The advantages and the dangers of the American scholar.

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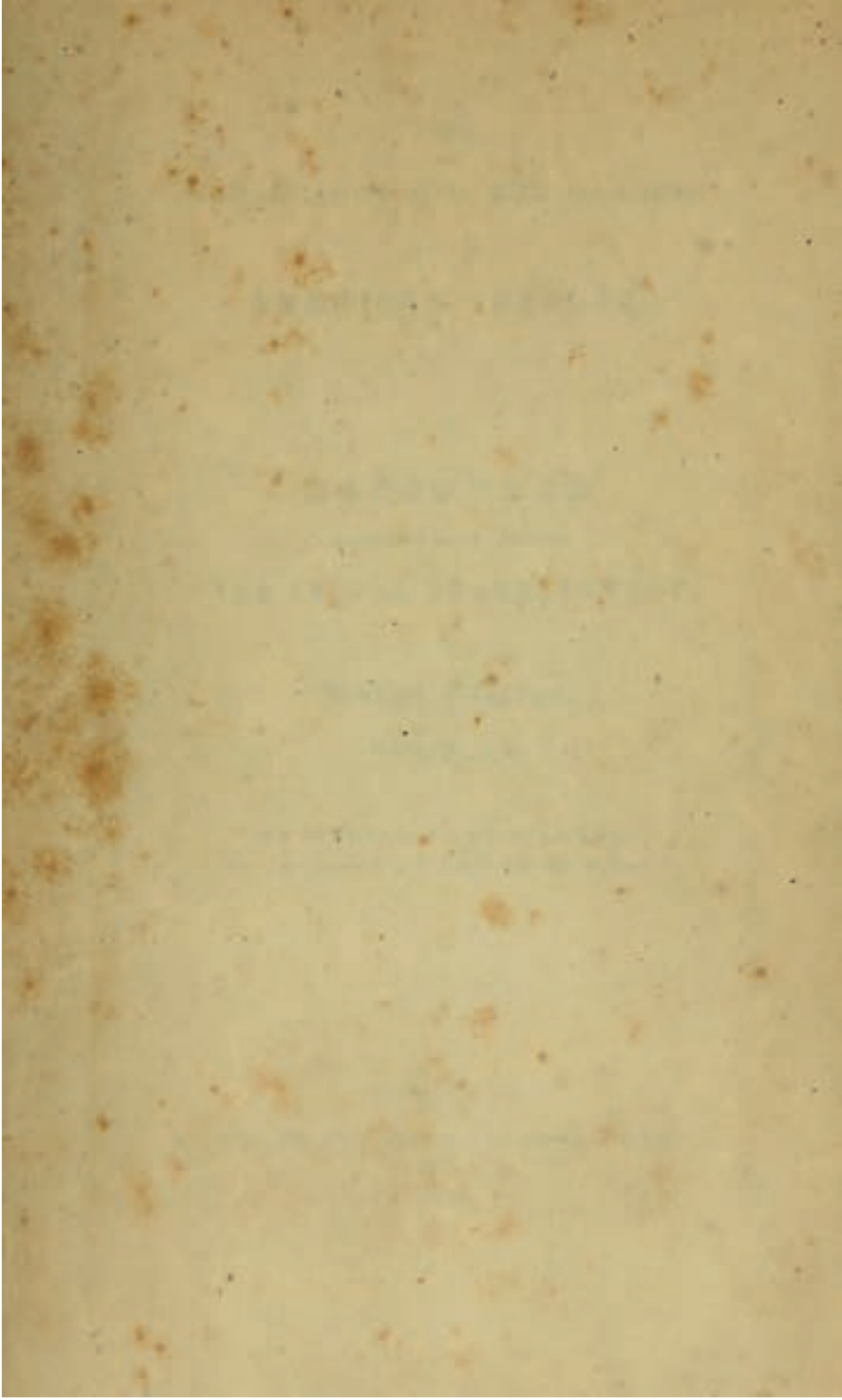
THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

BY

G. C. VERPLANCK.

1836



THE ADVANTAGES AND THE DANGERS OF THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED ON THE DAY PRECEDING

THE ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT

OF

Union College,

JULY 26, 1836.

BY GULIAN C. VERPLANCK,

One of the Regents of the University of the State of New-York.

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DISCOURSE.

THE actual state and the probable future prospects of our country, resemble those of no other land, and are without a parallel in past history. Our immense extent of fertile territory opening an inexhaustible field for successful enterprise, thus assuring to industry a certain reward for its labors, and preserving the land, for centuries to come, from the manifold evils of an overcrowded, and consequently degraded population—our magnificent system of federated republics, carrying out and applying the principles of representative democracy to an extent never hoped or imagined in the boldest theories of the old speculative republican philosophers, the Harringtons, Sydneys and Lockes of former times—the re-action of our political system upon our social and domestic concerns, bringing the influence of popular feeling and public opinion to bear upon all the affairs of life in a degree hitherto wholly unprecedented—the unconstrained

range of freedom of opinion, of speech, and of the press, and the habitual and daring exercise of that liberty upon the highest subjects—the absence of all serious inequality of fortune and rank in the condition of our citizens—our divisions into innumerable religious sects, and the consequent co-existence, never before regarded as possible, of intense religious zeal, with a great degree of toleration in feeling and perfect equality of rights—our intimate connexion with that elder world beyond the Atlantic, communicating to us, through the press and emigration, much of good and much of evil not our own, high science, refined art, and the best knowledge of old experience, as well as prejudices and luxuries, vices and crimes, such as could not have been expected to spring up in our soil for ages—all these, combined with numerous other peculiarities in the institutions and in the moral, civil and social condition of the American people, have given to our society, through all its relations, a character exclusively its own, peculiar and unexampled.

Circumstances and causes such as these, wide, general and incessantly operative, thus pervading the whole mass of the community, cannot fail, in some way or other, to reach and powerfully affect every individual. Any American citizen who will look about him with an attentive eye, and then turn his con-

templation inward upon himself, and examine his own breast and his own life, will readily perceive how sovereignly some or other of these external causes control his fortunes, direct his destinies, and mould his habits and his conduct, swaying or guiding his tastes, his reason, his feelings, or his affections. But if these can thus reach the humblest citizen, how much more decided must be their effect upon the man of native talent and improved intellect! As his mind expands itself more largely on the surface of society, as it enters with a bolder ambition or a keener relish into the concerns of men, the pursuits of fame, of power, or of knowledge, just so in proportion must he sympathize more readily with the surrounding world, and in acting upon many, must feel more sensibly the reciprocal action of the greater mass upon himself. Hence, all that is singular and peculiar in our country, her people or her institutions, will be in some sort imaged in his mind, and will operate upon his mental constitution as silently but as certainly as his physical frame is affected by the food that sustains him, or the air that he breathes.

It is, therefore, gentlemen, that I have thought that I could not more usefully discharge the duty assigned to me by your kind partiality, or select a theme more appropriate to the annual academic celebration of a college, which already boasting among its

alumni so large a proportion of the active talent of our state, continues annually to swell that number by a numerous body of our most promising youth, than to call your attention to the consideration of the blessings and advantages resulting from the political and social condition of our republic, to the American scholar—not merely in common to him with the rest of his fellow-citizens, but to him especially and above others, as an educated and intellectual man.

These are blessings and advantages, in themselves peculiar, unrivalled, inestimable; still, like all other temporal goods, they are not unmixed with evil, not unaccompanied by dangers, always liable to abuse. Like, too, to the other gifts of the Most High, intrusted to man for the use of his fellow men, they impose upon their possessor weighty, solemn and holy duties.

It is then of these blessings and advantages of the American scholar, their accompanying dangers and their attendant duties, that I now purpose to speak to you.

The subject ought certainly to interest those whom I am called to address, for it is of themselves that I must speak. From the lips of wisdom and genius, the theme could not fail to be fruitful of the deepest and most precious instruction. For myself, and the very imperfect views I am about to

lay before you, I can claim no other weight or authority, than what may arise from the fact, that these are neither the vague speculations of a political theorist, nor the rant of patriotic declamation. They are sober and deliberate opinions, the results of much opportunity of observation, and that by no means careless or hasty, and formed by one not indifferent to the imperfections of our political or social system, or unwilling to confess them—not blind to the faults and errors of his country or his countrymen, but who has yet never wavered or faltered in his veneration for the sacred cause of republican liberty, or in his confidence of the ultimate and certain tendency of our free institutions to promote truth and justice, to diffuse happiness and virtue.

First of all then—We all know and feel that every thing in the condition and prospects of our country tends to excite and maintain a bold and stirring activity of thought and action throughout the whole community. Nothing is allowed to remain stagnant or dormant. Every mind is compelled, sometimes in despite of its own inclinations, to partake of the buoyant spirit, the restless mobility, the irrepressible energy of youth and hope.

In most other lands society moves with steady regularity, in one slow, sure and accustomed round. Each ascending step in the scale of wealth and dis-

tinction is completely filled up, and the vast majority, doomed to hereditary ignorance and privation, must be content to pass their whole lives where birth or accident has first placed them. Feeling no stimulus to exertion, besides that of daily want, their desires and their hopes conform themselves to the narrow scale of their regular toils and their humble enjoyments. But with us, commerce, arts, agriculture, enterprise, adventure, ambition, are crowding and hurrying every man forward. Our past is but brief. We can scarcely be said to have a present—certainly we have none for mere indolent enjoyment. We are all pressing and hastening forward to some better future. No single mind can well resist the general impulse. The momentum of the whole mass of society, composed of myriads of living forces, is upon each individual, and he flies forward with accelerated velocity, without any other power over his own motion than that of the direction of its course. The universal ardor is contagious, and we all rush into the throng of life, and are swept along by its broad, resistless current.

Least of all can the mind, formed to liberal studies, habituated from early youth to the employment of its most vigorous faculties, resist the wide spread sympathy. "The clear spirit," to use Milton's phrase, "nursed up with brighter influences and with

a soul enlarged to the dimensions of spacious and high knowledge," sees in every direction careers of honor, or of usefulness open to its exertions, and tasking its noblest powers. For with us talent cannot well slumber; knowledge may always find some fit application.

Travel elsewhere, and where is it that you may not find talent chilled and withered by penury, or profound learning wasted on the drudgery of elementary instruction, or else "lost in a convent's solitary gloom?" With us this need never be. In fact, it is seldom long so, unless from the positive fault of the possessor. Excepting those melancholy cases, where some unavoidable calamity has weighed down the spirits and extinguished joy and hope for ever, knowledge and ability cannot well run here to waste without their voluntary degradation by gross vice or the maddest imprudence. But I do not now speak of the varied opportunities for the successful exertion of matured, cultivated talent, or the substantial rewards that its exercise may win, so much as of the still greater advantage which that talent may derive to itself from the prevailing activity and energy that animate the whole community. Under that strong and contagious stimulus the faculties are awakened, the capacity enlarged, the genius roused, excited, inspired. The mind is

not suffered to brood undisturbed over its own little stock of favorite thoughts, treading the same unceasing round of habitual associations, until it becomes quite incapable of fixing its attention upon any new object, and its whole existence is but a dull, drowsy dream. On the contrary, it is forced to sympathize with the living world around, to enter into the concerns of others and of the public, and to partake, more or less, of the cares and the hopes of men. Thus every hour it imbibes, unconsciously, new and strange knowledge, quite out of the sphere of its own personal experience. Thus it receives, and in its turn spontaneously communicates that bright electric current that darts its rapid course throughout our whole body politic, removing every sluggish obstruction, and bracing every languid muscle to vigorous toil. As compared with the more torpid state of society exhibited elsewhere, to live in one such as this, is like emerging from the fogs of the lowland fens heavy with chilling pestilence,

> "——the dull pacific air
> Where mountain zephyr never blew,
> The marshy level dank and bare,
> That Pan, that Ceres never knew—"

and ascending to inhale the exhilarating mountain atmosphere, where the breeze is keen and pure, and

the springs gush bright from their native rock, bestowing on the children of the hills the bounding step, the strong arm, the far seeing eye, and the stout heart. It is much then to breathe such a mental air from earliest youth. It is much to be educated and formed under such potent and perpetual stimulants to intellectual development. But for a mind thus formed and framed for vigorous and effective action, it is not less necessary that fitting occupations may be found for its nobler qualities and powers. This is much for worldly success. It is every thing for honor, for conscience, for content, for beneficence. Let genius, however brilliant, however gifted with rare, or copious, or varied acquirements, be but doomed to labor for selfish objects, for personal necessities and sensual gratifications, and for those only—and its aspirations too will become low, its desires sordid, and its powers (adroit, doubtless, and very effective as to their accustomed occupations) will dwindle and become enfeebled, until they are quite incapable of any generous and magnanimous undertaking.

But with us the man of intellectual endowment is not so "cabined, cribbed, bound in" to his own puny cares. Far otherwise: his generous ambition, his large philanthrophy, his zeal for the service of his God or his country, may spread themselves abroad

"as wide and general as the casing air," without finding any check or barrier to their farthest range.

In the eternal order of Providence, minds act and re-act, and become the transcripts and reflections of each other, thus multiplying and perpetuating the evils or the excellence of our short being upon this globe. It is not the exclusive prerogative of the great, the eloquent, the chosen sons of genius or of power, who can speak trumpet-tongued to millions of their fellow creatures from the high summits of fame or authority, thus to be able to extend themselves in the production of good or evil far around and forward. We are all of us, in some sort, as waves in the shoreless ocean of human existence. Our own petty agitations soon die away, but they can extend themselves far onward and onward, and there are oftentimes circumstances which may cause those billows to swell as they roll forward, until they rise into a majestic vastness which it could scarce seem possible that our puny efforts could have ever set in motion. Such favoring circumstances, in other nations comparatively rare, are here the common blessings of our land. We have a population doubling and re-doubling with a steady velocity so unexampled in former history, as to have utterly confounded the speculations of all older political philosophy. We have a territory, which rapidly as that popula-

tion subdues the forest and covers the desert, has still ample room for coming generations. These things alone are enormous elements in the mighty process of social melioration. Whatever is effected in removing any of the evils that afflict those about us, must, ere long, reach far beyond us and beyond them, to other and more numerous generations, to distant fields, as yet silent and desolate, but destined soon to swarm with a busy multitude. The character, knowledge and happiness of that future and distant multitude, are now in our hands. They are to be moulded by our beneficent labors, our example, our studies, our philanthropic enterprise. Thus the "spirit of our deeds," long after those deeds have passed away, will continue to walk the earth, from one ocean-beat shore of our continent to the other, scattering blessings or curses upon after-times.

Consider too the general elementary instruction of this nation—too slight, meagre and superficial indeed to content the patriot as an ultimate end wherewith to rest satisfied, but admirable as the means of spreading information and pouring a bright flood of light and truth over our whole continent. Books, newspapers, periodicals, are scattered profusely through the land, and present to a large proportion of our population their favorite and most unfailing relaxation from business and toil. Our people are

daily, hourly habituated to discussions of the most interesting nature, sometimes upon the most abstruse, frequently upon the most important subjects of human interest. All our experience, our modes of business and ways of life, have a strong tendency to teach us to regard science, not as a thing mysterious and solitary, never to be mixed with common life and its ordinary thoughts and concerns, but as an exalted and munificent benefactor, constantly and profusely contributing to our welfare and happiness. Hence it requires nothing but the steady and well-directed efforts of enlightened and liberal minds to make a very large part, and that in many respects too, the best part of science, familiar and popular to a degree which the recluse scholar of former days could never imagine. Much indeed of the best science can only be useful, in any high degree, by becoming thus familiar and popular; for unless it be so, it must remain a barren theory, dry and useless.

This is eminently and self-evidently true in all political and economical science. It is equally so of all ethical truth: and as it is the beautiful characteristic of the loftiest and most perfect science, most rapidly to simplify and generalize its knowledge as it increases its stores, it is not easy to conjecture any assignable limit beyond which the grand conclusions

(at least) of sound scientific investigation, and the results of learned labor, may not be laid open to the liberal curiosity of the humblest artisan. In the same or some similar way, the choicest refinements of classical taste, and the congenial study of the remains of ancient genius, which beautify and enrich the scholar's mind, may be made through him to enlarge, to elevate, and ennoble the general mind of his country.

But these are not the only facilities we enjoy for making the acquisitions of learning profitable to all, and for bringing intellectual force to bear upon its appropriate objects. The quick and keen sense of self-interest, that gives such sagacity and energy to the business operations of this country, is equally propitious to the success of every art, every discovery, invention, undertaking, and science, that involves in it any amount of practical improvement or power. Hence, whatever of theoretical science, inventive skill, ingenious speculation, or reasoning eloquence, can be made to tell upon any of the multitudinous affairs making up the business of life, or to minister in any way to the increased power or enjoyment of man, will soon find ready attention for their claims. Here no prejudices in favor of time-honored usages are strong enough long to resist the advance of scientific improvement or wise innovation. Society is not

divided into castes, each one of them watching with jealous vigilance against any encroachment of their several exclusive walks by any rude intruder from another class, themselves clinging to the settled usages and old forms of their own clan, with the steady pertinacity of men whose unexamined prejudices are interwoven with their earliest habits and their most valuable personal interests. If Science, descending from her starry throne in the heavens, light the student to any discovery or invention in any manner applicable to the wants of his fellow creatures—if Genius prompts the lofty thought—if love of God or of man inspire the generous design, no matter how the novelty may astonish for the moment, no matter what prejudices may be shocked, no matter what interests may be alarmed and band themselves against the innovator, let him go on undismayed. He advances to certain victory.

But it has often been objected that this all-absorbing gravitation towards the useful, the active, and the practical, in our country, propels every student from his most favorite studies into the struggles, the competition, and tumult of life, and is thus fatal at once to all recondite and curious learning, to deep attainment in pure science or polished excellence in elegant art and literature. There is certainly some portion of truth in this objection, and yet but a por-

tion only. Where the demands for competent ability are so pressing, and the temptations to employ that ability in such occupations as bring with them instant rewards are so great, it is quite certain that but few will be found inclined to spend their lives in studies which have no interest for others, and no perceptible bearing on private or public good. When, however, we consider the wonderful connexion and inter-dependance of all knowledge, made more and more manifest by every day's advance in science, so as almost to prove by an accumulation of particular examples the sublime hypothesis of the old philosophy, "that by circuit of deduction, all truth out of any truth may be concluded;" when we reflect how singularly adapted the various parts of knowledge are to the individual tastes and character of different men, so as to seize and draw them as with an irresistible mental magnetism to their several studies, we cannot, I think, doubt that all that is most valuable in science or literature, will find votaries among us, who, not content to make such studies the amusements of their leisure or to devote a life of monastic gloom to their solitary worship, will make or find for them a fit application. The experience of scientific investigation has shown that such application of the test of reality and experiment to theoretic truth, has not only often thrown a clearer light on that

theory, at once limiting its generalities and confirming its evidence, but has also evolved new combinations, suggested new inferences, and manifested higher laws. Art more than repays its obligations to science. The large processes of manufactures have proved the best school of chemical discovery. Natural knowledge has contributed largely to medical skill, and it has in turn received its most precious accessions from the observation of the physician. The abstrusest speculations of the metaphysician, have found their place in those controversies of theologians that rend the religious world, as well as in questions of political discussion, of legislation, and of jurisprudence. Thus contemplations, apparently the most shadowy, have often operated with the greatest efficiency upon the most engrossing concerns of daily life.

Nevertheless, it may well be that there are some meditations so subtile and unreal, some branches of learning so remote from use, some laborious arts of refinement requiring for their successful cultivation such silent abstraction and unremitting, undivided labor for years, that they can find no room amid the strife and bustle, the *fumum, strepitumque*,—the rail-road noise and rapidity of this work-day world of America. Be it so. We would not willingly lose them. For nothing that has filled the thoughts of

the good and wise, or weaned men from sensual pleasure by the better attractions of art, taste or learning, can be without value and dignity. But if we must lose them, let us be content, and the more so, because their deprivation, if such be of necessity the case, is more than compensated by countervailing benefits resulting from the same causes. Such acquirements or accomplishments cannot flourish here, because they require the devotion of the whole man to their service, whilst the American man of letters is incessantly called off from any single inquiry, and allured or compelled to try his ability in every variety of human occupation.

Though he may be laboriously devoted to the duties of a particular calling, or, on the other hand, exempted from the pressure of regular professional labor, no man of informed mind can with us exclude the surrounding world. The *Quidquid agunt homines*, familiarity with men and their business is forced upon him, and it is a rare thing indeed if he can remain a cool looker-on. It may be patriotism, it may be humanity, that animates him—it may be personal pride, or political zeal, or ambition, or perhaps merely the mysterious sympathy of universal example; but whatever may be the special motive in the individual, no scholar, no professional student

or practitioner can well remain the mere man of books. If in this acquaintance with many other matters, something is lost as to particular skill and minute accuracy of knowledge, assuredly much more is gained in the healthful development of the faculties, the enlargement of the understanding, the more equable poise of the judgment, and the richness, variety, and originality of the materials for reflection, combination, or invention thus stored in the memory.

If awed by that veneration the scholar naturally feels for those who consecrate their days and nights to learning, alternating only between books and the pen, you hesitate to allow the superiority conferred by this variety and versatility over the man of one solitary study, let me appeal to the unvarying testimony of literary history for the proof. The great men of antiquity, the models of eloquence, the fathers of poetry, the teachers of ethical wisdom, the founders of that ancient jurisprudence, that still rules the greater part of the civilized world, were none of them solitary scholars; none of them were contented with the "half wisdom of books" alone. They performed well all the duties of war and peace; and their immortal works, beautiful in the severe simplicity of truth and nature, still remain "eternal monuments"—as Thucydides, in the calm consciousness of genius, has said of his own

majestic history—eternal monuments for the good of after ages, of things which they had themselves seen and done. There was scarce one of them who could not, like Cicero, look back, with proud satisfaction, to his labors in the forum, the senate, and the field, disastrous ofttimes, but full of glory—"*summi labores nostri, magnâ compensati gloriâ, mitigantur*" and then turn to those studies which were the grace and crown of their prosperity, and the sure consolation of their misfortunes, "*non modo sedatis molestiis jucunda, sed etiam hærentibus salutaria.*"

The self-same lesson is taught in the history of the philosophy and literature of our own mother tongue. Whose are the venerated and enduring names—whose the volumes that we turn to, with reverent affection, as the oracles of just thought, or the ever fresh springing fountains of delight? Who were they from Bacon to our own Franklin—from Spenser and Shakspeare to Walter Scott, but men of those mixed pursuits, that multifarious instruction, that familiar intercourse with actual life, which narrow-minded learning would brand as the bane of philosophy, the destruction of letters. Compare their works with those of men devoted to literature alone,

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* De Oratore, Lib. II.

and who looked at nothing beyond its precincts—the plodding compiler, the laborious collector of scientific trifles, valuable only as materials for some wiser mind to use, the herd of dealers in light literature, either the servile imitators of past excellence, or the echoes of the follies of their day, or baser yet, the pandars to its vices. How short and fleeting has been their popularity! Here and there one among the number has deserved the gratitude of posterity by moral worth and well directed labor. His works keep an honored place in our libraries, but they rarely exercise a living sway over the opinions and tastes of nations.

> A mortal born he meets the general doom,
> But leaves, like Egypt's kings, a lasting tomb.

Such is also the experience of the arts of taste and design. The father of the Italian arts, Leonardo da Vinci, was a scholar, a politician, a poet, a musician. Michael Angelo, the sublime and the holy, was still more universal. Sculptor, painter, poet, architect, engineer—we find him now painting his grand frescos, now modelling his gigantic statues, now heaving the dome of St. Peter's into the air, and now fortifying his loved Florence, the city of his affections, with a humble diligence and a patriot's zeal. There are no such artists now in Italy. The painters and sculptors with which it swarms,

are devoted to painting and sculpture exclusively; but how do they compare as artists with their great predecessors! Could any authority whatever add weight to the facts I have just referred to, such would be found in the opinion of Milton himself. In a well known passage of one of those fervid and brilliant prose tracts of his youth, which (to use the noble metaphor of an eloquent critic) announced the Paradise Lost as plainly as ever the bright purple clouds in the east announced the rising of the sun; Milton, with a sublime and determined confidence in his own genius, covenanted—for that is his remarkable expression—in some few years thereafter, to produce "a work not to be raised from the heats of youth or the vapors of wine, like that which flows at will from the pen of some vulgar amorist, nor by invocation of Memory and her syren sisters, but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit which can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and send out his seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases." "To this," he subjoins in a lower strain of eloquence, but with the same decision of tone—"to this must be added industrious and select readings, steady observation, and an insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs." Had Milton confined himself to the studies of his library, or the halls of his university—had he not

thrown himself into the hottest conflicts of the day—had he not stood forth the terrible champion of freedom of opinion and of republican liberty, raising on high his spirit-stirring voice in their defence in worst extremes, and "on the perilous verge of battle where it raged;" had he not participated in counsel, in act, and in suffering with England's boldest spirits—had he not thus felt in himself, and seen in others, the "might of the unconquerable will," the unshaken, unseduced, unterrified constancy of faithful zeal and love, he would not have gained that insight into seemly and generous arts and affairs, that intimate acquaintance with the nobler parts of human nature that made him the greatest of poets. Had Milton lived always a recluse student, his learned fancy would undoubtedly have enriched his country's literature with Lycidas and Comus, but the world would have wanted the Paradise Lost.

But the American literary man has yet other reasons to be grateful for having been born in this age and country; and they are reasons such as a mind cast in the grand antique mould of Milton's, would prize as most worthy of fervent thanksgiving. Every thing here is propitious to honest independence of thought. Such an independence is the presiding genius of all our institutions; it is the vital spirit that gives life to the whole. Without this, our con-

stitutions and laws, our external forms of equality, our elections, our representation, our boasted liberty of speech and of conscience, are but poor and beggarly elements, shadows without substance, dead and worthless carcasses, from which the living soul, the grace, the glory, the strength, have for ever fled. It is not the parchment record of our constitutions, the bills of right, the trial by jury, the elective franchise, nor all the securities provided by the jealous wisdom of our fathers for the unrestrained exercise of liberty, that can call back this living spirit when once it has fled—no, nor the unrestrained press scattering its millions of daily sheets over the land, nor the representative halls echoing with their never-ending discussions. These cannot repair its loss, but they are all admirable agents in its production and preservation; and there are besides other circumstances in our condition not less favorable to this temper, than our political institutions. The numberless shades of opinions upon the doctrines of revelation, as well as upon other momentous concerns and duties, coming to us from the various stocks whence we descend, or the different influences under which our citizens grow up, with all the creeds, all the prejudices, and all the knowledge of the old world pouring in upon them, though involving or producing dangerous errors, have yet a healthful efficacy in

habituating men to the free use of their judgment, and the manly, direct avowal of their thoughts. Here there is no apparently general agreement of society to awe the mind from investigation of what claims to be certain and established truth. And when examination on any subject brings conviction, the inquirer is seldom compelled to meet that hardest trial of human fortitude, the renunciation of old associations and long cherished doctrines in the face of universal scorn and indignation, and without the solace of human sympathy. More than this:—that restlessness of enterprise, which alike nerves the frontier settler to the toils and adventures of the wilderness, and kindles the young dreams of the political aspirant, which whitens the ocean with our canvass, drives the rail-road through the desert, and startles the moose at his watering-place, or scares the eagle from his high solitary perch with the sudden beat of the steam-boat's wheels—that one and the same ardent, restless spirit ruling our whole people, can have little communion with that abject prostration of intellect, that makes man crouch before his fellow, submitting his reason and his conscience to another's will. It is thus that the adventurous ardor, so efficient in external and material matters, naturally extends its energies to the moral and intellectual. Here

are at once provided facilities for the propagation of truth, and securities for some portion, at least, of respect for conscientious error.

It is not easy to realize the full value of the blessings made familiar to us by daily enjoyment, without some experience of their opposite evils. It is our happy fate to know nothing personally of the severer tyranny of power over the conscience. History can alone teach us what this is, and how to estimate duly our political advantages in this respect. What then is the history of human opinions but a long record of martyrdom for truth, for religion, for private conscience, for public liberty? Every monument of antiquity in the old world, like that one of "London's lasting shame,"

> The *Traitor's Gate*, miscalled, through which of yore
> Past Raleigh, Cranmer, Russel, Sydney, More,—*

every vestige of the past recalls some remembrance of the "lifted axe, the agonizing wheel," the scaffold, the stake, and the fagot, on which the patriot poured out his life's blood, and where the martyr breathed forth in torture his last prayer of triumphant forgiving faith. But, traveller, stop not there to mourn.

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* These lines are quoted from memory, I believe from Rogers, and slightly varied.

Rejoice rather—for these are the monuments of the victories of truth—of the triumph of the self-sustaining, immortal mind, over the impotence of transient power. The martyrs have conquered. Their sentence is reversed. Their tyrants have passed away with names blackened and branded by universal scorn. The cause for which they died has now mounted the seat of worldly empire, or else is enthroned still more regally in the hearts of millions. Mourn not for the martyrs. Mourn rather for truth suppressed by fear, for genius shrinking from the torture or the dungeon; or, more melancholy still, deeming ease and wealth cheaply bought by the sacrifice of honor, of conscience, of faith, and of truth. Mourn for Galileo and Beranger, and a crowd of others as wise, and as good, and as weak as they were. Pity, but despise them not. Look to your own age, and then compare it with theirs. Look to your own country and her laws, and then look to theirs. Be thankful for your happier lot, yet fear—lest you yourselves should some time yield up your integrity under trials that, weighed with theirs, are as light as air.

Well has a philosophical poet* of our own age enforced the deep moral to be drawn from such examples.

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*Coleridge.

"Ye who secure midst trophies not your own,
Judge him who won them, when he stood alone,
And proudly talk of '*Galileo's fall.*'
Oh, first the age and then the man compare,
That age how dark, congenial minds how rare;
No host of friends, with kindred zeal did burn,
No throbbing hearts awaited his return.
Prostrate alike, when prince and peasant fell,
He only, disenchanted from the spell,
Like the weak worm that gems the starless night,
Moved in the scanty circlet of his light.
And was it strange that he withdrew the ray
That did but guide the night birds to their prey?"

But whilst there are great political and public causes to shield the American mind from exposure to the stern tyranny of power, there are others less conspicuous and prominent, equally protecting it from more degrading tendencies. I do not count as the least among these the absence of marked difference of hereditary or permanent rank. It is impossible for any one, who has not personally witnessed it, to comprehend the strange reverence to worse and inferior men than themselves, the submisson of the understanding to the vices and caprices of those they deem the higher orders, which beginning with early youth, and confirmed by education, clings throughout life to thousands of the well-instructed and the good. I well remember the astonishment expressed to me, some years ago, by several learned and respectable ministers of the gospel in Great Britain, at the ease

with which an eloquent divine of our country (the late Dr. Mason) conversed and argued with, and even contradicted, a royal duke who had honored an anniversary charity festival with his presence. They accounted for this phenomenon not by ascribing it to its right cause, the temper and education of his country, but by attributing it to his presumed habits of familiar association with the political dignitaries of his own land. This feeling struck me as the more remarkable, because these worthy men (several of whom enjoy an honorable distinction in the religious literary world) were themselves dissenters from the national established church, and almost republican opposers of the then administration of the state. It requires a very strong effort of mind, and often too as great an excitement of feeling, to throw of this prejudice; and when it is thus thrown off, the danger is that it either runs into wild insubordination of just authority, or else lasts but for a time, till the fervor of youthful zeal is over, and the suggestions of interested prudence concur with early opinions; and then the half obliterated impressions of youth reappear.

Now the obvious tendency of all this is to bow down the intellect before authority, making the soul crouch and crawl before place, rank and dignity. I say that such is its *tendency*—for I should

do foul wrong and insult to the deep serious thought of England and her native sturdy manliness, as well as to the enthusiastic intellectual daring of the continental scholars, were I to say that such were the constant and necessary consequences of any external and artificial condition of social order whatsoever—still less so of a mixed government like theirs. It is, however, an influence deeply deleterious to the right feeling of mental independence, and it is therefore happy that it in no degree threatens us. But in other lands, pecuniary dependance is too often connected with this reverence for rank, so that they produce together the most complete vassalage. The market for intellectual labor is overstocked. Nature's rich banquet is crowded with titled and hereditary guests, "the table is full." To emerge from the crowd of menials, and obtain some share of the feast, the unbidden scholar must attach himself to the train of a patron, and feed on the alms his niggard bounty may bestow. Such has been the degrading history of literary men, poets, authors, and, I blush to add, philosophers, throughout the world, for many centuries. And if in our own times the literature of France and of England have, in a good degree, freed themselves from that ignoble thraldom, this is mainly to be attributed to the growth of principles similar to our own, to the

diffusion of knowledge amongst the people, to the rapid increase of commercial and manufacturing riches, all combining to build up the sovereignty of public opinion, and to make the patronage of aristocratic wealth more and more insignificant in comparison with the unpretending munificence of an educated people. Yet the causes which originally led to this degradation of the literary character remain, and much of the best talent of Europe still wears (as nearly the whole of it did for centuries) the galling though gilded chain of patronage.

> Yet think what ills the scholar's life assail,
> Toil, envy, want, the *patron* and the gaol,—

said the indignant Johnson, filled as he was with habitual reverence for rank, yet resenting, with manly contempt, the wrongs of genius and the disgrace of letters.

At a later period of his life, the same veteran author recorded in his great English Dictionary the bitter result of his long and sad experience and that of his literary associates, by sarcastically defining the *patron* as being "commonly a wretch, who protects with insolence and is paid by flattery." The same sad story is told more in detail in the precarious dependant lives of the wits and poets of London and Paris during the reigns of Louis XIV., Charles II., and the

first and second Georges. It is written at large in their shameless flatteries, addressed to venal statesmen and ribbald courtiers, embodied in servile dedications, or embalmed in works where taste and fancy struggle in vain to rise under the load of baseness and pollution imposed upon the unhappy literary slave by his equally unhappy patron. The facility with which a sure and comfortable subsistence may be obtained in this country, and the certainty with which educated talent, directed by ordinary discretion and industry, may obtain to a decent competency, are such as to exclude all temptation, much more all necessity, to follow in this respect the humiliating example of European learning. To such evils "the lack of means need never drive us." If dazzled by the false glitter of office, if bribed by the doles of political patronage, or by such paltry boons as private interest can bestow, the American scholar is ever weak enough to sell his conscience, or bow down his independence before a master, he falls a voluntary victim. The sin is his own—his own be the shame. Let him not seek to divide it with his country. Is it not then a glorious privilege to be wholly free from the necessity of such dependence, never to be forced by the tyrannous compulsion of need to man-worship, the meanest of all idolatries? Far nobler, far happier, than kings can make him, is

the lot of him who dedicates his life and his intellect to instruct and delight the people—who looks to them not for alms or bounty, but for a just compensation in honor and in profit, for the pleasure or the instruction he affords them—who seeks to serve them as a friend, not to fawn on them as a flatterer—to please them or to teach them, yet as having a higher master and knowing the solemn responsibility of one who acts upon the happiness or the morals of many. Happy he who, in the discharge of such duties, leads none into dangerous error, lulls none into careless or contemptuous negligence of right, nor ever sullies the whiteness of an innocent mind. Happier—still happier, he who has scattered abroad into many hearts those moral seeds whence benevolent and heroic actions spring up, who has "given ardor to virtue and confidence to truth," or, in more sacred language, "has turned many unto righteousness." Such genius, fired from heaven's own light, will continue to the end of time to burn and spread, kindling congenial flames far and wide, until they lift up their broad united blaze on high, enlightening, cheering, and gladdening the nations of the earth.

Nevertheless, sad experience has sometimes proved that he who draws his subsistence or his fame from the taste of a corrupted people, may debase and dishonor himself in ministering to the cor-

rupted tastes of the million, as well as he who pandars to that of the corrupt aristocratic few.

> " The drama's laws, the drama's patrons give,
> For they who live to please, must please to live ;"

And what is true of the drama, holds equally good of all the literature and the arts that minister to pleasure and entertainment. Yet the lure to evil from serving the many is far less than from serving the few. To one entire half of the great domain of mind it reaches not at all. The cultivator of mathematical and physical science, more fortunate in this than the man of letters, is wholly beyond such danger. All of his labors, in order to bring honor or advantage to himself, must be felt in the increased comforts of thousands, or the augmented power of his species. What a magnificent accompaniment is this thought to the other worldly rewards of his successful toils! What a moral dignity does it give to the exploits of art and science, in themselves the most purely physical and mechanical!

But the man who aspires to guide or to please the minds of others by eloquence or literature, will soon find that, in proportion as he addresses himself to enduring public interests or universal natural feelings in preference to those which are local or personal, artificial or temporary, so his own genius will

be elevated, and the ethical character of his thoughts and works ennobled and purified. For in order to advance those large public interests, he must look to the grand laws, political or moral, that govern human happiness. In order to touch the universal natural sensibilities, he must stir up the generous sympathies, that in individuals are entangled or choked with their peculiar vices, but still are common to human nature. He must rouse up the virtues that sleep in most hearts, but are dead in none. So only can he gain and keep a firm hold upon the public mind. Now in the very effort of so doing, his own littleness is insensibly lost in the greatness of a common humanity. He tasks himself to high purposes, and in that exertion brings forth powers he dreamt not of in himself. The author rises above the man. He becomes unto himself, his own "exceeding great reward."

I was much struck, years ago, with an admirable application made by a veteran statesman of this general truth to a sound doctrine of political ethics. It is contained in that beautiful historical fragment left by the late Charles Fox—a work that, I know not why, has never obtained that reputation of which it seems to me to be eminently worthy. Whilst it vies in sober dignity with the best remains of classical antiquity, it breathes throughout every page

the same generous and manly benevolence that (whatever might have been his public or his private faults) marked the whole character of that frank and kind-hearted statesman. In relating the secret negotiation of James II. with the French court, by which the English king was to be furnished by Louis XIV. with pecuniary aid for the enslaving of his people, one of the very meanest and most criminal transactions recorded by modern history, the historian stops to wonder and regret, that in company with several far inferior men, no unfit agents for such a business, are found named the able and eminent Lord Godolphin, and Lord Churchill, afterwards better known as the celebrated Duke of Marlborough. "It is with difficulty," says he, "that the reader can persuade himself that the Godolphin and Churchill here named are the same persons who were afterwards, one in the cabinet and one in the field, the great conductors of the war of the succession. How little do they appear in one instance! how great in the other! And the investigation of the cause to which this excessive difference is owing, will produce a most useful lesson. In the one case they were the tools of a king plotting against his people; in the other, the ministers of a free government acting upon enlarged principles, and with energies which no state that is not in some degree republican, can supply.

How forcibly must the contemplation of these men, in such opposite situations, teach persons engaged in political life, that a free and popular government is desirable, not only for the public good, but for their own greatness and consideration, for every object of generous ambition."

Every good citizen of our republic will readily acquiesce in the soundness of this political conclusion of the English statesman. But I do not hesitate to give the doctrine a much wider application, and to say that a state of society, free and popular, is eminently conducive to exalted principles of thought and action, and the best energies of intellectual men in every liberal and generous pursuit, and is therefore desirable to them, not only for the public welfare, "but for their own greatness and consideration, for every object of generous ambition." In such a state, Poetry and Painting may perhaps look around in vain for Macenases. They need not despair if they find them not in individuals—for they will find them in the multitude.

> "Unbroken spirits cheer! still, still remains,
> The *eternal patron* Liberty, whose flame,
> While she protects, inspires the noblest strains;
> The best and sweetest far are toil-created gains."

So many historical and biographical illustrations in the belles lettres, in jurisprudence, in the arts of

taste and design, in the numberless applications of science, all strongly corroborating the views I have just stated, are crowding upon my memory, that were I to recapitulate them in detail, I should weary your patience with a string of names and incidents already familiar to every reading man; whilst I should be compelled to leave the remaining parts of my subject wholly untouched. To them I must hurry, and I can speak of them but briefly.

It is of the intellectual dangers, growing out of circumstances otherwise thus fruitful in blessings, that I purposed also to speak. The dangers of prosperity, more insidious than those of adversity, are often more fatal, and these are of that class.

One of the most obvious of them, is the danger of falling into a conceited, smattering superficiality in consequence of that very universality of occupation and inquiry which seems, in other respects, so propitious to the formation of a sound, comprehensive understanding, so useful to the man of books, so graceful to the man of business. Such superficiality is undeniably one of the besetting sins of our reading men. It shows itself in the capacity of talking fluently upon all things, and of doing every thing; and in the habit of talking inaccurately upon all things, and of doing every thing badly. It nourishes and sustains itself upon compends, abridg-

ments, extracts, and all the other convenient subsidia of improved education; excellent things in their way, but like other great improvements of our day, wheeling you to the object of your journey, without permitting you to know much of the country you pass through. You may trace it by the small pedantry that commonly accompanies half knowledge. You may track it in legislative speeches and reports, in public documents and legal arguments, and even in judicial opinions, where facts, and numbers, and grave statements of argument and collations of authorities are all that is wanted; but where their place is filled by puerile rhetoric, by common-place instances of Greek and Roman history, or by mouldy scraps of thumb-worn school-boy Latin—shabby finery at the best, and all of it out of place. Yet the temptation to the commission of such folly is not great, and the remedy is easy. No man can hope to know every thing within the knowledge of his whole race. Let him then study with diligent accuracy that single branch of knowledge which it happens to be most his duty to know well, and he will have time and opportunity left to learn much more. Let him keep his curiosity awake, and his affections alive to whatever concerns the welfare of his neighbor, his country, or his kind. He cannot then fail to learn much, and he will know how to use all he learns

well. His understanding will be tempered by use to that right medium that best brings the scattered and broken rays of light from all quarters, to converge upon any object on which the mind is called to fix its attention.

This impatience of continuous systematic labor, and the hope of reaching by some new and short road those objects of human desire which the Creator has not less beneficently than wisely decreed, should be gained only by the sweat of the brow or the toil of the mind—

> ——————— Pater ipse colendi
> Haud facilem esse viam voluit,—

this same impatience of slow study that engenders the parading superficiality which I have just described, is often seen to produce still more serious effects upon the character and the whole course of life. Such effects are peculiarly apparent at the present time in our own country.

In the wonderful and accelerated progress of this nation to wealth and greatness, the public mind is continually surprised by the sudden apparition of enormous riches gained as it were in a moment, sometimes seemingly by accident, sometimes the hasty fruit of a quick-eyed and bold sagacity. Then again in our political contentions, the unexpected mutation of popular favor frequently raises an individual at once to

eminence from some humble professional walk, where he leaves his former superiors to toil on far beneath him. Under the strong excitements of such examples, it is but natural that the ardent youth of acquirement and ability should be often tempted to look with disgust upon the slow returns of regular labor, whether in study or in business. He closes his books, or he flies from his office or counting-room, and rushes to the field of gambling speculation, or it may be of equally gambling politics, trusting to become immediately rich or great, by the favor of fortune, as others have become before him.

Unquestionably in such a republic as ours, the rewards of public favor are legitimate objects of honorable ambition. So too in a country where population and capital are so rapidly augmenting, to neglect the means of securing to ourselves some share of that general prosperity, which long-sighted sagacity assures us must be the natural effect of causes already in action, would be to reject the goods which Providence tenders to our acceptance. But the great danger in this country, and especially at the present time, and peculiarly to the well-educated young man, is that he is most strongly tempted to stake at once his whole chance of success and of happiness upon such uncertain contingencies and upon them alone; turning with scorn from the sober

certainties of life, as being worthy the attention of none but dull, plodding spirits.

Now viewing this subject as a mere question of prudent calculation, we are met with the striking and certain fact, that the whole aggregate profits of mere speculative gain among us (throwing aside all account of the perhaps equal losses) are utterly insignificant in comparison with those of regular commerce, or well directed industry in other pursuits. In the same way, and for precisely the same reasons, the highest honors and rewards of the mere political adventurer are just as paltry, when placed by the side of those of Marshall, and Wirt, and Dwight, of Wistar, or of White, and, I might add, many living names scarcely less honored than those of the venerated dead—whose long, steady, successful course of professional or of learned labor, was crowned by the universal and affectionate veneration of their countrymen. But if turning our view from external circumstances of wealth or of respect, we look to the influence of such a temper upon character and happiness, the contrast is still more striking. On the one side are domestic quiet, calm content, cheerful industry, well employed days and peaceful nights, and above all, a steady reliance on your own exertions—under the care of Heaven, the true security of independence and the best guarantee of vir-

tue. Yet all this our youth are seen throwing aside to take in exchange the feversh excitement of the gambler, now elated into wild exultation, now harassed by doubt and fears, now weighed down by mortification, disappointment, and sorrow of heart—ay, and to take the gambler's hazardous, precarious fortunes too, his frequent, sudden and dreadful fluctuations from wealth to poverty, from power and splendor to beggary, a state of mind and of fortune leaving no room for domestic happiness, little for personal independence, hardly any for steady, straight-forward honesty. Nor let the young man flatter himself with the false hope, that all this is but for a time, and that when his fortunes are made, he will rest in safety. If he starts into life, risking every thing upon hazards like these, he is a doomed man. He must go on to the end of life as he begun. His early habits are incongruous with the calm, unexciting details of ordinary life, and render his mind eventually incompetent for the ordinary duties of society.

Against this danger there is but one sure safeguard of intellectual discipline. Religious and moral duty may indicate others. I am far from advising a timid abstinence from any creditable or honest undertaking that may offer strong inducements to enter upon it. Such advice would be

idle and ineffectual, if it were in other respects wise, and it is not wise in the times and country in which we live. The intellectual safe-guard I would recommend is simply this:—to form your permanent habits and tastes to some study, some business, some profession, of common and constant utility: to become masters of this, familiar with it, fond of it. If afterwards more exciting avocations call you off for a time, to this you may always look as the agreeable and respectable employment of your prosperous leisure, and upon this you may fall back in adversity, with the certainty of finding a sure protection for your honor, your independence, and your virtue.

There is another fault with which our country has been sometimes reproached, and this reproach, to which I have already alluded, much exaggerated as it is, is not without some foundation in reality. This degree of reality is again another of the evils that may befal the American scholar, and against which it most behooves him to guard. It has been said by shrewd though unfriendly observers, that in America the practical and the profitable swallow up every other thought. There, say they, fancy withers, art languishes, taste expires; there the mind looks only to the material and the mechanical, and loses its capacity for the ideal and the abstract; the sensuous

understanding is vigorous, the pure reason is torpid and blind. It might seem that there were very little reason to complain of our lot, if our nation effects every thing it attempts in the useful and practical; and that the ideal and the abstract might will be left to others who have less of solid and material consolation. Yet I think not exactly so; and, first wholly protesting against the sweeping broadness of the charge—am willing to confess, that the American mind is peculiarly exposed to suffer in this very way. The demands upon talent for active service are so numerous and imperative, the compensation and rewards for such service are so immediate and tempting, that the educated man is induced naturally to value the worth of knowledge by its direct utility. This is not amiss in itself, if it stop there, but he is often led on to take another step, and measure the degree of that utility by its value to his own interests—thus paring down utility to mere selfishness, and that too most commonly the selfishness of the coarsest and meanest material interests. To this, there are, it must be confessed, stronger temptations here than in other countries. On the other hand, there are here also stronger inducements to a more liberal habit of thought and a more generous course of action. If the facilities of advancing our personal interests are here numerous

and absorbing, so again those interests will here be found to be peculiarly bound up and interwoven with those of our country and our neighbor. The prosperity of each man depends upon the prosperity of all. Every active citizen feels that he partakes largely of the practical and real, as well as of the theoretical sovereignty, and may make his own character and influence felt far and near. For the same reason, in all the operations of private enterprise, and in our public concerns, as the laws and principles regulating their action are evolved and manifested, even enlightened self-interest is constantly called to look to something loftier and more lasting than its own direct and immediate objects. Thus whilst the intelligent American citizen is surrounded by the strongest temptations to devote himself solely to selfish pursuits, he is at the same time every where invited to conform his own spirit to that of our liberal institutions, and instructed to uplift his mind to the consideration of large principles, and to regard himself as being but a small part of the vast whole which claims his best affections.

With such a choice before him, pitiable indeed is the lot of him who turns from the nobler and manlier side, to think, to live, and to drudge for himself alone. He cuts himself off from the best delights of the heart—its endearing charities and its

elevating sympathies. He paralyzes his own intellect by suffering it to become half dead through inaction, and that in its nobler parts. The mighty ladder of thought and reason, reaching from the visible to the invisible—from the crude knowledge gained through the senses to the sublimest inferences of the pure reason—from the earth to the very footstool of God's own throne—is before him and invites his ascent. But he bends his eyes obstinately downwards upon the glittering ores at his feet, until he loses the wish or the hope for any thing better.

This, however, is but an extreme case, to be pointed out as a beacon to mark the covert peril. That such grovelling materiality, such mean selfishness, is not the necessary, nor the constant, no, nor the frequent result of our ardent industry in the affairs of life, let the discoveries of Franklin, and the magnificent far-drawn speculations of Edwards—let the grand philosophy, and the poetic thought, flashing quick and thick through the cloudy atmosphere of political discussion in our senate-house—let the open-handed charity, the more than princely munificence, the untiring personal labors of benevolence, exhibited by our most devoted and successful men of business, bear splendid testimony.

There is yet a danger of quite another sort, that

with us sometimes besets and misleads the literary man. Familiarized from youth with the glories and beauties of European literature, his ambition is early fired to imitate or to rival its excellence. He forms to himself grand plans of intellectual exploits, all of them probably incongruous with the state and taste of his country, and most of them doubtless beyond his own ability. The embryo author projects epic poems, and in the mean while executes sonnets in quantities; the artist feeds his imagination with ideal historical compositions on the scale and above the excellence of those of Raphael; the young orator dreams of rivalling the younger Pitt, and of ruling the nation by his eloquence, at the age of four-and-twenty. These enthusiasts enter the living world, and soon find that their expectations are but a dream. They discover either that the world rates their talent very differently from their own estimate of it, or else that the state of society about them is wholly adverse to its exercise in the direction or on the scale their ambitious fancy had anticipated. The coarse matter-of-fact character of our world begins to disgust them. They see duller school-fellows outstrip them in worldly success. They see the honors and profits of public office bestowed upon some whom they know to be unworthy. The profits of trade and speculation are gathered before their eyes by the unlettered.

Disappointed and disgusted, they are now tempted to ascribe their disappointment to the republican institutions of their country; not reflecting that it is impossible to enjoy all kinds of good at the same time; that whatever is administered by men must be subject to abuse; and that to be happy and successful, every man must some how or other conform himself to the sphere where Providence has placed him. If the scholar gives way to this temptation, he becomes a discordant, jarring thing in society, harmonizing with nothing near or around him. He dwells with a sort of complacent disgust upon every imperfection of our social state. He gradually becomes a rebel in heart to our glorious institutions. His affections and secret allegiance transfer themselves to some other form of government and state of society, such as he dreams to have formed the illustrious men and admirable things of his favorite studies—forms of government or states of society, such as he knows only by their accidental advantages without a glimpse of their real and terrible evils.

When this mental disease, for so it may be called without a metaphor, seizes irrecoverably upon the thoughts of the retiring, the sensitive, and timid lover of books and meditation, his capacity for useful exertion is ended; he is thenceforward doomed to lead

a life of fretful restlessness alternated with querulous dejection. On the other hand, should he be naturally a man of firmer temperament and sounder discretion, time and experience will sober down his fancies, and make him join in the labors of life with cool submission. Still he is in danger of being a soured and discontented man, occasionally compelled to feign what he does not feel, and always unsustained by that glad confidence, that eager zeal and gay hope, which ever cheer him who loves and honors his country, feels her manifold blessings, and is grateful for all of them.

As various bodily diseases are observed to be specially incident to their several particular arts, trades, and professions, so the malady I have just described seems in this country to be that to which men of purely literary cultivation are specially predisposed. The men of daily toil seem happily to live quite below the level of its agency, those of abstract inquiry, of mathematical study, physical observation and high science, as much above it.

The early history of American literature affords a distinguished example of this influence upon a most elegant, accomplished and brilliant mind. So modern are our American antiquities, that much of this early history is within the memory of men not beyond the middle of life, and such it happens to be

in this instance. It is that of one once called the American Addison, and still justly regarded as a father of our native literature, the late Joseph Dennie. Nature had endowed him with the quickest taste for beauty, the keenest sensibility for all intellectual excellence. A scholar from his cradle, he became very soon, by practice, "a ripe and good one." His ready memory was stored to a degree unequalled by any one on this side the Atlantic, and surpassed by none on the other, except his contemporary, the celebrated Porson. It was filled, crowded, bursting with the choicest beauties of thought, the rarest gems of expression that refined taste could select from the most extensive range of reading. He united to this reading much originality of thought, a gay and sportive fancy, and an unsurpassed power of brilliant expression. He was a genuine enthusiast in his love of literature, and he made it the pleasure and the business of his life to propagate the same taste among his countrymen. In this he achieved much, but he would have accomplished very far more, had he not yielded to a strange, unwise and unhappy morbid dislike for the institutions and social order of his own country. This discolored his views and distorted his judgment. It enabled inferior, every-day men, to vex and thwart him in his best and most favorite designs. It abridged the influence of his opinions and

of his taste, and broke down the authority of his criticism and his example. Worst of all, it identified in the minds of the unlettered, the cause of elegant literature with that of attachment to foreign principles and establishments, and contempt for our own. Honest men reasoned, and correctly too, though from false premises, that if literature could be gained only at the expense of patriotic feeling, it is best that we should go without it. It lessened too the merit and value of his writings as literary compositions; for it tended to strip them of the original American air they would otherwise have had, and to give them the common cast of mere English literature. Hence, instead of ranking with those of Irving, at the head of our literature, both in time and in merit, his works are already passing into oblivion. The same perverse prejudice had also, I fear, an unhappy effect upon the regular activity of his intellect and the course of his life. Peace to his spirit, and gratitude for his services to our commonwealth of letters at a time when most it wanted aid. But let the student take warning from his great and single error.

I would not now have called forth his frailties from the tomb, did I not consider them as affording a most salutary and impressive lesson to the youthful enthusiast. More especially on a literary occasion

like this, I could not have brought myself to speak thus publicly of the weakness of one whom I esteemed and honored, did I not firmly believe that it was for a purpose which his own gentle spirit, could he know of it, would approve, and could I not, at the same time, pay a cordial, heart-felt tribute to his many amiable and generous qualities, his worth, his accomplishment, and his genius.

It is the happy privilege of Americans to be free from the necessity of miserable dependance upon the caprice of other men for their daily subsistence or enjoyments. An honorable pride of character is native to our soil. Our reason and our conscience are our own. No man need to seek for himself a master, no man need to fawn upon a patron. Yet another danger, similar in effect to that from which we are thus exempt, yet quite opposite in its cause, threatens our mental liberty. It is that of slavery, not to one but to many, not to a patron but to a party. In our popular form of government, the existence of organized parties for the promotion of any system of policy, for the success of any principles of administration on which opinions are divided, and even for local objects and questions that must be decided ultimately by the ballot-boxes and legislative action, seems to be unavoidable, and when confined to their legitimate sphere, not only harmless but salutary.

They keep up a more constant and exciting interest in public affairs through the whole community. They lead to a more vigilant watchfulness of those intrusted with power. They give greater stability and regularity to the action of government, and preserve it from becoming the sport of accident and caprice. But no dispassionate man, who examines the character of all our political parties for the last few years, can fail to perceive that there is something in their organization threatening to defeat the primary object of their own formation, and injurious to personal honor and independence.

The rule of a majority of the people is the fundamental law of our institutions, and the will of the people has a right to be expressed on every question. But the modern doctrine loses sight of the people as a whole, and substitutes for loyalty to the people, fealty to party. It teaches the true liege-men of faction to move together with the discipline and blind obedience of a regular army, and to regard those who do not act with them, not as republican fellow-citizens who differ from them in opinion on some secondary though important points, but as aliens and enemies, persons not entitled to any weight in the nation, whose approval of the course of one of our friends is a good ground of suspecting his fidelity, and to act with whom, though on an insulated ques-

tion and for obvious public good, is treason and desertion. We must add to this, that by the decision of party, is meant that of a bare majority of the party only, or more commonly that of its prominent leaders, assisted by a few active professional partisan politicians. Thus the preferences of the rest, corresponding perhaps with a very large majority of the whole people numerically, are swallowed up in party allegiance. The result of all this is, that in a land of professed equal rights, one large portion of the citizens is politically disfranchised, until they can by the same discipline acquire power, and then disfranchise their opponents. Under a constitution professing the will of the majority to be the supreme law, the most vital questions are settled by an active bold minority. Connected with all this, and as a most essential ingredient in the system, a bitter spirit of intolerance is nursed up, unjust to the motives of adversaries, degrading to public men, and engendering narrow jealousies among the people. The public man is taught in his official character to look not to the welfare or the judgment of the people as a whole, but (what should be wholly subordinate) to the success and approbation of his party. Thus, means usurp the place of ends. The first who suffer the just punishment of this moral treason, for such it is, against republican principles, are the

successful leaders themselves. They deprive themselves at once of the honest enthusiasm, the cheerful confidence that ever accompany the zealous support of principles. They become the timid, temporizing slaves of expediency, looking at every step, not to its justice or wisdom, but to its probable popularity. Their own policy prevents them from relying for respect and support upon the broad judgment of all honest and enlightened men, and when age or adversity arrives, when "interest calls off all her sneaking train," they are left helpless and contemptible. Such being the pitiable condition of the Magnates of faction, what must be that of him who follows at their heels as a hireling—above all, of the educated and literary hireling! He has sold his manhood for a little pelf; he must revile, and he must glorify; he must shout huzzas, or whisper calumnies, just as he is bidden. His time is not his own. His thoughts are not his own. His soul is not his own.

Strange thing it is, but true, that in this our republic, the land of abundance, the native soil of independence, there may be found some Americans of talent and information as abject in the submission of their understanding and will to the dictation of another, as was ever the most awe-struck courtier of Louis XIV. or the Czar, and who can fawn

upon the dispensers of office with a cringing servility that would have mantled with shame the cheek of the worst hireling of Walpole, or the most profligate parasite of Dubois, the scandal of the church, or of Jefferies, the reproach of the law.

I have before said that I looked with undoubting confidence to the ultimate tendency of our free institutions, to elevate and purify the general mind. Nor do these things shake me in that conviction. They are but for a time. These dark clouds will pass away. They cannot quench the glorious sun of our republic. To-morrow—

> To-morrow, he repairs his golden beams,
> And floods the nation with redoubled ray.

But their time is now. The evils are present. They are confined to no individuals, to no one party or faction. I have even feared that this spirit of intolerance and dictation was extending itself from the political into the social and the religious world. Even before the altars of the Most High, strange and unhallowed fires have been lighted up in the priest's censers. It is for our generous, educated, high-minded youth to stay this plague. Let them not think to keep themselves pure, by holding themselves aloof from action. Let them take their stand

manfully as their own best judgment may dictate, in the political and religious divisions of our people; but let them feel for those who honestly differ from them as for erring brethren. Be your zeal as fervent as it may, still temper it with a kind-hearted tolerance for the sincere and the honest. Reserve your warmest indignation for the narrow and bitter Pharisee, whether for you or against you, for the hypocrite, the impostor, and the persecutor. Above all, reverence yourself, your country, and the principles for which you contend. Never sacrifice your own honor, and still less, the cause of religion or freedom, to the subsidiary means designed to promote them, or the external forms in which they may be invested.

Go forth then, gentlemen, to your exalted duties. Go—sustain and elevate the high privileges of the American scholar. Shrink not from the dangers, yield not to the temptations that await you.

The father of epic poetry, when Diomed rushes to the field, describes the goddess of wisdom as nerving her champion's arm with strength, filling his breast with courage, and circling his shield and spear and helmed head, with her own living fires. Even so—the Minerva of your distinguished college has armed you in the bright panoply of science, and fired your souls with a holier inspiration, than pagan antiquity could feign. Profane not those high gifts, disappoint

not the just expectations of the friends of learning and liberty. Be true to yourselves and your country.