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SPEECHES

OF

MESSRS. WEBSTER, FRELINGHUYSEN

AND OTHERS,

AT THE

SUNDAY SCHOOL MEETING

Washington District

IN THE

CITY OF WASHINGTON.

FEBRUARY 16, 1831.

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Philadelphia:
AMERICAN SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION.
No. 146 CHESTNUT STREET.

—
1831.

NOTE.—Circumstances rendered it impossible to submit the following report of the proceedings at *Washington*, to the revision of our friends there, whose presence and eloquence contributed so much to the interest of that occasion, and to the advancement of our common cause.

Any inadvertencies, therefore, in the mode of expression, may be safely attributed to the copyist, or compositor, rather than to the speakers, or to the very accurate and obliging stenographer.

MAR 17 1923.

SUNDAY SCHOOL MEETING

AT THE

CITY OF WASHINGTON.

On the 16th of February, 1831, a large and highly respectable meeting of the citizens of WASHINGTON, of various denominations, was held in that city, to consider the resolution of the AMERICAN SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION, adopted at the Anniversary in May last, *to supply the Valley of the Mississippi with Sunday Schools in two years from that time.*

On motion of FRANCIS S. KEY, Esq. of Georgetown, (D. C.) FELIX GRUNDY, member of the Senate of the United States, from the State of TENNESSEE, was called to the chair, and MATTHEW ST. CLAIR CLARKE, Esq. Clerk of the House of Representatives of the United States, was appointed Secretary.

REV. MR. WALTON, of Alexandria, being requested by the Chairman, invoked God's blessing on the assembly, and on its important and interesting object.

The CHAIRMAN then stated the object of the meeting to be to aid in carrying into effect the following resolution, adopted at the late anniversary of the American Sunday School Union, which is as follows:

Resolved, "THAT THE AMERICAN SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION, IN BELIANCE UPON DIVINE AID, WILL, WITHIN TWO YEARS, ESTABLISH A SUNDAY SCHOOL IN EVERY DESTITUTE PLACE, WHERE IT IS PRACTICABLE. THROUGHOUT THE VALLEY OF THE MISSISSIPPI."

Permit me to express the joy I feel, (said the Honourable Chairman,) at the prospect presented by this resolution. Within the last half century, I have witnessed the vast changes which have been effected in the great Valley of the Mississippi. A then unbroken wilderness has been converted into a highly cultivated land; in place of Indian huts have arisen temples of justice, and of science, and temples to the true and living God.

The object of the present proposition is to extend moral and religious culture to the minds of the rising generation, throughout that vast region. It is to imprint on tender minds the great principles of knowledge, especially in morals and religion, at a period best fitted for impression, and calculated to

produce their proper effects on future life. I rejoice at the prospect; and in behalf of those intended to be benefited, I thank those whose benevolence has prompted them to this undertaking. If this good work shall succeed, I entertain a hope, that even we, who are now becoming old, may live to see the day, when Sunday Schools shall have imparted their benign influence to every family in our country, and that when we come to lie down in death, we shall close our eyes upon a land of Sunday Schools, of Bibles, and of Christians.”

The Rev. JOHN BRECKENRIDGE, of BALTIMORE, who appeared as a special Delegate from the Society, then addressed the meeting, on the nature, value, and ends of the institution—on its truly catholic character—on its national importance—its republican tendency, and its connexion with the best temporal and eternal good of our fellow-men: and then more particularly explained the objects of the Society in the limitation of time and place, in the resolution which had just been read, touching the “Great Valley.”

It was then stated to the meeting: that the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, (who is a contributor to the Society’s funds,) had engaged to attend the meeting, but was prevented by ill health. He however sent his best wishes for the prosperity of the cause.

The following letter from the Hon. WILLIAM WIRT, of MARYLAND, late Attorney-General of the United States, enclosing a liberal donation, was then read.

Washington, February 16, 1831.

Dear Sir,

I regret that it is not in my power to be with you this evening, that I might have united my humble efforts with those of our fellow-citizens who will be present, in advancing this great, and, as I believe it, Heaven-directed cause. That “Liberty and Learning lean on each other for support,” is a truth which has long been known to the wise, and of which we are all becoming convinced by fearful experience. It has been the ignorance of the people which has so long enabled tyrants to hold the world in chains; and they have never failed to burst them asunder whenever light has broken in strongly upon them. But if they are permitted to relapse into ignorance and its natural attendant, groveling vice, tyrants will rise again, under the name of patriots, and we shall see the world re-plunged into Gothic darkness and despotism. It is not in the nature of things, that a popular government can long subsist, except among an enlightened and virtuous people; nothing else can shield them against the designs of wicked and intriguing politi-

cians, who always come in the name and garb of patriotism, and, calling themselves friends of the people, cheat them to their ruin. Every effort, therefore, to enlighten the people, deserves the zealous support of every genuine friend of liberty; and I hail, with unaffected joy, the ardour with which this great and philanthropic plan has been every where received. Viewed in a temporal and political light, merely, it deserves the strongest support from all who wish the continuance of our free and happy institutions at home; and when we see the effect that our example is producing on the world, the motive for our exertions rises to a far loftier and nobler sentiment. It is the cause, not of the United States only, but of the whole earth. It is the cause of man throughout the world; and who is then so poor and sordid of spirit, as to think only of himself, when the great question is, whether *this earth* shall be inhabited by enlightened and virtuous freemen, erect and firm on the basis of independence, or by hordes of ignorant and groveling, prostrate slaves, hugging their chains and licking the dust from the feet of their oppressors!—But in connexion with these great temporal benefits, your society has a still higher and holier aim—spreading the light of the Gospel, and advancing the kingdom of the Redeemer. In relation to the world at large, I believe that public virtue has no solid basis, but in Religion. I mean by public virtue, that which impels a man, in all his public acts, to look solely to the good of his country, without any view of personal aggrandizement. I believe that the fathers of our revolution were, for the most part, such men. A great crisis called them out, and the common danger, as well as the common hope, supplied a great motive of action—which held them together, and directed their united efforts to the liberation of their country. But that crisis once passed, and the object achieved, the natural passions of man came into play, and then came personal ambition, with all its disastrous retinue of faction, intrigue, injustice, barbarity, slander, contention and strife, until our whole country presents a scene from which every honest and peaceable man recoils, without a ray of hope, except from the power of the Almighty. Private vice always keeps pace with public immorality. Principles and manners descend naturally from those who occupy distinguished places, to those who dwell in the humbler walks of life. This is an admitted truth in monarchies, and we have had experience enough to know, that it is extensively true in republics. One distinguished man is able to corrupt a whole neighbourhood by his example and machinations; and the sphere of his pernicious influence becomes enlarged, in proportion to the eminence to which he has risen. The only correction is that which you seek to apply, and the

plan is laid in the profoundest wisdom. Begin at the other end of society with the rising generation, in the humbler walks of life. Plant in them the seeds of that Gospel, to whose power the world of civilized man bears evidence, and you raise up a great antagonist principle which will overwhelm corruption, though seated on high. The people in truth hold the upper place among us. They are the spring-head, the natural fountain of all power. Purify the fountain and its stream will be pure. And what is there so efficacious, nay, what is there that has any power at all to produce such an effect, but the Gospel of the Redeemer carried home to the heart by his spirit? Mere human virtue is a cheat—a scintillation at best, which we see continually extinguished by temptation. It has no power to resist the call of selfish ambition, and the tissue of vile means and agents which such an ambition never fails to employ. It may make a show in public; but it has no power to resist the temptations which solicit the passions of man in private, and which have already poisoned all the springs of moral action among us.—Nothing less than the living conviction of an ever-present God, before whom we are acting and thinking and speaking, and that we have a future state of never-ending existence, dependent on his approbation, can impose a moment's restraint on the indulgence of human passion: and nothing can reconcile man to such a restraint, but the formation of a new spirit within him, which will convert that restraint into liberty and privilege, and make the service of God his highest happiness, here, as well as his only sure hope, hereafter. This is the spiritual work of the Gospel of the Redeemer, which has brought life and immortality to light, and furnished to man a motive and a spring of action, which enables him to tread the earth and all its vile pursuits beneath his feet, in the contemplation of that immortality to which he is hastening. With these sincere and deep convictions on this subject, it is delightful to anticipate the change that will, in all human probability, be wrought by this great and magnificent scheme of Sabbath Schools, in the rich and populous valley of the Mississippi. It is happy to see that there is nothing sectarian about it, but that the whole Christian church unites in its advancement. And it is not less happy to see that the narrow spirit of political party, or of temporal dominion to the church, has no concern in this case: that the great objects in view are of universal concern, the diffusion of light and knowledge, and the deep and wide dissemination of that pure religion, without which human virtue degenerates into an empty show, or a hypocritical instrument of ambition. That this truly noble and benevolent plan may be placed under wise and judicious direction, that it may

be crowned with success by Him who alone has power so to crown it, and that the kingdom of the Redeemer may come, is the fervent wish and prayer of your fellow-citizen,

WM. WIRT.

The Rev. Mr. BRECKENRIDGE.

The Hon. ELISHA WHITTLESEY, member of the House of Representatives of the United States from the state of OHIO, then moved the following resolution:

Mr. President,—I have risen to offer a resolution approving of the measures adopted by the American Sunday School Union, to establish Sunday Schools in the destitute places in the Valley of the Mississippi.

Resolved, That the resolution passed by the American Sunday School Union, in reliance upon Divine aid, to establish, within two years, a Sunday School in every destitute place, where it is practicable, throughout the Valley of the Mississippi, is highly commendable, and demands the joint effort of the religious, moral, and patriotic portion of our citizens to carry it into effect.*

Mr. W. sustained the resolution, substantially, as follows:

In support of the resolution, I shall not attempt to trace out who was the author of the benevolent institution, whose interests have assembled us on this occasion, nor dwell upon its rise and progress. The historian will search him out and inscribe his name on his page, and monuments of gratitude will be erected in the hearts of thousands and millions who will be rescued from a state of moral depravity by this mode of instruction. It is sufficient for me to know that the institution exists, and has a deep foundation in almost every quarter of the globe, and has extended its beneficent influence even to the isles of the sea. It is sufficient for me to see the effects of the system of Sunday Schools upon the rising generation: to find, by personal observation, that those who have been, heretofore, sunk in vice and wretchedness, have been raised to a moral elevation of character which fits them for active and useful life in this world, and which, as we ardently hope, will raise them to the possession of immortal glory when their pilgrimage below shall be over. It is sufficient for me to know, that its principles are the principles of morality and of religion; that they are the same which have been instilled by maternal affection into the tender bosom

* If there shall seem to be a repetition of sentiments expressed by the resolutions, it may be explained by the circumstance that they were drafted without concert between the gentlemen who offered them; each expressing the views and feelings of the mover.

of infancy, and which prompt the maternal prayer while the child is reposed on its pillow, and its safety and happiness confided to Him who sleepeth not. It is sufficient that this institution is cherished by the good and the wise, both in Europe and in America. We see blessings multiply wherever the Sunday School Union has hitherto prevailed, in every part of our country. As has been justly remarked, it is an institution intended to promote the interests of no one particular sect in preference to another. Men of all the various religious denominations are equally engaged in urging it forward. Nor has it its habitation in any one particular spot. It seeks to embrace within its benevolent exertions every portion of the human family; its benefits are showered upon all alike, whether poor or rich, whether bond or free.

I rejoice, Mr. President, that those who reside on this side of the mountains have deemed it proper to associate with a view to extend the advantages of Sunday Schools to the rising generation in the new settlements of the West. We who reside in that quarter of the Union, do not understand this movement as having its origin in any opinion among those who have planned this effort, that their brethren beyond the mountains are more subject to depravity, or more debased in morals, than their fellow-citizens in other parts of the Union: but whoever has been a witness to the many and various difficulties unavoidably connected with new settlements, must be aware of the fact, that the advantages of education are harder to obtain than in more thickly settled neighbourhoods. The settlers come from different and distant sections of our country, and being the pioneers of society, are not generally in very affluent circumstances. It is necessary that they should receive some aid in the education of their children. We have seen and felt these difficulties in the West, and although it is very desirable and necessary that some assistance be extended, yet I wish to state for the information of those not well acquainted with the particulars of our situation, that we are not entirely destitute of Sunday Schools, particularly in the older parts of the Western country. It will appear on an examination of the last Reports of these Societies, that there are in the Connecticut Western Reserve about 7,000 Sunday scholars, and in all Ohio about 27,000. The population of the Connecticut Western Reserve is about 100,000, and of the entire State about 937,000. I am satisfied of the fact, that the whole number of youth taught in these schools has not been returned to the general Society. Many of the Sunday Schools have not formed an association with the Sunday School Union. If the calculation as to the relative number in the Northern part of that State be correct, then the proportion is equal to that existing in

any other state of the Union, Connecticut and Massachusetts only excepted. There are more or less Sunday Schools in all the towns and villages of Ohio. I have been personally much gratified here, as there, to see the numerous companies of scholars assemble and recite; and I should think that no man who sees these interesting youth brought together from all ranks and conditions of society, without regard to wealth, and who feels a patriot concern in the future prospects and standing of the country, but must rejoice that the principles of religion and morality are inculcated on the minds of the future citizens of the Union. This great and important enterprise is confined to no section of our country. You have undertaken a great work—its field of enterprise extends from the great lakes of the North to the mouth of the father of rivers at the South, and from mountains to mountains. Such is the vast extent of the region to be enlightened, that some of the mightiest and most ancient kingdoms of Europe might be set down in the prairies and wildernesses of the trans-Alleghany world, and be felt as no incommodation. This design is calculated to give strength to our political union—it opens a fair field of hope for our posterity; and I am confident, that in expressing my own feelings, I express, at the same time, the feelings of the constituents whom I represent, when I assure you of my best wishes for the prosperity and success of this great and benevolent design.

I submit, for the consideration of the meeting, the resolution, which I send to the Chair.

The resolution was seconded by Hon. JOSEPH H. CRANE, member of the House of Representatives of the United States from the State of Ohio, and passed.

Mr. Crane said, he would avail himself of the occasion merely to state his entire conviction, that the resolution now offered, truly and justly expressed the sentiments and feelings of the people of that extensive region, which was to be benefited by the good works of the Sunday School Union Society; and not of them only, but he trusted, the sentiments and feelings of the wise, the good, and the patriotic of every country where civilization and Christianity prevailed.

Hon. NICHOLAS D. COLEMAN, member of the House of Representatives of the United States from the state of KENTUCKY, then introduced the following resolutions:

“RESOLVED, That this meeting does highly approve of all systems of education, designed for the diffusion of useful instruction, and especially such as contemplate the moral cultivation of man.”

“RESOLVED, That viewing the plan of the American Sunday School Union for the diffusion of pious instruction throughout the United States, and especially in the Valley of the Mississippi, as such, this meeting approves the benevolent designs of its patrons and friends.”

MR. COLEMAN expressed his views as follows:

MR. CHAIRMAN,—In offering for the consideration of this meeting, the resolutions which I send to the chair, and in rising to make a few observations, I am prompted by a high sense of duty. The resolution which you read, adopted by the American Sunday School Union, proposes to establish a school in every destitute village in the Valley of the Mississippi, for the purpose of diffusing the benefits of religious instruction. I am not one of those who take offence at the exertions of our friends, in other parts of the Union, for the welfare of the people of the West; nor can I, for a moment, perceive the reflection either upon our means of education, or capacity for improvement, contained in the resolution of the Sunday School Society. Nor do I think, sir, that the subject should be confined exclusively to the ministers of the gospel, or to members of the church. It is the subject of moral and religious instruction, upon a plan which is at once cheap and efficient, and *all* may advocate it on principles of policy, morality or piety, as either may dictate.

I cannot look upon any system, which has for its object the culture of the moral man, without a deep sense of interest, for it is this instruction which ameliorates our condition in this life and opens the way to a station of security hereafter. If I were to yield to the influence of my own selfish feelings on this occasion, the magnitude of the subject, and the cultivation of the audience, would force me to seek respectability in silence. But under the peculiar anxiety which I feel for the success of this undertaking, especially under the management of our much esteemed friend, at whose instance we are convened, and more especially, if possible, as it proposes to extend the benefits of religious instruction to the uninformed of my own kind neighbours, it would be criminal to allow the opportunity to escape without one humble effort to advance the objects. It is known to you, Mr. Chairman, that I reside in the Valley of the Mississippi, the theatre for the operation of this benevolent system. Indulge me in a few remarks upon the condition of this favourite land of my birth; it is the land of your birth, or, if not, of your early adoption. Within your recollection, and almost within mine, it was the home and hunting ground of various tribes of savages. It now presents a flourishing and happy population, engaged in the pursuits of civilized life. Where thirty

years ago, were deep forests, and Indian wigwams, now are to be seen extensive farms, smiling villages, and bustling cities. The hardy, bold and energetic bands of pioneers in the West, have given a great and powerful accession to this republic, both in physical strength and mental vigour. The character of the population is too well known to need much comment; but their situation, particularly in relation to the means of instruction, is perhaps not known to all. It cannot, or should not be expected, that a population which has grown up in an unprecedented manner, within a very few years, could have all the advantages of other and older parts of the country, in the means of cultivating the mind. It too often happens with new settlers, that the necessity for physical exertions, deprives them of the leisure and other opportunities for instruction. Moreover the emigrants to the West, were from various quarters of the confederacy, bringing various manners and customs with them, their attachment to which have operated to prevent that concert in action, requisite to the adoption of any general system of education for the poorer classes of our fellow citizens. We have grown too rapidly in numbers to be supplied with schools in the ordinary manner. Sir, the salubrity of our climate, the cheapness of our lands, together with their fertility, have drawn the poor to the West. Those who had large families, and are unable to maintain them conveniently in other states, have sought the West. They come, but they bring not the means, either in books or money, for instruction. They live in comfort, for the necessaries of life are abundant; but they are still poor, and their minds remain uncultivated. I do not, in saying this, design to extend it too far. It is only a portion of the population so situated. The mass of intellect in the Valley of the Mississippi, is equal to that of any other equal portion of the globe. Nor is the effort which we are now making, any reflection either upon the intelligence or the information of the people of the West. We are now proposing to extend means of instruction there, which have been in operation for years elsewhere. We labour under another disadvantage. In older countries, experience has taught the necessity of establishing institutions for the protection and instruction of orphans. Our country, I mean the Valley, is not yet favoured with many of those establishments. Orphans, then, will find a blessing in this Sunday School project.

The subject of popular education has been, and is yet, interesting to us in the West. Not long since a plan was proposed to be established by the Legislature of Kentucky, for this purpose. All the talent and eloquence of the country were engaged in it. I had strong hopes of its success. For the present it

sleeps. The proposition proceeded on the ground, that popular education was needed. If we, ourselves, grant so much, why suffer our pride to revolt at the Sunday School system? True, it will not be so general, and so diffused a plan; but it will be very general, very cheap, and, in my humble opinion, very efficient.

What an interesting fact has been communicated to us! Thirty-seven and a half cents will enable the society to teach a pupil to read, and discharge him from school at 13 or 14 years of age, with a Testament in his hand. The bare communication of the fact is a rich commentary on the system. Who could withhold a few dollars, when he knows that each dollar will extend the great privilege of reading to three different children of poverty? This system is striking in another view; it does not withdraw the services of the child from the family during the week. With many families this would be a great inconvenience. And the child would, after the engagements of labour, devote itself more exclusively to the business of the school, and consequently make a progress in learning, beyond any that can be found at the ordinary school.

Mr. Chairman, I see many advantages in the system, indeed many points of superiority, over almost any other, for instruction, beside the pious tendency. But I have detained you already too long to suggest them. I shall conclude by endeavouring to answer an objection which I have heard urged. It is said that this system takes the instruction of the child from the parent, gives it to a church, and thereby increases the power of the church, by impressing upon the mind in infancy or childhood, doctrines and principles which might be rejected in the maturity of age: and that this is done with a view to a political effect, which is to eventuate in an established religion. This objection will not bear examination. It does not take the religious education of the child from the parent, because there is no compulsion to send children to the Sunday School. If children are sent, it is voluntarily done, and implies an approbation of the doctrines taught, for it cannot be presumed that the parent is inattentive to the progress of his child. But it is said that the religious parent will feel under obligations to send his children to the school. Very true; and will he not feel the very same obligation to teach the child the same doctrine, whether he sends or not? Precisely. This, if an objection, is one that we cannot avoid. Every parent who believes in the truth of any particular tenets, will naturally endeavour to teach them to all whose happiness he, in any wise, can control. But, sir, this is a common thing with all churches. Each is pursuing the same plan of instruction, and with what view? What end can any

church have in view, in cultivating the mind, but the happiness of that mind? Can it be supposed that those who voluntarily relinquish all that the careless call delightful here, can contemplate the accomplishment of a worldly object? If that were the object, must they not see that it is impossible on their plan? Is it not known that ignorance is the very fetter of the mind; that which enables designing intelligence to create prejudice, fix partiality, and confirm injustice; and thus to control with imperious sway? And yet it is gravely contended that the removal of ignorance, the process of liberalising and enlightening the intellect of man, is to be made use of to render his subserviency more complete. That is to say: the light that is afforded darkens his path, the strength given diminishes his power of resistance, and the freedom secured throws him dependent upon the will of others.

No sir, if any church designed to raise up a power, sufficient to operate upon, and affect the political affairs of our country, they would labour to continue the minds of their people in ignorance, and consequently weakness. The efforts which are making to improve the mind, should put to shame the charge of design to effect political results.

Sir, I am at heart a friend to the improvement of the mind, in any way that it can be effected. I would not blend church and state. I would not bring the religious and political feelings of the country, either into union, or collision. Nor would I have either to exercise the least control over the other. Our constitution guarantees to all, the right to worship as conscience may dictate. It is an inestimable privilege. Mr. Chairman, it is the interest of the church, and the government, to promote the instruction of the human mind. Science and literature are the sisters of liberty. They mutually advance each other. 'Tis knowledge that destroys barbarism, as light dispels darkness. Preserve your intelligence, and you preserve your political independence. Relapse into ignorance, and our free and happy institutions must moulder and decay.

In seconding the resolutions offered by Mr. Coleman, Hon. CHARLES E. HAYNES, member of the House of Representatives of the United States, from the State of GEORGIA, said—

In rising, Mr. Chairman, to second the resolutions just offered, I do so with unfeigned diffidence. Nor should I address you on the present occasion, but as a member of a Christian community which feels as deep interest in the advancement of human virtue and knowledge as any other. I would not forbear

this public expression of my belief in the truth of Christian revelation, and its influence over the happiness and prosperity of our country. If it be true, Sir, that virtue and intelligence are the especial safeguards of republican government, and if it be true that first impressions are last impressions, (and who can doubt it?) how great then the importance of imbuing the minds of our children with the knowledge of the true God, in the revelation of his Son. But, Sir, aside from duty to our own posterity, there is another consideration of peculiar and universal obligation. On this country more than on any other, in the providence of God, has been cast the solemn charge of preserving and perpetuating Christian knowledge, and the principles of free government. If our country in its march to liberty and independence, was not guided by the pillar of cloud and of fire, as the chosen people of old, yet, in looking through the events of the Revolutionary contest, its path seems to have been alternately shadowed by the one and enlightened by the other. But I do not intend to go into a general inquiry into the merits of the undertaking, the promotion of which has called us together on this interesting occasion. It is only my purpose to express for its objects, my entire approbation, and to ask that the resolution may be adopted.

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Hon. THEODORE FRELINGHUYSEN, member of the Senate of the United States, from the State of NEW JERSEY, then offered the following resolution:

“RESOLVED, That the objects contemplated by the late resolution of the American Sunday School Union, adopted in May last, commend themselves to the patronage and best wishes of every American statesman, patriot and Christian.”

Mr. F. in support of it, addressed the meeting as follows:

MR. CHAIRMAN,

I always rejoice in the occasion that enables me to raise my voice in behalf of the Sunday School. I regard it, Sir, as the most benignant enterprise of modern benevolence. It is the fountain spring of good. In all its aspects, it is full of promise. That season of existence which has been most neglected, in which the seeds of a future harvest are sown, and in which life and destiny are controlled, this eventful era is introduced to the direct influence of the purest moral and religious instruction. Heathen Rome in the proudest day of her glory never remitted her concern for the education of her youth. She felt that in her schools was to be achieved all that hope could expect or desire. And with a morality defective in its principles, by the

aid of this great lever, she rose to the summit of earthly fame. We enjoy the means of far more elevating instruction. We can draw motives from the pure treasury of the word of God in all its exalted hopes, momentous sanctions and eternal retributions. And we are encouraged to the faithful cultivation of these means, by the promise of HIM who gave them: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This is as true in philosophy as it is in scripture. The proof of it is broadly spread out over the whole history of man. Although his native tendencies are depraved and degenerate, this *training*, Sir, (a most emphatic word to denote the nature of the process,) this training is constantly counteracting these tendencies. It persuades from degrading pursuits to exalted aspirations. When the heart would seek some grovelling, earthborn good, that perishes as we grasp it,—this points the desires to a portion in the heavens, pure and satisfying and perpetual. And with the divine blessing, the self-love of the heart is enlisted on the side of virtue; the mind perceives its profit as well as pleasure in the ways of wisdom, and habit adds the confirmation of a second nature to the dictates of truth and duty.

Wherefore then does the man illustrate the principles of virtue? Sir, he has been *trained up in the way he should go*. The lessons read to him in childhood, were not only incentives to virtue, but his surest defences against vice. They not only allured him to the right way, but effectually admonished him to shun the wrong way. I am fully aware that all this process would be fruitless without the blessing of God; that He is sovereign when he gives and when he withholds. But I also know, Sir, that it is His sovereign good pleasure to bless the faithful labours of His people; that his faithfulness is pledged in the promise, "Them that honour me, I will honour, and those that seek me early shall find me."

Mr. Chairman, if further proof were needed, we might find it in the history of all the profane. Take any convict of your penitentiary, and his brief and sad biography would form an appropriate history of the great majority of his fellows in crime. Ask him, Sir, what it was that brought him to his wretched dwelling place, and he must reply: "I was trained up for it. I early broke away from the restraints of conscience. I had no kind friend to instruct me, or I despised his counsels.

' No mother's tender care
Shielded my infant innocence with prayer.'

From a youth I have defied my Maker. I thought it manly to blaspheme his sacred name. I made a mock at sin, entered the

broad way of transgression, and disregarded the beacon lights that warned me of my danger. Such has been my training, and, here I reap its bitter fruits; I ought not to be disappointed. For from such a childhood and youth who could expect other than such a doom?" Let us then, Sir, assiduously cultivate these moral influences. Who that has the heart of a man can refuse them his best wishes? Sir, is it not of the last importance to have the sources of national prosperity pure, and the aims and pursuits of our people elevated? and where but in the Bible shall we find the record of sound principles? Permit me to say that the occasion was never more urgent for the friends of truth to send forth the healthful influence of the gospel. Sir, in this day of benevolent action, the enemies of God and man are not idle. The disciples of infidelity are striving with sleepless effort to break down the defences of religion and virtue. She has her ministers and her altars. Her votaries are assailing the citadel of truth with every weapon that promises the least infliction. They would blot out the Bible, and roll the wave of desolation over all that is dear to us as men and Christians. Then I would say to parents, as you love your children, and to statesmen, as you love your country, cherish this blessed enterprise. Who would not rejoice to behold the pure spirit of religion pervading the whole mass of our population? These sacred rules of life inculcated and circulated in every valley, reaching to every mountain top, and tracking the course of every mighty river of the west? Who does not desire that the hopes of immortality might animate every heart and fill every bosom, through the whole breadth of the land?

Nothing besides can give stability to our institutions. Let us ponder with deep reflection, and cease not to repeat and reiterate the interesting truth, that our boasted liberties will not long survive the wreck of our public morals. The destruction of the one will witness the passing away of the other. They will go down in melancholy companionship to the same grave. So the father of his country deemed, and with a paternal solicitude counselled us. Mr. Chairman, I heard with heartfelt approbation the sentiment eloquently advanced and sustained by our Rev. friend, that the genius of our constitution is propitious to the interests of the Sunday School. It is true, Sir. The pure spirit of republican liberty invokes its aid, and cherishes its fellowship; and he is unfaithful to his country, who would seek to impair its influence or check its progress.

The CHAIRMAN inquired if the resolution was seconded.
The Hon. CHARLES A. WICKLIFFE, member of the

House of Representatives of the United States from the State of KENTUCKY, rose and said:—

MR. CHAIRMAN,

I not only second the resolution which has been submitted by the gentleman over the way, but I subscribe my entire approbation to the sentiments so eloquently and feelingly expressed by him, in recommending it to our favourable consideration.

My indisposition this evening will prevent me from interrupting, by many remarks of my own, the pleasure which all must feel from the animated developement of those principles which govern and regulate the Sunday School Union; an institution which has its origin in Christian philanthropy, and whose success mainly depends upon the voluntary support of a liberal community. I must, however, trespass upon the good feelings and time of this assembly for a single moment, while I give my public testimony in favour of an institution which has accomplished so much, and promises to accomplish more for the rising generation. An institution whose sole object is public and private good, whose every tendency is the advancement of the temporal and eternal welfare of the human race.

Sir, it cannot be that this institution is unfriendly to the free institutions of our country; its tendencies cannot be, certain I am the objects of its friends are not, to unite church and state. Can such an inference be drawn from the fact that pious and good men of all religious denominations are engaged in extending the blessings of intelligence to the unlettered youth throughout this wide spread republic? Do those who wish to unite church and state seek to disseminate light, knowledge and truth, among those whom they wish to enslave? Where is the literary institution, College or University, which does not claim for its founders, promoters or professors, those who profess the truth of Revelation? The objection that ministers of the Gospel and professors of Christianity are engaged in promoting this system of Sunday School education, consequently it must have for its object a union between the government and church, would lie with equal force against every literary institution or college in the country, where pious men have any agency in their government. I do not believe that there lives in the United States one human being who is silly or wicked enough to desire a union between church and state.

Mr. Chairman, it has been your lot as well as mine to have been cast in early life in a country and at a time, when the institution of Sunday Schools was unknown.

I can well remember, Sir, when to the children of the villages in the west, that day, from which this institution takes its name, was the day of mischief and vice. It is now otherwise in those

places in our native state where Sunday Schools have become objects of interest and advantage to all. It is gratifying to witness the interesting scenes at one of those schools. Children, instead of a desire to engage in mischievous idleness, are ambitious to appear first and best at the place where practical, moral, and religious truths are instilled into their youthful minds, by the gratuitous agency of some moral or pious instructor.

Sir, it is no objection with me to this institution, that it proposes to make the rising generation acquainted with the principles of the Christian religion, and the truths of the Bible. No community thus instructed can be otherwise than free and happy. A people ignorant of their blessings cannot long enjoy civil liberty; they must sooner or later become the slaves of power, and victims of oppression. I hope the resolution will be unanimously adopted.

—
FRANCIS S. KEY, Esq. of GEORGETOWN, (D. C.) proposed the following resolution:—

“RESOLVED, That the Directors of the American Sunday Union have justly estimated the piety and patriotism of their countrymen, in relying upon them for the accomplishment of the great object they have resolved to execute—and that Committees be appointed to solicit donations throughout the District in their behalf.”

And then said:—

Mr. CHAIRMAN,

The truth of the proposition contained in the resolution I have submitted is already, I trust, sufficiently apparent. If any friend of the institution, whose message has been so faithfully and feelingly delivered to us, has come to this meeting with fear and trembling—apprehending that, in the noble effort it is making, it has stepped too far in advance of public opinion to be followed and sustained; may we not hope that he has already seen and heard enough to rejoice him with the conviction that his fears were groundless.—And when the proceedings of the night shall go forth, and the high and cherished names that shall be here added to the patrons and advocates of this great enterprise shall be heard throughout our land, who can doubt but that the benevolent projectors of this work will see more to incline them to consider what shall be their next achievement, than to falter in this.

If the mere contemplation of success shall encourage to new efforts, what may we not expect, what may we not attempt when its fruits shall appear? What achievement will be too vast for patriots and Christians to accomplish in a land like this?

Mr. Chairman, we have heard what is now intended by the institution, at whose invitation we are assembled.—The nature and extent of the blessings they purpose to send among the most destitute and increasing population of our country, have been powerfully set before us, and we are invited to co-operate in this work.

We have a right to inquire what it is worth, and what it will cost.

What is it worth?

To confine myself within proper limits I must give but a slight sketch of its advantages.—It proposes to supply the means of education, of a most useful and important character, to all the children of a great and growing country. It provides teachers and books—teachers, whose only motive and object is to do good—and books that can have no other tendency. They are made familiar with the Bible—a book that even infidels have admired, and all admit is the greatest moral work in the world. They have other books collected in little libraries, in the schools, for their use, written by judicious and pious men, suited to their tastes and ages, and calculated to improve their hearts and understandings.

The whole population of the country included in the resolution of the Union, exceeds four millions—of these it is estimated that one million are children of a proper age for instruction, and one third of these, it is supposed, are destitute of any means of education. Upwards of three hundred thousand children therefore are to be the immediate recipients of these benefits. Nor is this all—when taught, they will become teachers. A society thus favoured can never be so insensible to their advantages as to lose them, and the blessings of instruction will thus be handed down from generation to generation. That the objects of this bounty will be greatly benefited—that they will generally be made wiser, better and happier—and that their country will find them useful, and many of them most valuable as citizens, cannot be doubted.

In a political point of view, then, alone, this scheme of benevolence is evidently of great worth.

But it is as the mere dust of the balance compared with the considerations that may most justly be brought into the account. These children are to live in this world, and should be fitted for its duties, its trials and its blessings.—But they are also to live in another world—and to live there forever.

If they are immortal creatures; if the mysteries that surround them have been disclosed by a revelation from on high; if there be a day of retribution, mansions of unfading glory for the faithful, and an eternal prison for the rebellious; if this life be

but a preparation for another, and the volume of inspiration alone teaches what we must do to be saved, what are all the lights of science and philosophy, but as dim tapers in the effulgence of the light of the Gospel? To tell the value of an education that sheds this light upon the understanding and the heart, that shows man his lost condition, and points to his Deliverer, that fits him for all his trials here and for his triumph hereafter, must transcend all human powers of calculation—Never will it be told till the glad voices of millions, enlightened by these humble means, shall proclaim it in heaven.

What then can the Christian patriot do or desire for his country, that can be compared with the diffusion of these means of blessedness?—Would he surround her with fleets and armies, with all that wealth and power can command, and place her on the pinnacle of earthly grandeur? Alas! where is the land which shows no memorials of departed greatness, whose majestic ruins do not teach us the vanity of trusting to an arm of flesh?

But let a Christian spirit be mingled into the mass of our population, till it pervades every neighbourhood, and where is the danger from within, or from without that can harm us? Our schools will be surer citadels of safety than art can erect, and when our people thus walk with God, “God himself will be with them, and he will be their God, and they shall be his people.”

That a day like this is coming, when nations shall thus remember and turn to God, has been long foretold; and is there no cheering indications among the signs of the times in which we live, that our vast and beautiful land, to which the oppressed of every clime is fleeing, whose example and influence have been already seen in awakening the people of the earth to a sense of their duties and their rights—is there no indication that she is to lead on the array of nations in their return to God?

Sir, who can see that in many of the States it has been resolved and executed, that every house should have a Bible, and that it is now determined that every neighbourhood shall have its Sunday School, without indulging such an anticipation?

The age in which we live is agitated by the new and mighty powers that have been brought to bear upon the affairs of men.—Among all the improvements in art and science which we are daily witnessing, there is none to be compared with the improvements in education. And this operates, let it be observed, directly upon the hearts and minds of men; upon a material of more potent agency than all the elements of nature. That great effects will result from the working of these mighty causes cannot be doubted. Our duty is, in dependence upon him whose

wise providence has ordered them, to employ them, with all our power, for his glory and the good of our fellow men, and look to him for the result.

That our country will thus be blessed under the protection of the Most High, and made still more than she has been, a light to the nations of the earth, we may confidently trust.

Then shall

“ All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
Flock to that light: the glory of all lands
Flow into her: boundless shall be her joy
And endless her increase.”——

—— Her report shall travel forth
Into all lands. From every clime they come
To see her beauty and to share her joy.

Then shall the assemblies of her people be

—— such as earth
Saw never, such as heaven stoops down to see.

Such, Sir, is a faint outline of the worth of that object which we are invited to promote.

And now, Sir, shall I take a few moments to inquire what it is to cost?

It is estimated that the work proposed in the resolution submitted to us, will cost \$100,000.

This, Sir, no doubt, sounds to many of us as a large sum of money.—It would accomplish many things of importance.—It would build a frigate—would make 20 or 30 miles of road or canal. Yet would any man’s mind bear the comparison of these objects with the lowest conception that could be formed of the one proposed? The question is, is it a large sum for the object proposed to be accomplished?

Again, sums are large or small according to the means of those who are to pay them.

There are many men in our country who could each pay this sum, large as it seems, and still be richer than any man ought to be. There are an hundred men who could pay it without feeling it. Certainly a thousand men who could pay it, almost without knowing it.

Sir, I believe, if necessary, no inconsiderable part of it could be paid by those now within these walls, within the two years, by fairly apportioning it among us according to our means, without impoverishing any man.—But we are not limited to these walls. Could it not be raised in the City of Washington? They have there undertaken to raise ten times that sum for a canal—and in the whole District they have engaged for the same purpose for twenty times that sum.

But we are not limited to the City or the District—we have

a flourishing people, twelve millions in number, to apply to.— To the portion of those, who are willing and able to contribute, the sum is a trifle.

If every man and every woman would give the tenth of what they annually expend, for no object necessary to their real comfort, it would produce far beyond the amount required. Efforts like these, besides their other good effects, serve to teach us the use of money. We shall learn to value it more, and apply it more properly, when we perceive what can be done with it. Thirty-seven cents is a small sum. There are few among us who do not very often spend far more than that amount without consideration, and most unnecessarily. An idle indulgence, a useless book, a ride when we might walk, a pin, a feather, or a flower, may cost many times that amount.

Now, Sir, the American Union has shown us the value of 37 cents. We are informed, that such is its economy and management, that it gives a child a testament, and teaches him to read it, for 37 cents. Let every one then hereafter think, when about to throw away this sum as a trifle, to how important a purpose he may apply it; how rich a gratification it may purchase.

Sir, Christians particularly must learn this lesson. They must remember their stewardship.—They must not fear to appear, what they ought to be, “a peculiar people.”—They have the example of their Lord and Master to animate them, and “the love of Christ” to constrain them to be “zealous of good works.”—Their efforts alone may accomplish far more than the object of the present resolution, and their prayers may bring down such a blessing from on high, that every child in every valley and upon every hill of our happy land, may have the gospel in his hand and its power in his heart.

This resolution was seconded by the Hon. DANIEL WEBSTER, member of the Senate of the U. States from the state of Massachusetts, who expressed in a few words his approbation of the objects of the meeting.

Notwithstanding the very general provision made for education, in the part of the country to which he belonged, yet Sunday Schools were there extensively established, and their usefulness universally acknowledged.

Most great conceptions were simple. The present age had struck out two or three ideas, on the important subject of education, and the diffusion of religious knowledge, partaking, in a very high degree, of this character. They were simple, but their application was extensive, direct, and efficacious. Of these, the leading one, perhaps, was the distribution of the Holy

Scriptures, without note or comment; an idea, not only full of piety, and duty, and of candour also, but strictly just and philosophical; since the knowledge of the general truth must, of necessity, be communicated, before there can exist a capacity to examine and decide on those different views and inferences, embraced by Christians of various denominations and various opinions.

The object of Sunday Schools, and of the particular resolution now before the meeting, was, as he understood it, of similar large and liberal character. It was to diffuse the elements of knowledge, and to teach the great truths of Revelation. It was to improve, to the highest of all purposes, the leisure of the Sabbath; to render its rest sacred, by thoughts turned towards the Deity, and aspiring to a knowledge of his word and will.

There were other plans of benevolence, about which men might differ. But it seemed to him, there could be no danger of error here. If we were sure of any thing, we were sure of this, that the knowledge of their Creator, their duty and their destiny, is good to men; and that, whatever, therefore, draws the attention of the young to the consideration of these objects, and enables them to feel their importance, must be advantageous to human happiness, in the highest degree, and in all worlds. In the great wants of their moral nature, all men are alike. All were born in want of culture, in want of knowledge, in want of something to explain to them, not only what they may see around them, but their own nature, condition and destiny. In civilized times, and in a Christian land, the means of this knowledge were to be supplied to the young, by parental care, by public provision, or by Christian benevolence. They were now assembled in pursuance of a call made by this last means of operation. It was to afford to some what all needed. It was to administer to the indispensable moral necessities of mankind. It was to supply, or aid in supplying, the elements of knowledge, religious, moral and literary, to the children throughout a most interesting and important portion of the country. He was most happy to concur in this object, and to be present at this meeting, to give it his aid and encouragement.

On motion of Rev. J. N. DANFORTH, seconded by WALTER LOWRIE, Esq. clerk of the Senate of the United States, both of the city of Washington:

“RESOLVED, That, in the opinion of this meeting, it is the solemn duty, as well as the inestimable privilege of American Christians, to offer their fervent prayers to Almighty God for his blessing on the efforts of the American Sunday School Union to supply the Valley of the Mississippi with Sunday School instruction.”

The exercises of the evening concluded with prayer, offered by the Rev. Mr. Post, of Washington City.

Thus closed one of the most interesting and important meetings, in our view, which has ever been held in this country.

The decided and unqualified approbation, thus publicly given to the *Sunday School* cause, by men holding the highest places in honour, usefulness, and public esteem, is exceedingly encouraging to the advocates and supporters of the system in humbler spheres. It gives a check to the licentious tongues and pens which have assailed and abused the cause, and will, we doubt not, excite new inquiry on the part of those who have been mis-informed on the subject, or who, from any circumstances, have fallen into error.

A highly distinguished member of Congress, who was present at the meeting, says, "It was the most profitable evening I ever spent in Washington." And another worthy gentleman says, "I congratulate you on the meeting—the names are of themselves a host—**THE SEAL IS SET.**"

May that gracious God, whose blessing has so signally rested on the institution from its beginning hitherto, continue to smile upon it, and save it from every measure which shall disappoint its friends, or bring reproach upon the cause they have so liberally sustained, and so eloquently advocated.