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INFLUENCE.

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INFLUENCE.

"THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE UNTO LEAVEN, WHICH A WOMAN TOOK AND HID IN THREE MEASURES OF MEAL, TILL THE WHOLE WAS LEAVENED." MATTHEW 13 : 33.

DURING the Mosaic economy, the Jewish church exerted little influence beyond its own limits. From its early character, and the abject corruption of the adjacent nations, it was more exposed to become corrupted by foreign alliances than to become the reformer of the gentile world. It was purely national, and not aggressive in its object. At the introduction of the Christian dispensation, this national exclusiveness gradually melted away; the "covenant of peculiarity" was formally abolished by the decree of Heaven; the fire on Jewish altars was kindled on the altars of Paganism, and the temples of idol deities were converted into temples for the worship of the living God. There was no designed, concentrated, and powerful moral influence exerted upon the nations of the earth until this period. This is the great design of Christianity, and for this benevolent design it is admirably fitted by its divine Author. "The kingdom of heaven," says he, "is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

It is not more certain that there are constant changes taking place in the physical frame of our world, than in its intellectual and moral character. Men are the creatures of *influence*; they are so actively, and they are so

1-

passively—giving and receiving impulses which make them different to-day from what they were yesterday, and which will make them different to-morrow from what they are to day. Like *leaven*, which diffuses itself throughout the mass with which it comes in contact, and makes it a different thing from what it once was, these reciprocal influences affect the aggregate of human society for good or for evil. Men are not always aware of the influence they exert, nor of that which they are capable of exerting, nor of the responsibility of exerting it for good. We propose, in the present discourse, to offer a few, and those not the most connected thoughts on the general topic of human influence. Yet, that our thoughts may not be altogether without method, we shall direct our attention to its *nature*, its *constituent elements*, and some of its *leading characteristics*.

I. We will, in the first place, submit a few general observations on the NATURE of human influence.

There is a *physical* influence that affects natural bodies; as the influence of the sun upon the vegetable creation, the moon upon the tides, and the poles upon the magnetic needle. There is a *sympathetic* influence which is addressed to the sensibilities of men, which affects others because it is itself affected by them, and which produces emotions in the bosoms of others that are correspondent in kind with those that are felt by the individual who produces them. There is also a *moral* influence which is exerted by moral causes, which consists in the power of truth, motive, and argument operating on the rational faculties, and which resides first and chiefly in that great Master-mind of the universe from which all other minds proceed, and who is himself the source of

all those hallowed agencies which control the celestial world, and overlay the earth on which we dwell. Good and evil angels also exert a moral influence: the latter, with all their perverted powers and faculties, seducing to sin; the former employed in offices of love, and going forth to counteract the spirit of evil. Men also exert it. There is nothing by which individuals or communities are more distinguished from each other, than by the influence they exert on those around them, on the age in which they live, or on ages which come after them.

For the source and origin of the influence which one man exercises over another, we must go back to the laws of our intellectual and moral constitution; it is founded in the nature of man. The allwise Creator has so constituted the human mind, and so organized the social relations, that men cannot refrain from exerting it. Such is the delicate framework of human society, that every fibre and filament acts upon the collected and concrete assemblage. Every man has susceptibilities for it, while the great body of men invite it, and know not how to act until they feel this extraneous impulse. Not a few aim at exerting it; and make it the great object of their lives to control the views, form the character, govern the conduct, and decide the destiny of those with whom they have intercourse. It is inseparable from man's being. Men must go out of the world; nay, they must go out of the universe, and be no longer men, if they would escape its sphere. It depends on causes and incidents that are exerting themselves constantly. It is exerted when they are young and when they are old, when they are at home and when they are abroad, when they wake and when they sleep. It operates in seasons of toil and

relaxation, in sickness and health, where they are, and where they are not. Whether they are conscious of it or not, and whether they will or no, it is doing its work. There is not a mind in the world, unless it be the one in absolute and unknown solitude, that does not exert an influence, and for all that we know, on every other mind. It exerts *some* influence ; it acts upon every mind within its own immediate sphere, and that sphere, through the juxtaposition of other minds, is insensibly enlarged, till it eventually becomes so extended that an appeal goes forth from it to which there is a response. Though it may be a still, small voice, it is one which speaks ; and like the gentlest agitation of the waters in the midst of the ocean, which is felt on the billow that lashes the shore, it strikes some chord which reverberates. Why should it be thought incredible that your influence and mine should be so allied to other influences, and they again to others, that it should travel round the globe ?

We are not acquainted with all the laws of the material world ; yet are the secrets of it so far laid open, that philosophers assure us that there is not a particle of matter in the universe which does not directly or indirectly exert an influence on every other particle. Were the whole structure of the human mind, with all the laws of thought, volition, and emotion fully developed and explained to us, it would no longer appear incredible that there is not a mind in the universe that does not exert an influence on every other mind. The sun does not more certainly penetrate and encircle the entire globe, so that "nothing is hid from the heat thereof," than the influence of every man is sure to be felt in this apostate world.

No man exerts an influence that is always and uniformly good. Habitually good it may be, but at the best it has blemishes, and wants that perfect symmetry and beauty which make it like the cloudless sun. With the best intentions, any man may produce impressions which are of unhappy tendency, while his intentions themselves are not always faultless. Nor are we justified in saying that any man exerts an influence that is uniformly bad; for, with the worst intentions, the impressions which he sometimes leaves on the minds of those he designs to influence, may be the opposite of those which it was his purpose to produce. There are influences of a more distinctive and unmingled character; those that reform and those that vitiate, those that bless and those that curse the world, those that save and those that destroy.

When exerted to reform, enlighten, and bless, human influence is the loveliest and most enviable talent intrusted to men. It is like the smiling and renovating power of the spring, when it pours its fertilizing rays upon the cold earth, and makes it rich with verdure and melodious with song. It breaks up the incrustated habits of sin, diffuses the charm of truth and holiness, sheds the light of life upon minds hitherto covered with the shadows of death, and causes songs of salvation to tremble on lips which had never before tasted the waters from the well-spring of life. When exerted to corrupt and destroy, it is a tremendous and dreaded agency. It is like the chill, bleak blast of winter, throwing its wild winds and furious tempests around the habitations of men, locking up the human mind, and burying it in the caverns of ignorance and guilt. The world would soon become overspread with wickedness, the revolting details of which would

require volumes to record, if, amid such influences, other agencies were inactive or inefficient, or so embarrassed and controlled as to become neutral and dismayed. God has not intrusted this moral power to wickedness alone ; it belongs to the good and the bad. There is now, and ever has been, an unceasing conflict between these two mighty agencies. The two extremes of human nature here meet on the world's great battle-ground. In this dire conflict are men like the best of Judah's and the worst of Israel's kings, like Herod and John, like Nero and Paul, like Dioclesian and Constantine, Pelagius and Augustine, Sigismond and Huss, Voltaire and Luther, Cromwell and the second Charles, Bonner and Cranmer, the haughty Louis and the humble Huguenot whose blood stained the altar and the throne. Talleyrand and La Fayette retained their influence through all the changes of the republic, the democracy, the despotism, the restoration in France. When the duke of Buckingham was revelling in Charles' palace, the influence of his licentiousness was conducting the English nation to the brink of ruin ; and when John Milton, *clarum et venerabile nomen*, was cloistered in solitude and buried in blindness, fired by the imagination of the poet and elevated by puritanic faith, he was exerting an influence that established the fame of England's literature, and made the crown tremble on her monarch's head. When Lord North was walking agitated and alone in St. James' park, his influence was felt throughout the American colonies ; and when George Washington was sleeping in his tent at Cambridge, his influence was responded to from Georgia to Maine. George Whitefield and the countess of Huntingdon lived everywhere, and so did

Joseph Priestly and Richard Price. So did queen Mary II. live everywhere: in youth, in womanhood—in Ireland, in England—in retirement, and on the throne, her devout and well-directed influence was the preservation of Protestantism in Europe. So that worst of women, that betrayer and poisoner of princes, that Jezebel of her race, Catharine de Medicis, lived in every court on the continent.

Human influence is a strange thing; it attracts wherever it goes. Rest and inactivity do not belong to it; it never asks for repose; it is a wheel that is perpetually revolving, a pendulum that ever vibrates. It were a gloomy, yea, a terrific picture, to trace but the outlines of the cloud which desolated the earth when men like some of those just spoken of directed the storm. It were a different scene to trace the sunlike course of other some, relieving these dark and angry shades, gilding the cloud, and pouring its radiance like the western sun from his throne of gold. No influence which men exert is a matter of mere indifference; the very inactivity of the most inactive is effective in evil. Whatever it be, it is effective; and fails not to render all who are subjected to it wiser and better, or less wise and less good—more useful and more happy, or more mischievous and miserable.

With these general observations on the nature of human influence, the inquiry is a natural one,

II. What are its CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS? And this presents the second topic of our discourse.

It is difficult, on so extensive a theme, to do more than call your attention to the following particulars.

1. The first great and controlling element of influence

Influence.

2*

is *personal character*. The basis of it, the pivot on which it turns, is the intellectual, and more especially the moral qualifications of the man himself. Who the man is, and what he is, are inquiries, the answer to which assigns him a greater or less degree of power over the character and destiny of his fellow-men. It is not necessary that a man should be fitted, like the Arabian impostor, or like Charlemagne, or like Alfred the Great, to shape the character of his age, in order to exert this power. He may not be the model of greatness or of goodness, yet is his influence very apt to be measured by his individual endowments. It is easier to find on the page of history, great men who are wicked, than great and good men; the history of our race is in this respect a mournful and humbling narrative. It is well for the world when wicked men are weak men, though even such men sometimes exert an influence that is altogether disproportioned to the men themselves. The reason is, they exert their influence with a hearty good-will; they act upon pliable materials; they are aided and assisted by the powers of darkness, and they find it much easier to do evil than to do good, to pull down than to build up. So a truly good man may be more powerful than he is great. He is habitually emitting, if not an unbroken, a well-nigh continuous stream of light, teaching, cheering, impressing all on whom it shines. It is no easy matter to escape the influence of truth, where it is lived up to and acted out in the lives of good men. Such a man is ever to be held in honor, and never lives in vain. We must have been slow of heart to learn, if reading and observation have not taught us, that there are not wanting instances in which good men of inferior intellectual faculties and attainments

have exerted an influence which men of less goodness and more intellectual accomplishments might envy.

Yet, as a general fact, every man's influence is commensurate with his personal character. It is impossible to form any just view of the great events which have taken place in the world, or of the influence exerted in bringing them about, without inspecting the character of the actors. History, compared with biography, shows nothing more clearly, than that as the men are, so are the times. If there have been corrupt ages of the world, it is because bad men have lived in them, and their influence has been poison and death. If there have been dark ages, it is because the men were benighted; ages of superstition, the men were superstitious; bloody ages, the men were bloody. If there have been ages of light and advancement, it is because bright lights in the intellectual firmament have travelled across them; and if there have been ages of reform and piety, it is because God has raised up and commissioned the men of piety and reform. The golden age of Christianity was the age of its divine Author and his apostles; the age of philosophy was the age of Plato and Abelard; the age of wild and impassioned enthusiasm was the age of Peter the Hermit and Godfrey; the age of infidelity was the age when the eighteenth century vomited upon the world such men as Herbert, Hobbe, Blount, Tindal, Hume, and Voltaire. And if these appear to be almost identical propositions, the fact that they so appear is the strongest confirmation of the truth that the influence of men depends upon their character.

This truth, though an obvious one, is of great practical importance. If a man aims at exerting influence,

his character must be in keeping with that influence, be the department he occupies what it may. The age of freedom comes not from a despot, nor that of military glory from men of a meek and quiet spirit. A bad man cannot be a reformer; for "if Satan cast out Satan, how then shall his kingdom stand?" Neither can a good man be a corrupter; for "the tree is known by its fruit." No rank, no talent, no industry, can give a man the influence he aims at, and the ascendancy over the public mind he seeks for, be it specific or general, be it for good or for evil, unless he himself be a practical exemplification of the objects and the cause he advocates. The military reputation of Marlborough and Wellington, of Napoleon and the archduke Charles of Austria, was the main support of the armies they led to the field. The reputation of the late Dr. Chalmers carried with him the Free church of Scotland in the most perilous and important ecclesiastical movement of the age in which we live. It is no doubt true, that most men have more or less of a fictitious character; there are those who enjoy a reputation which they are not entitled to, as well as those who enjoy less than their intrinsic merits demand. Yet, sooner or later, are all apt to find their own level, and their reputation is, for the most part, well earned. Unspeakably dear is a spotless name to a man who lives to do good in the world; "a good name is like precious ointment." Like the influence which is the fruit of it, reputation is a plant of slow growth, and sometimes of sudden and rapid decay. It may suffer unjustly, but this does not prevent the blow. No matter who the man is, or what he has been, or how unjust the imputation, if his character is unsavory and his name in bad

odor, his influence is paralyzed, and even "his good is evil spoken of."

2. The influence of men, in the second place, depends, in no small degree, upon their *opinions*. Their character takes its type and coloring from their thoughts. Their thoughts govern them, because the train of their affections flows in the train of their thoughts, and their conduct flows in the train of their affections.

Truth does not consist in the knowledge of what is true, but lies back of that knowledge, and is the foundation and source of it. The opinions of men are true just in the ratio in which they correspond *with facts*, and are the counterpart and impression of the original seal. Thoughts, opinions, character, that are not founded on realities, are founded on falsehood, and are themselves a practical lie.

There is no greater absurdity, than that men are not responsible for their opinions. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." His character and influence are as inseparable as the rays of the sun from its light and heat. Good influences may be traced to good opinions, and evil influences to opinions that are evil. The impulse which men impart to others, depends upon the impulse which they give to their *minds*. The whole process of experimental and practical piety, is carried on by the instrumentality of right opinions. "Sanctify them," says the Saviour, "through thy truth." The value of truth would be destroyed, if men were no better for believing it, and if it were just as well for them to believe what is false. Error is wickedness in principle; wickedness is error acted out.

Opinion rarely, if ever, lies dormant; it is expressed,

and with the design of impressing other minds ; it is the channel through which human influence flows. It is this which gives so much influence to well-educated men, and men who are in the habit of expressing and enforcing their views. The pulpit, the bar, the halls of legislation, the arena of popular discussion, and the press, are but exemplifications of the power of expressed opinion. The world has ever paid homage to this influence ; and so powerful is it, that, in despotic governments, the lips, the pen, and the press, are the objects of watchful supervision and legal restraint. Even whole libraries have been, sometimes with savage barbarism, and sometimes with not less savage bigotry and intolerance, committed to the flames, either through indifference, or fear of the opinions they enforce or invade.

A true history of the various sources of human influence would form a true and substantial history of human opinion. Twelve men at the commencement of the Christian era controlled the character of millions. The history of the church of God is the history of thought—thought as it first came from heaven, pure, stainless, elevating ; and just in the measure in which these bright and transparent thoughts have been corrupted, or lost their energy in human hands, has this history lost its brightness. The moral history of the Pagan world might be written in the history of its philosophers and their various opinions. So of all civil and profane history. There was a small company of Puritans in the sixteenth century, at the head of whom stood Cromwell, Hampden, and Sir Harry Vane, whose opinions broke the strong bonds of tyranny in the world. And there was a small collection of men in the latter part of the eighteenth

century, at the head of whom were the founders of the American republic, who scattered those broken bonds to the four winds. Thought may not always be the source of effort, because there may not be sufficient energy of character to carry it into effect; but effort is always the result of thought. It is surprising to see to what extent men are influenced by opinions that are not, in the first instance, their own. There are few independent thinkers. Most men do not love the trouble of thinking; they have their oracles, and these are men, the opinions of men. Nor is it always sound argument that convinces them. There is little reason to doubt that much of the truth, and more of the error, which is received by men, owes its propagation as much to the influence of those who propagate it, as to an impartial and rigorous examination of the evidence by which it is, or professes to be, supported.

3. The influence of men is associated, in the third place, with *their property*. Wealth is a talent which is chiefly valuable for the influence it gives to its possessor. Inherited wealth gives influence; wealth that is the gift of God's providence in other ways, and without the effort of those who possess it, gives influence; much more does that wealth give influence which is procured by contrivance, by toil, and by economy, because it is indicative of those intellectual faculties, and that strength of character which, if devoted to other pursuits, would have rendered their possessor eminent. Such men have influence in any community, because they deserve to have influence; they are men of mind, men of forethought, men of great practical wisdom, men of energy, and with rare exceptions, are, and must be, men of integrity and moral virtue.

One cannot look over a large and commercial community without being impressed with the fact, that there are instances not a few, in which the character and talent that have been successfully devoted to the acquisition of wealth, if devoted to literary acquisitions, or judicial or civil honors, would have been entitled to the highest rank of learning and science, and would have been deservedly distinguished either at the bar, or in the senate-chamber. But let it be acquired or bestowed, wealth always gives influence. Men bow to it, and do it homage; they worship at its shrine; it is the deity they honor. It governs princes, rules in the halls of legislation, makes peace and war, and shapes the policy of the nations. There was a single man in Rome whose wealth controlled the empire; and there is now a single family in Europe whose wealth extorts the obeisance of its kings. Wealth is the great feudal lord of this world, and the mass of its inhabitants are his ungirt, uncovered, and kneeling tenantry, professing to serve him with "life and limb, and earthly honor." The man who counts his thousands merely, is looked up to by his fellow-men; his wishes are respected, and his voice is heard; while the man who counts his millions, concentrates the power of doing good or evil which no single generation can measure.

It is not enjoyment that wealth gives; men of competence possess all the enjoyments which wealth can give, without its corroding cares and oppressive responsibilities. This world does not contain wealth enough to make man happy. What it chiefly imparts is the power of influencing others. Wisely and benevolently employed, it multiplies the existence of those who pos-

sess it almost indefinitely. It founds hospitals, provides a home for the widow and the fatherless, gives the bread of life to the hungry, and to the thirsty its living waters, and writes "holiness to the Lord" on every dollar within its coffers. It is not wrapt up in self, nor is it squandered, nor indiscriminately diffused. It goes abroad, sometimes with cautious and measured footsteps, and sometimes on angels' wings flying through the midst of heaven. It has no unyielding grasp. It has no locks which conscience does not open, no bars which do not melt under the fervent beams of heavenly love. We should be surprised to learn, were we able to make the calculation, how much hallowed influence a single man of wealth is able to exert. If the poor widow's two mites will travel down to the end of time, who shall estimate the blessed results, when the coffers of the rich are emptied, and the sleeping wealth of Christendom is poured into His treasury who gave it, who made his people his stewards, and to whom it all belongs? Wickedly employed, there is no greater curse than wealth, because it entails a curse. To men who labor only to hoard it, it becomes an accursed deposit, and the rust of it testifies against them. For men who squander it for the purposes of sensual joy, it only purchases shame and a grave; while to those who abuse it to the corrupting of their fellow-men, it speaks of the pageantry of vice, of garments rolled in blood, of robes of mourning, of the trophies of the destroyer, of the miserable victims of sin and perdition.

Wealth has a giant's power. It possesses a sort of enchanting influence, sometimes for weal, and more often for woe. With hearts bursting with gratitude;

will such men as Thornton, and Norris, and Boudnot bless God that he gave them wealth; while with grief that cannot be uttered, will many a rich man, like the celebrated founder of an infidel college in our own land, whose grasping covetousness and lavish profusion was his own ruin and the ruin of thousands, mourn that he was not a wandering exile, having not where to lay his head. Wealth that embalms the Saviour's name, though it were only to anoint him for his burial and provide him a sepulchre, travels round the globe. Wealth that dishonors him, though it were but to clothe him with a purple robe, and weave for his head a crown of thorns, contaminates by its pride and malignity, and exerts an influence as ruinous as an eternity of sin and despair.

There is no craving of the human mind more universal than the love of money. In a multitude of minds, it prevails over the love of pleasure, and even the love of comfort and convenience. Not a few make themselves miserable to be rich. This moral anomaly is to be accounted for, in part, by the fact that possession of wealth gives influence; it engenders egotism and self-respect, and secures confidence. It makes men something, who would be little without it; it gives place and name, and is the channel through which an inbred and cherished selfishness, or a high-born and heaven-imparted benevolence flows out to blight or refresh the world. We remark,

4. In the fourth place, that the influence of men depends *on events over which they themselves have no control, and in which they have no agency*. The biography of those who have exerted the greatest influence, would be very obscurely and imperfectly written, should the biog-

rapher assign a subordinate place to the directing providence of the Most High. "Promotion cometh neither from the north, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the judge: he setteth up one, and he putteth down another." He governs the world, even to the sparrow's flight, and the falling of a hair. Men and their influence are so often, and so extensively, the creatures of time and circumstances which they looked not for, that none are more surprised at their history than themselves. Those crises which seem, by mere chance and good luck, to have assigned them their sphere of action and drawn forth their latent energy, are not of their own appointment and ordering. They are inferior agents in the execution of His counsels who ruleth among the children of men; the influence on which their instrumentality depends, itself depends on him.

The most trivial occurrence has not unfrequently been found to give a direction and coloring to many a man's entire life. Joseph the Hebrew, in order to be honored as a prince, must first be sold as a slave. Mordecai becomes the deliverer of the Jews by almost miraculously escaping the gallows prepared for him by Haman. A view of the statue of Alexander the Great, in the temple of Hercules at Cadiz, led Julius Cæsar to become the master of Rome. Marc Anthony lost the empire of the world by a woman. The flight of a bird from the shrubbery covering the cave where Mahomet was concealed from the fury of his persecutors, perpetuated the power of the false prophet. The thoughts of Sir Isaac Newton were first fixed upon the law of gravitation by observing the fall of an apple. A single skirmish has decided the fate of many a mili-

tary hero; while the parting of a ratline or a lashing, the drawing of a bolt, a single lurch, or a cloud passing over the moon, has fixed the destiny of many a naval commander. A happy operation in finance established the character of Necker and Hamilton; while a successful amputation, a successful argument at the bar, or a single discourse from the pulpit, have discovered facilities of influence unknown even to their possessor, elevated his views, put him upon hitherto unthought of efforts, and proved the source of power which he himself never anticipated. Some owe their influence to a vigorous, and some to a sickly and enfeebled constitution; some owe it to their birth and the place of their residence, some to their domestic alliances, and some to the healthy or unhealthy tone of the opinions and habits of the society with which they are conversant. In judging of the influence of men, we shall always think better or worse of them than they deserve, and less than we ought of the providence of God, unless many things are taken into the account in which they themselves have no voluntary concern. Nor may we suppress the remark,

5. In the fifth place, that another source of influence is found in *the great principle of association*. It is a remarkable arrangement which thus avails itself of the gregarious disposition of men, and embodies their scattered and isolated influence in organized and harmonious effort. Good men associate for good ends; bad men for ends that are bad; they are drawn together by those elective affinities which arise from similarity of character, and are founded on their moral sympathies. Other considerations may *throw* them together; but as a general fact, all associated influences are formed and sus-

tained by congeniality of spirit and unity of object. Over this vast sea of minds, kindred spirits are sooner or later attracted within the same circling eddy, or float on the same current. Concentrated influence is powerful influence. There is no such moral power as this associated influence, bound together by warm impulses, and acting under this reciprocal pressure. It awakens the strongest passions and affections of the mind: the enthusiasm of one conveys itself to thousands; and where, besides being thus compact, it is well directed, nothing is able to stand before it.

There is no more beautiful illustration of this influence, upon a small scale, than that which is furnished by the domestic relations; ranging from the power of exclusive aristocracy, to the more simple and less ambitious aims of those well-instructed and disciplined households which He who setteth the solitary in families has assigned to this first and sweetest of all earthly organizations. Schools of learning and venerable universities, both of ancient and modern date, have exerted great power over the minds of men. Greece and Rome revered their schools of philosophy; France, Germany, and Britain, have paid, sometimes a reluctant, but always real homage to the universities of Europe; there was a period when few institutions in the world did more to decide the destinies of men, than the Sorbonne at Paris. It is this same principle of association that gives such amazing power to human governments, dispensing office and emolument, prosperity and adversity, life and death to whom they will.

History does not probably record a more disastrous or wicked exemplification of concentrated influence, than

the "Society of Jesus," originating with Ignatius Loyola, with the view of resisting and arresting the Protestant Reformation. Adopting regulations known only to themselves, bound by the oath of secrecy and coöperation, having no domestic ties, and no connecting links with any man or set of men, or any part of the world, save those which connected them with their association and their purpose, they possessed a power for centuries which has been exercised by no other merely human association. They ingratiated themselves into the favor of all classes; they ascended to the rich, and descended to the poor; with the fashionable they were gay, with the devout they were austere. They educated the youth of Europe, and controlled its learning, wealth, and power. They put on every disguise, and made any profession. They could be Protestants and Protestant preachers in England, and in Spain and Rome submissive servants of the holy See. They could be infidels and atheists in France, while in Germany and the Netherlands, they could be great reformers. They were the counsellors of kings, and their confessors; and hence they possessed the secrets of every cabinet, and moulded the plans and shaped the policy of nations. So various and well selected were their posts of observation, that they held communication with remote parts of the earth with almost magnetic rapidity, and were like their great archetype, who "as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." Their coöperation was confessedly the most vigilant, the most consistent, the most vigorous, enthusiastic, and absorbing; and it was the power of *influence*.

There never has been but one system of associated in-

fluence to be compared with the system of the Jesuits, and that is one of a directly opposite character. *The church of the living God* governs by its influence; nor can its principles long exist in any mind without making themselves visible. It is not physical force, by which it controls so many minds; it is not wealth, honor, and power; it is not a system of human inventions in the worship of God, nor the researches and subtleties of human philosophy. It is the influence of truth and love—an influence whose object is to enlighten, convince, reclaim, sanctify, establish, and comfort—an influence which gives the human mind a new direction, and transforms the human character. If there have been favorable and happy changes in the religious and moral state of the world, this is the influence by which they have been produced.

As one of the delightful expressions of the influence of this heaven-born community, we may not, on the present occasion, overlook those *voluntary associations* which arise from the coöperation of good men in the different departments of the church, and which form one of the noblest characteristics of the age in which we live. We are friends of ecclesiastical organizations, because they are Christian. And there are voluntary associations which are not less Christian, because they combine Christian men of different ecclesiastical organizations. If it be Christian to scatter the principles of Christian truth, and send the children of light and love to every land, such associations have the image and superscription of Christianity. Association is the life and soul of individuality. No man who truly desires to accomplish the great object of human life, is now lost

in the crowd ; no widow's mite, nor poor man's prayer, is lost sight of in more splendid offerings ; no influence is lost by the overshadowing power of the few. They are the many who act upon the many. If the last half century has been an age of progress and reform, it has been so, in no small degree, through this instrumentality. It is an age of great associations, rather than great men. The mutual dependence of man is better understood, and more cheerfully acknowledged. Every man is effective, because no man acts alone. And this is the influence which is now working such mighty changes in the old world and in the new, and which, if Almighty God take it under his own direction, is yet destined to accomplish those great moral revolutions which will fill the earth with his glory. There is great simplicity in the varied forms of this associated influence ; yet is there amazing grandeur. When it is evil, it is sublimely terrific ; it is like the swarth of the whirlwind. When it is good, it towers above all earthly things in celestial beauty. It is God himself coming down to dwell with men ; it is his own influence, which is "as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion ; for there the Lord commanded his blessing, even life for evermore." But we pass to the

III. Third branch of our subject, which is to speak of SOME CHARACTERISTICS by which human influence is distinguished.

These give it no small importance, and make it indeed what it is.

1. It is, in the first place, *silent and unseen*. Its power is known only by its effects. It pervades the

mass unperceived. It does not seem to be what it is. Like light and air, it is of that diffusive, penetrating quality, which enters quietly into the springs of human existence; the intellectual and moral life lie open to it. Just as chemical causes do in the natural world, it effects changes without any perceptible motion. It lodges itself within those deep recesses that are inaccessible to greater pretensions; the thoughts of men insinuate and wind their way towards it, just as a confined and sickly plant pushes itself upward from the crevices of the rock towards the life-giving atmosphere.

Good influences work silently; they are bold and honest, but they are quiet and noiseless. They avow their object; they invite scrutiny; but they are like the "kingdom of God, which cometh not with observation." They may be sagacious, comprehensive, and practical; they may have a sharp insight into the principles of human nature, but they are never deceitful and treacherous, nor boisterous and desultory. They are not the path of the comet, nor the bursting of the volcano, nor the devastation of the plague. They fall like dew-drops; their silent process is like that by which each blade of grass is nourished. Look at the Sandwich Islands, forty years ago the brothel of the commercial world, but now a Christian land. Look at Ethiopia, with her towns and villages, and schools and churches, "stretching out her hands unto God." The influence which originated and fostered these wondrous enterprises, once lay in the bosom of an humble mother on the secluded hills of New England. It was that *thought*, unseen by all but God and his invisible angels—it was that thought incessantly pored over—it was that prayer

so often uttered in her solitary chamber, which was the germ of the tree, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations.

Evil influences, too, are for the most part silent and unseen. They are insidious, sly, ensnaring. It is no part of the errand on which they visit us, frankly and without reserve to avow that their aim is to do harm. They are tempters to evil, and come upon us in disguise. They have no hope except from concealment. Their system is made up of artifice and intrigue. The great author of mischief well knows, that "in vain is the net spread in sight of any bird;" if the mask is torn off, the victim takes the alarm. When most effective, they are never bold and startling propositions to evil; they are unperceived agencies, and come in an inviting form; they present the allurements, but hide the deformities and terrors; the ugliness is covered up. Could men see all, they would not so readily jeopard their interests, and court the idols whose embrace is death. They are deluded by the love of excitement, by the chances which are sometimes presented to a forlorn hope, and the time will come when they will sicken at the hollow artifice. Evil influences always take deeper hold of the mind than the victim of them looked for; they outstrip his expectations. It is said of Maximilian Robespierre, that when a young man, he resigned a judicial appointment in one of the provinces of France, because he could not bring his mind to pronounce the sentence of death as a penal judge. Yet so insidious were the influences that formed his subsequent character, that this was the man who shed blood enough to require an artificial conduit to carry it off from the

streets of Paris. We do well to count on the insidiousness of evil. It promises what it never performs; it works in the dark; and visits with a retribution of which it gives not the least whisper.

2. In the second place, it is *progressive* influence. It is not merely silently diffusive, but increases in a sort of geometrical ratio. It spreads itself from breast to breast, and with every new acquisition acquires augmented energy. The law of progress is not more sure in the natural, than in the moral world. Nor is that progress always slow. Like the movement of some mighty machinery, its first impulse encounters the most sensible resistance; we feel the jar for the moment, and then all is smooth again, and it moves the more quietly and the more rapidly for every successive revolution. The progressive agencies to which the intellectual and moral world are subjected, become strong by effort; they are fed by their own fires, and gather strength by the processes which seem to exhaust them. Their change is onward; and like the bubbling brook first formed by the trickling water from the rock, they soon become like the broad river which sweeps the fields in its pride.

Evil influences are progressive, from the evil tendencies in the human heart. We have but to let them alone, and their work is soon accomplished; the cockatrice egg breaks out into a viper, and the whelp of the lioness shakes the forest with his roar. One false principle assumed, and though men then reason fairly and conclusively, they are further removed from the truth; so one sinful practice adopted, will soon have engrafted upon it another. Those records of the past which illustrate this truth, are dark and melancholy periods. It

was but a little leaven at the first; and, but for a neutralizing, redeeming process, the acrid fermentation had leavened the mass without distinction, and the truthful pen of history had recorded the progress of the race only as from bad to worse.

But they are not evil influences alone that are progressive; there has been a sensible progress in those by which the world is made better. There are advances in civilization, advances in science and the arts, in jurisprudence and civil government, and in the acknowledged principles of civil and religious liberty. Human life and property are now held by a different tenure from that by which they were held three hundred years ago. Things cannot now be done which were done even so lately as the sixteenth century, and in enlightened Britain. If we go further back, we see still more clearly that public opinion is changed, and changed for the better. Galileo would not now be thrown into prison for his discoveries in astronomical science, nor would Socrates be condemned to the hemlock for his honest speculations in philosophy. Men like Nero and Caligula, or even like Henry VIII. or Charles II., would not now be permitted to retain their thrones. Who now dreams of the foolish pretences of astrology and necromancy? Who expects that another Mahomet will arise; or that the nations can again be lashed into the frenzy of the crusades? Who, since the recently opened communications between the United States and Mexico, looks for another such scene as that which took place at Bogota thirty years ago, under the direction of the royalist general Morillo, in which six hundred persons of distinction were strangled and their bodies suspended from gibbets, for no other

crime than that they knew how to read and write? There is a vantage-ground which the nations now occupy, that is seen and felt; they are brought nearer; and men, without being sensible of it, are influencing one another for good. And so it is with influences that are higher and more sacred. There is a heavenly light which shines around the worst of men, that embarrasses, if it does not control them; that perplexes their consciences, and makes them suspicious of themselves. There is no influence to be compared with that of truth and goodness.

“High worth is elevated place. . . .
 ’Tis wealth, though it commands no exchequer;
 And though it wears no ribbon, ’tis renown.
 This is true glory and repute, when God,
 Looking on earth, with approbation marks
 The just man, and divulges him through heaven.”

The greatest influence does not consist in doing the most extraordinary things, but in doing ordinary things in the right way and time, and with a view to please God and do good to men. A good man does this; and while, peradventure, it was but a ray of light that first beamed on his path, it brightens as he goes. *What is it that is like “leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal; till the whole was leavened?”* It is “the kingdom of heaven”—the kingdom of heaven in the soul of man and in the world. Instead of eight individuals within the ark, or one hundred and twenty in an upper chamber at Jerusalem, or three thousand on the day of Pentecost, two hundred millions of men are now scattering the bread of life. Every year there is an advance in the state of the world that is secured by the power of religious thought and religious motives. The

Bible teems with it, the family circle teems with it, the pulpit teems with it, the press teems with it, the Sabbath-school teems with it, ecclesiastical and voluntary associations teem with it. And it is an influence that will go on, not uniformly, nor always symmetrically; it may be slow, and at intervals seem retrograde: sometimes its impulses will be dull and heavy, and then, like every thing human, they may not be unmixed with evil; nay, there are times when they become impassioned and blaze forth; but still they will be on the ascendant—"the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days."

3. In the third place, the influence which men thus exert is *permanent*. The impressions made upon the human mind are not like letters written in the sand, nor are they like the characters that are chiselled out in the rock, which the continual droppings of time wear away. They are never forgotten, nor can the mind which once receives them ever again be as it has been. There was an idolatrous and demoralizing king, the terrific influence of whose character is spoken of in sacred history three hundred years after he was numbered with the dead. Many an Israelite will bewail the influence of that one man for a long time to come. It had its effect in extending the triumphs of infidelity from generation to generation; it was found at the introduction of Christianity; it collected itself in the hall of Pilate, and was uttered in the infuriate cry, "Crucify him, crucify him." It contributed to weave the veil that is now on the hearts of God's ancient people, and is at this moment direfully at work in imbit-

tering the cup of human sorrows. There was another prince of that same favored nation, whose influence also descended from generation to generation, and who was "as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by a clear shining after rain." It was a hallowed influence, and has come down to us. Its voice is heard in our sanctuaries, cheers our domestic altars, and is felt in our hearts. It is like his own sweet harp, that so often tranquillizes our troubled spirits and inspires our praise. Successive generations will light their hallowed fires at his altars so long as the sun and moon endure. It is impossible for us to measure the progress of human influence. Long after the names of men are forgotten, their influence lives. Eternity will make what is good, better; and what is bad, worse. Be it ever so small in its beginning, it survives the short-lived activities that gave it birth, till the luminous train is lost in the brightness of eternity, or the dark tissue in the blackness of darkness.

4. It is an affecting characteristic of human influence, in the fourth place, that there is always attached to it *great responsibility*. Men are prone to feel their responsibility for every thing more than for their influence; yet it is the most solemn trust reposed in them, the greatest talent they possess, and that to which all others are tributary. Those who have the most influence are not always the most to be envied, because the time is coming when it will be far better to have been the humble and unnoticed possessor of one talent well employed, than of ten thousand prostituted to selfish and vile ends. Let us take heed to our influence; let us

take heed how we abuse it, how we trifle with it, how we neglect it, how we cultivate and exert it. The responsibility of using it and not abusing it will meet every man at the bar of God, and run parallel with his eternity. There is no exemption from this bond; it is preeminence enough for the meanest that he sustains it, and it is enough to make the mightiest tremble. The least observed of all his conduct may touch some secret spring that shall set mind after mind in motion, whose pulsations shall be felt when the scenes of earth are forgotten. Even little things cease to be trifles when it is recollected that their influence dignifies them and gives them magnitude. No man knows when his influence is most important; it is enough to know that he is responsible for it.

It is a solemn thought that a process is now going forward with every living man, by which he is exerting an influence upon *others*, and others are exerting an influence upon *him* for eternity. Through all the narrow pathway of this lower world, these influences are everywhere around him; and, as God is just, it cannot be otherwise than that he shall give account of his stewardship. Some of the more solemn and affecting disclosures of the great reckoning to the intelligent universe, will consist in the discovery then made of the influence which has been exerted in the present world by the young and the old, by male and female, by individuals and associations of men, by pastors and churches, by the nations of the earth upon one another, and by generations of men upon subsequent generations to the end of time. Such a day will be a fitting winding up of the scene where this world has been but the selected

spot of man's education for eternity ; where the characters of men have been formed under influences till then unknown, and where the result of those influences is seen in the character and destiny of those two mighty continents that are bounded on either side by the waters of the impassable gulf.

The thoughts which have been thus suggested will not, we trust, be deemed irrelevant to the design of our present meeting. Others cannot feel the interest which some few of us yet remaining feel, in looking back to the origin, and tracing the history of the AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY. Having obtained help of God, this institution has pursued its course for a quarter of a century, amid changes and at a period of the world not soon forgotten. His holiness the pope of Rome, in an encyclical letter published in our own day, had ventured to declare "the liberty of *the press* to be a fatal liberty, which cannot be held too much in abhorrence." American Christians thought otherwise. For twenty years previous to the formation of this Society, different and independent tract societies had existed in several of the states of the Union. In the autumn of 1824, a correspondence was commenced between the New York Religious Tract Society and the American Tract Society at Boston, with the view of combining the influence of all these several societies in one national institution ; and on the 10th of May, 1825, a convention of delegates from tract societies throughout the country was convened in this city, at which the Society's constitution was recommended for adoption, and on the following day it was solemnly and unanimously organized.

Great changes have taken place even within this short period of twenty-five years. Heads that were then venerable, now lie low in the dust; while those that were youthful then, have now become venerable. Summerfield, Milnor, Stokes, Stearns, Pearson, Miller will be long remembered, not only for their personal excellence, but for their devotement to the interests of this institution. Death, intrusive, inexorable death has supervened and drawn his impervious curtain around the scenes of these bygone years; but it is not so impervious as to shut out the reflected loveliness of Summerfield, Milnor, and Miller, or confine the fragrance of their names to the urn which contains their ashes. History is for the most part a narrative of crime; it is a sickening biography of wicked men, disgusting us by splendid sins. It is not often, in turning over its pages, that the eye is refreshed with such shining examples of excellence and usefulness as mark the course of these beloved men.

But it is only a passing tribute which we can pay to the illustrious dead. These years which have so rapidly fled derive their chief importance, not from their number, not from their pains and pleasures, not from the men, be they among the dead or the living, who have been the principal actors in this labor of love; nor yet from the thousand incidents which have accompanied the distribution of such a multitude of pages of God's truth which have cheered the distributors in their work, and which seemed so important as they were passing; but from their effects on the temporal and eternal well-being of men.

In order to exert the best influence and on the largest

scale, the Society combines the cooperation of various denominations of Christians. Its Publishing Committee consists of six ministers of the gospel; one from each branch of the Presbyterian church, one from the Reformed Dutch church, one from the Congregational churches of New England, one from the Episcopal, and one from the Baptist churches. This union has been preserved from the commencement of the Society's operations, not only in all good conscience and honesty, but with a fervor and devotedness stimulated by attachment to the great truths of the gospel. "The tree is known by its fruit;" what the religious principles of the Society are, best appears from its own published pages. The best that we can say of them, or that we can desire to say, is, that they are *Christian*, without being sectarian. I do not know that it can be said to have a rival; itself has no spirit of rivalry but to do the most good within its power. It does not designedly interfere with any other institution; nor do I know that it is subjected to any interference from others. It is a catholic institution, a democratic institution. It is the favorite of the Christian community; the "common people hear it gladly."

I have said that its principles are *Christian*. It leaves the peculiarities of sect to be cared for by the sect which magnifies them, and leaves every sect to propagate its peculiarities in its own way. This is one of its great features, and this is its strength and glory. Its principles are as much more important than the peculiarities of sect, as the life and soul of Christianity are more important than the garb it wears. Its publications distinctly recognize the great doctrines that lie at

the basis of man's redemption; their great aim is to give God the throne and abase the sinner at his footstool; nor do they glory, save in the cross. I have sometimes thought that if the separated families of Christ are ever to be brought into closer union, it will be by adopting some such symbol of faith as those great doctrines which lie at the basis of the operations of this institution.

It would seem to be a fitting service, on the present occasion, very briefly to advert to the different departments of labor in which the Society has been employed. Its great object, it is hardly necessary to remark, is to disseminate, in a cheap and portable form, religious instruction to the masses of our own people. But its views are by no means confined to our own population: no unimportant department of its operations respects foreign and pagan lands. The principles on which its pecuniary grants are made to kindred institutions, to missionary boards, missionary presses, and missionary laborers, require that the grants thus made should be employed in the printing and circulation of the Society's publications or faithful translations of them, faithful translations of detached portions of the Scriptures, or original tracts in foreign languages faithful translations of which into English shall have been approved by the Publishing Committee. These grants have been annual; they have been made to more than seventy societies and missionary stations, scattered throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa; they have varied from three hundred dollars to thirty-five thousand during the year, and the entire amount of them for twenty-five years is, 342,294 dollars.

Another department of the Society's operations consists in its searching out the wants of the destitute, and

carrying its tracts to all the accessible population. I know of no other agency which has labored so directly for this end, and which, in its associated capacity, so literally obeys the command, "Go ye out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." It enlists the personal efforts and influence of a great body of Christians, who are not ministers of the gospel, in the systematic and personal distribution of tracts, connected with prayerful effort for the souls of men. This is one of the great objects of the Society, and an aim which distinguishes all its movements.

There is another department, and, in my own humble judgment, the most useful of all its arrangements; I mean that which is employed in what is called the volume circulation. The first efforts of the Society were devoted to the printing and circulation of *tracts*, properly so called. Nor did the providence of God lead to any extension of this arrangement until the year 1827, when, through the bounty, first of four venerable men, and afterwards of others who sympathized with this noble design, they commenced the publication of those *Christian classics* which have so long commended themselves to the wise and good of every name. The best works of Doddridge, of Baxter, of Bunyan, of Flavel, of Owen, of Hall and Hopkins and Leighton, of Edwards and Brainerd and Fuller, of James and Gurney, of Wilberforce and Hannah More, of Jay and Krummacher, of Paley, Bogue, and Merle D'Aubigne, of Newton and Henry and others of later date, have been selected by the Society and published in the form of a Christian library. I know not of a richer offering to the young or the old, to

ministers or their people. If I mistake not, this beautiful measure originated with the American Tract Society, and from it has originated a similar effort on the part of different denominations of Christians.

In connection with this volume-circulation effort, originated the system of *Colportage*, by which the bound volumes of the Society are distributed, at low prices or gratuitously, to large masses of the destitute. "The full influence of this system," the Society say in their last annual report, "eternity only can reveal." The total expenses of the colporteur system, for eight years, are \$292,500, and the contributions of the churches in support of this enterprise have been more than \$196,000. The persons employed in this service form a class of missionaries; and though at the first introduction of the system it was regarded by some as perhaps tending to an encroachment upon the ministerial office, it is now so generally sanctioned, that almost every establishment in the country has adopted it, and it has received the recorded approbation of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church.

During the first twenty-five years of its existence the Society has received, in donations, \$1,171,284; for books and tracts, etc., \$1,592,064—making an amount of \$2,771,038. During the same period it has published 2,748,835,750 pages; has circulated 2,507,102,789 pages. It has given as donations 415,680,511 pages, besides remitting \$342,294 in cash for foreign lands.

To our own mind this furnishes an interesting statement. We have no hesitation in expressing the conviction that this Society has been raised up by God to accomplish a great work. Next to the American pulpit and the

American Bible Society, it may be questioned whether there is any associated effort in the land which has accomplished so much for the diffusion of divine truth, for the dissemination of Christian literature, for the salvation of men, and for the conservative influence which has been, and still is so imperatively demanded by the times in which we live. Remove the publications of this and kindred associations from the land, and with them the weekly publications which bear the seal of Christianity, and it would not be easy to specify the sources from which the influence could go forth to counteract that mass of talent concentrated in the secular press, and so much of which is of a corrupt and corrupting character.

As to the measure and kind of influence which the Society has exerted, we can only say, it is open to the world. If I mistake not, a due acquaintance with what it has done, and with all that it has done, will produce the conviction that it has disseminated the gospel, the true gospel, the plain and uncompromising gospel, and, with the single exception of those principles which relate to church polity and the sacraments, the whole gospel—the great system of truth which inculcates the faith and holiness of the New Testament. The Bible does not deal in needless and philosophical distinctions; they are not the peculiarities of sect which constitute the gospel of Christ. The ploughshare of truth may be driven deep by other hands; it is well there should be other hands employed in digging about the roots of the tree of life. The Society seeks rather the green and luxuriant foliage, the spicy blossoms, the rich, ripe fruit. It is of great importance that there should be just such a medium and dispenser of the word of life. If to give a salutary

direction to the minds of the young, to enlighten the ignorant, to reclaim the vicious, to counsel the embarrassed, and to bind up the broken in heart, be the genuine fruit of Christianity; if to send forth its hundreds of laborers into the highways and hedges—if to read the wonderful works of God in a language they can understand to thousands, of other tongues—if to lead the wanderer to the house of God, and make his sanctuary a refuge in the day of calamity—if these and kindred results are the genuine fruit of Christianity, this Society has been no cumberer of the ground. Those who are best acquainted with the numerous productions it has sent into the world, best know their value, and the value of the efforts both to prepare and secure them. And it is due to its indefatigable Secretary, who has, in connection with its Committee and other officers, so faithfully conducted its affairs for twenty-five years, to add, that its annual reports furnish no unimportant documents in the history of American authorship, the American press, and the religion of the Western continent. If it has been a timorous and indolent community, if the men employed in it and employed by it have not deemed labor pleasant and honorable, if they have used the laborer's toil to gain repose for themselves, or the widow's mite to make themselves rich, let justice and humanity complain; but if the reverse of all this be the truth, let no man rebuke, but all men honor them.

God has honored them. In different parts of this land, both among the living and the dead, not a few have been brought into the fold of Christ through their instrumentality. The Spirit of God has put his own seal upon their humble efforts; not a few revivals of

religion in the land have been traced to the reading of a *tract*: the full extent of their influence it is not for the present world to disclose.

If I mistake not, we live in an age bordering on the spiritual harvest of the world. Like the centuries which had just recovered from the torpor and bondage of the dark ages, the present century is distinguished by the ardor of its pursuits and its impulsive enthusiasm. The past twenty-five years has been one of the brighter periods in this world's history. Thought now travels by steam and on magnetic wires. More is now being done to elevate the intellectual, social, and moral condition of our race, than at any period since the Saviour was born. Demoralizing, deteriorating processes are at work, and with fearful energy; but there are purifying and elevating processes also. And good men of every name are charged with them. Never was there a louder call for their united zeal and self-denial. The man who now laboriously lives for God, is exerting an influence over the minds of men more effective than numbers can compute, or time can measure. This single Society, vigorously and prayerfully sustained, with God's blessing, is able to do more for the souls of men, to accomplish that which will one day be more highly appreciated by the intelligent and holy universe, than all the gold that avarice ever desired. and all the power which ambition ever sought after.

It is a beautiful and blessed work in which this Society is employed, in diffusing so widely its lessons of heavenly wisdom; in scattering that which is adapted to the wants of the mind; in meeting the utmost stretch of its desires; in gratifying its spiritual cupidity to the

full, and supplying it with those unsearchable treasures which make the poor rich, and without which the rich are poor indeed. And most unostentatiously and beautifully is it pursuing its divine vocation. God grant that it may still pursue its course with the same noiseless and effective diligence and success with which it has pursued it in the years that are gone.

We are not insensible of the accumulated responsibility which rests upon it, growing out of its unexampled success. An institution which has at its control more than *three hundred thousand dollars* annually, and for such an object, bears a weight of responsibility which ought to be deeply felt. It is a city set on a hill which cannot be hid. The influence of its friends, the power of its presses, its multiplied and dispersed agencies, its denominational confederacy, its local position, and its strong hold upon the affections and confidence of good men throughout the land, render it an observed community. This is just as it should be. It welcomes and invites inspection and even scrutiny; the more it is inspected and scrutinized, the more will it commend itself to the confidence of good men.

Under God, the Society stands well with the people; and we say to those more immediately employed in it, Go on, respected and beloved brethren, with redoubled toil, with increased meekness and humility, with more ardent love to God and man, without dismay, and with revived hopes. The next twenty-five years will constrain the most sceptical to look back upon your course and say, "Behold, what hath God wrought." The watchful observer of his dispensations cannot fail to see tokens of good, and many a signal of the Messiah's

coming in the power of his Spirit. He is opening a highway among the nations; overturning long-established and venerated institutions of men; taking the wise in their own craftiness, and breaking up foundations that have for centuries been a barrier to the progress of his kingdom. "By terrible things in righteousness, He who is the confidence of all the ends of the earth and of them that are afar off upon the sea," is answering the prayer of Zion for deliverance, in redeeming her converts with judgment. The cloud that is big with blessings to his friends, will bear in its bosom the elements of destruction to his enemies; and while good men are giving utterance to the exultation, "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High," they shall speak forth their sympathies for human suffering, and say, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth."

Nor are there wanting demonstrations of mercy not mingled with judgment. God is overshadowing the church with his presence; shedding down upon her the spirit of grace and supplications, and causing light, in distinct and steady beams, to break in upon her darkness. He is hiding his wrath and visiting her in love. He is regarding the cry of the destitute, and not despising their prayer. One little cloud of mercy after another overspreads our sky, and pours its refreshment upon the plains beneath. While with chastened, and it may be with humiliating recollections of some of our own long-cherished hopes and unanswered prayers, we sometimes utter the complaint that God hath forgotten us, one band of converts after another, in different parts

of the land, is taking refuge in the ark of safety, as doves fly to their windows when driven by the storm. We say confidently to the friends of the American Tract Society, lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes, and make all your arrangements for brighter days. Augmented influences must be exerted for the supremacy of God's truth and the conversion of men; they must be exerted with diligence and fidelity; nor may the men of light and love ask to put off the habiliments of toil until they receive permission from their divine Master to rest from their labors.

That summons will not be long in coming. When twenty-five years more have passed away, and in some favored sanctuary in this metropolis, the friends of God assemble to celebrate the first semi-centennial anniversary of the American Tract Society, other men will stand in the places which its friends this night occupy. To us this earthly sun will have gone down, and if we fear God and love his Son, that immortal morning will have dawned upon us which has the Lamb for the light thereof, and God its glory. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Let us rise up to the work afresh. The year eighteen hundred and fifty belongs to an epoch in which the darkness that rests upon the nations shall pass away. We have entered upon the last half of the century which is to usher in the day that shall hold on its cloudless course till it overlay the earth, and the song of the new-born shall be heard in every land, from the rising to the setting sun.

21 JU 68