AN
ADDRESS
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BEFORE
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MEMORANDUM.

Some passages which appear in this Address as printed, were, for the sake of shortness, omitted in the delivery. With this exception, it is presented nearly verbatim as it was pronounced.
ADDRESS.

I have, heretofore, on occasions not unlike the present, ventured to offer to my countrymen, some views entertained by me on the general subject of human improvement and civilization. I propose to employ this opportunity, in presenting to those whom I have now the honor to address, a topic, sufficiently distinct in itself, but having intimate relations with that general subject. I mean the enquiry whether the leading and ruling minds among men have respected, and do sufficiently respect and observe, the universal Law of Truth, in their dealings with the common and popular mind.

It is unnecessary—and would be unprofitable perhaps, if not improper—for me to detain you, at this time, with any account of the sentiments I have expressed on other occasions in regard to civilization; especially as, if of any importance, they are already, in part at least, before the public. As connected, however, with the topic now to be presented, I may be allowed to offer a general observation or two on that subject.

I set out, then, on that subject, with the simple but comprehensive idea and proposition, that man is an improve-
able being, and that the race is improvable just as the individual is. I hold this to be expressly the plan of his constitution, as a dweller on the earth, and the plan of the constitution of things around him, so far as they were contrived for him to affect him. Now wherever we are able to discover, in the works of creation, the distinct outline of a general plan or design, two results follow, both of which must be deemed, I think, clear, and equally clear and certain to every enlightened and well-balanced mind; one is, that there is a Great First Cause to whom the design is to be attributed; the other is, that, as God is the author of the design, the end evidently intended to be attained cannot fail to be accomplished. In this way, I hold human improvenility to be matter of moral demonstration. And the same conclusion may be found in another way. We may read the earthly career and destiny of the race in their past history and present condition. The Past and the Present prophecy and testify of that world to come which is yet before Humanity in its home beneath the heavens. Progression has marked every stage in man's existence from the beginning. The sum of wisdom, virtue and happiness in human life, let the account be taken and stated at any, or for all the great epochs of his time on the earth, will be found to have been greatly on the increase. And this is a fact, the written record of which is, or may be, in every man's hand, and of which it would seem that no man who reads that record understandingly can doubt. Every great event in his history has led, or is leading in the end, to the same result—all that have seemed most adverse and disastrous, as well as those that have been hailed, at the time, as most fortunate and happy. When, then, we look at the growth he has already achieved since his creation, in intellectual and moral strength—in the knowledge of himself and of external nature—at his extraordinary success in discovering, evolving and arming himself with those vast elemental powers, and physical agencies and energies, with which the earth, the waters and the air have been replenished for his use; when we think of this, and consider, also, in the first place, that so far from having already attained his full stature and height of excellence, he is, to say the least of it, quite as capable of progression and improvement now as ever before; and, then, that the means, instruments and agencies of his advance, ordinary and extraordinary, instead of having been exhausted already, were never so abundant, and are multiplying every day; when we think of all this, we can not choose but look forward, with entire confidence, for an advancing and progressive civilization—we must of force believe that the plain of man's pathway onward in his future career, will be by an angle of elevation equal at least to that of the course he has trodden hitherto, and by which he has been brought up already from a state of extreme degradation to one of comparative excellence and dignity. The well-instructed and devout mind, moreover, can not fail to see in the Record which has jour-
nalized thus far the pilgrimage of the race—in the revolutions of states and empires—in the singular succession of nations appointed to be the chief depositories, for the time being, of the world’s civilization—the workings of that Supreme and Providential Power with whom the plan of their gradual improvement and elevation originated, and with whom of course its execution ultimately rests. In such a mind, human improveability and progressive civilization can admit of no question; it must be a certain, settled and absolute faith, because resting on proofs which admit of no denial and no doubt.

But now my present purpose leads me to remark, that it is essential to the very idea of civilization, that it should be an amelioration and enlightenment affecting and pervading the common mind. It must be popular or it is nothing. That a country has a few bright names to boast of, names shining as great lights, and the more conspicuous and wonderful for the general darkness that surrounds them—this does not constitute civilization. Athens had whole constellations of such names, and yet, though greatly superior to all preceding nations, the Athenians were lamentably wanting in true civilization. Homer, the greatest of Poets, sang to the Tribes of Greece, which yet exhibited in all their conduct nothing better than rude and barbarian, if not savage, virtues. Virgil and Cicero could not prevent, if they did not themselves enjoy, the bloody and cruel spectacles in which the Roman populace delighted. Shakspeare, and Milton, and Bacon, and

Newton, and Locke, are great names, and all labored faithfully, and with a success never equalled or approached before, each in his own way, in the great cause and work of human improvement; but they have affected and influenced succeeding ages, much more than they did their own. And this is true of nearly all the individual and extraordinary men, in all times, who have appeared in the various walks of learning—in science, in literature, in the useful, and in the elegant arts. The labors of such are never lost to civilization; their influence is highly salutary all the while as far as it extends, but they “bide their time,” and, finally, if the principle of vitality be in their works, their light shines forth, and is seen, and felt, and enjoyed by masses and generations of men, growing in intensity and power, with the revolutions of seasons and the lapse of time, and with the multiplying of its proper agents and subjects on the earth.

It is only, however, when the popular mind—the mass of human life in any country—is moved and elevated, by whatever means or influences, that we can count it for civilization. It is not individual men, but it is mankind, it is the race that is to be humanized and exalted, made reasonable, and virtuous, and happy, by the civilizing processes to which they may be subjected. And it is when knowledge is increased, and those who keep its treasures and feel its power are multiplied; when wealth abounds and has a general distribution; when the arts are developed and brought to a happy degree of perfec-
tion, and commerce is active and flourishing, so that life in the mass lacks nothing of its appropriate comforts, conveniences and adornments; when popular liberty is enjoyed, not merely exemption from chains, and dungeous, and physical oppressions, but when the popular mind itself, the soul of the multitude, is free; and when a pure, simple, unaffected and uncorrupted form of christian piety prevails, to cover all the ranks of life with its graces and its beauty;—it is then, and in such case, that we should recognize the actual and abiding presence and prevalence of civilization. And this way are the tendencies of things; and many are the active and efficient agencies all the while operating towards such a result, though men in general are little aware of it. Indeed, the general attention may be said never to have been roused to the subject, except in cases when the fountains of the great deep of human society have been broken up, and a strong flood, swollen with moral and physical contributions from tens and hundreds of thousands of united human hearts and human hands, has risen to sweep over large portions of the earth, and bear away before it the ripe corruptions, absurdities, or abominations of the period.

Two principal events of the kind just referred to, have occurred in modern History. One the world saw in the Reformation of Luther; the other was seen in the American Revolution. In both of these cases, the popular mind was thoroughly roused, and went forth in strength and majesty, as a lion just wakened from his lair. And in these examples it was, that the important and invaluable lesson was first distinctly taught and learned that, while nothing gives such irresistible force to great enterprises, of whatever character, as the enlisting of the popular sentiment in their favor, this same popular opinion—this combination of moral and physical strength, effected by gathering and binding together for use, as in one common and compacted mass, the united sense and judgment of whole nations and communities of men—is a power which may just as well be won and wielded in behalf of truth, freedom and virtue—in behalf of improvement and civilization—as to be prostituted and employed, as too often it has been, in the service of all manner of falsehood, error and evil—employed, this power of the people, in heaping burthens on the people themselves, and repressing the tendencies all the while apparent among them, to rise above the condition of their time, or throwing them back on deeper and deeper ignorance and degradation.

It distinguishes our own time and country above all others, that communication with the popular mind is more direct, and habitual than ever before or elsewhere, and the popular will is more commonly consulted, employed and deferred to. As an agent and instrument of power and of success, its importance has come to be well understood; happy, if one might say that this mighty agency, even now, was never perverted and abused, and never employed but to further the growth of intelligence, virtue, integrity and happiness in the world. Certainly
all must see, at once, of what moment it is that this agency should be thoroughly secured in behalf of improvement and civilization; and this leads me to the remark, to which I would gladly have your particular attention, that there is one indispensable condition on which this popular agency must be thus secured, and on which alone, perhaps, improvement and civilization can be henceforth materially advanced—and that is, that the Truth be exactly and rigidly observed in all the intercourse of the influential classes with the common mind.

And this brings me back to the topic on which I proposed to employ this occasion and this discourse. There would, of course, be no propriety in dwelling, with zeal and earnestness, on the obligations and the necessity of the Truth in this connection, if in fact the Truth had not been, and was not, used to be violated before the people. It becomes important then, first of all, to settle the question of fact; and this will be found, I think, to give us employment enough for all the time which it would be allowable to occupy with this exercise. This is a task, certainly not the most agreeable, though not the less necessary for that reason; especially, as I am afraid we shall find, on enquiry, but too little reason to doubt that the observance of the law of Truth before the people has been, and still is, slighted, to a deplorable extent, on the part of the leading and influential classes in society, always and still retarding and hindering, in a deplorable degree, the progress of civilization.

Almost every man—every man at all cultivated in mind and manners—shrinks from falsehood, and is ready to resent the imputation, whenever and however made, as a wound and insult to his honor. And this is well; happy that it is so. Undoubtedly, truth is generally felt to be of absolute and universal obligation; and the faith of the world is that it is commonly observed. And this is well too; for, however the fact may be, if this faith in the common observance of truth was less strong and undoubting than it is, it would be difficult to see how the business and affairs of life could be conducted and carried on at all. Undoubtedly, too, there is much actual and conscientious observance of the truth—much in every department of life—in social intercourse; in traffic, negotiation, and trade; in the walks of literature; amongst sects in religion, and among parties in politics. But, at the same time, every body, at all conversant with life in its various departments, must be sensible that in every one of them, fraud and falsehood are practised and prevail to a greater or less extent, and, of course, with effects and consequences hurtful and mischievous, just in proportion to the value of the truth and honesty that are sacrificed. And the worst view of the case is that, as a general thing, the obligations of truth are felt less and observed less, precisely where it is important they should be observed and felt most—where the mischiefs of falsehood are greatest, and where the punishment of the perpetrator, by the loss of the world's favor and regard, or by any
personal inconvenience or suffering operating from without, is the least likely to follow, and quite apt to be the lightest if inflicted at all.

It is, my friends, with vices very much as it is with crimes. The world is full of indignation towards them, when committed on a small scale, and for petty objects; but feels, and sometimes expresses, something very like admiration when they grow enormous and daring, and connect themselves with bold and magnificent projects and enterprizes. The man who commits one murder for the satisfaction of his petty malice, jealousy or revenge, is a monster; while he who sacrifices a thousand lives—depopulates a kingdom—deluges a whole nation in blood—for the sake of his ambition and to settle himself in power, stands a fair chance of being written down a patriot and a hero. Such a man always finds apologists at least; it is always discovered that he has redeeming qualities; and the public and common mind is taught to fasten on his brilliant powers, or his consummate skill, and to look at the means he has used through the end he has aimed at. Oh, it is a great mistake men make when they consent to be dishonest and fraudulent, or criminal, in small matters—unless they mean to be despised and abhorred—the petty forgers; the petty falsifiers of the truth; the small dealers in small cheatings of all sorts. Let such persons look to the example set them in high places, where the end goes far to justify the means, and the means to justify the end, though both end and means are, to every

just sense, the very essence and embodiment of wickedness and crime. See how men prosper, and what consideration they enjoy, if only they have been reasonably successful, where they have had the talent and the courage to practise villainy with a high hand—when, instead of an individual or two, they undertake to defraud the community, when they succeed in cheating the whole body of the people, or contrive to rob the state.

And it is very much so with vices; and especially, perhaps, with that we have in hand. The sacrifice of the truth in homely, and every-day affairs, brings with it commonly the appropriate punishment. It subjects the offender to personal inconvenience, to loss of character, and to merited contempt. A salutary public opinion is brought to bear upon him. There is no form or shade of character which is less tolerated in society than that which habitual falsehood gives; it is perfectly and totally odious and detestable. It is only when the falsehood becomes a bold, ingenious, or great invention, framed to effect some considerable or important purpose—affecting perhaps a whole party or sect, though it may be directed against an individual, or coloring or perverting facts which involve the welfare and the destiny of a nation—it is only then that society begins to show itself indulgent to the offence. Something is then pardoned to the infirmity of human nature, in consideration of the greatness of human power and ingenuity. Take the case of the arch-priest and prince, Talleyrand—with his maxim,
that the true use of language is to conceal or disguise one’s meaning; and consider the unaffected indulgence—nay, admiration—with which his conduct, character and career are too commonly viewed. Connecting himself with every important political movement of his times—a period fruitful, beyond all example, in stupendous changes and revolutions—he acted always and steadily on his maxim, and bowed himself in and out of courts, cabinets and camps, just in the order in which they succeeded each other, and as often as they changed front—and principles, the very image and incarnation of a perpetual lie. I do not mean to say that such conduct and such men are heartily approved, or approved at all by the enlightened and definitive judgment and conscience of mankind; but at least, for the time being, they are tolerated, admired and pardoned. And hence, I say, there is nothing in public sentiment, in public opinion—a stern and settled judgment of condemnation acting promptly, decisively and at once—no dark and portentous lowering of the public countenance—no gathered and threatening clouds over the public brow, muttering execration and wrath—to deter from the perpetration of falsehood, if only the game be royal or high, and really worth flying at. But besides this; there are not wanting cases in which fraud and falsehood are, and may be, habitually practised for objects and gains, neither very royal nor very high, which the rebuke of the world does not reach, or where it is only heard to be despised.

These are cases where there is a community of persons—a class, or a party—small and few in number though they may sometimes be—who will adopt or justify the practice, and so give to those concerned the requisite countenance and support. Strong in a common strength, they learn to look with indifference or contempt, on all adverse or condemnatory opinions, beyond the pale of their own circle. In that circle they feel enclosed as by a high wall of defence, and they become bold to bid defiance to every thing that may threaten them from without. Indeed, it would be surprising, if it were not so often witnessed, with what confidence men of conscience will live in habitual and scarcely disguised offence in this kind, and walk abroad in the sun without shame, if only their vice and error be common stock and property between themselves and a few associates.

And, my friends, this is a point which deserves particular attention—the falsehood that bears sway wherever there is a community of persons, or a party, to countenance the practice, and divide the responsibility. There is little fear that any man—cultivated or uncultivated—will stand out alone before the world, an individual liar, whether in small or great affairs. Some will do so, especially where the business in hand is important enough to command supporters and advocates at any rate and on any terms. But this is not the great danger. The instances are rare in which an individual man braves in this way the moral sense and judgment of mankind.
There are few, indeed, who dare to become the individual champions even of the right, where the judgment and opinions of the world are wrong; fewer still, then, who dare to be personally and flagrantly dishonest and wrong in the face of an honest and right-judging community—unless indeed on the single condition that they may have a party, or a clique, to countenance and support them. It is the associate untruth—the fellowship of falsehood and falsifiers—that are the objects fit to excite our fears, and awaken our alarmed attention. For this evil is a general one, if it be not universal—it would be difficult, I am afraid, to find a clear exception, where men associate together for objects that are to be carried with competition or controversy, and against opposition.

Nor is this any new thing in the world—this perpetration of wicked and injurious falsehood by classes, by parties, and in companies. Ever since men first learned the art of combining for any purpose, they have been used to combine for this.

In Athens, philosophy was cultivated chiefly through the means of contending and rival sects and schools. In no other way, probably, could philosophy have been cultivated there at all. But the time came when certain associated individuals undertook to monopolize the wisdom of the Athenian world in their own persons. These were the Sophists—at first an honorable name, and honorably applied to those whose minds were adorned by superior cultivation, and filled with knowledge, and who made it their business to impart the treasures of their learning and wisdom to others, in written or oral discourse; but finally a name used to designate the mountebanks of science, letters and eloquence. Like other pretenders, they made merchandize and profit of their skill in falsehood and fraud, and filled their own pockets, while they ruined the taste and the morals of their pupils. Socrates—the only man of heathen antiquity who fairly anticipated the sublime faith and doctrines of the gospel—himself a teacher of wisdom, but not for gain—not only could not consent to approve and applaud, as the common and deluded mass did, the miserable jargon, the fallacies and the rhapsodies of the Sophists, but he finally set himself seriously to the task of rescuing the youth of his country from the influence and corruptions of their pernicious teaching and doctrines. This, of course, was conduct not to be endured, and the band of the Sophists went resolutely at work to bring about the ruin, and eventually the murder, of their opponent. It took twenty years to accomplish this purpose; but it was finally effected through the systematic and concerted falsehoods and slanders of his associated enemies. They literally combined to lie away his life. After Aristophanes, by or without their instigation, had succeeded in inflicting a wound on his high character and reputation, by feeding the hungry and morbid appetites of his countrymen, with a most base and unrighteous misrepresentation of the man and his doctrines, in his Comedy of The Clouds; and af-
ter this wanton and injurious attack, and their own oft-told and continual falsehoods, invented and circulated with the cruel confidence of men mutually countenancing and sustaining each other in an evil work, had had time to pervade and infect the public and common mind, they ventured to bring forward their formal and groundless accusations. He was charged—he who had been forty years a public teacher in Athens, openly and uniformly, in the presence and hearing of all the people, inculcating the same pure and lofty precepts of piety, patriotism and morality—he was now charged with being a contemner of the gods, and a corruptor of the Athenian youth. His trial before the Judges was conducted by Melitus, who would have failed to procure a majority for his condemnation, if two of his associates and advisers, Anytus and Lycon, men of standing and influence in the state, had not come in, at last, to add the weight of their judgment and character to the base and impious accusation.

This was not, it must be remembered, the case of conspirators, hatching in secret a nefarious plot against the life of a citizen, or the peace of society. There was a bold and open appeal to the credulity of the common mind in favor of gross and palpable untruths, such as only a very slight examination, and a very little reflection might have detected and exposed. But they knew very well that there would be no examination, and no reflection, in the case. A party had been formed in Athens against Socrates—a popular party. He had rendered himself obnoxious to the hatred of certain portions of the people, by denouncing their vices, and by refusing to flatter them as the Sophists had been used to do; and he had attacked and publicly exposed the Sophists themselves, who were their favorites. His enemies had taken care to foment this popular, or rather this party dislike, unjust and unreasonable as it was; and when they found it had grown to a feeling of hostility and malice sufficiently persecuting and impetuous, to stumble at no means, or methods of annoyance, or destruction, directed towards the object of their malignity, however base or cruel, then they brought out their absurd and lying accusation; and, feeling strong in the support and confidence of an abused and dishonest party, they carried forward their persecution to a final and fatal issue. It was just one of those cases where men, claiming to be men of character and repute, become bold in the commission of fraud and high-reaching falsehood, conscious all the while of wrong and outrage, because they are sinning in company, and, whether ultimately successful or not in their particular enterprise, they feel sure of a certain amount of popular, or common and united opinion, to sustain, or at least to shield and cover them. They knew well enough that the best men and the best opinions were against them. They knew that Lysias and Plato, and a host of others like them, with nearly all who stopped long enough to think, and had the grace and virtue to be at all just and honest in their sentiments, were against them. But it mattered
not. They found a present support in the evil passions of a malignant and vindictive party, and this gave them courage to be false and wicked enough to satisfy any evil passions, in themselves or others, however malignant and vindictive they might be; and they achieved their triumph—a triumph followed almost as soon as won, and from that day to this followed, wherever known or read of, by the retributive judgment and execration of mankind.

Another, and the most notable example of all, of the extremity to which the bold and open falsifiers of the truth will push their daring, when made confident and strong by the principle of Association, or in the faith of a party sufficiently weak or wicked to be implicitly relied on, occurred in the sacrifice of the innocent Saviour of the world. The least guilt in the case was that of the false witnesses who testified against him. Perjurers may always be found for a consideration; and the more easily and cheaply, if the times shall seem to promise them protection. But it was the priests and the leaders of the party that had been formed against him, who found, in the vulgar prejudices and depravity of those enemies of his who knew not what they did, the security in which they reposed, while they brought their gross and concerted falsehoods to bear upon him—it is these whose cold-blooded wickedness excites our special horror. Their charges, one and all, were too monstrous for serious credence anywhere; and these men knew they were utterly discredited everywhere beyond the circle of the religious party whose enmities had been aroused towards him. Neither Pilate, nor Herod, nor any other sane man, not a persecuting Jew, believed one word of all they uttered, or caused to be published and testified, to his prejudice and injury. And little cared they for all this. It was only another case of men daring to be openly false, and pushing their falsehood to deadly conclusions, in the face of all the better feelings and judgment of the time, under the encouragement and support derived from the idea of a common guilt and danger, in which they had only their share with others, and a party to fall back upon in their last necessity.

It would indeed be a curious thing, to compute, if it were possible, the sum of the evil which has been inflicted on the moral and mental world, by that mighty instrument of mischief and misery—the deliberate and wilful denial and perversion, or the willing neglect and sacrifice of the honest truth. Let the student, whose mind is familiar with the leading events in human history, run his thoughts back along the course of time, with this object in view, and he will soon see that Mendacity, more perhaps than any thing else, has been the great antagonist to Power against which the race has had to struggle and bear up in all ages, and that which has had more to do than almost any other, with the hindrance and retardation of mankind, in that career of gradual civilization and enlightenment which was set before them at the begin-
ning. Wherever men have been stupid and ignorant, this dark and malignant Power has exerted its influence to keep them so; and wherever a movement has been made towards the bettering of their being and condition, the same Power has interposed to repress and paralyze their energies, and throw insurmountable obstacles in the way of their advance, in the line of improvement.

In Egypt, where science and the Arts were first cradled—at least in the West—and where the human intellect made some stupendous though awkward efforts—moving in grandeur though with little grace—the moral faculties of men were kept in a state of utter and brutal degradation, by the fabrications of the Priesthood; framed, and palmed on the credulous and swarming population, with a view to the more easy control and command of that population, as of so much physical and brute matter, and to the perpetuation and security of their own power.

When civilization, what there was of it, fled to Greece, and took up her abode in that beautiful land of song, of eloquence, and of glory, the same malignant and serpent Power was there to interfere injuriously with the advance of true refinement and excellence. Mind was there cultivated and burnished up, until the exhibition that was made of its powers—their compass, their energy and their elegance—became the wonder, as it still is the admiration and glory of the world. But in the midst of this manifestation of mind—so truly great and glorious—there was all the while, be it observed, an indwelling, abiding and essential barbarism—it amounted to nothing less—in manners and practical morals. The prevalent sentiments and feelings of the Greeks, in their best estate, were prono and earthy, and though dwelling in the perpetual presence of the most sublime and exquisite models and monuments of art, and though listening daily to the most finished and beautiful productions of taste and genius, yet, after all, we look in vain, in all their conduct and actions, for the evidence of any of that elevation, dignity and purity of moral bearing and character, which constitute civilization in the modern and Christian signification of that term. And how is so remarkable a fact as this to be accounted for and explained? Easily enough I am afraid. I refer to a state of things which belonged to all Greece, under all circumstances, and in every stage of her existence, and which rendered her advance to any high degree of moral excellence absolutely impossible. The Greeks were accustomed to indulge in an overweening vanity—not an uncommon habit among men and nations, whither in ancient or modern times—but, if not more excessive in Greece than elsewhere, it was at least employed and abused more to her disadvantage. Not content with enjoying their true and acknowledged superiority to all other nations and peoples of their own, or of preceding times, the Greeks weakly indulged the imagination and impression that, even in points and particulars where their imperfections and deficiencies were most glaring, they had at
tained already the summit of excellence—at least they thought that, if they were not already past improvement, yet there was nobody on earth who could instruct them. Now this disposition and habit of mind, instead of having been lamented and opposed by the majority of leading minds among them, was constantly fed and blown up by them into higher extravagance, absurdity and folly. It was a disposition and habit always at hand, and always used, in the most unscrupulous manner, to raise a party upon, in opposition to all attempts, made by the more honest and capable, to improve and elevate the moral condition of that singular and wonderful people. No truths or doctrines in morals, of a really sound, elevating and improving character, ever yet were quite agreeable to men whose tastes and habits had been already formed by a low and debasing standard. This was the difficulty with the teachings of Socrates, and this was the difficulty afterwards, and in a more eminent degree, with the teachings of Jesus Christ. And it was precisely on this disposition among the Greeks to think themselves wise and good enough already, and much wiser and better than they really were—a disposition which was aroused and stirred up to mortification and sullen anger, by the plain and cutting, though courteous rebukes of Socrates—that the Sophists were enabled to raise a stern and revengeful party for his destruction. In doing this, the accustomed potions of strong and high-wrought flattery were administered, and of course with an unsparing and unscrupu-

lous sacrifice of the truth. Nearly the whole secret of the moral degradation of the Athenian people rested in this, according to my humble notion of the matter. The strong and dominant minds among them, the men who gained the ear and the hearts of the people by flattering their pride and their vanity, persuaded them to the belief of a universal lie, and so sealed up their minds effectually against the admission of all practical and improving truth.

But I have no time to follow up this train of thought in regard to the Greeks; much less can I undertake to pursue a similar examination, through the succession of nations which have followed each other as the conservators of human improvement, and the contributors to a growing and extending civilization, with the view of shewing how far and how injuriously the spirit of Mendacity has affected the destiny and the happiness of the race. Every careful observer of events—every diligent student of the world’s history—may gather for himself, facts without stint or measure, bearing on this interesting and important point, by observing only a little method in his researches or his reflections.

Those who have principally swayed the common and popular mind in all ages and countries, have stood mainly in two or three classes; there have been the Literary men, the Political men, and Religious Teachers; and together these, with one or two other classes perhaps, have directed and governed mankind; and if any one would
satisfy himself whether the Law of Truth has or has not been neglected and disregarded, and to what extent, in all departments of human life, before the people, by those who have been their teachers and guides, he need only take the trouble to track either or all of these classes through their career in the various periods and phases of their operations and history.

I. Look for a moment, my friends, at the history of Religion in the world, and the operations of religious teachers—as well since, as before, the coming of the Saviour, and the introduction of the simple, sublime and affecting truths of his gospel. That absurd systems of mythology, and the rites of a debasing and often bloody superstition, should have prevailed in all the earlier ages of the world, even where there was a creditable and high degree of intellectual cultivation, seems generally to be thought of and regarded, as if it had been quite a thing of course—a necessary condition of humanity, altogether natural, and not, perhaps, altogether inappropriate or unbecoming. Now I am not myself of that opinion. Undoubtedly the religious sentiment is natural to all men, and that sentiment must and will be indulged in one form or another; and there is as little doubt that the religion of the ignorant and uninstructed—under all systems—tends to superstition; and there never was a time, perhaps, when it was not deemed, by many, an easier thing to teach ignorant men a plausible, and even revolting superstition, than to instruct them in a simple, pure and holy faith. At any rate it is certain, from all recorded and reliable testimony, that religious teachers have quite too often found, or made, it convenient to set up false standards of religious faith and obligation before the people, instead of offering to them the unadulterated truth. And why has this been so? Have the inventors of false systems and creeds been themselves deceived? Sometimes, perhaps, but certainly not always. They have observed an aptitude in the common mind for their fables and fictions; they have been sure of a party to support them; even a majority of the cultivated among them, too indolent or too weak to enter on any investigations for themselves, would yield them their suffrage and opinions; and finally the necessity of governing, and the determination to rule—to rule in their own way, and for their own purposes—have been enough to lead them to frame and palm off their dishonest futilities on their willing but unhappy subjects. In all this, there has been, I am afraid, quite as much want of integrity as want of knowledge—as much dishonest invention as unavoidable error.

That the major part of the ministers—the administrators—of all religious rites and ceremonies, even the most pagan, debasing and bloody, have been believing—partaking largely of the delusions which they helped to propagate, admits probably of no doubt. But there is as little doubt, that if we trace superstition—under whatever form it has appeared, quite back to its source, we shall find it, in nearly every instance, if not absolutely origina-
ting in a deliberate, intentional and well-understood violation of the truth—at least adopted and wrought up by designing and dishonest minds, conscious all the while how little truth there really was in the systems they devised and taught, for the sake of objects of selfishness or ambition; occasionally, no doubt, for objects believed to be indispensable or useful, and which they meant to promote by systematic falsehood, as if truth was less to be relied on as an instrument of good. We must not fail to remember that natural theology—resting in the great central truth of the being and attributes of one supreme and eternal God—is in itself the simplest of all forms of religious faith, adapted to the very constitution of the human mind even in its weakness and ignorance, if unsophisticated, and that which the mind of antiquity, before the day of direct Revelation, and all mind everywhere, and in all time, especially where its powers were expanded and enlarged by cultivation, would have most easily and eagerly embraced, as it is embraced by Christians, if that mind had been dealt with any degree of honesty and fairness. There is an early and instinctive aspiration in every human soul after an intelligent First Cause; and my own conviction is, that it has been mainly by the painstaking abuse and perversion of that feeling, and of the religious sentiment in men, under the lead and conduct of the strong and the wicked among them—shutting out the truth and the light, and covering the earth, by their inventions and frauds, with gloom and thick darkness—that polytheism, idolatry, and every form of disgusting superstition, have reigned so long, so extensively and so obstinately, in the world.

As soon as we came down to periods of time the transactions of which are revealed to us by certain and faithful records and relations, we are able to see at once what direct and controlling agency, unprincipled and reckless men have had in imposing religious falsehood and fraud on the credulity of the world; and we may properly infer the general fact to have been in remoter ages, as we find it in more recent times. Look at a single case—the stupendous imposture of Mohammed, the founder of the religion of Islam. It was in the beginning of the seventh century of the Christian era, that this successful fraud was attempted; in a country where the Christian religion had already obtained a footing and an incipient ascendancy; and among a people neither stupid nor un instructed—where letters had been cultivated with considerable success, and some knowledge obtained of the severer sciences. It took him four years to make nine converts, and before his death, only about twenty years afterwards, he had established a complete religious dominion over the whole of Arabia, and over some parts of Asia. His successors and followers were not less active or efficient in propagating and extending his faith and his empire. Islamism was speedily established in Persia, in India, in Asia Minor, over the Greek empire, in Egypt, in Barbary, and in Spain. It has existed and flourished for twelve
hundred years, and at this day numbers among its adherents and disciples not less, probably, than one hundred millions of souls.

This is, indeed, a remarkable example of the success which may attend the zealous inculcation of flagrant and absurd falsehood on the minds of men; but it is scarcely more remarkable than some others. It was not far from the period when Mohammed was in the Cave of Hera, fabricating his imposture, that a Bishop of Rome—the ambitious and crafty Boniface—with the aid of the imperial and bloody Phocas, assumed the title of Universal Pastor, and founded another empire in imposture which has since more than equalled that of his Arabian rival, in the extent of the territory it has covered, and the number of souls it has subjugated. It must be permitted to us who are Protestants to speak of this usurpation and imposture according to our understanding of the truth. That the Romish Church has not only, at all times, numbered among her votaries individuals of great and deserved eminence for learning, piety and purity, but that the mass of her communion, at all times, and everywhere, have been eminently sincere and devout, can neither be denied nor doubted. But I must insist that there have been frauds imposed by her Hierarchy on the Christian world, which are not the less obvious and gross for any such reasons. So, that she has herself been occasionally misrepresented and belied by the zeal of Protestantism and of party, is, I think, quite certain; but I can find no excuse in any such fact, for the outright inventions which have actually been palmed, in her name, on the millions upon millions of human beings who were entitled, by every honest and every sacred consideration, to be supplied only with the simple and unadulterated truth. The Bondage, not to err merely, whether of opinion, of creed, or of fact, but to a spiritual dominion founded in usurpation and flagrant falsehood, in which she has held, for twelve hundred years, so large a portion of the population of Christendom, and in which she still holds them, is that for which abused humanity at once breathes indignation and sheds tears of blood. It is this stupendous fraud of the Romish Hierarchy, in deliberately teaching and propagating their unworthy, puerile and debasing inventions, in the place of, or in addition to, the simple and sublime truths which the Church was originally commissioned to promulgate, because they could find men, in countless multitudes, ignorant and weak enough to believe them, with a view to promote their own objects of dominion and rank selfishness—it is this for which they are, and must forever be, held responsible to an abused and insulted world, and to an offended God.

But, of course, it is not my business or purpose, on this occasion, to speak of this subject any further than to refer to this among other notable instances of religious usurpation, of which it has been the lot of humanity that multitudes should be the enslaved and willing subjects. I place this by the side of the great Mohammedan usur-
pation—more than the equal of that in magnitude and power, and, though a spiritual dominion under which more truth is taught, yet it is scarcely a whit behind the other in the extent of its inculcation of actual error on the human intellect and the human heart. And I refer to both of these cases as illustrating—first, the position, by proper inference, that in the earlier, as well as in later times, nearly all perversions of the simplicity of religious truth, in its alphabet and elements, have been originally produced, or directly urged on, to a great extent, by the dishonest agency of individual men, in deliberately abusing the human mind by invented fictions and falsehood, uttered and propagated for truth; and, finally, as illustrating the general fact, after which I am looking, of the enormous, uncomputed and incalculable mischief and injury, to which mankind have been, and still are subjected, by the prevalent spirit of Mendacity in the world.

These examples, however, are still among the class of religious teachers and guides; and there would be little difficulty in adding to them. The proceedings and doings of the Jesuits alone might furnish us with abundant matter for reflection. But, passing by all other times and instances, is there not some reason to apprehend, that we might find, in the current and passing history of religious affairs—not in the world at large only, but in Christian countries, as well Protestant as Catholic—but too much evidence, that there are those in the class of religious teachers even here, and among modern Christians, who are not wholly free from the just imputation, not so much perhaps now-a-days, of inventing new fictions, though we have lamentable cases of the sort, but, at least, of heartily adopting old ones and lending a boid hand to their successful propagation?

I do not here speak of opinions and creeds honestly adopted and employed by opposing and rival sects, however little foundation there may be for such opinions and creeds, in reason or in scripture; nor do I refer to any religious teachers, of whatever faith, or in whatever capacity, who are themselves thoroughly persuaded of the truth and importance of what they teach. But if the fact be, as all, I think, must be satisfied it is on a little reflection, that religious truth, as it is found in the teachings of Jesus Christ, is overlaid, in various quarters, if not every where, where religious parties are formed, to a greater or less extent, by human inventions and devices, which mar the beauty and excellence of that truth, and hinder its progress by the shackles they impose on the freedom of the human mind, by obstructing and clouding the intellect and oppressing the conscience and the heart—if this be so, then are we not forced to believe that there are not wanting those, at this day, and in Christian communities, engaged, in one way or another, in the work of religious instruction, who, acting under no delusion themselves, or no further deceived than they choose to be, are found inculcating, in their daily ministration and services, some weak and silly device or invention, in the place of
that simple gospel they profess to teach, or at least in addition to it? At the same time, I must insist, that it is no very subtle or rigid rule of morality, which holds men accountable, not only for the falsehood they knowingly propagate, but for that also which they help to publish and establish without knowing, when they might and ought to know, that it is not the truth. And if this rule is one of just application in the common concerns of life, how forcible and how indispensable in its application to the business of religious teaching! And by what law in ethics does that man justify himself, I should be glad to know, who embraces the entire faith of a religious sect or party, because it is the faith of a party, and assumes the obligation of teaching it entire to others, and who does this with no other personal examination than such as is employed for the express purpose of fortifying his belief in all that faith, whether it to be right or wrong—true or false; or who else is content with believing what a goodly company of other men believe, or seem to believe, so that whatever falsehood may be involved, which he may more than half suspect all the while, may seem to be not altogether his own, but to appertain to his calling and his party!

II. But I have alluded to political men, as constituting one of the principal classes who have had, and who have, so much to do with the direction and government of human affairs; and, it must be confessed, that, in their time, they have done their full share, in one way and another, for the suppression and perversion of truth in the popular mind, and the inculcation of falsehood. We believe in this country—it is our appropriate faith—that governments, in all preceding ages, have been founded, almost without exception, in actual error, if not in universal fraud and falsehood. There has been little honest dealing with men before our time, in the matter of political rights. Men have not been deemed men, and treated as men. The great truths, that all men are created equal; that all have certain inalienable rights; that governments are instituted for the protection and benefit of the governed, from whose consent alone the just powers of governments are derived—these truths, which we hold to be fundamental, were never even embodied in form, and proclaimed and insisted on as essential, and were never attempted to be acted on, and carried out, as truths of practical import, till the very recent period which gave birth to the North American Republic, as a new and independent empire. Up to that period, they had been everywhere denied, at least in practice, by the establishment of governmental systems based upon theories and assumptions which were antagonist to these truths, and which were in themselves false, and often known to be so to the leading minds among those who have constantly introduced and relied upon them.

Whoever feels impatient at the slow progress, and the moderate advance, which mankind have made, in so many ages, towards civilization, refinement and moral excel-
lence, let him turn to the causes of depression and retardation which have existed in the frauds of governments. Let him consider how few men, of all the millions that have existed on the earth, have been permitted to believe that they were created, or allowed to live, for any other purpose than to minister to the profit and the pleasure, and to fulfil the sovereign uses of their lordly masters. How few of them, indeed, have ever known, or been allowed to believe, that God has created the nations of one blood; that those who have gained, or have succeeded to rank and wealth, and station, above themselves, were really born only their political equals; that they had themselves a just and equal right with all others to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; and that the pretended divine right of kings and princes, so long and so successfully maintained, was only the most flagitious, impudent and abominable lie that ever passed the lips of the profligate and mendacious!

But, my friends, while we are considering the conduct of the class of political men, we must not spend all our thought on the Great Past, and on other countries and peoples than our own. This land of ours—this blessed land—is the theatre, almost above all others, for politicians and political parties. Both the times and our peculiar institutions seem to require them; and at any rate there never has yet been on the earth a people whose interests, and business, and happiness, and destiny, were more directly or more constantly and entirely influenced and controlled by them. There never was a country where politicians were so numerous—almost every man of any pretension amongst us, at some time or other, is a politician—where their power, for good or for evil, was so great, and where the common obligation to be honest, faithful and true, might not be violated with less fatal injury to the common interests and the commonwealth. How has the Truth fared in the dealings of political men with the popular mind of our own beloved country?

Now I wish here to do justice to political parties. Like all other parties, every where, and in all departments of life, they are mainly honest. They are deceived, indeed, and very often know not what they do. They act and think usually by a common impulse and feeling, which may be right, but for which there is, and can be perhaps, no ground or warrant of security, that they may not be wrong. They are the recipient and subject body, moving and acting, for the most part, according as the power that acts upon and controls them, may give them motion and direction. It is, of course, a public, or rather a common opinion or motive—common to the members of the particular body—by which they are actuated and governed; and this opinion or motive sometimes, indeed, though rarely, may be spontaneous, as if the place where they congregate or dwell, had been shaken, and a sudden inspiration had seized them; but generally, almost universally, that opinion or motive is supplied by some leading mind or minds among them, or from without; mysteri-
ously hinted perhaps at first, but made, with incredible swiftness, by means which easily suggest themselves, to reach every ear and heart, and pervade and envelope the whole mass as if it was an atmosphere. How often must it be repeated—the gross flatteries to which the popular ear listens nevertheless—that the mass of men, even in the most enlightened and cultivated communities, divided and marshalled as they are in parties, reason imperfectly on the more important and intricate affairs of government and of life; and only, indeed, as a general thing, from the very necessity of the case, as they are supplied with arguments by their interested advisers, expressly designed of course, to help them forward in the direction in which these advisers may think it fitting they should move. Certainly, the mass of men—each section by itself, agglomerated into party, and opposed to and opposed by every other section—the mass in each honestly think and believe themselves right. Men ought to put faith in other men as they do. Human nature is constituted on the very principle that requires them to do so. It is in human nature itself to be believing, and even credulous. Man is created and constituted to love the truth; we are only false when specially moved to be so by considerations stronger than our innate love of truth, or when a habit of falsifying has been contracted; and we are only sceptical when our incredulity or suspicion is aroused by some controlling or imperative circumstance, or when our enlightened reason compels us to be so. It is precisely on this account that men in clubs and parties are so easily persuaded, influenced and governed, and it is precisely for this reason that they are usually honest, single-hearted and sincere in their opinions, and in their acts.

But this very view of the honesty of parties cannot fail to force upon the sober and reflecting judgment unhappy suspicions about the entire and universal honesty of party leaders, as well as some serious thoughts concerning the deep responsibilities under which such leaders are acting. We are to conclude, that these are the men who think and reason, who search and examine, and who have the means and the ability to reach correct results; and how then does it happen that, with the same general end and object professedly in view, these men lead off in so many different and opposite directions, drawing away so many conflicting and hostile parties after them? Is all this to be set down merely to the account of error and the fallibility of human judgment? I do not believe it. My faith is, that in regard to all those things in which the good or ill of life is made, by the providence of God, to depend on the judgment and the election of the human mind, where the right is to be chosen and the wrong avoided, men are supplied with the abundant capacity, when enlarged by proper cultivation and enjoying fitting opportunities, to avoid those gross and fatal mistakes into which they are, nevertheless, continually falling. In the present condition of things in the world, the popular mind lacks this necessary cultivation and those fitting advanta-
all her conflicting and willing, but deceived company, through awful and imminent, but concealed hazards, and to probable if not certain destruction.

It would be doing no more than common justice to the people at large, and certainly it would be doing these men themselves no injustice, that we should hold them to the same rigid rule of responsibility, when they lead into errors, which proper study and preparation might avoid, and when they designedly betray, misinform and deceive. Adopting this rule, it would not be very material to enquire whether the deliberate perversion and violation of the truth, in their dealings with the common mind, have, or have not been habitual or frequent, on the part of politicians, and the leaders or managers of party. In any view of the case, however, which I am able to take, I am forced to this unhappy conclusion—after some opportunity for making up an opinion, and some industrious use of that opportunity to this end—that among the leaders and managers of political parties in this country—I make no exception in regard to parties, and I include the whole period of our national existence, from the Revolution down—that among the leaders and managers of these parties—there have been, and are, some, and quite too many—and of these not seldom the most active, restless, zealous, efficient, and successful of the number—who have, in their communications with the popular mind, in quite too many cases, neglected or failed to regard and observe the law, the spirit and the obligations of truth. I refer,
not without deep humiliation and abasement, to the history of the American government, and of the parties that have existed and warred under it, for the evidence and proof of what I suggest.

I know very well that even so slight and guarded an impeachment as this is, may seem to sound harshly in the ears of many, and that it is in fact shocking to the moral sense of every right-thinking and honest-minded man. But there are two things that should not be forgotten. One is this; that the political men of no foreign country under the sun—taken as a class, especially where any considerable freedom exists, as in France or in England—are less obnoxious, according to their opportunities, to the same imputation than those of this country. No foreign nation, therefore, can reproach us with this accusation, except, indeed, on the ground that as more purity is demanded of us for the security of our institutions, so more may rightfully be expected of us than of others. And another thing to be remembered is this, that my impeachment of political men, in this country, falls very far short of that opinion and judgment, which politicians themselves, on all sides, profess to entertain, and mutually publish, in the coarsest terms, every day, of one another. They, indeed, carry the accusation, I think, quite too far; for not content with uttering unwelcome truths, in regard to each other, and of which nobody, perhaps, is better entitled to judge and to speak than they are, they would have us believe that the very brightest and purest politi-
cal characters amongst us, have not been, and are not, altogether free from the vice of direct political mendacity. In this I think they tell us more than the truth. This country has had, and now has, men, who have spent their lives in politics, and passed through the most trying and difficult times, with a devotion to Truth as stern and habitual, as that with which they have served the country. Washington was one, and John Jay was another; and I would name a third, also, by way of offering an example in our own times, whom I should refer to with equal confidence as deserving to be placed in the same honorable order—a venerable citizen of Massachusetts—"that old man eloquent"—only that it is better perhaps, to wait a very little, until the grave shall have sanctified his eminent virtues, and canonized his name, before we venture to speak of his superior merits as they deserve. No, my friends, the country and the Constitution, and Constitutional Freedom have not been left without true and faithful witnesses, to represent and defend them. But some there are whom we cannot include in the number of such—alas that we cannot—some—many—among those who have been in their time the leaders or managers of party, and who in various and unequal spheres, have gone in and out before the people as guides and lights, in the political affairs of the country.

I can hardly conceive of any thing more curious in an historical point of view—and it might be very useful though very humiliating—than a faithful record and enu-
meration of the various matters and things, seriously affecting the political condition of the country, which the American people, in the course of sixty years, have been solemnly instructed to believe by politicians, and which great numbers, sometimes large majorities of them, have solemnly and religiously believed, though now known to be utterly destitute of truth. Let those who are familiar with our history reflect whether they cannot now see, that some, if not many, of the great internal struggles and convulsions through which the country and government have passed, from the Revolution to our day, must be set down, by the truth of History, mainly to the interested, if not dishonest, movements and devices of political men? Have not political parties been often marshalled against each other, and the peace of the country broken and destroyed, by their bitter and almost deadly conflicts, when the causes of difference, and quarrel between them, have been little more than mere idle inventions, with just such substance and stuff in them as dreams are made of? Without any attempt at enumeration, the principal instances will occur to every well-informed person. In whatever direction the strong current of sympathy, prejudice or passion among the people has at any time been observed to set, must not the truth of History say, that there the frauds of political-men have been apt to be thrown in, to set the waters in turbulent motion, and swell them, if possible, to a heady, impetuous and resistless flood? Has not every

Administration, no matter in whose hands, been assailed in succession, and, almost always, by compounding a liberal infusion of essential fiction, with a moderate ingredient of fact; and, on the other hand, have not these successive Administrations been quite apt to defend themselves, or have they not been defended, and the war carried into the camp of the Opposition, with too little regard to honor and to truth? Have not issues wholly false been frequently presented before the country, as the subjects of party animosity and strife, and have not some of the most important electoral judgments of the people been made to turn upon them, while the proper merits of public men and public measures—the only just grounds upon which they could have been rationally, either condemned or applauded—have been carefully kept wholly out of view, and passed by unregarded? And when, by and by, a just account shall come to be taken in all this matter, and a true and irreversible historical judgment shall be made up, will it not then be found that some, at least, of the most signal changes and revolutions in parties and political affairs in this country—so vitally affecting its welfare and its interests, and even our national existence—were really wrought out and effected, as much by the use of intrigues bottomed on fables and figments, as by the manly employment and the force of truth; in short, may not the result of a careful survey and examination of our national history, when it comes to be candidly made, be, that, in some of the most critical periods.
of that history, large portions of the people, swollen it may be at times into strong majorities, have, through the efforts of politicians, labored under strong delusions, in regard to public men, and public affairs—delusions deeply injurious to themselves and the country; and that, taking the sum of our political history, Intrigue and Falsehood have been but too often successful before the people—have prevailed and actually borne away with them, but too frequently, if not as often, and to as great an extent, as their rival and antagonist powers—Honesty and Truth? Happily the country has been less affected by such a state of things than might have been apprehended. For, in fact, the government has been pretty steadily administered, all the while, whatever the people have believed about it, on the same general principles, adopted and established under Washington, into whatever hands it has fallen; and if there has been, at any time, any material and hazardous departure from these principles, it has not been precisely when the belief has commonly obtained, that Liberty and the Constitution were in danger.

But I leave the class of political men—one of whom, be it remembered, I have been and am, though in a very obscure and humble way, and of whom I have felt myself, therefore, at liberty to speak at some length, and the more freely—I leave them to such vindication as they may happily find in their own consciences, and possibly in the more accurate and favorable judgment of a forgiving and charitable world.

III. I have named, in an imperfect enumeration of the most influential classes in society, the class of literary men, or writers. The common impression and belief is, that Literature, on the whole, has been favorable to the triumph and the prevalence of virtue and truth in the world. And of this I suppose there can be no doubt. But I am not satisfied, considering how tremendous its power is, that it should not have been, and should not be, altogether so—and this, unhappily, cannot be said of it.

When Literature first appears, and in all its youthful and virgin measures, among a simple and uncultivated people, it is uniformly innocent and pure; it is only after it has been long enough in use for the discovery to be made, that, being an instrument of infinite power, it is easy to make it one of infinite mischief, that it becomes, in the hands of the selfish, the ambitious or the profligate, a weapon of destruction, whetted for all sorts of unhallowed and cruel uses. The contrast, in respect to simplicity and truthfulness, between the early literature of a people, and that of later and corrupted times, would not be inaptly illustrated by comparing the Book of Job—supposing that work to have been a poem of Arabian origin, as some have believed, and regarding it only in its literary character—with the Koran of Mohammed; the one full of beauty, simplicity and truth; the other, the clumsy, though successful device of an arch-impostor, full of turgidity and full of falsehood. The same difference is observable in the different ages of Grecian Literature; well enough
illustrated in the contrast between the sublime and elevat-
ed strains of Homer—the Bard of Bards—and the lying
and slanderous effusions of Aristophanes.

But it is chiefly in modern times, that Literature has
come down from her heights of eminence and glory, to
be the handmaid of vice, infidelity and mendacity. Vol-
taire, and other writers of his age and school, employed
her but too successfully in this wretched mission. So
long, however, as the brood of unprincipled writers, in
France, or elsewhere, kept their fatal hands off from the
Periodical Press, they were comparatively innocent be-
cause comparatively harmless. When they came to seize
that mighty engine, and turn it on society, and use it with
a reckless disregard of means and consequences;—as soon
as that was done—it was found that all things lay at their
mercy—virtue, and truth, and innocence—whatever pos-
sessions men hold most dear and sacred—with all the
securities and muniments which have grown up around
domestic life, or which belong to social and political exis-
tence—all lay at their mercy. The trade of Reviewing,
conducted according to the example first set about five
and-thirty years ago, was marked with all the peculiar-
ties and characteristics of a savage inroad and incursion
on the peaceful settlements of civilized life. The Re-
viewers were stealthy, subtle, treacherous and cruel.
They stole upon the slumbering and unsuspecting; they
warred upon the innocent and the helpless, as well as on
the strong and those capable of self-defence; they shot
their arrows from covert and ambushes; they burned,
they branded, they pillaged, they tortured; there was no
act of atrocity, or malice, or falsehood, of which they did
not show themselves capable. Happily, in more recent
times, the trade of Reviewing has been forced by circum-
stances, into some change of tone, temper and conduct.
It has relented and relaxed a little, even where the savage
and the brute, though tamed and partially civilized, still
hold a subdued and modified empire; in other quarters it
has become altogether gentle, peaceful and humane, pur-
suing its even, independant and dignified way, as the
efficient conditior of taste, talent and genius, in every de-
partment of learning.

The great instrument upon which those malignant
Powers—always infesting society in some shape—which
deal chiefly with mischief, delusion and falsehood, have
seized, in later times, and which they mainly employ for
these abominable uses, is the Newspaper Press. But it
is in other countries—as in France and in England—that
the spirit of genuine and unappeasable malignancy pre-
sides over portions of the Newspaper Press, rather than
with us. There, and with the class I refer to, it is either
a settled and sullen determination to disturb, to prostrate,
and to ruin, in the desperate hope that as the worthy sink
the worthless may rise; or it is a temper compounded of
malice and mirth, which is ready to enjoy and glut over all
the misery that it is able to create. With us, I am happy
to think, the demon is less conspicuous and active. The
objects which men propose to themselves here, by the establishment of the press, are seldom directly malicious or wicked. Newspapers here—by far the greater part of them—are connected with parties, of which they are usually the organs or the instruments. And it is chiefly in this capacity, and while laboring in their vocation—as they understand it—that they fall into licentiousness, and become addicted to servility, and finally, in some cases, to the most reckless and flagitious practices.

When a Newspaper is set up for the purpose, and undertakes—not merely to advocate one set of principles or doctrines, and to repudiate their opposites—but undertakes to defend and justify every act, measure or movement of a party, wrong or right; and to accuse and condemn every act, measure or movement of a rival or antagonist party, right or wrong; what can we say of it, but that that Newspaper parts with its integrity for a price, and is no longer at liberty to be honest or true, except by chance? Is not the soul of that Newspaper sold out by the express terms of a deliberate and well-defined contract, and has it, or can it have, any moral character or quality left, which it can rightly call its own? Certainly, this is not the unhappy condition of all party papers, because such is not what they all undertake and contract for; but are there not some—quite enough—quite too many of them—which wear these bonds, themselves and their own columns being judges? Do we not all know of such—papers which the press groans to de-

liver daily, in litters of hundreds and thousands each, and which together stock and supply immense districts of country, and host of wondering, expectant and hungry readers? Papers which go forth habitually laden to the scuppers—deep as they can swim—with detraction and falsehood, and carry, if at all, only some light and slimsy articles of common-place and merchantable truth? Papers which scatter falsehood by contract, and shed truth only by accident? How can it be otherwise, when the party they speak for must never seem to be wrong, and the party they oppose must never seem to be right? When the party they advocate must be put up, wrong or right, and the party they oppose must be put down, right or wrong? And when, as happens generally, in matters about which rival and high-toned parties are in loud and angry conflict, the real truth lies, not with either, but in some middle ground between the two? How can it be otherwise with Journalists—few in number I hope they are—who begin, continue and end, in one unbroken course and strain of party service and servility? Who feel themselves bound to utter and practice deception, detraction and falsehood, in a settled and systematic way, and as if it were a calling and business to which they had been solemnly and religiously set apart and dedicated—as if the press were an altar, and they were the anointed priests who must sacrifice upon it just so much truth, and just so many spotless and unblemished victims, every day! Oh, there are men in this capacity, who
But it is not merely in the service of party that portions of the Newspaper Press, sin against morals and the truth. Some Newspapers out of that service, as well as in it, are quite too fond, and too much in the habit, of going out of their way to impeach private persons, and others in whom the public have a deep interest, and misrepresent and misinterpret their motives and acts.

The characters of men of talent, of standing and influence, are among the best portions of the public property of the country, and that from which the most valuable returns of profit and advantage may be expected to flow.

And yet, if an individual of this stamp has the misfortune—wittingly or unwittingly—to offend one of the least among that brotherhood of unscrupulous Editors, of whom I have spoken, and above all, if he happen in any way, to incur the mortal displeasure of the class of such Editors—ah then, wo be to him; happy if he be not at once a doomed man; without a hearing, without time for explanation or thought, he may chance to find himself condemned by the judgment of a tribunal which speaks in harsh thunder, and with a thousand united voices of anger and execration, and hung up in gibbets, on Newspaper cross-trees, in all the high and low latitudes of a broad and widely-extended country.

Well, and what must a man do in such a case—or what can his friends do for him? One thing seems to be certain: he must submit to the loss of his reputation; nothing scarcely, short of a miracle, can save or restore that.
The multitudinous public has received, and digested the falsehood, which already pervades and affects, and is incorporated with, the whole body, to its utmost extremities; and if he now attempt to send the truth, as an antidote, after it, the truth in such cases is proverbially slow in its operation; and, besides, nine-tenths of the stomachs will be certain to reject it entirely, from the delicate and irritable habit they will have contracted by indulgence in the free use of the calumny in the case with which they have been so lavishly supplied. Still, however, the sufferer may yet feel disposed, for the benefit of the whole country, to bring the tremendous issue to the test of a final trial, whether the Press be, or be not, henceforward to be regarded as absolutely irresponsible. He may prosecute, then, for a libel, and make his solemn appeal to the justice of the commonwealth. He does this; and the instant it is done, he may find the alarm sounded through the land for the Liberty of the Press; the Press is attacked! the Press is in danger! as if really the Press was not free, unless, in addition to the licence of complete unrestrained publication which it enjoys, it has also a complete immunity from the troublesome interference of judicial tribunals and the law, in all cases whatsoever—not free, unless it may employ malice and calumny without question or gainsaying—unless it may demolish the Constitution, and shut up the courts, and become that sort of sovereign, absolute and irresponsible power in the country, which every loyal subject is bound to confess and maintain, can do no wrong! But suppose the course of Justice is yet free, and heeds not the outcry and clamors of those it is about to overtake; suppose the libel be passed upon by that good old Saxon tribunal—a jury of the people—and a verdict rendered against one of the offenders; what then may we not expect to see next? Why, we may see—and this is not a case altogether so suppositional as one could wish it was—we may see the whole Newspaper Press called upon, and openly appealed to, to make common cause with the convicted and condemned libeller; appealed to, to assume the atrocious act as its own, and by means of a common libel fund, raised for the purpose, by a voluntary capitation tax on the corps editorial, to take away, and in effect abrogate, the pecuniary fine and punishment which the law of the land affixes to the offence, and by which it seeks to visit and restrain the offender! Let the country look to it— I say, let the country look to it—if it would not see truth, morals, law, constitution, liberty itself, sacrificed to a Power, which is always bold as it should be, but which sometimes, and in some cases, fancies itself irresponsible. Nay, for humanity's sake, for the sake of the country, and for the sake of the common cause of civilization in the world, I appeal to the Press itself to look to it. Truth, morals, law, constitution, freedom—to these, if we would have them exist in purity and strength, and to all the cardinal interests of society, a free press is indispensable; but then it must be virtuous and true, as well
as tree. And if wanting virtue and truth, it turns wanton and destructive towards all the cardinal interests of society, why truth, morals, law, constitution, freedom, will indeed fall, but the Press, though the last enemy to be destroyed, will be certain to fall also along with them.

But the time admonishes me that I must now leave the whole subject on which I have taken the liberty to discourse to you, to your own judgment and reflections. It is not that our own beloved country is reproachable in the matter I have spoken of beyond all others; but it is that no where else on earth is falsehood so hurtful, and truth so indispensable. Nothing, almost literally, is done with us without reference to the popular sentiment and will. And this popular will, as I have said already, is a mighty engine and instrument for evil or for good; and we are here, in this same blessed land of ours, trying almost the first great experiments with its mighty strength and capabilities. We may make it the power of darkness and destruction, or the power of light and salvation. And this will depend much on the good or ill treatment which the popular mind shall experience at the hands of the influential classes, and on the reverence or contempt the people themselves may entertain for the Truth, and their regard or disregard of its laws and its sanctions. If, then, those in whose hands the chief influence lies over the popular mind, shall openly deny and renounce its obligations and authority; if they—under whatever pretences or temptations—will give themselves up to the habitual neglect of the principles of integrity and veracity in their communications and dealings with the people; then let it be noted and solemnly proclaimed, now and once for all, that the hopes of the philosopher, the patriot, the philanthropist and the christian for the country, are crushed and destroyed. Neither public virtue, nor sound learning, nor freedom, nor religion, nor civilization, nor any other condition of human happiness, can subsist, much less be promoted and advanced, among any people, in the presence of a practical and habitual disregard of the sacred claims and obligations of truth.

And now, in conclusion, the enquiry will force itself on the mind; how is the great evil of which I have been speaking—the too frequent neglect of the obligations of truth by the leading and influential classes in their dealings with the popular mind—how is this evil to be met, and corrected or resisted? It is obvious that our hopes must rest ultimately on the elevation and instruction of the popular mind itself. The people must be educated until they shall be capable of forming for themselves a sounder judgment of men and things. They must be educated until they shall be able to command that respect and fair dealing, which is always their due, but which their leaders and guides have too often and too long failed to offer and observe. And on this point, I have myself a large and liberal faith. I would not flatter the people with ascribing to them qualities such as falsehood and servility often affect to discover in them; but I
would tell them plainly that they are endowed with capabilities of which they have, as yet, but little idea. Great acquisitions of knowledge—deep study and research—are as impossible to the mass of men, as they are happily unnecessary for them. But all men may become sufficiently instructed in the business of their own callings, and in all the practical duties devolving upon them as citizens and as men; and then—what is worth more than all—I hold it to be not only possible, but positively easy, when the right methods shall be adopted, to cultivate the moral powers of the common and popular mind up to that degree—fitting it at once for nice judgment, and for personal enjoyment—that the like has not yet entered into the heart of Philosophy to conceive; for it is precisely the moral powers of the human mind, as distinguished from the intellectual, which have been given to all men in measures most nearly approaching to equality, and which are most susceptible and easy of development and cultivation.

And towards this consummation, I think it no delusion to believe that things are actually tending. Means are now employed to this end which are altogether modern and new; and among the very best of these, are literary societies, and associations, constituted on the principle of mutual improvement. Let these be cherished and sustained. Other means and agencies, by and by, will come in to their aid. And nobody need despair of human nature. It is doing pretty well already; and we have in the present condition of things, in spite of all difficulties and discouragements, a most excellent promise of good for the future.

But I cannot help adding the reflection, how great a point would be gained at once, if only the class of the learned amongst us would, as such, undertake, not directly the reformation of others, in the particular to which I have adverted, but just, with one accord, themselves religiously to observe—each on his own account—the simple Law of Truth, in whatever dealings they may chance to have with the public and common mind. It belongs to the educated, and it belongs to those who are resolved to be educated—to those who are striving after personal cultivation and improvement, who are grasping at intellectual and moral excellence, and seeking to feed that insatiable appetite for wisdom—surely it belongs to such to be single-hearted and true.

Indeed, if there were not unhappy examples to shew the contrary, it would be difficult to believe that the Student—and the man who means to be wise never ceases to be a Student—that he could ever be otherwise than single-hearted and true. By the very terms and conditions of his intellectual habits and pursuits, Truth seems to lie always in his common pathway; and, we should think that he must always be shod with it, as the Pilgrim with his sandals, and walk with it in his right hand, as the Pilgrim with his staff. He is conversant, daily and hourly, with its familiar form, in the various subjects in which it more
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emphatically resides. Besides that it is presented to him, more or less perfectly and completely, in every department of written learning—in every form of literature and every form of science—he finds it too elsewhere, and quite as certainly as in books. He finds it—if truly a Student—in human life, in all the various displays which that life makes of itself; in private dwellings, and in public streets; in solitary places, and in the thronged marts of trade; in the quiet and obscure retreat, and in gairish houses of indolence and pleasure; in penitentiaries, and temples of worship; in asylums, and halls of legislation or justice; in the breast of the solitary hermit, and in the bosom of the busy or the maddened crowd; where the plough is driven, or the hammer falls; where the sailor suffers, or the soldier fights; where youth frolics, or old age totters; where the bride rejoices, or where the widow or the orphan weeps;—every where—every where—where the mystery and drama of human life are enacted.

And the Student—if he be truly such—finds the truth elsewhere, also, than in human life; he finds it especially, and more easily and certainly still, in external Nature. Nature is all truth. She is clothed with it as with a garment. She is true every where, and at every moment of time, and through all changes. The Heavens are true, and the Earth is true. Light is true, and darkness is true. The green leaf is true, and so is the yellow leaf. The seasons are all true. The Stars, and the Planets, with their changing moons, are true. There is Truth in heaving billows, and in running streams; Truth in the valleys, and on the mountain tops; Truth in the Ocean, and in the Air, and Truth in the myriad forms of Animal Life with which God has replenished them. And the great God himself—the Author of all this Nature, and all this Truth—He, above all things, is true. Oh, my friends, how can the Student—living in such a world as this—is—surrounded with such subjects for study, contemplation and employment, and compassed with such witnesses—how dare he—how can he find time to be false! how can he be otherwise than always, immovably, and forever true!