THE SOCIAL PRINCIPLE:
THE TRUE SOURCE OF NATIONAL PERMANENCE.

AN ORATION,
DELIVERED BEFORE
The Erosophic Society of the University of Alabama,
NON-CIRCULATING
AT ITS
ROOM USE ONLY
TWELFTH ANNIVERSARY,
DECEMBER 13, 1842.

BY WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS,
OF SOUTH-CAROLINA.

TUSCALOOSA:
PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.
1843.
ADVERTISEMENT.

I had contemplated such a revision of this performance as would have more closely connected the several topics, and established, by a more consecutive arrangement of detail, the point under discussion. Such a revision was equally due to the subject and to myself. The importance of the former called for it, and the hurried and unfavorable circumstances under which the oration was written, rendered it necessary. But time is not allowed me, and I must dismiss it from my hands, with this apology, and with a hopeful reliance upon the generous indulgence of the reader.
CORRESPONDENCE.

EROBOPHIC HALL, DECEMBER 15th, 1862.

Dear Sir,—We have been appointed a Committee, in behalf of the Erosephic Society, to tender to you their unsung thanks for the highly interesting and deeply instructive manner in which you addressed them, on the occasion of their twelfth anniversary; and, also, to request a copy of the Oration for publication.

Permit us, sir, to add our personal solicitations to those of the body we represent, and to express our sincere hope, that you will comply with the unanimous wish of the Society.

We have the honor to subscribe ourselves,

Your's, most respectfully,

M. L. STANSEL, J. T. LOWE,
J. L. SMITH, Committee.

W. GILMORE SIMMS, LL. D.

TUSCALOOSA, DECEMBER 17th, 1862.

Gentlemen,—The Oration delivered before your Society on its twelfth anniversary, was, owing to unsatisfactory circumstances, a hurried composition. To prepare it for publication, it will need some considerable revision. This done, it will give me great pleasure to submit it to your disposal. Pray receive and transmit to the excellent and honorable body which you represent, my sincere acknowledgments for the courtesy which has been shown to gentlemen,

Your very obedient and obliged friend and servant,

W. GILMORE SIMMS.

Mississ. M. L. STANSEL, J. T. LOWE,
J. L. SMITH, Committee Erosephic Society.

THE SOCIAL PRINCIPLE.

AN ORATION.

It is now nearly twenty years, my friends, since the individual who addresses you, first made his acquaintance with your city; and that glance at our mutual past, which the present visit has occasioned, discovers a strange similitude in our common fortunes. What I am in the regards of my friends and countrymen,—whether well or ill-deserved,—is sufficiently attested by my presence here,—in the midst of such an assembly,—engaged in the honorable duty which your gracious opinion has confided to my hands. But, in the proud fortunes of the community by which I am surrounded,—remembering what she was in that day of my obscurity,—I am forcibly impressed with those wondrous effects of time, which we never so clearly understand as when they are somewhat associated with our individual experience. Little did I imagine that the rude and scattered hamlet which I then surveyed,—a fragmentary form, not half made up,—was, in so short a space of time, to become so eminent a city;—her dwellings informed by intellect and enlivened by society;—her sons refined by education,—her daughters ennobled by sentiment;—Learning at home, with an al-
lotted and noble mansion in her high places, and Taste secure in her dominions of equal peace and prosperity. Still less was it in my thought, that, in that same little space of time, the unknown and obscure boy who then beheld her in that unimproved condition, was to be summoned from his distant home in Carolina, to minister at her most sacred anniversary,—to prepare the altar for the offerings of her infant literature,—and to join with her sons in the holy sacrifice to that Genius, equally proud and pure, in whose honor the song of the bard, and the voice of the orator, “never should be mute.”

Then—a decapitated Colossus—the forest tree lay prostrate before her threshold,—the wild vine swung luxuriantly across her pathway,—and, at the close of evening, the long howl of the wolf might be heard, as he hungered upon the edges of the forest for the prey that lay within her tents. Scarcely less wild, in its unpruned, uncultivated condition, was the mind of that youthful spectator,—cumbersome by fragmentary materials of thought,—choked by the tangled vines of erroneous speculation, and haunted by passions, which, like so many wolves, lurked, in ready waiting, for their unsuspecting prey.

The egotism of this comparison will be forgiven for its truth. We are now, both of us, to a certain extent, free from these incumbrances and enemies. The danger is withdrawn from our immediate neighborhood,—the pathway is open for our present footsteps. The security which waits on social order, has rendered your avenues peaceful; and the passions in my bosom, if not entirely overcome, are, I trust, kept in subjection to those ordinances of God and society, which alone preserve in freedom the community and the man. We have both succeeded to that condition of prosperity, which enables us sometimes to rise from the immediate struggle, and to look around us with the eye of a well-satisfied contemplation; and it becomes us to inquire, as a matter of equal duty and acknowledgment, by what agency we have triumphed,—what means have effected our successes,—and why, indeed, we are now assembled here. The inquiry is not one of very serious difficulty. The answer in one case will naturally be suggestive of the other. To account for the successes of individual mind, will go far to account for those of the community; and the history of a community, will, in turn, measurably illustrate the progress of its individual minds. Your prosperity is the due result of whatsoever degree of thought has been expended upon your progress, and whatever measure of energy has been concentrated upon the plans and purposes of your intellect. The same causes which lead to prosperity will secure permanence. Unhappily, for great cities and great nations, they do not always perceive, or do not always regard, with sufficient respect, a truth so equally valuable and obvious. It is only by venerating the mind which has made, that the works of mind may be preserved, unimpaired, for posterity.

This glance at our mutual past awakens many reflections, the principal of which, as it relates to that strange philosophical romance, the progress of society, may well enchain our attention, and constitute the legitimate topic of our present essay. Traversing the then dreary wastes of this south-western region,—contemplating with a superior sense of awe the numerous cities of her solitude,—the recollections of her Euro-
pean history rushed through my thoughts, and in recalling the course of French, Spanish and British invasion, through the then spacious empire called Florida, I was struck with the remarkable fact, that, of the efforts of these three powerful nations, to establish the banner of Civilization within this wondrous province, two of them should so utterly have failed. That a nation, in that day of such gigantic powers,—endued with such superhuman energies, as Spain,—grasping at the acquisition of territory, with a tenacity which looked less like policy than passion;—that a people of such constitutional ardor as the French,—so capable of endurance in the prosecution of a favorite purpose,—so full of resource in finding means of progress, and in providing against defeat;—that neither of these should have been able to secure themselves in the homes which they overran,—and that it should be left to a race of traders—fewer in number—poorer in purse and spirit—less practised in war—less fervent in zeal—to achieve the conquest in which they found nothing but defeat,—would seem a difficult problem for the solution of the philosopher. And yet, I fancy, that a just survey of the true objects of these several nations, and of the usual progress of society among them, will lessen, if not entirely remove, this difficulty. The solution may be found in a single sentence. While the Spaniards and the French, in the new world, sought either for gold, for slaves, or for conquest, the English sought for nothing but a home. While Ponce de Leon, in the decline of life,—when the place of his abode should have been already endeared to him, close almost as the human affections which Time had consecrated to his need,—abandons all in a wild and visionary search after delusive waters, which are to reverse the usual destiny of man, and lift him to the condition of immortality;—while De Soto,—blest with those ties which love should have rivetted to his soul, dear as its own vital springs,—abandons wife, family, friends and security,—those very things for which man is alone justified in departing from his birth-place;—while similar purposes, in like manner, invite to the new world the arms of thousands more, French and Spanish,—we are constrained to perceive, in the aims and objects of the British colonists, nothing wild, nothing irrational—no purposes not plausible, no plans not feasible—no design not comprehended within the well-recognized wants of a free and wholesome state of society. They came to colonize and not to conquer, though, in effecting the one object, they necessarily secured the other. In this simple fact consists the great secret of their success. The purposes of society are the most rational, perhaps the only rational, in which man can ever engage. His nature constitutes him for these purposes, and their very prosecution, without any other object, includes a virtual promise of security for his possessions and his life. His instincts acknowledge these truths even where his mind fails to examine them, and he tacitly yields himself to the sway of a government, in which these objects seem to be the most thoroughly guarantied, as well by the common sympathies as by the common law.

And yet, if we compare the people of these three countries, according to their own standards, so far as relates to their usual moral and education, we shall find the superiority to rest, almost entirely, with the unsuccessful adventurers. With De Soto came the nobility
of Spain—her cavaliers and courtiers—prime warriors and distinguished gentlemen. The French adventurers were, in like manner, accomplished in arts and arms—noble in birth and bearing—graceful and courteous—and with an ambition sufficiently lofty, to give a seeming elevation to their most inferior pursuits. Both nations professed a religion, which, mingling with the enterprise in hand, imparts, more than any other influence, zeal and confidence to the soul of the individual. Nor did their superiority rest here. The sanction of their respective sovereigns—their friendly countenance, and, frequently, fostering provision,—added an importance and dignity to their commissions, which alone might have afforded them the happiest auguries of success. Very different, indeed, was it with the English colonists. These were generally a destitute, if not a dissolute people. They did not by any means represent the learning, the tastes, or the accomplishments of the mother country. Roundheads or Cavaliers, they came still as mere private adventurers—few in number, homeless and houseless,—sometimes the rebel fugitives of a lost battle, sometimes the profugates of a prison,—men seeking safety, peace, home, liberty,—not plunder, not conquest, not the vain honors of a mistaken and misnamed renown. As in the instance of the Puritans, so far from receiving government assistance, they were rather in danger of her chains. This was a fierce, intractable sect, restive under any rule, sullen and dogged,—rude and stubborn,—but having that hearty English sense of the social virtues, which is the true bond of union by which a nation is strengthened for gigantic purposes. The Cavaliers, whether of Virginia or Carolina—thoroughly different in their general characteristics—more lavish—given to more license of morals and manners—practised more in the vices as well as in the graces of Courts—and with a less rigid adherence to the Dii Penates, than distinguished the eastern colonies,—were yet not without their sense of what is due to the sacred character of home. After long, feverish and fearful strifes, they sought equally its security and repose. They had been tainted by a pernicious familiarity with the French and Italian customs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,—they had drunk deeply of the excesses of a monarch, whom they had served with a too unscrupulous and unmerited devotion,—but they had never entirely surrendered that wholesome English feeling, which, in the word "Home," finds only another meaning for the word "Comfort." They bore with them the household gods of their fathers,—they set them up with observant rites in the wilderness, and dignified the forests of America with altars, in scrupulous imitation of those which they had left forever. Their ambition was to found a New England,—new homes, worthy of those which they had abandoned, and in whose sweet similitude the whole aspect of their future world was drawn. They had succeeded. They had endowed these homes with the whole treasure of their sympathies,—those English sympathies which embody a whole world of treasure in the little world of home. Hence, it was no difficult matter, when, in '76, the mother country prepared to violate their social securities, to awaken the whole people, from Maine to Georgia, to the necessity of making common cause in a quarrel, which was yet, strictly speaking, the quarrel of a single section only. What mattered it to the Cavaliers of Carolina, that the
English government trampled upon the privileges of Massachusetts Bay,—and why should the Puritans of New-England care whether the Cavaliers of Carolina were or were not permitted the right of choosing their own civil and military officers? There was no love lost between these separate communities. They had few affinities of taste or temper. Foes in the old country, they were not likely, very soon, to overcome their antipathies in the new. Yet they did overcome them, and, with the sagacious instincts of the Anglo-Saxon nature, in the maintenance of those social securities, which, whatever might have been the difference of treatment to which they were severally subjected, had been, in respect to both, almost equally outraged. It is well to remark, in support of this opinion, that, in our Declaration of Independence, the wrongs done, the provocations suffered, are spoken of only as so many aggressions upon society; and the understanding is never for a moment outraged or offended, by a single abstraction about that Liberty, which, save in name, is nothing more than a spirit of refined society. They shook themselves free from the King of Great Britain, for the same reason which first prompted them to seek refuge in the wilderness,—the comfort and the security of home. Not so much with the view to the assertion of an abstract principle, the neglect of which might, at some future day, have involved them in probable loss of right or privilege, but because of absolute present abuses and usurpations. It is a rhetorical exaggeration which may lead to evil, to speak of British taxation only, as the cause of our Revolutionary war. I do not doubt that we should, in process of time, have dissolved our connection with the mother country, under any circumstances, and any sort of treatment. It was not in the nature of things that the two countries should very long remain under the same authority. But we are to look for the true causes of the Revolution, as enumerated in the Declaration, to the most atrocious offences against society,—the violation of life and liberty, and other crimes of like character, which, to have submitted to, would have been fatal to all its securities. There was nothing speculative in the causes of complaint; and taxation was not the sort of tyranny which led to war. These causes consisted in the denial of laws which were essential to the peace of society,—in the presence of a military which was insubordinate to society,—in the imprisonment of the citizen in regions away from the society to which he belonged,—in the murder of the citizen in the ordinary walks of society,—and in rescuing his murderer from justice. To have taken up arms for other than these offences—to have invoked a seven years' war of the most brutal nature, for less provocation—would have been equally against the spirit of society and religion,—would have incurred a guilt, which the calm, conscientious, moral nature of the fathers of the Revolution would have prayed in sackcloth and ashes, for a far longer period of years, to avert. We have but to read the famous instrument to which we have given a passing reference, to see that the wrongs done by Great Britain are dwelt upon as wrongs to people, rather than to principles,—to the repose and security of society, rather than to that elementary principle of human equality, which the same instrument begins with declaring. That, indeed, was the principle made apparent by the wrong, yet, but for the wrong, the principle might have slept
for ages in the dormant bosom of the savage or the slave.

There is a deep significance in these facts, which we are not often brought to see. A people thus moved only by proper provocation,—thus studious to justify themselves before the world,—thus solicitous of those concerns only which seem counselled by human reason, and enforced by natural justice,—is a people, above all others, to have the custody of the social principle. They will not sleep above their trust. Such a people are not prone to change—are slow to excess—slow to revolution—considerate of life—reserved, cautious—fond of acquisition—apt to be moral, proud, prudent and persevering. If they are selfish, they exhibit this selfishness in a becoming attitude. They are selfish in regard to superior objects. They are distinguished by the primary qualities of social permanence, method and consideration. Their consideration provides always against the future,—makes home comfortable,—cares for the feeble,—exalts the woman,—protects her with no common courage, and hedges her in with a pains-taking solicitude that suffers not the winds of heaven to blow too rudely upon her cheeks. She, in turn, thus guarded,—thus elevated and endowed,—becomes a creature of superior sentiments,—refines the worship which she receives, and softens the stern bosom which she charms. The home thus rendered sweet to the affections, becomes necessary to the tastes. If gentle spirits make it desirable within, the busy fingers of an equally gentle fancy render it attractive without. Vines and flowers encircle the habitation,—birds whose strains attest that they do not repine for an unnecessary liberty, fill the atmosphere with song,—whilst art,

with a rival melody, astonishes and provokes the imitative ability of the natural musician. With the progress of one taste to perfection, is the birth of another. With newer desires of sentiment, industry is impelled to exertion, that the demands of sentiment shall be satisfied; and thus it is that men advance, by the natural and moral process of accumulation, step by step, to the possession, not only of superior fortune, but of superior refinement. The progress of one man, thus endowing his little cottage with love and comfort, provokes the emulation of his neighbor, and thus hamlets rise, and great cities, even in the bosom of a wilderness like this! Why are not the Spanish and French adventurers who traversed these regions three hundred years ago,—marching with armies and banners,—a noble and a bright array,—in all the pomp of fame and chivalry,—why are they not now in possession of these dominions,—the masters of this city,—speaking the sonorous language of the one nation, or the courtly dialect of the other,—and engaging, this hour, in the gorgeous and imposing rites of their peculiar religion? Why is it that the French and Spaniards are in possession of so few of their colonies and conquests,—driven, either wholly or in great part, from the West-India Islands,—from Mexico, from Central, and from South-America,—odious in all, with so few memorials of their power, unassociated with its crimes? I answer, because they pursued not these humble processes of comfort,—because, with all their qualities of conquest, they lacked the only one which makes conquest permanent! That domestic feeling, which is equally a sentiment and passion with the Englishman,—the appreciation of a social impulse which no fashion can easily subvert,—a
sort of household religion, from whose sweet and simple altars no accursed love of lucre can ever thoroughly beguile. Imbued with this religion of the house and heart, the Englishman makes a castle wherever he plants a footstep. It is his law and fortress, and raising this moral superstructure wherever he lays his hearth-stone, he has founded his lordly dwelling in the four quarters of the earth. His drum—such is his haughty boast—still keeps sonorous sounding time, responding, like ancient Memnon, to the progress of the sun, in every known region which he honors with his beams. In each of these, such has been his devotion to the substantial objects of his nature, his treasure is too great to suffer him to forego his possession. He is rooted there like some natural growth of the forest—he takes root readily, maintains his foothold with his life, and you can only dispossess him by a recognition of those social laws by which he is governed, and by stern patriotism, which, in the assertion of a natural right, finds a superior impulse to his own. In no other way can we account for the fact, that these haughty islanders, of all living conquerors, have alone maintained their conquests, seldom baffled, and never, but in a single instance, driven from the ground where they had found foothold, and then only by the arms of a people sprung from the same ancestral loins with themselves. Nay, even this exception must have its qualification. They were not expelled from America—they maintained themselves in America. The invader was a foreign despot—hostile to British liberty—and the expulsion of British arms from our soil, was one of the noblest efforts of British freedom. It was the struggle of the Briton’s fireside, against Britannia’s avarice—the social man against those usurping passions of a government, which too frequently war upon the sacred hearth, in the name of church and sceptre.

Yet the original conquest and retention of America by the British people, was a matter of no easy performance. We see in it a conclusive proof of the superior means of conquest, which is possessed by the social principle, in spite of all disadvantages. The colonists, few in number, were wanting in resource; and though brave in spirit, and of powerful frame and muscle, not ordinarily accustomed to arms. A rude militia, they could endure, and they could strike; but their military skill—their acquaintance with the arts of national murder—was limited in the extreme. To these were opposed the veterans of France and Spain,—men already in possession of the soil,—brought up to arms,—having no other business,—superior in number,—superior in all the extrinsic aids and appliances of a military and mighty nation. To reconcile this disparity, and overcome these deficiencies, the British had nothing to oppose, but a patient habit of mind and body,—a well-ordered and compact social system, which had trained them to a feeling of the vast importance, in all enterprises, of mutual obligation and support,—and a religious regard to those duties, which, as they were single, and circumscribed within natural boundaries, seemed reasonable, and justified in their prosecution the fiercest valor and the firmest resolution, that ever rendered inflexible the will of man. Whatever may be the temptations of gold or conquest, be sure that no man fights so stubbornly, as he who, knowing the value of his home, fights upon its threshold; and the very humbleness of the British homestead in America, increased
the indignation with which he strove against his foreign invader. The very moderation of his aims, was a virtual assurance of their justice, and made him as stubborn in their assertion, as if the home for which he struggled had been endeared to him by the domestic associations of a thousand years. It is not the value of the thing for which he combats. It is because that thing is his own; and it is partly to the veneration shown by British law to the British land-holder, that this lesson, teaching the profound value of the homestead to the meanest of Britain’s sons, has served to make compact her social institutions, while the world around her was threatened with social overthrow. To this same valuable lesson, we ascribe the passion of the Englishman and American to be the owner of land,—each to have his little peculium,—his home,—in the language of the domestic proverb, “however homely.”

The more we examine this proposition, by a reference to British and other histories, the more certain, we imagine, will appear its truth. Having security in the homestead, with that feeling of dignity which a conscious permanence of position inspires,—and a farther appreciation of the vast importance to civilization of a community, at once stationary, yet susceptible of progress,—and how naturally does the man improve his condition. Compare, with this idea in mind, the comfort of an English home with that of any other people. Nay, it is the boast of the Englishman, that this very word, with the host of dear associations which belong to it, is peculiar to his own language. Nor is it the word only. The thing, itself, is almost peculiar to the English. Even we, their descendants in America, are scarcely in possession of it. We have a thousand luxuries, but few comforts. I have often imagined, or striven to imagine, the comforts of an English home, as known to our ancestors some two hundred years ago;—its placid sweets,—its unaffected grace,—its hearty cheerfulness,—the sweetness of its repose,—the polish of its simplicity,—the frankness of its hospitality,—its buoyant sensibility, and quiet raptures. The snug mansion always distinguished by plenty,—the cheerful fireside, equally clean and unpretending, enlivened by the happiest faces, and the sweetest evening recreations,—the curtained chamber,—the decorated walls,—the order which regulates without being seen,—the authority which is felt without being heard. The prompt, unassuming attendance of servants,—the reverential bearing of children,—and that warm but subdued current of domestic love, which, passing from grandsire to grandson, seems to transmit itself, with an annually increasing tide, along with the family possessions, through the hearts of successive generations,—fertilizing in some degree the partially foreign bosoms of the venerable nurse and butler. Here I see youth brought up with the modest bearing and docile habits of the damsel,—manly without presumption, curious without obtrusiveness, and studious without being dull. The maiden, pleasing without pertness,—grateful for, without solicitous regard,—anxious to gratify, yet without yielding any thing of that pride which becomes her sex, and makes it becoming in the sight of ours. Then, for the more external picture,—the vigorous sports of the field,—the necessary employments of the farm,—the chase, the merriment, the rustic revel,—the manly trial of strength or skill,—the hearty buffet with ball or cudgel,—strifes of buoyancy and blood, but not of
hate,—and the cheerful uproar which terminates the simple and wholesome festivity, such as once conferred upon the country, in the language of other nations, the name of “Merrie Englande.” I confess, the hearty and generous nature which spoke out in those days, dashed, it might be, by a little excess of that rustic simplicity which became rudeness, has a charm for contemplation, which makes it half doubtful whether civilization, in refining too much upon this character, has not impaired some of its most valuable virtues. But the horse play which, in the rustic charivari, should sometimes show too many of its heels, did not then seem to impair the becoming veneration of the people, for the sacred sweets and patriarchal authority of home. The sport itself was licensed by religion, and did not often exceed its allotted boundaries. Nay, so long as it was a licensed sport, it was satisfied with its limits; and the son did not the less honor his father, nor the village lads their pastor, nor the whole people the presiding Druid, the venerable Genius of the Homestead, because they were occasionally suffered to forget themselves in a homely saturnalia. You are all reminded of the sweet picture in Goldsmith’s “Deserted Village.”

“Dear, lovely bowers of innocence and ease,  
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please;  
How often have I taken up thy green,  
Where humble happiness endear’d each scene,—  
How often have I paused on every charm,  
The shelter’d cot, the cultivated farm;  
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,  
The decent church that tops the neighbor’ing hill;  
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,  
For talking age and whispering lovers made;—  
How often have I bless’d the coming day,  
When toil remitting, left its turn to play,  
And all the village train, from labor free,  
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree!

If Goldsmith, even in his day,—the day distinguished by the American Revolution,—pronounced the domestic charms of England to have fled,—what has been the loss since? But Goldsmith spoke with the usual warmth, and consequently, with the usual exaggerations, of the Poet. The household virtues may have been on the decline,—nay, we know that they were,—but they were very far from having fled entirely. England is even now, over all countries, that in which the domestic tie is strongest,—in which the charm of home is sweetest,—where the patriarchal and social virtues are yet most fondly cherished. We do not now speak for the great body of her people, and we are by no means forgetful of the condition of the miserable operatives, who depend upon the employments afforded by machinery: but our reference is to that body of her citizens which have charge of the social principle,—that sacred fire which, like that of the Persian, is never suffered to go out, in any nation, unless its destruction has been first resolved upon. There is, no doubt, a community in every land, to whom its virtues are particularly confided,—to whom the great body of the
people turn instinctively, in the moment of distress and danger;—a class which are thus tacitly distinguished as the permanent—the principled—those who obey neither the caprices of fashion, nor the impulses of speculation,—who pray for neither poverty nor riches,—whose hearths are always smiling in plenty, and whose industry never clamors for more. It is in the possession of a community like this, more than any other nation, that the great superiority of Great Britain, in all respects, is to be found. It is in consequence of this unquestionable social superiority, that the Englishman, let him go where he will from home, is always a discontent. His most ordinary and indispensable requisites are denied him in other lands, and the substitutes which are offered, only remind him, as if in mockery, of the superior value and attractions of those which he has abandoned. Doubtless, in the clamor which he makes, he not only betrays some feebleness of character, but is unjust to other people. But that he attaches too high a value to those things which make his home more dear to him than any other,—which make him love his country with an individual passion that seems to swallow up all others,—cannot well be said by those who behold, in this very attachment, the true secret of his own and country’s eminence.

We might trace, did it need, and did our leisure and limits permit, to his peculiar mental constitution, to his religion, and general earnestness of temperament, a great portion of this tenacious and profound devotion to the spirit of the place. Something of it is due to his good common sense, which prompts him to address his thoughts and efforts to objects which are certainly attainable, and the uses of which are beyond all ques-

tion. Something, unquestionably, to the fact, that his geographical boundaries at home are so much circumscribed,—a fact which necessarily impresses him with a just sense of the paramount value of land to him who was ordained a planter. It is because of the difference of circumstances in this respect, that we, in America, have lost, in a great degree, the benefits of this lesson. The quantity of land before us, deprives us of that veneration for the soil, to which the Englishman owes so many of his proudest virtues. The intrinsic value of his paternal estate, great in itself, is heightened by the recollection, that it has constituted the inheritance of his fathers, and is endowed with the numerous improvements of successive generations. Every race has striven in the same grateful employment of adding to its beauties. No spot is left unhallowed by the all-endowing hands of love and veneration. Every tree has its appropriate name and history; and if affection has not been able to keep from decay, these memorable fathers of the forest, she has, at least, decorated their hoary brows with the ivied green which mantles their desolation. It may seem something of an absurdity, in the eyes of a freeman, to assume as important, even to Liberty itself, these little concerns of life,—these domestic additaments,—the small interests which make physical comfort, and address themselves somewhat to the sensuous nature. Doubtlessly, Liberty is the greatest social good,—nay, without such liberty as becomes one’s moral condition, there is no social good. But that sort of liberty which is entertained without human comforts,—which neither knows nor desires them,—is the liberty of the savage, which, insisting upon its freedom, returns only to its wallow. Now, the English-
man, with liberty, possesses a thousand other social goods, and those of the domestic hearth, of which we have spoken, are the greatest. They make his comforts—they endear his home—they couple his freehold with his freedom, and making his very selfishness a patriotism, the love which he maintains for both, secures him in their mutual possession.

How much of this passion for the family homestead—how much of this social principle—did the Briton bring with him to America? How much of it, when his authority over the soil was broken, did he transmit to his successors? Have we preserved the household virtues of the Englishman? Do we maintain his tastes in this particular?—do we honor those humanities which every lesson of our common ancestry should teach us to revere? Do we sustain the gentle—do we venerate the old? Are we, like them, solicitous always of the decencies of life and society? Do we bow to intellect? Seek we to promote, by letters, religion and the arts, the altars of a high civilization? Are our freeholds so identified, in our regards, with our freedom, that the abandonment or decay of the one, makes us tremble for the safety of the other? Where are we in the social world? What is our rank, compared with other nations, in the estimates of the civilized? Where are the proofs that we are nobler, gentler, purer, wiser than our ancestors—for, let me remark,—no civilized people can continue stationary! The law of civilization is a law of progress; to fail in reporting which is a sure sign of retrograde, fatal to all our pretensions, and terrible in its consequences to posterity! These are questions to be answered,—not easy of answer. Oh! that in answering them, my friends, we too, like the noble mother of the Gracchi, could point to our children! I have but feebly and indifferently pursued this train of reflection, unless these questions have already suggested themselves, more or less directly, to every thinking mind in this assembly. This is a place, and the present an occasion, where and when, if ever, the thoughts should be lifted to the contemplation of the highest good. Our business here is mutual encouragement, in a common toil, for the attainment of this good; and, next to religion, the business of Literature, is the noblest concern of human society. Nay, Literature is the religion of society; the handmaid of that spiritual nature, whose constant yearnings are for excellence,—ideal conquests over a sublimated perfection, to which all other objects, of the social or individual man, are base and unworthy,—of his earth, earthy, and to be cast aside, and trampled out of sight, when he stands before altars such as these! With a trust, then, that what has been said, has not been wholly purposeless,—has not fallen upon unheeding senses,—I renew these questions. Are you prepared to answer them?—Would I, too, could remain silent! I should be spared a pang, my countrymen! could they be left unanswered;—for where is the son of the soil, who is pleased to answer to her shame—to point to her rags—to place the prying finger on her moral sores, and tent her to the quick with an examination of those mortifying places in her body, which still retain—fortunate that they do so—a morbid sensibility! But, though he feels no delight at the duty, it is still a duty. It is impossible that he should escape it. The orator is base, and unworthy of his vocation, who, speaking to his time, speaks only to flatter it—avoids
the wholesome truth for the glozing compliment, and, with a selfish fear that regards his own, rather than his country’s glory, disguises from his hearers that unbiased judgment of the future, which, as it will have no motive to conciliate favor, will have no reason to forbear condemnation. Happy, indeed, shall I be, if, in laying bare the defects of our people, I provoke any, the meanest among them, to strenuous performance—if, in the exhibition of those truths which may bring a common blush into our cheeks, I shall awaken the young hearts of my auditory to their solemn consideration. To the young I address myself, rather than the old. It is they who are in danger—theirs is the struggle, the long trial and the toilsome march. To them the strength for the conflict—the praise of deliverance as for a battle won—the triumph of well-deserved and virtuous victory!

The revolution of ’76 neither found nor left the American people in that condition, which was favorable to a very rapid improvement or a very high degree of social refinement. We have seen what was the character and condition of the early colonists—how generally poor in fortune—how commonly wanting in the higher education. To this period, though, in a comparative sense, successful, they still continued to struggle against numerous necessities. They were hardly in morale and physique—but mere hardihood, however favorable to virtue, health and ultimate prosperity—is yet only to be regarded as a sort of moral ground-work, upon which the prouder virtues of civilization are yet to grow. The Anglo-Americans brought with them a taste of English life, but it was a taste only, and embittered by numerous recollections of strife and denial. England, to them, had been, in the words of one of their own simple ballads, “a garden,” but they could add, from the same ditty, “Many a bitter weed grew there.”

They had been of that class, in the mother country, to whom a knowledge of the dulce domum came associated with the conviction that such sweets were denied to them. This conviction was, indeed, the true reason of their self-expatriation. They were resolved to seek in a foreign country what they beheld, but could not acquire, in their own. The painful toils and wanderings which followed—the conflicts with the wilderness and with its wild possessors—were not calculated to promote these tastes, or to ripen them into very prompt perfection; and we find, accordingly, that agriculture, the progress of which, in every country, must precede the superior arts, was, at the dawn of our revolution, in a very humble condition. Our people had learned to labor, but little more. Staple culture, may be regarded as generable unfavorable to agriculture—as tending to the improvement of one commodity at the expense of all the rest—and the agriculture of the South, was then, as now, (though in a less criminal degree) confined almost entirely to staples which were ultimately destructive to the soil. Grazing, which is a kindred occupation with that of the Hunter, and almost equally unfavorable to civilization, was the employment of a large portion of our people; and the whole were wanting in those means of education for the young, which should be among the first objects of any people who duly appreciate the importance of social life;—for education, which refines the inferior nature, and lifts it to its proper uses, can, alone, make the passions subor-
inate to the wholesome dominion of a common law. In Puritan New-England, where the population was less scattered, and where the means of centralization, in groups and families, were most easily found, this deficiency was soonest overcome. In Virginia and South-Carolina, the wealthier families sent their sons to Europe for education—thus still farther lessening their ability to secure this precious boon at home—while the poorer sort were almost wholly abandoned, in mental destitution, to the soil. No combination of circumstances could be well conceived, more unfavorable to civilization; and it was due entirely to the inherent virtues of the Anglo-Saxon stock, by which a stern love of home was engendered as a duty, that the rich youth sent abroad for knowledge, and the poor youth abandoned to the soil without it, were yet ready to unite—the one flying from his foreign alma mater, the other rising from the maternal furrows which he ignorantly dressed—in the common cause of a country which they seemed mutually to love by instinct. To tend the soil, indeed, is to make one love it, and this was the first office by which the British Colonist prepared to constitute the forests of America, an English home—an office which the Spaniard in his pride, and the Frenchman in his levity, equally disdained to perform. To possess himself of a chosen spot—to make of it a garden—to multiply its fruits around him; to live well and hospitably, decently and reverently, were his leading objects. Security and plenty were his first considerations—his children soon thickened about him, and though as yet the Parish School failed to salute his ears with the busy study of juvenile study, the Parish Church, with its simple but imposing tower, denoted equally his recollections of the country from which he came, and the God who had thus far smiled upon his adventure. He had reached this stage of social progress in America—his dwelling and his Church were built—how well built may still be seen in many of the antique and solid structures of Ashley river—his graves lay in sight of his evening walks—and improving resources had added to his pride by enabling him to add to the simple virtues of the patriarch, the graces, comparatively speaking, of an English hospitality. It needed but repose from external pressure—time for contemplation—a respite, in which to grow the nobler plants of social culture, taste and education, the arts and graces of civilization. But, at this very period—this nice moment so important to the nation’s future—his increasing prosperity awakened in his foreign brother, that greedy appetite which led to the Revolution. The seven years of social war which followed was sadly detrimental to the social progress. In that time, employing every art and agent to prosecute his purpose, reckless of all laws however sacred—all obligations of nature and humanity—the German monarch of Great Britain at once deluged the land with savages and blood. Never, indeed, was such a war against the social virtues by a people professing to be civilized. Vae victis, was the cry with louder emphasis from the throats of British war, than ever saluted the ears of the conquered from the ranks of Gothic or Roman carnage. Domestic strifes were fermented—families divided—communities and cities; and a foreign people, not speaking our language, and having accordingly no sympathy with our condition, were employed, in apt alliance with the Indians of our
frontier, to make complete the work of devastation. Homes were abandoned in terror, and destroyed by hate. Hamlets perished by fire, and the domestic affections were extinguished in the blaze; while the disruption of all those ties which bound together, as one, the members of a family, effectually dissipated the prestige of domestic authority. It would not be difficult to say how much of the lawlessness and violence which now disgrace our country, and with which we are reproached by the modern British, is due to the reckless and detestable ambition of their ancestors—their greedy avarice—their insatiate thirst of power, and their total disregard, in that prolonged warfare, of all those redeeming usages of war, which sometimes entitle it even to the applause of humanity. How well they paid for the service of the brutal Hessians—with what toilsome sagacity they stimulated the frenzy of the native savage, and, with what cunning and cruel policy, they fomented the social differences among our people, until the world beheld with a horror, in which Britain did not share, the awful spectacle of father, brother and son, mangling the mutual throat before the family altar. Could these strifes be healed in a moment—could the feuds of a people be subdued—pangs and passions of the heart, merely at the withdrawal of the foreign knife? Would the baffling of the foreign ally, soothe the excited nature of the native savage? If it be the work of ages to lift a people from the condition of the barbarian, to that of the civilized, it is, perhaps, a work of almost equal time and difficulty to recover and regenerate a civilized people whom circumstances have hurried into the barbarism of Civil War. Homes, indeed, may be rebuilt. Time may heal the ravages of sword and flame. Even pecuniary prosperity, in a progress of years, may be restored to a nation;—but what can re-unite affections which have been sundered by the sword—bring back the sweet peace which made the homestead lovely—re-awaken the often-banished confidence in man—rekindle the fires of mutual zeal in the common cause of society—subdue those wild spirits whom a seven years war, suddenly ended, had cast loose, without employment, upon the country—of habits, reckless and disolute, formed to idleness, incapable of a patient and slow-advancing industry? It need not be said that the return of peace was followed by little social improvement. The lares familiares, overthrown by hands of violence, were not soon reinstated by hands of peace. We do not find the American citizen pursuing the spoiler into the wilderness, as in the case of the Pagan father, of whom we read in Scripture, for the recovery of his terrapin. On the contrary, we are constrained to see in the history of our social progress, for the last fifty years, but few signs of that sober-thoughted love of home, the absence of which we regard as among the most alarming evils of our present social condition. Undoubtedly, as we have endeavoured to show, the Revolutionary struggle threw us back in this respect—how much we need not say, but to this cause we attribute the first impelling direction in this downward progress, covered as was the face of the land with an impoverished soldiery—impatient of control, ready for strife, and reckless, under the pressure of necessity, of all human consequences. For, it will be remembered, that, in the South at least, the whole body of the people had been in arms on one
side or the other:—the citizen was the soldier, and nowhere was there a community, preserved from overthrow, sufficiently large and imposing to overawe the insubordinate, or subdue the brutal nature. What this domestic calamity may have spared to society, was more than usurped by the prevalent warfares of the frontier—the desperate assaults of outlawed men, leagued with the savage, who, once stimulated to phrenzy by British arts, could not be quieted by British exhortation—if, indeed, such exhortation was ever attempted among them. The interregnum of peace which followed, was simply a rest from war. But thirty years had elapsed from the peace of '83, when the doors of Janus were again thrown violently open, and we were again summoned to contend, for the liberties of society, in another bloody passage with our foreign brother.

Old feuds were to be revived—old war-cries of the savage to be re-sounded, and the maternal love which now insists so much upon our inferior civilization, was once more busy in the endeavour to help it forward by shot and sabre. Now,—the blessings of a superior civilization, are blessings which flow almost entirely from the reign of peace. A nation kept constantly at war, within its own borders, is necessarily demoralized. With but few intervals, and those of short duration, the people of America, from the first Colonial settlements, whether at Jamestown, Massachusetts Bay or Ashley River, were in continual conflict—now with the French and Spaniards, now with the savages, and finally, and worst of all,—a conflict not yet ended—with the mother country. It would be something wonderful, indeed, judging by the histories of other nations, if there should be a perfect state of civilization among us—if there should be no violence,—no strife,—no absence, in frequent regions, of just principles,—no social disquiets, discomforts, wild dwellings and wilder men. Immunity from such evils, under such circumstances, would be miraculous. There are no such immunities for mortals in the stores of providence, and with the help of our mother country, the curse is at our doors!

But I should regard it as a mistaken patriotism, however legitimate the plea, to endeavor to extenuate the faults, the follies or ferocities of our people, by showing how much they were occasioned by the ambition of Great Britain. We claim to be a sensible and Christian people—and the plea will not avail us any farther than to show the difficulties in the way of our virtue. It will not excuse us for having fallen in the struggle, for we need not to have fallen. It is enough to render sure our responsibility to show that we are not now ignorant of the claims of society,—of what is due to ourselves, our children and our ancestors. It is not for us, speaking the language of Milton and Shakespeare, and claiming their writings as in part our heritage, to plead ignorance of what we owe to the humanities, to the arts, to the pure, the true, the beautiful and intellectual. Our responsibility is strictly proportioned to our knowledge. What we know, pronounces the judgment upon what we are. Nay, even evasion will not serve us, else how easy to show, from our British censors themselves, that they too have fallen—that they share in our shame—that they no longer maintain the virtues of their ancestors, and that the same vices which are conspicuous in ourselves, are of no mean prominence in them. Hear one of their own
great minds—one of the greatest living minds among them. He invokes the genius of a greater.

"Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour;—
England hath need of thee—she is a fen
Of stagnant waters! Altar, sword and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower,
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;—
Oh, raise us up, return to us again,
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power!"

Surely, such should be our prayer—but such we see is also hers—and if such be her deficiencies, what wonder that we, who,—shame upon us!—copy her failings with such religious strictness, should deserve a like and greater reproach. We have, indeed, what she has not,—pleas in extenuation, and we may plead them with tenfold utterance against herself—but she has none! Her soil has never known invasion, since the day that her civilization begun. Her Christian neighbors have never conducted the savage to her dwelling, armed with scalping knife and spear,—and given her villages to the midnight flame. If she has grown base, it is because of her own inward tendencies.

"Hec fonte derivata clades
In patriam, populumque fluxit."

The same great poet in another noble sonnet thus more particularly dwells upon the vices of the modern English—vices, we may remark, which are quite as notorious to their neighbours, as ours are to them. Mark, as I repeat them, how sadly they apply to our social history.

"I am oppressed
To think that now, our life is only dress,
For show,—mean handy work of Craftsman, cook,
Or groom! we must run glittering, like a brook,
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest;—
The wealthiest man among us is the best:

Certainly, it is a curious coincidence, that, just now, the very evils which the British find in us, they should denounce among themselves; vanity, ostentation, the worship of wealth, selfishness and want of manners. It would be a becoming study with the philosophical mind to trace the source of this coincidence. Doubtless, it is a result due to some defect in the character of both—something in the common customs or principles—some lamentable want in the popular education—the domestic policy—all to be found, embodied among the constituents of the social principle. But our aim is less discursive—our limits too confined for such an examination. That we owe, however, many of our social vices to a miserable and servile imitation of the English, in their vain displays and boisterous affectations, is beyond all question. It is this wretched love of show, this absence of plain living and high thinking, which is making us all bankrupt,—hurrying us on, with gamester phrenzy, in change and speculation; and, placing before us ever the dazzling forms of unsubstantial and fraudulent desires, is momentarily beguiling us from that

"Hec fonte derivata clades
In patriam, populumque fluxit."

But I note other causes among us, superior to these, for promoting this deteriorating social tendency. The first and most important is the wandering habit of our people. Now, the first requisite to the civilization of
any people, is to make them stationary. To become stationary implies the necessity of labor, and this necessity is the origin of agriculture. With the increase of the community, a farther necessity arises for diversifying the objects of labor, and with this necessity spring the arts, mechanical and fine. I need not pursue this suggestion. A wandering people is more or less a barbarous one. We see in the fate of the North American savage, that of every nomadic nation. What is true of them, is true in degree of every civilized people that adopts, in whatever degree, their habits. Every remove, of whatever kind, is injurious to social progress; and every remove into the wilderness, lessens the hold which refinement and society have hither-to held upon the individual man. One of the securities of the Englishman, from a danger of this sort, was his moral and social inflexibility. It was his boast that he maintained his authority over the savage—that he made no concessions to the inferior nature; but, as we have already said, set up his household Gods, in whatever wilderness he sought abode. In this he differed from the Frenchman, who, when he built his lodge among the Hurons, with the levity of his character, surrendered in part his own, while adopting the habits of the Indians. He was won by the novelty, which the intense self-esteem of the Englishman made him treat with loathing. The latter surrendered nothing,—lost nothing of his original claim to moral authority,—preserved the superior organization of the society in which he had been taught, and, by this alone, maintained his foothold in the forest. There is no doubt that, had the British Colonists been sufficiently numerous for conquest, they would have saved the American Aborigi-ness—they would have subjected them to bondage, preserved them by the tasks of labor, and finally lifted them to a cognate condition with their own. In degree, all wanderers cease to be laborers. Their habits become desultory and unsettled. They obey impulses rather than laws, and toil in obedience to their humours rather than their necessities. With desultory habits, the moods of men become capricious, their resources uncertain and their principles unfixed. Let me illustrate the effect of these habits, upon the features and fortunes of our people, by a single example. You all have witnessed the change produced in the case of an individual family, emigrating to a wild from a long settled region of country. The restraining presence of society once withdrawn—the provocation to civilization which the ancient customs of a settled neighborhood once inspired,—at an end,—and how indifferent do the wanderers become to all appearances,—Into what a miserable hovel does the father and the husband crowd his little family, once so accustomed to all the luxuries and charms of civilization. How careless of decency become the master and the matron. How slovenly are the dress and the dwelling—how squalid the children—how ignorant,—how seldom clean, and how soon, as substitutes for the more delicate tastes of the abandoned home, do we find father and son engaged in the free use of whiskey and tobacco,—those two gross, brutal and terrible tyrannies of our nation. Society,—the presence and the restraints of neighbours, gentle, loving, and considerate—the cheerful home—the certain school house—the "decent Church that tops the neighbouring hill"—these had saved them from this miserable descent!
And why have they wandered from these privileges and blessings? Why, O! why?—For gain! for the small increase—the miserable pittance—the little more to the Cotton heap,—and for this, the man is willing to convert the wife into the wench, and the dear children, who might be made the noblest pillars of the noblest republic, into horse-boys, or ruffians, or something worse!

And how was it that this love of gain became so completely the passion of the American people, as to make them lose that care for home, which was the superior passion with their ancestors. Not that we hoard money. Far from it. Our profligacy, on the contrary, keeps equal and active pace with our avarice. We are as active in squandering as in getting, and this is also a peculiar characteristic. Let us look a little into this matter, by briefly analyzing the constituents of character which distinguished our people from the beginning.

Whether, then, we consider the people of New-England, Virginia or Carolina, we find them all, at the outset, to have been a very poor people. It was their poverty, in truth,—the discontent with their present condition, and a desire to improve it, which first brought them to America. Their ground once chosen, the great struggle was for the means which should enable them to emulate the homes of the more fortunate whom they had left. Their toil was to establish homes like theirs—a social world which should realize that comfort which had been the ideal in their minds before. But, it must be remembered, that, with this desire, they lacked, in a great degree, the resources of taste and education which were possessed at that time by the mind of the British people. A colonizing expedition may represent the energies, the character, nay, even the genius of a nation, but seldom its highest absolute existing elevation. The Puritans were a coarse, uneducated people,—sensible of the value of learning as an agent of social prosperity, but totally regardless of its uses, as a minister to the tastes and sensibilities of a highly endowed intellectual nature. What they knew of Milton, was of Milton the politician, not the poet. The first settlers of Virginia could claim no decided advantages of education, and fresh from battle-field, and desperate in fortune, they were perhaps not equally virtuous—certainly, not equally methodical, persevering and industrious; while the Cavaliers of Carolina, though crowned with the more certain favour of the great, and possessed of more decided social tendencies, in consequence of the milder and calmer periods of their emigration,—were yet equally fierce in temper and rash in experiment. If they could boast of the manners of a court, they were yet cursed with such vices as gave a character of its own, in English history, to that of Charles the Second. The difference in moral respects, was, perhaps, not very substantial or great between these three maternal sections of our country.

The Puritans then, as their descendants now, were more studious of appearances—more rigid in forms—more bigoted in their prejudices and more presumptuous in their opinions. Their Southern neighbours preserve, in like manner, to this day, many of their original characteristics. They were more frank in manners, more considerate of the graces of society, more flexible in opinion, less heedful of religion, less
methodical, and, with equal and even greater earnestness, less firm and consistent in the prosecution of their objects. In one respect they were all the same people. They were all creatures of a vexing discontent, which left them unsatisfied with any present condition. They had industry and skill enough to secure themselves in it, but, for such a people—pressed by necessities that grew in due proportion with their powers,—this was not enough. To perpetuate a conquest was to provoke the desire for newer enterprizes, and the fortification rendered secure behind them, they steadily pushed forward in search of newer conquests. The poverty in which they lived, with the desires which they felt, necessarily taught them to attach to wealth an undue importance; and the love of gain soon becomes a passion—soon takes the place, in every human bosom, of those, more legitimate, by which it is occasioned. This passion was farther heightened in the case of the American, by a radical change which his character underwent in his new condition. It is but a partial view of the subject, to speak of our love of money as our passion.—It would be more correct to say that all our objects become passions for the time. The latent enthusiasm of the English character, grew into flame, in that progress from enterprize to enterprize, from danger to danger, which distinguished the career of the Anglo-American. That deliberate, almost phlegmatic reserve, which, in the case of the Englishman, covers the earnest bosom of a giant in repose, driven from its barriers of convention, forced to throw aside its artifices of carriage and philosophy, became, with the American, a thirst, a fever, restive in restraint and sleepless in performance. English imperiousness became American impetuosity. Hence our earnestness in all our objects, the rapidity of our action, and—which is our failing—our caprice of purpose, which makes us abandon in hot haste, what in hot haste we have begun—our fretful dislike to the staid, the deliberate, the regularly progressive. This characteristic stimulates largely, and equally, our thirst for acquisition and the profligacy with which we waste our gains. It is at the bottom of most of our actions, whether for good or evil—and hurries the same mob which has just risked its hundred thousand lives in rescuing the city from conflagration, to the violation of the Laws, equally, of society and man.

The genius of the American, sprung thus from the most noble and prolific source, and stimulated by a career and circumstances the most extraordinary, is naturally a genius of large expectations, as it is certainly one of mighty endowments. It grasps at wealth as one of the most obvious agents of the power which it seeks, and it employs this wealth in the most lavish manner, as an exercise of that power. Its chief misfortune is that it has so suddenly and unexpectedly come into such large possessions. With what levity does it sport with its attributes. What extravagance distinguishes its plans and purposes. How stupendous are its schemes, how wild, if not wonderful, its aims, and how full of hyperbole its most ordinary forms of utterance. Its proceedings remind one of a child spoiled by fortune—in the possession of toys the most costly, which it flings about with a recklessness and levity, that provokes in the spectator equal wonder and regret. Thus, we see, that, with all our toil for gain, there is a recklessness—a seeming scorn of the object
of our toil, which sets ordinary speculation at defiance. This very recklessness is one of the most prominent of our national traits, the equal progeny of that self-esteem of the Englishman and that impulse of the American, which is never half so well content as when it can awaken the amazement of mankind.

Poor Richard addressed himself to the profligacy of our character, at a time when its exhibitions were very far inferior to what they have since become. One, indeed, being less of the seer than Franklin, might have supposed, that, in his day, lessons of thrift were unnecessary in New-England. An ordinary mind, not regarding the emulative nature of the American, in all parts of the country, would have assumed that, in his neighbourhood, similar necessities to those which had tutored him, would have forced like maxims of economy on every citizen. But, even then, they might have been properly addressed to the South, where a more genial climate and a more productive industry, had already sown, broad cast, the seeds of a lavish and profligate expenditure. But the passion for gain grew with the expenditure. It was necessary to it. Hence, in great part, the devotion of our people to staple culture, or to the production of that one commodity only which could find a market. The whole labor of the Planter was expended,—not in the cultivation of the soil,—for the proper cultivation of a soil improves it,—but in extracting by violence from its bosom, seed and stalk, alike, of the wealth which it contained. He slew the goose that he might grasp, at one moment, its whole golden treasure. A cultivation like this, by exhausting his land, left it valueless, and led to its abandonment;—and, unhappily, there was nothing in

the circumstances of his progress, to make him reluctant to do so, and studious, by every means, to avert this necessity. His insatiate rage for gain had rendered him regardless of all other considerations. In few instances had he built the stately mansion, the solid walls and sweet manifold comforts of which would have prompted him to repeated toils and experiments, ere he had been persuaded to abandon it. He laid out no gardens, the gravelled walks and tropical beauties of which would have fastened, as with the spells of an Armida, his reluctant footsteps—planted no favorite trees, whose mellowing shade, covering the graves of father, mother or favorite child,—would have seemed too sacred for desertion,—would have seemed like venerated relatives whom it would be cruel to abandon in their declining years. These, are the substantial marks of civilization, by which we distinguish an improving people. Regardless of these, we find him regardless of still more sacred obligations. What is the condition of the homestead in moral respects? Do we find his daughters nourished with the food of thought, lofty sentiment, and the graces of such an education as becomes the position of their sex? How worthless is their education,—limited to what servile objects, and how commonly meant only for the purposes of a vain and selfish display of superficial accomplishments;—“plain living and high thinking”—those noblest of all the essentials of social life, being utterly set at naught! And, for the sons! In the prosecution of that same feverish, phrenzied passion for gain,—he has sent them forth, while their sinews were yet unhardened—their minds yet untaught—their tempers untuned—at the very time when, in their mental gristle,
none other than the parental dwelling should be entrusted with their care—he has sent them forth in the same mad, pitiful thirst for gold—for the sordid traffic—the petty salary—the cogging, cunning world of speculation. The poor boy, thoughtless, but hopeful of the world—simple and confident, but oh! how vain, how rash, how impatient of the time and the truth—ere he has yet gone through his accidence—ere he has learned the lesson, most sacred and necessary of all, to honor his father and mother in the day of his youth;—is despatched in the morning of that day from their controlling presence,—thrust among strangers, who care not for father or mother—care not for the boy,—care not that he has learned any but the one commandment—‘thou shalt not steal!’ This is the custom, worse than death, in the history of our American career—the most misery-bringing custom that prevails among us. Nothing can be so fatal to discipline—and without discipline all is lost—there is nothing worth remaining—power, wealth, talent, all are worse than useless, without this most necessary, soul-bracing, body-strengthening ordeal, which we call discipline.—Nothing is so fatal to this discipline as the emancipation of the boy, in his tender years, from the restraints of the maternal household—from the guidance of the parental hand and eye—from the pure and sobering influences—the regular habits and the cheering smiles of the domestic hearth and habitation. Nothing so soon prompts the boy to throw off his allegiance to years, to station, to worth and virtue, as the capacity of earning money for himself. Money is the sign, among us, unhappily, of the highest social power,—and the possessor of it soon learns to exercise it as a means of authority. It is new doctrine, certainly, in our country—but not the less true for that—to teach that the longer a boy is kept from earning money for himself, the better for himself—for his real manhood—for his morals—his own, and the happiness of those who love him. Unhappily, the infatuated parent holds with delight the exercise of this capacity, though it might not be difficult, at the same time, to show, that, with this exercise comes presumption, insubordination and insolence—looseness of principle—recklessness of conduct—levity of manners, excess in indulgence, brutality in habit, drunkenness and debauchery, beastliness the most loathsome, and, frequently, crimes the most atrocious. What dreadful penalties are paid, by child and parent, for this premature exposure of the infant mind to the rank resort of the stranger, to the enslaving tyrannies of trade, to the crude admixtures of a heartless foreign society, and the absence of all those holy, love-compelling influences which are seldom or never to be found out of the sacred circle of family and home.

I have said nothing here of the effect upon the social world of this mal-appropriation of the mind by which it is to be governed. Yet of this appropriation you may predicate all the pernicious effects which are to follow. The domestic hearth will be without its attractions,—the domestic altar without its worshipper. Fireside and altar will be equally outraged by the narrowing concerns of trade. There will be but one topic, and that will be the how, the when and where of the successful speculation. There will be but one chaunt, and the chorus of that will be the eternal dollar.—There will be but one care wrinkling our souls as it
wrinkles prematurely our cheeks, and that will be for the miserable secret, which shall turn our baser metals into gold, or at least, into a currency, which shall serve a present purpose. This is the only concern of newspaper and statesman. The schemes of the politician and the philosopher, are equally addressed to this one necessity. Even the government it is now assumed, must be made subservient to trade; and to hearken to the universal language of orator and press, it would seem as if the popular enterprise were the only consideration which deserved our esteem.—An improvement in Rail-roads or Steam Engines, is spoken of as a great moral improvement—a discovery in physical science, which may increase the powers of machinery, wins all the palinodes of the press, and we constantly deceive ourselves in this way by confounding the idea of a cunning or an ingenious with a great people. We hear ad nauseam, the applause of those toils or inventions which may be applied to the acquisition or the preservation of property, and this seems to be the whole amount of our national idea of progress. To morals, letters and the fine arts,—to the pure, reserved and delicate forms of taste and fancy—which to be won are to be worshipped, we are as profoundly indifferent as if we were no longer human, or as if there was no world beside to reproach us with our shame. How should such things deserve our regard? They can only minister to the affections—they can only elevate the soul—they can only tame the savage—they can only give birth to such stale virtues as veneration, filial love, meekness, charity, gentle moods and hallowing household graces. And what are these to him who wants money only—who knows no other want—whose heart seeks no other affections—whose taste demands no other objects of delight—whose soul is perfectly satisfied having no other God!

With impatient spirit, a heart swelling with diseased desires, a hope that knows no measure in modesty or reason—our country, at this moment, through its inappreciation of the social virtues, presents a deplorable picture to the eye and mind. It is a nation free from beggary. Never was nation so free at all times from this saddest of all conditions. No man lacks in food or clothing. Never was nation, in the whole broad eye of the sun, so well fed and habitable,—with such various food—with such fine raiment. Plenty covers the land, and the God who has been thus bountiful in blessings, has withheld the arm of punishment. There is no pestilence in our cities—there is no savage at riot along our borders. Yet we clamor—we complain! Never was mouth so loud as the American in the language of complaint! Of what do we complain? That the Arts avoid our shores—that the Graces fly from our habitations—that we have lost

“Our peace, our fearful innocence,”

that we are selfish men—that we have no Literature worthy of the name—that our desires are base—that brutality stalks among us with a rare impudence—that crime is rising with hideous dimensions throughout the land? Is it of these things we clamour? No! No! These are matters of small significance—these call for no complaints—offend no feelings—alarm no virtues—occasion no lamentations. Our clamor is for something better, sweeter, dearer,—more necessary to our souls—for gold, for silver, or, more specious delusion still, though more harmless, for good current paper of
banks not yet absolutely broken. The national appetite rages—is still unsatisfied—will never be satisfied. We are torn with the greed that works within us—our want, not our need,—raving that “promises to pay,” will no longer enable us to fleece the poor of our own, and defraud the rich of a foreign nation!

This is a terrible picture! Is it not a true one? Where are we as a people? What is our moral rank among the nations? We cannot shut our eyes to the melancholy truth. We cannot close our ears to the accents of scornful denunciation. We are sunk, lamentably sunk in character—not our Government—do not delude yourselves—but our people,—you, and I, and all of us. The Government of State and Nation is a name—the mere creature of the people, drawing breath at our will, dependant wholly upon our decree, and moving this way or that, at our ordinance. The sin is ours, and the shame, and we must face its consequences, with what courage is left us.—And yet, hear our orators—read our newspapers! Unless when dealing in the grateful toil of defaming a rival party, their language is that of the happiest self-complacency.—Their skirts, they fancy,—at least they allege,—are clear of the dishonor, and, if they allow themselves to speak at all of our foreign discredit, it is only to lament that the loss of fame will be a loss of money—will prevent us from getting new loans. I, for one, rejoice that the nation can procure no new loans. It is necessary for the national virtue that we should be humbled. We have run a long career of profligacy, and the humiliation which is due to our vices is necessary to our regeneration. We must be made to feel the want and the shame together. We must be made to see that while the foreign creditor points one finger at our violated obligations, he keeps the other tenaciously upon his money-bags.

GENTLEMEN OF THE EROSOPHIC SOCIETY:

The vices which have degraded the nation first had their beginning in the household. The character of a popular Government is that of its society;—and this consideration brings us back to our starting place.—Our reform must begin where our virtues faltered—at home—in each home—in all homes—by the hearths which we are too prone to abandon,—and prostrate before those family altars which we do not sufficiently venerate. We must endeavor, as rapidly as we can, to recall the domestic virtues of our ancestors—those which made them triumph over French and Spaniard—which enabled them to give you permanent seisin of this noble State and City—that profound reverence for the social tie, which is at the very root of all our human obligations, and, without which, no nation ever perpetuates its conquests. In this maternal virtue, (for such I consider it,) I have endeavored to show the good old English excellence. To the decline of this virtue among us, I ascribe our present feebleness, distress and discontent. There is distress among us, because there is discontent, and this distress and discontent are the more dangerous because they are without cause. They show that something is wrong in our morals, in our affections, in our hopes, in our economy. But it is our religion, not our fortune, which is at fault. We have need to pray rather than complain—to toil, rather than contend—to implore
wisdom from heaven to our aid, rather than audaciously challenge the sympathies of heaven and earth, for a condition, which, but for our vices, would be the most enviable of that of any nation upon earth. We have much to attain, and much to overcome. We must moderate our desires—restrain our impatience,—learn to respect labor—abridge our propensity to wander, and narrow our ambition as much as possible to the sphere in which our affections should move. We must give up our vague and morbid cravings after a condition which few persons can, at any time, attain. We must put on a more subdued demeanour. We must acquire a temper of more content and cheerfulness. We must concentrate our energies upon the little spot in which we take up our abodes, and, in making that lovely to the mind, we shall discover in it abundant resources to satisfy all the mind's desires. These duties, Gentlemen, are particularly yours. To you are entrusted the large and teeming interests of the future. The happiness of our society, the destinies of our nation, depend upon those who now stand, half conscious only of their solemn position, upon the threshold of social and political existence. You have been selected from a large body of your fellow-citizens, to receive the advantages of superior culture. You have not been forced, by selfish parents, or ungenial necessities, to yield up your youthful souls to mammon. Yours should be a nature, equally refined and unselfish. Your boyhood has been shielded from petty, and pressing cares. These academic walks should have tempered your passions, while the study of the great masters of antiquity should have lifted your thoughts to the contemplation of the superior virtues and the highest excellencies of human nature. The education which you have received, has been calculated only to force upon each of you the exercise of his own intellectual individuality. To bring out that native mind and character which is the peculiar allotment of man over all other beings. Armed with this individuality, the discretion of an individual will is accorded you. You are to compare and to choose. You are to go forth in the exercise of that vocation for which God has designed you, to strive in its labors and to gather its rewards. To you over all, how important that the truth should be known. The adoption of an error, as a truth, at the beginning of manhood, is the adoption of a bondage which few men, though living out the seventy years of their allotted span, ever succeed in casting off. How necessary to think deliberately—to choose with as little impulse or passion as may be. I have already said that one of the great dangers of the American mind is its impatience—its impetuosity—its keen anxiety to take the field. A generous quality if rightly governed; but which is too pleasing to the ambitious parent to be schooled, and too grateful to the ardent boy, to be voluntarily subdued. Happy if it takes up the right cause—fortunate if it finds the proper ally—but worse than wretched, and liable to utter defeat, in hope, heart and fortune, if the side chosen be wrong, and the alliance be with some natural enemy of virtue. After what has been already said, I need scarcely repeat, Gentlemen, how very wretched and dangerous I think our whole social system. We are all wrong, even as regards the search after fortune,—for where are the fortunes of those who have been most searching, and, as they fancied, most successful? We are still more
in error, as regards our pursuit of happiness. We lack too many qualities of training and education, to succeed well in either of these objects. We lack fortitude as well as patience—modesty and veneration—gentleness of behaviour and industry of habit. We neither know how to toil nor how to endure. We regard labor as slavish, and endurance as a sort of baseness. We indulge in the most confident assertion, at one moment, and, in the next, repine in the most dastardly complaint;—and in all our promises and performances, prove ourselves singularly insensible to the true objects of delight or happiness. These, I have shown, are to be found in a more devout adherence to the laws of domestic comfort. But these laws we do not admire and do not obey. We have no faith in one another. Our tastes are purely animal. Our appetites master us. We lack the simplicity of a truthful, earnest nature. We substitute rudeness for frankness. We look upon a gentle deportment as a proof of imbecility, and we are more pleased with the swagger of the ruffian, who yields nothing, to the courtesy grace of the gentleman, who knows what a noble thing it is to yield gracefully. These, it will not be denied, are too much the characteristics of our social life. It is in this respect that we find all our deficiencies.—Viewed, externally, as a mere nation, we are a surprising people, and our vanity is sufficiently delighted in being called so. We obey the laws of progress as promptly as any other nation—perhaps much more so—in all those concerns which regard man as a machine, capable of certain physical performances, or those only beside, which, if not absolutely physical, concern nothing so much as physics. But these, believe me, are small triumphs—not to be counted in the history of progress in a great Christian nation. The powers of steam—the facilities of railroads—the capacity to overcome time and space, are wonderful things,—but they are not virtues, nor duties, nor laws, nor affections. I do not believe that all the steam power in the world can bring happiness to one poor human heart. Still less can I believe that all the railroads in the world can carry one poor soul to heaven. And these are the real objects of life—to live well, and do well, in preparation for the future. By keeping these objects in mind, you will patiently submit to the conviction that labor is the law of life, and that labor is not only honorable in itself, but ennobling to him who adopts it as his law. You will discard all thoughts of fortune-making. This is not the business of man,—nay, its pursuit is usually fatal to all his proper performances. On this subject we have a conclusive authority. What is it that we are authorized to ask for, in our morning prayer to God? “Give us this day our daily bread.” No more,—Yet this is much—much more than any of us deserve. Millions rise every morning in Europe, with an overpowering apprehension, that day, that they shall get no bread,—neither for themselves nor for their little ones. Nobody contents himself, in America, with so humble a desire;—and were we to form any idea of our prayers, in this country, from our complaints, we should be seen, morning and night, before the throne of God, supplicating, not for bread, but fortune. The mere bread of life seems but a sorry object of prayer; and yet, without this prayer, no better future awaits us. Certainly, peace, security, happiness, are not ours, with all our toils, and with all our prayers to fortune. Gentlemen, we must pray to God, and not to fortune!
1. This passage may seem to require explanation. We are all so accustomed in this country—influenced less by the authorities of history than by the generalizing declamation of popular orators—to ascribe to a common cause and common provocations, the grand movements, in all the colonies, of the American Revolution, that, with many persons, not well read in these matters, it may occasion great surprise to be told, that there were any wrongs, proposed to be redressed by that event, other than those which grew out of the Stamp duties and the tax on Tons. In this revolution, as in every other, there were latent causes of complaint, less said than felt, better understood than spoken,—which, perhaps, had a more active agency in bringing about the great result, than any of the more readily avowed provocations. There were social evils, everywhere, springing out of the ill-defined relation between the colonies and the parent country, to which our text could only suggestively advert, yet which, just as imperatively as any other, demanded the application of the most prompt and patriotic remedies. Thus, for example, though South-Carolina had always been one of the most favored of the British provinces—not conflicting, in any way, with the course of British trade—not threatening the wondrous progress of her manufacturing and her commercial powers—and liberally furnished, when needing them, (and even when not needing them) with British arms and British money—yet she had her own grievances, of which to complain, and those of a kind equally to endanger her liberties, and to mortify the honorable ambition of her sons. One of these,—and a sufficient cause of greater—consisted in the virtual dominion, by the mother country, of her capacity,—and in the absolute denial of her rights,—to office herself from among her own people—a base and miserable policy, such as Great Britain still pursues towards her colonies, by which she lost the affections of the South, and by which, sooner or later, she will lose her Canadian possessions, as she has already lost the only guaranty which might secure them,—the love, the hearts, of her people. The creatures of the court—creatures basically incompetent to such duties—were provided for by placing them in power over a people, to whose leading minds they were inferior, and for whose interests and in whose society, they had no sympathy. Not only were the civil offices filled in this manner, by their creatures, but the military also; and a wanton disparagement of the native intellect, seemed to form a part of the government policy, as it were, to perpetuate more completely the dependence of the one, and the authority of the other people. Under the avails which resulted from these, we suffer, to some extent, to this very moment; but of the direct evils which flowed from such a system, our entire colonial history is full of pregnant examples—a reference to one of which—that of Braddock—will suffice to illustrate the whole. It so happened that, in South-Carolina, the carrying out of this system, led to the absolute expulsion from the state of civil authority of certain of the most influential natives, just about the time when the discontentments were most active—without actually being war—in Massachusetts Bay. One of these gentlemen, was the celebrated William Henry Drayton,—a statesman who in Carolina, contributed quite as much as any other one person to prepare the public mind for the final issue. He was driven from the seat of Chief Justice, and a continuance of the court put in his place. But we have no space for examples, and our purpose is nothing more than to indicate the clue by which the student may pursue a train of inquiry not often suggested. In the memoirs and correspondence of Josiah Quincy, Jr. we find a few passages which will illustrate, in some degree, what we have been saying. This gentleman’s share in the anti-revolutionary proceedings, is well known. He visited South-Carolina in 1773. His observations generally are those of an honest man and man of sense. In the extracits which follow, the reader will note the passages which I have italicized.

“In company were two of the late appointed assistant justices from Great Britain. Their behavior, by no means amazed my zeal against British appointments. In company dined Thomas Bow, Esq., a planter of considerable opulence, a gentleman of good sense, improvement, and politeness. From Mr.—I received assurance of the truth of what I had before heard, that a few years ago, the assistant judges of the Supreme Court of the province, being natives, men of abilities, fortune, and good fame, an act of assembly passed, to settle £300 sterling a year upon them, whenever the king should grant them commissions, given in se benese generales. The act being sent home for concurrence, was disallowed, and the reason assigned was the above clause. I am promised by Mr.—a transcript of the reasons of disallowance, with the Attorney and Solicitor General’s opinion thereon relative to the act. Upon this, the assembly passed an act, to establish the like salary, payable out of any monies that shall be in the treasury;—not restricting it to any alteration in the tenure of their commission. Mr.—No assistant judge had ever before been rewarded in England. Immediately upon the king’s approving this last act, Lord Hillsborough, in his seat for America, sent word over about this chief justice, to his friends, and two assistant justices; the one D. Smith, and the other W. Heathman.”

“The Constitution of South-Carolina is in very many respects defective, and in an equal number extremely bad. The whole body of this people seem averse to the ideas and assumptions of the British legislature; over the colony but you will seldom hear, even in political conversation, any warm or animad expressions against the measures of administration. A general doubt of the firmness of the Northern colonies is prevalent among them; they say the Massachusetts Bay can talk, vote, and resolve, but their doings are not correspondent. Sentiments and expressions of this kind are common and fashionable. They arise from various causes, from envy and jealousy in some, and from aversion in others. The very remarkable difference in their manners, religious tenets, and principles, contributes to the same effect. It may well be questioned whether there is, in reality, any third branch in the constitution of this government. It is true they have it called a House of Assembly, but whom do they represent? The labourer, the mechanic, the tradesman, the farmer or yeoman? No,—the representatives are almost wholly rich planters. The planting interest is therefore represented, but I conceive nothing else, as it ought to be. Non-residents may be chosen to represent any town, if they have lands in the county, and hence a great majority of the House live in Charleston, where the body of the planters reside during the summer months. A fatal kind of policy,—to present the House of Assembly are staunch colonists. The council, judges, and other great officers are all appointed by warrant from Great Britain. Nay, even the clerk of the board and assayer—Who are, and have been thus appointed? Persons disconnected with the people and obsessions to them. I heard several planters say, ‘We none of us can expect the honors of the State; they are all given away, to worthless, poor wightknacks.’”
ERRATA.

Page 8, line 17—for "overnran," read "overran."
a 26, " 7 from bottom—for "hardly," read "hardly."
a 30, " 4 from bottom—for "fermented," read "fermented."
a 42, " 5 from top—for "which is never half so well content as when it can," read, "which are never half so well content as when they can," &c.