

THE  
WRITINGS AND SPEECHES  
OF  
DANIEL WEBSTER

---

*National Edition*

---

VOLUME THIRTEEN

THE NATIONAL EDITION OF THE  
WRITINGS & SPEECHES OF DANIEL  
WEBSTER IS LIMITED TO ONE  
THOUSAND AND FIFTY COPIES  
THIS SET IS NUMBER...*510*.....



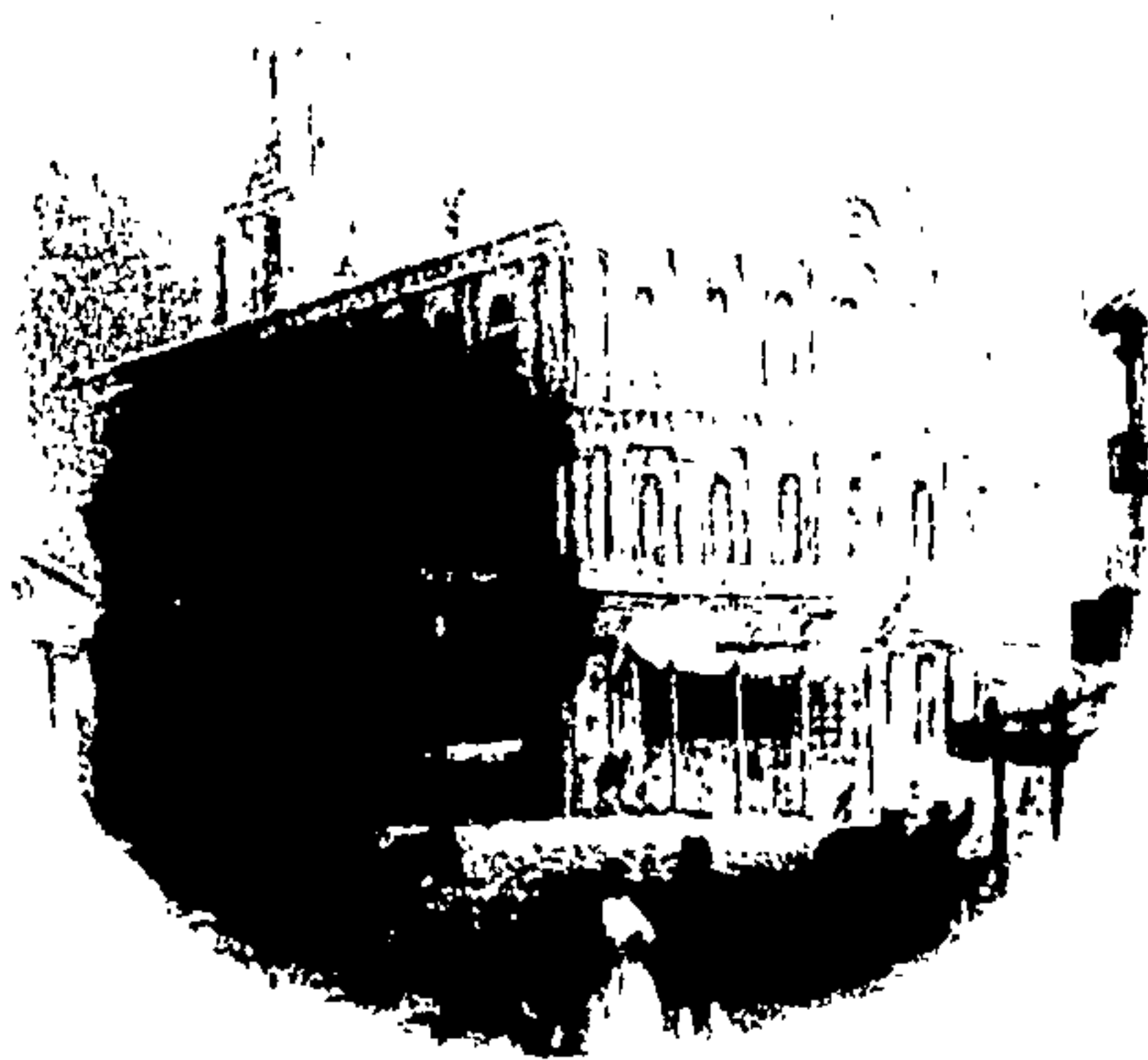
7/12/08 11:30

*Daniel Webster*

From a Painting of Mr. Webster in Hunting Costume by  
G. P. A. Healy, in the possession of Mr. Thomas  
B. Bryan, Elmhurst, Ill.

THE WRITINGS AND  
SPEECHES  
OF  
DANIEL WEBSTER

IN EIGHTEEN VOLUMES



VOLUME THIRTEEN

*The Writings and Speeches of*  
**DANIEL WEBSTER**  
HITHERTO UNCOLLECTED  
VOLUME ONE · ADDRESSES  
ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS  
NATIONAL EDITION · Illustrated  
with Portraits and Plates



*BOSTON · LITTLE, BROWN, & COMPANY*  
*NINETEEN HUNDRED AND THREE*

5  
95  
000  
10

7x  
W378W

COPYRIGHT, 1903,  
BY LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

*Rec. Dec. 4, 1903.*

---

UNIVERSITY PRESS • JOHN WILSON  
AND SON • CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.



*My Dear Niece;*

*I pray your acceptance of this, with  
AN ADDRESS  
an assurance, that if it were Ten*

DELIVERED BEFORE THE  
*Thousand times more valuable, it  
NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY,  
would not surpass my affection*

FEBRUARY 23, 1852,  
*for You.*

*BY Daniel Webster*

DANIEL WEBSTER.

*Mrs Harriette W. Paige*

PULCHRUM EST BENEFACERE REIPUBLICÆ; ETIAM BENEDICERE HAUD ABSURDUM EST.

*July 10. 1852.*

---

*Wahant.*

NEW YORK:  
PRESS OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

MDCCCLII.



# The Dignity and Importance of History

FEBRUARY 23, 1852.<sup>1</sup>

THE object of your association, gentlemen, like that of others of similar character, is highly important. Historical societies are auxiliary to historical compositions. They collect the materials from which the great narrative of events is, in due time, to be framed. The transactions of public bodies, local histories, memoirs of all kinds, statistics, laws, ordinances, public debates and discussions, works of periodical literature, and the public journals, whether of political events, of commerce, literature, or the arts, all find their places in the collections of historical societies. But these collections are not history; they are only elements of history. History is a higher name, and imports literary productions of the first order.

It is presumptuous in me, whose labors and studies have been so long devoted to other objects, to speak in the presence of those whom I see before me, of the *dignity and importance of history*, in its just sense; and yet I find pleasure in breaking in upon the course of daily pursuits, and indulging for a time in reflections upon topics of literature, and in the remembrance of the great examples of historic art.

Well written history must always be the result of genius and taste, as well as of research and study. It stands next to epic poetry, among the productions of the human mind. If it

<sup>1</sup> An address delivered before the New York Historical Society. Printed from the pamphlet report: New York: Press of the Historical Society, MDCCCLII. It contains the following Dedication:

I dedicate this address to Hon. Luther Bradish, President of the New York Historical Society, as a proof of private friendship and public regard.

•

## 464 Addresses Hitherto Uncollected

requires less of invention than that, it is not behind it in dignity and importance. The province of the epic is the poetical narrative of real or supposed events, and the representation of real, or at least natural, characters; and history, in its noblest examples, is an account of occurrences in which great events are commemorated, and distinguished men appear as agents and actors. Epic poetry and the drama are but narratives, the former partly, and the latter wholly, in the form of dialogue; but their characters and personages are usually, in part at least, the creations of the imagination.

Severe history sometimes assumes the dialogue, or dramatic form, and, without departing from truth, is embellished by supposed colloquies or speeches, as in the productions of that great master, Titus Livius, or that greater master still, Thucydides.

The drawing of characters, consistent with general truth and fidelity, is no violation of historical accuracy; it is only an illustration or an ornament.

When Livy ascribes an appropriate speech to one of his historical personages, it is only as if he had portrayed the same character in language professedly his own. Lord Clarendon's presentation, in his own words, of the character of Lord Falkland, one of the highest and most successful efforts of personal description, is hardly different from what it would have been, if he had put into the mouth of Lord Falkland a speech exhibiting the same qualities of the mind and the heart, the same opinions, and the same attachments. Homer describes the actions of personages which, if not real, are so imagined as to be conformable to the general characteristics of men in the heroic ages. If his relation be not historically true, it is such, nevertheless, as, making due allowance for poetical embellishment, might have been true. And in Milton's great epic, which is almost entirely made up of narratives and speeches, there is nothing repugnant to the general conception which we form of the characters of those whose sentiments and conduct he portrays.

But history, while it illustrates and adorns, confines itself to facts, and to the relation of actual events. It is not far from truth to say, that well written and classic history is the epic

## Dignity and Importance of History 465

of real life. It places the actions of men in an attractive and interesting light. Rejecting what is improper and superfluous, it fills its picture with real, just, and well drawn images.

The dignity of history consists in reciting events with truth and accuracy, and in presenting human agents and their actions in an interesting and instructive form. The first element in history, therefore, is truthfulness; and this truthfulness must be displayed in a concrete form. Classical history is not a memoir. It is not a crude collection of acts, occurrences, and dates. It adopts nothing that is not true; but it does not embrace all minor truths and all minor transactions. It is a composition, a production, which has unity of design, like a work of statuary or of painting, and keeps constantly in view one great end or result. Its parts, therefore, are to be properly adjusted and well proportioned. The historian is an artist, as true to fact as other artists are to nature, and, though he may sometimes embellish, he never misrepresents; he may occasionally, perhaps, color too highly, but the truth is still visible through the lights and shades. This unity of design seems essential to all great productions. With all the variety of the *Iliad*, Homer had the wrath of Achilles, and its consequences, always before him; when he sang of the exploits of other heroes, they were silently subordinated to those of the son of Thetis. Still more remarkable is the unity in variety of the *Odyssey*, the character of which is much more complicated; but all the parts are artfully adapted to each other, and they have a common centre of interest and action, the great end being the restoration of Ulysses to his native Ithaca. Virgil, in the *Æneid*, sang of nothing but the man, and his deeds, who brought the Trojan gods to Italy, and laid the foundation of the walls of imperial Rome; and Milton of nothing, but

“Man’s first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world and all our woes.”

And the best historical productions of ancient and of modern times have been written with equal fidelity to one leading thought or purpose.

It has been said by Lord Bolingbroke, that “History is



## 466 Addresses Hitherto Uncollected

Philosophy teaching by example;" and, before Bolingbroke, Shakspeare has said :

“ There is a history in all men’s lives,  
Figuring the nature of the times deceas’d ;  
The which observ’d, a man may prophesy,  
With a near aim, of the main chance of things  
As yet not come to life, which in their seeds,  
And weak beginnings, lie entreasured.  
Such things become the hatch and brood of time;  
And, by the necessary form of this,  
King Richard might create a perfect guess,  
That great Northumberland, then false to him,  
Would, of that seed, grow to a greater falseness,  
Which should not find a ground to root upon,  
Unless on you.

Are these things, then, necessities?  
Then let us meet them like necessities.”

And a wiser man than either Bolingbroke or Shakspeare, has declared :

“ The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.”

These sayings are all just, and they proceed upon the idea that the essential characteristics of human nature are the same everywhere, and in all ages.

This, doubtless, is true; and so far as history presents the general qualities and propensities of human nature, it does teach by example. Bolingbroke adds, with remarkable power of expression, that “ the school of example is the world: and the masters of this school are history and experience.”

But the character of man varies so much, from age to age, both in his individual and collective capacity; there comes such a change of circumstances, so many new objects of desire and aversion, and so many new and powerful motives spring up in his mind, that the conduct of men, in one age, or under one state of circumstances, is no sure and precise indication of what will be their conduct, when times and circumstances alter; so that the example of the past, before it can become a useful instructor to the present, must be reduced to elementary principles in human nature, freed from the influence of condi-

## Dignity and Importance of History 467

tions which were temporary and have changed, and applied to the same principles, under new relations, with a different degree of knowledge, and the impulses arising from the altered state of things. A savage has the passions of ambition, revenge, love, and glory; and ambition and love, revenge and the hope of renown, are also elements in the character of civilized life; but the development of these passions, in a state of barbarism, hardly instructs us as to the manner in which they will exhibit themselves in a cultivated period of society.

And so it is of religious sentiment and feeling. I believe man is everywhere, more or less, a religious being; that is to say, in all countries, and at all times, he feels a tie which connects him with an Invisible Power.

It is true indeed, and it is a remarkable fact in the history of mankind, that in the very lowest stage of human existence, and in the opposite extreme of high civilization, surrounded with everything luxurious in life, and with all the means of human knowledge, the idea of an unseen and supreme Governor of the Universe is most likely to be equally doubted or disregarded.

The lowest stage of human culture, that of mere savage existence, and the intellectual and refined atheism, exhibited in our own day, seem to be strangely coincident in this respect; though it is from opposite causes and influences that men, in these so different conditions, are led to doubt or deny the existence of a Supreme Power. But both these are exceptions to the general current of human thought and to the general conviction of our nature.

Man is naturally religious; but then his religion takes its character from his condition, his degree of knowledge, and his association; and thus it is true that the religious feeling, which operates in one state of society, and under one degree of light and knowledge, is not a safe example to prove its probable influence under circumstances essentially different. So that, when we regard history as our instructor, in the development of the perceptions and character of men, and in the motives which actuate them, there comes a concomitant rush of altered circumstances, which are all to be considered and regarded.

## 468 Addresses Hitherto Uncollected

History, therefore, is an example which may teach us the general principles of human nature, but does not instruct us greatly in its various possible developments.

What Dr. Johnson said, in his comparison of Dryden and Pope, is not inapplicable to this topic, "Dryden," said he, "knew more of man in his general nature, and Pope in his local manners." Dryden's sentiments, therefore, are the exemplar of human nature in general, Pope's of human nature as modified in particular relations and circumstances; and what is true of individual man, in this respect, is true, also, of society and government.

The love of liberty, for instance, is a passion or sentiment which existed in intense force in the Grecian Republics, and in the better ages of Rome. It exists now, chiefly, and first of all, on that portion of the Western Continent in which we live. Here, it burns with heat and with splendor beyond all Grecian and all Roman example. It is not a light in the temple of Minerva, it is not the vestal flame of Rome; it is the light of the sun, it is the illumination of all the constellations. Earth, air, and ocean, and all the heavens above us, are filled with its glorious shining; and, although the passion and the sentiment are the same, yet he who would reason from Grecian liberty, or from Roman freedom, to our intelligent American liberty, would be holding a farthing candle to the orb of day.

The magnificent funeral oration of Pericles, over those who fell in the Peloponnesian War, is one of the grandest productions of antiquity. It contains sentiments and excites emotions congenial to the minds of all lovers of liberty, in all regions and at all times. It exhibits a strong and ardent attachment to country, which true patriots always feel; an undaunted courage in its defence, and willingness to pledge and hazard all, for the maintenance of liberty. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting a few passages from that celebrated address, in a translation which I think much closer to the original Greek than that of Smith:

Mr. Webster here quoted at some length from the oration referred to, and then proceeded as follows:



## Dignity and Importance of History 469

How terse, how Doric, how well considered is the style of this unsurpassed oration! Gentlemen, does not every page, paragraph, and sentence of what I have read, go home to all our hearts, carrying a most gratified consciousness of its resemblance to what is near and dear to us in our own native land? Is it Athens, or America? Is Athens or America the theme of these immortal strains? Was Pericles speaking of his own country, as he saw it or knew it; or was he gazing upon a bright vision, then two thousand years before him, which we see in reality, as he saw it in prospect?

But the contests of Sparta and Athens, what were they in lasting importance, and in their bearing on the destinies of the world, in comparison with that ever memorable struggle which separated the American colonies from the dominion of Europe? How different the result which betided Athens, from that which crowned the glorious efforts of our ancestors; and, therefore, this renowned oration of Pericles, what is it in comparison with an effort of historical eloquence which should justly set forth the merits of the heroes and the martyrs of the American Revolution?

The liberty of Athens, and of the other Grecian Republics, being founded in pure democracy, without any principle of representation, was fitted only for small states. The exercise of popular power in a purely democratic form cannot be spread over countries of large extent; because, in such countries, all cannot assemble in the same place to vote directly upon laws and ordinances, and other public questions. But the principle of representation is expansive; it may be enlarged, if not infinitely, yet indefinitely, to meet new occasions, and embrace new regions. While, therefore, the love of liberty was the same, and its general principle the same, in the Grecian Republics as with us, yet not only were the forms essentially different, but that also was wanting which we have been taught to consider as indispensable to its security: that is, a fixed, settled, definite, fundamental law, or constitution, imposing limitations and restraints equally on governors and governed. We may, therefore, inhale all the fulness and freshness of the Grecian spirit, but we necessarily give its development a different form, and subject it to new modifications.



## 470 Addresses Hitherto Uncollected

But history is not only philosophy, teaching by example; its true purpose is, also, to illustrate the general progress of society in knowledge and the arts, and the changes of manners and pursuits of men.

There is an imperfection, both in ancient and modern histories, and those of the best masters, in this respect. While they recite public transactions, they omit, in a great degree, what belongs to the civil, social, and domestic progress of men and nations. There is not, so far as I know, a good civil history of Rome, nor is there an account of the manners and habits of social and domestic life, such as may inform us of the progress of her citizens, from the foundation of the city to the time of Livy and Sallust, in individual exhibitions of character.

We know, indeed, something of the private pursuits and private vices of the Roman people at the commencement of the Empire, but we obtain our knowledge of these chiefly from the severe and indignant rebukes of Sallust, and the inimitable satires of Juvenal. Wars, foreign and domestic, the achievements of arms, and national alliances fill up the recorded greatness of the Roman Empire.

It is very remarkable that, in this respect, Roman literature is far more deficient than that of Greece. Aristophanes, and other Grecian comic writers, have scenes richly filled with the delineation of the lives and manners of their own people. But the Roman imitators of the Grecian stage gave themselves up to the reproduction of foreign characters on their own stage, and presented in their dramas Grecian manners also, instead of Roman manners. How much wiser was Shakspeare, who enchained the attention of his audiences, and still enchains the attention of the whole Teutonic race, by the presentation of English manners and English history?

Falstaff, Justice Shallow, and Dogberry are not shrubs of foreign growth transplanted into the pages of Shakspeare, but genuine productions of the soil, the creations of his own home-bred fancy.

Mr. Banks has written a civil history of Rome, but it seems not to have answered the great end which it proposed.

The labors of Niebuhr, Arnold, and Merivale have accom-

## Dignity and Importance of History 471

plished much towards furnishing the materials of such history, and Becker, in his *Gallus*, has drawn a picture, not uninteresting, of the private life of the Romans at the commencement of the Empire.

I know nothing of the fact, but I once had an intimation, that one of the most distinguished writers of our time and of our country has had his thoughts turned to this subject for several years. If this be so, and the work, said to be in contemplation, be perfected, it will be true, as I have no doubt, that the civil history of the great republic of antiquity will have been written, not only with thorough research, but also with elegance of style and chaste, classical illustration, by a citizen of the great republic of modern times. I trust that when this work shall appear, if it shall appear, we shall not only see the Roman consul and the Roman general, the Comitia and the Forum, but that we shall also see Roman hearths and altars, the Roman matron at the head of her household, Roman children in their schools of instruction, and the whole of Roman life fully presented to our view, so far as the materials, now existing in separate and special works, afford the means.

It is in our day only that the history and progress of the civil and social institutions and manners of England have become the subjects of particular attention.

Sharon Turner, Lingard, and, more than all, Mr. Hallam, have laid this age, and all following ages, under the heaviest obligations by their labors in this field of literary composition; nor would I separate from them the writings of a most learned and eloquent person, whose work on English history is now in progress, nor the author of the "*Pictorial History of England*." But there is still wanting a full, thorough, and domestic, social account of our English ancestors, that is, a history which shall trace the progress of social life in the intercourse of man with man; the advance of arts, the various changes in the habits and occupations of individuals; and those improvements in domestic life which have attended the condition and meliorated the circumstances of men in the lapse of ages. We still have not the means of learning, to any great extent, how our English ancestors, at their homes, and in their houses, were



fed, and lodged, and clothed, and what were their daily employments. We want a history of firesides; we want to know when kings and queens exchanged beds of straw for beds of down, and ceased to breakfast on beef and beer. We wish to see more, and to know more, of the changes which took place, from age to age, in the homes of England, from the castle and the palace, down to the humblest cottage. Mr. Henry's book, so far as it goes, is not without its utility, but it stops too soon, and, even in regard to the period which it embraces, it is not sufficiently full and satisfactory in its particulars.

The feudal ages were military and agricultural, but the splendor of arms, in the history of the times, monopolized the genius of writers; and perhaps materials are not now abundant for forming a knowledge of the essential industry of the country. He would be a public benefactor who should instruct us in the modes of cultivation and tillage prevailing in England, from the Conquest down, and in the advancement of manufactures, from their inception in the time of Henry IV., to the period of their considerable development, two centuries afterwards.

There are two sources of information on these subjects, which have never yet been fully explored, and which, nevertheless, are overflowing fountains of knowledge. I mean the statutes and the proceedings of the courts of law. At an early period of life, I recurred, with some degree of attention, to both these sources of information; not so much for professional purposes, as for the elucidation of the progress of society. I acquainted myself with the object and purposes and substance of every published statute in British legislation. These showed me what the legislature of the country was concerned in, from age to age, and from year to year. And I learned from the reports of controversies, in the courts of law, what were the pursuits and occupations of individuals, and what the objects which most earnestly engaged attention. I hardly know anything which more repays research, than studies of this kind. We learn from them what pursuits occupied men during the feudal ages. We see the efforts of society to throw off the chains of this feudal dominion. We see too,

## Dignity and Importance of History 473

in a most interesting manner, the ingenious devices resorted to, to break the thralldom of personal slavery. We see the beginning of manufacturing interests, and at length bursts upon us the full splendor of the commercial age.

Littleton, Coke, Plowden, what are they? How their learning fades away and becomes obsolete, when Holt and Somers and Mansfield arise, catching themselves, and infusing all around them, the influences and the knowledge which commerce had shed upon the world!

Our great teachers and examples in the historical art are, doubtless, the eminent historians of the Greek and Roman ages. In their several ways, they are the masters to whom all succeeding times have looked for instruction and improvement. They are the models which have stood the test of time, and, like the glorious creations in marble of Grecian genius, have been always admired and never surpassed.

We have our favorites in literature, as well as in other things, and I confess that, among the Grecian writers, my estimate of Herodotus is great. His evident truthfulness, his singular simplicity of style, and his constant respect and veneration for sacred and divine things, win my regard. It is true that he sometimes appears credulous, which caused Aristotle to say of him, that he was a story-teller. But, in respect to this, two things are to be remarked; the one is, that he never avers as a fact that which rests on the accounts of others; the other, that all subsequent travels and discoveries have tended to confirm his fidelity. From his great qualities as a writer, as well as from the age in which he lived, he is justly denominated the "Father of History." Herodotus was a conscientious narrator of what he saw and heard. In his manner there is much of the old epic style; indeed, his work may be considered as the connecting link between the epic legend and political history; truthful, on the one hand, since it was a genuine history; but, on the other, conceived and executed in the spirit of poetry, and not the profounder spirit of political philosophy. It breathes a reverential submission to the divine will, and recognizes distinctly the governing hand of Providence in the affairs of men. But, upon the whole, I am compelled to regard Thucydides as the greater writer.

## 474 Addresses Hitherto Uncollected

Thucydides was equally truthful, but more conversant with the motives and character of men in their political relations. He took infinite pains to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the transactions that occurred in his own day, and which became the subject of his own narrative.\*

It is said, even, that persons were employed by him to obtain information from both the belligerent powers, for his use, while writing the history of the Peloponnesian War.

He was one of the most eminent citizens of the Athenian Republic, educated under the institutions of Solon, and trained in all the political wisdom which these institutions had developed in the two centuries since their establishment. A more profound intellect never applied itself to historical investigation; a more clear-sighted and impartial judge of human conduct never dealt with the fortunes and acts of political communities.

The work of Herodotus is graphic, fluent, dramatic, and ethical in the highest degree; but it is not the work of the citizen of a free republic, personally experienced in the conduct of its affairs. The history of the Peloponnesian War, on the other hand, could only have been produced by a man of large experience, and who added to vast genius deep personal insight into the workings of various public institutions. As Thucydides himself says, his history was written not for the entertainment of the moment, but to be "a possession forever."

There can, it seems to me, be no reasonable doubt that the first works by which man expressed his thoughts and feelings in an orderly composition, were essentially poetical. In the earliest writings of which we know anything with distinctness, we have an union or mingling of poetry and fact, embodying the traditions and history of the people among which they arose.

Like other intellectual culture, this form of history appeared first in the East, and, from the days of Moses and Joshua down to our own times, it has there retained substantially the same character. I mean, it has been a remarkable mixture of the spirit of history and of epic poetry. In Greece, we may

\* See Book V., § 26.



## Dignity and Importance of History 475

observe originally the same state of things ; but the two forms of composition at length became separated, though the Greek historical art, when highest, never loses all its relations to the epic. The earliest Greek poets were religious and historical poets, dealing in the traditions and mythology of their country, and so continued down through Homer. Herodotus was by birth an Asiatic Greek, and was quite imbued with the oriental spirit. In his time, of public records there were none, or, at the most, there were only local registers of public events, and their dates, such, for instance, as those kept by the priesthood in the temples at Delphi and Argos, or the registers of particular families. He travelled, therefore, to collect the materials for his history. But he made of them one whole, and laid one idea at the bottom, with as much epic simplicity as Homer did in the Iliad. His subject was the contest of Greece with the Persians, and the triumph of Grecian liberty, or, more strictly, the great Grecian victory over the barbarians who had conquered the world, as then known. The relations between Herodotus and Homer are not to be mistaken ; he not only has episodes, like the long one about Egypt, and formal speeches, which were common in historical works till the sixteenth century of our era, and have not been unknown since,\* but he has dialogues. One of his series of speeches, which partakes of the character of a dialogue, shows a remarkable advancement in political knowledge for that age ; I mean that in which the conspirators against the Magi of Persia, previously to the elevation of Darius, discuss the different forms of government, almost in the spirit of Montesquieu. But all these things are kept in their proper places by Herodotus. He feels the connection of his subject all the way through ; how one event proceeds from another, and how, in the spirit of epic unity, everything tends to the principal result, or contributes to it directly.

In Thucydides, the art of history is further advanced, though he lived very little later than Herodotus. He probably had read or heard his history, though that is doubted.

Thucydides did not, indeed, make one whole of his work, for he did not survive the war whose history he undertook to

\* They are adopted, for instance, by Botta.

## 476 Addresses Hitherto Uncollected

relate; but he is less credulous than Herodotus; he has no proper dialogue; he is more compact; he indulges very little in episodes; he draws characters, and his speeches are more like formal, stately discussions. And he says of them, they are such as he either heard himself, or received from those who did hear them, and he states that he gives them in their true substance.

There is nothing to create a doubt that personally he heard the oration of Pericles; and it is remarkable that, throughout the most flourishing period of Greek literature, both poetical and historical, productions were composed to be heard, rather than to be read; and the practice of listening to their rehearsals led the Greek people to attain great accuracy, as well as retentiveness, of memory.

In short, Herodotus' work seems a natural, fresh production of the soil; that of Thucydides belongs to a more advanced state of culture. Quintilian says of the former, "*In Herodoto omnia leniter fluunt;*" of the latter, "*Densus et brevis et semper instans sibi.*"

Xenophon, in his Hellenica, continues Thucydides. He was a military leader, and familiar with the affairs of state, and though not so deep a thinker, was a more graceful and easy writer. Polybius, living in a much later period, is defective in style, but is a wise and sensible author. His object is not merely to show what has been, but to attempt the instruction of the future, making his work what he calls a demonstrative history, fitted for the use of statesmen. He is the last of the really good Greek historians.

The Romans had the great Greek masters, in prose and poetry, all before them, and imitated them in everything, but approached their models nearly only in eloquence and history. Like the Greeks too, they had early poetical histories, historical legends, and songs. Ennius wrote a sort of epic history of Rome. Cæsar, one of the most distinguished of all great men, wrote accounts of what he had done, or what related directly to himself. The clearness, purity, and precision of his style are as characteristic of him as any of his great achievements.

Sallust followed more closely the Greek models. Each of his two remaining histories is an epic whole, — short, indeed,



## Dignity and Importance of History 477

but complete, fashioned with the greatest exactness, and remarkable for a dignity and stateliness of style which Cæsar did not seek, and which would not have been fitting for his personal memoirs.

Livy had another purpose; there is an epic completeness in his great work, though it has come down to us in a mutilated state. "*Majestas populi Romani*" was his subject, and he sacrifices much to it, even, not unfrequently, the rigor of truth. His style is rich and flowing. Quintilian speaks of "*Livii lactea ubertas*," the creamy richness of Livy. His descriptions are excellent; indeed, there is a nobleness and grandeur about the whole work well fitted to his magnificent purpose in writing it.

Tacitus comes later, when he could no longer feel so proud of his country as Livy had done. He had much of the spirit and the power of Thucydides. Both were great, upright men, dissatisfied with their times; the one, because of the ascendancy of demagogues among the people, the other, with the imperial vices and the growing demoralization of his age. Tacitus is, however, free from passion, and is a wise, statesmanlike, and profound writer, throughout. Of both his History and Annals considerable portions are lost. We cannot, therefore, tell how much of completeness and proportion there may have been in either. But the nature of the period he discusses in each, — a period, as he says, "*opimum casibus, atrox præliis, discors seditionibus, ipsa etiam pace sævum*," not less than the severity of his own nature, forbade poetical ornament. In character-drawing, he is hardly excelled by any one. By a single dash of his pencil, he sometimes throws out a likeness, which all feel and acknowledge; and yet it has been thought that some degree of falling off in the purity and elegance of the Latin language is discernible in his pages.

Of the Roman historians my preference is strongly for Salust. I admire his reach of thought, his clearness of style, as well as his accuracy of narration. He is sufficiently concise; he is sententious, without being meagre or obscure, and his power of personal and individual description is remarkable. There are, indeed, in his style, some roughnesses belonging to the Roman tongue at an earlier age, but they seem to

## 478 Addresses Hitherto Uncollected

strengthen the structure of his sentences, without especially injuring their beauty. No character-drawing can well exceed his delineation of Catiline, his account of Jugurtha, or his parallel between Cæsar and Cato. I have thought, sometimes, that I saw resemblances between his terse and powerful periods, and the remarks and sayings of Dr. Johnson, as they appear, not in his stately performances, but in the record of his conversations by Boswell.

In turning to peruse once more the pages of Sallust, to refresh myself for the preparation of this address, I was struck by the coincidence of a transaction narrated by him, with one which we have seen very recently in our own country.

When Jugurtha had put to death Hiempsal, and expelled Adherbal from his rightful throne, the latter (who was born in Numidia, and not in Hungary) came to Rome to invoke what we should call, the intervention of the Roman people. His speech, delivered on that occasion, in the Senate, as Sallust has given it, is one of the most touching ever made by a man in misfortune and suffering from injury, to those having the power of granting relief or redress. His supplication to the Senate is founded on the broad and general idea that the Roman people were just themselves, and as they had the power, so it was their duty, to prevent or punish high-handed injustice, threatened or inflicted by others.

While I confess myself not competent to sit in judgment on the great masters of Roman story, still it has always struck me that in the style of Livy there is so much fulness, so much accumulation of circumstances, as occasionally tends to turgidity. I speak this, however, with the greatest diffidence. Livy seems to me like the rivers under the influence of copious spring floods, when not only is the main channel full, but all the tributary streams are also tending to overflow; while Sallust, I think, takes care only that there shall be one deep, clear, strong, and rapid current, to convey him and his thoughts to their destined end.

I do not mean to say that the skilful use of circumstance, either in the hand of a historian or a poet, is not a great power, — I think it is. What we call graphic description, is but the



## Dignity and Importance of History 479

presentation of the principal idea, with a discreet accompaniment of interesting concomitants.

The introduction of a single auxiliary thought or expression sometimes gives a new glow to the historical or poetical picture. Particularity, well set forth, enchains attention. In our language, no writer has understood this better than Milton. His poetical images and descriptions are sure to omit nothing which can make those images and those descriptions striking, distinct, and certain, while all else is industriously repelled.

Witness the fall of Vulcan, which is stated with such beautiful detail, so much step by step, and terminated by such a phrase and comparison at the end, as greatly to enhance the idea, both of its length and its rapidity.

“ Men call'd him Mulciber; and how he fell  
From Heaven, they fabled, thrown by angry Jove  
Sheer o'er the crystal battlements; from morn  
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,  
A summer's day; and with the setting sun  
Dropp'd from the Zenith like a falling star,  
On Lemnos the Ægean isle.”

His description of vocal music in the “Allegro” is another instance of the same kind:

“ And ever against eating cares,  
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,  
Married to immortal verse,  
Such as the meeting soul may pierce  
In notes, with many a winding bout  
Of linkèd sweetness long drawn out,  
With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,  
The melting voice through mazes running,  
Untwisting all the chains that tie  
The hidden soul of harmony.  
That Orpheus' self may heave his head  
From golden slumber on a bed  
Of heap'd Elysian flowers, and hear  
Such strains as would have won the ear  
Of Pluto, to have quite set free  
His half-regain'd Eurydice.”

I hardly know anything which surpasses these exquisite lines, so poetical, and, at the same time, so thoroughly and absolutely English, and so free from all foreign idiom.

## 480 Addresses Hitherto Uncollected

Several stanzas of Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" are also remarkable for the power and accuracy with which rural scenery is presented, by grouping together many interesting objects in one picture.

Another poetical instance of the same beauty is the "Burial of Sir John Moore."

There are remarkable instances of the same skill in writing in some of the English prose writers, and especially in the productions of Daniel De Foe. No boy doubts that everything told of Robinson Crusoe is exactly true, because all is so circumstantially told; I believe I was about ten years of age when I first read Robinson Crusoe, and I remember still the distress and perspiration which I was thrown into by his dangerous condition in his boat. "There was a current on both sides, a strong eddy under the shore. The sea was making a great breach upon that point. It was not safe to keep the shore, for the breach, nor leave it for the stream. He could do nothing with his paddles, and there was not a breath of wind. A great depth of water, running like the sluice of a mill, carried him farther and farther from the eddy, which was on the left hand, so that he could not keep his boat on the edge of it, and as the current on the north side and the current on the south side would both join at a few leagues distant, he thought himself irrecoverably gone." And I thought so too. No man doubts, until he is informed of the contrary, that the historian of the plague of London actually saw all that he described, although De Foe was not born till a subsequent year.

It is a well known saying that the lie with circumstance is exceedingly calculated to deceive: and that is true, and it is equally true, not only that fictitious history gains credit and belief by the skilful use of circumstance, but that true history also may derive much additional interest from the same source.

In general, however, historical facts are to be related with rather a close and exclusive regard to such and such only as are important.

The art of historical composition owes its origin to the institutions of political freedom. Under the despotism of



## Dignity and Importance of History 481

the Ganges and the Indus, poetry flourished with oriental luxuriance from the earliest times; but in the immense compass of that rich, primeval literature, there is no history, in the high sense of that term. The banks of the Nile were crowded with historical monuments and memorials, stretching back into the remotest antiquity; and recent researches have discovered historical records of the Pharaohs in the scrolls of papyrus, some of them as ancient as the books of Moses. But in all these, there is no history composed according to the principles of art. In Greece, the epic song, founded on traditional legends, long preceded historical composition. I remember when I thought it the greatest wonder in the world that the poems of Homer should have been written at a period so remote that the earliest Grecian history should have given no probable account of their author. I did not then know, or had not then considered, that poetical writings, hymns, songs, accounts of personal adventures like those of Hercules and Jason, were, in the nature of things, earlier than regular historical narratives. Herodotus informs us that Homer lived four hundred years before his time. There is, nevertheless, something very wonderful in the poems of the old Ionian.

In general, it is true of the languages of nations that in their earlier ages they contain the substantial bone and sinew characteristic of their idiom, yet that they are rough, imperfect, and without polish. Thus Chaucer wrote English; but it is what we call old English, and, though always vigorous and often incomparably sweet, far remote from the smoothness and fluency belonging to the style of Pope and Addison. And Spenser wrote English, but, though rich, sonorous, and gorgeous, it has not the precision and accuracy of those later writers. It would seem that many books must be written and read, and a great many tongues and pens employed, before the language of a country reaches its highest polish and perfection. Now the wonder is, how a language should become so perfect, as was the Greek of Homer, at the time when that language could have been very little written. Doubtless, in succeeding ages, the compass of the Greek tongue was enlarged, as knowledge became more extended, and new things called for new words; but, within the sphere of Grecian knowledge, as it

existed in the time of Homer, it can scarce be questioned that his style is quite as perfect and polished as that of any of his successors, and perhaps more picturesque. The cause of this apparent anomaly is, that the language had not only been spoken for many centuries, by a people of great ingenuity and extraordinary good taste, but had been carefully cultivated by the recitation of poetical compositions on a great variety of religious and festive occasions.

It was not until the legislation of Solon had laid the foundation of free political institutions, and these institutions had unfolded a free and powerful and active political life in the Athenian Republic; until the discussion of public affairs in the Senate and the popular Assembly had created deliberative eloquence, and the open administration of justice in the courts, and under the laws established by Solon, had applied to the transactions between the citizens all the resources of refined logic, and drawn into the sphere of civil rights and obligations the power of high forensic oratory: it was not until these *results* of the legislative wisdom of Solon had been attained, that the art of history rose and flourished in Greece. With the decline of Grecian liberty began the decline in the art of historical composition. Histories were written under the Grecian Kings of Egypt; and a long line of writers flourished under the Byzantine Emperors; but the high art of historical composition, as perfected in the master-works of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, had perished in the death of political freedom.

The origin, progress and decline of history, as an art, were nearly the same in Rome. Sallust and Livy flourished at the close of the Republic and the commencement of the Empire. The great works of Tacitus himself are thought by many to betray the beginning of decline in the art, and later writers exhibit its fall.

The art of history again revived with the rise of the Italian Republics; and since the revival of literature, at the close of the middle ages, it will probably be found that three things naturally rise into importance together; that is to say, civil liberty, eloquence, and the art of historical writing.

Other foundation is not to be laid for authentic history than



## Dignity and Importance of History 483

well authenticated facts; but, on this foundation, structures may be raised of different characteristics, historical, biographical, and philosophical. One writer may confine himself to exact and minute narration; another, true to the general story, may embellish that story with more or less of external ornament, or of eloquence in description; a third, with a deeper philosophical spirit, may look into the causes of events and transactions, trace them with more profound research to their sources in the elements of human nature, or consider and solve, with more or less success, the most important question, how far the character of individuals has produced public events, or how far on the other hand public events have produced and formed the character of individuals.

Therefore one history of the same period, in human affairs, no more renders another history of the same period useless, or unadvisable, than the structure of one temple forbids the erection of another, or one statue of Apollo, Hercules, or Pericles should suppress all other attempts to produce statues of the same persons.

But, gentlemen, I must not dwell upon these general topics. We are Americans. We have a country all our own; we are all linked to its fates and its fortunes; it is already not without renown; it has been the theatre of some of the most important human transactions, and it may well become us to reflect on the topics and the means furnished for historical composition in our own land. I have abstained, on this occasion, gentlemen, from much comment on histories composed by European writers of modern times; and, for obvious reasons, I abstain altogether from remarks upon the writers of our own country.

Works have been written upon the history of the United States, other works upon the same subject are in progress, and, no doubt, new works are contemplated, and will be accomplished.

It need not be doubted, that what has been achieved by the great men who have preceded our generation, will be properly recorded by their successors. A country in which highly interesting events occur, is not likely to be destitute of scholars and authors fit to transmit those events to posterity. For the



## 484 Addresses Hitherto Uncollected

present, I content myself with a few general remarks on the subject.

In the history of the United States there are three epochs. The first extends from the origin and settlement of the Colonies, respectively, to the year 1774. During this, much the longest period, the history of the country is the history of separate communities and governments, with different laws and institutions, though all were of a common origin; not identical indeed, yet having a strong family resemblance, and all more or less reference to the Constitution, and common law of the parent country.

In all these Governments the principle of popular representation more or less prevailed. It existed in the State Governments, in counties, in large districts, and in townships and parishes. And it is not irrelevant to remark, that, by the exercise of the rights enjoyed under these popular principles, the whole people came to be prepared, beyond the example of all others, for the observance of the same principles in the establishment of national institutions, and the administration of sovereign powers.

The second period extends from 1774, through the great event of the Declaration of Independence, in which the Colonies were called States, and, through the existence of the Confederation, down to the period of the adoption of the present Constitution. The third embraces the period from 1789 to the present time.

To avoid dealing with events too recent, it might be well to consider the third era, or epoch, as terminating with the close of President Washington's administration, and going back into the second, so far as to trace the events and occurrences which showed the necessity of a general government, different from that framed by the Articles of Confederation, and which prepared the minds of the people for the adoption of the present Constitution. No doubt, the assembly of the first Continental Congress may be regarded as the era at which the union of these States commenced. This took place in Philadelphia, the city distinguished by the great civil events of our early history, on the 5th of September, 1774, on which day the first Continental Congress assembled. Delegates were present from New

## Dignity and Importance of History 485

Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Let this day be ever remembered! It saw assembled from the several Colonies those great men whose names have come down to us, and will descend to all posterity. Their proceedings are remarkable for simplicity, dignity, and unequalled ability. At that day, probably, there could have been convened on no part of this globe an equal number of men, possessing greater talents and ability, or animated by a higher and more patriotic motive. They were men full of the spirit of the occasion, imbued deeply with the general sentiment of the country, of large comprehension, of long foresight, and of few words. They made no speeches for ostentation, they sat with closed doors, and their great maxim was "*faire sans dire.*" It is true, they only wrote; but the issuing of such writings, on authority, and at such a crisis, was action, high, decisive, national action. They knew the history of the past, they were alive to all the difficulties and all the duties of the present, and they acted from the first, as if the future were all open before them. Peyton Randolph was unanimously chosen President, and Charles Thomson was appointed Secretary. In such a constellation, it would be invidious to point out the bright particular stars. Let me only say, what none can consider injustice to others, that George Washington was one of the number.

The proceedings of the assembly were introduced by religious observances, and devout supplications to the Throne of Grace for the inspirations of wisdom and the spirit of good counsels.

On the second day of the session it was ordered that a committee should be appointed to state the rights of the Colonies, the instances in which those rights had been violated, and the means proper to be pursued for their restoration; and another committee to examine and report upon the several statutes of the English Parliament which had been passed, affecting the trade and manufactures of the Colonies. The members of these committees were chosen on the following day. Immediately afterwards Congress took up, as the foundation of their



## 486 Addresses Hitherto Uncollected

proceedings, certain resolutions adopted, just before the time of their assembling, by delegates from towns in the county of Suffolk, and especially the town of Boston.

Boston, the early victim of the infliction of wrong by the mother country, the early champion of American liberty; Boston, though in this vast country she may be now surpassed by other cities in numbers, in commerce and wealth, can never be surpassed in the renown of her revolutionary history. She will stand acknowledged, while the world doth stand, as the early promoter and champion of the rights of the Colonies. The English crown frowned upon her with severity and indignation; it only made her stand more erect and put on a face of greater boldness and defiance. The Parliament poured upon her all its indignation; it only held her up with greater illumination, and drew towards her a more enthusiastic attachment and veneration from the country. Boston, as she was in heart, in principle and conduct in 1774, so may she remain till her three hills shall sink into the sea and be no more remembered among men.

Gentlemen, these early proceedings of the citizens of Boston and other inhabitants of the county of Suffolk deserve to be written where all posterity may read them. They were carried to the representative of royalty by the first distinguished martyr in the cause of liberty, Joseph Warren. How fit that he who was not long afterwards to fall in the defence of this liberty, and to seal his love of country with his blood, full of its spirit and its principles, should be charged with its remonstrances to the throne of England! No encomium, no eulogy upon the State of which I have the honor to be a citizen, can exceed that which is expressed in the unanimous resolution of the first American Congress of the 8th of October, 1774, in these words:

*“Resolved, That this Congress approve the opposition of the Massachusetts Bay to the execution of the late acts of Parliament; and if the same shall be attempted to be carried into execution by force, in such case all America ought to support them in their opposition.”*

Gentlemen, I will not believe that the ancient Commonwealth of Massachusetts can ever depart from her true character or

## Dignity and Importance of History 487

cease to deserve this immortal honor; I think it impossible. But should she be left to such forgetfulness of herself and all that belongs to her, should she temporarily or permanently stray away from the paths of her ancient patriotism, should she, which Heaven avert, be willing to throw off her original and all-American mantle and to disrobe herself, in the presence of the world, of all her nationality of character, there are others who would eagerly seize that mantle, and who would show themselves capable of wearing it with grace, dignity, and power. I need not say here where those others are to be found. I am in the city in which Washington first took upon himself the administration of the Government, I am near the spot on which all hearts and all hopes were concentrated in 1789. I bring the whole scene, with all its deep interests, before me. I see the crowds that fill and throng the streets, I see the ten thousand faces anxious to look on him to whose wisdom, prudence, and patriotism the destinies of the country are now committed. I see the august form, I behold the serene face of Washington; I observe his reverent manner when he rises in the presence of countless multitudes, and, looking up with religious awe to heaven, solemnly swears before those multitudes and before Him that sitteth on the circle of those heavens, that he will support the Constitution of his country, so help him God!

And I can hear the shouts and acclamations that rend the air, I see outpouring tears of joy and hope, I see men clasping each other's hands, and I hear them exclaim: "We have at last a country; we have a Union; and in that Union is strength. We have a government able to keep us together, and we have a chief magistrate, an object of confidence, attachment, and love to us all."

Citizens of New York, men of this generation, is there anything which warms your hearts more than these recollections? Or can you contemplate the unparalleled growth of your city, in population and all human blessings, without feeling that the spot is hallowed and the hour consecrated, where and when your career of prosperity and happiness began?

But, gentlemen, my heart would sink within me, and voice and speech would depart from me, if I were compelled to believe that your fidelity to the Constitution of the country, signal and



## 488 Addresses Hitherto Uncollected

unquestioned as it is, could ever exceed that of the State whose soil was moistened by the blood of the first heroes in the cause of liberty, and whose history has been characterized from the beginning by zealous and uniform support of the principles of Washington.

This first Congress sat from the 5th day of September until the 26th of October, and it then dissolved. Its whole proceedings are embraced in forty-nine pages; but these few pages contain the substance and the original form and pressure of our American liberty, before a government of checks and balances and departments, with separate and well defined powers, was established. Its principal papers are: an address to the people of Great Britain, written by John Jay; a memorial to the inhabitants of the British colonies, written by Richard Henry Lee; a petition to the King and an address to the inhabitants of Quebec, written by John Dickinson.\*

There is one resolution of the old Congress, adopted on the 14th of March, 1776, which has never received so much attention as it deserves.

It is in these words:

*“Resolved, That it be recommended to the several assemblies, conventions, councils, or committees of safety, immediately to cause all persons to be disarmed within their respective Colonies, who are notoriously disaffected to the cause of America, or who have not associated and refuse to associate to defend by arms the United Colonies against the hostile attempts of the British fleets and armies.”*

Extract from the minutes.

CHARLES THOMSON,  
Secretary.

\* In a copy of the printed journal of the proceedings of the Provincial Congress of 1774, which belonged to Cæsar Rodney, and which contains interlineations, probably in his handwriting, the petition to the King is stated to have been written by John Adams, and corrected by John Dickinson. Its authorship is claimed also for Richard Henry Lee, by his biographer, probably on the ground that he was the chairman of the committee, and may have prepared the original draft of the petition which was re-committed, Mr. Dickinson being at the same time added to the committee; and it is included in the edition of Mr. Dickinson's writings published at Wilmington during his lifetime, and superintended by himself. Mr. Rodney's copy of the journal ascribes the memorial to the inhabitants of the British colonies, to William Livingston. But there is the best proof that it was written by Richard Henry Lee.

## Dignity and Importance of History 489

Several of the governors of the States, conventions, councils, or committees of safety took immediate measures for carrying this resolution into effect. The proceedings in consequence of it have been preserved, however, only in a few States. The fullest returns which can be found are believed to be from New Hampshire and New York. The form adopted was a recital of the resolution of Congress, and then the promise, or pledge, in the following words :

“In consequence of the above resolution of the Continental Congress, and to show our determination in joining our American brethren in defending the lives, liberties, and properties of the inhabitants of the United Colonies: We, the subscribers, do hereby solemnly engage and promise that we will, to the utmost of our power, at the risk of our lives and fortunes, with arms, oppose the hostile proceedings of the British fleets and armies against the United American Colonies.”

In the mountainous State of New Hampshire and among the highest of its mountains, then containing only a few scattered settlements, was the township of Salisbury. The Merrimac River, forming its eastern boundary, now so pleasant in scenery, and with so much richness and industry on its banks, was then a roaring and foaming stream seeking its way, amidst immense forests on either side, from the White Mountains to the sea. The settlers in this township were collected, and the promise or pledge proposed by the Continental Congress, of life and fortune, presented to them. “All,” as the record says, “freely signed except two.”

In looking to this record, thus connected with the men of my own birthplace, I confess I was gratified to find who were the signers and who were the dissentients. Among the former was he from whom I am immediately descended, with all his brothers, and his whole kith and kin. This is sufficient emblazonry for my arms, enough of heraldry for me.

Are there young men before me who wish to learn and to imitate the spirit of their ancestors, who wish to live and breathe in that spirit, who desire that every pulsation of their hearts and every aspiration of their ambition shall be American and nothing but American? Let them master the contents

## 490 Addresses Hitherto Uncollected

of the immortal papers of the first Congress, and fully imbue themselves with their sentiments.

The great Lord Chatham spoke of this assembly in terms which have caused my heart to thrill, and my eyes to be moistened, whenever I recollect them, from my first reading of them to this present hour :

“ When your Lordships look at the papers transmitted us from America, when you consider their decency, firmness, and wisdom, you cannot but respect their cause and wish to make it your own. For myself, I must declare and avow that in all my reading and observation, and it has been my favorite study (I have read Thucydides and have studied and admired the master-states of the world), that for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusion under such a complication of difficult circumstances, no nation or body of men can stand in preference to the general Congress at Philadelphia. I trust it is obvious to your Lordships that all attempts to impose servitude upon such men, to establish despotism over such a mighty continental *nation*, must be vain, must be fatal. We shall be *forced ultimately to retract* ; let us retract while we can, not when we must.”

This first Congress, for the ability which it manifested, the principles which it proclaimed, and the characters of those who composed it, makes an illustrious chapter in our American history. Its members should be regarded not only individually, but as in a group ; they should be viewed as living pictures exhibiting young America as it then was, and when the seeds of its public destiny were beginning to start into life, well described by our early motto as being full of energy and prospered by Heaven :

“ Non sine Dis, animosus infans.”

Some of the members of this Congress have lived to my time, and I have had the honor of seeing and knowing them ; and there are those in this assembly, doubtless, who have beheld the stately form of Washington, and looked upon the mild and intelligent face, and heard the voice of John Jay.

For myself, I love to travel back in imagination, to place myself in the midst of this assembly, this Union of greatness and patriotism, and to contemplate as if I had witnessed its



## Dignity and Importance of History 491

profound deliberations and its masterly exhibitions, both of the rights and of the wrongs of the country.

I may not dwell longer on this animating and enchanting picture. Another grand event succeeds it, and that is, the convention which framed the Constitution, the spirited debates in the States by the ablest men of those States, upon its adoption, and finally the first Congress, filled by the gray-haired men of the Revolution, and younger and vigorous patriots and lovers of liberty, and Washington himself in the principal chair of state, surrounded by his heads of department, selected from those who enjoyed the greatest portion of his own regard, and stood highest in the esteem of their country.

Neither Thucydides nor Xenophon, neither Sallust nor Livy, presents any picture of an assembly of public men, or any scene of history which, in its proper grandeur, or its large and lasting influence upon the happiness of mankind, equals this.

Its importance, indeed, did not at the moment strike the minds of ordinary men. But Burke saw it with an intuition clear as the light of heaven. Charles Fox saw it; and sagacious and deep thinking minds over all Europe perceived it.

England, England, how would thy destinies have been altered if the advice of Chatham, Burke, and Fox had been followed!

Shall I say altered for the better? — certainly not. England is stronger and richer at this moment than if she had listened to the unheeded words of her great statesmen. Neither nations nor individuals always foresee that which their own interest and happiness require.

Our greatest blessings often arise from the disappointment of our most anxious hopes and our most fervent wishes:

————— “Let us know,  
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,  
When our deep plots do fail; and that should teach us,  
There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough hew them how we will.”

Instead of subject colonies, England now beholds on these shores a mighty rival, rich, powerful, intelligent like herself.

And may these countries be forever friendly rivals. May their power and greatness, sustaining themselves, be always directed to the promotion of the peace, the prosperity, the enlightenment, and the liberty of mankind; and if it be their united destiny, in the course of human events, that they be called upon, in the cause of humanity and in the cause of freedom, to stand against a world in arms, they are of a race and of a blood to meet that crisis without shrinking from danger and without quailing in the presence of earthly power.

Gentlemen, I must bring these desultory remarks to a close. I terminate them where perhaps I ought to have begun,—namely, with a few words on the present state and condition of our country, and the prospects which are before her.

Unborn ages and visions of glory crowd upon my soul, the realization of all which, however, is in the hands and good pleasure of Almighty God, but, under His divine blessing, it will be dependent on the character and the virtues of ourselves and of our posterity.

If classical history has been found to be, is now, and shall continue to be, the concomitant of free institutions and of popular eloquence, what a field is opening to us for another Herodotus, another Thucydides, and another Livy! And let me say, gentlemen, that if we and our posterity shall be true to the Christian religion, if we and they shall live always in the fear of God, and shall respect His commandments, if we and they shall maintain just moral sentiments and such conscientious convictions of duty as shall control the heart and life, we may have the highest hopes of the future fortunes of our country; and if we maintain those institutions of government and that political union, exceeding all praise as much as it exceeds all former examples of political associations, we may be sure of one thing, that while our country furnishes materials for a thousand masters of the historic art, it will afford no topic for a Gibbon. It will have no decline and fall. It will go on prospering and to prosper. But if we and our posterity reject religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us that



## Dignity and Importance of History 493

shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity. Should that catastrophe happen, let it have no history! Let the horrible narrative never be written! Let its fate be like that of the lost books of Livy, which no human eye shall ever read, or the missing Pleiad, of which no man can ever know more than that it is lost, and lost forever!

But, gentlemen, I will not take my leave of you in a tone of despondency. We may trust that Heaven will not forsake us, nor permit us to forsake ourselves. We must strengthen ourselves and gird up our loins with new resolution; we must counsel each other, and, determined to sustain each other in the support of the Constitution, prepare to meet manfully and united whatever of difficulty or of danger, whatever of effort or of sacrifice the Providence of God may call upon us to meet. Are we of this generation so derelict, have we so little of the blood of our revolutionary fathers coursing through our veins, that we cannot preserve what they achieved? The world will cry out "shame" upon us if we show ourselves unworthy to be the descendants of those great and illustrious men who fought for their liberty and secured it to their posterity by the Constitution of the United States.

Gentlemen, exigencies arise in the history of nations when competition and rivalry, disputes and contentions are powerful. Exigencies arise in which good men of all parties and all shades of political sentiment are required to reconsider their opinions and differences, to readjust their positions, and to bring themselves together, if they can, in the spirit of harmony. Such a state of things, in my judgment, has happened in our day. An exigency has arisen, the duties and the dangers of which should sink deep within all our hearts. We have a great and wise Constitution. We have grown, flourished, and prospered under it with a degree of rapidity unequalled in the history of the world. Founded on the basis of equal civil rights, its provisions secure perfect equality and freedom; those who live under it are equal and enjoy the same privileges. It is to be presumed that all wise and good men of the nation have the same end in view, though they may take different means to obtain that great end, — the preservation and protection of the



Constitution and Government. If, then, they have one and the same object, they must unite in the means and be willing each to surrender something to the opinions of others, to secure the harmony of the whole. Unity of purpose should produce harmony of action. This general object then, being the preservation of the Constitution, the only efficient means to accomplish this end is the union of all its friends. The Constitution has enemies, secret and professed, but they cannot disguise the fact that it secures us many benefits. These enemies are unlike in character, but they all act for the same purpose. Some of them are enthusiasts, self-sufficient and headstrong. They fancy that they can strike out for themselves a better path than that laid down for them, as the son of Apollo thought he could find a better course across the heavens for the sun.

“ Thus Phaeton once, amidst the Ethereal plains,  
 Leaped on his father’s car, and seized the reins,  
 Far from his course impelled the glowing sun,  
 Till nature’s laws to wild disorder run.”

Heat, in the intellectual constitution of these enthusiasts, is distributed just exactly as it should not be; they have hot heads and cold hearts. They are rash, reckless, and fierce for change, and with no affection for the existing institutions of their country.

Other enemies there are, more cool and with more calculation. These have a deeper and more fixed and dangerous purpose; they formerly spoke of a forcible resistance to the provisions of the Constitution; they now speak of secession. Let me say, gentlemen, that secession from us is accession elsewhere. He who renounces the protection of the “stars and stripes,” will assuredly shelter himself under another flag; that will happen from inevitable necessity.

These malcontents find it not difficult to inflame men’s passions; they attribute all the misfortunes of individual men of different States, sections, and communities, all want of prosperity — to the Union. There is a strange co-operation of what are called antagonistic opinions. Extremes meet and act together.

There are those in the country who profess, in their own words, even to hate the Constitution because it tolerates in the

## Dignity and Importance of History 495

Southern States the institutions existing therein; and there are others who profess to hate it, and do hate it, because it does not better sustain these institutions. These opposite classes meet and shake hands together, and say: "Let us see what we can do to accomplish our common end. Give us dissolution, revolution, secession, anarchy, and then let us have a general scramble for our separate objects." Now the friends of the Constitution must rally and unite. They must forget the things which are behind, and act with immovable firmness, like a band of brothers, with moderation and conciliation, forgetting past disagreements and looking only to the great object set before them,—the preservation of the Constitution bequeathed to them by their ancestors. They must gird up their loins for the work. It is a duty which they owe to these ancestors and to the generations which are to succeed them.

Gentlemen, I give my confidence, my countenance, my heart and hand, my entire co-operation to all good men, without reference to the past, or pledge for the future, who are willing to stand by the Constitution.

I will quarrel with no man about past differences, I will reproach no one, but only say that we stand together here in a most interesting period of our history, with the same general love of country, the same veneration for ancestry, and the same regard for posterity; and let us act in that spirit of union which actuated our ancestors when they framed the institutions which it is ours to preserve. But I will not carry my toleration so far as to justify, in the slightest degree, any defection from that great and absolutely essential point, the preservation of the Union; and I think every man should make his sentiments known on this point. For myself I have no hesitation, and cannot act with those who have. Other questions, questions of policy, are subordinate. This is paramount. Every man who is for the Union should come out boldly and say so, without condition or hypothesis, without ifs and ands and buts. What Cicero says on another occasion is fully applicable to this: "*denique inscriptum sit, patres conscripti, in fronte uniuscujusque civis, quod de republica sentiat.*" Let every man bear inscribed on his forehead what are his sentiments concerning the republic. There are persons weak enough,



## 496 Addresses Hitherto Uncollected

foolish enough, to think and to say that if the Constitution which holds these States together should be broken up, there would be found some other and some better chain of connection. This is rash! This is rash! I no more believe it possible that if this Union be dissolved, held together as it now is by the Constitution, especially as I look on these thirty-one States, with their various institutions, spreading over so vast a country, with such varieties of climate, — I say, I no more believe it possible that this Union, should it once be dissolved, could ever again be re-formed, and all the States re-associated, than I believe it possible that, if, by the fiat of Almighty power, the law of gravitation should be abolished, and the orbs which compose the Universe should rush into illimitable space, jostling against each other, they could be brought back and re-adjusted into harmony by any new principle of attraction. I hardly know whether the manner of our political death would be an aggravation, or an alleviation of our fate. We shall die no lingering death. We shall fall victims to neither war, pestilence, nor famine. An earthquake would shake the foundations of the globe, pull down the pillars of heaven, and bury us at once in endless darkness. Such may be the fate of this country and its institutions. May I never live to see that day! May I not survive to hear any apocalyptic angel crying through the heavens, with such a voice as announced the fall of Babylon, "Ἐπεσεν, ἔπεσεν, ἡ Ἀμερικὴ ἡ μεγάλη, καὶ ἐγένετο κατοικητήριον δαιμόνων καὶ φυλακὴ παντὸς πνεύματος ἀκαθάρτου.

Gentlemen, inspiring auspices, this day, surround us and cheer us. It is the anniversary of the birth of Washington. We should know this, even if we had lost our calendars, for we should be reminded of it by the shouts of joy and gladness. The whole atmosphere is redolent of his name; hills and forests, rocks and rivers, echo and re-echo his praises. All the good, whether learned or unlearned, high or low, rich or poor, feel this day that there is one treasure common to them all, and that is the fame and character of Washington. They recount his deeds, ponder over his principles and teachings, and resolve to be more and more guided by them in the future. To the old and the young, to all born in the land, and



## Dignity and Importance of History 497

to all whose love of liberty has brought them from foreign shores to make this the home of their adoption, the name of Washington is this day an exhilarating theme. Americans by birth are proud of his character, and exiles from foreign shores are eager to participate in admiration of him; and it is true that he is, this day, here, everywhere, all the world over, more an object of love and regard than on any day since his birth.

Gentlemen, on Washington's principles, and under the guidance of his example, will we and our children uphold the Constitution. Under his military leadership, our fathers conquered; and under the outspread banner of his political and constitutional principles will we also conquer. To that standard, we shall adhere, and uphold it, through evil report and through good report. We will meet danger, we will meet death, if they come, in its protection; and we will struggle on, in daylight and in darkness, aye, in the thickest darkness, with all the storms which it may bring with it, till,

“ Danger's troubled night is o'er,  
And the star of Peace return.”