

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY,

IN THE

CITY OF NEW-YORK,

DECEMBER 22, 1852,

BY

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οὐ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐκεῖ ἐλευθερία.

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At a meeting of the Board of Officers of the New England Society in the City of New-York, held at the Astor House on Thursday evening, January 6, 1853,—

Resolved, That the thanks of the Board of Officers of this Society are hereby tendered to the Rev. William Adams, D.D., for the able, instructive, and eloquent Oration delivered by him at its last Anniversary Meeting, and that he be requested to furnish a copy of the same for publication.

Resolved, That the Secretary transmit a copy of the foregoing resolution to Dr. Adams.

A true copy of record,

EPH'M KINGSBURY, *Sec'y*.

A D D R E S S .

By what secret sympathy are we drawn together on this day of the calendar? Something more is it than a filial regard for an honored ancestry; more than a fond attachment to the place of our nativity, though the memory of the homes and haunts of our childhood be bright beyond all Arcadian scenery. Chiefly is it the honest conviction that the event, we this day commemorate, was immediately related to the general progress and happiness of the human race. Were provincial pride or patronymic pretension the motive of our celebration, the sooner it were abandoned the better. But if it be true, as we have soberly believed, that the small company who landed from the *Mayflower* in 1620, were an important link in the long drama of human history; if their faith, fortitude and success were destined to tell beyond themselves and their own times, on all generations and all lands, then is there no one man,

wherever born, who has a greater or less degree of interest in them than another; and so long as we study the ways of Providence with a philosophic comprehension and a kindly heart, no place can be found for arrogant pretension, but all place for majestic humility, Christian charity and boundless hope.

Mr. Carlyle, with his characteristic mannerism, has said, "the best thing England ever did was Oliver Cromwell." With more soberness of style Mr. Southey has justly observed, "that there is no portion of history in which it so much behooves an Englishman to be thoroughly versed as in that of Cromwell's age." Oliver Cromwell was New England working on British soil. Puritanism has had two homes and histories, trans-Atlantic and cis-Atlantic. The origin and substance of the thing was one, but the stream was destined early to be divided, a part running down in the regular channels of British history, and a part passing under the sea and reappearing upon our own shores with prodigious advantages in its favor. A noble theme, indeed, is Puritanism in its relations to the politics, the literature and the religion of the British Isles; great things has it accomplished, whereof we are glad, in its native home; reformed abuses, secured rights, promoted freedom; but its cis-Atlantic development has been in a new world, on a virgin soil, far removed from those ancient institutions and

associations which elsewhere have modified its form and embarrassed its life. Nor let us suppose that Puritanism is an obsolete tradition. It is active now ; its work is still needed ; its history is not yet ended. The long struggle between freedom and despotism is not yet decided. We have still need to be fortified in the principles of our fathers. When the gentle spirit of Christian liberty is in danger of encroachment on the one hand from the old form of arrogant authority, and on the other from the stealthier corrosion of false philosophy, it is well for us to recall the forms of our canonized forefathers ; to study the lessons which, though dead, they still speak to us ; or, as they themselves would have expressed it, when Christ is in danger of being crucified afresh between two thieves, it is time *that many of the Saints who sleep should arise and come out of their graves and appear unto many.*

A good history of Puritanism is yet a desideratum in English literature. That history has been undertaken by writers not a few, from different positions ; but, as with a good picture, there is only *one* point from which it can be viewed aright ; every other is too high or too low, too near or too remote. We have often wished that Milton had brought down his history of England to his own times. Perhaps his poetic genius would have been a hinderance

rather than a help; certainly he was too near the origin of Puritanism to describe those triumphs and rewards of freedom which gladden our eyes. If one would learn the affluence and rotundity of the English language, we should certainly advise him to study the pages of Lord Clarendon; if he would acquire forensic eloquence, or the art of special pleading, we should counsel him to read Mr. Hume. But who would think of discovering in either of these distinguished authors a just conception of the English Puritans? Besides that which is substantial, there is much extrinsic and incidental in their life, which may catch the eye of the most superficial observer; shadows to displease, and charms to attract; much that is repulsive, and much that is heroic; and many a bright gleam of beauty shines in upon their serious life, as the winter's sun casts its warm smile upon the solemn pines and cedars of New England woods. But when we pass beyond all forms and accidents to the very soul of their history, we find it, where the sympathies of many historians cannot reach—in an earnest religion. By an effort of the imagination, I can conceive of Juvenal writing odes on chastity, Congreve composing church psalms, Byron writing Hebrew melodies, and Percy B. Shelley discoursing on theology; the only incongruity which my im-

agination absolutely refuses to entertain is, that David Hume, the sophist and the skeptic, was in any respect qualified to write an impartial history of the Puritans.

Besides these deep-seated antipathies of authors, there are other difficulties in the way of an impartial description of these remarkable men. As a party they were not homogeneous. No one man stands forth as their exponent and representative. There were many differences among those who usually pass under one name. Some of the best of the Puritans, considered as to doctrinal belief, never separated themselves from the National Church; yet were they as really of the movement as any who went to Frankfort or Geneva. Some struck for civil liberty only as that was incidentally related to the cause of religion; while others, with little thought or care for religion, were willing to be classed with the Puritans, because of their enthusiasm for political freedom. It has ever been the constant temptation of authors to lose sight of the real question at issue in the battle, in a description of some one of the many heterogeneous and motley hangers-on of the army.

Then again, reformers are, of necessity, men of peculiar qualities. Bold, impetuous, severe, rather than refined, elegant and loveable. Their weapons are not of lath but veritable steel. In days of ease,

we pass a false judgment on men who wrote with fire within, and real fire around them. Open any book in our language, and you may know, from the very style of its composition, to what period of history its author belonged. Every page of Addison breathes of luxurious tranquillity, rural and metropolitan. Look at Harrington, Latimer and Milton, and you feel that you are in a fortification in a time of siege, and the words fly hard-shotted, and at a white heat. From this fact it happens that we cannot always describe reformers by the qualities of more pacific times. Some things existed in excess, and some things were in utter defect. We must subtract and concede, and then form a judgment. Their life was not a simple equation. You cannot describe it by indiscriminate eulogy, nor indiscriminate censure. There was action and reaction, advantage and disadvantage, good and evil; and we are only concerned to know whether, after all allowances and subtractions, the good does not preponderate. Stand by the side of the ocean when the sea is coming in, and you behold weeds and wrecks, the dead fish and the swollen carcasses of animals, things unsightly, heterogeneous and confused, drifting to the shore; and you listen to the wild scream of the sea-birds, with their melancholy cry, but, notwithstanding, we tell you that it is the great tide which is

rising, lifting the stranded ship from the bar, bearing argosies of wealth upon its bosom, filling up all the channels and inlets, and bringing with it the healthful breeze which fans a Continent with the tonic airs of life.

In that ingenious classification of sciences proposed by Auguste Comte, a prominent place is assigned to what he calls *sociology*, or the science of human society. Whether we accept the speculations of the French thinker or not, we must hold that there is such a reality as the *philosophy of history*. It disturbs our intellectual repose, to be told that events occur, subject to no law, proportioned to no plan, and controlled by no Providence. It was a beautiful conception of classical mythology, that the Muse of history was the daughter of Jove; and the conviction that there is some design which gives unity to human history, is a corollary from the belief that there is a God who governs the world which he has made. By some infelicitous judgment, what is termed *Ecclesiastical History*, is made the special reading of divines. All history is ecclesiastical history; for the Christian religion is the soul of the world, the end and solution of its creation. It was not a clergyman, but Frederick Von Schlegel, who said, "without this faith the whole history of the world would be naught else than an

insoluble enigma, an inextricable labyrinth, a huge pile of the blocks and fragments of an unfinished edifice, and the great tragedy of humanity would remain devoid of all proper result.* We wonder not that many, eminent for their genius, have confessed to a distaste for historical reading, so long as they have never discovered the true point of perspective from which to study the picture which God's hand has thrown upon the wall. What care I to know that Cæsar conquered Judea; that James was a bigot; that the Puritans went into exile; if I do not perceive the relations of these events to that true optimism, the Christian faith, which involves the life and liberty of the world. What a meagre idea of the Christian religion is that which represents it as symbolized in creeds and catechisms, well enough to be learned by children, and used for sharpening the intellect of those who have taste and leisure for discussing its dry abstractions; or as a salutary medicine for the bruised in spirit; a form which hovers chiefly around churches and churchyards, the domain of the clergyman and the undertaker; its light like that which superstition has seen flickering over old graves; a skeleton at the feast while the music and the revelry go on; its great help to man being to throw a bridge over the

* Philosophy of History, Lect. X.

river of Death, and conduct him safely to another world. Religion is life, it is power. Every memory associated with this day honors it as the parent of Republics, the patron of well-governed States, the soul of justice, enterprise, freedom and commerce; and not more certain is it that the whole body of the sea is swayed by the attractions of the heavenly orb, than that the whole surface and depths of society are yet to be governed by the potent laws of the Christian faith.

Think not that I have proposed a mere professional service—though it be true, according to Cicero, that the Syrian rhetorician would have been more at home had he spoken before Hannibal of rhetoric rather than war,—if, pressing at once to the heart of my theme, I undertake to show what were the relations of religion to the event which we celebrate, and how it is that religion is the imperishable seed of true liberty. I confess to an inability to comprehend the history of the Puritans, their essential life and their accidental forms, their wisdom and their mistakes, if surveyed from any position other than that we have now chosen.

In the Royal Museum at Stockholm, among other great curiosities, is preserved, with religious care, the small, unpretending, Latin Bible of Martin Luther; its margin covered with notes in the

Reformer's own hand, a prize brought by Gustavus Adolphus out of Germany, and worthy to be saved as the Ithuriel weapon which, in the lifetime of its owner, roused fifty millions of people to life and freedom. We say it most deliberately and soberly, and it will be for me to show it, the history of later times is the history of a free Bible. Its working, or its want, explain all the phenomena of modern society. I say the Bible, because, by the invention of the art of printing, that book is made, what, before, the organism of the Church assumed to be, the visible symbol and exponent of Christianity itself.

The Protestant Reformation was not an ecclesiastical schism, but a great moral movement, which sent the pulses of life through every channel of society. In the year 1802, just half a century ago, the National Institute of France offered a premium for the best dissertation on this question: "What has been the influence of the Protestant Reformation on the political condition of different European States and the progress of letters?" Villers, the successful competitor, with consummate felicity, opens his admirable essay after this manner: "Had an assembly of savants, prior to the sixteenth century, wished to ascertain the influence of any schism from the Roman See, they would undoubtedly

have propounded the question in this form : ‘ What are the evils which have followed this impious and pernicious doctrine ? ’ But now that many European States are separated from the Papal power, an assembly of philosophers in a country still attached to her communion, proposes to fix the influence of the reformation on European society and the progress of letters. This change in the language implies a change in opinions ; and the very form of the question conveys its own answer.”

The first remarkable conjunction of events, demonstrating the superintendence of Divine Providence in our history is, that Columbus discovered the New World, not until after the birth of that German Reformer, who was destined to give form and direction to the new movement of Society. As the Island of Delos floated about unfixed and unknown, till she who was to be the mother of Apollo and Diana, needed it for an asylum, when, by the command of Jove, it rose from the sea, pilared firm on the foundations of the earth, to be the birthplace of Wisdom and Freedom, and the chosen site of that temple to which all nations should bring their offerings, so was this New World enveloped in the mists of the ocean, its rivers running silently to the sea, its vast surface waiting for a future population, its existence altogether unknown, till the auspicious

moment had arrived, when God's hand lifted the veil of the sea, and a new continent was revealed as the home of new men and the theatre for a new act in human history.

It is a well-known literary fact, that Mr. Hume wrote his history of the Stuarts before the narrative of preceding events. As well begin a man's biography at the fiftieth year of his age; or describe a ship of war under full sail, ploughing the waves with no mention of the little plank, under the water, which turns about her bulk and glory. True and well-chosen are the words, with which Shakspeare begins his historical drama of Henry VIII.:

“I come no more to make you laugh; things now
That bear a weighty and a serious brow,
Sad, high and working, full of state and woe,
Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow,
We now present.”

In all history there is not one cycle better defined and more complete than that which sweeps from the reign of the monarch after whom the dramatist has named this interlocutory chronicle, down to the passage of the later reform bills of England; and the soul of the whole period is Religious Liberty. Are we sure that we comprehend the real meaning of these familiar words?

The Reformation in England, unlike its contemporary movement on the Continent, which beginning with religion went on to politics, began with politics and went on to religion. It has been given as a humorous description of man, that he is a creature with a will of his own, who longs to be Pope. King Henry verified the definition in his own case; and impatient because the incumbent of the Papal Chair would not favor his matrimonial fancies, this royal Bluebeard resolved that he would do as he liked, and set up Pope for himself. His Protestantism amounting to nothing but independence from a foreign authority, his position was wonderfully unique and anomalous; maintaining Papal dogmas, yet defying Papal supremacy; oddly enough dragging Protestants and Papists to execution on the same hurdle; the former for disbelieving transubstantiation, the latter for believing the Pope was supreme. But the beginning of strife is as the letting out of water; first a drop, then a stream, and then a flood. A change in one respect promised changes in all. Mythology informs us of an eagle, purloining meat from the altar of the gods, who saw not the coal of fire cleaving to her prize, which, borne away, consumed her nest. The Protestantism of the King began in self-will and passion; but the Protestantism of his subjects had a celestial origin, and was

fanned to a larger and yet larger flame, till it burned up the last relic of intolerance and despotism. While the politics of the King were filling the eye and ear of the world, there was a new power beginning to work, without observation, which was destined to change every aspect of the controversy. The translation of the New Testament, by Tyndale, into the English tongue, synchronizes with Henry's rupture with Leo X. It was read with prodigious eagerness by the people. The translation of the whole Bible soon followed. Disposed to favor an act which sanctioned his pretensions in the controversy with Rome, the King himself authorizes its distribution, and enjoins it upon all preachers to insist upon its use. When this potent book had been working upon the minds and hearts of multitudes for twelve years, the passionate monarch saw his mistake, and endeavored to rectify it. He interdicted what before he had permitted. He put Tyndale to death for having translated the book which now he feared. A little book is that, but it has kindled a great fire. Let the "Defender of the Faith" pursue his own policy, play his own game; like the electric chain which feels not the power it transmits to others, he has let down the lightning of heaven into the heart of a nation, which will never find rest again until it has secured for itself that just

freedom which is the birthright of man. The controversy has now fairly commenced. Here is a reformation, not extrinsic and accidental, but with a soul in it. The parties perfectly understood one another; though there were many side issues and collateral disputes, all which was vital, as we shall presently see, was included in this controversy concerning the freedom of God's word.

It were too much in a discourse like this, to write the history of this great strife. But observe a few facts. In the reign next succeeding, that of Edward VI., facilities for the circulation of the Bible were multiplied; and just in that proportion, changes occurred in the thinking of the nation. Then ensued the reign of Mary, when bigotry sought to quench the heavenly spark in blood. The four winds blow upon the great sea, the storm rages, and the floods arise and foam. Fear not the issue; for that little book, by this time, has sent its roots into many hearts, and they will be the tougher and stronger for the rocking of the tempest. "When Queen Elizabeth was conducted through London, on her accession to the throne, amidst the joyful acclamations of her subjects, a boy, who personated Truth, was let down from one of the triumphal arches, and presented her a copy of the Bible. She received the book with the most gracious deport-

ment, placed it next her bosom, and declared that, amidst all the costly testimonies which the city had that day given her of their attachment, this present was by far the most precious and acceptable.* Hail, ethereal stranger! Thou hast survived the flood, and hast received a royal welcome! Art thou the coal of fire from the altar, destined to repeat and finish thy former service, in consuming the hay, wood, and stubble of the eagle's nest? Little enough did that haughty daughter of the Tudors understand what she did, when, on that day of pageantry, she so honored the Book of God. We shall hear of great things in her reign, which were not in the programme of that public show. Let her cleave to her semi-reforms; addict herself to papal ceremonies; institute her star-chamber and high commissions; refuse all toleration to sectaries; determine that "no man should decline right or left from the drawn line of her authority;" it is all too late to reinstate the ancient thralldom. What she did in form, multitudes had done in earnest; pressed that Bible to their hearts; and no power could destroy the freedom which was nurtured by its potent contact. We will not liken that Divine Book to the Trojan horse, which was drawn into the

* Hume.

besieged city by the inhabitants themselves; for that contained within itself a host of martial men, and the rattling of arms was heard as it went over the wall; but we are sure that, pacific, truthful and celestial as is its nature, it will plant the seeds of great revolutions, and time only is necessary to ripen the results which it promises. In the reign of James I. was prepared that translation of the Bible, about which cluster all the memories and loves of those who speak the English language in two hemispheres. Let that "lubberly fellow" proclaim his policy, "no bishop, no king;" boast of his skill in kingcraft; let him make a fool of himself in his theological discussions at Hampton Court; let him resolve to "harry the Puritans out of his kingdom;" in enjoining a standard version of the Bible, he has done one thing, for which we are disposed to pardon all his pedantry, all his buffoonery, all his bigotry, and all his cruelty. We forget the origin of the good, in the intrinsic value of the blessing; just as Samson drank of the miraculous stream, without so much as once remembering that it proceeded from the jawbone of an ass. Follow the history of that book, now that it has obtained its long-sought liberty, and tell me whether it is a vain fancy that its history is the history of modern times. It opens its seals, blows its trumpets,

and utters its voices. Soon we hear of it in camps and parliaments. It is made the arbiter of last appeal between kings and people. Cromwell reads out of it to his troops before the battle of Naseby. It leads on the struggles of non-conformity—that Protestantism of Protestantism—that dissidence of dissent. At every stage it demands more and more of right for man; emancipates from one servitude after another; and, at each advance, secures a better and a safer liberty. Literature revives at its presence, as verdure is nourished by flowing fountains. All the literature of the English tongue has been created since our vernacular version of the Scriptures. Pactolus, with its sands of gold, rolls not so rich a flood as that which a free Bible has poured along the affluent channels of our language, producing fertility wherever it spreads. We trace its effects, not merely in the Baxters and Howes, who, for fire of patriotism, force of eloquence, vastness of learning, depth of erudition, never had their superiors; but in the large observation and serious truthfulness of Shakspeare; and when Milton wrote those immortal poems which are the crown-jewels of our language, it was as if religion, emerging from her conflicts, had reached her royal coronation, and put the well-earned diadem upon her head, amid a “sevenfold chorus of halle-

lujahs and harping symphonies." That same emancipated book, comes over in the *Mayflower*; the first compact of constitutional liberty was written on its cover; it has a home in every cabin which sends up its smoke in the wilderness; it cheers the toil of the lonely exile; it was read in every school and family; it was carried in their knapsacks by the soldiers of the Revolution; and when the American Republic was founded, George Washington laid his honest hand upon this book, to take the oath of office; and by this time, a whole nation was so thoroughly bred in its precepts, that the idea that an official oath could be falsified by any *coup d'état*, never so much as entered the imagination of an American citizen.

Now let us go back and show that this synchronism of events was not accidental, and verify our assertion, that the freedom of the Bible was the source and pledge of all other freedom. Let me prove to you, that the key which we now have in our hands is the only one which can unlock the character of the Puritans, explaining alike their virtues and their errors.

They claimed the right to possess, read, and interpret the Word of God. That right was denied; and here the controversy began. In that principle which they asserted, you have the right of private

judgment, which is the very soul of freedom. How shall we define the right of private judgment? I answer, partly in the words of Mr. Macaulay, "We conceive it not to be this, that opposite opinions may both be true; nor this, that truth and falsehood are both equally good; nor yet this, that all speculative error is necessarily innocent; but this, that there is on the face of the earth no visible body to whose decision men are bound to submit their private judgments on points of faith." The written Word of God is the only *authority* in matters pertaining to religion; to every man belongs the right of consulting, interpreting, and obeying this for himself, uncoerced by penalties, unbribed by partialities. No human power, individual or organized, may in any form or degree restrict this absolute freedom. See you not that the very first claim by the Puritan was a blow struck for human rights and human liberty? He looks into the Book of God, and learns that he is a man. In finding his religion, he finds his humanity. His soul dilates with the conception that the Creator speaks to him as his own child and image, addressing his reason, affections, and choice. With Moses, he ascends the mount of the law; with Elijah, he hears the still small voice of God on Horeb; with the Apostles, he accompanies our Lord to the Mount of Transfig-

uration; and with John, is he caught up to the third heavens, to behold the vision of the new Jerusalem. The first claim of Puritanism was an assertion of the democratic idea in its purest and sublimest form. Its very rudiment was *religion asserting popular rights*. Shall man take away what God has given? That which began with one claim was sure to advance to others. Withstanding arrogance and despotism in the assertion of the right to the book which God had addressed to our individuality, Puritanism from the beginning was pledged against all forms and acts of tyranny, and political reforms were born of religious liberty. In that remarkable production, the "*New England Primer*," familiar in past times to all the homes and schools of our country, whose pictorial representations, if they did not inspire a taste for the fine arts, most certainly created an undying hatred of all tyranny, are many things "hard to be understood." We wonder not that many a young memory and understanding broke down at *effectual calling*. But as we reach habits of thoughtfulness and observation, we grow into the meaning of the compendious truth, "They who are effectually called do partake of justification, adoption, and sanctification, and *the several benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them.*" What an af-

fluent stream is that which flows from such a fountain ! What benefits are those which accompany such a lofty vocation ! What manifold rights of the people are involved in the first great law of religion, that the soul shall be free ! What a growth of intelligence, enterprise, industry, wealth and happiness, is included in that germ of a personal relation to God ! Wonder not that when Sir Edmund Andros came over as the emissary of James II., to take away the charter of the colonies, the inhabitants of Massachusetts, bred in the great principles of religion, in the fearless assertion of civil liberty, quietly locked up that august personage in the castle of Boston before they ever had heard of the displacement of the Stuarts and the accession of the Prince of Orange. This is the way in which God makes free Republics ; not by philosophical theories, and French politics. He makes free *men* by a free Bible ; the grant of one liberty is the *Magna Charta* of all.

It is customary in many quarters to represent the Puritans as "ridiculous precisians," quarrelling about vestments and forms. One might think, so much is said about caps, surplices and rochets, that there was a sober truth in the humorous conception of Sartor Resartus, that "*Society is founded on clothes.*" But this is a superficial view of the matter. Those ecclesiastical vestments concerning

which disputes ran so high, were only the symbols of antagonistic principles. You would not scoff at the American Revolution as a contest about a few chests of tea; or the Wars of Succession as waged for the color of roses; nor ridicule the strife of great parties as a dispute concerning the hue of the cockades they wore in their hats. The Puritans had read in that free book, which was their law and light, that man is *justified by faith*, and while they were exulting in their spiritual freedom, there crossed their path the form of arrogant authority, which, in God's name, demanded of them something above what was written. And what was it that they were required by royal authority to wear? Those garments and appendages which, by long usage and mystical meaning, were associated in every mind with that ultramontane power whose jurisdiction they had disowned and abhorred. Thus it happened that one of the first points at which great principles met in battle, related to matters so trifling as ecclesiastical vestments and forms of worship. But why dispute at all upon points so trivial? Were they not things in themselves indifferent? No sensible person did dispute concerning them so long as they were regarded as indifferent. Had the dress prescribed to be worn by the clergy been a simple scholastic garb, suited to the decency and gravity of public

worship; had this been *recommended*, rather than prescribed under penalty of deposition, no Puritan would have objected to its use. The ground assumed by Bishop Hooper in refusing to be consecrated in the specified vestments, is sufficiently catholic, modest, and manly. But when the matter in dispute was known by all parties to involve the vital questions of the times; when it was perfectly well understood by all, that, wrapped up in the folds of those clerical habits, was the old controversy concerning the supremacy of God and the freedom of man, there was no place for indecision. The Puritan saw that the book of Leviticus belonged to the Old Testament and not to the New; and he would not put "petticoats" in the place of faith. When Bishop Day spoke to Archbishop Gardiner of justification by faith, that intolerant hierarch exclaimed, "If you open that gap to the people, then farewell all again." Both parties knew perfectly well what they were about; and when the one enjoined and commanded, as God's representatives, human inventions and the badges of human pretension, the others, knowing the result to which the first admission would lead, that the controversy could be settled just as well on an inch as a continent, afraid of that bondage which would begin its thralldom in requirements soft and silken

as satin vestments, took their ground and exclaimed aloud, " Out with the bondwoman and her sons, we are children of the free." When the monarch undertook to force them into conformity to Popish habits under penalty of that English inquisition, the Court of High Commission, it stirred their blood, and you cannot censure their course without condemning the Revolution of 1688 and the accession of the Prince of Orange—the latter being only an advanced result of the former. Puritanism a dispute about clothes! A rag may prove the volume, rapidity and power of the swollen current on which it rides. That glorious flag which is our pride and protection, by sea and land, what is it but a piece of woollen bunting, with imitations of certain stars and stripes? Aye! what is it? There is a whole history in it. It is the symbol of a nation's freedom and independence. The memories, pride, patriotism of a whole people are in its folds; and as oft as it is spread over our heads, the heart strikes quicker and stronger, and the step is firmer and manlier. Whoever would ridicule the precision of the Puritan in refusing to wear the prescribed Papal habits, let him know that that refusal was born of the freedom of the New Testament; and we shall meet it again in political history, when the contro-

versy relates to such littlenesses as ship money and paper stamps.

It is said to be a peculiarity of people born in New-England, by which they may always be known, that they have *a habit of asking questions*. Undoubtedly they have. But that habit was not born of a discourteous and impertinent inquisitiveness, a meddling with other men's matters; it has a nobler pedigree. There underlies this national and sometimes troublesome peculiarity, a great and potent principle, the root of our history and the marrow of our bones. All reforms begin with *asking questions*. A few centuries ago the world was overshadowed with authority. Opinions were prescribed alike in politics, philosophy and religion, by one uniform despotism. The dialectics of Aristotle reigned supreme in the Universities, when Lord Bacon began to experiment and inquire, throwing into the crucible, and asking what things were made of and made for; and forthwith the new Philosophy was born. The Puritan also began to ask questions; how it was that a woman, whom the Apostle had forbidden to speak in public, could be the Chief Bishop of the Church? Who it was that had the right to curtail his freedom in the worship of God? Whence did that right proceed? Just so soon Religion was reformed, put on her beautiful garments,

and bounded on her career of light and freedom. James enraged and alarmed his subjects, by affirming that they had no more right to inquire what he might lawfully do, than what the Deity might lawfully do ; but the Puritan, believing that the Church of England was originally founded on the right of private judgment alone, immediately asked why he should submit his private judgment to that. The political reformer caught the spirit of investigation, and began to ask, What is the foundation of this old adage : 'The King can do no wrong ?' Do not crowns and thrones sometimes cost more than they come to ? asked the Roundhead ; and Republics were born in their place. So be it that the questions propounded are sensible, they are the voices of freedom and the index of manhood. Doubtless the habit may exist in excess, degenerating into frivolity or exaggeration. Many a beautiful work of Art and production of Nature has been spoiled by inquisitive boyhood wishing to see what was inside of it ; but we say it soberly, that investigation is the parent of all freedom ; free inquiry the stability of all right ; and that so soon as it is gone, nothing but insipidity or despotism remains. In the history of forensic eloquence, it would be difficult to find more political wisdom or common sense than were packed into the brief speech of the late Duke of Wellington on

the Reform Bill: "My Lords, this measure was demanded by the people; it has passed the House of Commons. I think it wise that it should pass the House of Lords. Otherwise the people may take it into their heads *to ask the question*, 'What use is there in having any House of Lords at all?'"

If our fathers, as the freemen of the Lord, had not pressed the right sort of questions, there had remained to us no freedom whatever.

Again, it has been said that the Puritans rendered themselves and their cause ridiculous by the nakedness of their religion, the sourness of their faces, and the austerity of their manners; that they did violence to the finer instincts of our nature, and are responsible for the licentiousness and infidelity which afterwards ensued. Mistakes, undoubtedly, they made; but we are disposed to say, with Horace:

"Verum ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
Offendar maculis;"*

which, in a free translation, may be rendered, "When the sun shines, never mind the spots." Mistakes, grave and sorrowful they made, we admit. Had they avoided them, they would have been more than human. You cannot understand those mistakes

* De Arte Poetica.

unless you bear in mind the controversy in which they were engaged. As with their virtues, so with their errors, both are to be accounted for by the issue between Freedom and Tyranny, to which they were pledged. Do you not know that in polemics men always drive one another to extremes ; and that, in proportion to the violence of the contact, is the force of the rebound ? The pendulum which is thrown to the utmost limit in one direction, is sure to swing as far in the opposite ; and it will oscillate for a long time backwards and forwards, before it reposes in the true medium. You laugh at the Puritans because they gave their sons and their daughters such uncouth names, out of the Old and New Testaments ; by the strangest solecism, calling their first-born son ICHABOD ; their well-beloved daughter TRIBULATION, or GODLY SORROW ; interlarding their conversation and speeches with Scriptural phrases, and appending or affixing to the names of their captains and leaders whole verses out of the Bible, as if it were their study to become as disagreeable and ridiculous as possible. But we have seen that the very question at issue between them and their antagonists related to the authority and freedom of the Bible ; and, just in proportion as that authority was denied, and that freedom was curtailed, they were resolved that both should be asserted and

honored. That which strikes our ear as a laughable mistake, at this distance of time, had no such sound when the old battle was raging. If the one party studied to avoid the Bible, and do it despite, choosing the names of their children out of profane classics, the romances of the Troubadours, or the Roman Calendar, would it not be the likeliest thing in the world, that the opposite party would show their hand by selecting prænomens out of the Book for which they were contending; and that with an utter disregard of sound and sense? Is there no principle of our nature, to say nothing of religion, by which we readily explain the fact that, when the King issued his Book of Sports, commanding men to frequent bear-gardens on Sundays, on that very account they would go in greater numbers to the conventicle; and that, on their way thither, their faces would be drawn down into an unusual length and awful gravity? If bacchanalian choruses were the choice of the roystering reprobates on the one side, do you wonder that barbarous versions of the Psalms, and these delivered by some with an unnecessary drawl and nasal twang, were in use by the opposition? When the war was active between two immense forces, is it strange that every sign, badge and emblem of the one should be stripped off, and even trampled under foot by the other? Because the *cross*, that beautiful symbol

of our faith, was then the ensign of a political party which they esteemed aggressive and despotic ; therefore, the Puritans took it down from their church steeples, and substituted a bare weathercock, guiltless of all such associations ? Say now, in these easy days of toleration, that they carried their antipathies too far ; but go back to the times when the strife was pending to which all our liberties are to be traced, and say whether you cannot do more than justify, even honor the sacrifice which stripped off the decorations of Religion in order to save its life. It was ABRAHAM offering up his own son, JEPHTHA sacrificing his own daughter, when the Puritan showed his purpose to forego some of the sweetest privileges of his faith, on the principle that what was lawful, in itself, was not expedient or right in those critical exigencies which were to decide the destinies of generations. I speak not of the present times, but there is not a man of us who, had it been his lot to take part in the struggles of our fathers, would not have refused the observance of *Christmas*, that annual festival which was garlanded with all the memories of ancestry, just so soon as it was understood that the name itself was a symbol of the great strife to which all were pledged. For the same reason was it, because one party addressed prayers to a multitude of Saints, some of whom, to .

say the least, were of a doubtful character, therefore the Puritan refused the prefix of *Saint* even to the Apostle of the Gentiles, and the Disciple who leaned on Jesus' bosom. Because the Romanist prescribed the duty of praying for the dead, the Puritan, to avoid the least imputation of what he regarded an unscriptural error, declined all religious services at the interment of his friends. The first instance in which it is known that a prayer was offered at a funeral in New England, was so late as 1685, at the interment of Rev. William Adams, of Dedham, Massachusetts, an act which attracted much observation and comment at the time.* Puritanism, the nakedness of religion ! It was the nakedness of the athlete, entering the arena, stripping himself of every robe which would embarrass his limbs, before wrestling for very life. The struggle past, wonder not that the victor, as he carried away the Book for which he had fought, held up high and foremost his glorious prize ; that, in the outburst of his enthusiasm and exultation, he poured scorn on all things profane and human, in opposition to the object of his reverence and faith. Wonder not that when he took it with him into the cabin of the *Mayflower*—a free dove into the ark—he solaced his lonely voyage with its sublime revelations ; that three sermons a day through-

* Sewall's Diary.

out the passage charmed the weariness of the exiles, and that their jubilant psalms mingled day and night with the roar of the winds, and the everlasting anthem of the ocean. Think it not strange that men, emerging from such a history, should require some time to relax their religious austerity, and discover, in new circumstances, the happy medium. Smile not at the great truth which is hidden in the playful remark of that veracious historian, Mr. Diedrich Knickerbocker, that "the colonists unanimously resolved that they would take the legislation of Moses as the laws of the province, till such time as they had leisure to make better." What else, in all consistency, could they do, than honor the Book against which government, authority and letters had so long been in arms? Thus of necessity, from the very enthusiasm of their success, they pendulated into the extreme of severity. The forced conformity of the English commonwealth, and the legislative gravity of the New England colonists, were mistakes, as we say; but they were mistakes which no human wisdom could have escaped. There are some things in our nature which never can be coerced. Seriousness is one, and laughter is another. The Puritans rebelled when King James commanded them to play according to law. We wish now that they could have remembered the

same law of humanity when they sought to make men serious according to statute. For myself, I have never wondered at the phenomena of New England witchcraft. Unless human nature has materially changed since the days of our boyhood, I incline to think that, were the same enactments in force now which existed two centuries ago in Massachusetts, relative to the forced gravity of the young, queer things would occasionally make their appearance down the chimneys; incomprehensible pins would be stuck into the flesh of aged gravity, and unaccountable missiles would be projected by invisible hands.

Nor is this all which can be said of Puritanical austerity. There is a liberty which leads to lawlessness. The heroes of Plutarch, with their passionate love of freedom, had no conception of the laws by which that freedom should be moderated and restrained. No servitude is so debasing as liberty without law. All history had chronicled the same story—those who would be free, baffled by their own success, and buried beneath their own triumphs—independence leading to wealth, wealth to luxury, luxury to impatience of control, and this, by rapid stages, to effeminacy, corruption, vassalage, and destruction. A new thing was that which the Puritan had undertaken. Liberty, which tends to

excess, he sought to moderate and control. Hence he subjected himself to severe discipline. Breaking away from the authority of the King, in a peculiar sense, he put himself under the authority of God. He struck for freedom, and conquered himself. He demanded his rights, and passed his "self-denying ordinances." The more he was coerced into rebellion against political and ecclesiastical usurpation, the more weights and laws, denials and mortifications, he laid on himself. That liberty which he espoused was not the goddess of which Pagans had sung, with a loose dress, a flushed cheek, bacchanalian voice and dancing step; rather was it, in the imagery of the book he had studied so wisely and loved so well, a "chaste virgin," whose very smile was sobered with gravity, whose beauty was that of serious thought, and whose every grace of garment, word and manner, declared not only the spirit of life, but the *law* of religion at the heart. The Puritan was not the first man who had fought heroically and successfully for freedom; but he was the chief of those, who having obtained it, however intolerant he may have been, was not intoxicated and ruined by it. He did more than break the bands of the Philistines; he avoided the effeminacy of pleasure, and rigidly adhered to that self-control and abstemiousness in which was the secret of his strength.

Hence gravity with him was a study, and austerity a law. His dread of the play-house, the bear-garden, the dance and the revel, was his mode of expressing a great truth—that man, if he would preserve and enjoy liberty, must keep himself from those things, which tend to the destruction of liberty. Say he was mistaken as to modes and degrees; who shall question the truth of his judgment. Our liberties may be secured in charters and constitutions; but who or what shall guarantee us against the excesses of liberty but self-control in the individual man. The motive power, the mainspring, the regulator, balance and detent, must be combined in the same mechanism. Give to the comet its centrifugal force alone, and it will burn and destroy, strewing its lawless flight with blazing ruin; but join therewith the centripetal power, and it will be sure to turn at the right point, and shoot along its boundless path, itself a world of fire, yet passing between other worlds without collision or harm, awakening only admiration at the harmony and beauty of the mighty laws it obeys. Show us where and when there has been a political revolution in these modern times, favorable to liberty, which has been successful without this combination of life and law, impulse and restraint, which is secured by the Christian faith. No man understands the politics or literature of Continental

Europe, who remembers not that infidelity once arose in mighty wrath against despotism, enlisting herself in the cause of justice and humanity, asserting man's rights with an eloquent tongue and defending his weakness with a strong arm ; but when the old tyranny was dethroned, the successful combatant put the torch to the temples of religion and liberty, burned up its own house, and like the demoniac in the New Testament, went raging about among the tombs, cutting its own flesh, and refusing alike the restraints of chains and clothes. English Puritanism uprose against the same despotism ; but when its victories were won, it reared its churches and school-houses ; casting away the chain, it held itself in firm faith to truth and duty ; with the Bible in its hand and prayer in its heart, it went to work to build up free institutions on the foundations of religion. Therein lies the difference between the history of Puritan republicanism and all the mournful disappointments of the world.

One thing more remains to be said to complete our analysis. That book which was the Puritan's law, had taught him a great truth of history—the justice of the Almighty ; in the faith of the ultimate vindication of which he was armed for duty and endurance. There are many forms of heroism ; the highest often the least honored. The soldier

sits composedly on his charger in the face of danger, or rushes into "the imminent deadly breach," but it is with the flag of his country floating proudly over him, with the inspiration of martial music thrilling his every nerve; with the proud consciousness that a nation's eyes are fixed on his bearing, and should he fall, a nation's hand would hang wreaths of honor upon his urn. Our fathers espoused a good cause, and believing that a just God would, one day, vindicate it and them, they displayed the higher heroism of patient fortitude under suffering unobserved and unapplauded. Nor are we to suppose that to them was given any adequate conception of the magnificent results of their decision. God makes men great by withholding from them the knowledge of their greatness; hiding, as by a veil, pierced here and there for mere glimpses of the future, the splendid rewards of their actions, while strengthening them in a steadfast trust in present duty. Could they, whose serious features we recall to-night with filial reverence, have foreseen all the results which we now behold; the laws, the governments, the civilization which have followed their wisdom and valor; could they have known what changes in the world would occur in consequence of their great sacrifices, the enthusiasm of that vision would have relieved their life of

all its bitterness. But this was the heroism of their faith. Like their Lord and Master they made themselves of "no reputation." They went out of their own gates, turning their backs on the universities in which they had courted letters; on the pulpits in which they had preached righteousness; on the homes in which their affections had nestled; expatriated themselves in a strange land; braved the terrors of the Western Ocean, the cold of an unknown sky, the solitude of an unexplored wilderness, cut the last link which bound them to the civilized world, and were alone with the stars and with God. They staggered in the faintness of famine; with their own hands they dug the graves of wife and child; when half were buried, they knew not but that all would die before the return of the bird-singing, and the whole might die and not be missed by the world they had left; notwithstanding all which, such was their faith in the justice of God, that they who survived were sure, though the stars over their heads should fall, and the pillars of heaven should tremble, the truth and the right would triumph at the last; and having withstood in the evil day, they planted their feet firm as the rock on which they stood, and in the sublimest of all heroism, resolved, having done all things else, to *stand*. How has that justice been vindicated! Look

at the Puritans when depressed and despised under the Tudors and Stuarts—the persecuted band in the perils of their exodus and pilgrimage in the wilderness, and you might be ready to scoff at the folly of faith, and doubt the justice of Heaven. But time is long, and God is calm. The drama is not yet to be ended. That which once was a reproach is in honor now, as if the Almighty were emptying his affluence to vindicate his equity. It has its schools and its universities, its freedom and its laws, its spindles and its ploughs, its steam-presses, steamships, and speech-lightning; its commerce and its navies; a world-continent, with room enough and to spare; its declarations and constitutions; its millions of men, with free thought and free speech, and where is the power of the world to-day? Not in Venice, nor Florence, nor Lisbon, nor Madrid, but with those who speak the English language, freighted as it is with all the thoughts and voices of freedom.

Behold the auspices under which we are called to frame here a new form of human society.

First of all are the memories of ancestry, and the traditions of a long and eventful history. From the tone of contempt which has been affected by some, it might be inferred that we were a people without a rightful ancestry, unacknowledged before the world, “disgraceful foundlings, blushing at the

bend of illegitimacy in our coat armorial." Can any thing be more absurd? Can any inhabitant of the British isle boast of a prouder pedigree than we? The pride of those who still hold the ancestral cliffs, records our consanguinity in every blazon of their honors. The old unconquered British, the Saxon, Rollo's Scandinavian blood, are ours.* Our bones are full of the memories of British history. The blood which flows in our veins is the same which once warmed the brave hearts now sleeping in the moss-grown graves of England's martyrs. If there be any virtue in historic lineage, the literature and life of England are ours; nor can any man between Land's-End and the Orkneys, possess a greater claim to the fame of one jurist, poet, philosopher, or defender of liberty in British history, than we ourselves. Does the act of transplanting a tree dispossess it of any of the layers of fibre which form its substance?

While this identity of history and language exists, one thing is to be named wherein we stand alone. The circumstances under which England was separated from the Roman dynasty in the reign of Henry VIII., have entailed a connection between Church and State which has embarrassed her secular policy, and will embarrass it for a long time to come. By slow degrees we have reached, what as

* James II. Hillhouse.

yet no other nation has attained, the entire separation of Church and State, with no diminution, but an increase of the power of true religion. Not to speak of politicians who have had their own ends in view, men like Hooker, Stillingfleet, Burnett, Warburton; Paley, Gladstone, and Chalmers, have defended the alliance of ecclesiastical and secular politics, on different grounds ; but chiefly because of an assumed obligation of the Government to provide for the highest interest of the people. It was for our land to solve the problem at which piety and wisdom had toiled elsewhere in vain, how the power of religion could be increased over a people, at the same time that it borrowed no aid nor support from the Civil Government. The facts of the last census will be a cheering voice to those who are elsewhere striving for the same freedom. England tolerates all religions ; but *toleration* is an odious word. While one form of religion is permitted, another is established by law and statute. The blaze of those bonfires, and the ringing of those bells which announced the national joy on the repeal of the test and corporation acts, have scarcely yet died away. But this was but a partial advance towards that liberty which we had attained long before, and the presage of yet other advancements which we have left far behind us. Some of the best men in Eng-

land at this moment are debarred from their just rights at the universities and elsewhere, because conscience compels them to dissent from the established religion. We have no dissenters in America. We boast not of toleration, but of universal freedom and equality. The truth on this subject was not reached all at once. When that noble man, John Robinson—fit in every quality of learning, prudence and piety, to be the leader of the brave band whose deeds we celebrate—bade them, in the memorable address which he made to them on the eve of their embarkation, to *remember that more light was yet to break out of God's word, that the Reformation was not yet complete, that Luther and Calvin had stopped short of the whole*, it was not of any occult philosophy hidden beneath the surface of the new Testament of which he spake; undoubtedly it was of this very thing, the relations of religion to the civil power, that he intended to be understood. Some glimpses of the truth on this subject had he, and before God and his elect angels he charged them to keep their minds open to receive the whole when it should come. By little and little did it come, till the last disability was removed, and legislation utterly ceased from all attempts at installing one form of religion at the expense of another; and here is a vast continent, where religion now asks no

other support than the intelligent minds and warm hearts of her own disciples. This perfect liberty and equality for all forms of religious opinion sometimes brings with it, of course, sentiments which are noxious. But there can be no true freedom for what is good, except there be freedom likewise for what is bad; and where is the bad so likely to be neutralized and counteracted, as where running waters meet together and purify themselves by a gentle effervescence of contrary qualities, instead of stagnating in a feculent pool, where no breeze or current disturbs the slime which mantles its surface. The best mode of refuting error is to let it out into the air. Powder is harmless if thrown loosely on the surface; when rammed hard into a barrel it becomes powerful and perilous. The danger is not so much from what is allowed to come out freely from men's mouths, as from what is forced down into their silent hearts; and when any government has succeeded in putting pulpits and presses under the most complete censorship, then look out for explosions. The more still it is the nearer is the tempest. In the very last report he ever made to his monarch, Archbishop Laud declared that never was there a church or kingdom in such complete and quiet conformity; and this on the very eve of the storm which drove king and primate before it as the whirlwind drives the chaff. If any man