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S P E E C H,

AT THE

DINNER GIVEN IN HONOR

OF

GEORGE PEABODY, ESQ., OF LONDON,

BY THE

CITIZENS OF THE OLD TOWN OF DANVERS,

OCTOBER 9, 1856,

BY EDWARD EVERETT.

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BOSTON:

PRINTED BY HENRY W. DUTTON AND SON.

1857.



## S P E E C H .

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MR. PRESIDENT :—

I suppose you have called upon me to respond to this interesting toast,\* chiefly because I filled a few years ago a place abroad, which made me in some degree the associate of your distinguished guest, in the kindly office of promoting good will between the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Norman race, (for I do not think it matters much by which name you call it,) “the fair mother and the fairer daughter,” to which the toast alludes. At all events, I had much opportunity, during my residence in England, to witness the honorable position of Mr. Peabody in the commercial and social circles of London; his efforts to make the citizens of the two countries favorably known to each other; and generally that course of life and conduct, which has contributed to procure him the well-deserved honors of this day, and which shows that he fully enters into the spirit of the sentiment just propounded from the chair.

To the prayer of that sentiment, Sir, I fully respond, desiring nothing more ardently in the foreign relations of the country, than that these two great nations may be rivals only in their efforts to promote the welfare and improvement of mankind. They have already done, they are now doing much, at home and abroad, to promote that end by the arts of peace. Whenever they cooperate they can sweep everything before them;—when they are at variance, when they pull opposite ways, it is the annihilation of much of the moral power of both.

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\* The following is the toast, to which Mr. Everett was called upon to reply :—  
“England and America, *Pulchra mater, pulchrior filia*, long may they flourish in the bonds of peace, rivals only in their efforts to civilize and christianize the world.”

Whenever England and America combine their influence in promoting a worthy object, it moves forward like a vessel propelled by the united force of wind and steam ; but when they are in conflict with each other, it is like the struggle of the toiling engine against the opposing tempest. It is well if the laboring vessel holds her own ; there is danger if the steam prevails that she may be crowded under the mountain waves, or, if the storm gains the mastery, that she may drift upon the rocks.

It is very obvious to remark, on this occasion, and on this subject, while you are offering a tribute of respect to a distinguished man of business, that these two great nations, which are doing so much for the advancement of civilization, are the two leading commercial nations of the world ; that they have carried navigation and commerce to a height unknown before. And this consideration, Sir, will serve to justify you and your fellow-citizens, if they need justification, for the honors you are bestowing upon the guest of the day, as it will the other communities in different parts of the country, which have been desirous of joining in similar public demonstrations of respect. Without wishing to disparage the services which command your respect and gratitude, in the walks of political, military, or literary life, it is natural that, in a country like the United States, where commerce is so important an interest, you should be prompt to recognize distinguished merit in the commercial career ; a career of which, when pursued with diligence, sagacity, enterprise, integrity and honor, I deem it not too much to say, that it stands behind no other in its titles to respect and consideration ; as I deem it not too much to say of commerce in its largest comprehension, that it has done as much in all time, and is now doing as much, to promote the general cause of civilization, as any of the other great pursuits of life.

Trace its history for a moment from the earliest period. In the infancy of the world its caravans, like gigantic silk worms, went creeping, with their innumerable legs, through the arid wastes of Asia and Africa, and bound the human family together in those vast regions as they bind it together now. Its

colonial establishments scattered the Grecian culture all round the shores of the Mediterranean, and carried the adventurers of Tyre and Carthage to the north of Europe and the south of Africa. The walled cities of the middle ages prevented the arts and refinements of life from being trampled out of existence under the iron heel of the feudal powers. The Hanse Towns were the bulwark of liberty and property in the north and west of Europe for ages. The germ of the representative system sprang from the municipal franchises of the boroughs. At the revival of letters, the merchant princes of Florence received the fugitive arts of Greece into their stately palaces. The spirit of commercial adventure produced that movement in the fifteenth century which led Columbus to America, and Vasco di Gama around the Cape of Good Hope. The deep foundations of the modern system of international law were laid in the interests and rights of commerce, and the necessity of protecting them. Commerce sprinkled the treasures of the newly-found Indies throughout the western nations; it nerved the arm of civil and religious liberty in the Protestant world; it gradually extended the colonial system of Europe to the ends of the earth, and with it the elements of future independent, civilized, republican governments.

But why should we dwell on the past? What is it that gives vigor to the civilization of the present day but the world-wide extension of commercial intercourse, by which all the products of the earth and of the ocean—of the soil, the mine, the loom, and the forest—of bounteous nature, creative art, and untiring industry, are brought by the agencies of commerce into the universal market of demand and supply. No matter in what region, the desirable product is bestowed on man by a liberal Providence, or fabricated by human skill. It may clothe the hills of China with its fragrant foliage; it may glitter in the golden sands of California; it may wallow in the depths of Arctic seas; it may ripen and whiten on the fertile plains of the sunny South; it may spring forth from the flying shuttles of Manchester in England or Manchester in America—the great world-magnet of commerce at-

tracts it all alike, and gathers it all up for the service of man. I do not speak of English commerce or American commerce. Such distinctions enfeeble our conceptions. I speak of commerce in the aggregate—the great ebbing and flowing tides of the commercial world—the great gulf-streams of traffic which flow round from hemisphere to hemisphere,—the mighty trade-winds of commerce which sweep from the old world to the new,—that vast aggregate system which embraces the whole family of man, and brings the overflowing treasures of nature and art into kindly relation with human want, convenience and taste.

In carrying on this system, think for a moment of the stupendous agencies that are put in motion. Think for a moment of all the ships that navigate the sea. An old Latin poet, who knew no waters beyond those of the Mediterranean and Levant, says that the man must have had a triple casing of oak and brass about his bosom, who first trusted his frail bark on the raging sea. How many thousands of vessels, laden by commerce, are at this moment navigating, not the narrow seas, frequented by the ancients, but these world encompassing oceans! Think next of the mountains of brick, and stone, and iron, built up into the great commercial cities of the world; and of all the mighty works of ancient and modern contrivance and structure,—the moles, the lighthouses, the bridges, the canals, the roads, the railways, the depth of mines, the titanic force of enginery, the delving ploughs, the scythes, the reapers, the looms, the electric telegraphs, the vehicles of all descriptions, which directly or indirectly are employed or put in motion by commerce; and last, and most important, the millions of human beings that conduct, and regulate, and combine these inanimate, organic, and mechanical forces.

And now, Sir, is it anything less than a liberal profession, which carries a quick intelligence, a prophetic forecast, an industry that never tires, and, more than all, and above all, a stainless probity beyond reproach and beyond suspicion, into this vast and complicated system, and by the blessing of Providence, works out a prosperous result? Such is the vocation

of the merchant—the man of business—pursued in many departments of foreign and domestic trade—of finance, of exchange—but all comprehended under the general name of commerce; all concerned in weaving the mighty network of mutually beneficial exchanges which enwraps the world.

I know there is a shade to this bright picture: where among the works or the fortunes of men shall we find one that is all sunlight? Napoleon the First thought he had said enough to disparage England when he had pronounced her a nation of shopkeepers; and we Americans are said by some of our own writers to be slaves of the almighty dollar. But these are sallies of national hostility, or the rebukes which a stern moral sense rightly administers to the besetting sins of individuals or communities. Every pursuit in life, however, has its bright and its dark phase; every pursuit may be followed in a generous spirit for honorable ends, or in a mean, selfish, corrupt spirit, beginning and ending in personal gratification. But this is no more the case with the commercial than any other career. What more different than the profession of the law, as pursued by the upright counsellor, who spreads the shield of eternal justice over your life and fortune, and the wicked pettifogger who drags you through the thorns and brambles of vexatious litigation? What more different than the beloved physician, the sound of whose soft footstep, as he ascends your staircase, carries hope and comfort to the couch of weariness and suffering, and the solemn, palavering, impudent quack, who fattens on the fears and frailties of his victims? What more different than the pulpit which reproves, rebukes, and exhorts in the spirit and with the authority of the gospel, and the pulpit which inflames and maddens, perplexes or puts to sleep? What more different than the press, which, like the morning sun, sheds light and truth through the land, and the press which daily distils the concentrated venom of personal malice and party detraction from its dripping wings? I believe that the commercial profession is as capable of being pursued with intelligence, honor, and public spirit, as any other; and, when so pursued, is as compatible with purity, and eleva-



tion of character as any other; as well entitled to the honors which a community bestows on those who adorn and serve it; the honors which you this day delight to pay to our friend and guest.

I was not the witness of the commencement of his career abroad; but we all know that it soon fell upon that disastrous period when all American credit stood low—when the default of some of the States, the temporary inability of others to meet their obligations, and the failure of several of our moneyed institutions, threw doubt and distrust on all American securities. That great sympathetic nerve (as the anatomists call it) of the commercial world—credit—as far as the United States were concerned, was for a time paralyzed. At that moment, and it was a trying one, our friend not only stood firm himself, but he was the cause of firmness in others. There were not at the time, probably, a half a dozen other men in Europe, who, upon the subject of American securities, would have been listened to for a moment, in the parlor of the Bank of England. But his judgment commanded respect—his integrity won back the reliance which men had been accustomed to place on American securities. The reproach in which they were all indiscriminately involved was gradually wiped away, from those of a substantial character; and if on this solid basis of unsuspected good faith he reared his own prosperity, let it be remembered that, at the same time, he retrieved the credit of the State of which he was the agent; performing the miracle, if I may so venture to express myself, by which the word of an honest man turns paper into gold.

A course like this, however commendable, might proceed from calculation. If it led to prosperity and opulence it might be pursued from motives exclusively selfish. But Mr. Peabody took a different view of the matter, and immediately began to act upon an old fashioned New England maxim, which I dare say he learned in childhood and carried with him from Danvers,—that influence and property have their duties as well as their privileges. He set himself to work to promote the convenience and enhance the enjoyments of his travelling fellow

countrymen—a numerous and important class. The traveller—often the friendless traveller—stands greatly in need of good offices in a foreign land. Several of you, my friends, know this, I am sure, by experience ; some of you can say how perseveringly, how liberally, these good offices were extended by our friend, through a long course of years, to his travelling countrymen. How many days, otherwise weary, have been winged with cheerful enjoyments through his agency ; how many otherwise dull hours in health and in sickness enlivened by his attentions !

It occurred to our friend especially to do that on a large scale, which had hitherto been done to a very limited extent by our diplomatic representatives abroad. The small salaries and still smaller private fortunes (with a single exception) of our ministers at St. James, had prevented them from extending the rites of hospitality as liberally as they could have wished to their fellow-citizens abroad. Our friend happily, with ample means, determined to supply the defect ; and brought together at the social board, from year to year, at a succession of entertainments equally magnificent and tasteful, hundreds of his own countrymen and of his English friends. How much was done in this way to promote kind feeling and mutual good will, to soften prejudice, to establish a good understanding, in a word, to nurture that generous rivalry inculcated in the sentiment to which you have bid me respond, I need not say. I have been particularly requested by my friend, Sir Henry Holland, a gentleman of the highest social and professional standing, to state, while expressing his deep regret that he cannot, in conformity with your kind invitation, participate in this day's festivities, that he has attended several of Mr. Peabody's international entertainments in London, and felt them to be of the happiest tendency in promoting kind feeling between the two countries.

We are bound as Americans, on this occasion particularly, to remember the very important services rendered by your guest to his countrymen who went to England in 1851, with specimens of the products and arts of this country, to be exhib-

