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DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY

OF

BOWDOIN COLLEGE,

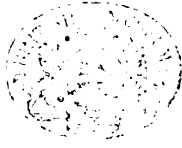
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DISCOURSE.*

THERE are some occasions which almost necessarily cast out from one's mind all thoughts of being a stranger, even when his eye is meeting faces which it never met before. When the friends of learning come together to celebrate her past triumphs or consult for her future advancement; especially when such an association as this, which she acknowledges as one of her most revered and efficient helpers, assembles to keep an annual jubilee to her honour; there is little reason why the matter of a cordial sympathy between the speaker and his audience, should turn upon so unimportant a question as whether they have ever had a previous meeting. I confess, Gentlemen, that, in attempting to comply with your request, it costs me little effort to feel at home in the new circle in which your partiality has placed me; for I greet you as

* The greater part of this discourse was delivered at the late anniversary of the Phi Beta Kappa society of Dartmouth college.

fellow labourers in the cause of intellectual improvement, and I remember that the republic of letters knows no geography. I feel honoured in finding myself, as I do for the first time, surrounded with the sons of Bowdoin; and I am glad to breathe, though it be but for a few hours, the atmosphere in which so many fine intellectual constitutions have been reared; but the more grateful reflection to me is, that though we hail from different colleges, we are devoted to a common cause; and that the sons of Harvard, or of Yale, or of any other of our higher seminaries, may afford to join you in this festival, without even thinking of their individual literary maternity.

Notwithstanding it is the idea of good fellowship and grateful remembrances, rather than of anything formal or elaborate, that seems most congenial with the spirit of the occasion, I could not feel that I was true to either your expectations or my duty, if I were to throw away this hour upon any indifferent or profitless speculations. What I wish is, to give to your minds such a direction as may serve to quicken your sense of responsibility as scholars, and to stimulate you to more vigorous efforts for the well being of the race; and I know not that I can accomplish this object better than by bringing before you a few thoughts on the PERPETUITY OF INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCE.

There is a sense indeed in which it may be said that *all* influence is immortal. We are too much accustomed, in our estimate of both objects and events, to regard them in an insulated, rather than a connected, view: reason condemns this as an illusion incident to the imperfection of our faculties. Whatever God has made or ordained, belongs to a mighty system, from which nothing can be spared, but at the expense of the perfection of the whole. And as this system has been constituted with a view to important ends, so all its parts are put in requisition for their accomplishment. The dew drop of the morning and the lily of the valley have a purpose to answer, as truly as the wide ocean or the majestic oak. The man of the hovel has a part to act, as truly as the man of the palace. And though the influence of the one may seem to be as nothing, while the influence of the other presses upon you every where, yet they are alike in this,—that they are both component parts of God's universal ministry; they both belong to a system of perpetual and boundless co-operation.

I hardly need say that it is in a more specific sense than this, that I design now to speak of the perpetuity of intellectual influence. I refer more particularly to those minds that nature, or culture, or both, have exalted above the mass; and yet I will include not merely men of such towering intel-

lectual stature as to constitute them the lights of their age, and afterwards the lights of history, but all whose faculties have been trained to vigorous exercise, and directed, in general, to useful ends. My position is, that men of this description, living in whatever country or age they may, never cease to live. They have an important and enduring agency, in moulding the character and destiny of the race. Whether their influence works a new channel for itself through successive generations, or whether it mingles more directly in the mighty stream which is forever growing from the contributions of ages, you can no more question its perpetuity, than you can doubt the axioms of science, or reject the testimony of the senses.

Intellectual influence in the high sense here contemplated, perpetuates itself primarily, in a direct study of the great works which it has originated and accomplished, and which remain an hereditary and permanent legacy to the world. A great mind imparts to its offspring, not merely a general intellectual hue, but a marked individuality of features and expression. No matter whether it be through the pen, or the pencil, or some other medium, that such a mind puts forth its efforts, in those efforts it enshrines itself for immortality; and henceforth it lives in a form in which it can be referred to and communed with by men of every clime and every

generation; lives to teach wisdom, to quicken thought, to mould character, on earth, while its immediate sphere of activity is amidst the scenes beyond the veil.

Who believes, for instance, that the author of the Iliad had done teaching the art of poetry, when the rude generation that first heard his poetry sung, had passed away? Centuries after, the great Virgil sat at his feet, and invoked his muse, and followed, (*haud passibus æquis* it must be acknowledged,) in his glorious track. And from Virgil down to Wordsworth, it would perhaps be difficult to find a great poet, who had not either directly or indirectly, held communion with the Grecian bard. Nor is it merely in forming poets of illustrious name, that the influence of Homer has been felt; but genius in every form has acknowledged the power of his sublime creations. The painter has felt it, working up his pictures into the bold and bright realities of nature; the sculptor has felt it, causing the cold marble to take on every thing that pertains to life, but its actual pulsations; the architect has felt it in the new forms of beauty and magnificence which it has supplied to his imagination; every scholar has felt it, at least in his admiration of the power of genius and in fresh impulses towards intellectual eminence. I take for granted that Homer, in some form, is an inmate of this venerable seat of learning; and I

doubt not that many who hear me, would respond heartily to all that I could say of the privilege of walking in the light of his genius.

But Greece gave to the world its greatest orator as well as its greatest poet; and it is no less true of the thunder of the former, than of the melody of the latter, that it has never yet died away. It must be acknowledged that, in order fully to appreciate the power of a great orator, we must hear the voice and see the face of the living man; we must surrender ourselves to the magic glances of the eye, to the mysterious dominion of gesture and attitude; and such, in some cases, has been the power of mere manner, as to invest the most indifferent common places with the character of lofty wisdom. If what has come down to us in respect to the manner of Demosthenes is to be relied on, there must have been in it an assemblage of qualities, which could never be adequately conceived, without being witnessed and felt. In this respect, the generation that listened to him had certainly the advantage of the generations that have succeeded; though history has preserved enough, to render him a universal teacher. But for the power and splendour of his conceptions and his language, we are not obliged to trust history; for in spite of the barbarism of intervening ages, a large portion of his productions have been preserved. And in them we realize so

vividly the fervid and lofty kindlings of his spirit, his alternate calmness and vehemence, his power to rouse and agitate, to assuage and subdue, that in our estimate of the orator, we almost forget that the face and the voice could have imparted any additional attraction. Now I maintain that, though death took him out of the scenes in which he had been accustomed to mingle, so that he was no longer the terror of his adversaries or the hope of his country, it still left him in the world;—left him to speak to all nations and all ages, in those matchless productions that can never die. The orations against Philip evidently gave a hue, in an after age, to the orations against Catiline; and it may well be doubted whether there ever would have been a Chatham, or a John Adams, or a Chalmers, if there had not been a Demosthenes to go before;—for whatever those great minds might have been, independently of the Grecian orator, it can hardly be questioned that he acted as a powerful auxiliary to the culture of each. Who will not say that he has mastered the grave, who, after the lapse of nearly half the whole period of the world's existence, still occupies the throne in the department of eloquence; is still revered and cherished as a model in all the schools; and is continually reproducing, in a degree, the same sentiments of hope and fear, of sympathy and aversion, of admiration and scorn, which alternately

swayed the multitudes who listened to the living orator?

If another illustration is needed, let it be from the department of the fine arts; and a better example we cannot find than Michael Angelo; for the painter and the sculptor, to say nothing of the poet or the architect, were combined in him, in perhaps nearly equal degrees of eminence. The splendid period which he adorned, scarcely furnished another genius equally bold and lofty and versatile. Some of his statues have been pronounced not inferior to the finest specimens of the Greek school; and many of the productions of his pencil would not suffer in a comparison with any of the master pieces of antiquity. In the statues of Cupid and Bacchus, of Moses and the Christ, in the monuments of the Medici and the representation of the Saviour's descent from the cross, the powers of sculpture seem to have been well nigh exhausted. In the sister art, perhaps the brightest monument of his genius is his picture of the last judgment, executed in the style and spirit of his favourite poet Dante;—a picture that groups, with terrible and glorious effect, most of the material circumstances of the final catastrophe of the universe. I say nothing here of what this wonderful achievement of the pencil has effected, or is hereafter to effect, in reviving or perpetuating a taste for the fine arts :

I only say that, so long as this picture lasts, it will be a medium through which the mind of the immortal artist will act with mighty moral power upon a multitude of other minds; and even those who have not an eye to detect its minuter beauties, find it easy to comprehend, and difficult to resist, the grand and solemn lessons which it inculcates. Michael Angelo flourished in the very dawn of the Reformation; and it were to be expected that such a subject should be invested in his mind with somewhat of the superstition of his age; but yet the picture brings out a much truer theology, and in an infinitely more effective manner, than is to be found in the perplexed and bewildering speculations of most of his contemporaries. I should not think it beneath a protestant of the nineteenth century, to study this picture, not merely for the genius which it evinces, but for the truth which it displays; for though it be truth which Christianity has cast into the light of noonday, and which Protestant Christianity has separated from the errors with which it was once associated, it often becomes more impressive, even to a cultivated mind, when it thus makes its appeal through the medium of the senses.

But it is not always that the efforts of great minds are embodied in a literally visible and palpable form. It is possible that they may be so

subtle as hardly to come within the range of the senses, or so secret as not to fall within the domain of history; and yet they may penetrate to the very heart of the world, and reach onward to the end of time. Or even, though they may be palpable enough to the generation to which they immediately belong, yet, as they derive their power, in a great degree, from combination, and from the peculiar existing relations of things, they necessarily lose their distinctive character with posterity; and though their influence is forever at work in moulding the destiny of society, it were not more hopeless to attempt to gather out of the ocean the drops that have fallen in a single shower, than to designate the innumerable and multiform channels through which this influence diffuses itself. Hence there are many great and permanent benefactors of the race, whose names scarcely survive the generation that immediately succeeds them. Perhaps they put forth no single independent effort of so marked a character that any distinct record is made of it; and yet they are vigorous and efficient co-workers with others, in bringing about momentous results: they have an enduring life in those institutions which they have contributed to establish or improve. It has happened, not unfrequently, that those measures which have left the deepest impress upon society, have originated in the wisdom of one,

and been brought forward and urged by the eloquence of another; and though, in such a case, the latter is usually the person to receive the laurels, the former is the one who really holds his race under the heaviest obligation. It has fallen to the lot of here and there an individual, to do good service to the world in both the ways of which I have spoken—I mean, by great efforts which are perpetuated in their original form, and by that more general influence of which history often finds it difficult to take cognizance, except in its results. The great German Reformer performed mighty works with his pen; and those works made a powerful impression on the darkness of his age; and they have been out on a mission of light and love ever since; and both God and man will see that that mission is never suffered to terminate. But we have here only a part of Luther's achievements. He was certainly in some respects, the master spirit of his time. His great heart never took the first lesson in fear; his giant intellect was always awake; his eagle eye always upon the stretch; his well nigh resistless hand ever nerved for action; and possessing such qualities, and maintaining such attitudes, we easily see that we have not reached the source of his highest influence till we have come up to his unwritten thoughts; to words that fell upon the ear but have never met the eye; to

deeds of noble daring, of which it is left to history alone to speak. Cherish his written productions with as much reverence as you will, but study the history of his life, and you shall find greater works than these ; and even history will reveal to you but very imperfectly what it was that made him the wonder of his age. Suppose Luther's great influence had never been put forth, or had not survived his own generation, who knows that even we, in these ends of the earth, should have been breathing the genial atmosphere of civil and religious freedom ?

I have spoken of the influence which great minds exert by those embalmed efforts, in which they become teachers, perhaps models, for all posterity. But our view of this subject would be incomplete, if it were not to include also some reference to those obscure hints and apparently insignificant suggestions, which, possibly, at the time, pass without much notice, but are afterwards found to have contained the seminal principle of some great discovery. It sometimes happens indeed that the same individual seems to originate and mature, if not absolutely perfect. Some accidental observation of the operations of nature, suggests a grand conception, which, when carried out, revolutionizes the world. It occurred to Columbus that it was natural to suppose that the Eastern continent should be balanced by a Western ; and this thought brought in its train the

discovery of America. Newton's doctrine of colours, the prismatic spectrum, was the result of his observing the colours in a soap bubble. The idea of the London tunnel is said to have been first suggested by the operations of some insect, in protruding a kind of sheath, as it bored its way through the sand. But it is quite possible that the seed of a great invention may lie, in some measure, dormant in the mind of several generations, before it begins to germinate. Some remote hint of it may be suggested, sufficient to keep the mind of the world in a wakeful and expecting attitude; and there may be some visible approximation to it, as the years and generations pass away; or possibly, after a long period of suspense and inquiry, the whole distance between absolute ignorance and complete knowledge, may be passed over in an hour. The origin of the steam engine is referred to the Marquis of Worcester, in the time of Charles the First; but the rude thing which he constructed, had to come down through the hands of Savary and Watt and Fitch and Fulton, before it could be made available to bringing the poles together. The conception of the Electric Telegraph dates back into the last century; there were men in different countries eagerly looking out for it; and it finally came in its present form, as the result of other philosophical discoveries, which had been coming in upon the world

through a series of years. There have been instances also, as in the discovery of Galvanism, in which a new field of truth has suddenly opened upon a mind which has not been in search of it,—possibly, which has been in search of something scarcely analogous to it. Now, in all these cases,—whether the discovery be a matter of design and inquiry, or a matter of pure accident,—whether there has been a manifest preparation for it, as gradual as the dawn of morning, or whether it has come unbidden and unlooked for, as the lightning's flash, it is invariably the result of influences that have been previously at work. I venerate the names of Newton and Franklin, of Fulton and Morse; and I am more than willing to concede to them the honour due to illustrious discoverers; but, after all, each of them entered, in a degree at least, into other men's labours; or, if the discovery were acknowledged to be entirely original, yet the general light of the age in which it was made, was nothing less than the accumulated influence of preceding centuries.

It is an interesting thought in this connection, that the achievements of the great intellects of one generation, are not only bequeathed as a legacy to the next, but actually become capital for the next to employ in enlarging still more the stock of intelligence and virtue. When Fulton died, it was a

great matter that he left an insignificant steamboat or two, plying doggedly on the Hudson, at the rate of five or six miles an hour; it was a glorious triumph, in connection with which he might safely leave his name and his fame to future generations; but those who have come after him, having taken his improvement as the basis of still farther improvements, have covered not only the Hudson, but all our navigable rivers, with flying palaces. And thus it is in every department: the man who accomplishes any thing great and good for his race, thereby furnishes a platform for the next generation to stand upon, to accomplish something greater and better; and though, in the progress of years, the immediate result of his efforts may be cast into the shade by the yet nobler exploits of other minds, it will still be true that they labour in his strength and he lives in their efforts.

It may occur to you that the evidence of the position I am endeavouring to maintain, is rendered at least less impressive, if not absolutely dubious, by the fact that the current of intellectual influence sometimes seems to be arrested; and those regions which were once the garden of learning and civilization, are invaded and trodden down by the rough foot of barbarism. The fact here alleged is indeed unquestionable. The intellectual history of the world is the record of alternate depression and

triumph: not a nation has ever existed, but has furnished an example, in a greater or less degree, of such vicissitude. Greece, in the age of Pericles, acknowledged no rival, and feared none; but she has been sitting in sackcloth for ages, gazing at the scattered fragments of her former glory. Rome, in the age of Augustus, became, in her turn, the mistress of learning and eloquence and art; but after she had secured to herself an illuminated page in the world's history, she came down into the dust; and when we inquire now for her great orators and historians and poets, she points us with downcast look to the tombs of Tully and Sallust and Virgil. The period of Leo the Tenth was a bright day for Italy, in respect to the triumph of the arts; but after a generation or two, all her renown had become a matter of history. The highest literary glory of France is identified with the reign of Louis the Fourteenth; and that of England with the reign of Elizabeth; and though, in each country, learning has ever since kept her fires burning, yet the genius of Hooker and Milton and Bacon, of Boileau and Moliere and Corneille, has hardly been reproduced. Thus the intellect of the world seems always to have been moving about: it has sometimes been concentrated within narrow limits, but it has always refused to be long stationary.

I may remark, in passing, that this feature in the

history of intellect is quite analogous to the established economy of both the physical and the moral world. Creation itself is an example of endless variety; and much of both its beauty and utility depends upon this characteristic. The laws which regulate the operations of nature are uniform; but not uniform in such a sense as to render human existence a perpetual monotony. God's moral administration is conducted upon fixed principles; and yet the developments in the moral world have been various, according to the circumstances in which different nations have been placed. I say, therefore, if we were to take counsel of the established order of things, in other departments of the divine economy, we should be led to expect nothing else in regard to intellectual progress, than what we actually find;—that, in some countries, the mind would be asleep, while, in others, it would be achieving its most glorious triumphs.

I shall not attempt here to investigate the particular causes of either the rise or the decline of learning, in any period, or any country; for these would be found so complex, and so interwoven with the general history of society, as to require not only a minuter analysis, but a wider range, than would consist with the limits which the occasion prescribes to me. But I may say that, as we lose nothing, on the whole, by that variety which marks

the constitution of nature,—as the lightning and tempest that scathe and blast, are Heaven's accredited ministers of benevolence to earth, so the alternations which we witness in the domain of intellect, are consistent with a substantial and enduring progress. Let superstition bury the mind in the night clouds of ignorance and error,—it may bear it for a while ; but, as sure as the mind is modelled after the perfections of God, it will ere long avenge itself of the wrongs it has suffered, by awaking to glorious impulses in defence of its own immortal rights. Superstition was the nurse of the Reformers. She first laid their intellects in her swaddling clothes ; she administered antidotes to the legitimate workings of reason and truth ; in due time, she brought forth her chain, and sought to bind every faculty ; and, for a while, she doubted not but that her success was complete. Ere long, however, she found herself in contact with certain giant spirits,—the very spirits whom she had herself trained, that had begun to dream of truth ; and though she took to herself her whole armour, she found that they had a heavier armour still : when she reasoned, they confounded her ; when she threatened, they defied her ; when she flattered, they laughed her to scorn. It is true indeed that this was primarily a religious reformation ; but as the intellectual and the spiritual man had suffered

together, so also they enjoyed a united triumph. The effort to cast off that terrible incubus that had been pressing upon the mind of the world for ages, proved the opening of a new spring of intellectual life ; and it is not too much to say, that its quickening influence is felt, at this hour, among all the nations.

There is another consideration that may possibly be thought to militate somewhat against the position I have undertaken to establish,—I refer to the fact that the finest models of eloquence, of poetry and of art, date back to a remote antiquity. In accounting for this fact, in respect to poetry and eloquence at least, we are to remember that those great minds had a field which was comparatively unoccupied : the scenes which inspired Homer, were new to poetry ; and the occasions which roused Demosthenes, had not become familiar to eloquence ; so that their conceptions were of course, in a great degree, original. And even the artist had the advantage, to some extent, of occupying a new field ; for the poverty of art, in its earliest stages, had left to the Greek masters nearly the whole of nature to copy, without their running any hazard of repetition. Besides, was it not worthy of a benignant Providence to allow here and there a master spirit to arise, who should not only irradiate his own country and age, but tower into a universal and perpetual model. But, however bright or enduring may be the lustre

of those stars of antiquity, we should remember that they were but solitary stars, or I should rather say solitary constellations, in the midst of wide-spread darkness. If there were a few minds that seemed to reach the highest point of elegance and of power, the mass were in bondage to the most degrading ignorance. Whereas now, knowledge has become almost as diffusive as the light; and what is lacking in intensity, is made up a thousand fold in extension. We are warranted, therefore, in saying that intellectual influence has hitherto, on the whole, been progressive; and if the past sheds any light upon the future, we have a right to conclude that it will be perpetual.

It is a question of no small interest what constitutes the principle of self-preservation in the productions of the human mind;—wherefore it is that of two lights that seem to burn with equal brightness, one burns on forever, and the other gradually dies away, till it reaches the point of absolute extinction. I suppose that the solution is to be found chiefly in the fact that in the one case there is, in the other there is not, a conformity to truth and nature,—to the established order of the creation. The physical, the intellectual, the moral world, has each received its appropriate direction; and God requires that man should respect his ordinance;—should move in harmony with the laws

which He has impressed upon his own works; and just in proportion as man loses sight of this requisition, his labours will certainly be in vain. It is indeed quite possible that men may violate the established economy of the universe, and yet their productions may be the objects of a temporary admiration; and they may even go into their graves, dreaming that they have acquired for themselves an immortal name; but it will not be long before their works will follow them to the land of forgetfulness. Even genius herself, though she may leave her image impressed upon them ever so deeply, can procure for them but a brief respite; for truth and nature must and will be vindicated, in their being given to the worm.

Let me not be understood, however, to imply that every kind of departure from the actual reality of things as God has constituted them, necessarily infers a precarious or brief existence. A literary production or a work of art may have no prototype in nature, and yet it may faithfully exhibit some actual perversion of nature, which has helped essentially to form the character of an age. Homer has painted out many great events, which at least do not offend against probability; and he has brought forth many fine representations of natural objects, which we know to be true; and with all this he has intermingled an entirely fabulous celes-

tial economy; and yet it was the commonly admitted economy of the time; and thus, even here, his representations were conformed to fact, though not to nature. The economy itself, was false, and consequently perishable; but the view which he has given of it is true,—that is, is a fair record of the religious vagaries of his age; and therefore, illuminated as it is by his matchless genius, it is immortal. The great works of Phidias and Praxiteles embodied the popular conceptions of their time; and thus, to this day, have all the effect of historical monuments; yet the characters or the events which they commemorate, have their origin chiefly in an absurd and ridiculous mythology. The pen of inspiration is alike faithful in describing the delusions of idolatry and the triumphs of Christianity, the suicide of Judas and the tranquil death scene of Stephen; and the record is as enduring in the one case as in the other.

If you look, for a moment, into the domain of art, and inquire what it is that chiefly distinguishes those productions which the world has long since pronounced immortal, you will find that it is this very quality of which I am speaking,—a conformity to the everlasting principles of truth, as they are manifested in the external world. The Parthenon and the Propylæa, the Collisæum and the Pantheon, upon each of which barbarism had well nigh per-

formed its perfect work,—though belonging to different orders, are an embodiment of the highest principles of architectural taste: each is glorious in its ruins; not because it is the product of immense thought and labour, but because its proportions, its ornaments, every thing pertaining to it,—has its basis in the economy of the creation. What is it that renders so irresistible to the eye Raphael's coronation of Charlemagne, or his deliverance of Peter from prison, or Michael Angelo's statues for the monument of Julius? It is that nature is here so admirably imitated that you feel yourself to be in actual communion with her; and the being who gazes at you from the canvas or the marble, is so entirely a thing of life, that you involuntarily walk reverently and talk softly in his presence. Such productions as these attract the universal eye; and though it may take a connoisseur to find out all their beauties, or to feel their full effect, yet the most unlettered peasant will view them with admiration, because they agree to an inward sense of fitness, founded on nature and truth, which he has never attempted to analyze.

Need I say that it is this quality especially, that has given to Shakspeare his matchless attractions, as master of the drama. There have been other dramatic writers far more learned, in the technical sense, than he; but none half so effective; and the

reason is, that he carried the lamp directly into the heart's deepest recesses, while they have stood without and held it at a distance; they have regarded chiefly what was rare, or factitious, or imaginary, while he conversed with every day realities, and was at once nature's docile pupil and faithful interpreter. There was nothing in the form of man from which he turned away. Man in the market place, man in the workshop, man in the prison, man even in the gutter, as well as man in the palace or on the throne, was a book for his perusal, a subject for his anatomy. Indeed he was shut up chiefly to original nature; for with the exception of the characters of Chaucer, which took their hue chiefly from the poetry of the Troubadours, there was nothing in the English language, and very little that was accessible to him in any other, that furnished any tolerable illustration of human life. Hence there is scarcely a type of humanity, but some one or other of his characters resembles it. I know indeed that this great explorer of the heart, this master of the passions, is not without the most serious defects; and many a critic has ventured to assail him with his barbed arrows; but they have availed about as little as did the arrows which the Parthians shot against the sun. Even the moral blemishes, the unpardonable offences against reverence and purity and virtue, with which

all are constrained to acknowledge that he is chargeable, are tolerated by a sort of common consent; and the reason is, that they are inseparably interwoven with the texture of productions in which nature is so exactly copied, that the world will never consent to let them die. You have only to compare Shakspeare's Othello with Addison's Cato, to see how much superior Shakspeare was in the simplicity and truthfulness of nature, to the most successful aspirants to dramatic fame, that have succeeded him.

Nor is this principle less strikingly illustrated in the department of philosophy. Aristotle, you know, was the great champion of dialectics in Greece; and the Peripatetic school which he established at Athens, was in existence as late as the time of Augustus. But Greece was but a single province of his dominion: he gradually brought under his sway almost the entire cultivated intellect of the world. He ruled at Rome in the time of the Cæsars. He ruled in Arabia through the brightest periods of her history. He ruled for ages in the Christian church, as the presiding genius of every cell and convent which superstition had reared. In a word, the Jew and the Gentile, the Mohammedan and the Christian, bowed implicitly to his authority, and walked hand in hand in the light of his teachings. And Aristotle was truly a prince in the

world of intellect,—the greatest light, no doubt, of all antiquity. He was not merely a student but an originator: though he was furnished with a basis to work upon in the speculations of philosophers who had preceded him, especially of his own illustrious master, yet he may be said to have framed a new system;—a system which had in it many precious materials that must endure always, but which, nevertheless, was not without its share of wood, hay and stubble. With the schoolmen of the middle ages, it lost its native dignity, and became identified with an absurd and drivelling mysticism; and, in this form, the world ere long grew weary of it, and Lord Bacon was the man to pronounce its doom. The bringing in of the doctrine of induction marked an epoch in the history of intellect; and whether we consider its conformity to truth and reason, or the triumphs which it has already achieved, we cannot doubt that it is destined to endure and to become universal. Here and there indeed, in some creature of the mist, some dissector of the air, the spirit of the inglorious past is reproduced; and perhaps it lingers in some of the schools, as if sighing to regain its lost empire; but the providence of God, in the progress of truth and knowledge, forbids all fear of its final triumph. The truth is, that the prototype of this latter system is in ideal or imaginary existences; while the prototype of the

former is in the very world of mind and matter which God has made; and it were to be expected that God should honour those by rendering their labours perpetual, who honour Him by labouring in obedience to his laws.

I find another apt illustration of my position in the history of religion; for though I am speaking of intellectual influence, the intellect has its part to perform here as well as elsewhere; and we may be allowed to speak here with the greater confidence, as the standard of truth and right is a matter of direct revelation. The germ of a perfect system of religion is coeval with the existence of the race. There are certain great fundamental truths, of which nature herself seems a divinely constituted teacher. But man has not been left to her teachings alone; for during a period of four thousand years, there was a continued succession of divine revelations, which inspiration hath embodied in a permanent and infallible record; and in this record we have now a complete system of religious faith. But the disposition to mar this perfect system by spurious additions, has been manifest in every stage of its development. Even the Patriarchal dispensation witnessed to the setting up of idols, in place of the one only living and true God. During the Mosaic economy, a large part of the world, including the most cultivated nations, had buried the original

principles of natural religion under a mass of absurd notions, and foolish, indecent or cruel rites. And the false systems which thus grew up, have come down from age to age,—changing their character indeed, in many respects, but in regard to the fundamental point of idol worship, remaining unchanged. Christianity came as the fulness of the blessing that had been in progress for ages; and, for a while, she stood erect and beautiful, the very image of the Heavens. But it was not long before the spirit of the world seized her; and from being an angel of wisdom and love, she became the ally of superstition,—even the minister of cruelty. In other words, the system which, for centuries, was received as Christianity, was quite another thing than the Christianity of the New Testament; it was at best a miserable caricature of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. But, in due time, there arose a set of men, who went earnestly, heroically to work, to separate the precious from the vile, and to restore to the church the pure system of truth, of which she had suffered herself to be robbed, or rather which she had voluntarily cast away. The labour which they commenced, it must be acknowledged, came to an ignoble pause with the generations that succeeded them; but it has revived in our day, and gives every promise of reaching, ere long, a glorious consummation. Nor is the Protestant church satis-

fied to extend her triumphs within the empire of nominal Christendom; but she is attacking, with yet greater zeal, the manifold forms of Pagan superstition; and she distinctly proclaims her purpose to keep at her work, till the last of them has become a despised and neglected thing. And I know that she will succeed in her enterprize. I know it, because I find sentence pronounced against every perversion of either natural or revealed religion, by the infallible word of God; but my faith in this divine testimony cannot but be confirmed, when I see how utterly all these human devices are at variance with man's own constitution; how they blight his noble faculties; how they belittle his immortal nature; how they hang about him as incumbrances which reason and conscience are forever urging him to cast off. The voice of the past proclaims that nothing in religion but what really belongs to her, will live; that while she will retain every element of truth and purity and power, she will shake herself more and more from whatever is earthly and adventitious, till she stands forth in all the simplicity and energy and majesty, which she brought with her from Heaven.

If I am right as to what is necessary to give permanency to intellectual efforts, then I am sure there is many a dreamer of immortality in our day, who has nothing better to expect than a brief and insig-

nificant existence. There are dreamers in philosophy, who cut loose from all established principles, and would palm upon us, in place of the sober deductions of reason, those absurd vagaries of the fancy, which even poetry would scarcely admit, without apologizing for an unaccustomed license. There are dreamers in politics, with whom the science of legislation degenerates into a mere tissue of blind abstractions; who seem to overlook the fact that communities are made up of individuals, and that government, in order to accomplish its legitimate end, must contemplate the workings of individual hearts; or rather must regard the mass as having a common heart, corresponding to that which beats in every bosom. There are dreamers in respect to the means of social happiness; who would merge individual rights and interests in the common weal; who, under the pretence of magnifying universal philanthropy, actually exemplify a spirit of universal selfishness. There are dreamers in theology, who would accumulate upon us, as objects of faith, matters which have not been revealed, or who would send the universe into mourning for the loss of its God. There are dreamers in literature;—some really gifted minds, who had rather be found in a wrong track than a beaten track; who seem to love the darkness, because it renders more impressive their gorgeous creations;

while there are others who try to hide the poverty of their conceptions in a mist; who throw out their common places with oracular assurance; and who finally make you lose your temper by making you feel that, in the attempt to follow them, you have lost your labour. Now, I venture to say that all these offenders against truth and nature, will have their reward; and it will be of such short duration, that it would not be strange if they should live to enjoy it all. They may bequeath their productions to posterity,—no matter how solemnly,—posterity will indignantly reject them; she will say that it is enough and more than enough, that they have exercised a momentary sway over their own generation. Or if they should chance to maintain their ephemeral dominion, even through several generations, it will be only the difference between a sudden and a lingering death. I would not ask to have it certified to me by any prophet, that some who pride themselves as among the brightest stars of the present age, will, within less than a century, have run their short lived course, and utterly disappeared from the world's intellectual horizon.

But notwithstanding nothing that is not conformed to truth and right can endure as a permanent element of human life or human society, it is not safe to leave the good to work its own way, and the evil to die out of itself; for though there is that in

the very constitution of things, which ensures the result of which I have spoken, that result is never realized, independently of the instrumentality of cultivated and virtuous minds. You see then that, in this arrangement of Providence, there is devolved upon you a mighty responsibility. You stand as legatees in respect to the past; as guardians in respect to the future. These religious, civil and literary institutions, the laws that govern us and the liberty in which we rejoice, the achievements of learning and science, and the precious records of our common faith, we receive as an inheritance;— as an embodiment of the intellect and the heart of many generations. Believe me, you have much to do in order to fulfil the great purpose of Heaven, in committing this deposit to your hands. It is not enough that you do nothing to mar or diminish; you are to do much to increase and strengthen and adorn. You are not merely to enjoy the labours of other generations; you are to carry forward what they have begun, and to leave a richer legacy to the future than you have received from the past. You are to take heed, especially, that your intellectual efforts are all directed to honourable ends, and controlled by virtuous dispositions. If mistakes and errors have come down to you,—no matter though they be hoary with age, and consecrated by the prejudices of many generations, you are to do

what you can to correct them, so that they shall not survive as a burden or a curse to another generation. But while you are ready to lend a helping hand to every work of real reform, you are to bring the claims of every object that invokes your sympathy or your aid, to the light; for there are dreamers and madmen abroad, who claim to be the world's chief reformers. If there are influences at work for evil among your contemporaries, you are bound to put forth, according to the measure of your ability, an antagonist influence. You are to cherish our noble institutions with grateful and reverential care, regarding each of them as a light shining for the benefit of the world. In a word, you are to show yourselves at once the patrons and the examples of intellectual excellence; and the great cause of humanity will scarcely ask any other pledge that her interests shall be protected and improved in your hands.

Does not the glance which we have now taken at the general progress of society, including its alternate struggles and triumphs, justify glorious expectations in regard to the future? With the men of this generation is lodged the aggregate influence of nearly sixty centuries;—an influence which originated with the parents of the race, and which has been flowing onward, often indeed in an irregular, and sometimes a concealed, channel, but,

on the whole, gradually increasing to the present hour. Now we may safely say that here is a great system in operation, under the direction of Providence, which must work out intellectual and moral results that have yet been scarcely shadowed forth even to our imaginations; and yet we shall form no adequate estimate of the case, unless we take into view the increased power of the present age above any of the ages that have preceded it. Is there any thing yet discovered in the universe of matter or of mind, that is not put in requisition in aid of the cause of human improvement? Is there not an all pervading spirit of wakeful curiosity, of unyielding research, that is actually forcing nature to give up her secrets, and is rapidly exhuming a long buried antiquity? Is not commerce rising constantly into a more powerful auxiliary of knowledge; uttering, in the dark places of the earth, her authoritative mandate,—‘Let there be light,’—and gradually bringing the whole world into a common neighbourhood? Have not the land and the water bowed alike to the dominion of steam, so that distance has become almost an unmeaning word, even when it includes the opposite poles? Above all, has not the electro-magnetic principle opened a channel of thought which rivals in velocity the thought which it conveys? And is not the church, in her constantly extending missionary operations, carrying

forward the work of intellectual as well as moral regeneration; for she cannot prosecute the latter, if the former be entirely neglected; and the same spirit of benevolence that prompts to the one, prompts to the other also. Now I ask whether, with that ever accumulating tide of influence which has been rolled down upon us through successive generations, and which is receiving such vast contributions in our day, from newly discovered or newly applied agents, there be any thing wanting to satisfy the most incredulous, that the reign of useful knowledge, of well furnished and well employed intellect, is destined to be universal. I see no dark cloud, no baleful star, in our horizon, to portend either the approach of a wild storm of barbarism, or the return of a still night of ignorance. But even if I knew that learning were to suffer another dire eclipse, I would fix my eye upon the past, and thank God and take courage. I would call to mind those by-gone ages, in which the intellect of the world seemed to have undergone a paralysis; and yet, in due time, it awoke with renovated power, and to gigantic efforts, according to the years in which it had seen evil. I would not allow myself to doubt that that benignant Providence which was the guardian of learning when she was shut up for centuries in monasteries and libraries, and which finally brought her forth with

a relumed and joyous aspect, would still throw around her his protecting wing; and that, in company with her angel sister,—virtue, she would ere long look down upon the whole world and call it her own.

Who can estimate the importance of a great and cultivated and well directed mind? If we limit our views to the present, the visible, the palpable, we are sometimes amazed at the amount of power which a single individual, in the course of a brief life, puts forth. He may be at the head of an army, and decide by his skill and prowess his country's destiny. He may be at the helm of state, and carry the vessel safe through the rockings of the wildest tempest. He may have discovered some principle in nature, or achieved some triumph in art, which gives society a fresh impulse and wakes thousands of minds to more vigorous action. He may be a reformer in morals or a star in literature, an oracle of taste or a fountain of wisdom; so that, before he yet speaks, the world begin to listen; and when he writes, they are on the alert to read. It were not easy to say how many or how great are the purposes of public and private utility, which such an individual accomplishes for his own generation; his influence works its way through innumerable channels,—I had almost said, becomes an ingredient of the very atmosphere you breathe. Now, I say, if

we were to consider the earthly life of such a man as terminated when the mechanism of the body stops, it would still have been a glorious thing for him to live ; but the truth is that his intellect, his heart, all the elements of his power, are embalmed in his achievements ; and here is a life that flourishes, in spite of the desolations of the tomb. Nor does he continue stationary at this new stage of his sublunary being, but moves down the track of ages with an ever increasing energy and velocity, and with an ever extending and ever brightening domain. When I think of an illustrious mind thus perpetuating itself on earth, and becoming more fresh and powerful with the progress of centuries, I cannot but bow down in reverence before my own nature ; for notwithstanding the blighting malady that has overtaken it, I recognize in it the miniature of at least some of the attributes of God ; I see in it a power of thought and feeling and action, to the development of which my imagination cannot fix a limit ; and I am lost, absolutely lost, in the grandeur of this conception, as my mind stretches forward to grasp the idea of its own immortality.

If I were to select from the whole intellectual nobility of the present day one whose influence, especially as a statesman, furnishes as apt an illustration of my subject as any other, I should have no occasion to look beyond New England ; and the

name to which I refer, has already become so much the property of history, that delicacy does not forbid me to allude to it; while yet it is so much a household word, that necessity hardly requires that I should pronounce it. That illustrious man, nearly half a century ago, was hard at work at a neighbouring college in the cultivation of his intellect; and he has been hard at work, almost ever since, for the welfare of his country. I speak not of the distinctive hue of his political opinions, or of any particular position he may at any time have assumed; but overlooking all party distinctions, I speak of him as an earnest, honest, far-seeing patriot; a man of wisdom and a man of might; great as truly in repose as in action; in thoughtful moderation as in resistless power. I honour him as fit to be a balance wheel in our political mechanism, which shall give to each and every part of it, a steady, safe and effective operation. I honour him as one who has more than once shown himself able to stand up in serene grandeur amidst warring elements, and to make his voice heard above the loudest swell of the storm, declaring for his country, his whole country, forever. I honour him as one who has given additional value to the privilege of being an American, and whose name we have only to speak, to rebut many of the paltry calumnies of other nations. There have been periods in our

history, when all parties have united in a tribute of homage to his public character ; and even when he has appeared on the arena of political conflict, and mingled in the hottest of the fight, he has never stood in so much as an equivocal attitude, in respect to either dignity or integrity ; and his very adversaries have felt constrained to do him honour. His vocation has been that of a statesman ; and there his influence and his honours have chiefly centered ; and yet he has occasionally brought an offering to the cause of literature, which has given him a place among her most renowned benefactors. The productions of his pen, distinguished alike by chaste simplicity and rugged strength, may fairly challenge comparison with the most classic productions of antiquity. His thoughts are like a chain of diamonds, and his style like a crystal stream. Even Plymouth Rock and Bunker Hill have been invested with new attractions by the power of his eloquence ; and as long as the one stands a witness for religious freedom, and the other a witness for civil freedom, each will be a witness also to the majesty of his intellect. Yes, he will live on through all coming time ; will live a continually brighter and stronger and more widely diffused life. And if the state where he was born and nurtured, or the state in which most of his public life has been passed, should venture an attempt to monopolize his fame, or here-

after to build his monument, his country would cry out that he belonged to her; the world would cry out that he belonged to her; and these universal claims would be echoed and re-echoed by each passing generation.

If the influence of a single eminent individual be thus diffusive and powerful, what shall be said of the influence of an institution that is designed to educate the youth of successive generations; to supply to society the elements of an enduring progress by regularly furnishing recruits to the ranks of intelligence and virtue? Or to make the case a definite one, who can estimate the importance of this very institution, in its bearings, not upon your own state only, but upon the nation and the world? It came into being less than half a century ago, while you were yet only a province. It seemed, in its rising, a sort of morning star, heralding the day of your independent existence; but you hail it now as one of the greater intellectual orbs, whose beams reach farther and grow brighter, as it advances towards mid-heaven. Large portions of your territory which were wilderness then, have since become the marts of industry and the haunts of busy men. And while your population has been increasing and extending on every side, your internal resources have been in a constant process of development; you have been going forward in

whatever involves the great interests of civilization and humanity; the desert places of ignorance have put on the joyous aspect of intelligence and activity; and you would not fear now to be weighed against some of the older states, in respect to social and civil importance. But whence this wonderful improvement,—this keeping pace of the intellectual, and I trust the moral, with the physical;—this rising up of an educated, influential state out of the wilderness of the last century? Whatever other causes may have operated, here in this well endowed and well ordered institution, I doubt not, is the most important cause of all. Your great men are not of foreign importation; they are born and nurtured among yourselves; they come hither and learn the use of their own powers, and then they go abroad and become your epistle known and read every where; and some of them utter words of wisdom and power from the highest places in the nation. And the present is but the pledge, the embryo, the obscure shadowing forth of the glorious future. God forbid that any thing should occur even to render dubious the splendid vision that rises before you! When this nation of ours, having redressed all the wrongs she has committed, and survived all the dangers and conflicts incident to her onward course; shall sit down to share a serene triumph with the family of nations; when the

golden age, not of the poets but of the prophets, shall spread its mild radiance over the world ; who of you will undertake to fix a limit to the influence which this institution will have exerted in bringing forward that bright and welcome epoch ? Who will do justice to the gratitude and veneration with which the names of its patrons and benefactors will then be pronounced ? Will not multitudes eagerly inquire where rest the remains of its illustrious founder, that they may bring fresh garlands to lay upon his grave ?

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