In the chartered cities we must look for the chief sources of that democratic tendency of modern times, which has shaken nearly all the thrones of Europe. They were the nurseries of that intelligent, and orderly, but high spirited *middle class*, which has taken so large a share in all those great struggles for freedom, that have made the last three centuries the most stirring period of history. One of these cities, fenced by the Alps from the storms of the middle ages and the tyranny of the

dukes of Savoy, was destined, as we shall see hereafter, to become the nursery of that mighty Calvinistic republicanism, which, after striking in England the first effectual blows in the modern warfare of liberty against power, has reached its greatest expansion in the forests of the new world.

We have now taken a rapid view of those great elements of political organization, whose conflicting interests and mutual jealousies prevented any one of them from gaining an ascendancy so absolute, as to crush those vigorous germs of freedom which, though trampled by tyranny and cankered by corruption, have never ceased to live in European society, whence they have been transplanted to the virgin soil of America. We may now turn to other causes of social improvement, less obtrusive but perhaps more efficient than political institutions.

First of these was chivalry,—that poetry of arms, which mitigated the barbarity of war and embellished the military profession with the graces of courtesy and gallantry,—of humanity to a fallen foe, of generous self-devotion in the cause of the weak and oppressed. It was the martial enthusiasm of the terrible warriors of Germany, refined by the *poetry of the Arabs*, and exalted by the *great moral ideas derived from Christianity*. To estimate its influence upon society, we need but reflect upon the vast interval between the brutal followers of Clovis and Hengist, and their descendants, the Black Prince, Chevalier Bayard, and Sir Philip Sidney.

The solemn ceremony by which the youthful warrior of Germany, burning for distinction, was invested with arms, was the mere form into which poetry and religion afterwards breathed the soul of chivalry. For what but ideality and religion combined could have substituted for the impulses of revenge, of rapacity, of ambition, of mere instinctive ferocity,—the romantic enthusiasm of love and devotion;—could have divested war of animosity and preserved, amid the fury of

combat and the exultation of victory, a delicate courtesy, scrupulous honor and romantic generosity to a vanquished enemy. It was the business of every true knight to surpass his predecessors and rivals in his approaches to that lofty ideal, which he found in the poems and romances of the age, as well as in those works which treated expressly of the duties and virtues of chivalry. He must be loyal and true; he must be pious modest and self-denying,—redressing the wrongs that come to his knowledge, and ever ready to signalize his devotion to God and the ladies.

War and religion may seem to some a strange combination; but, if Christianity cannot remove social evils, is it nothing to mitigate them? If it does not eradicate the fierce passions of men, is it nothing to restrain, to soothe, to divest strife of its atrocities?

If the institution of chivalry has perished, it has, like every thing else that springs from the profoundest depths of human nature, left its traces deep and broad in some peculiar characteristics that distinguish the Christian nations from the most polished states of antiquity. The Greeks and Romans reduced captives to slavery, a conduct which, it is easy to see, must have greatly aggravated the ferocity and destructiveness of wars. The rules of chivalry made it infamous to insult or injure a vanquished enemy, while on the other hand no valor or renown could wipe out the stain which a violation of his word of honor brought upon the escutcheon of a Knight. Here we have the origin of that humane system of warfare peculiar to the Christian nations, which prohibits wanton destruction of life and property, enjoins kind treatment of prisoners, and sends them back to their own country upon their simple parole of honor.

The chief glory of chivalry was that romantic devotion to the softer sex, which, though it did not prevent licentiousness, contributed greatly to secure to woman that position which

she holds in modern society. This brings us by a natural transition to one of the most interesting topics in the philosophy of social progress.

It is obvious that woman can exert her due influence only in that state of society in which, instead of being the slave of man's passions, she is respected and beloved—the sharer of his inmost thoughts—the equal companion of his joys and his sorrows. *Such a state of society has existed only in connection with Christianity.* No where else has she occupied a social position suited to develop the beautiful properties of her nature, and at the same time preserve that moral purity which can alone enable those properties to exert a salutary influence over the other sex. Nowhere else has opinion girded her with invisible armor more potent than steel, more impervious than adamant.

The Spartans and Romans respected their women, but it was the kind of respect that a tiger has for his mate. The Spartan mother could buckle on the armor of her son, and bid him return with his shield or upon it, for she, when young, had been compelled by the laws of Lycurgus to wrestle naked in the presence of the young men. She was excluded from the tables and social meetings of the other sex, and even separated from her own children, who at an early age were placed under the care of persons employed by the state. The respect of the martial Romans for the sex was perfectly consistent with an almost total neglect of their society, for these terrible warriors, whose home was the camp or the field, had very little relish for the soft endearments of domestic life, or the refined pleasures of cultivated society. Cato's singular condescension to his friend Hortensius must considerably qualify our admiration of Roman manners in this respect. The Germans in their forests respected their women, but the nature of that regard may be judged of by the fact, that in their warlike expeditions they were accompanied

by their wives and sisters, who sometimes fought by their sides and emulated the hardihood and ferocity of their husbands and brothers. It must be further remarked that what Tacitus tells us of German manners, is inconsistent with the known licentiousness of the Saxon invaders of England. I need scarcely allude to the slavery of women among the Mohammedans. It is true that the Arab poetry was full of love, but the sentiment, though often tender, was exaggerated and sensual. The beauty immured in the harem was, as M. Sismondi remarks, a deity as well as a slave, but she was never a *woman*, the virtuous helpmate of man.

It is worth while to inquire into the causes of the superiority of the Christian nations in this respect. M. Guizot has endeavored to account for it by the peculiar circumstances of the feudal family. The baron living remote from cities in his lonely castle among rocks and forests, surrounded by humble retainers with whom he could have but little intercourse, gave those hours not spent in war and the chase to the society of his wife and children. Moreover, he thinks that the only persons to whom the baron could confide his secrets, or whom he would permit to counsel with him, were his wife and the parish priest, and that the chieftain of course set great value upon those two indispensable personages. This may go for precisely what it is worth; very little more I apprehend, than M. Guizot's notions of a balance of power in America.

On the other hand, M. Sismondi is of opinion that the exalted position of woman in western society should be ascribed to the oriental poetry introduced into Spain by the Mohammedan conquests. Doubtless we may trace to that source much of the refined voluptuousness of the troubadours and the romantic extravagance of Spanish chivalry. But if a kindred poetical enthusiasm, which has contributed to make woman in all Christian nations the cherished companion of

man and the ornament of the social circle, has in all Moham-
medan countries, made her the secluded slave of the most
heartless sensuality, surely some potent and universal agency
must have been at work to produce so wide a divergence.—
*That agency was the unobtrusive influence of the Christian
religion, partly direct, partly through the medium of chivalry.*

Woman has ever been the ally of Christianity, and her
services in its cause have been richly repaid by religion,
which proposes to tame the fierce passions of men, by incul-
cating precisely those virtues that find their most congenial
soil in the female heart. Christianity has enjoined humility,
patience, gentleness, sensibility to the joys and sorrows of
our fellow creatures, as constituting the very ideal of moral
beauty. It gives its divine sanction to qualities which were
held in contempt by the most cultivated nations of antiquity,
who respected only the sterner virtues of justice, temperance,
fortitude and patriotism. It is obvious that a religion, which
exalts those virtues most congenial with the nature and con-
dition of woman to the first rank of moral attainments, must
elevate her in the social scale. While Christianity by
adorning woman with its own peculiar graces, rendered her
more truly worthy of the love and homage of the other sex,
it also taught the fierce warriors of those times to respect
qualities the most opposite to their own. Indeed what was
chivalry itself but a constant effort to mitigate the horrors of
war, and embellish the profession of arms by as large an
admixture of those very qualities as was compatible with the
requisite courage and energy. We need not therefore be sur-
prised, that haughty valor himself came and bowed at the
feet of beauty, and sought in the smile of gentle loveliness
the chief reward of his perils and the inspiration of his ro-
mantic heroism.

The remarks in our former discourse in relation to the
unobtrusiveness of the greatest and most durable power,

apply with peculiar force to the contributions of woman to the progress of society. Even philosophic historians have been far from doing justice to female influence, because from the nature of the case, their attention is chiefly directed to the intrigues of courts, the movements of armies, the doings of politicians, the bubbles and commotions of the surface of society. But kings, heroes, statesmen, were all children once, and no one need be told that in the quiet shades of domestic life we must look for the springs of that mighty stream, which bears upon its troubled surface warriors and statesmen, courts and armies, republics and dynasties, and all the multiform institutions and transactions of civil society.

What latest improvement of Algebra will enable us to compute how much the tears of beloved wives and sisters, the counsels and entreaties of Christian mothers have done for mankind! During the earlier part of the middle ages, domestic education was doubtless the most powerful auxiliary to the moral influence of the clergy, and often the antidote to their corruptions and superstitions. Woman was generally on the side of religion and virtue, if we may judge from most of the instances in which female influence rises to the surface of that turbulent society. The love-poetry of the period affords us additional evidence that the relations of the sexes were not only refining, but purifying in their tendency. The love passages which soften the stern grandeur of Dante, and in a still higher degree the sonnets of Petrarch, which fell upon the awakening mind of Europe, like sparks of heavenly fire, breathe a respectful tenderness and elevation of sentiment unknown to the amatory poetry of the ancients, and never dreamed of by the fiery voluptuousness of the Mohammedans. The Christian mistress, the Christian wife, the Christian mother! what a vast segment of modern civilization and social progress is defined by those words!

The noblest civilization tends to bring the two sexes nearer

together in regard to their moral and intellectual character. The highest order of genius has been justly said to combine the peculiarities of both sexes; the rigorous understanding, the force of imagination, the energy of will that distinguishes the one, with the quick perception, the intuitive tact, the tenderness and sensibility of the other. There is no reason to hope that what is now only true of remarkable individuals will ever be universal or even general, yet the degree, to which the difference between man and woman is lessened by a reciprocal interchange of those qualities which we regard as most worthy of love and admiration in each respectively, may be as good a measure as any other of the real progress of society.

Aside from speculation, the peculiar properties of woman's moral and intellectual structure are precisely such as are adapted, whenever her social position commands respect and favors the development of her powers, to smoothe the asperities of man, to refine and elevate his sentiments, to entwine his rugged strength with the foliage and flowers of tenderness and fancy. There is nothing which so calls into action the finest feelings of his nature, as the sense of being leaned upon, of being looked up to as a guardian by a being so graceful in her timidity, so beautiful in her helplessness, provided her virtue commands his respect; for if she be not pure, if she revere not herself, she may have the protection, but never the sincere homage of chivalry, and the elegance which she diffuses over society only renders vice more attractive by divesting it of its grossness.

Chivalry reached its perfection when it added to the poetry of love that poetry of devotion which gave origin to the crusades. Upon the subject of these holy wars, about as much nonsense has been written and spoken as on almost any other subject, whatever. What avail the endless tirades upon the folly and absurdity of the crusades? Are the worship of

gold, the enterprises of commercial extension, the lust of territorial aggrandizement, which now embroil nations, a whit more respectable than the poetical devotion which carried the chivalry of Europe to the sepulchre of Christ? Why suffer the enterprises of sordid and earth-born selfishness to pass with perhaps a gentle expression of disapprobation, and exhaust the vocabulary of contempt upon the offspring of great and generous emotions. No doubt that inundation of fiery valor, which Europe poured upon Asia, was turbid enough with profligacy, seeking to expiate a life of guilt by a martial pilgrimage to the cradle of religion, and vague hopes of reckless adventurers to repair their fortunes and gratify their passions in the opulent and voluptuous East. What of all that? Similar facts may be predicated of every large body of men that ever assembled on earth. The solemn homilies of conscientious and respectable persons upon the folly and wickedness of other people, are to the last degree wearisome and unprofitable. It is not in this manner that the historical philosopher contemplates the great movements of society. The crusaders were not so foolish; the idea of founding a great Christian power in the East was not so chimerical; nor have those wars been so barren of beneficial results as some short-sighted persons imagine.

The men of our age, which doubtless has follies and absurdities enough of its own, ought not to sit in judgment upon those of another, unless they are able to enter into their spirit and understand their motives. It is difficult to obtain a clear insight into the thoughts and feelings of those "fervent days of old," when religious faith, instead of being a moral probability floating in a medium of metaphysical abstraction and *patronized* by politicians as an useful auxiliary to law in preserving social order, was a warm and life-like reality, glowing in the hearts and living in the daily business of men and affording the most powerful incentives to action.

In modern times the poetry of devotion has been so much sobered by motives belonging to the present state of being, that it is hard to tell whether the chief sources of our prudential morality are in earth or heaven. I am aware that this is a necessary stage in the progress of mankind from ages of noble and heroic, but superstitious and persecuting fervor, to those of equally poetical but far more clear and tolerant belief. Yet there is no reason why the self-complacent shrewdness of this rather barren and prosaic age of transition, should be particularly lavish of pity or contempt upon half-enlightened, but still glorious manifestations of those high properties of our nature, which distinguish us from the beasts that perish.

The chivalric, like the heroic ages, exhibit striking contrasts of strong lights and deep shadows. The conduct of men who are guided by cool calculations of profit and loss, will in general have an even tenor, seldom sinking into crime, seldom rising into heroic virtue. But ages of faith, which are also ages of fervent and overmastering impulses, are productive of splendid virtues and dreadful crimes, and show many examples of those powerful but irregular natures which are great alike in their evil and their good. In partially civilized societies, like those of the middle ages, where the restraints of law and public opinion are feeble, and the elements of a vast and glorious national existence are yet lying, as it were, in chaos, it need not surprise us that characters in general marked by piety, generosity and heroism, are sometimes darkened by fearful outbursts of an opposite character, followed by a depth of remorse to which more disciplined minds are utter strangers. In such times the mixture of good and evil in human nature; the *polarity* of powerful passions, is much more freely and strikingly manifested, than in a state of society, where each man's path is marked out and hedged in for him by education, custom and public opinion.

The crusades were a universal sifting and shaking up of the chaotic elements of society. To contemporaries they may have appeared as the French revolution did to persons now living, an aimless tempest of human passions. In such cases we observe nothing at first but the eddying of hosts, the shock of arms, the clouds of dust and garments rolled in blood. But when the uproar has ceased and the clouds have rolled away, a new world is disclosed, and we find that many time-honored abuses, old institutions and inveterate prejudices have passed away forever.

Thus the Europe, which saw with indifference the kingdom of Jerusalem, watered with so much blood, return under the yoke of the Moslems, was very different from that Europe, which had burst into a flame at the preaching of Peter the Hermit. Brought in contact with Asiatic civilization—with strange and striking manners—with the remnant of Roman majesty that still lingered on the shores of the Bosphorus, a sad memento of ancient glory—with more refined and luxurious modes of living than those to which they had been accustomed, the ideas of the rude warriors of the west were enlarged. A profitable commerce began to diffuse the commodities and the arts of the east over the western world. Social order had gained by the passing away of many turbulent and reckless spirits. The barons had sold their estates to raise money for those romantic expeditions, and by that means as well by their prolonged absence, the royal authority gained ground at the expense of the feudal system. The loose confederacies of petty principalities, which had little more of national existence than the name, began to consolidate into compact and powerful states. The monarchs with augmenting authority and revenues increasing with the increase of commercial wealth, began to employ mercenary troops and dispense with the short and precarious services of their

turbulent vassals. Modern Europe, in short, emerged from a chaos of conflicting elements.

As we have intimated above, the crusades gave the feudal system a blow from which it never recovered. From the termination of those wars, we find the central authority in France, the peculiar soil of feuds, steadily gaining ground. Yet the struggle between monarchy and feudalism was everywhere sufficiently protracted to keep alive, till more enlightened times, some sparks of the spirit of liberty. The idea of absolute power was never permitted to lay hold of and completely subjugate the minds of the people. During that struggle, each party had sought to strengthen itself by liberal concessions to the commons. The precious guarantees of freedom thus created, were too often, it is true, neglected or forgotten in ages of ignorance and servitude, but they were preserved to confound the minions of despotic power, and strengthen the advocates of liberty, when new life had been infused into them by the bold and searching spirit of modern inquiry. As we shall see hereafter, the popular branch of the English parliament owes its existence to a great baron at war with his king.

Feudalism, having done its work, rapidly declined. When the arm of the law became strong enough to afford protection to life and property, the advantages of the feudal relation ceased, and only its burdens remained. The old Roman law was incorporated with the jurisprudence of most parts of Europe, and though betraying its despotic origin by many slavish features, which were in a great measure corrected by the independent spirit of those who adopted it, this code was admirably adapted to the regulation of the domestic and social relations as well as to the speedy and equitable redress of injuries.

But feudalism did not perish utterly, even after it had accomplished the great purposes of its existence. This is true

of all old institutions,—the body lingers long among men after the soul has departed. They become so closely interwoven with the social system, that they cannot be suddenly torn away without destruction to the whole fabric. It required the French Revolution to give the finishing blow to feudalism. In the latter part of the middle ages, after the increasing vigor of monarchy had crushed the independence of the feudal nobility, the latter ceased to be the champions of liberty and the guardians of popular rights. They became the allies of power, and sharers in the plunder and oppression of the industrious masses; they began to bask in the sunshine of courts, and waste in debauchery and ostentation the substance of the trampled multitude. But at the same time they became the patrons of art and letters, while their luxury and magnificence gave encouragement to commerce and manufactures. Thus they were unwittingly raising up two classes of men, the men of letters and the men of trade, who were destined at a subsequent period to overthrow the throne and the church, as well as the aristocracy which had fostered them.

Let us now rapidly trace the improvements in commerce, art, literature and general knowledge. Though Italy suffered greatly from the fury of the barbarians, she was the first to rise from the ruins of the empire. She had been more populous and more thoroughly civilized than the western provinces, and of course reacted with more power upon her conquerors, whose manners soon softened in that glorious climate amid the astonishing remains of ancient magnificence. The majesty of Rome still lingered about the cradle of her power and the scene of her glory. The eastern emperors re-asserted their claims from time to time, and kept the barbarians in check, until the new civilization had taken root under the fostering care of the spiritual supremacy of Rome. For the sceptre had not yet departed from the “eternal city.” She still pre-

sided over the destinies of mankind. The empire of force had given place to a moral power still more wonderful, which extended its guardianship of order, religion and learning over the entire Christian world, though Italy, of course, being under the very shadow of the Roman tiara, enjoyed the largest share of its protection.

The principal cities of Italy became the seats of a flourishing commerce, which gradually extended to every part of Europe within reach of their ships. They began to rival each other in every species of productive industry. They established free and democratic governments, which however soon fell a prey to domestic faction and foreign intrigue—the usual fate of those petty republics confined to a single city or a small district of country. A single explosion in so confined a space may shatter the constitution, and the weakness of such communities lays them open to foreign ambition. Their fate furnishes no argument against democratic institutions in a great country which can stand alone, and embrace such an extent of territory and variety of interests, that no local disease is likely to endanger its political integrity.

The cities on the Mediterranean coasts of Spain and France soon rivalled those of Italy in commercial enterprise. To facilitate its operations, banks were established,—first, it seems, at Barcelona; for the monied corporations of Italy did not for some time after their creation perform the ordinary functions of banking institutions, being limited to aiding the fiscal department of government. All banks were at first confined to deposit and exchange,—the functions of discount and circulation having been added in comparatively recent times.

Commercial prosperity was the pioneer of art, literature and scientific discovery. Before proceeding further I will remark, though it is scarcely necessary to do so, that we may speak of the same thing as being at once an effect and a cause

of the progress of society, without confusion of ideas or terms. The arrangements of the All-Wise have established a system of mutual action and re-action, so that when a product has been evolved from the fermentation of elements, it immediately becomes a constituent of new combinations.

In the infancy of modern civilization, poetry was as usual the first voice of awakening mind. Poetry precedes science, because the natural course of intellectual culture is from the particular to the general—from the concrete to the abstract. All the various forms of poetry spring from the same properties of our intellectual structure. Its essence is a *passionate* recognition of the sublime and beautiful, arising from an intuitive perception of the correspondence between ideas and qualities and their outward manifestations in form, color and proportion. That even a building may embody an idea which will shadow forth the moral feelings of men, must be evident, if we compare the voluptuous gracefulness of an oriental mosque with the religious twilight, the massive proportions, the gorgeous yet gloomy magnificence of a Gothic cathedral. The aspiring spirit of the Papacy, which, in the name of Heaven, acquired and maintained an absolute dominion over the minds of men, stands forever embodied in the marble of St. Peter's,—in those arches springing up to the clouds,—in those gigantic columns, fit to prop the dome which the stupendous audacity of a Michael Angelo suspended in mid-heaven. The spirit of the middle ages stands more legibly written in the cathedrals, abbeys and castles, which have survived the ravages of time, than in any of the confused chronicles of that period.

Science is analytic—Poetry, synthetic. Science takes to pieces to examine in detail. Poetry puts together the various parts of a beautiful and harmonious whole. Science imitates the destructive—poetry the constructive processes of nature; but in so doing she surpasses nature. It is true

that all the parts of artistic creations are found in the actual world; yet the painter, the sculptor or the literary artist bodies forth forms or characters superior to anything which Nature can show. No human form ever equalled the master-pieces of sculpture; no such combination of profound intellect, fearful energy of will, and consistent depravity, as Milton's Satan, ever was known on earth; and no human pair could have furnished the same poet with an exact likeness of our first parents in Paradise. It is manifest that the type of the specific beauty or grandeur of the object must exist in the mind of the artist, and this type I call the *idea* of the object. The same idea must exist in the mind of the beholder or the reader, though dim and perhaps invisible to his consciousness, until genius makes him acquainted with his own thoughts.

Essentially connected with the strange sense of *keeping*, or correspondence, between ideas and qualities, which I have alluded to above, is the tendency to comprehend the whole at once, in other words, to consider the parts in their just and proportionate adaptation to the purposes of each combination, which I regard as a chief characteristic of poetry. And if poetry often stirs the depths of our being by bold relief or vivid colors, that seem to mar the harmony of her creations, we must recollect that every specific whole with which we are acquainted, is a part of a still larger whole, its relations with which cannot be all exhibited at once. Thus the individual man, though complete in himself, is a part of a political organization, and has, to whatever represents the unity of the state, relations which may give rise to powerful emotions, such as patriotism and loyalty. But further, he is part of a universe, and has relations to God and Eternity. If he be destined to a boundless and everlasting existence hereafter, the poetical tendency towards the whole may mar the harmony of his being viewed solely in relation to the purposes of the present

world; for those mighty emotions, in which poetry revels, seem to cold philosophy a strange waste of spiritual power, as they are utterly disproportioned in their depth and intensity to the real magnitude of the objects which call them forth. Every deep feeling, every great idea claims kindred with infinity. Love passes beyond the grave and asks an eternal life for its object. If the poetry of a young soul once clusters around the form of some maiden, not a whit more beautiful or charming than thousands of her sex whom he passes with indifference, the sunshine of heaven beams in her smile, while her frown is the shadow of that cloud which hovers over the bottomless Tophet. It is no objection, but rather a confirmation of this theory, that the dreamy despondency of scepticism sometimes takes a highly poetical form; for without that dim unconscious struggling towards infinity, to which no human heart is an utter stranger, such despondency could not possibly exist.

It is not therefore surprising that the poetry of the chivalric, like that of the heroic ages, was vitally connected with religion. I speak not alone of such works as that of Dante, in which religious ideas are clearly predominant. The Christian religion breathed its own immortal life into all the art and literature of the middle ages, which has left any deep traces in the history of the human mind. The forms may have been classic, but the spirit was derived from Christianity.

Language, though not the only medium of spiritual intercourse, is by far the most important one. In general the progress of language and that of intellect are so nearly concurrent, that the one may be taken as the measure of the other. Language has been called the vesture of thought; it might more properly be called the body, of which thought is the soul. They grow together and exercise a reciprocal influence. If we closely watch the processes of our own minds, we shall find that we think in words; indeed we cannot car-

ry on a train of thought without them. We often hear it said that such a man has good ideas, but has not words to express them. May we not reverse the statement, and say that man does not think clearly on any given subject, because he has not words to fix the fugitive thought in the memory until the whole matter has passed under review. Poverty of language is usually connected with poverty of intellect, and the connection is such that it is difficult to say, in any given case, which is the cause, and which the effect. To enrich the language of men is to enlarge their range of ideas.

Very few words will suffice for the desires and conceptions of ignorant barbarians. But as men advance in knowledge and refinement, new terms must be found for philosophical abstractions, for nice shades of discrimination, for the endless variety of new objects and principles, which are perpetually disclosed by a widening range of intellectual excursions. It is obvious that if men are compelled to invent the terms necessary for these purposes, it must be long before the first of those arbitrary signs of ideas would be sanctioned by usage so as to convey a generally recognized meaning. The progress of knowledge under such circumstances must be extremely slow. The difficulty of grafting the expressions of new ideas upon the meagre dialect of barbarians, would of course diminish with the progress of the language, as every word agreed upon, and brought into general use would facilitate the adoption of new coinages, yet it would greatly retard, if it did not prove an insurmountable obstacle to intellectual improvement.

Happily modern literature was under no necessity of inventing a language. The Romans had imposed not only their laws, but their language upon the conquered provinces. Every where the Latin became the language of civil and ecclesiastical proceedings, of learned men, and of the most cultivated classes of society. The vernacular of Italy, in

those parts of Gaul nearest to Italy, it almost entirely supplanted the native dialects. After the ancient writings had found shelter in the monasteries from the ravages of the northern invaders, there was no longer at hand the means of preserving the purity of the language, by correcting the errors of provincial pronunciation. From the absence of a common standard, the words came at length to be written as they were pronounced in each country respectively, and thus the Latin was more or less corrupted even in Italy. But with all its corruptions, here was a language fit for the purposes of literature and philosophy, ready to be engrafted upon the rude dialects of the German and Gothic conquerors. From these two sources have sprung the most copious and beautiful of the modern languages. Of these, the Italian and the *Lange D'Oc* spoken in those parts of France nearest to Italy, had the least admixture of German idioms. They rapidly improved; for being originally best suited to the purposes of awakening mind, they received the first contributions from the reviving literature of modern Europe,—a literature which combined the spirit of classic antiquity and the refined sensualism of oriental poetry, borrowed from the Arabian conquerors of Spain, with the mighty passions and gigantic but gloomy conceptions nurtured in the mysterious depths of the German forests, the moral ideas of Christianity and the romantic enthusiasm of chivalry.

In accordance with what I have said above of the mutual relations and concurrent progress of language and intellect, we find that Italy, and those parts of France in which the *Lange D'Oc* was spoken, became the seats of the first great revival of letters. England, Germany and the north of France had scarcely begun to emerge from the long night of ignorance, when Dante embodied in his great poem the superstitions, the moral feelings and the poetical passions of his age and country; when the Troubadours were singing

in bower and hall their lays of love; when Petrarch, the morning star of modern literature, made his triumphal progress through Italy, to be crowned on the Capitoline hill with a chaplet more glorious than had ever decorated the brow of any of those mighty warriors, who had climbed the same steep followed by captive monarchs and the spoils of nations.

The English, which, though largely indebted to the Latin, has never, I believe, been classed among the Romance languages, was, during the middle ages, with the single exception of the native German, the rudest of all the dialects of the western nations. Yet for it has been reserved a destiny far more glorious than for any of the others. It is the language of the greatest dramatist, the greatest epic poet, the greatest philosopher, the greatest mathematician, the greatest constitutional monarchy and the greatest republic that the world ever saw. It is rapidly spreading over the globe, and seems destined to redeem, in a great measure, the confusion of Babel. In less than a century the literature of the English language may reach without translation nearly one-half of the human family. What an immense rent does this fact make in the mysterious veil of futurity!

After the revival of literature had thoroughly awakened the intellect of the modern world, and stimulated every species of inquiry, the first draughts from the unsealed fountains of knowledge seemed to produce a kind of intoxication. In all ages the love of knowledge is an unquenchable passion of the human soul, destined perhaps to survive all other passions. But nothing in recent times can help us to form a conception of the ardent spirit of discipleship, the enthusiastic reverence for wisdom and learning, which, after the revival of letters and the establishment of the universities, drew around the celebrated teachers throngs of eager and devoted students. Thousands flocked from every part of Europe in the thirteenth century to hear the new lectures on the Roman

law in the university of Bologna, and the knowledge acquired there contributed greatly to the improvement of jurisprudence in their respective countries. When Abelard, who is regarded by some, and perhaps justly, as the first in point of time, of the great original thinkers of modern Europe, retired from the university of Paris to a remote solitude, thousands would not be hindered from following him, and the savage wilderness that surrounded the monastery of the Paraclete, became an academic grove. In the fourteenth century there were no less than thirty thousand students at the university of Oxford.

Some modern lights of the world have thought proper to sneer at the literary enthusiasm of those times, because, *in their opinion*, the pursuits of this multitude of students were unprofitable. Of the scholastic philosophy especially, which, in the absence of a correct knowledge of the limits of scientific research, furnished the chief occupation of the newly awakened intellect of the modern world, much has been written, as it seems to me, with very little judgment or discrimination. It is the natural order of things, that the era of enlightened inductions should have been preceded by endless discussions of those deep questions, which regard the nature of man and the purposes of his being, his relations to the supernal powers, the freedom of the will and the origin of evil, which, as they admit of no satisfactory solution in the present state of being, must return upon each successive generation in all their original perplexity. An undying interest in those deep matters, chastened by an experimental acquaintance with the limits of human knowledge in the present state of being, lies at the bottom of every philosophic mind. If some of the questions of the schoolmen appear to us very puerile, we must recollect that the human mind had but fairly waked up from the slumber of ages.

Of what use, it may be asked, are inquiries that can yield

no certain results? The question betrays very narrow views of the objects of intellectual culture. Science has made many contributions to wealth, comfort and luxury, but after all, the *utility* of knowledge, using the term in the sense of conduciveness to the physical well-being of man, should not cause us to lose sight of the development of the mental and moral faculties themselves. An expansive mind will despise no species of research, which lifts the soul above the paltry concerns and debasing perturbations of earth-born selfishness, and sends it abroad into wide and lofty regions, where, notwithstanding it may gather no fruits that can be either counted or weighed, its powers are exercised in wrestling with those mysteries of being, which people the shadowy realms of metaphysical speculation. The scholastic philosophy was a sort of intellectual gymnastics, which, in the childhood of science, might accustom the mind to the exercise of its own powers, and thus prepare the way for the inductive system of Bacon, who, with all his broad candor, was probably not fully aware of the extent of his obligations to those very men whose authority he demolished forever. The half-enlightened labors of one age become a part of the culture of the next; the thoughts of each sect or party unconsciously blend with the mental processes of their opponents. Were disputants aware how much they owe their antagonists, discussion, instead of paying mutual debts with mutual abuse, would be a friendly and sympathetic emulation in the search after truth.

I have said that the labors of the schoolmen prepared the way for the inductive philosophy. The young mind, in the first overflowing activity of its new-found faculties, questions everything in heaven and earth, but soon finds that he is perplexing himself with inquiries, that lie without the limits of human knowledge in the present state of being, and finally sits down to the humble but more productive business of in-

duction. But in the meantime he has prepared himself for this task by close thinking and keen discrimination.

A mind, not already accustomed to subtle analysis, to dealing with general principles, is not likely to institute a series of observations, or to conduct them in such a manner as to make any important discoveries. Phenomena pass unheeded before the eyes of the uncultivated, which afford to the philosopher ample scope for his disciplined powers of research. We often hear it said that most discoveries have been due to accident, but the same accident may have happened a thousand times without producing any such result, because the right sort of mind was not present to improve it. Millions of apples had fallen, before that trivial circumstance became to the disciplined mind of a Newton, the first link of a chain which encircled the universe. The labors of a forgotten multitude of assiduous inquirers had contributed to form that stupendous intellect, which could deduce, from the commonest facts, the general laws of Nature. The ever-rising surges of the mysterious tide of spiritual force, of which the scholastic philosophy had been one of the greatest tributaries, had borne him to a point, from which his eye could sweep the empire of the Almighty.

We must not suppose that intellectual activity during the latter portion of the middle ages, was restricted to metaphysical speculation and the classic study of antiquity. When once the human mind has been thoroughly awakened to a consciousness of its own powers, it cannot be confined to any prescribed channel. While the schoolmen were discussing their nominalism and realism, and the new study of the Greek literature was dividing the universities into Greeks and Trojans, who fought their wordy battles with almost as much animosity, as the heroes of the Iliad had shown in more deadly encounters, there were not wanting bold original thinkers, who turned their attention to more productive investigations.

The fifteenth century was signalized by many great discoveries and inventions. There were men of genius who *practised* those principles of induction, which Lord Bacon, who may be called the Blackstone of the laws of research, afterwards digested into a beautiful system.

The scholastic philosophy prepared the way for the reformation. It is true that even the boldest of the schoolmen, by a dexterous use of terms, contrived to keep within the pale of orthodoxy, yet anything which sets men to thinking is dangerous to established abuses. He who puts the minds of others upon a new track, must not expect them to stop precisely where he does. He has applied a spark to an infinitely expansive power, and he cannot confine it within the same limits that he chooses to impose upon himself. Nor was the church by any means so hostile to investigation as many have supposed. It was not until the success of the great revolt had shown the Pope and his clergy how the spirit of inquiry endangered their own power, that they began to discourage it. In the careless confidence of undisputed supremacy, they connived at a freedom and boldness, which they afterwards learned to dread as their most formidable foes.

The long twilight of intellect had melted into morn, and the glorious sun of modern illumination was gilding the mountain tops, when Luther sounded his bugle in the forests of Germany, to give notice of a grand bishop hunt, and from hill and valley, from city and hamlet, a stalwart army sprang up at the inspiring summons, for which they had long been waiting, and the champions of the church woke up from the lethargy that had well nigh been fatal, and marshalled their jesuit host, and that world-battle commenced, which must go on until authority and freedom shall have fixed their respective limits and once more embraced each other. This mighty struggle demands a separate discourse altogether to itself.

In this brief sketch of the progress of society during the

middle ages, I have nowhere attempted to fix the era of the beginning of improvement, for the best of all reasons, that it is utterly impossible to do so. As well might we attempt to define the boundary between light and darkness. We may say here is light and there is darkness, but between the two points which we select, there is a neutral ground, where they contend for existence. The principles of moral life at work in the heart of society, require long periods to show any distinct results upon the surface, and though, if we compare two ages widely separated, we perceive that immense changes have taken place, the intermediate points of transition may be absolutely imperceptible.

The student of history cannot fail to observe upon what a sublime scale, both as to time and the number of agents employed, the plans of Providence are conducted. In that mighty warfare with ignorance, sin and misery, which makes up the history of our race, a thousand years are as one day. Ages on ages roll away, and millions on millions fall in the breach to achieve a single conquest from the dark domains of the enemy of mankind. The net product of the labors of many of the greatest intellects of the race, toiling in poverty, neglect and misery, may be mastered by a child in a few hours.

It is true of society as well as of the individual, that man is ever in pursuit of an ideal which is ever flying before him. His lot upon earth is an unceasing warfare with those strange elements of physical and moral evil, which not only lie in ambush on every side, but have taken up their quarters in his own mortal frame; or a weary chase of the coy goddess Truth, whose celestial beauty shines into the heart of her votary, and gives him, amid the general gloom and restlessness of his mortal pilgrimage, some moments of deep joy and transporting anticipation, but whose form forever eludes his eager embrace. The whole progress of society is the

perpetual pursuit of what perhaps can never be reached in the present state of being.

The tender germ, which in summer is to expand into a beautiful flower, and in autumn mature into a wholesome fruit, is at first wrapped up in fold after fold, the outermost of which is roughest and most capable of withstanding the storms of early spring. As the germ and its inner coats expand, one wrappage after another bursts open and falls off when its purposes have been completed.

This process of nature may furnish us with an illustration of the progress of modern society. The world-shadowing tree of Roman civilization was rudely torn and riven by the northern tempest. But its roots deeply interlaced the soil, and ere long, cherished by the genial warmth of religion, they began to sprout again and grow up into strong and hardy plants, and the germs of the new refinement were protected from the storms of those early ages, by a variety of institutions evolved by the successive stages of social development. The rough outer rind of the feudal system and the inner coats of monarchy, chartered franchises and papal supremacy grew together, and through them all protruded the hardy but beautiful flower of chivalry, which, when it decayed, was found to have enclosed the delicate bloom of honor, courtesy and social refinement. When their purposes had been accomplished, so far as we can see, feudality, hereditary monarchy and the papal power not only clung to the parent stem, but grown rigid by time, began to bruise and check the growth of that, which they were designed to protect, until they were burst open by the great revolutions to which we must now turn our attention. The first breach was made in the papal authority which pressed most directly upon expanding mind.

III.
SPIRITUAL DESPOTISM
AND THE
REFORMATION.

This page in the original text is blank.

SPIRITUAL DESPOTISM

AND THE

REFORMATION.

IT may be thought by some that I have ascribed to Christianity too large a share in modern civilization. So far from this being true, I doubt whether we can do more than approach a just conception of the stupendous importance of that agency. The intangible nature of its moral power must forever cause the actual sphere of its operations to elude the grasp of our faculties. It works silently in the great deep of spiritual being, and only by its effects can its power be known. And those effects may sometimes be so modified by other causes, as to give some show of reason for excluding Christianity altogether. Yet I am satisfied, that if we knew all, which the hopes and fears of religion have done to originate or strengthen good resolutions, to confirm the wavering, to tame the ferocity and restrain the passions of men; could we unveil the secrets of the millions of hearts, which have been exalted and purified by the moral ideal delineated in the gospel history; could we, in short, follow the impalpable power of religion through all the generations that have lived and died since the first promulgation of Christianity, our minds would be overwhelmed by the import and majesty of an historical fact, in comparison with which all other facts are insignificant.

It would help us to form a just conception of the importance of religion as an element of social organization, if we could find in all history a single example of a society, in

which all ideas of God and of future retribution had been thoroughly eradicated from the minds of men. A theory of morality, founded exclusively on considerations drawn from the present state of existence, has never been fairly tested, and we are therefore reduced to the necessity of inquiring not what have been, but what would probably be its effects.

This fact of itself would seem to be a sufficient proof of the necessity of religion. Societies, as well as individuals, have a strange instinct of self-preservation, and know pretty well what is necessary for that purpose. The *common sense* of mankind, after all, is a much surer guide than eccentric *philosophers* are willing to admit. The fate of all systems that have warred with that common sense, from the follies of the Anabaptists to the socialism of Owen, shows the impotence of the human mind, when, not content with guiding or regulating the social tendencies, it strikes at the vital principles of the social organization.

Though we may rest contented with the irreversible verdict, which history and the common sense of mankind have pronounced in favor of religion, the philosophical grounds of that verdict are an interesting subject of inquiry. An important part of the business of philosophy is to find reason for believing what the mass believe without reason. The popular opinions, narrow and disjointed as they are in the common mind, appear to the philosopher under new aspects, lead him into wide provinces of thought, and by means of the relations which he alone can discern, coalesce into a beautiful and harmonious system, worthy of the Author of all truth.

Let us first take a purely practical view of this subject. Tell a man of strong passions, and without strong passions no individual and no people can be good for much, that if he denies himself some present gratification, the sum of his hap-

piness may be ultimately greater, having regard to the present existence alone. He has a very short and we think a conclusive answer to all such reasoning. He looks round him and sees men who have taken the moralist's advice, suffering from all the ills that flesh is heir to, and sinking perhaps into an untimely grave, while the sensualist, who economises his resources of vicious enjoyment with any degree of prudence, lives in a perpetual sunshine of sound digestion and buoyant animal spirits. He sees that what is called happiness, if there be no hereafter, depends much less upon the state of the conscience than the state of the stomach, and that justice and goodness have much less to do with success in this world than energy and sagacity, much less than even vulgar skill in driving bargains. It is useless to disguise the fact that the worldly prosperity of men is not in proportion to their virtue, but is chiefly to be ascribed to shrewdness and good fortune. Under these circumstances, your hopeful pupil concludes that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush, and declines to forego present enjoyment for the sake of some future and doubtful advantage.

As to virtue being its own reward, we should reflect that the better a man becomes, the worse he seems to himself, because the very process of purification sharpens the moral sensibilities. Whenever one feels particularly complacent in the contemplation of his own goodness, he may be very sure that he is not only making no progress in virtue, but is very decidedly on the downward road. It was the greatest moral hero that ever lived who exclaimed in the bitterness of his soul, "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The moralist may next appeal to his pupil's generous sentiments, and exhort him to sacrifice his own gratification to the general good. But no one who knows human nature, would expect in this way to produce any effect upon the

mass of mankind. They are selfish beings, and their own interest must be made to coincide with that of society.—Your argument that the observance of those laws which conduce to the general welfare, may increase the share of each in the aggregate of social happiness, is altogether too circuitous to afford a motive strong enough to resist the impulse of a present passion. Besides, your argument moves in too elevated a region for the creature of a day, a mere compound of albumen, lime, phosphorus, and other material elements, whose existence must terminate with the dissolution of those elements. Talk of heroic virtue, of self-denial to a creature, who has nothing to hope or fear after his little life on earth has been snuffed out! He would laugh at your fine spun casuistry and endless speculations about the general good, and seek his own good by wringing from his fleeting and worthless existence every drop of nectar which it could afford. His fierce passions are craving the delicious fruit that is almost within his grasp, when the moralist comes and tells him to deny himself and pursue his real good through a narrow, stony and circuitous path, which, for all he knows, may lead him into swamps and deserts, instead of those gardens of pleasure which were promised him. Why should a creature who must perish like the beast, care about society and posterity, or forego a present gratification at the bidding of justice, truth or principle? No human institutions could preserve society from utter extinction, unless fortified by a sense of duty founded upon the law of God, and enforced by the sanctions of a future life.

There is another view of the subject which we may notice. One's aspirations and attainments are usually on a level with his views of his own nature and destiny. He who is thoroughly persuaded that he is a mere compound of material elements, destined to return in a short time to its original nothingness, is not likely to strive after any higher objects,

than those which minister to the wants of his animal nature. All great thoughts and lofty aspirations claim kindred with infinity.

A Newton could be happy in picking up shells on the shore of the ocean of truth, because he believed that one day he should launch into the great deep itself, and spend an eternity in exploring its mighty secrets. The sage who spends a lifetime in the pursuit of knowledge, can only hope to pass the threshold of the star paved temple of immensity, where the mysteries of being dwell in the shadowy recesses of boundless halls and endless corridors. Convince him that when his eyes should close in death, they would open no more upon this wondrous universe, and the ghastly thought would quench forever his lofty aspirations, for who would give the sap of his existence to feed those lights of mind which must go out in everlasting night? If it be said that some who have professed this dismal creed have been ardent in the pursuit of knowledge, I answer that so deeply is the common belief implanted in the human soul, that some fibres of it will survive the most assiduous weeding of sceptical philosophy. Men often unconsciously act upon principles, which in theory they discard. How much of their zeal is due to the love of truth, and how much to selfish motives, it is impossible to determine. It must not be forgotten that the Atheist philosophers lived in times, when knowledge had become reputable, and a source of wealth and rank in society. The martyrs of science, who, in poverty and neglect or persecution, conquered from the realms of darkness those fair provinces where a Diderot and D'Alembert dwelt in gentlemanly ease and safety, were all Christians or at least believers.

Take away the hope of immortality, and this life is indeed, in comparison with the capacities of man, a poor and paltry concern, only worthy of that light mockery, which is so fatal to all great and generous emotions. While the coarse would

plunge into gross sensuality, the more refined voluptuary would seek to disguise the littleness of his worthless existence with graceful and elegant pleasures; but it would be vain to expect of him any noble enthusiasm for truth and virtue, not to speak of those lofty exhibitions of moral heroism, which have sometimes saved a nation or the race, and shed a never-dying glory over ages of belief. Like Voltaire, believing himself to have been created in sport, he makes up his mind to carry on the joke and join in the laughter, that the supernatural powers may not have all the fun to themselves, while he admits none of those emotions which can only disturb his epicurean serenity.

Let us suppose that in some great moment, there flashes upon him with resistless force the soul-stirring thought that there is a spark of Deity within him, which, instead of perishing with the dissolution of matter, may draw from it the sustenance of an eternal growth; that he is an object of interest to higher intelligences, even to the Father of the Universe himself; that every thought, word or deed, is a seed borne down by the stream of time to fructify for weal or woe to all eternity; what a vast revolution must take place in his feelings and purposes! The Divine voice reverberates through every recess of his mysterious nature, calling up deep thoughts and infinite emotions.

It may be said that natural religion is sufficient for all the purposes which I have endeavored to point out. How happened it then, that in the most cultivated nations of antiquity, a pure system of natural religion was confined to the schools of the philosophers, and was absolutely powerless to correct the absurd superstitions and abominable vices of the multitude? How happened it that the empire of spiritual darkness, which had defied the assaults of philosophy, gave way before the humble men who planted the Cross upon the ruins of the Pantheon, and transferred the sovereignty of the moral

world from the cloudy Olympus to the bloodstained Calvary ? How happens it, that the most ignorant man in a Christian land is familiar, from childhood, with the subjects of the secret and profound speculations of a Thales and a Plato, and has a warm and vivid apprehension of their living reality, which those philosophers never knew ? Why is it, in short that philosophy never has, and never will, supply the place of the Christian religion among the mass of mankind ?

The abstract essence of the Supreme Intelligence, is too remote, too indefinite, to affect us strongly. A substance which is invisible, intangible, and beyond the reach of our senses and our imaginations, may be recognized by the mind, but cannot touch the heart, except by embodying itself in material forms. No one can feel either love or reverence for the Supreme Being, without associating him with some one or more of his material manifestations. But if nature is the body of God, and the sun, the stars and all the beautiful or the sublime objects of the physical world, are, as it were, the organs, by means of which he places himself in communication with the human soul, they give us no definite information as to his relations to us in particular. There is a tendency implanted in human nature for high purposes, to form a still closer bond of connection with the Divinity, to bring Him still nearer home to our own conceptions and our sympathies, to seek a divine brotherhood and supernatural embodiment of our own existence and destinies. As good and evil originate in precisely the same properties of our nature, according to the relative degree or objects of their activity, Christianity laid hold of the very principle, which, misguided, had been the source of idolatry, and solved that problem which had been always too hard for philosophy, of reconciling the accuracy of metaphysical abstraction with the warm glow of human sympathy. And herein lies its power ; the God-man living, sorrowing, bleeding, dying, and rising

from the dead, as the second Adam of a spiritual posterity. *Christianity is Philosophy turned into Poetry.* Hence the Divinity of our Saviour holds the first place among the Christian doctrines, for without it, Christianity is not a religion, but a philosophy just as inefficient, on a large scale, as any of the systems that preceded it, or have endeavored to supplant it.

The enlightened sceptic will acknowledge that the striking and stupendous facts in the history of Christianity demand the profoundest consideration of the philosophic mind. It cannot be denied with any shadow of plausibility, that for good or for evil it has been the soul of modern society. It is the electric chain descending from above, which has connected and given efficiency to most of the secondary causes of social improvement. What branch of physical science can compare in interest and importance with the phenomena of this spiritual electricity as manifested in history. Even if we should never attain to happy freedom from doubt as to the Divine authority of the Christian religion, or from perplexity as to some of its characteristics in its state of original purity, the very inquiry itself, if conducted in a proper spirit, cannot fail to have good effects, for earnest meditation upon such subjects expands and elevates the soul. This indirect influence of inquiry in countries where freedom of thought is encouraged, has been too much overlooked. It makes the great difference between Protestant and Catholic nations, and the incontestable superiority of the former. The lingering scepticism of deep and earnest natures, the dark struggle which goes on in many souls between cold reason and the faith of love, and keeps the subject perpetually before the mind, is better than the stolid certainty of uninquiring bigots, or the thoughtless acquiescence of worldly men, who, adopting the creed which they have been taught, never trouble themselves about the matter, until frightened by the approach of death.

The great point is the preservation in the soul of a deep and undying interest in the great facts of the Gospel history. A recognition of those facts as the foundation of hope and the inspiration of love, seems to have constituted the simple creed of the first Christians. There is no doubt that greater freedom of opinion, upon speculative points, was allowed in the primitive church than is now permitted by any powerful sect in Christendom. An increase of the spirit of dogmatism always marks the decay of the religion of love, and those who are most zealous for the symbolism, are often most careless about the substance of Christianity.

I have already had occasion to intimate, that even before Christianity had become the state religion of Rome, the succinct yet comprehensive creed of the first believers had been expanded by councils and philosophic theologians into a system of dogmas, while the simple form of church government, in which the college of presbyters was presided over by one of their own number, who, without any superiority of rank to his brethren, exercised a general supervision, became the nucleus of an hierarchical condition, which was gradually brought to correspond almost exactly with the order of the civil state. The bishops of the smaller cities gradually extended their jurisdiction over the neighboring districts; over these provincial bishops rose, in like manner, the great sees of Alexandria and Antioch; and finally to crown the regular ascent of ecclesiastical dignity, which corresponded with that of the civil authority to the bishop of Rome, the capital of the empire was conceded a preëminence of rank, rather than of real power. Thus the civil superiority of Rome in a church, united with the state, and modeled by it, became the foundation of that extraordinary power which made the "eternal city" the seat of a new empire, mightier and more enduring than that which had been overthrown by the northern invaders; resting not upon force, but opinion,

and propagated by weapons more potent than steel, though drawn from an invisible armory.

It is a difficult task to trace with candor and discernment the steps by which the bishops of Rome ascended to that height of power, from which, without any military force that deserved the name, they controlled not only the affairs of the church, but the policy of nations, trampled upon the necks of kings, united hostile armies under the banner of the Cross, and turned the rage which they were about to vent upon each other, against the enemies of religion and the Holy See. It is one of the most signal triumphs of mind over physical force, perhaps the most remarkable, that is to be found in the history of mankind.

The northern barbarians easily became accustomed to the preëminence of the Roman See, for most of them were converted, while the departing majesty of the empire still lingered upon the temples and palaces of the "eternal city." While the Greeks, in a great measure, transferred their spiritual as well as temporal allegiance to the new capitol, which Constantine had founded upon the Bosphorus, Rome continued to be the centre of the western church, and her pontiff, throned upon the venerable remains of ancient grandeur, strengthened their hold upon the reverence of an ignorant and superstitious people, exercised a general supervision in spiritual matters, sounded the alarm at the approach of heresy or schism, and *perhaps* had a right to preside, in person or by proxy, over the councils which were held from time to time to settle disputed points of faith or discipline. To this extent the papal supremacy is just as well founded as either the metropolitan or diocesan episcopacy. Neither formed any part of the original constitution of the apostolic age, which, as I have said, was a model of democratic equality, and if changes might be lawfully made in that constitution to meet the exigencies of the times, as many and as strong arguments might

have been urged in favor of the supremacy of Rome, as in favor of any lower degrees of episcopal jurisdiction. In a very advanced state of society, both are equally useless; but it is only among an enlightened people that a very large share of political or religious liberty is compatible with civil order and moral government. If, in rude and ignorant ages, a very strong ecclesiastical organization was necessary to preserve the moral power of religion, that organization would have been very defective without a central authority to form a bond of union as well as a salutary check upon the spiritual despots, who lorded it over God's heritage.

The bishops of Rome, not content with the moral weight which they derived from their superior dignity and the veneration of the Christian world, aspired to the absolute sovereignty in church and state. Before noticing the steps by which the Roman pontiffs partially succeeded in converting the western world into a vast theocracy, in which they were the vicegerents of God, I will remark, that the historical facts, connected with the great schism between the eastern and western churches, are fatal to the exclusive pretensions of the Latin church and its head, to apostolic succession and spiritual authority. That separation grew out of the conflicting claims of Rome and Constantinople. The Greeks well knew, that the preëminence of the Roman bishops was owing solely to the political preëminence of Rome during the formation of the hierarchical constitution, and they plausibly argued that, in a church united with the state, the spiritual supremacy ought to follow the political sovereignty. At the time of the schism, the great river of apostolic succession and authority just parted into two equal streams, and by what right the Latin branch has ever since claimed to be the whole river, we are at a loss to know. The western nations adhered to the patriarch of the old capitol, partly from habit and because it was in their midst, partly from hostility to the

eastern empire; and yet the Latin church to this day claims the right to dictate the faith of mankind and anathematize the Greek church as heretical and schismatical. With equal justice the latter retorts the anathema, while the liberal protestant looks on with a smile.

Let us return to the means by which the papal court partially succeeded in establishing a theocracy in the western nations. The first step was to break down the national and provincial independence of the clergy. In their efforts to do this, the Roman pontiffs encountered a spirited resistance. The struggle was similar to that between the crown and the feudal barons, and in both cases the central authority triumphed, partly by the unity of its counsels and the concentration of its energies, partly by a concurrence of fortunate circumstances. In the fermentation of conflicting elements that marked the incipient stage of civil and ecclesiastical organization, the limits of power were undefined and fluctuating; encroachments were easily converted into precedents. From such struggles the power which is lodged in a single person is almost sure to come out victorious.

It became a custom with such of the clergy as had either real or imaginary grievances to complain of from their immediate superiors or from the national synods, to call in the aid of the Pope, which at first, given only in the way of advice or counsel, gradually ripened into the appellate jurisdiction of the Roman See.

While the national clergy were resisting the usurpations of the Pope, they were also engaged in disputes with the civil power in their respective states. While civil rulers in all parts of Europe claimed and exercised the rights of convoking councils and nominating bishops, on the other hand the clergy, almost monopolizing the learning of those rude ages, thought that their superior qualifications, and the interests both of church and state, authorized them to take a large

share of political authority, and the love of power; so natural to the human heart, induced them to take advantage of weak reigns or the dissensions of a superstitious people, to arrogate to themselves the absolute control of civil affairs, even to the extent of deposing and electing kings. Thus warring at once with the secular authority, and with the spiritual supremacy of Rome, they soon found it necessary to make peace with one or the other, and they preferred subjection to a chief of their own order, to an humiliating acknowledgment of the superiority of laymen. No one who has read with attention the history of the famous contest between Thomas à Becket and Henry the Second, can be at a loss to understand the motives, which brought the clergy to acknowledge the supremacy of Rome. With a strong leaning towards the papacy, because it was their best ally against the secular authority, they were not very rigid in their scrutiny of that body of pretended canon law, commonly known as the false decretals, in which forged precedents for all the encroachments of Rome were dated back into the earliest ages of the church. It is a singular but incontestable fact, that the vast fabric of papal power rests in part upon one of the most audacious and clumsy impostures in the history of mankind.

I desire to do no injustice. If the greater part of the documentary evidence, which the Popes of the dark ages relied upon to support their pretensions, were the forgeries of Isidore; and the desire of aggrandizing their own order was one of the motives which induced the clergy to make common cause with Rome against the civil rulers of their respective countries; on the other hand, it should not be forgotten that they held the moral and intellectual power of those barbarous times; that they had the custody of the higher elements of social improvement; that they were the allies of learning, morals and peaceful industry; that it required no very great sagacity to perceive, that in order to

preserve their salutary influence over the minds of licentious barbarians, it was necessary to present an undivided front under a single chief. In their long warfare with ferocious animalism, the spiritual army needed a commander-in-chief, and who would be so readily thought of for that high office, as the bishop of Rome, already enthroned in the veneration of Christendom.

I have already remarked that the clergy, before they became dependent upon the Holy See, had disputed not only the ecclesiastical but temporal authority of civil rulers, and even claimed the right of deposing princes, who had invaded the privileges or violated the laws of the church. It was not to be expected that the Pope, now placed at the head of a disciplined army of spiritual warriors, who filled not only the churches and monasteries, but the schools and courts and cabinets of Christendom, and wielded those arms most terrible to a superstitious people, would forego any prerogative, which had been claimed and exercised by his subalterns. Accordingly, age after age, we find a succession of Pontiffs, differing widely in mental and moral qualities, systematically pursuing one great object, the subjection of the civil to the spiritual power. Were they animated by mere selfish ambition, or did a nobler motive lie at the bottom of this undeviating policy?

This question would occasion little difficulty to those persons, who value themselves upon that sort of worldly shrewdness which never imagines a good motive, where a mean and despicable one can possibly be made to account for the fact. But that indiscriminating severity of judgment which is founded upon a partial knowledge of human nature, that is to say, of its weakness and depravity, though it sometimes assumes a philosophic air of indulgent pity for that simplicity which thinks no evil, is a source of quite as much fallacy and injustice. It is the product of cold hearts and shallow brains.

Such men, notwithstanding their knowing air and decisive tone, seldom see far into anything, and they are especially shallow in their judgments of men or ages, which, in spirits and modes of thought, differ materially from those with which they are familiar.

As the soul of man preserves the identity of his organization through all the material changes which it undergoes, so every social institution has a vital principle, which preserves, in the succession of individuals, a chain of organic connection. Whenever that principle is lost, the institution must perish, though its carcass may long encumber the earth, and clog the movements of society.

The vital principle of the papal power, in the early period of its history, was a great and generous idea, debased, no doubt, in the minds of particular pontiffs, by a mixture of selfish ambition—so strangely compounded of good and evil are all the powerful impulses of human nature. It is inconceivable that a succession of Italian priests could have acquired and preserved a moral power over the independent and high-spirited people of England, France and Germany, sufficient to shake the thrones of the haughtiest monarchs, unless some higher purpose than merely selfish aggrandizement could be discerned in the papal policy. What was that purpose?

I will recall the mind of the reader to the condition of society, when the Popes, as the acknowledged head of the ecclesiastical state, undertook to impose upon kings and nobles, the restraints of the spiritual authority. Ignorant and ferocious animalism contemned art, learning and refinement. Law, justice, humanity, were trampled under foot by the fierce chieftains of rapacious and blood-thirsty savages, who spurned all restraints but those of superstition. Peaceful industry was constantly exposed to wanton outrage, and bands of plunderers purchased impunity by sharing their spoils

with princes and nobles. Female honor and the sanctity of domestic relations were violated even by their legal guardians. Private wars filled Europe with bloodshed and conflagration. In such a state of things, when the very magistrates set the example of crimes, which it was their duty to punish, it is obvious that the only hope of mankind lay in the moral power of the ecclesiastics, who, though not untainted by the vices of the times, were far in advance of the ruling classes of the laity, both in knowledge and in regard for moral obligations. They were the only champions of intellect and morals in their warfare with physical force, who could command the respect and restrain the passions of the barbarians. It is plain that the freedom of opinion which protestantism tolerates, would have been fatal to the infancy of modern civilization, for divisions in the church would have destroyed her influence. It was necessary that some strong bond should unite the spiritual soldiery of Christendom into an unbroken phalanx, in order to resist and subdue the inundation of ignorant brutality, which had overwhelmed the ancient civilization. That bond was the central authority of Rome.

If we would make any progress in the philosophy of history, we must be able to transport ourselves into the midst of men and ages, whose spirit and modes of thought are very different from our own, and if possible view their transactions in the same light, in which they appeared to open-minded contemporaries. We should be guilty of gross injustice to view the contest of bishops and kings in the eleventh century with the eyes of Protestants and Americans. In reviewing the struggle between the papal power, the chief representative of intellect and morals, and the secular tyrants, who trampled upon justice, humanity and industry, I can see no sufficient reason for taking sides with the latter, as most European writers have done. We owe much it is true to Alfred and Charlemagne and some of their successors, who

like them were exceptions among the princes of their time, and acted usually in concert with the church. We are liable to be misled by the vague denunciations of the tyranny and usurpations of the popes, that are to be found in the writings of men who were either in the employment, or wished to obtain the favor of those princes who quarrelled with the Holy See. But here and there a fact stands out from their general declamation, which speaks volumes as to the true nature of the conflict between the spiritual and secular powers. For example, it is stated, that the great Gregory the Seventh, who has always been regarded as the founder of the temporal dominion of the popes, as well as the most arrogant and ambitious among them, with the exception perhaps of Innocent III., launched his spiritual thunders at the head of Philip I. of France, because that monarch had screened from punishment a band of ruffians who had robbed a company of merchants; the said Philip sharing no doubt the plunder of his protégés. To mitigate the evils of those private wars, which desolated Europe and retarded the progress of civilization, the church proclaimed what was called the truce of God, by which hostilities were everywhere to cease from Thursday evening until Monday morning in each week, including the interval between the death and resurrection of our Saviour; but so strong was the appetite for blood, that the clergy were only partially successful in enforcing this salutary regulation. In short, I think that whosoever will candidly examine the history of the first half of the middle ages in reference to this matter, will find that the spiritual power was generally wielded for the preservation of order, the restraint of oppression, the defence of the weak, the protection and encouragement of learning and industry.

The preservation of religion itself required in ages of ignorance and licence, ecclesiastical organization, which derived strength from union. Divisions would have been fatal at

a time when the mass of the people were under the necessity of receiving their faith from the church, for it is idle to suppose that the scriptures could have been the rule of faith to any considerable number, when, before the invention of printing, a single copy of the bible was worth a small fortune, and few, besides the clergy, knew how to read.

I therefore look upon these two facts as the chief sources of spiritual power, in the earlier portion of the middle ages; first, that the church was generally on the side of the people against their oppressors; second, that to the mass of mankind she was the only accessible repository of religious knowledge, the only source upon which they could rely for guidance through life, and consolation in death. The secondary means, which were employed to extend and perpetuate that power, are well known to all readers of history. I shall dwell upon only one of them, the celibacy of the clergy.

The moral beauty of man's nature implies the subordination of his selfish and sensual passions to his reason and moral faculties. This unquestionable truth has been perverted into a notion very common among the enthusiasts of almost all religions, as well as some sects of philosophers, that any sensual indulgence is so far a derogation from the true dignity of our spiritual nature. Among the early Christians, celibacy, though not enjoined as a positive obligation on any class of persons, was regarded as a lofty attainment of spiritual perfection, and as a glorious triumph over the lower propensities. This opinion gave rise to the monastic orders, whose self-denial was regarded by licentious barbarians as a miraculous victory over the strongest impulses of human nature.

When the austerities of the cloister were displayed before the public by the mendicant friars, the churches of the parochial clergy were deserted by the people, who flocked to hear the preaching of those barefooted militia of the Holy See. Their success excited the envy of the secular clergy,

who were thus induced to acquiesce in a regulation, which however painful and absurd, might restore to them the veneration of their flocks. For a while it had the desired effect, yet the pope and the bishops found it a difficult task to enforce the universal observance of the law of clerical celibacy. When finally established, for a time it produced the effects which had been desired and expected; for the superstitious people beheld the marvellous austerity of the cloister displayed by the whole body of the clergy, who seemed to rise above all the weakness of humanity. It also placed at the disposal of the Holy See a body of men, who in the absence of all the cares and pleasures of domestic life, consecrated all the energies of their souls to the service of the church. In the latter part of the middle ages, the practice of concubinage and the dreadful corruption of morals caused by the rule of celibacy, contributed greatly, by weakening the hold of the ecclesiastics on the veneration of the people, to prepare the way for the reformation. And here we may remark, in passing, that the germs of the worst peculiarities of Catholicism may be found, if not in the apostolic age itself, at least in that which immediately succeeded; and so gradual has been their expansion into that full-blown luxuriance, to which the sharp pruning knives of the reformers were applied, that the attempts which have been made to fix their origin at certain particular times are perfectly idle. All errors that have taken any lasting hold of the human mind, have been formed by gradual accretions. All the abuses, as well as all the blessings of social systems, have their fibres running far back, until they are lost in the depths of the past.

I have said that the spirit of the papal policy was originally great and magnanimous. That intentionally or unintentionally it did much in those early ages for the cause of civilization, will not be denied. But the possessors of absolute power are apt to forget the purposes for which it was acquired. We

may illustrate the progress of degeneracy by the history of an individual, who engages in the pursuit of gain with the hope of acquiring an honest independence, and the means of doing good; but as he progresses, his nobler feelings are gradually supplanted by the mere love of accumulation; he becomes more and more eager in the pursuit of wealth, long after his original purposes have been accomplished; then he waxes fat and proud, forgets or tramples on the poor, whom he begins to look upon as inferior beings, and seeks to outshine all his neighbors in luxury and splendor; and finally, perhaps loses all for which he had sacrificed his original simplicity. In like manner the progress of the spiritual dominion of Rome may be divided into several stages, which cannot of course be distinguished with perfect accuracy, as well on account of the fluctuations attending a succession of men of various mental and moral qualities, as because all social and moral changes are so gradual that the points of transition cannot be marked with precision. We may find in the first period pontiffs who anticipated the degeneracy of the last, while the last may show remains of the spirit and policy which, in my general distribution, I have assigned to the first. The general course of a stream is easily distinguished from its particular windings.

I have sufficiently indicated what I believe to have been the true spirit and policy of the court of Rome during the first period. After the time of Innocent the Third, whose extraordinary talents and energy almost realized the vast and daring scheme of Hildebrand for bringing the western nations under a theocratic dominion, the popes, intoxicated with power, began to lose sight of the purposes for which it had been originally conceded. Not only were the last sparks of independence extinguished in the national churches, but the kings of the earth might be said to hold their crowns at the will of the arrogant successors of the

fishermen of Gallilee. The popes began to levy more substantial tribute than the homage and submission of the western nations. Various expedients were devised by which vast sums of money, from every quarter of Europe, were drawn into the papal treasury.

In the third period, power almost absolute, and pecuniary resources well-nigh inexhaustible, produced their usual effects. The popes began to forfeit the veneration of the people by rapacity, ostentation and corruption of manners not surpassed, if equalled by the most profligate courts of Europe. The state of moral feeling must have been low indeed, when such a monster as Alexander VI. dared to pollute the pontifical palace with crimes that cannot be named to ears polite. The corruption of the head of the church gradually spread through the whole body. The simple Germans and English, far away from the chief scene of debauchery, might still love the religion of their fathers, and venerate the spiritual chief of Christendom. But even among them, the higher orders of the clergy were as much distinguished for rapacity and ostentation as the monks were for idleness and superstition.

The people of Italy, who witnessed the disgusting spectacle of ecclesiastical degradation, lost all respect for a religion that was disgraced in the persons of its highest functionaries. The outward respect to the gorgeous ceremonial of the church, which the intelligent found it prudent to pay, concealed a general infidelity; and many of the clergy themselves, like the augurs of ancient Rome, could not look in each other's faces without laughing. In other countries, the chief source of disaffection was the enormous exactions by which the court of Rome plundered all Europe. This was especially the case in Germany, the simple-hearted people of which were the peculiar prey of Romish rapacity.

Meanwhile, the way was gradually preparing for that great

revolution which was to shake the fabric of ecclesiastical power to its deepest foundations, and separate completely those elements of national and individual freedom, which in the church of the middle ages were bound up with the principle of Catholic unity; for there was far greater freedom in matters of opinion, far more protestant individuality in the church before the reformation, than many have supposed. Indeed the reformation, like all other great revolutions, was merely an elimination of principles, which had been lurking in the ancient order of things. It decomposed the church, if I may be allowed the expression, separating the elements first of national, then of individual freedom, which had been lying side by side with catholicity and authority, usually in imperfect combination, or rather subordination to them, sometimes in temporary and partial revolt, but never till then in clear and decided hostility; and leaving the residuum of spiritual despotism, which the council of Trent for the first time consolidated into an inflexible system of dogmatic theology. The present Romish system is little more than the slag of that furnace of inquiry, which had been throwing out occasional sparks, before the breath of Luther blew it into a devouring flame. Let us glance at those transient and partial conflicts in the bosom of the church between protestant freedom and catholic unity.

I have already noticed the scholastic philosophy, which by the boldness of its inquiries sometimes alarmed the sentinels of orthodoxy. Before the reformation, however, the method of Aristotle had sunk into a mere logical legerdemain, with which the monks amused their stupid indolence.

The first storm which assailed the church was the famous heresy of the Albigenses, which, originally imported from the east, spread over Languedoc and Provence—at that time the best governed, the most refined and intellectual part of Christian Europe. Their doctrines were Manichean, a com-

pound of Christianity and the oriental philosophy. Their wandering minstrels, the troubadours, so prominent in the history of modern literature, were welcomed with delight in castle-halls and ladies' boudoirs, and mingled the poison of their subtle heresies with the voluptuous poetry which they had borrowed from the Arab conquerors of Spain. The northern nobility of France, instigated partly by bigotry, chiefly perhaps by political motives, promptly obeyed the summons of the pope to exterminate those dangerous sectaries, who happened to be the subjects of the count of Toulouse, whose increasing power and opulence had excited the jealousy of the other feudal chieftains. A fanatic monk bore the cross before those fierce champions of the church, who spared neither age nor sex of a peaceful, industrious and polished people, and turned the garden of Europe into a desert.

John Wickliffe was one of those men who seem to have been born an age too soon. He was a man of ability and learning, and apparently well qualified to have been the leader of the great movement which was reserved for a subsequent period. There is some reason, however, to believe that he was inferior to Luther in the spirit and firmness necessary for such an undertaking. The doctrines of Wickliffe were suppressed in England by the secular arm, but they took deep root in Germany, and were so widely diffused, that the Hussites, after their apostle, who was a disciple of Wickliffe, had been put to death at Constance in contempt of every principle of justice and good faith, were able for a long time to resist the whole power of the empire.

From time immemorial the peasants of Switzerland and Savoy, fenced in by precipices and avalanches from the corruptions of the world, preserved the purity and simplicity of their manners, and from time to time sent forth from their mountains a voice of warning and rebuke. It is not known with certainty what were their peculiar doctrines.

The church was able to suppress without difficulty the partial insurrections which preceded the reformation, nor was she very scrupulous as to the means which she employed for that purpose. But the fires which seemed to have been quenched in blood, still burned under cover, ready to burst forth with greater fury at a favorable juncture. Meanwhile the papal power was much weakened by the great schism growing out of the conflicting claims of the pontiffs of Rome and Avignon, which distracted the Christian world for nearly forty years. Towards the end of this period, the devout were scandalized by the extraordinary spectacle of three several popes, launching their spiritual thunders at each others' heads, and filling the world with uproar and confusion. As it was utterly impossible to determine the validity of their respective claims, the council of Constance, where the *national* element of protestantism for the last time took an imposing part in regulating the affairs of the church, to which it was shortly to be arrayed in open hostility, having prevailed upon two of the claimants of the pontifical chair to resign, deposed the other, and elected a new pope, who made Rome once more the spiritual capitol of Christendom.

The anxiety of the popes to extend their territorial dominion in Italy, hastened the decline of their power. They lost much of the veneration of the people, when they descended from their lofty position as the fathers of the church, the chiefs of the spiritual commonwealth of Europe, to mingle in the squabbles of local politics. There was something expansive and imposing in the moral guardianship of the great family of Christian nations, which threw even over the tyranny and rapacity of the Holy See, a spell, which was broken by the narrow and undisguised worldliness of territorial aggrandizement.

The latter part of the fifteenth century was signalized by great advances in knowledge, to which the invention of

printing gave a powerful impulse. Old habits of thinking were broken up by the marvellous discoveries, which astonished Europe from time to time, and the increasing light showed more vividly the contrast between the arrogance, rapacity and worldliness of the popes and the clergy, and the humility, self-devotion and simplicity of manners, which distinguished the founders of religion. From what source, it may be asked, could any just notions be derived of the purity and simplicity of primitive Christianity? The question would only show our liability to be deceived by those general pictures of society that we find in history, in which a few prominent features in the foreground throw into the shade all the smaller but more numerous details. When we read of the vices and ignorance of the clergy, and the superstition of the people, in what are called the dark ages, we are ready to imagine that truth and faithfulness and genuine piety had been banished from the world. But however difficult it may be for some to realize the fact, men were actually thinking and feeling in those dark ages, in which we find the rudiments of all that is most glorious in modern civilization. Notwithstanding the general corruption, not only society at large, but the monasteries, the parish churches, even the higher ranks of the clergy could show many living examples of healthy natures, which could separate and assimilate the truth that was mixed up with error and moral perversions in the spiritual food of the children of the church. We must not forget that the enthusiastic study of the Greek language and literature had turned the attention of the learned to the earliest and purest monuments of Christianity. The Scriptures, or at least portions of them, had been translated into several of the living languages of Europe, yet it is probable that they were little read by the common people before the time of Luther.

That great reformer did not *exclusively* originate a single

great thought, a single deep feeling. Had he done so, he would have been one of the martyrs of premature movements, not one of the leaders of revolutions. Like all other men of the latter class, his boldness, his earnestness, his power of infusing a fiery and enduring life into everything which he touched, rendered him the medium through which the thinking men around him came to understand and sympathize with each other. His capacious mind brought together, in one incarnate word, the thoughts and feelings which had been silently working in the great deep of the popular mind. What were the most potent of those elements of revolution?

Those who ascribe the reformation to selfish passions, excited by the hope of emancipation from salutary restraints, or of sharing in the plunder of the church on the one hand, and those who suppose it to have originated in opposition to any peculiar theological doctrines on the other, seem to be equally in error. The former do injustice to the mass of mankind, by leaving out of their calculations, the honest indignation of the people at the rapacity, tyranny and profligacy of their superiors, especially of those who have the care of religion, while the latter ascribe to the laity of that age, a clearer understanding of the subtleties of dogmatic theology than is even now possessed by a majority of the members of the most enlightened denominations. The real presence and purgatory might have exercised the skill of theological gladiators, but would never have produced a great popular movement, had they not been accidentally identified with a stupendous system of ecclesiastical corruption and tyranny. This is clear enough from the fact that the real presence, most difficult of the Catholic dogmas to be digested by reason, was retained by Luther and his immediate followers, and has found supporters among the most learned of the Anglican divines. One doctrine, it is true, or rather one

historical fact, the very essence of Christianity, that the Divine Man had, by his life and death, produced a full and sufficient remedy for the moral wants and diseases of all who should receive that provision by faith, was relieved of the inventions with which priestly cunning and popular credulity had overloaded and crushed it out of its proper place in the Christian system. But this truth, though obscured, had never been lost sight of, and the reformers merely removed the rust of ages and restored its original lustre.

It was not the symbolism, but the spirit of the church, her arrogant claims to the absolute sovereignty of the human understanding; the vices, the rapacity, the tyranny of the popes and the hierarchies; the ignorance and superstition of the inferior clergy; such were the chief causes of the reformation. Men who neither understood nor regarded the disputes of polemic theology, were unwilling any longer to forego the privileges of rational beings by submission to the authority of so called vicegerents of the Almighty, who were chiefly distinguished by avarice, luxury and worldly ambition; who supported their arrogant dominion, and made war upon individual freedom and national independence, by bloody persecutions, enormous pecuniary exactions, and all the cunningly devised machinery of ghostly usurpation.— There was a wide-spread disaffection especially among the Germans, who, on account of the mutual relations of the empire and the court of Rome, were more exposed than others to the rapacity of the latter; but it is probable that in few minds had it shaped itself into a definite purpose of breaking those meshes which habit, education and venerable antiquity had woven around the awakened intellect of Europe, when Luther arose to make men acquainted with their own thoughts, and give utterance to their silent indignation in a voice which shook the world and awoke the dead; pierced the sepulchres where moral life had been entombed for ages,

and raised up an exceeding great army to battle for truth, reason and liberty. We may sum up the causes of the reformation in very few words. Like most of the great revolutions of modern society, it was the *revolt of free spirits against profligate despotism*. This was everywhere the life of the movement; but in England and some parts of the continent, it was an under-current, concealed at first by the reaction of nationality against catholicity, which even attempted, but in vain, to drive back the individual element when it rose to the surface.

Both of the moving principles of the reformation, the national and individual, found a representative in Luther, who has shared the fate of all the great leaders of society, of having his character drawn in the brightest or blackest colors, according as the pencil has been in the hand of a friend or an enemy. I shall not aspire to delineate either an angel or a demon, but simply a great-hearted, deep-minded man, whose sagacity laid open the very heart of those momentous subjects, which he grappled with fiery earnestness and unconquerable heroism, while, on the other hand, his nervous irritability and bilious vehemence frequently betrayed him into gross violations of propriety and candor.

A poor boy of the humblest parentage, when at school, he was obliged to beg from door to door, the means of supplying his little wants. The hardships of his youth and his constitutional melancholy strengthened his devotional tendencies. He was full of poetry and passion, and his powerful, but somewhat gloomy imagination, probably beheld in the clouds that lowered upon the morning of his existence, the portents of a stormy future. He turned from a bleak and frowning world to where the glories of eternity were gilding the happy mansions of that "city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God." Such are the uses of adversity.

In such a state of mind, the death of a friend, and the bolt

of lightning, which struck near him during a remarkable storm to which he happened to be exposed, seemed warnings direct from heaven to renounce the uncertain vanities of time. He entered a monastery, where he distinguished himself by his austerities, as well as the deep and bitter agony of soul with which he wrestled, for an assurance of the favor of God. The natural impulses of a fiery and vigorous youth would sometimes assert their claims; the world might appear fairer when he supposed that he was cut off from it forever; the imperious desires and fierce struggles with which his soul was shaken, were regarded by him as suggestions of the evil one, and evidences of inherent depravity, which almost drove him to madness. He sought relief in still more rigorous austerities, but in vain, for prayer and fasting could not silence the voice of nature which was urging him into those very scenes which he thought he had renounced forever. The agonizing sense of guilt, *in part*, at least, the result of morbid tenderness of conscience, or erroneous views of moral obligation, was at length removed by a clearer understanding of that life-giving doctrine, that faith secures to the believer the entire benefits of the all-sufficient work of the Son of God. This doctrine of justification by faith, which, as already observed, had been much obscured by ascetic notions and the devices of the popes and his clergy for raising money, thenceforth occupied the first place in the theological system of the reformer. As Luther suffered so much in his warfare with the flesh, it is not surprising that he afterwards showed some disposition to compromise with that formidable enemy.

Luther's visit to Rome during the pontificate of the martial and magnificent Julius, was an era in his life. It is easy to imagine the feelings with which the monk, whose deep and strong affections, denied all other outlets, were wholly given to God and his church, approached the spiritual capital of Christendom,—the fountain-head of ecclesiastical au-

thority, the eternal centre of the moral Providence of God, the holy city in short, associated in his imagination with all that was most sacred and venerable. If his German cloister had ever been penetrated by reports of the corruptions of the magnificent court of the pontiff, such rumors had not made sufficient impression on his mind, deeply occupied as it was with his own depravity, to impair materially his veneration for the holy city and the father of the church.

What then must have been his astonishment and disgust, when, on arriving in Italy, he found the people neglected by their spiritual guides, the higher ranks ignorant or regardless of religion, the clergy both secular and monastic abandoned to debauchery? At Rome, which he expected to find a city of saints, his primitive and unworldly notions were matter of derision to the licentious scepticism of the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries. His poetical temperament could not fail to be impressed by the grandeur of that "marble wilderness," which preserved a lively image of the ancient magnificence of the "eternal city." But neither the glories of art, the recollections of the past, the congregated genius and learning which flourished under the munificent patronage of the papal court, could for one instant bewilder his moral convictions, or induce him to look with the least degree of allowance upon worldliness, licentiousness and hypocrisy. After his return to Germany, he abated nothing of the austerity of his manners, the severity of his doctrines or the fervor of his devotion. It is probable that this journey had the effect of impairing greatly the *prestige* of those ancient institutions, against which all his powers were soon to be arrayed in open hostility. Though he dreamed not as yet of reforming the church, or revolting from Rome, the boldness of his preaching, in which he tore away from theology the scholastic cobwebs in which it had been enveloped by monkish imbecility, showed that he possessed one of those searching, original

intellects, which are so dangerous to established abuses. Yet he might have remained an obscure and faithful minister of the church, but for circumstances such as short-sighted mortals term accidental.

Leo X., the successor of Julius, was one of the most brilliant and accomplished men of his age. A scion of an illustrious family, he was a favorable example of the spirit and cultivation of Italian society,—at that time the most refined and intellectual on earth. There is reason to believe that he disguised the careless scepticism of epicurean philosophy, under a decent conformity to the outward observances of religion. His elegant tastes and liberal patronage filled his court with artists, poets and philosophers. His munificent encouragement of the genius and learning, which threw a lustre upon his reign, exhausted the papal treasury; he was desirous to signalize his pontificate by the completion of St. Peter's church, one of the wonders of the world, and for that purpose determined to sell out the large stock of supererogatory merits of the saints which were still on hand.

The business of indulgences is a remarkable example of the difficulty of discerning the truth of history through the distorting medium of party prejudice. An indulgence seems to have been a remission of the *temporal* punishment of sin, in other words, of those various penances, which, as they were imposed by the church, could be dispensed with by her. But the sceptical Leo and his servile clergy, in their anxiety to replenish the exhausted coffers of the church, would not be very rigorous with those agents who transcended their authority, and extracted larger sums from the remorse of their customers by promising an exemption from the pains of purgatory and the fires of hell.

It is strange that writers, who admit the insolence and excesses of Tetzal, should seriously attribute Luther's violent denunciations of what he, in common with all other intelli-

gent men, must have looked upon as an abominable imposture, to the pitiful pique of an Augustinian friar, because the Dominicans were the favored agents of the infamous traffic. This hypothesis is a specimen of that shallow and despicable philosophy of history, in which man is a mere selfish animal, always the deviser, the tool or the victim of imposture.

Beginning by an attack upon abuses which were generally condemned, the views of Luther expanded so gradually, that he was probably startled himself, when he found that the breach had widened to an irreparable extent, and that the doors of the church were closed against him forever. The dispute might have been adjusted, had his antagonists acted with prudence and moderation. But the pope and his clergy, unaccustomed to opposition except from princes, could not brook the free and fearless tone of the eloquent monk, whose constitutional vehemence carried him farther than he had intended to go, and nothing but conciliation was wanting to induce him to retrace his steps far enough to bring him back to his spiritual allegiance. Towards a monarch, secure in the loyalty of a great nation, the pope might have adopted the plan of conciliation; but that an humble monk could successfully defy the power which had trampled upon the necks of kings, was not to be thought of.

Luther was too high-spirited and too well satisfied that he was right in the main, to hesitate long, when the measures of the court of Rome left him no choice but unconditional submission or open defiance. Yet, after he had brought himself to contemplate a separation from the centre of Catholic unity as inevitable, we need not be surprised that in hours of nervous depression, he showed some distrust of his own position, and a willingness to accommodate the dispute by larger concessions than his own judgment approved, when he found that they did not satisfy his opponents, and, roused by their unreasonable demands, he was himself again. In relation to

this part of Luther's conduct, one might think that the partial writers on either side had conspired to drive truth and justice out of the world. As his apparent tergiversations admit of an easy explanation which detracts nothing from his sincerity, and is applicable to other leaders of social movements, who have consciously or unconsciously recognized the great truth, that change and conservation must combine in all real and lasting improvement, and have sometimes been sorely perplexed to adjust their respective proportions, I hope to be indulged in a good-natured attempt to rescue the memory of the reformer from the folly of his friends and the malice of his enemies.

There are many persons so thoroughly convinced of their own infallibility, that they never distrust the soundness of their own conclusions, nor have the least respect for the views of those who differ from them. But Luther, with all his self-reliance was far from being blind to the arguments that might be urged against him, and some of which had then much plausibility,—of which they have been deprived by the *experience* of three centuries. His feelings towards the church were very different from those of a modern Protestant. He had been nurtured in her bosom; it was hard to break the spell which her venerable associations had thrown over his imaginative mind; and during those fits of nervous melancholy to which he was subject, he might feel that he was fearfully alone, and bearing up against the current of ages. His hours of despondency might be haunted by distressing doubts, and at such times he might be ready to sink under the tremendous responsibility of battling with an institution, which had been for ages the only source of religious knowledge and everlasting hope, to millions of the human family. He might fear, as his enemies told him, that he was introducing into the moral world anarchy, which would be dangerous or fatal to the best interests of society; for facts had not then

demonstrated the fallacy of such predictions. Let us be generous in our judgments of those great men who have borne our burdens and fought our battles.

All doubts and hesitation vanished, when he was called upon to confront the powers and principalities of earth. In every critical emergency he was clear, decided and fearless. His deportment at the Diet of Worms is a great historical picture, scarce paralleled in moral sublimity since the appearance of St. Paul at the bar of the pro-consul. It was now to be seen how the monk, who, from the seclusion of his cloister, had made the world ring with the thunders of his indignant eloquence, would bear the actual presence of those mighty ones of the earth, whose corruptions he had denounced and whose authority he had defied. Here was an assemblage of everything which could overwhelm a secluded and nervous student. Glittering files of those soldiers who shortly afterwards annihilated the chivalry of France, on the field of Pavia; a multitude, composed of timorous friends and insolent foes, thronging the streets, and covering the house-tops, eager to catch a sight of the reformer, or awaiting with breathless anxiety the result of a meeting, which might decide the fate of the Christian world; and a dazzling array of all that was most illustrious, by rank, power and dignity, in the empire of the west. At the head of a crowd of spiritual and temporal princes, sat a youthful monarch, upon whose dominions the sun never set, who had already shown capacity equal to the support of this weighty diadem, and who was by no means favorably inclined to Luther. And there, in that august presence, stood the charity scholar, the son of the Saxon peasant, arraigned for setting at defiance a power which had been acknowledged through ages by all the western nations. But he stood there, calm, undaunted, the master of his own mind and of the fate of those around him. The congregated majesty of a great empire was nothing to

him who had wrestled with the principalities and powers of the invisible world. Neither the frown of the monarch, the entreaties of his friends nor the threats of his enemies, when the cruel deaths of John Huss and Jerome were yet fresh in the memories of all, could shake his resolution for an instant. The destiny of millions, the fate of distant ages, hung upon his lips, and his soul was equal to the tremendous importance of the crisis.

This is the same man, who assailed his adversaries with ferocious invectives, seasoned with the slang of the alehouse, who set up for himself claims quite as arrogant, and still more manifestly absurd than those of the Pope, and told Carstadt, who asked him for the proofs of his divine mission, to go to the devil. To complete the picture of a great but irregular nature, kindness even from his enemies would sometimes move him to tears; his fiery heart was full of the tenderest affections; he had the liveliest sensibility to the beauties of nature and the peaceful pleasures of domestic life; and he sought relief in music, which he passionately loved, from the demon of melancholy that darkened his existence. He was no flowery Carmel, dimpling a summer sea with the ephemeral fragrance of the eastern clime, nor yet a majestic Chimborazo, reposing in mid-heaven; but rather a world-shaking volcano, ploughed by the lava flood and torn by the earthquake. But the same fires which blasted his foes, aroused and illuminated mankind; soft waters welled from the rifted granite, and flowers of paradise bloomed on the very margin of the river of fire.

The Lutheran reformation has not proved very expansive, chiefly perhaps because the national element mingled so largely in it. It was not merely a rising up of the human mind against priestly tyranny, but of Germany against Rome. If we would trace the true life of Protestant liberty to its fountain-head, we must look for it in a little city on

the shore of Lake Lemman, and under the shadow of the Alps, which emerged from the darkness and storms of the middle ages with its republican franchises unimpaired, and a high-spirited people willing and able to defend them.

Second only and scarcely second to that of Luther in the history of the reformation is the name of John Calvin. Indeed it may be doubted whether, any merely human intellect has exercised a more extensive or durable influence over the destinies of mankind. In all countries where Calvinism has prevailed, it has manifested similar characteristics, and produced similar moral and political phenomena. The Presbyterians of Scotland and Holland, the Huguenots of France, the Puritans of Old and New England, have all been stamped partly by their dogmas, partly by their institutions, with a family likeness which can be plainly discerned through the peculiarities of national character, and local circumstances. Intense enthusiasm, under the control and guidance of rigorous mental discipline, and concealed by an austere deportment; zeal for the diffusion of knowledge; uncompromising opposition to encroachments by civil rulers upon their own spiritual privileges; stern resistance to tyranny, and a singular freedom from those illusions of the imagination, which have made other men glory in their servitude; such are the most striking and universal traits of Calvinists. Everywhere they have fought the battles of freedom. It was Calvinism that struck the first effectual blows in that great struggle of Liberty against Power, which, begun in England, transferred to America, and from thence to France, has been the leading historical fact of the last two centuries, and will continue until the respective boundaries of the belligerents have been adjusted. It cannot be denied, that in the old world and the new, Calvinism has been the rough and morose, but watchful and true-hearted foster-mother of civil and

religious liberty. The causes of an historical fact of such magnitude deserve an impartial consideration.

The spirit of the system was embodied in the founder himself, whose mind, austere, vigorous, practical, regulative, was singularly free from visionary tendencies. Destitute of the imagination and impulsiveness of Luther, he was much better fitted for framing a regular and compact system of doctrine and discipline. That system, wherever it has been adopted, has shown a remarkable tendency to bring the imagination and the passions into subjection to the judgment and moral feelings. Calvinistic communities favor the development of the solid, much more than of the beautiful properties of our nature. No amount of gilding can make base metal current among them. Other men may tolerate oppression for the sake of national glory or the *prestige* of venerable associations, or generous, though blind loyalty; the genuine Calvinist is never cheated by the poetical sentiments, but resists to the death the least invasion of his rights, by whomsoever, or under whatsoever pretext it may be made.

We should take into consideration, also, in estimating the causes of its political tendencies, the place of its birth, republican Geneva, where men had been accustomed, from time immemorial, to the exercise of democratic franchises. Calvinism was born and brought up in the midst of municipal liberty. When Calvin's most illustrious disciple, John Knox, transplanted into the Scottish monarchy the religious system of the Genevan reformer, he gave it a republican organization. Every one knows how durable are impressions made upon the infancy, not only of an individual, but of a society, whether civil or religious. Accordingly, in all Calvinistic communities, the people have exercised a large share of ecclesiastical power. *Men will carry with them into civil life, the habits formed in the management of their religious affairs. They do not usually act upon one set of principles*

in their spiritual, and a totally different set in their temporal concerns.

The popular institutions of Calvinism readily suggested the importance of *educating the people*, who were to exercise powers affecting their temporal and eternal warfare. Accordingly, we find that zeal for the diffusion of knowledge, especially for bringing the minds of youth under such discipline, as tends to form habits of close and rigorous thinking, is a universal trait of Calvinistic societies, and the cornerstone of their superiority in freedom, order and general prosperity. There is another reason why sagacious Calvinists should desire that the people should form habits of severe thinking. Calvinistic dogmas are very repulsive, if not entirely unintelligible, to undisciplined minds. Nothing but rigorous logic is likely to conduct an inquirer to the system of doctrines, which the Genevese reformer digested from the writings of St. Paul and Augustine.

The question concerning the freedom of the will is a point of departure in theological philosophy, from which the direction, that the mind takes, must determine, in a great measure, its views of the nature of man and the government of God. The doctrine of contingent free will, allowed even by its advocates, to be an incomprehensible mystery to which reason would never lead us, places man in the centre of the moral world, and fixes our attention upon the capacities and responsibilities of a being, who has the astonishing power of defeating the purposes of the Almighty. The Calvinistic doctrine, on the contrary, humbles man in the dust, and fills the soul with the terrible sovereignty of Him "who doeth his will in the armies of Heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth." But while it sinks the race, the greater part of which is left to perish in the ruins of the fall, it raises the few, who are rescued to the ineffable dignity of the peculiar people of God. It is not surprising that men, who regarded

themselves as a spiritual aristocracy, whose patents were recorded in Heaven and signed by the Father of Eternity, should resent the insolence and tyranny of the sons of Belial. But I must pause, for I do not wish to invite a comparison with Mr. Macaulay, who, in his magnificent article on Milton, has treated this very subject with his wonted vigor of thought, and epigrammatic terseness of language.

The surest foundation of civil and religious liberty would be the general prevalence of fairness and tolerance, love of even-handed justice, and respect for the feelings and opinions of others. But this is, unfortunately, one of the ideals of society. The spirit of the maxim, "Do to others as ye would that they would do to you," while it is one of the highest, is also one of the rarest qualities of human nature, and Calvinists can claim no larger, and perhaps not so large a share of it, as some other sects. Partyism, from its very nature, is more or less at war with justice. Man, with all his glorious capacities and ages of progress, has still so much of the mule and tiger about him, that the preservation of liberty requires a certain equilibrium of contending parties and interests, either of which would be tyrannical enough, if allowed full scope for its intolerance and selfishness. Hence it is literally true, that freedom has grown up under cover of the antagonism of tyrannies.

It is not surprising, that those who are least patient of oppression, when they happen to be the weaker party, are not unfrequently the most overbearing, when they become strong enough to trample on their enemies. But it has so happened, that Calvinists have generally been thrown into opposition to arbitrary power, for the austerity of their manners, the severity of their doctrines, the republicanism of their church governments are not suited to the atmosphere of courts. Even where Calvinism has been in alliance with the state, not only the people, but many of the clergy have

been brought into collision with tyrants by their ungracious and inflexible resistance to the encroachments of the civil power upon their spiritual privileges. Morose and bigoted the Calvinist may be, but however great his faults, servility to the rulers of this world never was one of them.

The reformation, as already intimated, like all other great revolutions, decomposed society, bringing latent elements to the surface, giving them new vigor, and developing, at opposite poles, principles that had had before lain in more or less imperfect combination. It was a fiery furnace, which evolved from the church of the middle ages, the elements of nationality and individuality, and gave a rapid and immense expansion to the latter, while the residuum of Catholicity, after the council of Trent had given it a definite and unchangeable symbol, hardened into that spiritual despotism, which still holds in subjection so large a portion of the civilized world. Luther and his compeers broke off the hollow truce between liberty of thought and ecclesiastical authority, and arrayed them in open hostility. To adjust the respective limits of these antagonists and bring about a lasting treaty of peace between them, is the yet unsolved problem of the reformation. The reformers attempted to solve it, and strove in vain to confine the torrent which they had set in motion, within certain dykes of their own construction. The spring-tide of free inquiry, not yet perhaps at its flood, is sweeping away their barriers, and ages may elapse, before it subsides into its proper channel, after cleansing the earth of a thousand follies and abuses.

The history of the reformation proves the utter futility of those doleful predictions, with which the advocates of established abuses are accustomed to greet every change in the forms with which they are familiar. When the advocates of Catholic unity beheld a great part of Christendom divided and distracted by the multitude of sects which sprang out of

the liberty of private judgment asserted by the reformers, it seemed to them, and even to the affrighted fancies of some doubtful protestants, that the moral world was returning to chaos, and that all order, religion, civilization itself, would be swept away by the tempest of innovation. But in the moral as in the natural world, the utmost apparent confusion often conceals, for a time, the most beautiful evidences of the wisdom and goodness of God. Indeed the history of the reformation is analogous to that of the Christian civilization in general—to that of nature in general. Everywhere the most glorious results are evolved from the wildest fermentation of conflicting elements, when the Providence or Spirit of God is moving in the chaos. Everywhere strife and concord, diversity and unity, change and stability, are the apparently incompatible, but actually indispensable conditions of life, progress, beauty and power.

Compare those countries, in which the superficial strife and essential harmony of Protestantism have at once stimulated and regulated the intellectual energies of men,—set them to thinking deeply upon the greatest of all subjects, and furnished leading principles to guide them in their investigations, and put each rival sect under the necessity of vindicating its own claims by superior intelligence and morality, with those, in which Catholicism, taking refuge in the arms of civil despotism, has trodden out the last sparks of free inquiry, or those in which, as in Mexico and the South American republics, spiritual tyranny has survived the overthrow of monarchical institutions.

The tree is known by its fruits, and now, after the lapse of three centuries, we have the data for estimating the exact value of the dismal prognostications of the enemies of religious liberty. The vindication of the reformation has been written out in vast characters by the finger of Providence over all this green earth, wherever protestant enterprise has

carried the lights of knowledge and the glories of civilization. In old Germany, the mother of nations, where the boldness of protestant research has thrown a flood of light upon every branch of human learning; in England, whose mighty and exuberant energies are encircling the earth with her laws, her language and her literature; in North America, where a great republic, the work almost solely of protestant valor and freedom, is overshadowing the rotten offshoots of Spanish bigotry; in the coral isles of the South Sea, where nations have been rescued from barbarism and moral death; in the Asiatic continent, where protestant enterprise, with the lights of science and the blessings of Christianity, has fearlessly followed the British arms, as they battered down the walls, that once fenced the millions of India and China from the inroads of western civilization; in the Catholics themselves, who are so fortunate as to live in protestant countries, or in such social or political connections with them as to be stimulated into generous emulation of their protestant neighbors, we may look for the fruits of the reformation.

If superstition, with her racks and her fagots, has fled before the light of reason; if the restless daring of experimental science has extorted the secrets of nature and made her the servant of man; if the conflict of minds has struck out new and juster notions of government, of the rights of men and the limits of power, of the principles that should regulate all social institutions; if the Bible has become a household companion, and the minds of the humblest have been expanded by its glorious poetry, its divine philosophy, its faithful delineations of human nature, its simple yet sublime records of the primitive world and of those momentous transactions which have shaped the destinies of man for time and eternity; all these things may be traced to that great revolution which broke the chains of ecclesiastical despotism.

Such results of such a cause are in exact accordance with

the laws of the human mind. The habits of thinking which men form in relation to religion, the most important, and one of the most frequently recurring of all subjects, they will be apt to carry with them into other departments of intellectual activity. All who dislike the trouble and perplexity of thinking for themselves; all who are willing to surrender the prerogatives of rationality for the sake of *repose*, may find it in implicit submission to the authority of the church. But such, I am persuaded, is not the condition most favorable to the highest moral and intellectual attainments in the present state of being. It is by struggle and conflict, by painful and assiduous wrestling with the mysteries that surround us, by fearless, yet reverent investigation of the highest subjects, that our moral and mental powers are developed and disciplined.

Why are Catholics in those countries where Protestantism is either in the ascendant, or strong enough to make itself respected, so superior in intelligence and morality to their brethren in regions where the supremacy of the church is undisputed? Because they must think, if it be only to find arguments with which to combat their adversaries. Because they must vindicate the claims of the church by their moral conduct; for intelligent men will not respect a religion that does not improve the moral character of its votaries. This effect of the reformation has been felt even in those countries which it has never entered, or entered only to be extinguished in blood. Catholics ought to erect monuments to Luther and Calvin as high as the heavens, for to no other men do they owe more in a *moral* point of view. As Mr. Macauley has shown in his able review of Ranke's History of the Popes, the re-action of Catholicity against the assaults of the reformers purified the manners of the clergy, rekindled their devotion, revived their zeal and energy and gave rise to that singular body of spiritual soldiery who, while they have rivetted

the fetters of ecclesiastical despotism, have unquestionably done much for scientific discovery and the extension of civilization.

Never was institution better contrived to sustain a sinking cause than the Jesuit society. With marvellous sagacity, each member was assigned that species of service for which he was best qualified by natural gifts and education. Not only the offices of the church, but almost every secular employment, was filled with Jesuits, whose duty it was by any and every means, which ingenuity, sharpened by a thorough training in all the arts of intrigue, could devise, to confirm the wavering, to gain new converts to the faith, to enlist in behalf of the church the rank and wealth and power of the Christian world. Many of them were universally accomplished men, equally at home in the cottages of peasants, in the workshops of artizans, in the halls of universities and the palaces of kings. A profound knowledge of human nature, and a general acquaintance with the arts and literature of their time; a burning zeal which no hardships could damp, and no difficulties discourage; a moral heroism which defied alike the dangers of hostile courts, the infection of hospitals, the malaria of pestilential climates, and the ferocity of savages; a profound dissimulation which baffled the most sagacious statesmen, and the most wily diplomatists; a contempt of good faith, against which, neither the sacredness of oaths, the ties of nature and friendship, nor the obligations of humanity could furnish any security; such was the strange assemblage of sublime and detestable qualities, that met in this extraordinary body of men.

Their virtues and vices had the same origin. They were the faithful soldiers of the church, assailed on all sides by hosts of implacable adversaries, and they acted upon two maxims:—*That the soldier has nothing to do but obey his superior, and that all is fair in war.* The cause to which they

consecrated their lives and undivided energies, seemed to raise them above those obligations which rest upon ordinary men in ordinary transactions. So mighty and glorious an end as the vindication of that faith which involved the eternal destinies of man, sanctified any means which might be useful for that purpose; an error into which enthusiasts of all systems have fallen. The most wily Jesuit might be not only humane and self-sacrificing, but scrupulously just and honorable in all personal concerns, and where the interests of the church or of his order did not seem to require an opposite course.

From the middle of the sixteenth century, the reformation, by becoming entangled with political affairs, almost lost its original character of a great moral revolution. Like every other extensive movement of society, it was soon perverted into a mere covering of political or personal ambition, and the boundary between Catholicism and Protestantism in Europe was fixed, as it has remained with little or no change for two centuries, much less by reason and moral influence, than by wars and treaties and political considerations, growing out of the balance of power. So intricate was the entanglement of religious with political affairs during the thirty years war, which defined the boundary of the two forms of Christianity in Germany, that we have the strange spectacle of Cardinal Richelieu, the merciless persecutor of French Calvinism, assisting the protestant hero Gustavus Adolphus to humble the Catholic power of Austria.

It is in the United States alone, that the reformation has remained wholly detached from political affairs, and it is here, I am persuaded, that one of the great problems of the age is to be solved: *Whether Protestantism admits of a conservative form, which can unite moral power with freedom of opinion.* Its general tendency certainly has been more and more towards *individualism*, or anarchy. Sects have been more

and more subdivided, and almost every change has carried us a step farther towards the rejection of all authority, and the substitution of private illumination for external organization and symbolism; in other words, making every man his own judge, in matters of faith, with no bond of union or authoritative guidance. For to tell a man to form his own opinion from the Scriptures, without furnishing him at least with leading principles, is a renunciation of all ecclesiastical authority.

What form of conservative organization may yet be evolved from Protestantism, we know not. Perhaps the Catholic church itself may, though it is very improbable, gradually lower its pretensions to a point compatible with religious liberty—let fall obnoxious portions of its creed, and approximate its adversaries. But power and liberty, in spiritual as well as in civil matters, are still antagonists. The battle of the sixteenth century is still going on—is even hotter than ever. Catholicism is making a tremendous struggle to regain her dominion of the human mind. It is becoming apparent that unless the champions of religious freedom can unite on some generally acknowledged principles, they must be overwhelmed by a polity, which, for concentrated energy—for many-sided adaptation to all the varieties of character—for laying hold of and pressing into its service the most powerful principles of human nature, is without a parallel among human institutions. In the contest no intelligent lover of liberty can be neutral; for whatever claims the Roman church may have upon the gratitude of mankind—however great her services in former ages in the cause of civilization, nothing is more certain than that her spirit and internal structure are at war with the best tendencies of modern society.

In the progressive evolutions of the plans of Providence, institutions admirably adapted to one stage of society become pernicious in another, unless provision is made for such

changes from time to time as are demanded by the new development of social progress. The fundamental dogma of the unchanging church has forbidden her to keep pace with the progress of society, and she perpetuates in the nineteenth century the spirit and maxims of the middle ages, stiffened into tenfold rigor by the storms which have assailed her. In protestant countries, the worst features of the system are, for very obvious reasons, disguised for a time; but however flexible she may be in acquiring power, she will be inflexible in the use of it. *Romanism in its hour of weakness is a very different thing from Romanism in its hour of triumph.* I do not denounce her for being despotic—for doing her best to enforce implicit submission to her authority. Upon her own principles, she is required to do so by regard for the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind. If she did not strive to suppress freedom of thought upon the highest of all subjects, she would be false to the charge which she believes has been intrusted to her by the Saviour of men. History, philosophy, the condition of those nations in which the sway of Catholicism is undisputed, all proclaim that the system is destructive to religious and unpropitious to civil liberty. During the middle ages, it is true, republics grew up under the shadow of her wings, and the roots of Anglo-Saxon freedom run far back into the same period; but the reformation drove her into an alliance with civil despotism, and the great revolutions that have shaken the modern world have only increased her aversion to the riotous liberty which has sometimes threatened her destruction. Freedom of inquiry, which she once countenanced, she has learned to dread as her most formidable foe.

Religion is recovering from the blows inflicted by the infidel philosophy of the eighteenth century, and manifesting the indestructible life that is in her. The philosophers who promised mankind a golden age, under the reign of materialism,

were astounded to see the passions, which they had set free from the restraints of religion, defying also the exorcism of reason, and rioting in a carnival of crime and blood. Since France awoke from the fever-dream of revolutionary frenzy, a powerful re-action has taken place, and enlightened men on the continent agree that religion has its eternal foundation in the nature of man, and is and ever must be the cornerstone of the social fabric. In England, the colossal scepticism of a Hume and a Herbert, has dwindled down into that astonishing socialism of Mr. Owen, which, if adopted by a colony of baboons, would doubtless raise the apish community to the height of prosperity and glory.

But, while most men agree as to the necessity of religion, there is more perplexity than ever as to where the truth is to be found. Sects and schisms, and new theories are multiplying on every side. The Christian world is filled with a hubbub of contradictory voices. Old formulas are disputed, and the ancient records of Christianity themselves are being subjected to a fearless criticism, which, for the time being, shakes their authority. Dark and fearful is the struggle of many earnest souls, who see their old grounds of belief, which they had thought firm as the rock-girt foundations of the world, swept from under them.

There are times when chilling doubt or perplexity must steal over the mind of the most ardent lover of religion, if he be candid and liberal. If he turns from historical evidences, and questions the heavens and the earth as to those high matters which are most deeply interesting to us all, he hears only the echo of his own voice, as it rolls away, reverberating through the mystic halls and shadowy corridors of the star-paved temple of immensity, and then all is silent;—a silence more fearful for the feeling heart than the voice of doom. When we contrast the poetical belief of the “fervent days of old, when opinions were things,” with the spir-

itual condition of the present time, it would seem to us in moments of despondency, that the world had waked up from pleasant dreams, but had waked up in the dark. As says Richter, "yet struggles the twelfth hour of the night; the dead walk, the living dream; *Thou Eternal Providence wilt cause the day to dawn.*"

This page in the original text is blank.

IV.
THE ANGLO-NORMANS,
OR
LAW AND LIBERTY.

This page in the original text is blank.

THE ANGLO-NORMANS,
OR
LAW AND LIBERTY.

THE reader will bear in mind, that the first vigorous shoots of modern civilization, springing up from the ruins of the Roman empire, were sheltered by the church from the northern tempests. They also experienced the fostering care of monarchy, in the persons of Charlemagne and Alfred, and bloomed under the culturing hand of a chivalrous aristocracy. To recur to a figure already used, these institutions were the strong outer coats, which sheltered the germs of modern improvement from the storms of the world's spring. But, hardened by time and inveterate custom, these wrappages, instead of yielding to the expansion of the germs which they had protected, began to bruise them and to check their growth.

Meanwhile, a subtle but powerful element began to show itself on the surface of society. This was the spirit of liberty residing in those municipal corporations, which, buried apparently under the wrecks of the Roman empire, emerged with new and more valuable franchises, in the latter half of the middle ages, and in England especially, in that high-spirited body of landholders intermediate between the nobles and the serfs. This spirit was fostered by the increasing importance of the middle classes, as well as the free discursive intellect, which began to question the authority of men in matters of faith. The spiritual authority, as we have seen, was first assailed by Luther and his colleagues, and driven into a close

alliance with the secular power. Religious and civil liberty then combined for mutual support against the coalition of spiritual and political despotism. It was in England that the two great antagonisms of modern society first fairly confronted each other, and the first effective blows were struck in that battle between power and liberty, not yet ended, of which the English, the American and the French revolutions have been the most terrible and bloody encounters. The two last struggles I shall reserve for a subsequent work, it being my present purpose to trace the progress of society down to that remarkable period, when the best products of the Christian civilization were transplanted from Europe, where they have grown but slowly under the shade of hoary institutions, to the forests of the new world, where there are no *such* unpropitious circumstances to check their free expansion.

It is not alone as the vanguard of the host of freedom, in its war of two centuries with civil and spiritual tyranny, that the Anglo-Normans claim our regard. The greater part of the world would seem to have been partitioned by Providence between the two great branches of that dominant race of men, in the East and West, as a boundless field for the extension of their colonial and commercial system, and the diffusion of the English language and literature, as well as institutions of English origin. The empire of Britain girdles the earth; her colonizing and commercial enterprise outstrips her arms and negociations, and the outposts of English civilization have been pushed forward to the shores of New Zealand, in the south, and the verge of the polar ice in the north. The off-shoots of this wonderful race, appointed by Providence to be the civilizers and liberators of mankind, which only two centuries ago were planted on the Atlantic coast of North America, have grown into a mighty nation, which, long before it shall have arisen to the full height of its colossal power, upon a territorial foundation spreading from ocean

to ocean, will be throwing the shadow of its greatness and the moral power of its institutions backward upon Europe—forward upon Asia.

Everywhere the Anglo-Normans are the torch-bearers of religion—science—liberty; and from shore to shore, from mountain-top to mountain-top, through all the ancient realms of darkness and habitations of cruelty, new lights are kindling; and anon we shall see them flash on high, and run together, and encircle the earth with a glorious illumination. It is remarkable that this vast movement has steadily progressed through all the vicissitudes of the last century. Indeed the philosophical history of that period might almost be simplified into two leading facts: the struggle between power and liberty, in which the latter has been constantly gaining ground, and the contest between the French and the Anglo-Saxons for the foremost place in the civilization of mankind, in which the latter have as steadily advanced. Even in the last and most tremendous conflict between the Celts and the Saxons for that post of honor, the genius of Napoleon could strike down, one after another, the coalitions which English gold armed against him, on the continent of Europe; but all his gigantic efforts could not arrest for one hour the march of events which was carrying forward the English race to the dominion of the world. Surely a people to whom has been allotted a part so stupendous in the drama of history, may well claim the attention of the philosophic mind.

If we take a comprehensive survey of the Christian nations, we shall find that each has had a share in the providential education of mankind, corresponding with the peculiar features of its national character and local institutions. Thus Italy is the home of the beautiful arts which refine and elevate the soul, and not only the works of her great masters, but the melancholy recollections of unequalled though departed glories, which hover over her majestic ruins and

beautiful scenery, are, to pilgrims from other lands, perennial sources of the noblest inspiration. From old simple-hearted Germany, the mother of us all, have emanated the profoundest speculations in philosophy, and the greatest moral revolutions of modern times. It is remarkable that in relation to all the deepest matters of speculation, any movement which stirs the depths of German mind, slowly but surely finds its way into every part of the civilized world. France is the school of everything in which clearness and readiness are more available than depth or ponderous strength, and her great capital was once, and is still perhaps, to some extent, the centre of European civilization, where the raw material of thought, from every part of the world, has been worked up by French vivacity into elegant fabrics, which, like the religion of Italy, have been chiefly for exportation. The English have excelled in everything that requires good sense and *practical* sagacity, but, if I am not mistaken, the great mission of the Anglo-Saxons is to solve this highest problem of political philosophy: *the reconciliation of Order and Liberty*; in other words, ascertaining by experience the largest measure of individual freedom which is compatible with justice to all and to each, and what sort of institutions are best adapted to harmonize conservatism and democracy.

The physical greatness of England and her colonial offspring, must be chiefly attributed to the fact, that an unusually large share of civil and religious liberty has given scope for a full and free development of the peculiar traits of the national character. These traits are a sturdy *practical* sense, never carried away by paradox or mysticism, and a steady energy, sometimes degenerating into sullen obstinacy. It is astonishing how long the peculiarities of races are preserved in spite of all the physical and moral causes which have tended to efface them. In France and Ireland, a mercurial

temperament, marked by quickness, vivacity and thoughtless enthusiasm, still bears witness to a large infusion of Celtic blood. But in England, the Celtic population was almost entirely rooted out by the Saxons, whose temper was slow, ponderous, yet fierce and overbearing. After the emigration to England, the Saxons who remained behind in Germany, resisted the proselyting arms of Charlemagne for thirty years, and when they could hold out no longer, a large part of them preferred exile to an acknowledgement of the sway and religion of the conqueror. Retiring into Jutland and Scandinavia, now Denmark, Sweden and Norway, they, in concert with the hardy natives of those countries, whose character and manners were similar to their own, fitted out numbers of small vessels, in which, under the names of Danes and Northmen, or Normans, they became the terror and scourge of all the coasts of Europe. One body of them conquered the southern part of Italy, while another under Rollo, a famous chief, after ravaging England for many years, extorted from the king of France a large cession of territory on the northern coast of that country, where they embraced Christianity and founded the duchy of Normandy. The pagan superstitions of these "fair-haired sea-kings" were like their minds, rude, gigantic, terrible and well adapted to foster a martial spirit. The warrior believed that if he should fall in battle, he would be carried immediately to the star-paved halls of Valhalla, where, in presence of Odin, the God of war, he should sit down to the feast of heroes and drink oceans of beer from the skulls of his enemies. By their conversion to Christianity, they lost nothing of their martial qualities, for the Norman knights were the flower of European chivalry. So much for the original stock of what is commonly called the Anglo-Saxon race.

The manners and institutions of the Anglo-Saxons before the Norman conquest, were similar to those of other Ger-

manic nations. After Christianity had been reëstablished in England, it was long before its softening influence became visible. A ferocious freedom, arising from a lofty sense of personal independence, the weakness of the rulers, and the rude condition of the laws, filled the country with licentiousness and blood-shed. The most wanton murders were punished only by fines proportioned to the rank of the victim. Female honor had no security but superstition. The most absurd modes of deciding civil and criminal causes were prevalent, affording no security for justice, but the means and motives for fresh violence and outrage.

Yet this turbulent society contained all the original elements of the present government of England, except the feudal system, which was introduced by the Normans, and the chartered towns, which, not until long after the conquest, acquired sufficient importance to take any share in political affairs. It contained monarchy founded on loyalty, with at first only a partial recognition of the principle of hereditary succession; the power of the clergy, which was unquestionably employed in mitigating the ferocity, restraining the passions and cultivating the minds of the people; and finally, a high-spirited body of independent landholders, of whom the higher classes at least, had a share in the deliberations of the wittena-gemote or council of wise men, while the inferior freemen had the privilege of deciding civil and criminal causes in the county courts, in which the greater part of the judicial business of the nation was transacted.

The proceedings of these courts were at first rude and summary enough, and the ignorant judges saved themselves the trouble of deciding causes of any complexity, by appealing to the judgment of God in a variety of modes, the water ordeal, the fire ordeal and trial by battle, which gradually fell into disuse with the progress of intelligence and the improvement of the laws. The procedure became more regu-

lar, and it was found necessary to select from the increasing and tumultuous body of free-holders who had a right to sit on each trial, a smaller and definite number. Here, doubtless, is the origin of that peculiar feature of the English and Anglo-American constitutions, trial by jury.

The Norman conquest, by introducing the feudal system, completed the resemblance between English society and the English constitution, and those of all the other nations of Germanic origin. I have adverted in a former discourse, to the freedom of the feudal constitutions. That freedom, the source of the liberty we now enjoy in America, was the result of the conflicts of different classes of antagonist interests and tendencies. A social organization in which a single element completely overmasters the others, must degenerate into hopeless despotism, or experience terrible concussions from the reaction of those forces which, though repressed, are not thoroughly subdued. If the haughty barons and prelates and independent landholders, who sat in the legislative assemblies, held each other in check and united against the royal authority, it was, in general, more for the sake of their own privileges, than from any abstract sense of justice and equal rights. Wherever these conflicting tendencies were so nearly balanced that neither could gain a decided or permanent ascendancy, all classes who had a share in government, were tolerably secure against the excesses of arbitrary power.

The first great question that presents itself is this: how happened it that English liberty survived the general wreck of the feudal constitutions, and has gone on steadily expanding, fortifying itself by additional guaranties, and defining more and more clearly the limits of prerogative, while the freedom of other countries, similar in its nature and origin, has been overwhelmed by the progress of the royal authority? This question is, at first sight, rendered still more difficult to

answer, by the incontestable fact, that for some time after the Norman conquest, the English government was the most arbitrary in Europe. Yet, paradoxical as it may seem, the very fact that it was then the most oppressive, will help us to explain why it was afterwards the freest.

I can best illustrate my views upon this point by a brief comparison of the constitutional history of England, subsequent to the period I have mentioned, with that of France, of which it was, in all respects, the exact reverse.

While both the nobles and people of England were crushed to earth by the iron tyranny of the Norman kings, the French monarchs possessed little more than the shadow of royal authority. France was rather a loose confederation of great baronies than a consolidated nation, and however the people might suffer from the rapacity of turbulent nobles, they had nothing to fear from the power of the crown. In point of fact, though there was much disorder and violence, there was little positive oppression from any quarter, for the freemen were either bold retainers of chieftains who were bound to them by reciprocal obligations, or citizens of chartered towns, to whom both kings and barons granted extensive and valuable privileges, in order to obtain from them supplies for their everlasting wars.

So little jealousy was entertained of the royal authority, that the states-general very seldom met, and neither barons, land-holders nor citizens, the classes who, together with the clergy, composed that body, gave themselves much trouble about the central administration. This want of vigilance was fatal to their liberties. In their false security they allowed the kings to raise money for foreign wars and other national purposes without the consent of the states-general, and thus establish precedents, which enabled them to dispense with the meetings of that body. With the revenue raised by a variety of expedients, or granted by the *provin-*

cial assemblies, which were neither the appropriate nor efficient guardians of the liberties of the nation at large, the monarchs gradually formed a mercenary force, which released them from the necessity of calling upon their turbulent vassals for the short and precarious services of their equally refractory tenants. *Whenever the executive succeeds in making himself independent of the people for his supplies of money, there is an end to liberty.* As might have been expected, the royal authority constantly gained ground, by accessions too gradual to occasion alarm; the great fiefs were, one after another, swallowed up; the meetings of the states-general fell into disuse, and after the power of the nobility had been broken by a variety of causes, of which the crusades were the most efficient, no counterpoise was left to the central power, and the French monarchy became one of the most despotic that ever existed.

Far other and more glorious destinies were reserved for the English. As I have intimated, the first Norman kings were practically absolute. Their power, founded on conquest and preserved by their own commanding qualities, derived additional security from the mutual hatred of the Norman nobility and the English people, for each party supported the crown against the other, for the sake of humbling their enemies, sharing in their plunder or taking vengeance upon them. If a free people be so unfortunate as to fall under arbitrary power, it is far better that tyranny, instead of making insidious and scarcely perceptible encroachments, should exhibit itself at once in all its undisguised hatefulness, while the spirit of liberty yet lives and burns in the heart of the nation. It is better that the disease should do its worst before the vigor of the constitution is materially impaired.

Hence, it must be accounted, on the whole, a fortunate circumstance that the Norman kings, sure of the support of the barons against the people, and of the people against the

barons, were encouraged to such wanton excesses of arbitrary power, that after the distinction between Norman and Saxon had been effaced by time, these, at first, hostile classes found it necessary to unite against the common enemy. The barons, insulted and outraged in their persons, property and families by the dynasty which their ancestors had placed upon the throne of England, fell back upon the people, whose sturdy spirit and attachment to their ancient Saxon liberties, were yet unsubdued, and the result of this combination against the crown was Magna Charta, the earliest declaration extant of the great principles of the English constitution. Before I proceed to trace the progress of English liberty, I will mention one or two circumstances, which had a share in its preservation. And first of these is the national character.

All the nations of Germanic origin were alike remarkable for their free and independent spirit. Yet the Anglo-Saxons have unquestionably been distinguished by their aptitude for free institutions, their unconquerable love of liberty, and the practical sagacity with which they have detected the encroachments of arbitrary power, and clung to the most effectual means of resistance. The origin of these peculiar properties of English mind, and the manner in which they have been perpetuated from generation to generation, are and probably will forever remain profound mysteries.

The light-hearted Frenchman, with a large portion of Celtic vivacity, is too happy "with his fiddle and his frisk," to care much about the affairs of state, or he forgets his chains in his enthusiasm for the national glory. A skilful ruler, by taking advantage of this enthusiasm, may induce him to overlook the greatest usurpations. Not so with sturdy John Bull, who would rather be miserable in his own way, than be made happy by arbitrary power. He has a sullen jealousy of his *rights*, not the least of which is the right of grumbling. He watches the proceedings of those in power with the

sleepless vigilance of discontent, and his somewhat coarse, though vigorous sense secures him from the illusions of the imagination, and forms just notions of the nature and value of the *practical* safe-guards of liberty.

A great advantage which England has enjoyed in regard to the preservation of her liberty is her insular position, which, with her naval power, has secured her, with one or two exceptions, from actual invasion by a foreign foe. When a generous people behold their executive struggling with an insolent invader, they look with indulgence upon usurpations which may seem necessary to vindicate the national honor, and protect their own fields and firesides from the horrors of war. If such exigencies are frequent, the usurpations, which they induce the people to connive at, ripen into permanent acquisitions of executive power. Had Charles levied his taxes without the consent of the commons, to drive a foreign enemy from the soil of England, even the inflexible Puritans might have submitted to the encroachment. For this reason a powerful navy, or a strong line of frontier defences, are important to a nation that would preserve its freedom.

With these preliminary considerations, I shall proceed to answer the great question propounded above, by a brief outline of English constitutional history.

After two or three generations had effaced the distinction between the Norman barons and the Saxon people, between the conquerors and the conquered, they began to see the necessity of uniting against the intolerable tyranny which had grown up from their mutual animosities. They united upon the basis of the original laws and liberties of the Anglo-Saxons, modified by the feudal relations introduced by the Normans, but never completely naturalized. The feudal system never supplanted the independent allodial tenure in England, to as great an extent as in France and other portions of the continent. The Norman feuds were peculiarly

burdensome, but it happened fortunately for the English people, that the feudal burdens pressed most heavily upon the barons, who were tenants *in capiti*, or immediate vassals of the crown. The kings exercised their rights of wardship and marriage in the most rapacious manner. Their female wards of the most illustrious families, were actually sold to the highest bidders. Relief and all other feudal exactions were enforced with merciless vigor.

Grievances of a more general nature had spread disaffection through the mass of the people. Whole villages, and vast tracts of cultivated country were laid waste and converted into deer parks for the exclusive benefit of the royal hunters and their favorites. Justice was publicly sold. The most exorbitant fines were paid for the redress of injuries, and even for the free exercise of the most ordinary privileges. We are told of one hapless wight who paid a heavy fine for being allowed to eat. Such tyranny must have wrought its own ruin in any country, where the spirit of liberty was not wholly extinct.

Yet such was the overbearing energy of the Norman bastard's iron-handed race, that it was not until the reign of the contemptible John, who surpassed his predecessors in wanton tyranny almost as much as he fell below them in vigor and sagacity, that any effectual effort was made to set bounds to arbitrary power. The barons and prelates were now no longer the foreign favorites of a tyrant, but a constituent portion of the English nation. In their transactions with John, they seem to have felt that they, as chiefs and leaders of the people, were charged with the vindication of the rights of all classes.

The establishment of Magna Charta was without doubt one of the most pregnant epochs in the history of mankind. The principles, which then for the first time were reduced to a definite declaration of rights, and received the solemn sanc-

tion of all powers of the state, had doubtless been obscurely maturing in English society, from the time of the Saxon emigration. The coral insect and the hidden fires of earth work silently for ages before a new isle is heaved up from the sea to become the home of men, and a shelter for the mariner. The great Charter of Anglo-Norman freedom is an island in the ocean of time, where the labors and progress and unquenched and unquenchable fires of forgotten generations reached the surface, and raised aloft upon its mountain ramparts those landmarks of liberty, which, amidst the clouds and storms of after ages, were never wholly lost sight of.

It differs from another famous paper more immediately interesting to Americans, in its freedom from the abstraction of political philosophy. There is no declaration of natural rights, no attempt to set forth an ideal of society or government. Though comprehensive, it is altogether practical. The rights which it asserts are set forth not as the rights of men, but as the rights of Englishmen, and grounded not upon natural law, but immemorial prescription. This somewhat narrow and altogether practical character, so different from the absoluteness, the vague generality of French declarations of right, runs through all the great monuments of English liberty, and corresponds with the character of the English people. The Anglo-Americans seem to me to have combined the peculiarities of the English and French schools of politics, being broader than the former, more specific and practical than the latter.

The great charter provided specifically for the security of all classes of the people. Its more comprehensive clauses set forth clearly the great practical guaranties of freedom and equity, that no freeman should be damaged in person or estate, except by the judgment of his peers and the law of the land, that justice should be done without sale, denial or delay, that no aids or escuages (the usual and most oppressive forms

of taxation) should be levied without the consent of parliament. There is but one exception to the general equity of this paper. The king was permitted by his own authority to levy certain taxes upon the towns, which in England were then far inferior to the chartered cities upon the continent in wealth, population and franchises. It was not till ages of incessant conflict between the king and the legislature had elapsed after the execution of Magna-Charta, that the great principle of parliamentary taxation, the most important safeguard, nay the very citadel of liberty, was extended to every mode of raising revenue.

The discontent of the English with the Norman government, and their vague desires for the restoration of their old Saxon laws and liberties, now settled down to attachment to this great and solemn declaration of rights, which reduced to precision and certainty their hitherto fluctuating notions of the constitution. Here, at last, was laid a firm foundation for the glorious edifice of constitutional liberty. For many years afterwards, the parliament made it an indispensable condition of granting a subsidy to a new king, that he should solemnly confirm the great charter, and the clergy employed all their spiritual power to enforce its observance.

The execution of the great charter was soon followed by an improvement in jurisprudence and the administration of justice. The old customs of the Anglo-Saxons, modified by the feudal principles brought over by the Normans, among whom were found not only the most gallant knights but the sharpest lawyers in the world, began to acquire consistency and regularity, and to expand into that system of rules and precedents called the *common law*,—one of the most important bequests of the Anglo-Normans of the old world to their descendants in the new.

An eminent English judge has said, that as great obscurity rests upon the sources of the common law, as upon

the fountains of the Nile. Though, theoretically, it consists of immemorial customs or lost statutes, it is in a great measure, as a learned American jurist has remarked, a vast body of *judicial* legislation. The adherence to precedent has been by no means so close as to prevent the English judges from engrafting upon the common law new, and more liberal principles under cover of ancient forms and usages.

As might have been expected among a people remarkably tenacious not only of their political privileges, but of their private rights, and who were now, by one of the most important provisions of the great charter, entitled to look for a prompt and impartial administration of justice, free from the former vexatious interferences of arbitrary power with the proper functions of judicial tribunals, decisions rapidly accumulated; and the increasing extent and complexity of the laws made it necessary to fill the highest judicial offices, not with ecclesiastics, as heretofore, but with professional lawyers. This class of men, on account of their number, ability, and the interest which the people of England and the United States have always taken in the administration of justice, have acquired in those two countries a far more commanding position in society than in any other communities, either ancient or modern. That influence in general has been undoubtedly favorable to liberty.

Demosthenes compared the Athenian orators to watchdogs guarding the temple of national independence, and giving warning to the people of approaching danger. In like manner, the English and American lawyers, filled with the ideas of established right and venerable precedent, and accustomed to the keenest discriminations, are the beagles of liberty, who scent encroachments of executive power, abuses of judicial discretion and unconstitutional legislation. Heaven knows their bark is sometimes vociferous enough.

The able and honest lawyer deserves a very high place in

society. Identified, at least in England and the United States, at once with freedom and conservatism, he may be not only the champion of private rights, but the guardian of public liberty. He may be the fearless sentinel at the gate of the inner sanctuary of the temple of Justice, guarding the spotless majesty enthroned within from the rude intrusion of arbitrary power or popular phrenzy. What nobler spectacle than the moral hero, who, profoundly versed in the laws and constitution of a free country, stands up for right and justice, unawed by the frowns and unseduced by the blandishments of power; defying alike the mandates of despotism, the clamors of faction and the insolence of demagogues.

The jurisprudence of England and Anglo-America is less indebted to the Roman law than that of any other Christian nation. This circumstance has been favorable to liberty, for the civil law, as I have remarked, though admirably adapted to the regulation of society, as well as the speedy and equitable redress of injuries, is despotic in its origin and spirit, and for that reason the free Anglo-Saxons have ever looked upon it with jealousy. The evils, growing out of the technical inflexibility of the common law, are part of the price of liberty. While power must be entrusted to very imperfect men, it is necessary that its limits should be clearly defined and rigorously maintained; that the course of public functionaries should be marked out by plain and unbending rules, leaving as little room as possible for the exercise of discretion. A system of polity favorable to public liberty, may be too inflexible for the perfect attainment of the ends of private justice. Hence, we find among the Anglo-Normans a separate and strictly limited equity jurisdiction, hobbling along after the courts of law, and affording a partial relief from the hardships which they are compelled to inflict. As the chancellors were at first ecclesiastics, who were partial to the civil and canon law, it is in the chancery system that we must look

for the chief influence of the Roman upon the English jurisprudence. We may hope that the progress of society may weaken and finally remove all good grounds for the unnatural divorce of freedom and equity.

The equality of all freemen before the law has always been one of the chief glories of the English and Anglo-American constitutions. Even in the middle ages, though the incidents of the feudal tenures were peculiarly oppressive in England, the barons never possessed those enormous privileges, including an exemption for their families as well as themselves not only from the public burdens, but from the ordinary criminal jurisdiction, which they enjoyed in other parts of Europe. If the members of the House of Lords could be tried only by their peers, their sons, as far back as we have any knowledge in relation to the matter, were subject to precisely the same civil and criminal jurisdiction, with precisely the same rules of procedure, as the humblest freeman in the land. With some slight exceptions, it may be said the English law has been no respecter of persons. Even the royal family was not above the law. Every one will recollect the anecdote of Gascoigne sending "Prince Hal" to prison for a contempt of Court. It is easy to see how this legal equality must have contributed to keep alive among the people that self-respect and high spirit, which are among the chief sources and surest safeguards of freedom, without which indeed all constitutional guaranties are little better than so much waste paper.

In the latter part of the thirteenth century, the constitution and powers of parliament emerge from the cloud which rests upon their earlier history.

As I have had occasion to remark, among all the nations of Germanic origin, the whole body of freemen had a right to be consulted in all important matters, and no new taxes could be levied without their consent. After the establish-

ment of the feudal system, the legislative assemblies in general, consisted of what were called the three estates, that is to say, of the barons, the clergy and the free-holders. The natural supposition is, that the English constitution was similar in this respect to those of other nations of similar origin and circumstances. When the number of free-holders became very large, representation was a very obvious substitute for the personal attendance of the whole body.

As the progress of the arts, of manufactures and of commerce increased the wealth and importance of the cities and boroughs, from which a large proportion of the revenue was raised, it was only carrying out a leading principle of the feudal constitutions, that no taxes can be imposed without the consent of those who are to pay them, to extend to them a share in the national legislation. The student of parliamentary antiquities first reaches a firm historical footing in the year twelve hundred and sixty-five, when a great baron, the earl of Leicester, having defeated and taken prisoner Henry the IV., summoned a parliament consisting not only of bishops and barons, but of the representatives of counties, cities and boroughs, for the purpose of giving a color of legality to his own revolt and settling the affairs of the kingdom. Whatever may be thought of preceding ages, there is no doubt that from that time the house of commons has formed a constituent part of the national legislature.

Such was the constitution of parliament, when Edward I. succeeded his father, Henry IV., on the throne of England. The reign of Edward was a memorable and critical era in the history of constitutional liberty. It was now to be determined whether the principles of the great charter, which had been extorted from a pusillanimous prince and confirmed by his feeble successor, could be maintained against a haughty monarch, equal perhaps to any man that ever lived in courage, decision and sagacity, and who, more-

over, was scarcely seated on the throne before he gave the clearest tokens of a determination to make his own will the law of the nation. His high-handed measures soon roused a spirit of resistance.

The barons were on this, as on many other occasions, the powerful guardians of popular rights. It was a critical period, for the result of a struggle with a ruler of such sagacity and overbearing energy as Edward, is usually decisive. In such cases, unsuccessful resistance only confirms the power which it had striven to shake. The triumph of the king might have been an irretrievable overthrow of liberty. Happily for us, happily for mankind, the parliament came out victorious from the struggle, chiefly by taking advantage of a fortunate accident. The king was engaged in a foreign war, which he could not abandon without disgrace and mortification, and his ordinary revenue having been exhausted, he was compelled to apply to parliament for the means of carrying it on. That body refused to supply his wants, except upon condition of his not only confirming the great charter, but relinquishing his prerogative of raising money from the towns and tenants of the royal domains, without their consent. The king held out for a time, but the parliament being immoveable, he at last yielded, and that great principle was fully recognized and established, that no taxes can be laid upon the people without the consent of their representatives, a principle which has been the bulwark of English liberty, and the immediate cause of the American revolution.

It seems doubtful whether the legislative powers of the house of commons, at first, extended beyond the single function of laying taxes, though they might certainly petition for redress of grievances. It is easy to understand how their power over the revenue, the life-blood of the state, might be used for drawing to themselves the control and supervision

of the entire administration. With the sound practical sense for which the English are remarkable, the commons perfectly understood the force and value of the lever, which their power over the revenue placed in their hands, and never relaxed their grasp upon it for a moment. Before the time of Edward, we have seen the barons and prelates taking the lead in defence of popular rights. From that memorable period they recede into the background, and the commons begin to stand forth as the champions of liberty and the great constitutional counterpoise to the royal authority.

I have elsewhere remarked that order and liberty imply conflict of different tendencies, and can be perpetuated in *union* only by the preservation of a certain balance of those antagonisms. If we attain to a right understanding of the relations between the crown and the parliament of England during the middle ages, we shall not be surprised to find that the reigns of the most violent and extravagant princes were signalized by the greatest advances of constitutional freedom. The reign of Richard the Second was a case in point. He was by no means destitute of ability. On the contrary, in some critical junctures of his life, he showed an intuitive sagacity and prompt, decisive energy, which only rendered his vices and follies more glaring by the contrast. He was tyrannical and extravagant, and wasted the substance of his people upon worthless favorites and frivolous amusements. The patience of the commons was exhausted by his incessant demands for money, and at length they impeached his prime minister, and appointed commissioners to superintend the expenditures of his household, and reform the abuses of the administration. This measure gave rise to a desperate struggle between the crown and the parliament, which resulted in the deposition and death of the king.

In this contest, the commons not only preserved but extended their control over the national treasury, by establishing

a right to direct the application of the money which they voted, and hold the king's fiscal officers to a strict accountability. They also confirmed, by new precedents, their power of impeachment, and their right to exercise a general supervision over the executive administration.

It must not be supposed that these important powers of the popular branch of the legislature were, when recognized by the monarchs, so thoroughly engrafted in the constitution, that the commons could safely rest upon the ground they had gained, and relax their vigilance in reliance upon the concessions of faithless princes, who were sure to seize the first opportunity of resuming those prerogatives which had been wrested from them. Amid the incessant fluctuations of power in those semi-barbarous ages, the principles of liberty could be preserved only by the untiring vigilance and unconquerable obstinacy of their guardians for many successive generations. The statutes of parliament were drawn up after the close of the session, from rough and unskilful drafts of resolutions and petitions, by persons who often ignorantly or wilfully perverted their meaning. It was not until some time in the fourteenth century, that the legislature adopted the practice of introducing their laws in the shape of bills, which were engrossed under their own inspection, and when signed by the king could not be changed. But even this important change was not found an effectual safe-guard against the devices of arbitrary power. Most of the Plantagenet princes were in the habit of suspending statutes, of dispensing with their application to particular individuals or places, and sometimes, encouraged by a turn of political affairs which seemed favorable to their own prerogative, they would retract all their concessions, and bid defiance to the authority of the legislature.

From these causes it often happened that the commons, after having toiled and battled through a long session for

some great principle, would find at their next session that their whole work was to be done over again. When we see these men, drawn from the high spirited middle classes of England, standing up under the greatest discouragements, generation after generation, the stern, sagacious and unconquerable champions of popular rights; when we see them battling for ages against arbitrary power, as if the eyes of all their mighty posterity were upon them, we are constrained to say, surely the finger of God is here.

The civil dissensions of the Roses were rather favorable than otherwise to the progress of liberty. The deposition of princes and frequent changes of dynasty destroy the *prestige* of legitimacy, and place the possessor of a tottering throne under the necessity of finding new foundations and props for his power in the love and confidence of his people. The remark applies, however, only to countries in which the people know something of their rights and are sensible of their value, not to such states as the Roman empire and the oriental nations, in which the masses, sunk in apathy and having no weight in government, are merely passive spectators of changes effected by foreign force, or by pretorians and janizaries. In nations where the spirit of liberty is alive among the people, the moral resources of arbitrary power are much impaired, when an imbecile or tyrannical prince is dragged down from a throne, which the superstitious and servile had surrounded with the unapproachable majesty of divine right, and power even for a time falls into the hands of the *born* rulers of men, whose talents and virtues are a passport from heaven to the high places of authority. In England, while the general principle of hereditary succession has remained unshaken, it has been regarded, not as conferring an indefeasible right, but as the constitutional and most convenient mode of designating the chief magistrate. The throne has never been held so sacred, except by a few servile

minions of power, as to place the person of its occupant beyond the reach of the parliament and the people.

At the termination of the wars of the Roses, the powers of the popular branch of the legislature were almost as extensive, though not so clearly defined nor so well understood as at present. From the time of Richard the Third, the last of the Plantagenets, no *organic* change has taken place in the English constitution. The vast progress since that period has consisted of expansion, clearer definition, and the removal of anomalies.

It was clearly established before the accession of the Tudors, that all money bills must originate in the house of commons; that members could not be arrested during their attendance upon parliament except in case of treason or felony; that the freedom of speech could not be abridged; that the assent of the commons was necessary to all laws; that the representatives of the people had a right to enquire into the conduct of the administration, to bring the king's officers before them to render an account of their doings, to impeach his ministers, and, finally, in concert with the house of lords to fix the succession of the crown, and exercise a general supervision of the affairs of state in peace and war.

Here was laid a broad foundation of constitutional liberty, provided the elective franchise were sufficiently extensive to make the house of commons a proper exponent of the popular will. In relation to this point, it appears from a statute of Henry the Fourth, that all freemen without distinction had a right to vote in the elections of county representatives, but long afterwards in the time of Henry the Sixth, the right of suffrage was restricted to freeholders possessed of land, to the value of forty shillings. In cities and boroughs all freemen had a right to vote, but in most of the former the elections were actually made by the corporate authorities. The boroughs seem to have regarded their representation in parlia-

ment as a burden rather than a privilege, and some of them were so remiss that the house of commons was under the necessity of resorting to strong measures to compel them to hold elections and return the members they were entitled to. The care which was taken by the legislature to preserve to them a franchise which they valued so little, could only have arisen from regard to that great fundamental principle that taxation and representation are inseparable.

While the forms of a free constitution were thus settled upon a foundation unshaken by all subsequent revolutions, strange to say, the life, liberty and property of the subject never were so insecure as under the last Plantagenet princes. The monarchs, the powerful barons, and lawless associations somewhat similar to our Lynch tribunals, took advantage of the defective administration of justice and the anomalies that adhered to the constitution to gratify their revenge, ambition and rapacity. The noblest institutions were perverted into engines of the vilest tyranny. The "lion of March" Edward the Fourth, while giving a fresh impulse to the commercial and manufacturing greatness of England, found judges and juries servile enough to make themselves the instruments of his furious passions. Indeed, the judicial system was by far the most defective portion of the constitution. The judges held their offices at the will of the king. One of the anomalies to which I have alluded was the court of Star Chamber, which, though utterly at war in its principles and forms of proceeding with the spirit of the constitution, continued, as we shall see, to exercise its arbitrary jurisdiction as late as the time of Charles the First.

At the conclusion of the civil wars, the people were weary of bloodshed and outrage, and even arbitrary power, if it brought peace and security, seemed preferable to the rage of faction and the license of plunderers. Nothing is more certain than that the forms of a free constitution are no security

against actual tyranny, if those who are charged with the defence of popular rights relax their vigilance and slumber on their posts. The actual administration of the English government under the Tudor dynasty bore, in some particulars, the aspect of an eastern despotism rather than of a constitutional monarchy. The parliament, secure in its own powers and privileges, sunk into apathy, and readily granted whatever the executive was pleased to demand. Judges and juries were the pliant tools of arbitrary power. The church, which had been fiercely assailed by Wickliffe and his disciples, whose doctrines had been suppressed by the royal authority, threw all her weight into the scale of her powerful ally.

The princes of the house of Tudor had no inducement to invade the powers and privileges of the other departments of the state. They used them as pliant tools, and deluded the people, by disguising the substance of oppression under the forms of liberty. They had no motive to levy taxes without the consent of the commons, when they could obtain from that now pliant body as large supplies of money as they wanted, without being troubled with those demands for redress of grievances which, in former times, had always been made the indispensable conditions of subsidies. Juries and courts of justice only registered the edicts of oppression. The clergy, as we have said, were now on the side of despotism, for they began to feel that their *moral* power was so much impaired as to stand in need of support from the secular authority; the mass of the people were still too ignorant and superstitious to have much weight in public affairs; the gentry and nobility, the only classes from whom any resistance to arbitrary power could have been expected, had been almost destroyed during the bloody contests of the Roses, either on the scaffold or the battle-field.

Yet, it must not be overlooked that the tyranny of the

Tudors was of that sort which did not reach the great body of the people. The lightning fell not upon them, but upon the tall heads immediately around the throne. It was of no great concern to the toil-worn peasants and thrifty burgesses, as they gossiped over the news, in the bar-room of the village ale-house, that Henry had cut off his wife's head, or that Elizabeth had sent Raleigh to the Tower or Essex to the block. It was perhaps the period when our mother-land best deserved the title of "merry England," on account of the comfort and happiness prevalent among the middle and lower classes.

It was also a period, the latter part of it at least, of wonderful intellectual development. The abyss of political degradation was overarched by an unequalled blaze of literary glories. A Bacon, whose strength and breadth of wing bore him to that lofty and lonely pinnacle, from which, to vary somewhat the figure of an elegant writer, he caught the first rays of the rising sun of knowledge, while damps and darkness still covered the world below; the universal Shakspeare, whose genius was an epitome of the human race, the central and loftiest figure in a group of dramatists, either of whom might have been the first in any other age or clime. But moral and political degradation can be only gilded, not redeemed, by intellectual glories. When man becomes fully conscious that he has a right to the free exercise of *all* those high faculties which God has given him, subject only to the eternal obligations of the Divine Law, the most paternal despotism, though adorned by the wonders of art, and encircled by a blaze of literary genius, is a galling yoke.

We now approach a mighty era in the history not only of England but of mankind. Though the soul of liberty seemed to have departed at the accession of the Stuarts, the forms of a free constitution were preserved, until the progress of knowledge, the increasing numbers, wealth and influence of

the middle classes, but especially the stern and daring spirit of Calvinistic dissent, breathed into them new life, and gave the first decisive impulse to that terrible revolutionary spirit, which in England trampled upon kings and nobles, and afterwards gave birth to the American democracy ; which has shaken all the thrones of Europe, and swept over the earth in the fiery whirlwind of Napoleon's victories ; has regenerated society by a baptism of fire and blood, and sent pale Fear into the palaces of kings, through triple guards and crowded ante-chambers, to write on the innermost wall the doom of tyrants.

Though the history of mankind is a web where all events are linked and intertangled to some extent, there are certain critical eras which fix our attention, and when we contemplate them in all their manifold relations,—all the vast and ever-expanding movements to which they have given rise, we are constrained to believe that if their transactions had fallen out otherwise than they have done, the condition of mankind would have been altogether different from what it is. Perhaps no circumstance in all modern history has told with more powerful effect upon the present condition of the world, than the peculiar direction which was given to the reformation in England.

The Court of Rome seems never to have possessed as much power in England as in other parts of Europe. Even the national clergy were objects of distrust to the government and the people, on account of their dependence upon the Holy See. From time to time, as far back as the twelfth century, we see this hostility to the usurpations of the church breaking out in various forms ; in Henry's famous contest with Becket ; in the indignation of the barons and the people, excited by John's abject submission to the Pope ; in the measures by which Edward I., humbled the clergy with the approbation of those very commons who so sturdily resisted all his other high-handed proceedings ; in the statute of pro-

visers, forbidding all persons to hold ecclesiastical benefices in England by presentation from the court of Rome ; in the suggestion which the commons made to Henry IV., and renewed to his great son, to confiscate the revenues of the clergy to the use of the crown ; in many other measures, such as the statutes of mortmain, tending to restrain the rapacity of the ecclesiastics, and put a stop to the perpetual drain by which the papal court impoverished the nation.

The doctrines of Wickliffe were widely diffused among the middle and lower classes of the people in the times of Henry IV., and his son, the victor of Azincour, and though suppressed, during the reign of the latter, by the secular arm at the instigation of the clergy, they had served to stimulate inquiry and weaken the authority of the church. It is remarkable, that the parliament which passed the severe laws against heresy, under which the disciples of Wickliffe were treated with merciless rigor, was the same that renewed to "Prince Hal," as stated above, the proposition which they had made to his father, to confiscate the enormous revenues of the church. This may seem a strange contradiction, but it throws some light upon the connection between religion and the state in England. Heresy, or dissent from the established faith, was punished, not so much as a spiritual, but as a civil offence, because the practical English, with their worldly shrewdness, looked much more than any other people, to the temporal advantages of religion as a support of order and good government. Provided the essentials of Christianity were preserved, theology was a branch of the public service, entrusted to a particular class of men, who were to be moderately paid like other officers of the state, and whose functions ought not to be interfered with, any more than those of other departments. Dissent was, therefore, an injury to society, which was interested in preserving, not so much the abstract purity, as the unity and vigor of the

moral power. This fact may serve to explain the facility, so surprising to every attentive reader of the history of the English reformation, with which, not only the government officials, but the great body of the people followed their rulers and the clergy in their religious changes. The thrifty burghess, or fox hunting squire, would as soon have thought of questioning the decision of one of the highest judicial tribunals, upon a case manifestly within the sphere of its jurisdiction, as of dissenting from the action of those who were paid for taking care of religion, upon forms of worship or disputed points of theology.

In Germany and France, the reformation was chiefly a revolt of the people themselves, headed by their spiritual teachers, and the civil power merely protected or persecuted the new opinions. But in England, it was *at first* the work of the government itself, and was, in fact, but the substitution of a new form of tyranny over the minds and consciences of men. Every body knows how the lust of Henry VIII., the eagerness of courtiers to share in the plunder of religious houses, the time-serving policy of Cranmer, and the arbitrary power of Elizabeth, founded and built up that strange medley of worldly hypocrisy, primitive piety, political prostitution and venerable learning, called the Protestant church of England.

It was an attempt, and a partially successful one, to build up around the throne, a new spiritual power, more servile and tyrannical than the old. The human mind had just burst the chains which had bound it for ages. It had scarcely begun to rejoice in its new found freedom, when a systematic effort was made to rivet them anew. For a time, as I have intimated, even the body of the people implicitly followed their spiritual guides. But the English court and the higher ranks of the clergy, after spurning the authority of the ancient church, reckoned without their host, if they imagined that

their new establishment could long command the respect which had been yielded to that venerable fabric, upon whose hoary battlements the mysterious flight of ages had shed from their "cloudy wings" the mementoes of departed glories.—The proportions of the new structure were marred by remnants of the Gothic edifice of popery, which suited their new location, about as well as the drawbridge and donjon keep of an old feudal castle would suit the trimness of a modern country house. To the astonishment of those high dignitaries in church and state, who thought themselves entitled to dictate the faith of the nation, and enforce conformity with their own opinions by the most execrable tyranny, there were many thinking men who presumed to doubt the divine commission of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth. There were some who were bold enough to teach what they believed to be the truth, at the risk, not only of suspension from ecclesiastical functions and the loss of preferment, but of heavy fines, imprisonment and even death at the stake.

It was impossible for the court to repress by the most intolerant enactments, that bold spirit of inquiry which their own measures had awakened. They had broken up the fountains of the great deep of popular mind, and then presumed to say to its rising surges, "thus far shalt thou come and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." They soon found that they were usurping the prerogative of Omnipotence. Wider and higher rolled the wave of free thought, until the throne and the church began to rock upon the verge of the frightful abyss into which they finally sunk.

Even before the death of Elizabeth, a large party had adopted the severe doctrines and republican institutions of Calvin. This party, after the accession of the Stuarts and the union of the crowns of England and Scotland, rapidly gained strength. Their resistance to spiritual tyranny naturally drew along with it hostility to that civil despotism,

which was the close ally and main prop of a persecuting church.

In France, the great body of the people continued steadfast to the Catholic church, and the Protestants, after a long and bloody struggle, were finally crushed. Germany was nearly equally divided between Catholic and Protestant states, which were engaged in furious wars, until the treaty of Westphalia established upon the foundation of mutual toleration, the religious peace which has ever since subsisted. Everywhere on the continent, freedom of opinion was either decidedly victorious or utterly prostrate, and when the first rupture took place between Charles and his parliament, England was the only country in which an *internal* conflict was still vigorously maintained between ecclesiastical authority and religious liberty.

At the accession of the unfortunate house of Stuart, the moral and intellectual activity of the people subject to their rule, began to be clearly enlisted on one side or the other of the two great antagonisms of modern society—*arbitrary power*, claiming the sanction of divine right, and residing in the crown and its powerful ally, the church, on the one hand; on the other hand, *liberty*, developing itself in the kindred forms of free and fearless inquiry on religion, the highest of all subjects, and of sturdy opposition to civil despotism, which was so closely allied to spiritual tyranny, that the enemy of one was also the assailant of the other. The Scottish Presbyterians, by their rupture with Charles, had the honor of sounding the first war cry in that conflict, which has made up, in a great measure, the history of the Christian world for the last two centuries.

The history of the Stuart dynasty illustrates the old saw, that "whom the Gods have determined to destroy, they first make mad." The first symptoms of revolt—the first mutterings of the approaching storm, were heard in the reign of

James the First. This monarch, with all his ludicrous and disgusting weaknesses, combined with his useless learning, no small portion of the proverbial shrewdness of his countrymen. His political errors had their source in a delusion, very common to arbitrary princes—an exaggerated estimate of his own power. In that favorite maxim of his, “no bishop, no king,” there was a spice of sense, a glimmering of prophetic meaning. Acting upon this maxim, he strove to force conformity with the forms and discipline of the church of England, upon the stern and uncompromising Presbyterians of his native country. His failure, and the portentous character of the resistance he encountered, ought to have taught him the folly of bequeathing to his unfortunate son that preposterous enterprise, as one of the first moment to the security of his throne.

The views of Charles in this respect seem to have coincided entirely with those of his father. With a sincere attachment, no doubt, to the English establishment, which retained, so much more than any other form of protestantism, the spirit and forms of that ancient church to which his family always showed a strong leaning, he had also found it a far more servile and convenient ally of arbitrary power, than the republican Calvinism of Scotland, which, indeed, was the object of his peculiar and unconquerable aversion. While he was attempting to force Episcopacy upon the Presbyterians, Laud, with the approbation of the Court, was making it still more distasteful to them and all other dissenters, by a miserable pantomime of the pompous ritual and arrogant pretensions of the Catholic church. Every one will recollect the chief stages of that memorable contest, in which the high-handed measures of the king forced the Presbyterians to draw the sword in defence of their religious liberties. That clash of steel in the North resounded through the British islands. It was the signal for those who had watched, with ill-suppressed

discontent, the civil usurpations of the crown, to arise and gird themselves for the conflict with arbitrary power.

Four distinct parties, representing as many different tendencies of society, may be seen in the progress of the English revolution, to the successive stages of which, each, in its turn, gave form and pressure.

First, the high-church, high-tory party, whose sincere, but blind loyalty inculcated a superstitious veneration for the person and prerogatives of the Lord's Anointed, and implicit submission to the authority of the church. This party was the most solid support of the throne, and included nearly all the royalists, who were to be found among the rural gentry and substantial yeomen.

Then there was the party of *aristocratic statesmen*, weak in numbers, but strong in talents and experience, and comprising such men as Strafford and Falkland and Hyde—the representatives in that age of the race of accomplished politicians who, resting upon oligarchical power, and giving it their support in turn, have exercised such vast influence upon the political fortunes of Europe. Admitting, at first, the existence of abuses and the necessity of reform, they finally adhered to the crown, either from love of office or dread of popular license. Had Charles *consistently* followed the wise, yet energetic counsels of these men, he might have satisfied the great body of the nation, and disappointed the republican enthusiasts.

On the side of the Parliament, the Presbyterians, who at first took the lead in the struggle with the Court, were in favor of carrying out the idea of the English constitution, by abolishing certain anomalies which went far to neutralize its most glorious principles; by hedging the royal authority within limits, already defined by innumerable charters and precedents; by fortifying with new and more effectual guaranties, the privileges of the commons, and the rights of the people.

They were also in favor of introducing into the church, a more liberal and popular form of government. The leader of this party was the illustrious Hampden, who, in the balanced vigor of his mind, his practical wisdom, and the absolute subordination of his passions and impulses to duty and principle, bears a most striking likeness to our own Washington.

In the rear of the Presbyterians, came that stern and terrible phalanx, which was destined to overwhelm all the other parties, for when the old social order is once broken up, the most fiery and thorough-going enthusiasm is sure to gain the ascendancy, heaving up with itself the lower strata of society, to the summit of the revolutionary chaos. This party was chiefly composed of Puritans, with a sprinkling of free-thinkers and visionaries, and represented by such men as Vane, Cromwell and Harrington. This party was for establishing on the ruins of the throne and the altar, a purely republican polity, both in church and state.

As has been remarked in substance, by one of the greatest writers of this or any other age, the Puritans were, in some respects, the most extraordinary body of men that ever appeared upon earth. A surface of rock and ice concealed the fires that were to shake the world. The intense ardor of fanaticism was disguised by an austere deportment,—exalted by lofty principle,—disciplined by the coolest judgment,—guided by the profoundest sagacity,—supported by an iron courage and decisive energy, which overwhelmed the proudest chivalry of the age.

The great actors in the English contrast favorably with the leaders of the French Revolution, and show the wonderful vigor of the Anglo-Saxon character, under the discipline and culture of law, religion and liberty. Indeed, for sound judgment, lofty disinterestedness, heroic constancy, inflexible adherence to principle, just notions of liberty and good government, combined with unswerving loyalty to the majesty

of law and justice, we know not where to look in continental history for exact parallels to such men as Hampden, Elliot, Marvel, Milton, and other illustrious champions and martyrs of English liberty. They can be matched only on this side of the Atlantic among a kindred people. Even the slandered Cromwell, compared with most of those heroes who have built up their own power upon the ruins of ancient institutions, deserves, at least, a part of the eulogy we have bestowed upon his compatriots. We think that the English and American revolutions fully justify the remark, that to the Anglo-Norman race has been allotted the glorious mission of reconciling order and liberty, and teaching mankind the science of government.

In stirring periods, the new tendencies of society manifest themselves, not only in action, but in literature, and find their representatives in men of burning words as well as men of heroic deeds. If the two chief stages of the English revolution found each its greatest representative among men of action in Hampden and Cromwell respectively, the purest, the least perishable tendencies of the whole mighty movement became an incarnate word in the great Poet, who, rapt by the inspirations of his genius "far above this visible diurnal sphere," drew the sustenance of his own interior life from that fountain of heavenly radiance, where, to use his own glorious imagery, the eagle of liberty feeds his everlasting youth. With prophetic glance, freer, wider, more searching than that of any of his contemporaries, he discerned clearly the eternal principles which linked the transient topics of that day with the highest interests of humanity in all time to come. He knew the value of the outworks of liberty, yet the contest about ship-money, and most other subjects of dispute between Charles and his parliament, were, to his mind, merely the body of the revolution, of which freedom of conscience, of speech, of the press, was the soul.

Such were the men, who were the first in the modern world to unfurl the standard of civil and religious liberty, and proclaim in the ears of an awakening people "resistance to tyrants is obedience to God." They had seen their Protestant brethren on the continent struggling desperately for freedom of conscience, and in danger of being crushed by the civil authority in alliance with the church. At home, a church nominally reformed, but far more servile and quite as despotic as the papal, was supported by the king in its intolerable tyranny. If they turned to the civil administration, they beheld a similar spectacle of arrogant despotism and abject slavery. The king was raising money by his own authority, in utter contempt of a fundamental principle of the constitution,—resorting to forced loans and other illegal expedients for dispensing with the meetings of parliament,—pampering worthless and insolent favorites with the substance of an outraged people, and spurning the most humble petitions for redress of grievances. The judicial business of the country was drawn into two tribunals, the Star Chamber and High Commission courts, whose rules of procedure, utterly at war with the free spirit of the common law, gave them absolute control of the life and property of the subject. While the glorious principles of constitutional liberty, which had been extorted by the firmness, and watched over by the vigilance of former parliaments, were lying entombed in the musty repositories of state papers, a profligate court was sitting like a vampire upon a prostrate people, sucking its blood and heedless of its sufferings.

While the terrific elements of revolution were blackening the whole horizon with the portents of the tempest, which was to demolish the throne and desolate the country, Charles and his worthless favorites were disporting themselves in the little spot of sunshine that still surrounded the court. That unfortunate prince had been taught from his cradle to

entertain the highest notions of the royal prerogative. He was surrounded by men, who either sincerely believed or servilely professed the doctrine of implicit submission, which was inculcated by the clergy of the established church. With such a training and no great original powers of mind to raise him above the narrow prejudices of his education, he was deficient in all those qualities, except personal courage, which were demanded by the crisis it was his destiny to encounter. Nothing could have saved him but a judgment clear of all prepossession, a well-timed mixture of concession and firmness, and, above all, sincerity and good faith in his dealings with his parliament and people.

His actual character and conduct were almost the exact reverse of all this. His favorite advisers were such persons as the vain, haughty and violent Buckingham, the weak bigot Laud, and his queen, who, educated in the despotic court of France, was utterly ignorant of the spirit and character of the English people. When finally awakened from his dream of absolute power, he knew not when to yield, nor when to resist, nor *how* to do either. The concessions extorted from him by the parliament which procured his assent to the "Petition of Right," were made so ungracefully, with such reservations, and with so evident an intention to retract them whenever he might be able to do so, that instead of allaying, they only inflamed the popular discontent. By violating, in a short time after the parliament had dispersed, every solitary provision of that great instrument—the second Magna Charta of English liberty, to which, for the purpose of obtaining a supply of his urgent pecuniary wants, he had given his solemn though reluctant sanction, he put it out of his own power ever again to claim the confidence and respect of his people or their representatives.

The majority of the long parliament, of which Hampden was the leader, assembled evidently with a firm determina-

tion to effect a thorough and permanent reform. The commons began this great work by a searching investigation of abuses and grievances, all of which were condemned by resolutions, to which Charles was obliged to give his assent.— They then proceeded to still bolder measures. They impeached the king's ministers, condemned the illegal expedients to which he had resorted to raise money without their consent, abolished the courts of High Commission and Star Chamber, and provided that the judges should no longer hold their offices at the pleasure of the crown but during good behavior, thus establishing that great principle of judicial independence, which, in England and America, has guarded the temples of Justice alike from the seductions of patronage and the passions of the multitude. To all these measures the king was under the necessity of giving his reluctant assent.

From the fact that the parliament was not contented with these concessions, some writers have inferred that the popular leaders were actuated by selfish or factious motives. But they were men of too much firmness and sagacity to do their work by halves. They had before them the example of the former parliament, who had relied upon the solemn sanction which the king had given to the Petition of Right. They had seen him trample upon every solitary provision of that solemn declaration. After such an instance of perfidy, it would have been madness to trust the liberties of the nation in the hands of a faithless tyrant. They wisely resolved never to disperse until they had disarmed him of the power to render all their labors abortive.

Between a haughty and perfidious monarch, yielding to the pressure of imperious necessity, but determined to resume his obnoxious prerogatives on a favorable occasion, and a parliamentary majority, sagacious, intrepid and firmly resolved on a durable reform, a rupture was inevitable. It forms

no part of my plan to enter into details in relation to the immediate causes of that rupture, or the events of the civil wars in which the stern enthusiasm of the Round-heads, guided by the consummate skill and decisive energy of Cromwell, overwhelmed the fiery chivalry that rallied under the royal standard.

Here for the first time, all Europe, accustomed to the dogma of divine right, was astounded by the spectacle of the monarch of a great people, arraigned at the bar of his subjects, and tried, condemned and executed for violations of the fundamental laws of the nation. If we take into consideration the prejudices of the age; the lofty, serious and intrepid character of the judges; the circumstances of the prisoner—the representative of a long line of powerful princes—himself a haughty, fearless and vindictive tyrant; the nature of the charges which were based upon the high and unprecedented ground, that a king is as much bound by the laws of his country, as the humblest of his people; we must regard the trial of Charles Stuart as one of the most striking and imposing spectacles that the world has ever witnessed. It was the first and most impressive of the lessons, by which power has been taught its limits and its duties in the modern school of revolutions. The trial and execution of Louis the Sixteenth, was but a poor parody of that solemn tragedy, which the French Jacobins aspired to imitate.

The reign of Charles the First must be looked upon as the most important period in the history of constitutional liberty before the revolt of the American colonies. I will briefly sum up the chief reforms and permanent advances of the cause of freedom, by which it was signalized.

First, the Petition of Right, the second Magna Charta, reiterates and confirms the most important provisions of that famous instrument, and besides condemns every form of illegal taxation, prohibits the quartering of troops upon the

people, and carefully provides for the security of personal liberty, by declaring that no freeman, who sues out the writ of habeas corpus, shall be detained in custody by virtue of any special warrant from the king or his council. As this paper received the sanction of Charles, though perfidiously violated by him, it remains one of the great monuments of the English constitution.

Next, in order of time, are triennial parliaments, bringing popular opinion to bear at shorter intervals, upon the affairs of the state; the abolition of the courts of High Commission and Star Chamber; and the establishment of the judicial tenure of good behavior, which raised the judges from that slavish dependence upon the crown which had often rendered them the servile tools of tyranny.

Finally, the deposition and execution of the king shivered into fragments that blind idolatry of the person and prerogatives of the Lord's Anointed, which had been inculcated by a prostituted church. From that moment the moral props of arbitrary power, founded in opinion and prejudice, were sapped, and thinking men, everywhere, began to whisper to themselves and to each other, that power is a trust for the benefit of the governed, who have a right to cashier their rulers for a flagrant abuse of their delegated authority.

That men might have full leisure to reflect upon all the astounding facts and changes they had witnessed, and an opportunity of contrasting the imbecile sway of the scions of a corrupt dynasty with the vigorous and enlightened administration of one of the *born rulers of men*, the protectorate of Cromwell arrested, for a time, the tendency of English society, in accordance with a law of revolutions, to return to its old channel. To do justice to the motives of Cromwell, and of those incorruptible champions of freedom, such as Milton, who were in favor of entrusting the chief executive authority to the iron-handed chieftain, we must take an im-

partial view of the state of affairs after the death of the king. A large party of royalists, exasperated by defeat and shocked by the execution of their master, were bent upon restoring the old order of things. It would have been madness for those who had suffered and labored so much in the cause of civil and religious liberty, to place themselves at the mercy of this exasperated and remorseless faction. Those dreadful disorders of society which always follow in the train of civil wars, required a prompt and efficient remedy. Scotland and Ireland were torn to pieces by internal convulsions. The foreign relations were in the worst possible condition, from the want of a representative of the national sovereignty, who could command the respect of the continental powers.

These circumstances convinced all rational men, who were unwilling to restore the old dynasty, and thus rivet anew the chains which had just been broken, that a clear eye and strong hand were needed at the helm of state. However important it may be in general, to adhere to the regular forms of constitutional government, every nation is subject to violent and critical disorders, which require the prompt application of extraordinary remedies. Nor is it matter of regret, that such men as Cromwell are at hand, who *can* rule the storm, and do not shrink from the terrible responsibilities of such emergencies.

He well knew the peril and obloquy which he incurred. He knew that his station would be no bed of roses, but a pillow of thorns. To no one, perhaps, is mere power so much an object of desire, that he would be willing, for its possession, to sacrifice almost everything else that man holds dear upon earth. Nor is it always a virtue to prefer the peace and security of private life to the perils and responsibilities of high office in troublous times. We see no reason why a man, who finds himself surrounded by disorders, which require prompt and energetic measures, if he feels

that sublime, because well-founded, self-reliance, which has distinguished the master spirits of the world, should not take upon himself the perilous, and often thankless task of re-organizing society.

The Protector fully vindicated his estimate of his own powers by the results of his sagacious and energetic policy. Arraigned at the bar of European opinion, he pleaded his own cause in a voice which resounded through the civilized world, and drowned the poor treble of his miserable libellers. Liberty of conscience was secured, outrage suppressed, justice impartially administered, peaceful industry protected, insurrection crushed and the insolence of foreign nations effectually humbled.

How wearisome are those men, who blinded by prejudice can see little else than fanaticism or hypocrisy in the hero, who, after spending the greater part of his life as a plain farmer or obscure member of the commons, formed an army, and conducted it with a skill which is usually the result of military education and long experience; who, after overthrowing in the field the brilliant chivalry of the king, and bringing the head of the tyrant to the block, found himself in a situation of peril and responsibility which would have crushed any ordinary mortal. Having to contend at once with a mutinous army, a factious parliament, the unrelenting hatred of a powerful party, and the unbridled insolence of foreign aggression, this wonderful man, with a lofty purpose which no discouragements could shake, a prompt and overbearing energy which no opposition could withstand, a sagacity which no intricacy could perplex, and a penetration that no dissimulation could baffle, while with one hand he crushed insurrection at home, with the other swept the Dutch navy from the seas, humbled Spain, made France the unwilling instrument of his purpose, and raised England to a height of glory which she had never reached under the greatest of her monarchs.

Yet with all its glories, the commonwealth must be looked upon as a sort of parenthesis in the progressive evolution of the *idea* of the English constitution. It was a temporary remedy for a desperate disease. It had no root in the past, nor any vital connection with the main stem of prescription and social development. The appearance of life which had been given to it by the genius and energy of the first Cromwell, utterly vanished during the feeble administration of his son. It was an interval of sunshine after the storms of the revolution, which gave time for the principles of liberty, agitated in that contest, to take such deep root in the popular mind, that the profligate tyranny of the restored dynasty could not crush them, nor prevent their giving birth to the revolution of sixteen hundred and eighty-eight.

At this point, the plan of this work requires that I should bring to a close my brief sketch of English constitutional history. I will briefly recapitulate the causes, which have mainly contributed to the preservation and progress of Anglo-Norman liberty in the Old world, before it was transplanted to the New.

Free institutions, upheld by a lofty spirit of personal independence, were common to all the Germanic tribes, and in this respect the Anglo-Normans could claim no decided superiority over other nations of the same origin. It is not to be overlooked however that in England the population was wholly Germanic, the Celts having been rooted out by the fierce and indomitable Saxons, while in France, Spain and Italy, the German tribes were merely the ruling class in the midst of large Romance populations, in whom the spirit of liberty had long been extinguished by subjection to the Roman empire. The conflict between antagonist elements of political organization was more vigorous and protracted in England than on the continent, and as that peculiar sense of equilibrium or aversion to the *absolute*, which seems to be

inherent in the Anglo-Norman race, would never permit any of the political forces to gain a *permanent* ascendancy, their struggles resulted in the compromises of the constitution. This result was favored by the insular position of England securing her from foreign invasion, which, on the continent, induced the people to connive at illegal taxation and other excesses of arbitrary power, that seemed necessary to defend their own fields and firesides from the rapine and insolence of a foreign enemy,—still further, by the peculiar turn given to the reformation in England, which, at an early period, arrayed the champions of free inquiry and liberty of conscience against a spiritual tyranny, founded and supported by the state, but undisguised by any of those venerable associations which enabled the Catholic church to maintain her grasp upon the moral feelings and imaginations of men; and, finally, free inquiry and the republican institutions of Calvinism, starting up in opposition to the civil despotism, which was the formidable enemy of both, infused new life and vigor into long settled but almost forgotten principles and gave birth to that terrible revolution which cemented with blood the foundations of constitutional liberty.

Through all the phases of England's political progress, we discern a singular tenacity of ancient rights and privileges, a stubborn resistance to the encroachments of one department of the government upon another, a strong aversion to the speculations of political *idealists*, and a distrust of all innovations, which could not be readily engrafted upon the tree of *prescription*, without either violently lopping any of its branches, or injuring those roots which were buried in the strong soil of Saxon antiquity. The strong practical sense of the English shows itself in aversion to extremes and to the absolute in every form. For this reason no people have succeeded so well in reconciling movement with conservatism, in combining the spirit of improvement with a rational vene-

ration for the past. To this fact we must mainly ascribe the remarkably solid, durable and expansive character of her civilization.

I shall not attempt at present to trace the rise and progress of the commercial and maritime greatness of England,—the main-spring of that mighty movement, which has turned the haunts of savages and wild beasts into abodes of refinement, intelligence and freedom; kindled the lights of knowledge upon the shores of Australia and the oriental islands; founded a new empire in India, upon the ruins of the magnificent dynasty of Tamerlane; battered down the wall of exclusiveness that fenced the millions of China from the inroads of western civilization, and is still, with ever-increasing velocity, diffusing the English language, laws and literature to the farthest bounds of the green earth. That movement is the most stupendous fact of modern history, and might suggest boundless speculations on the future. One is tempted to imagine that the Anglo-Norman race has received from Divine Providence a fee-simple conveyance of this planet, with the appurtenances thereunto belonging.

Of the streams of life which have issued from that reservoir of nations, the mightiest has taken its way through the forests and over the prairies of North America, bearing upon its bosom a political argosy freighted with the hopes and destinies of man. Little more than two centuries after the first feeble colonies were planted upon the Atlantic coast, their descendants are pouring through the defiles of those snow-capped mountains, which throw their morning shadows upon the placid bosom of the South Sea.

We cannot but regard it as a singularly providential circumstance, that the *permanent* settlement of Anglo-America was postponed to that remarkable period, when the fetters of the human mind having been broken, a spirit of inquiry had gone abroad, and the great battle between power and liberty

had commenced. The American offspring of England may be said to have been born from the first throes of that great revolution which quickened the life-blood of the mother country with the spirit of liberty. To carry out the figure, the robust infant was cast out into the wilderness and left to the care of nature, and it soon found the use of its own limbs, without the aid of its parent.

The circumstances of the Spanish settlements were precisely the reverse. At the time they were made, Spain was the first nation and greatest military power on earth. But her government was an absolute despotism in church and state. Under the gloomy and bigoted Philip the Second, the last sparks of free inquiry were trodden out in blood. From such a society, bands of daring adventurers went forth, thirsting for gold, and, carrying the cross before them, conquered the fairest and most populous portions of America. They were supported by the vast military power of the parent country, from which a haughty aristocracy and persecuting church were transplanted to the new world.

The settlers of Massachusetts and Virginia brought with them the love of freedom which was reviving in England. Some of them, indeed, had the best possible reasons for hating tyranny. From their new homes in the western world, they saw their brethren who had remained in the mother country, struggling for civil and religious liberty. They saw a corrupt hierarchy crushed, a haughty nobility humbled, and the head of a perfidious monarch brought to the block, for trampling upon the rights of the people. Some years afterwards they saw another prince of the same infatuated dynasty, hurled from the throne, and the great principle at least partially recognized, that all power is a trust for the benefit of the governed, who have a right to take it away from those who flagrantly abuse it, and confer it upon others who are able and willing to perform its duties.

The English constitution was still encrusted by many unsightly anomalies, some of which have not, to this day, been removed. But the principles of liberty, which in England were checked and stunted, first by military ascendancy, and then by ancient institutions, encountered no such unpropitious influences in America. There was no necessity for a large military force to protect the colonists from the few naked savages who roamed through the forests, and if there had been, such a force could not have been spared by either of the contending factions of the mother country. There was nothing to tempt the nobility and prelates to the wilds of America. The settler, familiar with the rude grandeur of nature, could have none of those servile feelings, which, in Europe, were fostered by long established social distinctions, but trod in the wilds which he was subduing, with the free step and erect port of the conscious lord of creation. His mind, developed by the labors and perils of laying the foundation of a new empire in the wilderness, was free, original, fearless, self-relying, like the mountain eagle, cradled on the crag and rocked by the tempest.

Yet he was by no means, cut off from the life-giving *past*. If he had left behind him the army, the aristocracy and the church, the three props of arbitrary power and ancient abuses, he brought with him all that was adapted to his new circumstances. He brought with him all that glorious legacy of former ages, which the nobility and clergy had helped to preserve and transmit, before the people had become sufficiently enlightened to take charge of it themselves. He brought with him the common law, the trial by jury, the habeas corpus, parliamentary legislation, the division of the legislature into two bodies, holding by different tenures and acting as checks upon each other, judicial independence; and that great principle, the impregnable outwork of liberty, which requires the consent of the representatives of the

people to the imposition of taxes, and appropriations of money. Besides all this, he brought with him the intellectual treasures, which, first emerging from the darkness of remote antiquity in the poems of Homer and the literature to which they gave birth, have been constantly accumulating down to the present time. Last, but not least, he brought with him the *Christian religion*, in the freest and purest form then known. The vast arrangements of Providence, steadily maturing through the vicissitudes of ages, have at last brought together a complete provision for the complex nature of man.

American society, then, may be regarded as the *net product of the whole past*, eliminated from those terms which, though useful in working out the problem, must be cancelled to obtain the result. The stream of ages, in passing the Atlantic, has deposited the rubbish of dilapidated institutions. The plants, which had drooped under the shade of crumbling fabrics that once sheltered them from the wintry blasts, transplanted to a rich and unencumbered soil, may spring aloft into the heavens and overshadow the world.

I may be considered an enthusiast for avowing the belief that the Anglo-Normans, especially the American branch, are destined to be the pioneers and teachers of mankind in the science of civil government. They seem to me singularly qualified for this glorious part in developing the plans of Providence. I have adverted to the moderation and practical sense, the aversion to the extremes of political idealism, which are characteristic of the English and their American descendants. These qualities were exhibited in a striking manner in the organization of the American government. Our constitution was a compromise, not only between slaveholding and non-slaveholding societies,—between centralization and state rights,—but also between progress and conservatism. The American statesmen did not, like the French Jacobins, aspire to build a political edifice out of flimsy

abstractions of their own spinning. They did not attempt to create, but merely to construct, with material ready to their hands. With principles as old as Magna Charta, institutions to which the people had long been accustomed, and the new equality growing out of the peculiar circumstances of American society, they went to work in a spirit of compromise, and constructed a glorious temple of constitutional liberty.

The moderation and sense of equilibrium, of which we have ascribed a larger measure to the Anglo-Saxons than any other race, were conspicuous in the character of Washington, who, like many other great men, was the highest example of the predominant traits of his countrymen. His mind has been underrated on account of the unparalleled equipoise of its faculties. Nothing stands out in bold relief to arrest attention and strike the imagination. There is even an appearance of tameness in the complete subordination of his passions to his judgment and sense of duty. Yet his soul was colossal, and grows upon us the more it is contemplated. His character was not the cloud-piercing Gothic spire, but the symmetrical dome, which if lower and less striking, is more solid and enduring. Its key-stone was that steadfast adherence to principle which allowed no selfish passion for a moment to disturb the singleness of his purpose, nor any misfortune to shake his calm resolution.

But I find myself encroaching upon subjects which I wish to reserve for another work of a less summary character than the present. I hope hereafter to complete my view of the philosophy of history by tracing the progress of society through what may be called the age of revolutions, from the beginning of our own struggle with England down to the year 1815, when the last remnant of Napoleon's gigantic power was annihilated on the field of Waterloo, and noticing the most remarkable men, both of action and speculation, who have been connected with the movements of that stirring period.

Finally, if to be called a Roman citizen was once an honor greater than royalty itself, what honor, what responsibility must attach to the citizen of the Anglo-American republic! When we take into consideration the peculiar and interesting character of their political institutions, the restless activity, sound judgment and over-mastering energy with which the Anglo-Normans are pushing the triumphs of their intellect and enterprise in every part of the world, we think we are justified in placing that wonderful race of men in the van of Christian civilization. At no distant period the island mother must be overshadowed by the greatness of her offspring, for the power of England is singularly artificial. It has a very narrow territorial foundation in comparison with many of her colonies. It is a pyramid propping the heavens and overshadowing the earth, but resting upon its apex instead of its base, and upheld by the financial skill and far-reaching sagacity which have presided in her councils. The American republic is the mightiest of her progeny, and if its *union* and liberty are preserved, the sceptre of that stupendous intellectual empire, of which the *English language* will be the bond of spiritual union, must be transferred from England to the United States.

The westward progress of empire and of the centre of civilization has often been the subject of remark. It would seem that in the long day of man's existence upon earth, the point of meridian glory, like that of the solar day, is destined to make the circuit of the globe. From Persia to Greece, from Greece to Italy, from Italy to the Franks in France and Germany, from the Franks to Spain, from Spain to England, and may not the next transfer be from England to America? When passing the Pacific, it once more reaches the primeval seats of the human family may be the appointed time for the Recording Angel to close the volume of this world's history.

But we have better grounds than fanciful analogies for a

prospect so pleasing to our national pride. No one of comprehensive mind can look at the Mississippi valley, with its dependent *fringes* of territory on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, without being ready to exclaim with an English tourist—"If anywhere on earth the Almighty himself has marked out the seat of empire, surely it is here." In fertility, resources and extent of commercial facilities, no other region on earth can compare with it for one moment, except perhaps the basin of the Amazon, and there the minds and bodies of the people must be enfeebled by the incessant heat of an equatorial climate, while here there are no physical causes which can tend to deteriorate the most active, sagacious and energetic race of men that the world ever saw. Here, perhaps, human intelligence is to reach its loftiest earthly manifestations. Here are to be solved many of those great problems which involve the future destiny of mankind. Here civilization may attain its most glorious triumphs, if we give to genius, wisdom and learning their due regard ; if we place virtue and intelligence above wealth and office ; if we preserve that only true liberty which is consistent with a lofty morality, with wholesome laws—with justice to all and each ; if we look back upon the mighty past, not with self-complacent contempt, but with that discriminating veneration which may take warning from its errors and emulate its greatness ; if last, though not least, we cling to that most precious of all its legacies, of which the cross is the *seal* and the Bible is the *record*, duly attested by the Providence of God.