

ORATION,

BY E. L. MAGOON,

DELIVERED JULY 4TH, 1848,

AT THE

Laying of the Corner Stone

OF THE

Ohio Mechanics' Institute,

CINCINNATI.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The following Oration was premeditated and delivered, much in its present form, on the occasion for which it was desired. Its preparation for the press, however, has been a subsequent task, in the performance of which, the author has written somewhat more fully than he spoke. The Association, who kindly requested a copy to print, will please excuse the delay which, by the law of necessity, has been imposed. The author has his proportion of jobs on hand, which he would hope to dispatch as rapidly as is compatible with mediocre talents and the inspiration of dog-days.

Cincinnati, July 29th, 1848.

E. L. M.

ORATION.

IN our remarks on the present occasion, we shall consider three general questions.

I. What object has called together this great assemblage of enterprising citizens? It is to lay the corner stone of the Ohio Mechanics' Institute. We design to erect and occupy on this beautiful site, an Institution which shall successfully compete with such establishments as the Middlesex Mechanics' Association in Lowell, and the Mechanics' Association at Liverpool. The following facts may be appropriately stated:

Near the centre of Lowell stands the spacious brick and stone "Mechanics' Hall." "Besides stores in the basement and lower stories, it contains in the upper, a large hall, used principally for a lecture room; another large one, used as a reading room, being richly supplied with newspapers, pamphlets and reviews from all parts of the United States, and some from the Canadas and Great Britain; and a room containing a laboratory, for the purpose of making chemical experiments, and a Government room; also, a room for the Mechanics' library, consisting of more than 2,000 volumes, and another appropriated to the use of the 'Middlesex Society of Natural History,' whose cabinet already consists of more than 4,000 specimens, principally mineralogical. The value of this property is about \$25,000."

The historian of Lowell in addition to the above facts adds, "Our mechanics are much more intelligent and moral than the generality of traders and salesmen in our commercial cities. They are, as a general rule, a reading, thinking, industrious, saving, honest, independent class of men. They are better off, in money matters, than a great majority of the lawyers and traders throughout the Union." Since the above statements were first made, the Institution in question has greatly improved.

The Liverpool Mechanics' Institution was, according to Lord Brougham, copied from the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. It has become by far the most splendid and extensive institution of the kind in England. "The building of the Institution cost not less than £15,000; it contains upwards of 3,300 members, 850 pupils in three day schools, 600 pupils in fifteen or sixteen evening classes. It has fifty teachers regularly employed, whose salaries amount to £5,000 per annum, a library of 7,000 volumes, with 1,300 readers, and a daily distribution of 200 volumes, and public lectures twice a week, attended by audiences varying from 700 to 1,300. There are now in England about 300 Mechanics' Institutions, which have been established within twenty years.

II. What do we design to accomplish by the Institute, the foundation of which we have just laid? Our aim is to promote the efficiency and happiness of Mechanics. We hold to the orthodoxy of the well known doctrine of Bacon, inscribed as our motto,—"**KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.**" Knowledge of our physical being is power: knowledge of our mental capacities is power: knowledge of nature, of science, of the trades we practise, the tools we handle, the substance on which we toil, is power, proportioned to the comprehensiveness of our insight and the skill with which we subordinate fixed laws to practical use.

Some of us have been laboriously but delightfully employed for two weeks past in attending the anniversaries of

the common schools, the high schools, the colleges and institutions devoted to professional education in our city. And what metropolis in our land can show their superior in number, thoroughness and economy, open to all classes, and adapted to every grade of mind. Only one educational establishment is wanting to render our system complete,—one of the highest order, expressly adapted to promote practical science, mechanical efficiency, and social happiness,—this we have already commenced to build.

Education is the whetstone that gives an edge and efficiency to every implement in the mechanic's mental tool-chest. He may have them rough-ground on the harsh grindstone of experience, where he has at once to turn and hold on, with the gloomy prospect of ending with a wiry edge or no edge at all. The truth is, the grindstone and the oil-stone must go together. A man to be successful in any department of active life, must have learned in the rugged school of experience, as well as in the quiet bowers of the polished graces. It is by no means a misfortune to suffer the apparent adversities of early penury and severe toil. The rigor of hard fortune is the best field for young talent to battle on. He who is destined to become a mature Hercules, *will* strangle venomous serpents in his cradle even. The giants of influence who tread our earth with an energy that jars the stagnant mind into wonder, began with bracing their tiny feet on barren rock, while they drew in through strained pores, the elixir of power condensed from the cold storms of adversity that beat on their unsheltered brow. *This* school is the moral gymnasium of the soul. It familiarizes one with serious ideas,—in its light the dread secrets of human destiny are revealed,—in its discipline the virtues take a deeper root,—in its lessons the foundation of a *manly* education is laid. Who ever saw the pet of wealth and easy fortune, the babeling fed with silver spoon on bed of down, pampered in youth, stultified in age, with a "dirt brush" on his upper lip, his greasy

locks with all of Samson's profusion and with nothing of his strength: who ever saw *such a thing* do deeds that glorify God or man? It is well to serve a rough apprenticeship in that great workshop, the world. There one becomes acquainted, as Milton desired, with seemly arts and affairs, instructed in the ways of men, and there has pointed out the true path to fame if not to fortune. Ben Jonson laid bricks—Burns held the plough—Guttford made shoes, and all were, probably, the better for it.

Education has several important uses.

In the First place, it gives one *a knowledge of* his powers. The excitation of the faculty of thought is the revelation of the soul to itself. It is a simple element,—the power of thought,—and may lie in the hardy mechanic inactive, like a tank of water turfed and congealed, but if rarified to ethereal potency by the fire of education, that cold tank, with its latent power aroused and scientifically applied, will heave mountains from their base. Said Edmund Stone, the Mathematician: "Does any man need to know any more than the twenty-six letters, to learn every thing else?" To the English child these letters, 'tis true, are the symbols of all the literature in that language, but then they must be accurately and intelligently learned. Beginning with the use of these elements, and progressively mastering the science of their combination in forms of thought, the thinker becomes acquainted with himself, and makes at length, the very important discovery of his real endowments and peculiar forte. For the want of this, thousands of really talented men have frittered away their lives in fruitless endeavors. Fuseli, when President of the Royal Society of Art in London, complained that "the Royal Academy had robbed the plough and shoemaker's stall of very meritorious persons, and that many came to the sculptor's chisel, and the painter's pencil, who might have handled the joiner's plane or the tailor's scissors with greater advantage to the public and profit to themselves." The

professions in this country are crowded with useless men, who ought to be very good mechanics. But, no! to “hang a shingle out” with gilt letters,—to lay on shelves professional books that are never read,—to wear fine cloth, and sit with ease and dignity, with one’s heels on the mantelpiece, a novel in his hand, his chin in his bosom, and a spittoon by his side, is much more gentleman-like than to soil the lily hand, like “lean, unwashed artificers” in such gross pursuits as honest industry and a useful life.

Secondly : Education gives its possessor *the fullest use* of his faculties. If an artisan or operator of any kind is to make use of a complicated tool or instrument, some pains are taken to school him in the arrangement and use of the different parts, the way of applying the complex instrument, the imperfection to which the several parts are liable, the compensations to be used for the errors arising from them and the methods by which it may be kept in the best order, so as always to be ready for its work, and capable of performing this work well. Not as it lies inactive on the bench or in the chest, but the whole tool or instrument in *its working state* is the principal subject of explanation. Education fits the mind to all branches of knowledge, as the “brace” is fitted to the whole class of “bits.” A well-cultivated mechanical mind will bore into every subject, however knotty or hard, just as the same well-seasoned and strongly made “brace,” will drive every bit to its utmost capacity. Without this *prepared* adaptation between the instrument *acting* and the instruments *acted upon*, their contact will produce any thing but harmony and useful results. Not many years ago, the French government sent over to the Chinese, as a present, very curious brass models of all the mechanical powers, which they in their conceited ignorance received and regarded as toys for the amusement of the grand-children of the Emperor. Sir George Staunton declared, that the costly mathematical instruments, made at great expense and taken to Peking by

Lord Macartney, were as utterly useless to the Chinese, as a steam-engine to an Esquimaux, or a loom to a Hottentot. The difficulty with that nation is, that they lack mental enlargement,—they are cursed with that *caste* which reduces a laboring man, however intrinsically worthy, to popular contempt. Hence the general mind with them is, like their shoes, contracted and *really* contemptible. Education, on the contrary, enlarges and ennobles the faculties of the whole man, and all men of every condition. It is the divining rod that points unerringly to the subterranean mines of inexhaustible wealth. It is the potent-key that unlocks the treasures of darkness and renders the peasant with *this* diadem more noble than crowned kings. Patient and persevering cultivation realizes the combined powers of the fabled Argus and Briareus,—it gives a hundred eyes to plan, and a hundred hands to execute.

As a *third* consideration, let it be added, that education bestows on its possessor the power of exerting *a wide and healthy influence* over others. It has been said that he who can cause two blades of grass to grow where only one existed before, may be considered as the greatest benefactor of his species. He who excites activity in an intelligent spirit, sows a field with immortal germs where nothing before has grown of worth. It is the office of education to bestow on its recipient the fullest use of his powers; to give him inward force: to train him to self-government and self-cultivation. Who then can doubt, that it is a noble undertaking, to assist and unfold the intellect in those classes of the community, whose adverse condition exposes them to a merely animal existence? If it be said, in reply, that education is very well in itself, and that it is certainly desirable that we have in society an educated class, but mechanics are not its fit subjects, and from the necessity of their condition cannot partake of elements so noble, I will simply ask who are inventors, the most useful scholars in the world? Almost every person prominent in history, who

has signalized himself, by the invention of new processes, or the improvement of old sciences, has been *educated* in spite of difficulties. Lord Chancellor King, of England, was a grocer until the middle age of life. Chief Justice Pratt, of New York, was a *carpenter* by trade, but cutting his foot so as to unfit himself for that sort of work, he gave his attention to the law. It is the rule and not the exception, that those in all ages who have been best educated were persons who were placed under what seemed the most unfavorable circumstances. They have been men of humble origin, narrow fortunes, small advantages, and generally self-taught. Cleon, the *tanner*, was a successor of Pericles in the government of Greece in its best days. Demosthenes was a *cutler*, and right sharp tools did he learn to use in more senses than one. Cincinnatus was regal in character before he left the *plough*; and Terence, the African, was a noble poet while yet the vassal of Publius. Justin, the fifty-fifth Emperor of Rome, was originally a *herdsman's boy* in Thrace, who could neither write nor read, but became one of the wisest and best rulers of the mighty empire. Pertinax was an *artificer*; Diocletian was the son of a *scrivener*; Valentinian of a *rope-maker*; Probus of a *gardener*; and Maximin of a *wheel-wright*; Arsaces, the founder of the Parthian dynasty, was the son of a *herdsman*; Agathocles of a *potter*; and Iphicrates of a *cobbler*. Servius Tullus was the son of a *female slave*; and the mighty Tamerlane of a *goat-herd*. Moses, the first of law-givers was a *shepherd*; and so was David, the sweetest poet, and the greatest king. *Fishermen* and *tent-makers* were the first apostles of our religion; the Redeemer of mankind was "the carpenter's son."

Examples in our own day are equally pertinent and profuse. George Canning was the son of an *actress*; and Sir Robert Peel began life a *cotton-spinner*. Many others were indebted to early struggles with want for subsequent wealth and fame, nobler and more profitable than mere

statesmanship. Richard Hargreaves, a *weaver* of Lancashire, invented the spinning jenny, in 1767, and the stock cards which reduced the labor of carding fifty per cent. The individual whose inventions in cotton machinery, "bore the English nation triumphantly through the wars of the French revolution, and which were unquestionably of greater value than all her colonies from Hindostan to Labrador; was in his youth a poor journeyman *barber*, in Preston, the youngest of thirteen children, afterwards knighted by royal hands, and known to the world as Sir Richard Arkwright. Cartwright, the inventor of the power-loom was a *clergyman*, who had his mechanical genius excited by examining a machine for playing chess, and who innocently thought that a machine for weaving cloth might as easily be made, studied the subject until he became an enthusiastic mechanic, and executed the wonderful improvement he desired. Sir Humphry Davy, who, by his safety lamp and other splendid achievements in natural science, won his way to the Chair of the Royal Society of London, and at the head of the chemists of Europe, was the son of a poor *wood-carver* in obscure Cornwall, and was himself an unpatronized apprentice to an *apothecary*, where he made his first experiments in chemistry with his master's vials and gallipots, aided by an old syringe which had been given him by the surgeon of a French vessel, wrecked on the Land's End. West, the famous painter, was an obscure Quaker boy in Philadelphia, too poor at first to purchase canvass and colors; and yet he eventually rose to be the first artist in Europe, patronized by Kings, and President of the Royal Society of Art in London. Count Rumford was a *farmer* in Woburn, Mass. Too poor to procure the common privileges of scholars, he used to *walk* down to Cambridge, to hear the lectures on natural philosophy. He not only became one of the most distinguished mechanical philosophers of his age, but actually founded the Royal Society in London and introduced Sir Humphry Davy into public life.

Fulton was a *portrait-painter* of obscure origin; he began without friends or fortune, and by one invention has brought remote nations into near neighborhood, changed the universal aspect of human affairs, and pushed the tide of civilization far up towards its highest point. Columbus was a poor Genoese *pilot*, who went begging his way from court to court, until, executing the simple process of sailing in one direction as long as he had water to float his ship, he discovered a new world. Franklin, as is well known, was the son of a *tallow-chandler*, himself a *printer*, who prosecuted his studies in the midst of constant manual toil; as a patriot, performed the noblest service; as a philosopher, enlarged the bounds of knowledge by a new department of science, and lived to be pronounced, by Lord Chat-ham, an honor to the age in which he lived. Bowditch, the translator and corrector of La Place, used to sail from New England ports as a common *seaman*, or supercargo, and has recently died with the reputation of being a philosopher equal to any in Europe, and the best mathematician on the globe. Paul Moody was a plain mechanic of modest but sterling worth. I have often seen him busy in scrutinising the splendid machinery which he had invented or improved. An eloquent Governor of Massachusetts has justly said, that to the self-taught mind of this mechanic the great manufacturing establishments at Waltham and Lowell are much indebted for their prosperity. Dr. Carey, the first Missionary to India; Roger Sherman, the renowned statesman; and Dr. Worcester, the late distinguished philanthropist of Massachusetts, were all *shoemakers*; an occupation of which Coleridge has well said, that it has been followed by a greater number of eminent men than any other trade. The name of Thomas U. Walter may serve to close this brilliant list; the choice of his father made him a *bricklayer*; nature designed him for an *architect*. Severe and constant toil when young, prevented the acquisition of copious classical learning; but an almost sleepless

industry has since stored his mind with the entire science he has professed, with the addition of as much general literature as is requisite to embellish the artistic principles which the wishes of the intelligent call him to teach. By birth and patriotic love he is an American; in taste and talent he is a Greek whom Phidias would have honored, and Pericles employed. When the Mint in Philadelphia was built, he worked under a master, but every block was fitted to its bed under his observant eye. When the splendid palace, erected by the munificence of Girard was to be built, no superior could be found, and this bricklayer, son of a mechanic, projected and has recently completed a colossal model in marble of Corinthian magnificence which has never been equalled in this country and may never be excelled.

These instances and illustrations have been presented to show the value of institutions for education and for the diffusion of knowledge. It was no magic, no miracle, which made these men great proficient in the known, inventors of the new, and teachers of mankind. It was the patient, long-continued, persevering cultivation of their oppressed but aspiring minds. Industry, temperance and perseverance are the best patrons in the world, and the only ones true talent requires. The safe path to excellence and success, in every pursuit, is that of simple, but sound preliminary education, diligent devotion to acquire the art, and devoted industry in practising it. Whatever may chance to be the origin of a great discovery or improvement, science and studious application are always requisite to perfect and illustrate it. It may surprise some, that men who never reposed in bowers of classic ease nor fed on luxurious viands should excel the college student and the wealthy Don. There is no mystery in this. The workshop is the real school of practical philosophy,—the place where every hint is brought at once to the test of experiment, improved if it is worthy, and rejected if it is not. No empty theories *there* are dozed over

from week to week ; no dotard fantasies can in that busy practical scene dream on from month to month in unprofitable schemes. "Abstractions" do but little towards nourishing the mind ; they minister much less in support of the body. There are those who are aptly described in the Bible, "They *toil* not, neither do they *spin*, yet Solomon in all his glory was not *arrayed* like one of these." While such personators of "the limbo of vanity and paradise of fools," strut from one scene of inane nonsense to another without one new idea in their head, or one result of real usefulness in their life, the well-modelled ship which the mechanic has built and sent out with rich cargo to circumnavigate the globe, profits those who only look on her. The generally admitted distinction between the liberal and mechanical professions is not so decided in reality as it first appears ; for in those that require essential labor of mind, there is almost always some participation of intelligence ; while between the two extremes the two elements are combined in every different proportion. If a mechanic stands second to any man in the ranks of life, it is because he has chosen that position by limiting his intelligence. Let the working man respect himself, and he will be respected. By means of the multiplication and progress of the mechanical powers, the mechanical professions are every day approaching the liberal professions ; and man, learning that the part which belongs to him in the operations of industry, recovers his dignity in the exercise of his faculties, and becomes, at the same time, a more useful citizen.

We have stated the object of our present gathering, and the design we have in view, to execute which we erect this Institute. Let us now-

III. Consider some of the motives which should urge forward triumphantly, the enterprise before us. We present three considerations.

First, *the position we occupy*. The peculiarities of our age and situation demand that we should generously edu-

cate our Mechanics. It would seem that to no class of persons is a decent knowledge of practical philosophy more immediately requisite than to those who are to construct or make use of labor-saving machinery,—who are to navigate oceans, subdue uncultivated lands, lay out and direct the excavation of canals, to erect houses and supply their furniture, to build steam-engines and stage-coaches, hydraulic presses, and the more complicated apparatus of private gratification, or great public manufacturing establishments. Until within a few years, there has been little or nothing attempted, which could be called education for practical life. And yet nothing can be plainer than that those whose livelihood depends on the skilful practice of the arts, ought to be instructed, as far as possible, in the scientific principles and natural laws, on which the various arts are founded. In this manner alone, popular errors are eradicated, accidental discoveries improved, and the precious time and expense otherwise squandered in abortive undertakings saved. That your minds may be suitably impressed with the importance of the point now under consideration, let me remind you of the relation we as Americans sustain to the other portions of the world, and the relation we in Cincinnati sustain to our National Union. The magnitude and tremendous influence of our country render it extremely difficult to convey an appropriate idea of its proportions and resources to your minds. Our domain is measured by fifty-seven degrees in one direction, and twenty-four in another, including an area of two million, three hundred thousand square miles; or one billion, four hundred and seventy-two million acres. We have already under cultivation a fragment of this domain, including thirty sovereign States, some of which are larger and more powerful than whole Kingdoms in Europe, and yet only one third of this immense tract has, as yet, been reclaimed from the wilderness, while the portion already settled, could, with advantage, sustain a population ten times as dense,

as that by which it is now occupied. Almost every square rod of this vast family of States may be made eminently productive. No sandy deserts, no noxious wastes, disfigure the surface; no fiery volcanoes blast the prolific and spontaneous fruits of Providence, or with earthquake ruin destroy the handiwork of man. The most magnificent scenery everywhere fascinates the eye of taste. Chains of inland seas, with their tributary streams, supply to the industrious the certain rewards of toil. The hundred rivers, east of the Alleghanies, coursing nearly the whole extent of the Atlantic States, and the innumerable streams that from the Western Alleghanies and the Rocky Mountains rush to embrace each other in the mighty Valley of the Mississippi, reaching their almost interminable arms from Columbus to Oregon, from the Lake of the Woods to New Orleans, present to the contemplator the most astonishing facilities for internal commerce the world affords. While these bring our inland valleys into near proximity to the sea-board, our coasts, stretching thousands of miles, and indented with numberless bays and commodious harbors, seem formed by the hand of Providence, for the express use of a people who were to traffic with the whole earth. Our broad and fruitful empire stretches through every zone. Soils of every degree of fertility, and a climate varying with every league's extent, from the bracing cold of Maine to the balmy breath of Florida, render the successful growth of every valuable staple highly propitious. Even our mountains are as productive as they are sublime. Beneath their rugged coat of rock, lie inexhaustible mines of mineral wealth; and thus, with the variety of soil and diversity of climate, they combine to furnish the raw material for every species of manufacture. These striking circumstances, together with the singular advantage of an isolated position, separated by broad oceans from other powerful nations, who might appropriate our possessions, or threaten our liberties, form the basis of natural advantages

which we possess in a measure far above any other single nation. He who lives thirty years longer, will probably see our population swelled to nearly fifty millions, and will see the spirit of enterprise in all our public establishments increased in proportion—nearly or quite half a score of new States added to the Union; cities and manufacturing villages scattered over regions now lying in unbroken solitude; railroads cut over and through pathless mountains; rivers now unexplored, foaming behind rushing steamboats; canals traversed with the quiet but rapid Archimedian screw in the place of paddle-wheels; and all those parts of the country now partially settled, crowded with a much denser population around multiplied schools, richly endowed colleges, and splendid edifices adorned by architecture, and filled with specimens of the sister arts. The time will come, and that soon, when every river of this vast domain of the United States will be alive with industry, when every lake will be whitened with the flotillas of traffic, when present wildernesses will be converted into gardens, when every mountain will be penetrated for ore, or dotted with flocks; when the night lamps of contiguous cities and towns will be seen by each other, while the fields that intervene are covered with golden harvests; when the Rocky Mountains will look down upon our Western and Eastern coasts, *alike* densely settled, and when American citizens will be computed by *hundreds* instead of *scores of millions*. It would seem as if God designed this vast arena as fitly proportioned for the noblest struggles of the human mind. This is the last home of liberty. No caste divides our ranks; no star-chamber dictates our duty. The sun of our prosperity has scarcely risen above the horizon, and already it has diffused its cheering light over many nations. I trust in God that it is destined to rise steadily higher, kindle a flame which will consume every oppressive yoke, and bring Heaven's gift of liberty to every panting soul.

Let us pass to considerations which more immediately

relate to the interests of the Ohio Mechanics' Institute. Look at the position occupied by our City and State on the map of our common country. It is a remarkable ~~one~~. We are near the centre of a vast basin, eight thousand miles in circumference, an area the most productive on the face of the globe. By steamboat, National Road, and rail-car, we are within four days of all the great cities of the East. On the other hand, with like facility, a short time carries us to every great mart of all the South West. Through our noble river, and the best of artificial thoroughfares, direct communication is held, by our active commerce, with every civilized nation of mankind. Cincinnati ought to employ more intelligent mechanics than any other city in the world. Nature has thrown around this spot unwonted temptations for the men of wealth and enterprise. The place itself is healthy beyond most other towns. The climate never retards industry by excessive heat or cold. Unlimited motive power, free labor, and the best of fuel are here supplied at the cheapest rate. Immense quantities of raw material can be speedily brought to hand, of the best quality and at the lowest rates. Every artistic production of cotton, woollen, silk, hemp, leather, clay, wood, lead, iron, and the precious metals, may be, and will be, produced on this spot, with a profusion and excellence, which shall command the praise and purse of all the great West. Let Lowell be "the Manchester" of the little patch beyond the mountains: we must be for America the Sheffield and Birmingham combined.

Our *second* motive in this enterprise is derived from *the influence of judicious encouragement* bestowed on meritorious mechanics. God has seen fit to deposit the best minds where he has placed the richest jewels, under rough coatings and in caverns sometimes quite obscure. These are to be brought out and polished for use. All great conservative influences come up from the inventive and industrious classes of our race. The Almighty does not adver-

tise the world of its best men through the impressive endowments of rose-water and Macassar-oil. Ordinarily, from the rustic cabin, or the mechanic's workshop, emerge the pioneers of social improvement and national weal. As the organs of infinite Love, they trample on popular wrongs, dissolve unholy coalitions, and crush tyranny of every shape. But these incipient heroes at the outset need a kind look—the greeting of a warm hand, and the fostering influence of both employment and advice.

Delicacy forbids me to look around on this vast throng for examples, else how many apt illustrations could here be found. Scores stand here, ready for every good word and work, who started without a dime, but by hardy industry, fostered and rewarded by a generous community, have achieved both wealth and that which is better—a good name. Remember that others, young and emulative, are on your track, and are ready to succeed you in every laudable pursuit. Give them a chance. Erect this noble edifice. Open to succeeding generations its Library, its Lecture Rooms, and Scientific Halls. A noble monument will it remain; and the perpetuity of your beneficence shall be your brightest epitaph.

The *third* motive presented to urge you to zealous execution of what you have here begun, is a *patriotic consideration*. It is fit that this corner-stone should be laid on the 4th of July. Free institutions have ever been guarded with especial solicitude by the workingmen of our land. Some of you have seen the magnificent Hotel, recently built and owned by the mechanics of Boston, called the “*Revere House*.” History records an interesting incident, which explains the origin of the name, and the propriety of its being given to that superior edifice. At the time the new Constitution of the United States was before the country for adoption, Massachusetts for a while hesitated. Says Mr. Webster, “several States had already agreed to the Constitution: if her Convention adopted it,

it was likely to go into operation. This gave to the proceedings of that Convention an intense interest, and the country looked with a trembling anxiety for the result. That result was for a long time doubtful. The Convention was known to be nearly equally divided; and down to the very day and hour of the final vote, no one could predict, with any certainty, which side would preponderate. It was under these circumstances, and at this crisis, that the tradesmen of the town of Boston, in January, 1788, assembled at the Green Dragon, the place where the Whigs of the Revolution, in its ancient stages, had been accustomed to assemble. They resolved, that in their opinion, if the Constitution should be adopted, *‘trade and navigation would revive and increase, and employ and subsistence be afforded to many of their towns-men, then suffering for the want of the necessaries of life;’* and that, on the other hand, should it be rejected, *‘the small remains of commerce yet left would be annihilated; the various trades and handicrafts depending thereon decay; the poor be increased, and many worthy and skilful mechanics compelled to seek employ and subsistence in strange lands.’*” These resolutions were carried to the Boston Delegates in the Convention, and presented to the hand of Samuel Adams. That great and distinguished friend of American liberty, it was feared, might have doubts about the new Constitution. Naturally cautious and sagacious, it was apprehended he might fear the practicability or the safety of a general government. He received the resolutions from the hand of Paul Revere, a brass-founder by occupation, a man of sense and character, and of high public spirit, whom the mechanics of Boston ought never to forget. “How many mechanics,” said Mr. Adams, “were at the Green Dragon when these resolutions were passed?” “More, sir,” was the reply, “than the Green Dragon could hold.” “And where were the rest, Mr. Revere?” “In the streets, sir.” “And how many were

in the streets?" "More, sir, than there are stars in the sky." That was nearly as large a gathering as the one that graces the present occasion. Let us hope that the same spirit moves in all bosoms here, to impart bright auspices to the undertaking in which we are engaged, and to perpetuate the free institutions under which we live.

If it be asked, what can be done, and how much, let us look around for a reply. Let us recollect, that a half century since, with a population insignificant, this country vindicated her independence, in a war against the oldest and strongest government on earth. Let us remember that the foundations of these prosperous and powerful States were laid by a few persecuted private citizens, possessing but little wealth and no patronage or protection but their own resolute will. And, as if to indicate the means of all our triumphs, and consecrate this land as the theatre of noble individual effort, it was by the determined resolution of one friendless mariner, pursued through years of penury and contempt, that these vast continents of America are made the heritage and home of civilized men!—What *have* mechanics done? We have the authority of our greatest Statesmen living, that they stood foremost in the battles of the Revolution. What have they done in the arts of peace? If they have not forged the bolts of Jove, they have, by their representative Franklin, drawn them from the sky. If they have not cast the axletrees of Mars, they have constructed chariots, and finished axletrees, which on iron tracks run with greater speed than those which fabulous antiquity conceived. If they have not wrought in Cyclopæan caverns, forming armor for belligerent gods, they have created both god and armor—a Titan with body of iron and soul of steam, who has gone "tramp, tramp over the earth, splash, splash across the sea," lashing the foaming deep with his chariot wheel, and subduing the trembling earth beneath his ponderous arm. That old smutty blacksmith of mythology, Vulcan, has, by

mechanics, been robbed of his aristocratic dignity, and been compelled to do job and custom work. And Minerva, proud of her wisdom, and like some other ladies, contemptuous towards the ignobly born, has by hardy mechanics been not rudely but effectually torn from her purple throne in the Olympian skies, and been compelled to inspire the popular lecture and teach mechanics' schools. For the interests of these I plead. I plead that the children and wards of mechanics may be early and well educated. Every thing that shows the magnitude and growth of the country; its abundance and variety of resources; its increasing demand for all the practical arts, are so many reasons urging us to furnish young men especially the means of education, when it is certain that every kind of talent is sure to be required, honored, and rewarded. In this country, thank God, places of honor and emolument are not limited to those who chance to be born rich or respectable.

" Full many a gem, of purest ray serene,
The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear."

There are children at this moment growing up in the darkest obscurity, in town and country, who possess no inherited capital but poverty and healthy industry, who will, in a few years, successfully contend with the mightiest intellects of the age. "A fair field and no favor," is the war-cry of talent. With this what will the American mechanic do? He will beat the Old World into sullen respect, or enthusiastic admiration. He *has* done this already. From Lowell, full sets of cotton machinery have been sent to St. Petersburg; locomotives, built in Philadelphia, are driving a successful competition on several European railroads; and the splendid steam-ship Kamschatka, recently built in New York, challenged the severest scrutiny of English builders, and has received the hearty approbation of her owner, the Emperor Nicholas. In these, and many other instances, the raw materials of Russian iron, hemp, &c., have been

imported, manufactured, and returned, with a value enhanced *ten fold* by American skill. Many articles, for which only a few years since we were entirely dependent on foreign manufacturers, are now completely driven from the whole West by the superior productions of our own city.

The mechanic is a nobler being than Alexander: he is not limited in his conquests to one world. Without doubt, boys now exist, dressed in rough garments, who nourish the fire of genius—smothered as yet by ignorance and penury—a volcanic fire, which will yet burst on the astonished gaze of millions. The realms of invention are by no means entirely explored yet. We can easily demonstrate that other continents of land cannot lie near our own; but no one can tell what worlds of rich thought we have nearly approached, but never actually touched. Like Columbus, we may explore; but we are not compelled, like him, to obtain a *royal* permission to launch our craft upon this ocean. It may be in the power of some now living—it may possibly be the destiny of some one educated by this Association,—to lay open such natural laws as will affect most powerfully the condition of the civilized world. Before such a result is obtained, we must use the appropriate means. We must educate, educate! Give us intelligent men, who can themselves *plan* and *build* the *State-House*, and they will be the pillars of the State. Education makes the best foreman, and trains the best apprentices. Give us sober, frugal, educated mechanics, and they will deserve the encomium which an eloquent writer has bestowed in the following words:

“The mechanic is one of God’s noblemen. What have mechanics done? Have they not opened the secret chambers of the mighty deep, and extracted its treasures, and made the raging billows their highway, on which they ride as on a tame steed? Are not the elements of fire and water chained to the crank, and to the mechanic’s bidding

compelled to turn it? Have not the mechanics opened the bowels of the earth, and made his products contribute to his wants? The forked lightning is their play-thing; and they ride triumphant on the wings of the mighty winds. To the wise they are the flood-gates of knowledge; and Kings and Queens are decorated with their handiworks. He who made the Universe was a great mechanic."

May that dread Architect of the Universe "who weigheth the mountains in a scale and the hills in a balance," watch over your counsels, conduct this edifice to a safe completion, and prosper your benevolent efforts in the cause of human improvement. And may we unitedly and habitually act with the consciousness that—

"————— Man is made *to know*,
And there will be a time when this great truth,
Electric, shall run from man to man,
And the blood-cemented pyramids of ignorance
Shall by its flash be thrown to earth in atoms—
When it shall blaze with sun-refulgent splendor
And *the whole earth be lighted.*"