

D 16

.B98

A DISCOURSE

ON THE

MORAL TENDENCIES AND RESULTS

OF

HUMAN HISTORY,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE SOCIETY OF ALUMNI,

In Yale College,

On Wednesday, August 16th, 1843,

BY

HORACE BUSHNELL, D. D.

PUBLISHED BY

M. Y. BEACH, —NEW YORK;

T. H. PEASE, —NEW HAVEN;

J. W. JUDD, —HARTFORD.

1843.

1016
K-78

DISCOURSE.

GENTLEMEN OF THE ALUMNI—

It is rather a mechanical than a classic art, that seeks, by smooth preliminaries, to propitiate a favorable audience. Besides, if I have nothing to say worthy of your attention, I shall not hide the deficiency by any gloss of compliments or apologies; and, if I have, I can pay you no better compliment, than to presume that you are ready to hear me without enticement.

It is then a law, I will say, of humanity, in all its forms of life and progress, that the physical shall precede the moral. The order of nature is—what is physical first, what is moral afterwards.

The child begins his career as a creature of muscles and integuments, a physical being endued with sensation. Whole years are expended in making acquaintance with the body he lives in. By acting in and through this organ, he discovers himself, begins to be a thinking and reflective creature, and finally rises to a character of intelligence and moral gravity.

The world itself is first a lump of dull earth, a mere physical thing seen by the five senses. The animals that graze on it, see it as we do. But thought, a little farther on, begins to work upon it and bring out its laws. The heights are ascended, the depths explored, and every star and atom is found to be so cognate to thought that mind can think out and assign its laws. The whole field of being thus brought into science, takes an attribute of intelligence and reflects a Universal Mind. Every object of knowledge and experience, too, discovers moral ends and uses, and assumes a visible relation to our

spiritual destiny. Now the old physical orb, on which our five senses grazed, is gone—we cannot find it. All objects are become mental objects, and matter itself is moral.

If we speak of language, this, as every scholar knows, is physical every term. Words are only the names of external things and objects, as seen by the eye of a child, or of the unreflecting man. Next, the words, which are mere physical terms, pass into use as figures of thought—they become endued with intelligence and a moral power. Sublimed by the penetration of a moral nature, they are wrought up, at length, into the highest forms of literature. The physical world takes a second and higher existence in the empire of thought. Its objects beam out, transfigured with glory, and the body of matter becomes the body of letters. The story of Orpheus is now no more a fiction; for not only do the woods and rocks dance after this one singer, but all physical objects, in heaven and earth, having now found an intellectual as well as a material power, follow after the creative agency of thinking souls, and pour themselves along, in troops of glory, on the pages of literature.

Religion, too, is physical in its first tendencies, a thing of outward doing:—a lamb, burned on an altar of turf, and rolling up its smoke into the heavens—a gorgeous priesthood—a temple, covered with a kingdom's gold, and shining afar in barbaric splendor. Well is it if the sun and the stars of heaven do not look down upon realms of prostrate worshippers. Nay, it is well if the hands do not fashion their own gods, and bake them into consistency in fires of their own kindling. But, in the later ages, God is a Spirit: religion takes a character of intellectual simplicity and enthrones itself in the summits of the reason. It is wholly spiritual, a power in the soul, reaching out into worlds beyond sense, and fixing its home and rest where only hope can soar.

Civil government, also, in its first stages, classes rather with the dynamic than with the moral forces. It is the law of the strongest, a mere physical absolutism, without any consideration of right, whether as due to enemies or subjects. At length, after it has worn itself deep into the neck of nations,

by long ages of arbitrary rule, the masses begin to heave with surges of uneasiness. They discover the worth of their being in what it suffers, and their right to be happy. They reason about rights, they rebel, and revolutionize, they set limits to power, and define its objects, till, at length, government loses its physical character and seeks to rest itself on moral foundations, — on the good it does, the love it wins, the patriotic fire it kindles ; in a word, on the moral sentiment of the governed.

You see, in this brief glance, how the motion of society is ever from the physical towards the moral. Here I come forward and undertake to show, in coincidence with this fact, that it is the great problem of human history to ENTHRONE THE MORAL ELEMENT — that is, the element of virtue. There are before us, too, as involved in this truth, certain confines, that separate the Physical from what may perhaps be called the Moral Age of the world. These confines we must some time pass ; and in making the transition, we enter a new and better circle of history — the same if we please to indulge the fancy, which gleaned so brightly, as a future golden age, on the vision of the ancient sages and seers of classic days — the same, with no indulgence of fancy, which wiser sages and prophets more inspired, have boldly promised in the name of God.

Of course it does not become me, on a subject of this nature, to speak as a prophet myself. But if I can help you to anticipate any so splendid result to the painful and wearisome history of our race ; if I can bring to the toils of virtue in our bosoms, any new confidence or hope of triumph ; if I can open to learning and genius new fields of empire, and higher tiers of glory to be ascended ; — I shall not speak in vain, or want a justification before you.

This venerable institution exists for a moral purpose. Letters are here subordinate to virtue. With the deepest veneration for the classics, and for intellectual ornament of every kind, its founders could yet value this kind of discipline, chiefly as the means to a yet higher end, and one in which, as we shall see, they embraced whatsoever is good or magnifi-

cent in the future history of their race. Their original design has never once been forgotten. The institution still values itself and is valued by its numerous body of friends, in every part of our great country, as the support of virtue and the ornament of religion. We ourselves cleave to it as to a virtuous mother, whose name and remembrance is made dearer to us, by the moral experience of life and the wisdom of years. Possibly, if mere learning or literary splendor were its object, it might have gained an easier celebrity, and, with less of elegant learning, might have had the repute of more. But virtue and truth have a long run, and it will be found, as the years and ages wear away, and society ascends to its destiny of splendor, that this institution, modestly ordained to be the servant of virtue, ascends with it, and gains to itself the highest honors of learning, by its union to the highest well being and glory of the race.

My subject, then, belongs to the place and the occasion. We stand here on a moral eminence, where learning unites her destinies to that of virtue, we look abroad up and down the track of human life, to see whither it leads, and especially, to fortify our confidence of a day when all the great forces of society — policy, law, power, learning, and art — shall bow to the lordship of virtue, and the moral element of society shall, at last, have its rightful supremacy.

What now, let us ask, is necessary to this result — by what means, if at all, shall it be reached? This we shall see by a glance at the nature of the moral element.

Virtue is twofold. It includes an inward principle and an outward conduct or manifestation. Its principle is an idea of the mind or conscience — a simple, eternal, immutable idea, viz. *Right*.* This idea, or ideal laws, runs through all consciences, in all ages, and is the same in all. Obedience to this

* The idea of *Right*, like that of space, cause, time, and some others, is undefinable because of its strict simplicity. It is yet distinguished from all others as the Regent Power of the mind, that which subordinates all the powers and functions of the Life, and thus becomes the highest summit of unity. It is such a power that, considered as simply existing in the mind, or coming into thought, we are incapable of denying its authority.

law, as the general aim and desire of the life, constitutes the whole substance of virtue. Or, if we consider this ideal law as enforced by a divine government above us, (for that is the whole object of divine government,) then a like general aim and desire to obey God is the substance of virtue. The former is virtue as moral only — this is religious virtue.

If, now we pass over to the outward conduct of life, the sphere of particular action, we come into a different world. It is as when we pass out of the pure mathematics, which are absolute ideal truth, into the region of forms, distances, colors and forces. The substance of virtue is not here, but only her forms of action. Her being is constituted by obedience to the immutable law of the conscience. Here she comes forth to find expression, or, as we say, to act *out* her being. But the world of outward action is made up of an infinite number and variety of particulars, and these are separable by no absolute distinctions, but are continually flowing towards or into each other. We ask what is useful, equal, true, beautiful, in a word, what forms of action are aesthetically fit to express a right spirit, and so draw out our rules of conduct, just as the painter elaborates the rules of his art.* These rules of conduct are, of necessity, only proximate. They may be crude and discordant, they may be such as even to limit, and, as a more cultivated age might judge, to corrupt the strength of virtue. Of course, there is room for indefinite amplification and refinement in this outward code, if by any means it may be accomplished.

* We have a way of speaking which attributes the approval or disapproval of outward acts to the conscience. But according to the scheme of ethics here adopted, this is true only in a popular sense. The conscience is our sense of the authority of right, or our consciousness of receiving or rejecting this great internal law. All questions of outward duty are questions of custom, revelation, judgment, taste — they belong to the sphere of outward criticism, in which we are impelled *by* the internal law, and seek to realize it. The conscience is no out-door faculty, as the popular language supposes. That we come into being with a conscience in which all possible acts, in all possible circumstances, are discriminated, with infallible certainty, beforehand, and apart from the aid of experience and judgment, is incredible. Quite as hard for belief is it, that, if our conscience were required, *by itself*, to settle all the questions of duty as they occur, (which perhaps is the popular notion,) it would not rise up, like Mercury among the gods as Lucian fancies, and protest against the infinite business of all sorts it has thrown upon it.

Having in view this twofold nature of virtue, we perceive that there are two ways in which it may possibly advance its power, and only two. If the tone of the conscience, or of its ideal law can be invigorated; if also the æsthetic power, that which discriminates in outward forms, can be so disciplined as to perceive all that is beautiful in conduct, and produce a perfect outward code; then the moral element will have its two conditions of victory.

Two fields of inquiry then are opened by my subject, and the whole extent of human history, its philosophy and laws of motion lie confronted in it. I need not tell you that I am oppressed by its vastness, or that I must seek some method of limitation that will bring it within the possible range of the occasion.

This I shall do, by showing you first, in a general way, that the moral element has a twofold law of increment in the ways I have just now specified. I will then take up three distinct forces which enter most vigorously into this progress, the Greek, the Roman, and the Christian, show their imperishable power, and trace their future action.

Is there any law, then, in human history, by which the authority of conscience is progressively invigorated?

Leaving out of view religious causes, of which I will speak in another place, consider the remarkable and ever widening contrast that subsists, between the earliest and latest generations of history, in respect to a reflective habit. The childlike age, whether of the individual or of the race, never reflects on itself. The literature and conduct of the early generations are marked by a certain primitive simplicity. The whole motion of their being travels outward, as the water from under the hills, and no drop thinks to go back and see whence it came. They act and sing right out, unconscious even in their greatness, as the harp of its music, or the lightning of its thunder. Virtue in such an age is mainly impulsive. It is such a kind of virtue as has not intellectually discovered its law. If now the mind becomes reflective in its habit, if it analyzes itself and discovers, among all the powers and emo-

tions of the soul — some permanent, and many fugitive as the winds — one great, eternal, irreversible law, towering above every other attribute of reason, thought, and action, and asserting its royal prerogatives; if it discovers remorse coiled up as a wounded snake and hissing under the throne of the mind; if, too, it discovers the soul itself, as a spiritual nature, strong with inherent immortality, and building with a perilous and terrible industry here, the structure of its own future eternity; it cannot be that the moral tone of the conscience will not be powerfully invigorated. And the transition I here describe, from an unreflective to a reflective habit, is one that is ever more advancing, and will be to the end of the world.

Next, as it were, to give greater verity to ideas and laws of mental necessity, and so to the law of the conscience, developed by reflection, geometry and the exact sciences will be discovered. The Pythagorean discipline began, we are told, with a period of silence: and as silence, according to Lord Bacon, is the fermentation of the thoughts, the disciples were thus started into a habit of reflection. Next they were exercised in geometry, to make them aware of the reality, rigidity, and invincibility of ideal truth — that kind of truth which is developed by reflection. Then they passed into the law of virtue, and through this up to God. The school of Crotona was, thus, a miniature of the great world itself. The mathematics are mere evolutions of necessary ideas, and the moral value of a strong mathematical discipline, has, in this view, never been adequately estimated. By no other means could the mind be so effectively apprised of the distinct existence, the firmness, and the stern necessity of principles. Mere elegant literature would leave it in a mire of outward conventionalisms, a mere æsthetic worker among the fluxing matter of forms, incapable of a strong philosophic reflection, and quite as much of those sallies into the ideal world which constitute the nerve of the highest poetry. If, besides, the exact sciences are found to reign, as they do, over the great realm of nature and physical science, and the popular mind sees them symbolized to view, in all visible existence, then will a new and more forcible impression of what law and principle are,

become universal. Looking up to the heavens and beholding all the innumerable orbs and powers of the universe obedient to ideal laws, and revolving in forms of the mind; seeing the earth crystalize into shapes of ideal exactness and necessity, and the very atoms of the globe yoke themselves under the mental laws of arithmetic, seeing, in a word, the whole compact of creation bedded in ideal truth, and yielding to the iron laws of necessity — then is it impossible not to feel some new impression of the rigidity of moral principle, as a law of the mind — its distinct existence — its immutable obligation!

Next you will observe, as if to carry on these impressions and make them practical, that as society advances, public law becomes a rigid science, and the rights of society are subjected to the stern arbitrament of justice. Public law is moral. It is the public reason, revolving about the one great principle of right, and constructing a science of moral justice. Executive power, with all its splendid prerogatives, is seen withdrawing to make room for a higher law — even right. Tribunals of justice are erected and made independent. They are to sit clothed with the sacred majesty of right. Their adjudications are to be stern decrees of Nemesis — declarations of exact, scientific justice between the parties. This at least is the theory of public litigation; and if it should happen that actual justice is dispensed as seldom as the most caustic satirists of the law pretend, still it is a thing of inestimable consequence that justice should be thus impersonated among men. It is a solemn concession to the supremacy of right, such as helps to impress a cultivated people with a new sense of the impartial authority of reason and principle.

If now a condition of civil liberty be achieved (and this, we know, belongs to the advanced stages of history) the tone of moral obligation will be strengthened in a yet higher degree. Liberty imports freedom from constraint, and it must be confessed that in those great upheavings and revolutions, by which the shackles of unjust dominion have been burst asunder, the constraints of order, and the barriers of law, have too often been utterly swept away. The Liberty worshipped is License, true son of Liber, and rightly to be named, as

some of the witty ancients may have thought, from the stout old god of the vine. He goes forth, over hill and dale, drawn by his father's lions, brandishing the wrathful thyrsus, boasting his new inventions, and filling the people's heads with the strong wine of democracy, till sense and reason are crazed by its fumes. But the sober hour comes after, and then it will be found that the individual has emerged from under the masses in which he lay buried—a person, a distinct man, a subject of law, an eternal subject of God. Discharged from the constraints of force, he is free to meet the responsibilities of virtue, and he stands out sole and uncovered before the smoking mount of the conscience, to receive its law. The very doctrine of liberty, too, when it finds a doctrine, will be that force put upon the conscience or the reason, is sacrilege. Conscience, it will declare, is no other than the sacred throne of God, which no power or potentate may dare to touch. Mounting thus above all human prerogative to set its own stern limits and hold back the strong hand of power, as in these latter ages it is beginning to do, how high is the reach of conscience seen to be, how mighty its grasp, how impartial its reign!

I have thus alluded, as briefly as I could, to three or four stages or incidents in the progress of history which make it clear that the moral tone of the conscience must be ever advancing in power and clearness.

Pass on now to the outward code of virtue, that which regulates her conduct and forms of action. Though there is no merit or demerit, nothing right or wrong, in any outward conduct as such, still the interests of virtue are deeply involved in the perfection of the outward code. The internal life of virtue can neither propagate its power nor diffuse its blessings, except through the outward state. Furthermore, as expression always invigorates what is expressed, and as the outward reacts on the inward, by a sovereign influence, it becomes a matter of the highest consequence, as regards the internal health of virtue, that she should have her outward code complete, and, without exception, beautiful.

Accordingly there is a work of progressive legislation continually going forward, by which the moral code is perfecting itself. This code, as outward, is no fixed immutable thing, as many suppose. Custom is its interpreter, and it grows up in the same way as the common or civil law, or the law merchant, by a constant process of additions and refinements. Life itself is an open court of legislation, where reasonings, opinions, wants, injuries, are ever drawing men into new senses of duty and extending the laws of society, to suit the demands of an advanced state of being. All art and beauty, every thing that unfolds the power of outward criticism, enters into this progress. So does Christian love, which is ever seeking to execute its spirit, in the most perfect forms of conduct.

Moral legislation, in fact, is one of the highest incidents of our existence. Not that man here legislates, but God through man; for it is not by any will of man, that reason, experience and custom are ever at work to make new laws and refine upon the old — these are to God as an ever smoking Sinai under his feet, and, if there be much of dissonance and seeming confusion in the cloudy mount of custom, we may yet distinguish the sound of the trumpet, and the tables of stone, we shall see in due time, distinctly written, as by no human finger. Laws will emerge from the experience of life, and get power to command us.

Let us not seem, in this view, to strike at the immutability of virtue. We have no such thought. The law of virtue is immutable and eternal, above all expediency or self-interest, all change, circumstance, power and plan, necessary as God, necessary even to God. But the substance of virtue lies, as we have said, in no outward forms of conduct, and it is only these that are subject to modification. Thus there is such a thing as time, and time is ever the same thing in its nature. But where is time? Not in the sun, not in the dial, not in the clock or watch, or, if there, it is as much every where else. Time is ideal, a thing of the mind. But, though time is no where in the outward world, it has its signs and measures there, and what matter is it if they are changed? that does

not affect the immutable nature of time. Measured by the sun, the moon, the hour-glass, the clock or watch, the flight of birds, or the opening of flowers, time is still the same. So it is with virtue—it is the same unchanging, eternal principle, though its outward code of manifestation has variety and progress.

Neither let us seem to impugn the authority of the revealed law. The statutes of revealed law may be divided into two classes—those which positively command, and those which only permit or suffer. The former class can never be repealed or set aside. They will stand as roots of progress, and society will do them honor, by going on to amplify them and make them the basis of a perfect code. But the permissive statutes are of a different order. Many of them were given because of the hardness of men's hearts, and are already repealed. Others are now in debate and must clearly be discontinued, as no longer sufferable in the advanced state of society. A moment's reflection will teach you that a system of revealed law must submit its form, in some degree, to the present capacity of its subjects—and that will be the best which, considering all their prejudices and incapacities, will take the firmest hold of them and most strengthen the internal power of their virtue. Then what was plainly a concession to barbarism will of course be discontinued with barbarism. Nothing is more plain, than that a barbarous people could not receive a perfectly beautiful code of conduct. Is it any thing new, that if you give a clown directions how to execute a beautiful painting, he could not even take the sense of the directions; or, if you should give him a full code of politeness, that he could not enter into its terms? But how vast in compass, and multifarious in number, and complicated in form, are the actions of a life, compared with the strokes of a painter's art, or the items of a polite conduct! What scope is there here for criticism; what exactness of discipline does it require, only to understand what is wise, or useful, or fair, in all cases, even when it is revealed. What sharpness of taste, only to discriminate or conceive all beautiful actions, when expressly commanded—greater, by far, than any nation as yet possesses.

So plain is it that angelic law is possible only to angelic advancement—equally plain, that the moral code, even as revealed, must be limited, in a degree, by the narrowness and crudity of those who are to receive it.

Neither let us wonder, if it takes many ages to clear the moral code of all barbarous anomalies, and bring to it a full maturity. Experience must have a long and painful discipline, philosophy must go down into the grounds of things, rights must be settled, letters advanced, the beautiful arts come into form; God must wait on the creature, and conduct him on through long ages of mistake and crudity, command, reason, try, enlighten, brood, as over chaos, by his quickening power, and then it will be only by slow degrees that the moral taste of the world will approximate to a coincidence with the perfect moral taste of God.

Let us now see if facts will justify our reasonings. Far back, in the remotest ages of definite history, we find one of the world's patriarchs so fortunate or unfortunate as to be the inventor of wine, by which he is buried in the excesses of intoxication, we know not how many times, with no apparent compunction. Saying nothing of abstinence, not even the law of temperance had yet been reached. Another, who is called the father of the faithful, has not yet so refined upon the moral statute against falsehood, as to see that prevarication is to be accounted a lie. Accordingly, he more than once, flatly prevaricates, with no apparent sense of wrong. A successor, in equal honor for holy principle, deceives his blind father by a trick of disguise, and cheats him out of his blessing. He takes advantage also of a starving brother to extort his birth-right—acts which in our day would cover him with infamy. These were all holy men. It was not so much sin as barbarism, that marred their history. These instances of unripe morality furnish no ground of cavil against the Scriptures, but, to all reasoning minds, they are the strongest evidences of their real antiquity and truth. I have not time to lead you through the Jewish history. The remarkable fact in it is, that, with so high notions of holy principle, the outward style of virtue is yet so harsh, so visibly barbarous. You seem to be

in a raw physical age, where force and sensualism and bigotry of descent display their odious and unlovely presence, even in men of the highest worth and dignity. As you approach the later age of their literature and history, you perceive a visible mitigation of its features. Christianity then appears. The old outward regimen of beggarly elements is swept away, new precepts of benevolence and forbearance are given, the Jew is lost in the man, and the man becomes a brother of his race. How sublime the contrast, then, of Genesis and John!

What we see, in this glance at sacred history, is quite as conspicuous in the general review of humanity. The moral code of a savage people has always something to distinguish it as a savage people's code. So with that of a civilized. The very changes and inventions of society necessitate an amplification and often a revision of the moral code. Every new state, office, art, and thing must have its law. The old law maxim, *cuiuslibet in sua arte credendum est*—every trade must be suffered to make its law, is only half the truth. Every trade must make its law. If bills of exchange are invented, if money is coined, if banks are established, and offices of insurance, if great corporate investments are introduced into the machinery of business, it will not be long before a body of moral opinions will be generated, and take the force of law over these new creations. Fire-arms, also, printing, theatres, distilled spirits, cards, dice, medicine—all new products and inventions must come under moral maxims, and create to themselves a new moral jurisprudence. The introduction of popular liberty makes the subject a new man, lays upon him new duties, which require to be set forth in new maxims of morality. Already have I shown you, in these brief glances, a new world created for the dominion of law. And what was said of the human body, growing up to maturity, is equally true of the great social body:—

“For nature crescent does not grow alone,
 In thews and bulk, but as this temple waxes,
 The inward service of the mind and heart
 Grows wide withal.”

I also hinted, that new arts and inventions must often so change the relations of old things and practices, as to require a revision of their law. The Jew may rightly take his interest money now, for other reasons than because the Mosaic polity is dissolved. He is not the same man that his fathers were. He lives in a new world, and sustains new relations. The modes of business, too, are all so changed that the merits of receiving interest money are no more the same, although the mere outward act is such as to be described in the same words. At this very moment, we have it on hand to revise the moral code in reference to three very important subjects—wine, slavery, and war. The real question, on these subjects, if we understood ourselves, is not, on one side whether we can torture the Scripture so as to make it condemn all that we desire to exclude; nor, on the other, whether we are bound, for all time, and eternity to boot, to justify what the Scripture suffers. But the question, philosophically stated, is whether new cognate inventions and uses, do not make old practices more destructive, old vices more incurable—whether a new age of the world and a capacity of better things, have not so changed the relations of the practices in issue, that they are no longer the same, and no longer to be justified. Physically speaking it is the same act to go into a certain house, and to go into it having a contagious disease—not morally. Physically speaking, it is the same act to go into it having a contagious disease, and to go into it when the inmates have found a new medicine which is proof against the contagion—not morally. The moral import of actions, physically the same, is thus ever changing, and no reform is bad, because it requires a revision of law: for the change of condition, wrought by time, may be so great as to render the former law inapplicable. It is conceivable that even a positive statute of revelation may lose its applicability, by reason of a radical change in the circumstances it was designed to cover. Nor can it properly be said that such a statute is repealed—it is only waiting for the circumstances in which its virtue lies. A new rule contradictory to it in words, may yet be wholly consistent with it, and bring no

reflection on its merits. Accordingly, in what are called *reforms*, the real problem more frequently is to revise or mitigate law, or to legislate anew. And there is no evil in the human state, nothing opposed to the general good and happiness, which cannot be lawed out of existence by an adequate appeal to truth and reason, which are God's highest law. Nothing, I will add, which shall not thus be lawed out of existence.

Thus it is within the memory of persons now living, that a clergyman of England, specially distinguished for his piety, forsook the slave trade, by compulsion of Providence, and not because of any Christian scruples concerning it. Night and morning he sent up his prayers to God, blended with the groans of his captives, and had his Christian peace, among the lacerated limbs and the unpitied moans of as many as his ship could hold. Now a law is matured against this traffick, and the man is a monster who engages in it. And if you will see the progress of the moral code, you may take your map and trace the exact countries which this new law has reached, just as you may trace, from an eminence, the shadows of the clouds, as they sail over a landscape.

If you will see the work of moral legislation on a scale yet more magnificent, you have only to advert to what is called the international code. I know of nothing which better marks the high moral tone of modern history, than that this sublime code of law should have come into form and established its authority over the civilized world within so short a time; for it is now scarcely more than two hundred years since it took its being. In the most polished and splendid age of Greece and Grecian philosophy, piracy was a lawful and even honorable occupation. Man, upon the waters, and the shark, in them, had a common right to feed on what they could subdue. Nations were considered as natural enemies, and for one people to plunder another, by force of arms, and to lay their country waste, was no moral wrong, any more than for the tiger to devour the lamb. In war, no terms of humanity were binding, and the passions of the parties were mitigated by no constraints of law. Captives were butchered or sold into slavery at pleasure. In time of peace, it was not without great

hazard that the citizen of one country could venture into another for purposes of travel or business.

Go now with me to one of the Italian cities, and there you shall see in his quiet retreat, a silent thoughtful man bending his ample shoulders and more ample countenance over his table, and recording with a visible earnestness something that deeply concerns the world. This man has no office or authority to make him a lawgiver, other than what belongs to the gifts of his own person — a brilliant mind, enriched by the amplest stores of learning, and nerved by the highest principles of moral justice and Christian piety. He is, in fact, a fugitive, and an exile from his country, separated from all power but the simple power of truth and reason. But he dares, you will see, to write *De Jure Belli et Pacis*. This is the man who was smuggled out of prison and out of his country, by his wife, in a box that was used for much humbler purposes, to give law to all the nations of mankind in all future ages. On the sea and on the land, on all seas and all lands, he shall bear sway. In the silence of his study, he stretches forth the scepter of law over all potentates and people, defines their rights, arranges their intercourse, gives them terms of war and terms of peace, which they may not disregard. In the days of battle too, when kings and kingdoms are thundering in the shock of arms, this same Hugo Grotius shall be there, in all the turmoil of passion and the smoke of ruin, as a presiding throne of law, commanding above the commanders, and, when the day is cast, prescribing to the victor terms of mercy and justice which not even his hatred of the foe, or the exultation of the hour may dare to transcend.

The system of commercial law, growing out of the extension of trade and commerce, in modern times, is another triumph of moral legislation almost equally sublime with the international. The science of municipal law, too, has not been less remarkable for its progress. Saying nothing of the common law or law of England, which is, in a sense, the child of the civil or Roman law, what mind can estimate the moral value and power of this latter code, extended, as its sway now is, over nine-tenths of the civilized world.

Now all these systems of law, international, commercial and civil, are founded in the natural reasons of the moral code, and are, in fact, results of moral legislation. Considered, too, as accumulations of moral judgment, elaborated in the lapse of ages, they constitute a body of science, when taken together, compared with which every other work of man is insignificant. No other has cost such infinite labor and patience, none has embodied such a stupendous array of talent, none has brought into contribution so much of impartial reason and moral gravity.

Under these extensions of law, the world has become another world. Anarchy and absolute will are put aside to suffer the dominion of scientific justice. The nations are become, to a great extent, one empire. The citizen of one country may travel and trade securely in almost every other. Wars are mitigated in ferocity, and so far is the moral sentiment of the world advanced in this direction, that military preparations begin to look formal and wear the semblance of an antiquated usage. We may almost dare to say as Pandulph to Lewis, and with a much higher sense:—

“Therefore, thy threatening colors now wind up
 And tame the savage spirit of wild war,
 That, like a lion fostered up at hand,
 It may lie gently, at the foot of peace,
 And be no further harmful than in show.”

Who shall think it incredible that this same progress of moral legislation, which has gone thus far in the international code, may ultimately be so far extended as to systematize and establish rules of arbitrament, by which all national disputes shall be definitely settled, without an appeal to arms. And so it shall result that, as the moral code is one, all law shall come into unity, and a kind of virtual oneness embrace all nations. We shall flow together in the destruction of distances and become brothers in the terms of justice. And so shall that sublime declaration of Cicero, in his Republic, where he sets forth the theoretic unity of law, find a republic of nations, where it shall have a more than theoretic verity:—
 “Nec erit alia lex Romæ, alia Athenis, alia nunc, alia posthac,

sed et omnes gentes, et omni tempore, et sempiterna, et immortalis continebit, unusque erit communis quasi magister et imperator omnium Deus. Ille legis hujus inventor deceptor lator!"

I have thus endeavored to show that, as virtue is twofold, so there is a twofold law of progress by which it is advanced in human society — one by which the inward principle invigorates its tone, another by which its outward code is extended and made to accord more nicely with the highest beauty and the most perfect health of virtue. Both lines of progress have been active up to this time, with results as definitely marked as the progress of history itself. What now is to come? By what future events and changes, shall the work go on to its completion?

That must be unknown to us, though the present momentum of society is enough, by itself, to assure us in what line the future motion must proceed. There are, at the same time, three great forces in this motion, which we know are incapable of exhaustion. These must always work on together, as they have done up to this time, to assist the triumph of the moral element. Other forces have entered into history, such as the Gothic irruptions, the crusades, the feudal system, the free cities and their commerce, which, being more nearly physical, lose their distinct existence, as soon as they are incorporate, and are manifested only by their results. Not so with the three of which I am to speak. They belong to all future time, and will never cease their distinct activity. These three are the Greek, the Roman and the Christian. The Greek, as belonging to the outward department of virtue and assisting it by the high æsthetic discipline of its literature. The Roman, as asserting the ideal law of virtue and giving it a corporate embodiment. The Christian, as descending from heaven to pour itself into both, quicken their activity and bring them into earnest connexion with a government above.

The first thing to be observed in the Greek character and literature, is its want of a moral tone. A mere incidental

remark of Schlegel touches what might rather be made the staple of criticism, in the works of this wonderful people. "Even in those cases," he says, "where the most open expression of deep feeling, morality, or conscience, might have been expected, the Greek authors are apt to view the subject of which they treat, as a mere appearance of the life, with a certain perfect, undisturbed, and elaborate equability." How could it be otherwise, where an Aristotle, endowed with the most gigantic and powerful intellect ever given to man, could only define virtue itself as the middle point between two extremes, and every moral evil as being either too much or too little? Socrates and his splendid disciple, it is true, had a warmer and more adequate idea of virtue; though it will escape the notice of no thoughtful scholar, that they were charmed with virtue, rather as the Fair than as the Right. This is specially true of Plato. He draws her forth out of his own intellectual beauty, as Pygmalion his ivory statue, and, as this was quickened into life by the word of Venus, so his notion of virtue takes its life from him, from the charms in which it is invested. Evil and vice, too, connect, in his mind, rather with deformity and mortification than with remorse.

On the whole, there is almost no civilized people whose morality is more earthly and cold than that of the Greeks. At the same time, their sense of beauty in forms, their faculty of outward criticism is perfect. Their temples and statutes are forms of perfect art. Their poets and philosophers chisel their thoughts into groups of marble. Their religion or mythology is scarcely more than a gallery of artistic shapes — exquisitely sensual. They alone, of all people, in fact, have a religion without a moral — gods for the zest of comedy, gay divinities that go hunting, frolicking and thundering over sea and land. Genius only worships. The chisel is the true incense, to hold a place in epic machinery, the true circle of Providence. Every thing done or written, is subtle, ethereal, beautiful, and cold; even the fire is cold — a combustion of icicles. There can be no true heat, where there is no moral life. They love their country, but they do not love it well enough to suffer justice to be done in it, or to endure the pres-

ence of virtue. Their bravery is cunning, their patriotism an elegant selfishness. In their ostracism, they make public envy a public right, and faction constitutional. We look up and down their history, survey their temples without a religion, their streets lined with chiseled divinities, set up for ornamental effect, we listen to their orators, we open the shining rolls of their literature, and exclaim, beautiful lust! splendid sensuality! elegant faction! ornamental religion! a nation perfect in outward criticism, but blind, as yet, to the real nature and power of the moral element.

And yet this people have done a work, in their way, which is even essential to the triumph of virtue. Their sense of beauty, their nice discriminations of art and poetic genius, are contributions made to the outward life and law of virtue. A barbarous people, like the wild African or Indian, you will observe, have no sense of form, and their moral code will, for that reason, be a crude and shapeless barbarism. To mature the code of action, therefore, and finish its perfect adaptation to the expression of virtue and the ornament of life, requires a power of form, or of outward criticism in full development. Considered in this view, it is impossible to overrate the value of the Greek art. A whole department of human capacity, the power of forms or of outward criticism and expression, must be the disciple of Greece to the end of the world. This same Greek beauty, which can never perish, will go into the Roman life, and assist in that process of legal criticism by which the civil law shall be matured. Then it will go into the wild Gothic liberty that is thundering, as yet, along the Baltic and through the plains of Scythia, to humanize it, and make the element of liberty an element of order and virtue. It will breathe a spirit of beauty into every language and literature of every civilized people; and their intellectual and moral life will crystallize into the forms of beauty thus evolved, lose their opacity, and become transparent to the light of reason and law. The Christian faith, too, whose prerogative it is to make all the works both of man and of God subservient to its honor, will take to itself all the beauty of all the Greeks and make it the beauty of holiness.

We come now to the Romans, a people of as high originality as the Greeks, though not so regarded by the critics, because their originality did not run into the forms of literature. The ideal of the Greeks was beauty, that of the Romans law and scientific justice. We need not suffer the common wonder, therefore, that all the ambition of the Roman scholars, aided by hordes of emigrant rhetoricians, could not reproduce the Grecian classic spirit in that people; for whatsoever power of outward criticism was awakened followed after the Roman ideal, going to construct the moral rigors of the Stoic philosophy and fashion the sublime structure of civil jurisprudence. And Greece was as incapable of the Roman law, as Rome of the Grecian literature. Which of the two has made the greatest and most original gift to the future ages, it will ever be impossible to judge.

It was a distinction of the Roman people, that they had a strong sense of moral principle. They could feel the authority of what some call an abstraction, and suffer its rigid sway. Their conscience had the tone of a trumpet in their bosoms. This was owing in part, we may believe to their martial discipline; for it is a peculiarity of this, that it bends to nothing in the individual, his interest, comfort, or safety. It is as destitute of feeling as an abstraction, and accommodates the soldier to the absolute sway of rigid law. Accustomed to the stiff harness of discipline, to be moved by the unbending laws of mechanism up to the enemy's face and the bristling points of defence, there to live or die, as it may happen, without any right to consider which; a nation of soldiers learns how to suffer an absolute rule, and, if the other and more corrupt influences of war do not prevent, is prepared, with greater facility, to acknowledge the stern ideal law of virtue.

The Romans, too, had a religion, a serious and powerful faith, gods that kept their integrity and held a relation to the conscience. Even Mars himself, their tutelary deity, in so far as he was a Roman and not a Greek, was, on the whole, a much better Christian than some who have presided in Rome, with

quite other pretensions.* It was also a beautiful distinction of the religious character of this people, that they alone, of all heathen nations, erected temples to the mere ideals of virtue — Faith, Concord, Modesty, Peace.

The Romans, also, were an agricultural people, naming their noble families after the *bean*, the *pea*, the *lentile*, *vetches*, and other plants; retaining the sobriety, frugality, and all the rigid virtues of a life in the fields. These are the people to suffer a censorship, in which every licentious, and effeminate habit shall expose the subject to a public degradation — the only people, I will add, that has ever existed, capable of such a discipline.

Pass out with me, now, into the Tusculan country, and I will show you one of these old Puritans. A simple rustic house is before you, the house of a small country farmer. A man with red hair, and a pair of grey eyes twinkling under his fiery eyebrows, a muscular, iron-faced man meets you at the gate. This man will boast his dinner as a triumph of economy — bread baked by his wife, and turnips boiled by himself. Of pleasure he is ignorant. He keeps a few slaves, whom he turns away when they become old; for it is his way to make a rigid abstraction even of the principle of economy. In the morning he rises early, and goes forth into the neighboring towns to plead causes. He returns, in the afternoon, puts on his frock, and goes out to work among the slaves. He is a man of wit, and is to be called the Roman Demosthenes. He is to be a great commander, and a part of his prowess will be that he spends nothing on himself and makes the army pay its way by its victories. He will reap the honors of a triumph, he will be consul, he will be censor. And when Cato is censor, woe to the man who has defrauded the treasury! every man than gets over the line of sober drink! every high liver! every dandy! Then, to crown all,

* This will scarcely be thought extravagant by the scholar, who duly considers, with what reverence they guarded the sacred *ancile* let fall from heaven to be the pledge of their safety; or compares the processions of the Salii, with others of a more recent date and of a different name.

this man shall say — for he loves to carry out a principle — that “he had rather his good actions should go unrewarded, than his bad ones unpunished.” Inexorable, in whatever relates to public justice, inflexibly rigid in the execution of his orders, he will make history confess, that the Roman government had never before appeared, either so awful or so amiable.

Roman virtue, therefore, became a proverb, to denote that strength of principle, which can bend to no outward obstacle or seduction. And the pitch of public virtue displayed by this people, especially in the days of the ancient republic, is one of the greatest moral phenomena of history. Always warlike in their habit, inured to scenes of devastation and and blood, ambitious for their city and ignorant of any right in the world, but the imperial right of Rome, they were, at the same time, careless of pleasure and of wealth, stoics in fortitude and self-denial, immovable in conjugal fidelity, reverent to parents, incapable of treachery to their country or disobedience to the laws, exact and even superstitious in the rites of piety. Unjust to every other people, they were yet the firm adherents of law and justice among themselves. They went to war with religious preliminaries. The military oath was their *sacrament*, in which they engaged for a real presence; and though it was to be a presence in veritable blood, it was yet so religiously fulfilled as to be a bond of virtue. They, at first, sent forth their legions to make war more, it would seem, because they loved the discipline, than because they wanted the plunder. The tramp of their victorious legions was heard, resounding at the gates of cities and across the borders of nations; their leaders were returning, every few months, with triumphal entries into the city, that a most just people might enjoy and glory in the spectacle of their own public wrongs; till at last debauched by the plunder of their victories, they may be said to have conquered, on the same day, both the world and their own virtue together. Nor is even this exactly true; for it is remarkable, that they gave back to the subject nations the justice denied them in their conquest, and set up the tribunals of Roman law on the fields of Roman lawlessness! Equally remarkable is it that in the most dissolute age of the empire, the power of scientific law could not be eradicated from the hearts of this wonderful

people. While the monster Commodus sits upon the throne, Papinian and Ulpian occupy the bench, adding to the civil code the richest contributions of legal science! And even the signatures of Caracalla and his ministers will be found, not seldom, inscribed on the purest materials of the Pandects!

What then if Rome did not excel in literature? Had she not another talent in her bosom quite as rich and powerful — the sublime talent of law. In her civil code, she has erected the mightiest monument of reason and of moral power that has ever yet been raised by human genius. The honest pride of Cicero was not misplaced, when he said: “How admirable is the wisdom of our ancestors! We alone are masters of civil prudence, and our superiority is the more conspicuous, if we deign to cast our eyes on the rude and almost ridiculous jurisprudence of Draco, Solon and Lycurgus.” Little however did he understand, when he thus spake, what gift his country was here preparing for the human race. Could he have pierced the magnificent future, when this same Roman law should have its full scientific emboliment; could he have seen, at the distance of twenty centuries, the barbarians of northern and western Europe compacted into great civilized nations, and, after having vanquished the Roman arms and empire, all quietly sheltered under the Roman jurisprudence; a new continent rising to view, beyond the lost Atlantis, to be fostered in its bosom; a spirit of law infused into the whole realm of civilized mind and revealing its energy now in the common law of England, now in the commercial code, and, last of all, in the international — all matured in the pervading light and warmth of the Roman; liberty secured by the security of justice; the fire of the old Roman virtue burning still in the bosom of legal science and imparting a character of intellectual and moral gravity to the literature, opinions and life of all cultivated nations; and then, to crown the whole, the visible certainty that the Roman law has only just begun its career, that it must enter more and more widely into the fortunes of the race and extend its benign sway wherever law extends, till the globe, with all its peoples, becomes a second Roman empire, and time itself the only date of its sovereignty; — seeing all this, the great orator must have confessed, that every conception he had before entertained of the

majesty and grandeur of the Roman jurisprudence, was weak and even null. Our minds, even now, can but faintly conceive the same.

Such is the moral value of the Greek art and literature, such of the Roman law — one as a contribution to the outward form of virtue, the other to the authority and power of the moral sentiment itself. These are gifts wrought out from below — extorted, as we may say, from society. It remains to speak of a third power, descending from above, to bring the Divine Life into history and hasten that moral age, towards which its lines are ever converging. Hitherto, we have spoken of causes developed by the mere laws of society, which laws however, when deeply sounded, are but another name for God, conducting history to its ends, by a presence of latent force. In religion, in Christianity, we are to view him as coming into mental contemplation, as objective to the intellect and heart, and operating thus as a moral cause. Here he shows, above us, an external government of laws and retributions, connected with the internal law of the conscience; opens worlds of glory and pain beyond this life; presents himself as an object of contemplation, fear, love and desire; reveals his own infinite excellence and beauty, and, withal, his tenderness and persuasive goodness; and so pours the Divine Life into the dark and soured bosom of sin.

But you will perceive that a certain degree of intellectual refinement and moral advancement was necessary to make the approach of so great excellence and beauty intelligible. A race of beings immersed in the wild superstitions of fetishism could not receive the divine. And, therefore, it was not till the Greek letters and the Roman sovereignty were extended through the world, that Jesus Christ made his appearance. He is, at once, the Perfect Beauty and the Eternal Rule of God — the Life of God manifested under the conditions of humanity — by sufferings, expressing the Love of God, by love attracting man to his breast. Now there enters into human history a divine force which is not latent. The law from within meets the objective reality and beauty of God from without — conscience links with a government above, and morality is taken up into the bosom of religion.

I will not trace the historical action of Christianity, or show how it has subordinated and wrought in all other causes, such as I have named. Everyone knows that this new religion, sprung of so humble a beginning, has had force enough, somehow, to take the rule of human society for the last eighteen hundred years. Ancient learning, ancient customs and religions, emigrations, wars and diplomacies, all the foundations of thrones and the bulwarks of empire have floated, as straws on this flood. And now it is much to say, that where we are, thither Christianity has borne us, and what we are in art, literature, commerce, law and liberty, Christianity has made us.

I will only point you, beside, to a single symptom of the times, which shows you whither human history is going. It is a remarkable distinction of the present era, that we are deriving rules of common life and obligation from considerations of **BENEVICENCE**. We perceive that the internal law of the conscience includes not only justice but love. The spirit of Christianity, as revealed in the life of Jesus, has so far infused itself into human bosoms, that we feel bound to act, not as fellow men but as brothers to the race. We propose what is useful, we reason of what is beneficent. Government, we claim, is a trust for the equal benefit of subjects. As individuals we are concluded, in all matters, by the necessities of public virtue and happiness. All the old rules of morality, which hung upon the colder principle of justice, are suffering a revision to execute the principle of love, and every thing in public law and private duty is coming to the one test of beneficence.

Here I will rest my argument. I undertook to show you that human history ascends from the physical to the moral, and must ultimately issue in a moral age. I first exhibited the fact of a twofold progress in past history, accordant with the twofold nature of the moral element. What stupendous events and overturnings are, hereafter, to come pouring their floods into the currents of human history, we cannot know or conjecture; but I have brought into view three great moral forces, of whose future operation, as of whose past, we may

well be confident — the Greek Art, the Roman Law, and the Christian Faith. These three being indestructible, incapable of death, must roll on, down the whole future of man, and work their effects in his history. And, if we are sure of this, we are scarcely less sure of a moral age, or of the final ascendancy of the intellectual and moral life of the race.

I anticipate no perfect state, such as fills the overheated fancy of certain dreamers. The perfectibility of man is forever excluded, here by the tenor of his existence. He is here in a flood of successive generations, to make experiment of evil, to learn the worth of virtue in the loss of it, and by such knowledge be at last confirmed in it. As long, therefore, as he is here, evil will be, and life will be a contest with it.

But a day will come, when the dominion of ignorance and physical force, when distinctions of blood and the accidents of fortune will cease to rule the world. Beauty, reason, science, personal worth and religion will come into their rightful supremacy, and moral forces will preside over physical as mind over the body. Liberty and equality will be so far established that every man will have a right to his existence, and, if he can make it so, to an honorable, powerful and happy existence. Policy will cease to be the same as cunning, and become a study of equity and reason. It is impossible that wars should not be discontinued, if not by the progress of the international code, as we have hinted, yet by the progress of liberty and intelligence; for the masses who have hitherto composed the soldiery, must sometime discover the folly of dying, as an ignoble herd, to serve the passions of a few reckless politicians, or to give a name for prowess to leaders whose bravery consists in marching *them* into danger. The arbitrament of arms is not a whit less absurd than the old English trial by battle, and before the world has done rolling, they will both be classed together. Habits of temperance must result in a gradual improvement of the physical stature and intellectual capacity of the race. The enormous expenditures of war and vice being discontinued, and invention, aided by science, having got the mastery of nature, so as to make production more copious and easy, the laboring classes will be able to live in comparatively leisure and elegance, and find ample time for self-improvement.

Now begins the era of genius ; for all the mind there is, being brought into action, and that in the best conditions of intellectual health, it must result that the eminent minds will tower as much higher, as the level whence they rise is more elevated. The old leaden atmosphere of a physical age will be displaced by an intellectual atmosphere, quickening to the breath and full of the music of new thoughts. Society being delivered of all that is low, and raised to a general condition of comfort and beauty, will become a new and more inspiring element. The general peace of nations and the nobler peace of virtue, will make the reflective faculty as a clear sounding bell in a calm day — every depth of nature will be sounded and brought into the clear light of philosophy. The imagination will be purified by the subjection of the passions, and fired by the vigor of a faith that sees, in all things visible, vehicles of the invisible — and every thing finite eloquent of infinity.

But, what is the greatest pre-eminence, it shall come to pass, that, as the ideal of the Greeks was beauty, and that of the Romans law, so this new age shall embrace an ideal more comprehensive, as it is higher than all, namely, LOVE. The magnificent genius of Plato attained to some indistinct conception of this same thing, in that intellectual love, so much extolled by him, as being the power of all that is divine in virtue — the love of kindred souls thirsting after truth, and tracing back their way to that bright essence, whose image they dimly remember, and which, having cast its shadow on them in some previous state, made them forever kindred to each other and to it. But the love of which I speak is this and more — a love to souls not kindred, a love of action and of power, as well as of sentiment and of mutual affinity. This love is no partial ideal, as every other must be ; it is universal, it embraces all that is beneficent, pure, true, beautiful — God, man — eternity, time. To build up, to adorn, to increase enjoyment ; to receive the whispers of that Original Love which inhabits all the heights and depths ; to sing out the rhythm and eternal harmony of that music wherewith it fills, not the stars only, but all the recesses of being ; to go up into the heights of reason after its plan, and lay the head of philosophy on its bosom ; to weep, rejoice and tremble before

it, every where present, every where warm and luminous; palpitating in all that lives, blushing into all that is beautiful, bursting out as a fire, in all that is terrible — thus employed, filled with this love, as by a storm falling out of heaven, lifted and celestially empowered by it, the new moral age must needs unfold a regenerated capacity and construct a literature, more nearly divine, than has yet been conceived. All that is great in action, disinterested in suffering, strong in the abhorrence of evil, beautiful in art, wise in judgment, deep in science — the keen, the soft, the wrathful and piercing, as well as the gentle and patient — every side and capacity of mind will display itself, and as the talent of the Creator unfolds its grandeur in love, so by love, the talent of his creature will roll out into that full toned harmony of act and power which constitutes the distinction of genius.

BROTHERS IN LETTERS, — I may not close without some reference more personal to ourselves and closer to the occasion. We are here, once more, in the classic shades where our youthful beginnings were nurtured. We most filially venerate and love the place. No where else does memory drop the element of tense and become experience as here. Our youth returns upon us — its day-dreams even are here, as we left them, floating on the air and resting in the trees. As now our hearts are open to ingenious feeling, let us take to ourselves one more lesson before we part, and resolve to wed ourselves unchangeably to the good of mankind and the final triumph of virtue.

First of all let us, as scholars, have faith in the future. No man was ever inspired through his memory. The eye of Genius is not behind. Nor was there ever a truly great man, whose ideal was in the past. The official of history is good enough for worms and monks, but it will not feed a living man. Power moves in the direction of hope. If we cannot hope, if we see nothing so good for history as to reverse it, we shrink from the destiny of our race, and the curse of all impotence is on us. Legions of men, who dare not set their face the way that time is going, are powerless — you may push them back with a straw. They have lost their virility, their soul is gone out. They are owls flying towards the dawn and screaming, with bedizened eyes, that light should invade their prescriptive and congenial darkness.

Every scholar should be so far imbued with the philosophic spirit, as to remember that ways and manners, which stands well

with prescription, do not always stand well with reason, and that respectable practice is often most respectably assaulted. Suffer no effeminate disgusts; neither always be repelled, when a good object is maintained by cruid and even pernicious arguments. Men are often wiser in their ends than in their reasons, and, if we see them staggering after the light, our duty is not to mock them, but to lead them. Consider how God has stood by man's history and labored with him in his crudest follies, and even by means of these contrived to help him on.

We have a country where the legislation of virtue is free as it never was before in any other. Every thing true, just, pure, good, great, can here unfold itself without obstruction. To say that we are all called to be a nation of lawgivers, in the public constitution, is not all — we are called to be lawgivers in a higher and more sacred capacity. Political law, as supported by force, is here weak, that it may be strong as supported by reason. Our institutions postulate, in every thing, a condition of virtue, and their destiny is to be magnificent as it is a moral destiny.

Be it then our part, as scholars, to be lawgivers, bringing forth to men the determinations of reason, and assisting them to construct the science of goodness. And consider that it is sound opinion, not multitudinous opinion, that takes the force of law. Have faith in truth, never in numbers. The great surge of numbers rolls up noisily and imposingly, but flats out on the shore, and slides back into the mud of oblivion. But a true opinion is the ocean itself, calm in its rest, eternal in its power. The storms and tumultuous thunders of popular rage and bigoted wrong will sometime pause, in their travel round the sphere, and listen to its powerful voice. And if the night comes down to veil it for a time, it is still there, beating on with the same victorious pulse and waiting for the day. A right opinion cannot die, for its life is in the moral element, which is the life of God. Have patience, and it shall come to pass in due time, that what you rested in the tranquillity of reason, has been crowned with the majesty of law.

Here then, we come as scholars to embrace the destiny of virtue. The classic discipline received in these consecrated shades, we consent to hold as a trust for the Moral Age of man. We will think our talents most honored, by a devotion to what is the most magnificent of human hopes. We will regard it as the highest point of dignity, in our several professions, that they are penetrated with a moral purpose, and suffer a natural connection with the highest ends of history. Contradiction shall not move us, sacrifices shall not deter us. Our temper shall partake the grander of our objects. And as we are most assimilated, in our ends, to that Great Being who rules in all ends, so shall we most partake the tranquillity of his wisdom, and the conscious beneficence that feeds his joy.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00014545682

Hollinger Corp.
pH 8.5