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*A. P. Putnam.*

DISCOURSE

OCCASIONED BY THE

DEATH OF

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS:

DELIVERED AT THE MELODEON IN BOSTON, MARCH 5, 1848.

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BY THEODORE PARKER,

MINISTER OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN BOSTON.

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## DISCOURSE.

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WITHIN a few days one of the most distinguished statesmen of the age has passed away; a man who has long been before the public, familiarly known in the new world and the old. He was one of the prominent monuments of the age. It becomes us to look at his life, works, and public character, with an impartial eye; to try him by the Christian standard. Let me extenuate nothing, add nothing, and set nought down from any partial love or partial hate. His individuality has been so marked in a long life, his good and evil so sharply defined, that one can scarcely fail to delineate its most important features.

God has made some men great and others little. The use of great men is to serve the little men; to take care of the human race, and act as practical interpreters of Justice and Truth. This is not the Hebrew rule, nor the Heathen, nor the common rule, only the Christian. The great man is the servant of mankind, not they of him. Perhaps greatness is always the same thing in kind, differing only in mode and in form, as well as degree. The great man has more of human nature than other men, organized in him. So far as that goes, therefore, he is more ME than I am myself. We feel that superiority in all our intercourse with great men,—whether Kings, Philosophers, Poets, or Saints. In kind we are the same; different in degree.

In nature we find individuals, not orders and genera : but for our own convenience in understanding and recollecting, we do a little violence to nature and put the individuals into classes. In this way we understand better both the whole and each of its parts. Human Nature furnishes us with individual great men ; for convenience we put them into several classes, corresponding to their several modes or forms of greatness. It is well to look at these classes before we examine any one great man ; this will render it easier to see where he belongs and what he is worth. Actual service is the test of actual greatness ; he who renders, of himself, the greatest actual service to mankind, is actually the greatest man. There may be other tests for determining the potential greatness of men, or the essential ; this is the Christian rule for determining the actual greatness. Let us arrange these men in the natural order of their work.

First of all, there are great men who DISCOVER general truths, great ideas, universal laws, or invent methods of thought and action. In this class the vastness of a man's genius may be measured, and his relative rank ascertained by the transcendency of his ideas, by the newness of his truth, by its practical value, and the difficulty of attaining it in his time, and under his peculiar circumstances. In Literature it is such men who originate thoughts, and put them into original forms, — they are the great men of letters. In Philosophy we meet with such, — and they are the great men of science. Thus Socrates discovered the philosophical method of minute analysis which distinguished his school, and led to the rapid advance of knowledge in the various and even conflicting Academies, which held this method in common, but applied it in various ways,

well or ill, and to various departments of human inquiry ; thus Newton discovered the law of gravitation, universal in Nature, and by the discovery did immense service to mankind. In Politics we find similar, or analogous men, who discover yet other Laws of God, which bear the same relation to men in society that Gravitation bears to the orbs in heaven, or to the dust and stones in the street ; men that discover the First Truths of Politics, and teach the true Method of Human Society. Such are the great men in Politics.

We find corresponding men in Religion ; men who discover an idea so central that all sectarianism of parties or of nations seems little in its light ; who discover and teach the universal law which unifies the Race, binding man to man, and man to God ; who discover the true method of Religion conducting to natural worship without limitation, to free Goodness, free Piety, free Thought. To our mind such are the greatest of great men, when measured by the transcendency of their doctrine and the service they render to all. By the influence of their idea, Letters, Philosophy, and Politics become nobler and more beautiful, both in their forms and their substance.

Such is the class of DISCOVERERS,—men who get truth at first hand—truth pertaining either especially to Literature, Philosophy, Politics, Religion, or at the same time to each and all of them.

The next class consists of such as ORGANIZE these Ideas, Methods, Truths, and Laws ; they concretize the abstract, particularize the general ; they apply philosophy to practical purposes, organizing the discoveries of science into a railroad, a mill, a steam-ship, and by their work an idea becomes

Fact. They organize Love into Families, Justice into a State, Piety into a Church. Wealth is power, Knowledge is power, Religion power; they organize all these powers—wealth, knowledge, religion—into common life, making Divinity Humanity, and that Society.

This organizing genius is a very great one, and appears in various forms. One man spreads his thought out on the soil, whitening the land with bread-corn; another applies his mind to the rivers of New England, making them spin and weave for the human race; this man will organize a thought into a machine with his Idea, joining together fire and water, iron and wood, animating them into a new creature, ready to do man's bidding; while that with audacious hand steals the lightning of Heaven, organizes his plastic thought within that pliant fire, and sends it of his errands to fetch and carry tidings between the ends of the earth.

Another form of this mode of greatness is seen in Politics, in organizing men. The man spreads his thought out on mankind, puts men into true relations with one another and with God; he organizes Strength, Wisdom, Justice, Love, Piety; balances the conflicting forces of a nation so that each man has his natural liberty as complete as if the only man, yet, living in society, gathers advantages from all the rest. The highest degree of this organizing power is the genius for legislation, which can enact Justice and Eternal Right into treaties and statutes, codifying the divine thought into human laws, making Absolute Religion common life and daily custom, and balancing the centripetal power of the mass, with the centrifugal power of the individual, into a well proportioned State, as God has balanced these two conflicting forces into the rhy-

mic ellipses above our heads. It need not be disguised, that Politics are the highest business for men of this class, nor that a great statesman or legislator is the greatest example of constructive skill. It requires some ability to manage the brute forces of Nature, or to combine profitably nine and thirty clerks in a shop: how much more to arrange twenty millions of intelligent, free men, not for a special purpose, but for all the ends of universal life!

Such is the second class of great men — the ORGANIZERS; men of constructive heads, who form the institutions of the world, the little and the great.

The next class consists of men who ADMINISTER the institutions after they are founded. To do this effectually and even eminently, it requires no genius for original organization of truths freshly discovered, none for the discovery of truths, outright. It requires only a perception of those truths, and an acquaintance with the institutions wherein they have become incarnate; a knowledge of details, of formulas, and practical methods, united with a strong will and a practised understanding, — what is called a turn for affairs, tact, or address; a knowledge of routine and an acquaintance with men. The success of such men will depend on these qualities; they “know the ropes” and the soundings, the signs of the times; can take advantage of the winds and the tides.

In a shop, farm, ship, factory, or army, in a church or a state, such men are valuable; they cannot be dispensed with; they are wheels to the carriage; without them cannot a city be inhabited. They are always more numerous than both the other classes; more such are needed, and therefore born; the

American mind, just now, runs eminently in this direction. These are not men of theories, or of new modes of thought or action, but what are called practical men, men of a few good rules, men of facts and figures, not so full of ideas as of precedents. They are called common-sense men; not having too much common-sense to be understood. They are not likely to be fallen in with far off at sea; quite as seldom out of their reckoning in ordinary weather. Such men are excellent statesmen in common times, but in times of trouble, when old precedents will not suit the new case, but men must be guided by the nature of man, not his history, they are not strong enough for the place, and get pushed off by more constructive heads.

These men are the ADMINISTRATORS, or managers. If they have a little less of practical sense, such men fall a little below, and turn out only Critics, of whom I will not now stop to discourse.

To have a rail-road, there must have been first the Discoverers, who found out the properties of wood and iron, fire and water, and their latent power to carry men over the earth; next, the Organizers, who put these elements together, surveyed the route, planned the structure, set men to grade the hill, to fill the valley, and pave the road with iron bars; and then the Administrators, who, after all that is done, procure the engines, engineers, conductors, and ticket-distributors and the rest of the "hands"; they buy the coal and see it is not wasted, fix the rates of fare, calculate the savings, and distribute the dividends. The Discoverers and Organizers often fare hard in the world, lean men, ill-clad and suspected, often laughed at, while the Administrator is thought the greater man, because he rides over their graves and pays the divi-

dends, where the Organizer only called for the assessments, and the Discoverer told what men called a dream. What happens in a rail-road happens also in a Church, or a State.

Let us for a moment compare these three classes of great men. The Discoverers are the greatest of all measured by the test referred to. They anticipate the human race, with long steps, striding before their kind. They learn not only from the history of man, but man's nature; not by empirical experience alone, but by a transcendent intuition of truth, now seen as a Law, now as an Idea. They are wiser than experience, and by divination through their nobler nature know at once what the human race has not learned in its thousands of years, kindling their lamp at the central fire, now streaming from the sky, now rushing broad-sheeted, and terrible as ground-lightning from the earth. Of such men there are but few, especially in the highest mode of this greatness. A single one makes a new world, and men date the ages after him.

Next in order of greatness comes the Organizer. He, also, must have great intellect, and character. It is no light work to make thoughts things. It requires mind to make a mill out of a river, bricks, iron, and stone, and set all the Connecticut to spinning cotton. But to construct a State, to harness fittingly twenty million men, animated by such divergent motives, possessing interests so unlike — this is the greatest work of constructive skill. To translate the ideas of the Discoverer into institutions, to yoke men together by mere "abstractions," universal laws, and by such yoking save the liberty of all and secure the welfare of each — that is the most creative of poetry, the most constructive of sciences. In modern times, it is said, Napoleon is the greatest example of this faculty; not a

Discoverer, but an Organizer of the highest power and on the largest scale. In human history he seems to have had no superior, perhaps no equal.

Some callings in life afford little opportunity to develop the great qualities above alluded to. How much genius lies latent no man can know; but he that walks familiarly with humble men often stumbles over masses of unsunned gold, where men, proud in emptiness, looked only for common dust. How many a Milton sits mute and inglorious in his shop, how many a Cromwell rears only corn and oxen for the world's use, no man can know. Some callings help to light, some hide and hinder. But there is none which demands more ability than Politics; they develop greatness if the man have the germ thereof within him. True, in Politics, a man may get along with a very little ability, without being a Discoverer or an Organizer; were it otherwise we should not be blest with a very large House, or a crowded Senate. Nay, experience shows that in ordinary times one not even a great Administrator may creep up to a high place and hang on there a while. Few able administrators sit on the thrones of Europe at this day. But if power be in the man, the hand of Politics will draw out the spark.

In America, Politics more than elsewhere demand greatness, for ours is, in theory, the government of all, for all and by all. It requires greater range of thought to discover the law for all than for a few; after the discovery thereof it is more difficult to construct a democracy than a monarchy, or an aristocracy, and after that is organized it is more difficult to administer. It requires more manhood to wield at will "the fierce democratic" of America than to rule England or France; yet

the American institutions are germane to human nature, and by that fact are rendered more easy, complicated as they are.

In Politics, when the institutions are established, men often think there is no room for Discoverers and Organizers; that Administrators alone are needed, and choose accordingly. But there are ideas well known not yet organized into institutions: that of Free-trade, of Peace, of Universal Freedom, Universal Education, Universal Comfort, in a word, the idea of Human Brotherhood. These wait to be constructed into a State without injustice, without war, without slavery, ignorance, or want. It is hardly true that infinity is dry of truths unseen as yet; there are truths enough waiting to be discovered; all the space betwixt us and God is full of ideas waiting for some Columbus to disclose new worlds. Men are always saying there is no new thing under the sun, but when the Discoverer comes they see their mistake.

Now, it is quite plain where we are to place the distinguished person of whom I speak. Mr. Adams was not a Discoverer; not an Organizer. He added no truth to mankind not known before, and even well known; he made no known truth a fact. He was an Administrator of political institutions. Taking the whole land into consideration, comparing him with his competitors, measuring him by his apparent works, at first sight he does not seem very highly eminent in this class of political Administrators. Nay, some would set him down not as an Administrator so much as a Political Critic.

Here there is danger of doing him injustice, by neglecting a fact so obvious that 't is seldom seen. Mr. Adams was a North-

ern man with Northern habits, methods, and opinions. By the North I mean the free states. Now, the chief business of the North is to get empire over Nature; all tends to that. Young men of talents become merchants, merchant-manufacturers, merchant-traders. The object directly aimed at is Wealth; not wealth by plunder, but by productive work. Now, to get dominion over Nature, there must be Education, universal education, otherwise there is not enough intelligent industry, which alone ensures that dominion. With wide-spread intelligence property will be widely distributed, and of course suffrage and civil power will get distributed. All is incomplete without religion. I deny not that these peculiarities of the North come, also, from other sources, but they all are necessary to attain the chief object thereof — dominion over the material world. The North subdues Nature by thought, and holds her powers in thrall. As results of this, see the increase in wealth which is signified by Northern rail-roads, ships, mills, and shops; in the colleges, schools, churches, which arise; see the skill developed in this struggle with Nature, the great enterprises which come of that, the movements of commerce, manufactures, the efforts — and successful, too — for the promotion of education, of religion. All is democratic, and becomes more so continually, each descendant founding institutions more liberal than those of the parent state. Men designedly, and as their business, become merchants, mechanics, and the like; they are politicians by exception, by accident, from the necessity of the case. Few Northern men are politicians by profession; they commonly think it better to be a Collector or a Postmaster than a Senator, estimating place by money, not power. Northern politicians are bred as lawyers, clergymen, mechan-

ies, farmers, merchants. Political life is an accident, not an end.

In the South the aim is to get dominion over men ; so the whole working population must be in subjection — in slavery. While the North makes brute Nature half intelligent, the South makes Human Nature half brutal, the man becoming a thing. Talent tends to politics, not trade. Young men of ability go to the army, navy, to the public offices, to diplomatic posts, — in a word, to politics. They learn to manage men. To do this they not only learn what men think, but why they think it. The young man of the North seeks a fortune ; of the South, a reputation and political power. The politician of the South makes politics the study and work of his whole life ; all else is accidental and subordinate. He begins low but ends high ; he mingles with men, has bland and agreeable manners, is frank, honorable, manly, and knows how to persuade.

See the different results of causes so unlike. The North manages the commercial affairs of the land, the ships, mills, farms, and shops ; the spiritual affairs, literature, science, morals, education, religion ; — writes, calculates, instructs, and preaches. But the South manages the political affairs, and has free-trade or tariff, war or peace, just as she will. Of the eight presidents who were elected in fifty years, only three were Northern men. Each of them has retired from office at the end of a single term, in possession of a fortune, but with little political influence. Each of the five Southern presidents has been twice elected ; only one of them was rich. There is no accident in all this. The state of Rhode Island has men that can administer the Connecticut or the Mississippi ; that can organize Niagara into a cotton factory ; yes, that can get

dominion over the ocean and the land : but the state of South Carolina has men that can manage the Congress, can rule the North and South, and make the nation do their bidding.

So the South succeeds in politics, but grows poor, and the North fails in politics, but thrives in commerce and the arts. There the chief men turn to politics, here to trade. It is so in time of peace, but in the day of trouble, of storms, of revolution like the old one, men of tall heads will come up from the ships and the shops, the farms and the colleges of the North, born Discoverers and Organizers, the aristocracy of God, and sit down in the nation's councils to control the State. The North made the Revolution, furnished the men, the money, the ideas, and the occasion for putting them into form. At the making of the Constitution the South out-talked the North ; put in such claims as it saw fitting, making the best bargain it could, violating the ideas of the Revolution, and getting the North not only to consent to slavery, but to allow it to be represented in Congress itself. Now, the South breaks the Constitution just when it will, puts Northern sailors in its jails, and the North dares not complain, but bears it "with a patient shrug." An Eastern merchant is great on a Southern exchange, makes cotton rise or fall, but no Northern politician has much weight at the South, none has ever been twice elected president. The North thinks it a great thing to get an in-offensive Northern man as Speaker in the House of Representatives. The South is an aristocracy which the democracy of the North would not tolerate a year were it at the North itself. Now it rules the land, has the Northern masses, democrats and whigs, completely under its thumb. Does the South say "go," they hasten ; "come," they say "here we are" ; "do this,"

they obey in a moment; "whist," there is not a mouse stirring in all the North. Does the South say "annex," it is done; "fight," men of the North put on the collar, lie lies, issue their proclamations, enrol their soldiers, and declare it is moral treason for the most insignificant clergyman to preach against the war.

All this needs to be remembered in judging of Mr. Adams. True he was regularly bred to politics, and "to the manner-born"; but he was a New England man, with Northern notions, Northern habits, and though more than fifty years in public life, yet he seems to have sought the object of New England far more than the object of the South. Measure his greatness by his service, but that is not to be measured by immediate and apparent success.

In a notice so brief as this, I can say but little of the details of Mr. Adams's life, and purposely pass over many things, dwelling mainly on such as are significant of his character. He was born at Quincy, the 11th of July, 1767; in 1777, went to Europe with his father, then Minister to France. He remained in Europe most of the time — his powers developing with rapidity and promise of future greatness — till 1785, when he returned and entered the junior class in Harvard College. In 1787, he graduated with distinguished honors. He studied law at Newburyport, with Judge Parsons, till 1790, and was a lawyer in Boston, till 1794.

That may be called the period of his education. He enjoyed the advantages of a residence abroad, which enabled him to acquire a knowledge of foreign languages, modes of life, and habits of thought. His father's position brought the

son in contact with the ablest men of the age. He was Secretary of the American minister to Russia at the age of fourteen. He early became acquainted with Franklin and Jefferson, men who had a powerful influence on his youthful mind. For three years he was a student with Judge Parsons, a very remarkable man. These years, from 1767 to 1794, form a period marked by intense mental activity in America and in Europe. The greatest subjects which claim human attention, the laws that lie at the foundation of society, the state, the church, and the family, were discussed as never before. Mr. Adams drew in liberty and religion from his mother's breast. His cradle rocked with the Revolution. When eight years old, from a hill-top hard by his house he saw the smoke of Charlestown, burning at the command of the oppressor. The lullaby of his childhood was the roar of cannon at Lexington and Bunker Hill. He was born in the gathering of the storm, of a family that felt the blast, but never bent thereto; he grew up in its tumult. Circumstances like these make their mark on the character.

His attention was early turned to the most important matters. In 1793, he wrote several papers in the "Centinel," at Boston, on neutral rights, advising the American government to remain neutral in the quarrel between France, our ally, and others; the papers attracted the attention of Washington, who appointed the author Minister to Holland. He remained abroad in various diplomatic services in that country, in Russia, and England, till 1801, when he was recalled by his father, and returned home. It was an important circumstance, that he was abroad during that time when the nation divided into two great parties. He was not called on to take sides

with either ; he had a vantage ground whence he could overlook both, approve their good and shun their evil. The effect of this is abundantly evident in all his life. He was not dyed in the wool by either political party, — the moral sense of the man drowned in the process of becoming a federalist or a democrat.

In 1802, he was elected to the Senate of Massachusetts, yet not wholly by the votes of one party. In 1803, he was chosen to the Senate of the United States. In the Massachusetts Legislature he was not a strict party man ; he was not elected to the Senate by a strictly party vote. In 1806, he was inaugurated as Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard University, and continued in that office about three years. In 1808, he resigned his place in the Senate. In 1809, he was sent by Mr. Madison as Minister to Russia, and remained abroad in various ministries and commissions, till 1817, when he returned, and became Secretary of State under Mr. Monroe. This office he filled till he became President, in 1825. In 1829, failing of reëlection, he retired to private life. In 1831, he was elected as one of the Representatives to Congress from Massachusetts, and continued there till his death, the first president that ever sat in an American Congress.

It will be fifty-four years the thirtieth of next May, since he began his public career. What did he aim at in that long period ? At first sight, it is easy to see the aim of some of the conspicuous men of America. It has obviously been the aim of Mr. Clay to build up the “ American System,” by the establishment of protective duties ; that of Mr. Calhoun to establish Free-trade, leaving a man to buy where he can buy cheapest and sell where he can sell dearest. In respect to

these matters the two are exactly opposite to one another — antithetic as the poles. But each has also, and obviously, another aim, — to build up the institution of slavery in the South. In this they agree, and if I understand them aright, this is the most important political design of each ; for which Mr. Calhoun would forego even free-trade, and Mr. Clay would “ compromise ” even a tariff. Looked at in reference to their aims, there is a certain continuity of action in both these gentlemen. I speak not now of another object which both have equally and obviously aimed at ; not of the personal, but the political object.

Now, at first sight, it does not appear that Mr. Adams had any definite scheme of measures which he aimed to establish ; there is no obvious unity of idea, or continuity of action, that forces itself upon the spectator. He does not seem to have studied the two great subjects of our political economy — Finance and Trade — very deeply, or even with any considerable width of observation or inquiry : he had no financial or commercial hobby. He has worked with every party, and against every party ; all have claimed, none held him. Now he sides with the federalists, then with the democrats ; now he opposes France, showing that her policy is that of pirates ; now he contends against England ; now he works in favor of General Jackson, who put down the nullification of South Carolina with a rough hand ; then he opposes the General in his action against the Bank ; now he contends for the Indians, then for the Negroes ; now attacks Masonry, and then Free-trade. He speaks in favor of claiming and holding “ the whole of Oregon,” then against annexing Texas.

But there is one sentiment which runs through all his life —

an intense love of freedom for all men ; one idea, the idea that each man has Unalienable Rights. These are what may be called the American sentiment, and the American idea ; for they lie at the basis of American Institutions, — except the “ patriarchal,” — and shine out in all our history — I should say, our early history. These two form the golden thread on which Mr. Adams’s jewels are strung. Love of human freedom in its widest sense is the most marked and prominent thing in his character. This explains most of his actions. Studied with this in mind, his life is pretty consistent. This explains his love of the Constitution. He early saw the peculiarity of the American government, — that it rested in theory on the Natural Rights of man, not on a compact, not on tradition, but on somewhat anterior to both ; on the unalienable rights universal in man, and equal in each. He looked on the American Constitution as an attempt to organize these rights ; resting, therefore, not on force, but natural law ; not on power, but right. But with him the Constitution was not an idol ; it was a means, not an end. He did more than *expound* it ; he went back of the Constitution, to the Declaration of Independence, for the ideas of the Constitution ; yes, back of the Declaration to human nature and the laws of God, to legitimate these ideas. The Constitution is a compromise between those ideas, and institutions and prejudices existing when it was made ; not an idol, but a servant. He saw that the Constitution is “ not the work of eternal justice, ruling through the people,” but the work “ of man ; frail, fallen, imperfect man, following the dictates of his nature and aspiring to be perfect.”\* Though a

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\* See *Social Compact*, &c. Providence. 1848. p. 31, et al.

“constitutionalist,” he did not worship the Constitution. He was much more than a “defender of the Constitution,” — a defender of Human Rights.

Mr. Adams had this American sentiment and idea in an heroic degree. Perhaps no political man now living has expressed them so fully. With a man like him, not very genial or creative, having no great constructive skill, and not without a certain pugnacity in his character, this sentiment and idea would naturally develop themselves in a negative form, that of opposition to wrong, more often than in the positive form of direct organization of the Right; would lead to criticism oftener than to creation. Especially would this be the case if other men were building up institutions in opposition to this idea. In him they actually take the form of what he called “the unalienable right of resistance to oppression.” His life furnishes abundant instances of this. He thought the Indians were unjustly treated, cried out against the wrong; when President, endeavoured to secure justice to the Creeks in Georgia, and got into collision with Governor Troup. He saw, or thought he saw, that England opposed the American idea both in the new world and the old. In his zeal for freedom he sometimes forgot the great services of England in that same cause, and hated England, hated her with great intensity of hatred, hated her political policy, her monarchy, and her aristocracy — mocked at the madness of her King — for he thought England stood in the way of freedom.\* Yet he loved the English

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\* Reference is made to his speech in the House of Representatives, May 8th and 9th, 1840. (Boston, 1840.) It is a little remarkable, that the false principle of the common law, on which Mr. Adams was commenting, as laid down by Blackstone, is corrected by a writer, M. Pothier, who rests on the civil law for his authority. See pp. 6-8, and 20, 21.

name and the English blood, was “proud of being himself descended from that stock,” thinking it worth noting, “that Chatham’s language was his mother tongue, and Wolf’s great name compatriot with his own.” He confessed no nation had done more for the cause of human improvement. He loved the Common Law of England, putting it far above the Roman Law — perhaps not without doing a little injustice to the latter.\* The common law was a rude and barbarous code. But human liberty was there; trial by jury was there; the Habeas Corpus was there. It was the law of men “regardful of human rights.”

This sentiment led him to defend the Right of Petition in the House of Representatives, as no other man had dared to do. He cared not whether it was the petition of a majority, or a minority; of men or women, free men or slaves. It might be a petition to remove him from a committee, to expel him from the House, a petition to dissolve the Union — he presented it none the less. To him there was but one nature in all — man or woman, bond or free,— and that was Human Nature, the most sacred thing on earth. Each human child had unalienable rights, and though that child was a beggar or a slave, had rights, which all the power in the world, bent into a single arm, could not destroy nor abate, though it might ravish away. This induced him to attempt to procure the right of suffrage for the colored citizens of the District of Columbia.

This sentiment led him to oppose tyranny in the House of Representatives — the tyranny of the majority. In one of his juvenile essays, published in 1791, contending against a highly

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\* See Address at Washington, 4th of July, 1821. Second Edition, Cambridge, *passim*.

popular work, he opposed the theory that a State has the right to do what it pleases, declaring it had no right to do wrong.\* In his old age he had not again to encounter the empty hypothesis of Thomas Paine, but the substantial enactment of the "Representatives" of the people of the United States. The hypothesis was trying to become a fact. The South had passed the infamous Gag-Law, which a symbolical man from New Hampshire had presented, though it originated with others.† By that law the mouth of the North was completely stopped in Congress, so that not one word could be said about the matter of slavery.

The North was quite willing to have it stopped, for it did not care to speak against slavery, and the Gag did not stop the mouth of the Northern purse. You may take away from the North its honor, if you can find it; may take away its rights; may imprison its free citizens in the jails of Louisiana and the Carolinas; yes, may invade the "sacred soil of the North," and kidnap a man out of Boston itself, within sight of Faneuil Hall, — and the North will not complain; will bear it with that patient shrug, waiting for yet further indignities. Only when the Northern Purse is touched is there an uproar. If the Postmaster demands silver for letters there is instant alarm; the repeal of a tariff rouses the feelings, and an embargo once drove the indignant North to the perilous edge of rebellion! Now Mr. Adams loved his dollars as well as most New England men; he looked out for their income as well; guarded

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\* *Answer to Paine's Rights of Man*, London, 1793, originally published in the *Columbian Centinel*. The London edition bears the name of *John Adams* on the title-page.

† Mr. Atherton.

as carefully against their outgo ; though conscientiously upright in all his dealings, kind and hospitable, he has never been proved generous, and generosity is the commonest virtue of the North ;—is said to have been “ close,” if not mean. He loved his dollars as well as most men—but he loved justice more ; honor more ; freedom more ; the Unalienable Rights of man far more.

He looked on the Constitution as an instrument for the defence of the Rights of man. The government was to act as the people had told how. The Federal government was not sovereign ; the State government was not sovereign ;\* neither was a court of ultimate appeal ;— but the PEOPLE was sovereign ; had the right of Eminent Domain over Congress and the Constitution, and making that, had set limits to the government. He guarded therefore against all violation of the Constitution, as a wrong done to the people ; he would not overstep its limits in a bad cause ; not even in a good one. Did Mr. Jefferson obtain Louisiana by a confessed violation of the Constitution, Mr. Adams would oppose the purchase of Louisiana, and was one of the six senators who voted against it. Making laws for that territory, he wished to extend the trial by jury to all criminal prosecutions, while the law limited that form of trial to capital offences. Before that Territory had a representative in Congress, the American government wished to collect a revenue there. Mr. Adams opposed that too. It was “ assuming a dangerous power ;” it was government without the consent of the governed, and therefore an unjust government. “ All exercise of human authority must

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\* See Oration at Quincy, 1831, p. 12, et seq. (Boston, 1831.)

be under the limitation of right and wrong." All other power is despotic, and "in defiance of the laws of nature and of God."\*

This love of freedom led him to hate and oppose the tyranny of the strong over the weak, to hate it most in its worst form — to hate American Slavery, doubtless the most infamous form of that tyranny now known amongst the nations of Christendom, and perhaps the most disgraceful thing on earth. Mr. Adams called slavery a vessel of dishonor so base that it could not be named in the Constitution with decency. In 1805, he wished to lay a duty on the importation of slaves, and was one of five senators who voted to that effect. He saw the power of this institution — the power of money and the power of votes which it gives to a few men. He saw how dangerous it was to the Union; to American liberty, to the cause of Man. He saw that it trod three millions of men down to the dust, counting souls but as cattle. He hated nothing as he hated this; fought against nothing so manfully. It was the Lion in the pathway of freedom, which frightened almost all the politicians of the North and the East and the West — so that they forsook that path; a Lion whose roar could well-nigh silence the Forum and the Bar, the Pulpit and the Press; a Lion who rent the Constitution, trampled under foot the Declaration of Independence, and tore the Bible to pieces. Mr. Adams was ready to rouse up this Lion, and then to beard him in his den. Hating slavery, of course he opposed whatever went to strengthen its power, — opposed Mr. Atherton's Gag-Law; opposed the annexation of Texas; opposed the Mexican war;

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\* *The Social Compact, &c., &c.* Providence. 1842. p. 24.

and — wonderful to tell — actually *voted* against it, and never took back his vote.

When Secretary of State, this same feeling led him to oppose conceding to the British the right of searching American vessels supposed to be concerned in the slave-trade, and when Representative to oppose the repeal of the law giving “protection” to American sailors. It appeared also in private intercourse with men. No matter what was a man’s condition, Mr. Adams treated him as an equal.

This devotion to freedom and the unalienable rights of man, was the most important work of his life. Compared with some other political men, he seems inconsistent, because he now opposes one evil, then its opposite evil. But his general course is in this direction, and, when viewed in respect to this idea, seems more consistent than that of Mr. Webster, or Calhoun, or Clay, when measured by any great principle. This appears in his earlier life. In 1802, he became a member of the Massachusetts Senate. The majority of the General Court were federalists. It was a time of intense political excitement — the second year of Mr. Jefferson’s administration. The custom is well known — to take the whole of the Governor’s Council from the party which has a majority in the General Court. On the 27th of May, 1802, Mr. Adams stood up for the rights of the minority. He wanted some anti-federalists in the Council of Governor Strong, and as Senator threw his first vote to secure that object. Such was the first legislative action of John Quincy Adams. In the House of Representatives, in 1831, the first thing he did was to present fifteen petitions for the abolition of slavery in the District

of Columbia, though, from constitutional scruples, opposed to granting the petitions. The last public act of his life was this: — The question was before the House on giving medals to the men distinguished in the Mexican war; the minority opposing it wanted more time for debate; the previous question was moved, Mr. Adams voted for the last time, — voted “No,” with unusual emphasis; the great loud No of a man going home to God full of “the unalienable right of resistance to oppression,” its emphatic word on his dying lips. There were the beginning, the middle, and the end, all three in the same spirit — all in favor of mankind; a remarkable unity of action in his political drama.

Somebody once asked him, What are the recognized principles of politics? Mr. Adams answered that there were none: the recognized precepts are bad ones, and so not *principles*. But, continued the inquirer, is not this a good one, — To seek “the greatest good of the greatest number”? No, said he, that is the worst of all, for it looks specious while it is ruinous. What shall become of the minority, in that case? This is the only principle to seek, — “the greatest good of all.”

I do not say there were no exceptions to this devotion to freedom in a long life; there are some passages in his history which it is impossible to justify, and hard to excuse. In early life he was evidently ambitious of place, and rank, and political power. I must confess, it seems to me, at some times, he was not scrupulous enough about the means of attaining that place and power. He has been much censured for his vote in favor of the Embargo, in 1807. His vote, howsoever unwise, may easily have been an honest vote. To an impartial spectator at

this day, perhaps it will be evidently so. His defence of it I cannot think an honest defence, for in that he mentions arguments as impelling him to his vote which could scarcely have been present to his mind at the time, and, if they were his arguments then, were certainly kept in silence — they did not appear in the debate,\* they were not referred to in the President's message.†

I am not to praise Mr. Adams simply because he is dead ; what is wrong before is wrong after death. It is no merit to die — shall we tell lies about him because he is dead ? No, the Egyptian people scrutinized and judged their kings after death — much more should we our fellow-citizens, intrusted with power to serve the State. “ A lavish and undistinguishing eulogium is not praise.” I know what coals of terrible fire lie under my feet, as I speak of this matter, and how thin and light is the coat of ashes deposited there in forty years ; how easily they are blown away at the slightest breath of “ Hartford Convention,” or the “ Embargo,” and the old flame of political animosity blazes forth anew, while the hostile forms of “ federalists” and “ democrats” come back to light. I would not disquiet those awful shades, nor bring them up again. But a

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\* See Pickering's *Letter to Governor Sullivan, on the Embargo*. Boston. 1808. John Quincy Adams's *Letter to the Hon. H. G. Otis, &c.* Boston. 1808. Pickering's *Interesting Correspondence*. 1808. *Review of the Correspondence between the Hon. John Adams and the late William Cunningham, &c.* 1824. But see, also, Mr. Adams's “ Appendix” to the above letter — published sixteen years after the vote on the Embargo. Baltimore. 1824. Mr. Pickering's *Brief Remarks on the Appendix*. August. 1824.

† Reference is here made to British “ Orders in Council” of Nov. 22d, 1807. They were not officially made known to the American Congress till Feb. 7, 1808. They were, however, published in the *National Intelligencer*, the morning on which the Message was sent to the Senate, Dec. 18th, 1807, but were not mentioned in that document, or in the debate.

word must be said. The story of the embargo is well known: the President sent his message to the Senate recommending it, and accompanied with several documents. The message was read and assigned to a committee; the ordinary rule of business was suspended; the bill was reported by the committee; drafted, debated, engrossed, and completely passed through all its stages, the whole on the same day, in secret session, and in about four hours! Yet it was a bill that involved the whole commerce of the country, and prostrated that commerce, seriously affecting the welfare of hundreds of thousands of men. Eight hundred thousand tons of shipping were doomed to lie idle and rot in port. The message came on Friday. Some of the senators wanted yet further information and more time for debate, at least for consideration,—till Monday. It could not be! Till Saturday, then. No; the bill must pass now, no man sleeping on that question. Mr. Adams was the most zealous for passing the bill. In that “debate,” if such it can be called, while opposing a postponement for further information and reflection, he said, “The President has recommended the measure on his high responsibility; I would *not consider*, I would *not deliberate*; I would *act*. Doubtless the *President possesses such further information as will justify the measure!*”\* To my mind, that is the

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\* I copy this from the first letter of Mr. Pickering. Mr. Adams wrote a letter (to H. G. Otis) in reply to this of Mr. Pickering, but said nothing respecting the words charged upon him; but in 1824, in an appendix to that letter, he denies that he expressed the “sentiment” which Mr. Pickering charged him with. But he *does not deny the words themselves*. They rest on the authority of Mr. Pickering, his colleague in the Senate, a strong party man, it is true, perhaps not much disposed to conciliation, but a man of most unquestionable veracity. The “sentiment” speaks for itself.

worst act of his public life ; I cannot justify it. I wish I could find some reasonable excuse for it. What had become of the "sovereignty of the people," "the unalienable right of resistance to oppression" ? Would *not consider* ; would *not deliberate* ; would *act* without doing either ; leave it all to the "high responsibility" of the President, with a "doubtless" he has "further information" to justify the measure ! It was a shame to say so ; it would have disgraced a senator in St. Petersburg. Why not have the "further information" laid before the Senate ? What would Mr. Adams have said, if President Jackson, Tyler, or Polk, had sent such a message, and some senator or representative had counselled submissive action, without considering, without deliberation ! With what appalling metaphors would he describe such a departure from the first duty of a statesman ; how would the tempestuous eloquence of that old patriot shake the Hall of Congress till it rung again, and the nation looked up with indignation in its face ! It is well known what Mr. Adams said in 1834, when Mr. Polk, in the House of Representatives, seemed over-laudatory of the President : "I shall never be disposed to interfere with any member who shall rise on this floor and pronounce a panegyric upon the chief magistrate.

"No, LET the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,  
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee  
Where THRIFT may follow fawning."

Yet the future of Mr. Polk was not so obvious in 1834, as the reward of Mr. Adams, in 1808.

This act is particularly glaring in Mr. Adams. The North often sends men to Washington who might have done it without any great inconsistency ; men, too, not so remarkable for

infirmity in the head, as for that less pardonable weakness — in the knees and the neck; men that bend to power “right or wrong.” Mr. Adams was not afflicted with that weakness, and so the more to be censured for this palpable betrayal of a trust so important. I wish I could find some excuse for it. He was forty years old; not very old, but old enough to know better. His defence made the matter worse. The Massachusetts Legislature disapproved of his conduct; chose another man to succeed him in the Senate. Then Mr. Adams resigned his seat, and soon after was sent Minister to Russia, as he himself subsequently declared,\* “in consequence of the support he had for years given to the measures of Mr. Jefferson’s administration against Great Britain.” But his father said of that mission of his son, “Aristides is banished because he is too just.”† It is easy to judge of the temper of the times, when such words as those of the father could be said on such an occasion, and that by a man who had been President of the United States! When a famine occurs, disease appears in the most hideous forms; men go back to temporary barbarism. In times of political strife, such diseases appear of the intellectual and moral powers. No man who did not live in those times can fully understand the obliquity of mind and moral depravity which then displayed themselves amongst those otherwise without reproach. Says Mr. Adams himself, referring to that period, “Imagination in her wildest vagaries can scarcely conceive the transformations of temper, the obliquities of intellect, the perversions of moral principle,

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\* *Adams’s Remarks in the House of Representatives*, Jan. 5, 1846.

† *Correspondence between the Hon. John Adams and the late Wm. Cunningham, Esq.* Boston. 1823. Letter xliii. p. 150.

effected by junctures of high and general excitement." However, it must be confessed that this, though not the only instance of injustice, is the only case of servile compliance with the Executive to be found in the whole life of the man. It was a grievous fault, but grievously did he answer it; and if a long life of unfaltering resistance to every attempt at assumption of power is fit atonement, then the expiation was abundantly made.

About the same time, Mr. Adams was chairman of a committee of the Senate appointed to consider the case of a senator from Ohio. His conduct on that occasion has been the theme of violent attack, and defence as violent. To the calm spectator at this day, his conduct seems unjustifiable, inconsistent with the counsels of Justice, which, though moving with her "pace of snail," looks always towards the Right, and will not move out of her track though the heavens fall.

While Mr. Adams was President, Hayti became free; but he did not express any desire that the United States should acknowledge her independence, and receive her minister at Washington, — an African plenipotentiary. In his message\* he says, "There are circumstances that have hitherto forbidden the acknowledgment," and mentions "additional reasons for withholding that acknowledgment." In the instructions to the American functionary sent to the celebrated congress of Panama, it is said, the President "is not prepared now to say that Hayti ought to be recognized as an independent sovereign power;" he "does not think it would be proper at this time to recognize it as a new state." He was unwilling to consent

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\* March 15th, 1826.

to the independence of Cuba, for fear of an insurrection of her slaves and the effect at home. The duty of the United States would be, "to defend themselves against the contagion of such near and dangerous examples," that would "constrain them . . . to employ all means necessary to their security." That is, the President would be constrained to put down the blacks in Cuba, who were exercising "the unalienable right of resistance to oppression," for fear the blacks in the United States would discover that they also were men, and had "unalienable rights"! Had he forgotten the famous words, "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God"? The defence for such language on such an occasion is, that Mr. Adams's eyes were not yet open to the evil of slavery. That is a good defence, if true. To me it seems a true defence. Even great men do not see every thing. In 1800, Fisher Ames, while delivering the eulogy on General Washington, censured even the British government because "in the wilds of Africa it obstructed the commerce in slaves"! No man is so wise as mankind. It must be confessed that Mr. Adams, while Secretary of State, and again while President, showed no hostility to the institution of slavery. His influence all went the other way. He would repress the freedom of the blacks in the West Indies, lest American slavery should be disturbed and its fetters broke; he would not acknowledge the independence of Hayti, he would urge Spain to make peace with her descendants, for the same reason—"not for those new republics," but lest the negroes in Cuba and Porto Rico should secure their freedom. He negotiated with England, and she paid the United States more than a million of dollars\* for the fugitive slaves who took

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\* See Mr. Adams's Message, Dec. 2, 1828. The exact sum was \$1,197,422.18.

refuge under her flag during the late war. Mr. Adams had no scruples about receiving the money during his administration. An attempt was repeatedly made by his Secretary, Mr. Clay, through Mr. Gallatin, and then through Mr. Barbour, to induce England to restore the "fugitive slaves who had taken refuge in the Canadian provinces," who, escaping from the area of freedom, seek the shelter of the British crown.\* Nay, he negotiated a treaty with Mexico, which bound her to deliver up fugitive slaves escaping from the United States — a treaty which the Mexican Congress refused to ratify! Should a great man have known better? Great men are not always wise. Afterwards, public attention was called to the matter; humble men gave lofty counsel; Mr. Adams used different language and recommended different measures. But long before that, on the 7th of December, 1804, Mr. Pickering, his colleague in the Senate of the United States, offered a resolution for the purpose of amending the Constitution so as to apportion representatives and direct taxes among the states according to their free inhabitants.

But there are other things in Mr. Adams's course and conduct which deserve the censure of a good man. One was, the attempt to justify the conduct of England in her late war with China, when she forced her opium upon the barbarians with the bayonet. To make out his case, he contended that "in the celestial empire . . . the patriarchal system of Sir Robert Filmer flourished in all its glory," and the Chinese

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\* See Mr. Clay's letter to Mr. A. H. Everett, April 27th, 1825; to Mr. Middleton, respecting the intervention of the Emperor of Russia, May 10th and Dec. 26th, 1825; to Mr. Gallatin, May 10th and June 19th, 1826, and Feb. 24th, 1827. Executive Documents, Second Session of the Twentieth Congress, Vol. I.

claimed superior dignity over all others ; they refused to hold equal and reciprocal commercial intercourse with other nations, and “ it is time this enormous outrage upon the rights of human nature and the first principles of the laws of nations should cease.”\* It is true, the Chinese were “ barbarians ;” true, the English carried thither the Bible and Christianity, at least their own Christianity. But even by the law of nations, letting alone the law of nature, the barbarians had a right to repel both Bible and Christianity, when they came in a contraband shape — that of opium and cannon-balls. To justify this outrage of the strong against the weak, he quite forgets his old antipathy to England, his devotion to human freedom and the sovereignty of the people, calling the cause of England “ a righteous cause.”

He defended the American claim to the whole of Oregon, up to 54° 40'. He did not so much undertake to make out a title either by the law of nature or of nations, but cut the matter short, and claimed the whole of Oregon on the strength of the first chapter of Genesis. This was the argument: God gave mankind dominion over all the earth.† “ Between Christian nations, the command of the Creator lays the foundation of all titles to land, of titles to territory, of titles to jurisdiction.” Then in the Psalms,‡ God gives the “ uttermost parts of the earth for a possession” to the Messiah, as the Representative of all mankind, who held the uttermost parts of the earth *in chief*. But the Pope, as Head of the visible church,

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\* Report of Mr. Adams's lecture on the Chinese War, in the Boston Atlas for Dec. 4th and 5th, 1841.

† Genesis i., 26 – 28.

‡ Psalms ii., 6 – 8.

was the Representative of Christ, and so, holding under him, had the right to give to any king or prelate authority to subdue barbarous nations, possess their territory, and convert them to Christianity. In 1493, the Pope, in virtue of the above right, gave the American continent to the Spanish monarchs, who in time sold their title to the people of the United States. That title may be defective — as the Pope may not be the Representative of Christ, — and so the passage in the Psalms will not help the American claim, but then the United States will hold under the first clause in the Testament of God, that is, in Genesis. The claim of Great Britain is not valid, for she does not want the land for the purpose specified in that clause of the Testament, to “replenish the earth and subdue it.” She wants it “that she may keep it open as a hunting-ground,” while the United States want it that it may grow into a great nation and become a free and sovereign Republic.\*

This strange hypothesis, it seems, lay at the bottom of his defence of the British in their invasion of China. It would have led him, if consistent, to claim also the greater part of Mexico. But as he did not *publicly* declare his opinion on that matter, no more need be said concerning it.

Such was the most prominent Idea in his history; such the departures from it. Let us look at other events in his life. While President, the most important object of his administration was the promotion of internal improvements, es-

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\* See Mr. Adams's speech on Oregon, Feb. 9th, 1846. Arguments somewhat akin to this may be found also in the oration delivered at Newburyport, before cited.

pecially the internal communication between the states. For this purpose the government lent its aid in the construction of roads and canals, and a little more than four millions of dollars were devoted to this work in his administration. On the 4th of July, 1828, he helped break ground for the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, thinking it an important event in his life. He then said there were three great steps in the progress of America. The first was the Declaration of Independence and the achievement thereof; the second, the union of the whole country under the Constitution; but the third was more arduous than both of the others: "It is," said he, "the adaptation of the powers, physical, moral, and intellectual, of the whole Union, to the improvement of its own condition;—of its *moral* and *political* condition, by wise and liberal institutions,—by the cultivation of the understanding and the heart,—by academies, schools, and learned institutes,—by the pursuit and patronage of learning and the arts; of its *physical* condition, by associated labor to improve the bounties and supply the deficiencies of nature; to stem the torrent in its course; to level the mountain with the plain; to disarm and fetter the raging surge of the ocean."\* He faithfully adhered to these words in his administration.

He was careful never to exceed the powers which the Constitution prescribed for him. He thought the acquisition of Louisiana was "accomplished by a flagrant violation of the Constitution,"† and himself guarded against such violations. He revered the God of Limits, who, in the Roman mythology, refused to give way or remove, even for Jupiter himself. No

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\* Address on breaking ground for the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal.

† Jubilee of the Constitution, p. 99.

man was ever more conscientious on that ground. To him the Constitution meant something; his oath to keep it meant something.

No great political events occurred in his administration; the questions which now vex the country had not arisen. There was no quarrel between Freedom and Slavery; no man in Congress ventured to denounce slavery as a crime; the African slave-trade was thought wrong, not the slavery which caused it. Party lines, obliterated under Mr. Monroe's administration, were *viewed* and marked with a good deal of care and exactness; but the *old* lines could not be wholly restored. Mr. Adams was not the President of a section of the country; not the President of a party, but of the nation. He favored no special interest of a class, to the injury of another class. He did not reward his friends, nor punish his foes; the Party of the Spoils — patent or latent at all times — got no spoils from him. He never debauched his country by the removal and appointment of officers. Had he done otherwise, done as all his successors have done — used his actual power to promote his own ambition — no doubt he might have been re-elected. But HE could not stoop to manage men in that way. No doubt he desired a reëlection, and saw the method and means to effect that, but Conscience said, "It is not right." He forbore, lost his election, and gained — we shall soon see what he gained.

On the 19th of July, 1826, at a public dinner at Edgefield Court House, South Carolina, Mr. Mc'Duffie said, "Mr. Adams came into power upon principles utterly subversive of the republican system; substituting the worst species of aristocracy — that of speculating politicians and office-hunters — in the

place of a sound and wholesome republican democracy." When Mr. Adams retired from office, he could remember, with the virtuous Athenian, that no man had put on mourning for him because unjustly deprived of his post. Was an office-holder or an office-wanter a political friend of Mr. Adams, that did not help him;—a foe, that did not hinder. He looked only to the man's ability and integrity. I wish it was no praise to say these things,—but it is praise I dare not apply to any other man since Washington. Mr. Adams once said, "There is no official act of the chief-magistrate, however momentous, or however minute, but it should be traceable to a dictate of duty pointing to the welfare of the people." That was his executive creed.

As a public servant he had many qualities seldom united in the same person. He was simple and unostentatious; he had none of the airs of a great man; seemed humble, modest, and retiring; caring much for the substance of manhood, he let the show take care of itself. He carried the simplicity of a plain New England man into the President's house, spending little in its decorations—about one fourth, it is said, of the amount of his successor. In his housekeeping, public or private, there was only one thing much to be boasted of and remarked upon: strange to say, that was the master of the house. He was never eclipsed by his own brass and mahogany. He had what are called democratic habits, and served himself in preference to being served by others. He treated all that were about him with a marked deference and courtesy, carrying his respect for human Rights into the minutest details of common life.

He was a model of diligence, though not, perhaps, very sys-

tematic. His State papers, prepared while he was Minister, Secretary, or Member of Congress, his numerous orations and speeches, though not always distinguished for that orderly arrangement of parts which is instinctive with minds of a high philosophical character — are yet astonishing for their number and the wide learning they display. He was well acquainted with the classic and most modern languages ; at home in their literature. He was surprisingly familiar with modern history ; perhaps no political man was so thoroughly acquainted with the political history of America, and that of Christian Europe for the last two hundred years. He was widely read and profoundly skilled in all that relates to diplomacy, and to international law. He was fond of Belles Lettres, and commented on Shakspeare more like a professor than a layman in that department. Few theologians in America, it is said, were so widely read in their peculiar lore as he. He had read much, remembered much, understood much. However, he seems to have paid little attention to physical science, and perhaps less to metaphysical. His speeches and his conversation, though neither brilliant, nor rich in ideas, astonished young men with an affluence of learning which seemed marvellous in one all his life devoted to practical affairs. But this is a trifle : to achieve that nothing is needed but health, diligence, memory, and a long life. Mr. Adams had all these requisites.

He had higher qualities : he loved his country, perhaps no man more so ; he had patriotism in an heroic degree, yet was not thereby blinded to Humanity. He thought it a vital principle of human society, that each nation should contribute to the happiness of all ; and, therefore, that no nation should “ regulate its conduct by the exclusive or even the par-

amount consideration of its own interest.”\* Yet he loved his country, his whole country, and when she was in the wrong he told her so, because he loved her. This, said he, would be a good sentiment: “Our Country! May she be always successful; but, whether successful or not—may she be always in the right.” He saw the faults of America—saw the corruption of the American government. He did not make gain by this in private—but set an honest face against it.

He was a conscientious man. This peculiarity is strongly marked in most of his life. He respected the limit between right and wrong. He did not think it unworthy of a statesman to refer to moral principles—the Absolutely Right. I do not mean to say, that in his whole life there was no departure from the strict rule of duty. I have mentioned already some examples, but kept one more for this place: he pursued persons with a certain vindictiveness of spirit. I will not revive again the old quarrels, nor dig up his hard words, long ago consigned to oblivion; it would be unjust to the living. He was what is called a good hater. If he loved an idea, he seemed to hate the man who opposed it. He was not content with replying; he must also retort, though it manifestly weakened the force of the reply. In his attacks on persons he was sometimes unjust, violent, sharp, and vindictive; sometimes cruel, and even barbarous. Did he ever forgive an enemy? Every opponent was a foe, and he thrashed his foes with an iron hoof and winnowed them with a storm. The most awful specimens of invective which the language affords can be found in his words—bitter, revengeful, and unrelenting. I

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\* Lecture on China.

am sorry to say these things ; it hurts my feelings to say them, yours not less to hear them. But it is not our fault they are true ;—it would be mine, if, knowing they were true, I did not on this occasion point them out in warning words. Mr. Adams says that Roger Williams was conscientious and contentious ; it is equally true of himself. Perhaps Mr. Adams had little humor, but certainly a giant's wit ; he used it tyrannously and like a giant. Wit has its place in debate ; in controversy, it is a legitimate weapon, offensive and defensive. After one has beaten the single barley-corn of good sense out of a whole wagon-load of chaff, the easiest way to be rid of the rubbish is to burn it up with the lightning of wit ; the danger is, that the burning should begin before the separation is made ; that the fire consume the good and bad indifferently. When argument is edged and pointed with wit, it is doubly effective ; but when that edge is jagged with ill-will, poisoned, too, with personal spleen, then it becomes a weapon unworthy of a man. Sometimes Mr. Adams used his wit as fairly as his wisdom ; and bags of wind, on which Hercules might have stamped and beaten a twelvemonth, but in vain — at a single puncture from that keen wit gave up their ghost and flattened into nothing ; a vanity to all men, but a vexation of spirit to him who had blown them so full of his own soul. But sometimes — yes, often, Mr. Adams's wit performs a different part : it sits as a judge — unjust and unforgiving — “often deciding wrong, and when right from wrong motives.” It was the small dagger with which he smote the fallen foe. It is a poor praise for a famous man — churchman, or statesman — to beat a black-guard with his own weapons. It must be confessed, that in

controversy Mr. Adams's arrows were sharp and deftly delivered ; but they were often barbed, and sometimes poison.

True, he encountered more political opposition than any man in the nation. For more than forty years he has never been without bitter and unrelenting enemies, public and private. No man in America, perhaps, ever had such provocations ; surely, none had ever such opportunities to reply without retorting. How much better would it have been, if, at the end of that long life and fifty years war, he could say he had never wasted a shot ; had never sinned with his lips, nor once feathered his public arrow with private spleen ! Wise as he was, and old, he never learned that for undeserved calumny, for personal insult and abuse, there is one answer, Christian, manly, and irrefutable—the dignity of silence. A just man can afford to wait till the storm of abuse shall spend its rage and vanish under the rainbow, which itself furnishes and leaves behind. The retorting speech of such a man may be silvern or iron,—his silence, victorious and golden.

It is easy to censure Mr. Adams for such intemperance of speech and persecution of persons ; unfortunately, too easy to furnish other examples of both. We know what he spoke—God only what he repressed. Who knows out of how deep a fulness of indignation such torrents gush ? Tried by the standard of other men—his fellow politicians of America and Europe, he was no worse than they—only abler. The mouse and the fox have as great a proportionate anger as the lion, though the one is ridiculous and the other terrific. Mr. Adams must be tried by his own standard—the rule of right, the standard of Conscience and of Christianity,—then surely he

did wrong. For such a man the vulgarity of the offence is no excuse.\*

With this and the other exceptions he appears a remarkably conscientious man in his public life. He may often have erred — as all men — without violating his own sense of right.

While he was President he would not consent to any “public manifestation of honors personal to himself.” He would not accept a present, for his Bible taught him what experience continually enforced, that a gift blinds the eyes of wise men and perverts their judgment. While at St. Petersburg, the Russian Minister of the Interior, then an old man, felt uneasy on account of the presents accepted during his official service, and, calculating the value of all gifts received, returned it to the imperial treasury. This fact made an impression on Mr. Adams, and led to a resolution which he faithfully kept. When a bookseller sent him a costly Bible, he kept the book, but paid its full value. No bribes, no pensions in any form, ever soiled justice in his hands. He would never be indebted to any body of men, lest they might afterwards sway him from the right path.

Because he was a conscientious man he would never be the servant of a party, and never was. It was of great advantage to him that he was absent while the two great parties were forming in the United States. He came into the Massachusetts Legislature as a federalist, but some anti-federalists also voted for him. His first vote showed he was not limited by the common principles of a party. He was chosen to the Senate of the United States, not by a party vote. At first he

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\* See his defence of this in his Address to his constituents at Braintree, Sept. 17th, 1842. (Boston, 1842.) P. 56 et seq.

acted mainly with the federalists, though not always voting with his colleague, but in 1807 acted with the administration in the matter of the Embargo. This was the eventful crisis of his life; this change in his politics, while it gave him station and political power, yet brought upon him the indignation of his former friends; it has never been forgotten nor forgiven. Be the outward occasion and inward motive what they may, this led to the sundering of friendships long cherished and deservedly dear; it produced the most bitter experience of his life. Political men would naturally undertake to judge his counsel by its probable and obvious consequences — the favor of the executive — rather than attribute it to any latent motive of patriotism in his heart.

While at the head of the nation he would not be the President of a Party, but of the People; when he became a Representative in Congress he was not the delegate of a party, but of Justice and the eternal Right, giving his constituents an assurance that he would hold himself in allegiance to no party, national or political. He has often been accused of hatred to the South: I can find no trace of it. "I entered Congress," says he, "without one sentiment of discrimination between the North and South." At first he acted with Mr. Jackson, to arrest the progress of nullification, for the democracy of South Carolina was putting in practice what the federalists of New England have so often been alleged to have held in theory, and condemned on that allegation. Here he was consistent. In 1834, he approved the spirit of the same president in demanding justice of France; but afterwards he did not hesitate to oppose, and perhaps abuse him.

He had a high reverence for religion; none of our public

men more. He aimed to be a Christian man. Signs of this have often been sought in his habits of church-going, of reading the Bible,—they may be found rather in the general rectitude of his life, public and private, and in the high motives which swayed him, in his opposition to slavery, in the self-denial which cost him his reelection. In his public acts he seems animated by the thought that he stood in the presence of God. Though rather unphilosophical in his theology, resting to a great degree on the authority of tradition and the letter, and attaching much value to forms and times, he yet saw the peculiar excellence of Christianity,—that it recognized “Love as the paramount and transcendent Law of human nature.” I do not say that his life indicates the attainment of a complete religious repose, but that he earnestly and continually labored to achieve that. You shall find few statesmen, few men, who act with a more continual and obvious reference to religion as a motive, as a guide, as a comfort. He was, however, no sectarian. His devotion to freedom appeared—where it seldom appears—in his notions about religion. He thought for himself, and had a theology of his own, rather old-fashioned, it is true, and not very philosophical or consistent, it may be—and in that he was not very singular—but he allowed others to think also for themselves, and have a theology of their own. Mr. Adams was a Unitarian. It is no great merit to be a Unitarian, or a Calvinist, or a Catholic, perhaps no more merit to be one than the other. But he was not ashamed of his belief when Unitarianism was little, despised, mocked at, and called “infidelity” on all sides. When the Unitarian church at Washington, a small and feeble body, met for worship in an upper room—not large, but ob-

seure, over a public bathing-house — John Quincy Adams, then Secretary of State and expecting to be President, came regularly to worship with them. It was not fashionable ; it was hardly respectable, for the Unitarians were not then, as now, numerous and rich : but he went and worshipped. It was no merit to think with any sect, it was a great merit to dare be true to his convictions. In his theology, as in politics, he feared not to stand in a minority. If there ever was an American who loved the praise of God more than the praise of men, I believe Mr. Adams was one.

His devotion to freedom, his love of his country, his conscientiousness, his religion, are four things strong and noticeable in his character. You shall look long amongst our famous men before you find his equal in these things.\*

Somebody says, no man ever used all his intellectual faculties as far as possible. If any man is an exception to this rule, it is Mr. Adams. He was temperate and diligent ; industrious almost to a fault, though not orderly or systematic. His diplomatic letters, his orations, his reports and speeches, all indicate wide learning, the fruit of the most remarkable diligence. The attainments of a well-bred scholar are not often found in the American Congress, or the President's house. Yet he never gives proof that he had the mind of a

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\* In a public address, Mr. Adams once quoted the well-known words of Tacitus, *Annal VI., 39, — Par negotiis neque supra,* — applying them to a distinguished man lately deceased. A lady wrote to inquire whence they came. Mr. Adams informed her, and added, they could not be adequately translated in less than seven words in English. The lady replied that they might be well translated in five — *Equal to not above duty,* but better in three — JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

great man. In his special department of politics he does not appear as a master. He has no great ideas with which to solve the riddles of commerce and finance; has done little to settle the commercial problems of the world, — for that work there is needed not only a retrospective acquaintance with the habits and history of men, but the foresight which comes from a knowledge of the nature of things and of man. His chief intellectual excellence seems to have been Memory; his great moral merit, a conscientious and firm Honesty; his practical strength lay in his Diligence. His counsels seem almost always to have come from a knowledge of human history, seldom to have been prompted by a knowledge of the nature of man. Hence he was a critic of the past, or an administrator of the present, rather than a prophetic guide for the future. He had many facts and precedents, but few ideas. Few examples of great political foresight can be quoted from his life; and therein — to his honor be it spoken — his heart seems to have outtravelled his head. The public affairs of the United States seem generally to be conducted by many men of moderate abilities, rather than by a few men of great genius for politics.

Mr. Adams wrote much. Some of his works are remarkable for their beauty, for the graceful proportions of their style, and the felicity of their decoration. Such are his celebrated lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory, which are sufficiently learned and sagacious, not very philosophical, but written in an agreeable style, and at the present day not wholly without value. His review of the works of Fisher Ames — I speak only of the rhetoric — is, perhaps, the finest of his compositions. Some of his productions are disorderly, ill-compacted,

without "joints or contexture," and homely to a fault: this oration is a growth out of a central thought, marked by an internal harmony; that, a composition, a piece of carpentry distinguished by only an outward symmetry of members; others are neither growth nor composition, only a mass of materials huddled and lumped together. Most of his later productions, with the exception of his congressional speeches, are hard, cold, and unfinished performances, with little order in the thoughts, and less beauty in the expression. His extemporaneous speeches have more of both; they are better finished than his studied orations. He could judge and speak with fury, though he wrote with phlegm. His illustrations are usually drawn from literature, not from nature or human life; his language is commonly cold, derived from the Roman stream which has been filtered through books, rather than from the deep and original well of our Saxon home. His published letters are compact, written in a cold style, without playfulness or wit, with no elegance, and though mostly business letters, they are not remarkable for strength or distinctness. His diligence appears in verse as well as prose. He wrote much that rhymed tolerably; little that was poetical. The same absence of nature, the same coldness and lack of inspiration, mark his poetry and prose. But in all that he wrote, with the exceptions mentioned above, though you miss the genial warmth, the lofty thought, the mind that attracts, embraces, warms, and inspires the reader, you find always a spirit of Humanity, of Justice, and Love to God.

Mr. Adams was seldom eloquent. Eloquence is no great gift. It has its place among subordinate powers, not among the chief. Alas for the statesman or the preacher who has

only that to save the State withal! Washington had none of it, yet how he ruled the land! No man in America has ever had a political influence so wide and permanent as Mr. Jefferson; yet he was a very indifferent writer, and never made a speech of any value. The Acts of Washington, the Ideas of Jefferson, made eloquence superfluous. True, it has its value: if a man have at command the electricity of Truth, Justice, Love, the sentiments and great ideas thereof, it is a good thing to be able with Olympian hand to condense that electric fire into bolted eloquence; to thunder and lighten in the sky. But if a man have that electric Truth it matters little whether it is Moses that speaks, or only Aaron; whether or not Paul's bodily presence be weak and his speech contemptible, — it is Moses' thought which thunders and lightens out of Sinai; it is Paul's idea that is powerful and builds up the church. Of true eloquence, the best thoughts put in the best words, and uttered in the best form, Mr. Adams had little, and that appeared mainly in the latter part of his life. Hundreds have more. What passes for eloquence is common in America, where the public mouth is always a-going. His early orations are poor in their substance and faulty in their form; his ability as an orator developed late; no proofs of it appear before he entered the House of Representatives, at a good old age. In his manner of speaking there was little dignity and no grace, though sometimes there was a terrible energy and fire. He was often a powerful speaker — by his facts and figures, by his knowledge, his fame, his age, and his position, but most of all by his independent character. He spoke worthily of great men, of Madison or Lafayette, kindling with his theme, and laying aside all littleness of a party. However, he was most

earnest and most eloquent not when he stood up the champion of a neglected truth, not when he dwelt on great men now venerable to us all, but when he gathered his strength to attack a foe. Incensed, his sarcasm was terrific; colossal vanity aspiring to be a Ghenghis Khan, at the touch of that Ithuriel spear shrank to the dimensions of Tom Thumb. His invective is his masterpiece of oratoric skill. It is sad to say this, and to remember, that the greatest works of ancient or of modern rhetoric, from the thundering Philippics of Demosthenes down to the sarcastic and crazy rattle of Lord Brougham, are all of the same character, are efforts against a personal foe! Men find hitherto the ablest acts and speech in the same cause, — not positive and creating, but critical and combative — in war.

If Mr. Adams had died in 1829, he would have been remembered for a while as a learned man; as an able diplomatist, who had served his country faithfully at home and abroad; as a President spotless and incorruptible, but not as a very important personage in American history. His mark would have been faint and soon effaced from the sands of time. But the last period of his life was the noblest. He had worn all the official honors which the nation could bestow; he sought the greater honor of serving that nation, who had now no added boon to give. All that he had done as Minister abroad, as Senator, Secretary, and President, is little compared with what he did in the House of Representatives; and while he stood there, with nothing to hope, with nothing to fear, the hand of Justice wrote his name high up on the walls of his country. It was surprising to see at his first attendance there, men who, while he was President, had been the loudest to call out “Coalition, Bargain, Intrigue, Corruption,” come

forward and express the involuntary confidence they felt in his wisdom and integrity, and their fear, actual though baseless, that his withdrawal from the Committee on Manufactures would "endanger the very Union itself."\* Great questions soon came up — Nullification was speedily disposed of; the Bank and the Tariff got ended or compromised, but Slavery lay in the consciousness of the nation, like the one dear but appalling sin in a man's heart. Some wished to be rid of it — Northern men and Southern men. It would come up; to justify that, or excuse it, the American sentiment and idea must be denied and rejected utterly; the South, who had long known the charms of Bathsheba, was ready for her sake to make way with Uriah himself. To remove that monstrous evil, gradually but totally, and restore unity to the nation, would require a greater change than the adoption of the Constitution. To keep slavery out of sight, yet in existence, unjustified, unexcused, unrepented of, a contradiction in the national consciousness, a political and deadly sin — the sin against the Holy Spirit of American Liberty, known but not confessed, the public secret of the people — that would lead to suppressing petitions, suppressing debate in Congress and out of Congress, to silencing the pulpit, the press, and the people.

Under these circumstances, Mr. Adams went to Congress, an old man, well known on both sides the water, the presidential laurels on his brow, independent and fearless, expecting no reward from men for services however great. In respect to the subject of slavery, he had no ideas in advance of the nation; he was far behind the foremost men. He

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\* Remarks of Mr. Cambreleng.

“ deprecated all discussion of slavery or its abolition, in the House, and gave no countenance to petitions for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, or the territories.” However, he acquired new ideas as he went on, and became the congressional leader in the great movement of the American mind towards universal freedom.

Here he stood as the champion of human rights ; here he fought, and with all his might. In 1836, by the celebrated resolution forbidding debate on the subject of slavery, the South drove the North to the wall, nailed it there into shameful silence. A “ Northern man with Southern principles,” before entering the President’s chair, declared, that if Congress should pass a law to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, he would exercise his veto to prevent the law. Mr. Adams stood up manfully, sometimes almost alone, and contended for freedom of speech. Did obstinate men of the North send petitions relative to slavery, asking for its abolition in the District or elsewhere — Mr. Adams was ready to present the petitions. Did women petition — it made no difference with him. Did slaves petition — he stood up there to defend their right to be heard. The South had overcome many an obstacle, but that one fearless soul would not bend and could not be broken. Spite of rules of order he contrived to bring the matter perpetually before Congress, and sometimes to read the most offensive parts of the petitions. When Arkansas was made a state, he endeavoured to abolish slavery in its domain ; he sought to establish international relations with Hayti, and to secure the right of suffrage for the colored citizens of the District of Columbia. The laws which forbid

blacks to vote in the Northern states he held "in utter abhorrence."

He saw from afar the plots of Southern politicians, plots for extending the area of slavery, for narrowing the area of freedom, and exposed those plots. You all remember the tumult it excited when he rose in his place holding a petition from slaves — that the American Congress was thrown into long and disgraceful confusion; you cannot have forgotten the uproar which followed his presenting a petition to dissolve the Union!\* I know few speeches more noble and manly than his on the right of petition, — occasioned by that celebrated attempt to stifle debate, — and on the annexation of Texas. Some proposed to censure him, some clamored, "expel him," some cried out, "burn the petitions," and "him with them," screamed yet others. Some threatened to have him indicted by the Grand Jury of the District, "or be made amenable to *another tribunal*," hoping to see "an incendiary brought to condign punishment." "My life on it," said a Southern legislator, "if he presents that petition from slaves, we shall yet see him within the walls of the penitentiary." Some in secret threatened to assassinate him in the streets. They mistook their man; with Justice on his side he did "not fear all the grand juries in the universe." He would not curl nor cringe, but snorted his defiance in their very face. In front of ridicule, of desertion, obloquy, rage, and brutal threats, stood up

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\* See the Debates of the House, January 23d and following, 1837; or Mr. Adams's own account of the matter in his letters to his constituents, &c. (Boston, 1837.) See, too, his series of speeches on the Right of Petition and the Annexation of Texas, Jan. 14th and following, 1838. (Printed in a pamphlet. Washington, 1838.)

that old man, bold and audacious, and the chafed rock of Cohasset stands not firmer mid the yesty waves, nor more triumphant spurns back into the ocean's face the broken billows of the storm. That New England knee bent only before his God. That unpretending man — the whole power of the nation could not move him from his post.

Men threatened to increase the slave power. Said one of the champions of slavery with prophetic speech — but fatal as Cassandra's in the classic tale, Americans “ would come up in thousands to plant the lone star of the Texan banner on the Mexican capitol. . . . The boundless wealth of captured towns and rifled churches, and a lazy, vicious, and luxurious priesthood, would soon enable Texas to pay her soldiery and redeem her state debt; and push her victorious arms to the very shores of the Pacific. And would not all this extend the bounds of slavery? Yes, the result would be, that before another quarter of a century the extension of slavery would not stop short of the western ocean.” Against this danger Mr. Adams armed himself, and fought in the holiest cause — the cause of human rights.

I know few things in modern times so grand as that old man standing there in the House of Representatives, the compeer of Washington, a man who had borne himself proudly in kings' courts, early doing service in high places, where honor may be won; a man who had filled the highest office in any nation's gift; a President's son, himself a President, standing there the champion of the neediest of the oppressed: the conquering cause pleased others; him only, the cause of the conquered. Had he once been servile to the hands that wielded power? no thunderbolt can scare him now! Did he once make a trea-

ty and bind Mexico to bewray the wandering fugitive who took his life in his hand and fled from the talons of the American Eagle?—Now he would go to the stake sooner than tolerate such a deed! When he went to the Supreme Court, after an absence of thirty years, and arose to defend a body of friendless negroes torn from their home and most unjustly held in thrall; when he asked the judges to excuse him at once both for the trembling faults of age and the inexperience of youth, the man having labored so long elsewhere that he had forgotten the rules of Court; when he summed up the conclusion of the whole matter, and brought before those judicial but yet moistening eyes the great men whom he had once met there—Chase, Cushing, Martin, Livingston, and Marshal himself; and while he remembered them that were “gone, gone, all gone,” remembered also the eternal justice that is never gone,—why the sight was sublime. It was not an old patrician of Rome who had been Consul, Dictator, coming out of his honored retirement at the Senate’s call, to stand in the Forum to levy new armies, marshal them to victory afresh, and gain thereby new laurels for his brow;—but it was a plain citizen of America, who had held an office far greater than that of Consul, King, or Dictator, his hand reddened by no man’s blood, expecting no honors, but coming in the name of justice to plead for the slave, for the poor barbarian negro of Africa, for Cinque and Grabbo, for their deeds comparing them to Harmodius and Aristogeiton, whose classic memory made each bosom thrill. That was worth all his honors,—it was worth while to live fourscore years for that.

When he stood in the House of Representatives, the champion of the rights of a minority, of the rights of man, he

stood colossal. Frederick the Great seems doubly so, when, single-handed, "that son of the Dukes of Brandenburg" contended against Austria, France, England, Russia, kept them all at bay, divided by his skill, and conquered by his might. Surely he seems great when measured merely by his deeds. But in comparison, Frederick the Great seems Frederick the little: for Adams fought not for a kingdom nor for fame, but for justice and the eternal right; fought, too, with weapons tempered in a heavenly stream!\*

He had his reward. Who ever missed it? From mythological Cain who slew his brother, down to Judas Iscariot and Aaron Burr; from Jesus of Nazareth down to the least man that dies or lives — who ever lost his reward? None. No; not one. Within the wicked heart there dwells the avenger, with unseen hands to adjust the cord, to poison the fatal bowl. In the impenetrable citadel of a good man's consciousness, unseen by mortal eyes, there stands the Palladium of Justice, radiant with celestial light; mortal hands may make and mar, — this they can mar not, no more than they can make. Things about the man can others build up or destroy; but no foe, no tyrant, no assassin, can ever steal the man out of the man. Who would not have the consciousness of being right, even of trying to be right, though affronted by a whole world, rather than conscious of being wrong and hollow and false, have all the honors of a nation on his head? Of late years no party stood up for Mr. Adams, "the madman of Massachusetts," as they called him

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\* "Acer et indomitus, quo spes, quoque ira vocasset,  
Ferre manum, et nunquam temerando parcere ferro;  
Successus urgere suos; instare favori  
Numinis; impellens quicquid sibi summa petenti  
Obstaret, gaudensque viam fecisse ruina."

on the floor of Congress ; but he knew that he had, and in his old age, done one work, — he had contended for the unalienable rights of man, done it faithfully. The government of God is invisible, His justice the more certain, — and by that Mr. Adams had his abundant reward.

But he had his poorer and outward rewards, negative and positive. For his zeal in behalf of freedom he was called “ a monarchist in disguise,” “ an alien to the true interests of his country,” “ a traitor.” A slave-holder from Kentucky published to *his* constituents that he “ was sincerely desirous to check that man, for if he could be removed from the councils of the nation, or silenced upon the exasperating subject to which he seems to have devoted himself, none other, I believe, could be found hardy enough or bad enough to fill his place.” It was worth something to have an enemy speak such praise as that: but the slave-holder was wrong in his conjecture ; the North has yet other sons not less hardy, not more likely to be silenced. Still more praise of a similar sort: — at a fourth of July dinner at Walterborough, in South Carolina, this sentiment was proposed and responded to with nine cheers, — “ May we never want a democrat to trip up the heels of a federalist, or a hangman to prepare a halter for John Quincy Adams.” Considering what he had done and whence those rewards proceeded, that was honor enough for a yet greater man.

Let me turn to things more grateful. Mr. Adams, through lack of genial qualities, had few personal friends, yet from good men throughout the North there went up a hearty thanksgiving for his manly independence, and prayers for his success. Brave men forgot their old prejudices, forgot the

“embargo,” forgot the “Hartford convention,” forgot all the hard things which he had ever said, forgot his words in the Senate, forgot their disappointments, and said — For this our hearts shall honor thee, thou brave old man! In 1843, when, for the first time, he visited the West, to assist at the foundation of a scientific institution, all the West rose up to do him reverence. He did not go out to seek honors, they came to seek him. It was the movement of a noble people, feeling a noble presence about them no less than within. When Cicero, the only great man whom Rome never feared, returned from his exile, all Italy rose up and went out to meet him; so did the North and the West welcome this champion of freedom, this venerable old man. They came not to honor one who had been a president, but one who was a Man. That alone, said Mr. Adams, with tears of joy and grief filling his eyes, was reward enough for all that he had done, suffered, or undertaken. Yes, it was too much; too much for one man as the reward of one life!

You all remember the last time he was at any public meeting in this city. A man had been kidnapped in Boston, kidnapped at noon-day, “on the high road between Faneuil Hall and old Quincy,” and carried off to be a slave! New England hands had seized their brother, sold him into bondage for ever, and his children after him. In the presence of Slavery, as of arms, the laws are silent, — not always men. Then it appears who *are* men, who not! A meeting was called to talk the matter over, in a plain way, and look in one another’s faces. Who was fit to preside in such a case? That old man sat in the chair in Faneuil Hall; above him was the image of his father, and his own; around him were Han-

cock and the other Adams — Washington, greatest of all ; before him were the men and women of Boston, met to consider the wrongs done to a miserable negro slave ; the roof of the old Cradle of Liberty spanned over them all. Forty years before, a young man and a senator, he had taken the chair at a meeting called to consult on the wrong done to American seamen, violently impressed by the British from an American ship of war — the unlucky Chesapeake ; some of you remember that event. Now, an old man, clothed with half a century of honors, he sits in the same hall, to preside over a meeting to consider the outrage done to a single slave ; a greater outrage — alas, not done by a hostile, not by an alien hand ! One was the first meeting of citizens he ever presided over, the other was the last ; both for the same object — the defence of the eternal right.

But I would not weary you. His death was noble ; fit ending for such a life. He was an old man, the last that had held a diplomatic office under Washington. He had uttered his oracles ; had done his work. The highest honors of the nation he had worthily worn ; but, as his townsmen tell us, — caring little for the president, and much for the man, — that was very little in comparison with his character. The good and ill of the human cup he had tasted, and plentifully, too, as son, husband, father. He had borne his testimony for freedom and the rights of mankind ; he had stood in Congress almost alone ; with a few gallant men had gone down to the battlefield, and if victory escaped him, it was because night came on.

He saw others enter the field in good heart, to stand in the imminent deadly breach ; he lived long enough for his own

welfare, for his own ambition ; long enough to see the seal broken, — and then, this aged Simeon, joyful in the consolation, bowed his head and went home in peace. *His* feet were not hurt with fetters ; he died with his armor on ; died like a Senator in the capitol of the nation ; died like an American, in the service of his country ; died like a Christian, full of immortality ; died like a man, fearless and free !

You will ask what was the secret of his strength ; whence did he gain such power to stand erect where others so often cringed and crouched low to the ground ? 'T is plain to see : he looked beyond Time, beyond men ; looked to the eternal God, and fearing him forgot all other fear. Some of his failings he knew to be such, and struggled with them though he did not overcome. A man, perhaps not over modest, once asked him what he most of all lamented in his life, and he replied, My impetuous temper and vituperative speech ; that I have not always returned good for evil, but in the madness of my blood have said things that I am ashamed of before my God ! As the world goes, it needed some greatness to say that.

When he was a boy, his mother, a still woman, and capable, deep-hearted, and pious, took great pains with his culture ; most of all with his religious culture. When, at the age of ten, he was about to leave home for years of absence in another land, she took him aside to warn him of temptations which he could not then understand. She bade him remember Religion and his God — his secret, silent prayer. Often in his day there came the earthquake of party strife ; the fire, the storm, and the whirlwind of passion ; he listened — and God was not there ; but there came, too, the remembrance of his mother's

whispered words ; God came in that memory, and earthquake and storm, the fire and the whirlwind were powerless, at last, before that still small voice. Beautifully did she write to her boy of ten, "Great learning and superior abilities will be of little value . . . unless virtue, honor, truth, and integrity, are added to them. Remember that you are accountable to your Maker for all your words and your actions." "Dear as you are to me," says this more than Spartan, this Christian mother, "Dear as you are to me, I would much rather you should have found your grave in the ocean you have crossed, or that any untimely death cross you in your infant years, than see you an immoral, profligate, or graceless child. Let your observations and comparisons produce in your mind an abhorrence of domination and power—the parents of slavery, ignorance, and barbarism. May you be led to an imitation of that disinterested patriotism and that noble love of your country, which will teach you to despise wealth, titles, pomp, and equipage, as mere external advantages, which cannot add to the internal excellence of your mind, or compensate for the want of integrity and virtue." She tells him in a letter, that her father, a plain New England clergyman, of Braintree, who had just died, "left you a legacy more valuable than gold or silver ; he left you his blessing, and his prayers that you might become a useful citizen, a guardian of the Laws, Liberty, and Religion of your country. . . . Lay this bequest up in your memory and practise upon it ; believe me, you will find it a treasure that neither moth nor rust can destroy."

If a child have such a mother, there is no wonder why he stood fearless, and bore a charmed life which no opposition could tame down. I wonder more that one so born and by

such a mother bred, could even once bend a servile knee; could ever indulge that fierce and dreadful hate; could ever stoop to sully those hands which hers had joined in prayer. It ill accords with teachings like her own. I wonder that he could ever have refused to "deliberate." Religion is a quality that makes a man independent; disappointment will not render such an one sour, nor oppression drive him mad, nor elevation bewilder; power will not dazzle, nor gold corrupt; no threat can silence and no fear subdue.

There are men enough born with greater abilities than Mr. Adams, men enough in New England, in all the walks of man. But how many are there in political life who use their gifts so diligently, with such conscience, such fearless deference to God? — nay, tell us ONE. I have not spared his faults; I am no eulogist, to paint a man with indiscriminating praise. Let his follies warn us, while his virtues guide. But look on all his faults, and then compare him with our "famous men" of the North or the South; with the great whigs or the great democrats. Ask which was the purest man, the most patriotic, the most honest; which did his nation the smallest harm and the greatest good; which for his country and his kind denied himself the most? Shall I examine their lives, public and private, strip them bare and lay them down beside his life, and ask which, after all, has the least of blemish and the most of beauty? Nay, that is not for me to do or to attempt.

In one thing he surpassed most men, — he grew more liberal the more he grew old, ripening and mellowing, too, with age. After he was seventy years old, he welcomed new ideas, kept his mind vigorous, and never fell into that crabbed admi-

ration of past times and buried institutions which is the palsy of so many a man, and which makes old age nothing but a pity, and gray hairs provocative of tears. This is the more remarkable in a man of his habitual reverence for the past, in one who judged oftener by the history than by the nature of man.

Times will come when men shall look to that vacant seat. But the thunder is silent, the lightning gone ; other men must take his place and fill it as they can. Let us not mourn that he has gone from us ; let us remember what was evil in him, but only to be warned of ambition, of party strife, to love more that large charity which forgives an enemy, and, through good and ill, contends for mankind. Let us be thankful for the good he has said and done, be guided by it and blessed. There is a certain affluence of intellectual power granted to some men, that provokes admiration for a time, let the man of myriad gifts use his talent as he may. Such merely cubic greatness of mind is matter of astonishment rather than a fit subject for esteem and praise. Of that, Mr. Adams had little, as so many of his contemporaries had more. In him what most commands respect is, his Independence, his love of Justice, of his country and his kind. No son of New England has been ever so distinguished in political life. But it is no great thing to be President of the United States ; some men it only makes ridiculous. A worm on a steeple's top is nothing but a worm, no more able to fly than while creeping in congenial mud ; a mountain needs no steeple to lift its head and show the world what is great and high. The world obeys its great men, stand where they may.

After all, this must be the greatest praise of Mr. Adams :

— in private he corrupted no man nor woman ; as a politician he never debauched the public morals of his country, nor used public power for any private end ; in public and private he lived clean and above board ; he taught a fearless love of Truth and the Right, both by word and deed. I wish I could add, that was a small praise. But as the times go, as our famous men are, it is a very great fame, and there are few competitors for such renown ; I must leave him alone in that glory. Doubtless, as he looked back on his long career, his whole life, motives as well as actions, must have seemed covered with imperfections. I will seek no further to disclose his merits, or “ draw his frailties from their dread abode.”

He has passed on, where superior gifts and opportunities avail not, nor his long life, nor his high station, nor his widespread fame ; where enemies cease from troubling, and the flattering tongue also is still. Wealth, honor, fame, forsake him at the grave’s mouth. It is only the living soul, sullied or clean, which the last angel bears off in his arms to that world where many that seem first shall be last, and the last first ; but where Justice shall be lovingly done to the great man full of power and wisdom who rules the State, and the feeblest slave whom oppression chains down in ignorance and vice — done by the all-seeing Father of both president and slave, who loves both with equal love. The venerable man is gone home. He shall have his praise. But who shall speak it worthily ? Mean men and little, who shrank from him in life, who never shared what was manliest in the man, but mocked at his living nobleness, shall they come forward and with mealy mouths, to sing his requiem, forgetting that his eulogy is their own ban ! Some will rejoice at his death ;

there is one man the less to fear, and they who trembled at his life may well be glad when the earth has covered up the son she bore. Strange men will meet with mutual solace at his tomb, wondering that their common foe is dead, and they are met! The Herods and Pilates of contending parties may be made friends above his grave, and clasping hands may fancy that their union is safer than before; but there will come a day after to-day! Let us leave him to his rest.

The slave has lost a champion who gained new ardor and new strength the longer he fought; America has lost a man who loved her with his heart; Religion has lost a supporter; Freedom an unfailing friend, and Mankind a noble vindicator of our unalienable rights.

It is not long since he was here in our own streets; three winter months have scantily flown: he set out for his toil—but went home to his rest. His labors are over. No man now threatens to assassinate; none to expel; none even to censure. The theatrical thunder of Congress, noisy but harmless, has ended as it ought, in honest tears. South Carolina need ask no more a halter for that one Northern neck she could not bend nor break. The tears of his country are dropped upon his urn; the Muse of History shall write thereon, in letters not to be effaced, **THE ONE GREAT MAN SINCE WASHINGTON, WHOM AMERICA HAD NO CAUSE TO FEAR.**

To-day that venerable form lies in the Capitol,—the disenchanted dust. All is silent. But his undying soul, could we deem it still hovering o'er its native soil, bound to take leave yet lingering still, and loath to part, that would bid us love our country, love man, love Justice, Freedom, Right, and above all, love God. To-morrow that venerable dust starts

once more to join the dear presence of father and mother, to mingle his ashes with their ashes, as their lives once mingled, and their souls again. Let his native state communicate her last sad sacrament, and give him now — 'tis all she can — a little earth for charity.

But what shall we say as the dust returns ?

“ Where Slavery’s minions cower  
Before the servile power,  
He bore their ban ;  
And like the aged oak,  
That braved the lightning’s stroke,  
When thunders round it broke,  
Stood up a man.

“ Nay, when they stormed aloud,  
And round him like a cloud,  
Came thick and black, —  
He single-handed strove,  
And like Olympian Jove,  
With his own thunder drove  
The phalanx back.

“ Not from the bloody field,  
Borne on his battered shield,  
By foes o’ercome ; —  
But from a sterner fight,  
In the defence of Right,  
Clothed with a conqueror’s might,  
We hail him home.

“ His life in labors spent,  
That ‘ old man eloquent ’  
Now rests for aye ; —  
His dust the tomb may claim ; —  
His spirit’s quenchless flame,  
His ‘ venerable name,’ \*  
Pass not away.” †

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\* Clarum et venerabile nomen.

† The above lines are from the pen of the Rev. John Pierpont.



