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Everett's Address at Williams College

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EVERETT'S ADDRESS

AT WILLIAMS COLLEGE.

In August, 1837, Governor EVERETT delivered an address before a Literary Society of Williams College, in Berkshire, the westernmost county of Massachusetts. Were we disposed to heap needless praises, this performance would afford abundant occasion for eulogy. It is in all respects worthy of its author: and to those who know the full import of *that* assertion, it is tribute enough for almost any man. What induces us now to notice this Address, however, is much less a wish to honor him for this new effort in the cause of human improvement—that noble cause, of which he has long been so illustrious a champion—than a desire to present some interesting discussions which we find here, of several important questions.

But before we come to those discussions, let us, by way of making the reader enter more vividly into the spirit of the Address, give him some additional idea of its locality.

'The pleasant village where we are assembled,' says Mr. Everett, 'contains, within view of the spot where we stand, the site of Fort Hoosack, and a mile or two east of us stood Fort Massachusetts. The plough has passed over its rude lines; but what scenes of humble heroism and almost forgotten valor are associated with its name! It was the bulwark of the frontier in the days of its infancy. The trembling mother on the banks of the Connecticut,—in the heart of Worcester,—clasped her babes closer, at an idle rumor that Fort Massachusetts had given way. A hundred villages reposed in the strength of this stout guardian of New England's Thermopylae, through which, for two generations, the French and Canadian foe strove to burst into the colonies. These are recollections of an earlier day. A few miles to the north of us lies that famous field of Bennington, to which, sixty years ago, this day and this hour, your fathers poured from every village in the neighborhood, at the summons of Stark.'

It is impossible not to be struck with the following impressive display of the importance of education:

'If I wished to express most forcibly the importance, the dignity, and the obligation of the great work of education, I believe it might best be done by taking our stand at once on the simple enunciation of the spiritual and immortal nature of the thing to be educated;—the mind of man. Then if we wished to give life and distinctness to the ideas of the importance of education, which result from this contemplation, we might do so by a single glance at the number and importance of the branches of knowledge, to which education furnishes the key. I might allude to the admirable properties of language, which it is the first business of education to impart; the wonders of the written and spoken tongue as the instrument of thought,—wonders which daily use scarcely divests of their almost miraculous character. I might glance at that which is usually next taught to the unfolding mind, the astonishing power of the science of numbers, with which on the one hand we regulate the humblest details of domestic economy, and on the other compute the swiftness of the solar beam, and survey, and as it were, stake out from constellation to constellation the great railroad of the heavens, on which the comet comes blazing upward from the depths of the universe. I might proceed with the branches of knowledge to which education introduces us, and ask of geography

to marshal before us the living nations; and of history to rouse the generations of the elder world from their pompous mausoleums or humble graves to rehearse their fortunes. I might call on natural science to open the volumes in which she has not merely written down the names, the forms, and the qualities of the various subjects of the animal, vegetable, and mineral world now in existence,—the vast census, if I may so express it, of the three kingdoms of nature; but where she has also recorded the catalogues of her perished children,—races of the animal and vegetable world buried by the deluge beneath the everlasting rocks. Yes, winged creatures twenty feet in height, whose footsteps have lately been discovered imprinted in sand-stone on the banks of Connecticut river; enormous mammoths and mastodons, of which no living type has existed since the flood, brought to light from blocks of Siberian ice or dug up in the morasses of our own continent; petrified skeletons of portentous crocodiles and megalotheria seventy feet in length, covered with scales like the armadillo,—and which for ages on ages have been extinct,—have by the creative power of educated mind been made to start out of the solid rock. Sand-stone and gypsum have opened their ponderous and marble jaws, and a host of monstrous forms have risen into day;—the recovered monuments of a world of lost giants.'

'But leaving with these transient glances all attempt to magnify the work of education, by pointing out the astonishing results to which it guides the well-trained mind, a much shorter method might be pursued with one who needed to be impressed with its importance. I would take such an one to a place of instruction, to a school, yes, to a child's school,—(for there is no step in the process more important than the first,) and I would say,—in those faint sparks of intelligence, just brightening over the rudiments of learning, you behold the germ of so many rational and immortal spirits. In a few years, you, and I, and all now on the stage shall have passed away, and there on those little seats, primer in hand, are arranged our successors. Yes, when the volume of natural science, and nature with it, shall have vanished;—when the longest periods of human history shall have run together to a point;—when the loud, clear voices of genius, and the multitudinous tongues of nations, shall alike be hushed forever, those infant children will have ripened into immortal beings, looking back from the mansions of eternity with joy or sorrow, on the direction given to their intellectual and moral natures, in the dawn of their existence! If there is any one not deeply impressed by this single reflection with the importance of education, he is beyond the reach of anything that can be urged, by way either of illustration or argument.'

It is a prevailing opinion, that an early stage of society, when civilization is but little advanced, is the time of highest poetic excellence. The philosophical poet, Imlac, in *Rasselas*, seems to espouse this opinion, and gives the reasons for it—namely, that the first poetry of every nation gave the bent to public taste, and retained by consent the credit which it had acquired by accident; and moreover, that the earliest bards seized upon the best subjects of description and the most probable events for fiction, leaving to their successors nothing but transcriptions of the same incidents, new namings of the same characters, and new combinations of the same images.* When to these reasonings is added the influence of the venerable saying—'A poet is *born*—not *made*,'—the point seems clear to most minds, that an advanced state of cultivation is unfriendly, or at least not at all conducive, to

* We give this account of Imlac's reasoning from memory—not having *Rasselas* before us.

the highest effusions of poetry. This opinion, so discouraging to those who hope highly of man's progress, through the instrumentality of his continued efforts,—this opinion, so mischievous in repressing the efforts which that hope inspires,—is combatted by Mr. Everett with unanswerable power. Let not the length of the extract deter any reader:

'I deem the notion, that the first age was necessarily the best, to be a mere prejudice; and the idea that a partially improved age and a limited degree of knowledge are in themselves and essentially more favorable to the exercise of original genius, in any form, appears to me to be a proposition as degrading as it is unsound.

'On the contrary, I believe that truth is the great inspirer;—the knowledge of truth the aliment and the instrument of mind; the material of thought, feeling, and fancy. I do not mean that there is no beauty in poetical language founded on scientific error;—that it is not, for instance, consistent with poetry to speak of the rising sun or the arch of heaven. Poetry delights in these sensible images and assimilations of ideas in themselves distinct. From the imperfection of human language, it will perhaps always be necessary to describe many things in the material, and still more in the moral and metaphysical world, under similitudes which fall greatly beneath their reality:

'Thus in Shakspeare,

the floor of Heaven
Is thick intaid with patines of bright gold.

'In Spenser's Faery Queen,

The sacred fire, which burneth mightily
In living breasts, was kindled first above,
Among the eternal spheres and lampy Heavens.

'In Paradise Lost, the moon divides her empire

With thousand thousand stars, that then appeared
Spangling the universe.

'Now, though these images, separately weighed at the present day, may seem beneath the dignity of the subject to which they are applied, they are poetical and pleasing, (with the exception possibly of *lumpy*;) nor do I know that in any state of science, however advanced, such language will cease to please.

'But the point I maintain is this, that, as knowledge extends, the range of all imagery is enlarged, poetical language is drawn from a wider circle, and, what is far more important, that the conception kindles by the contemplation of higher objects.

'Let us illustrate this point still further, in reference to the effect on poetry of the sublime discoveries of modern astronomy. The ancients, as we all know, formed but humble conceptions of the material universe. The earth was the centre; the sun, moon, and five planets were shining bodies revolving about it, to give it light, and the stars were luminaries hung up as lamps in a vaulted sky. This philosophy not only lies at the foundation of the imagery, under which Homer represents the heavens, but it prevailed so long, and falls in so entirely with the impressions made upon the eye, that it has given a character to the traditional language of poetry even to the present day. Shakspeare, and Spenser, and Milton, as we have just seen, in this respect, draw their images from the same source as Virgil, Homer, and Hesiod.

'Now I cannot but think, that, when the sublime discoveries of modern astronomy shall have become as thoroughly wrought into the vocabulary and the intelligence of the community, as the humble and erroneous conceptions of the ancients, the great and creative minds will derive from them, a vastly grander range of poetical illustration. I cannot but think, that, by the study of this one science alone,—thought, speech, and literature will be wonderfully exalted. It is not in reference to poetry, a mere matter of poetical imagery. The ideas formed of divine wisdom and power,—of infinite space,—of stupendous magnitude and force,—of the grandeur and harmony of the material universe,—are among the highest materials of thought and the most

prolific elements of poetical conception. For this reason, in the same proportion in which the apparent circuit of the heavens has been enlarged and the science of astronomy extended by the telescope, the province of imagination and thought must be immeasurably extended also. The soul becomes great by the habitual contemplation of great objects. As the discovery of a new continent, upon the surface of the globe by Columbus, gave a most powerful impulse to the minds of men in every department, it is impossible that the discovery of worlds and systems of worlds, in the immensity of space, should not wonderfully quicken the well instructed genius. As the ambition, the avarice, the adventure, the legion host of human passions rushed out from the old world upon the new, so the fancy must wing its way, with unwonted boldness, into the new-found universe.

Beyond the solar walk or milky way.

'In Paradise Lost, there is a struggle between the old and new philosophy. The telescope was known, but had not yet revolutionized the science of astronomy. Even Lord Bacon did not adopt the Copernican system, and Galileo's wonderful instrument had produced scarce any result, beyond a more distinct conception of the magnitudes of the bodies, which compose the solar system. But it is pleasing to remark, with what promptness Milton seizes upon this new topic of poetical illustration. In his very first description of the arch-fiend, we are told of

his ponderous shield,
Ethereal temper, massy, large, and round,
Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders, like the moon, whose orb,
Through optic glass, the Tuscan artist views,
At evening from the top of Fesol6,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
Rivers, or mountains, in her spotty globe.

'Grand and sublime as is this imagery, it is borrowed from the lowest order of the wonders unfolded by the telescope. I cannot but think, if the whole circle of modern astronomy had been disclosed to the mind of Milton, that it would have filled his soul with still brighter visions. Could he have learned, from the lips of its great discoverer, the organic law which regulates the entire motions of the heavens;—could he have witnessed the predicted return of a comet, and been taught that of these mysterious bodies, seven millions are supposed to run their wild career within the orbit of the planet Uranus; and that, by estimation, one hundred millions of stars, each probably the centre of a system as vast as our own,—multitudes of them combined into mighty systems of suns wondrously complicated with each other—are distributed throughout space, would these stupendous views have been lost on his mind? I can never believe that truth, the great quickener and inspirer, revealed in such majestic glimpses, would have fallen inoperative on such an intellect. He would have awoke to a new existence in the light of such a philosophy. Escaping from the wholly false, and the partly false, the "utter and the middle darkness" of the Ptolemaic system, he would have felt the "sovereign vital lamp" of pure science in his inmost soul. He would have borrowed from La Place the wings of the boldest analysis, and would have flown to the uttermost parts of creation, where he could have seen through the telescope the bands of Orion loosened, and the gems of his glittering belt blazing out into empyreal suns;—while crowded galaxies, "powdered with stars" rushed asunder into illimitable systems. He would have soared with the Herschells, father and son, to the outer regions of space, and embraced the whole Newtonian philosophy in his immortal verse.'

Of a similar cheering tendency, and pertinent to the same argument, is the following passage, from a different part of the Address. We can hardly say, whether it is more suited to charm by its beauty, or to exalt by the ethereal sublimity of the views it presents:

'A continued progress in the intellectual world is consistent with all that we know of the laws that govern

it, and with all experience. A presentiment of it lies deep in the soul of man, spark as it is of the divine nature. The craving after excellence, the thirst for truth and beauty, has never been,—never can be,—fully slaked at the fountains, which have flowed beneath the touch of the enchanter's wand. Man listens to the heavenly strain, and straightway becomes desirous of still loftier melodies. It has nourished and strengthened instead of satiating his taste. Fed by the divine aliment he can enjoy more, he can conceive more, he can himself perform more.'

In the subjoined extracts, are some enlightened criticisms upon the four greatest poets of the world. We place the name of each poet as a *head* to the observations upon him.

SHAKSPEARE.

'With a reverence as deep as honesty or manliness permits for the master geniuses of our race,—a reverence nourished by the fond and never intermitted study of their works,—I may say that I catch, from this very study of their writings and characters, a conception, that, high as they rose, they might have risen higher. I can sometimes behold the soil of the world upon their snow-white robes, and the rust of human passion upon the glittering edge of their wit. It was long ago said by the great Roman critic, that the good Homer sometimes nods;—and Shakspeare, the most brilliant example unquestionably of a triumph over the defects of education,—mental and moral,—too often exhibits traces of both. As he floats on eagle's wings along what he nobly calls "the brightest heaven of invention," he is sometimes borne, by an unchastened taste, into a misty region, where the understanding endeavors in vain to follow him; and sometimes, as he skims with the swallow's ease and swiftness along the ground, too confident of his power to soar when he will up to the rosy gates of the morning,—he stoops, and stoops, and stoops, till the tips of his graceful pinions are sadly dagged in the mire.'

HOMER.

'Not a ray of pure spiritual illumination shines through the sweet visions of the father of poetry. The light of his genius, like that of the moon as he describes it in the eighth Iliad,* is serene, transparent, and heavenly fair; it streams into the deepest glades and settles on the mountain tops of the material and social world; but for all that concerns the spiritual nature, it is cold, watery, and unquickening. The great test of the elevation of the poet's mind, and of the refinement of the age in which he lives, is the distinctness, power, and purity with which he conceives the spiritual world. In all else he may be the observer, the recorder, the painter; but in this dread sphere he must assume the province, which his name imports; he must be the *maker*:—creating his own spiritual world by the highest action of his mind, upon all the external and internal materials of thought. If ever there was a poetical vision, calculated not to purify, and to exalt, but to abase and to sadden, it is the visit of Ulysses to the lower regions.† The ghosts of the illustrious departed are drawn before him by the reeking fumes of the recent sacrifice; and the hero stands guard with his drawn sword, to drive away the shade of his own mother from the gory trench, over which she hovers, hankering after the raw blood. Does it require an essay on the laws of the human mind to shew, that the intellect which contemplates the great mystery of our being, under this ghastly and frivolous imagery, has never been born to a spiritual life, nor caught a glimpse of the highest heaven of poetry?'

DANTE.

'In Dante, for the first time in an uninspired bard, the dawn of a spiritual day breaks upon us. Although the shadows of superstition rest upon him, yet the strains of the prophets were in his ears, and the light of divine truth—strong though clouded—was in his soul. As we stand with him on the threshold of the world of sorrows, and read the awful inscription over

the portal,* a chill from the dark valley of the shadow of death comes over the heart. The compass of poetry contains no image which surpasses this dismal inscription in solemn grandeur;—nor is there anywhere a more delicious strain of tender poetic beauty, than that of the distant vesper bell, which seems to mourn for the departing day, as it is heard by the traveller just leaving his home.† But Dante lived in an age, when Christianity—if I may so speak—was paganized. Much of his poem, substance as well as ornament, is heathen. Too much of his inspiration is drawn from the stormy passions of life. The warmth with which he glowed is too often the kindling of scorn and indignation, burning under a sense of intolerable wrong. The holiest muse may string his lyre, but it is too often the incensed partizan that sweeps the strings. The divine comedy, as he calls his wonderful work, is much of it mere mortal satire.'

MILTON.

'In *Paradise Lost*, we feel as if we were admitted to the outer courts of the Infinite. In that all-glorious temple of genius inspired by truth, we catch the full diapason of the heavenly organ. With its first choral swell the soul is lifted from the earth. In the *Divina Commedia*, the man, the Florentine, the exiled Ghibelline, stands out from first to last breathing defiance and revenge. Milton in some of his prose works, betrays the partizan also,—but in his poetry we see him in the white robes of the minstrel, with upturned though sightless eyes, rapt in meditation at the feet of the heavenly muse. Dante in his dark vision descends to the depths of the world of perdition, and, homeless fugitive as he is, drags his proud and prosperous enemies down with him, and buries them—doubly destroyed—in the flaming sepulchres of the lowest hell.‡ Milton, on the other hand, seems almost to have purged off the dross of humanity. Blind, poor, friendless, in solitude and sorrow, with quite as much reason as his Italian rival to repine at his fortune and war against mankind, how calm and unimpassioned is he in all that concerns his own personality! He deemed too highly of his divine gift to make it the instrument of immortalizing his hatreds. One cry alone of sorrow at his blindness, one pathetic lamentation over the evil days on which he had fallen, bursts from his full heart.¶ There is not a flash of human wrath in all his pictures of woe. Hating nothing but evil spirits, in the childlike simplicity of his heart, his pure hands undefiled with the pitch of the political intrigues in which he had lived, he breathes forth his inexpressibly majestic strains,—the poetry not so much of earth as of heaven.

'Can it be hoped that, under the operation of the influences to which we have alluded, any thing superior to *Paradise Lost* will ever be produced by man? It requires a courageous faith in general principles to believe it. I dare not call it a probable event; but can we say it is impossible? If out of the wretched intellectual and moral elements of the commonwealth in England,—imparting as they did at times too much of their contagion to Milton's mind,—a poem like *Paradise Lost* could spring forth, shall no corresponding fruit of excellence be produced, when knowledge shall be universally diffused, society enlightened, elevated, and equalized; and the standard of moral and religious principle in public and private affairs, raised far above its present level? A continued progress in the intellectual world is consistent with all that we know of the laws that govern it, and with all experience. A presentiment of it lies deep in the soul of man, spark as it is of the divine nature. The craving after excellence, the thirst for truth and beauty, has never been,—never can be,—fully slaked at the fountains, which have flowed beneath the touch of the enchanter's wand. Man listens to the heavenly strain, and straightway becomes desirous of still loftier melodies. It has nourished and strengthened instead of satiating his taste. Fed by the divine aliment he can enjoy more, he can conceive more, he can himself perform more.

'Should a poet of loftier muse than Milton, hereafter appear, or to speak more reverently, when the Milton of

* *Dell' Inferno*, Canto III.

† *Del Purgatorio*, Canto VIII.

‡ *Dell' Inferno*, Canto IX, X.

¶ *Paradise Lost*, Books III and VII, at the beginning.

* *Homeri Il. VIII. 535.*

† *Odys. XI.*

a better age shall arise, there is remaining yet one subject worthy his powers;—the complement of Paradise Lost. In the conception of this subject by Milton, then mature in the experience of his great poem, we have the highest human judgment that this is the one remaining theme. In his uncompleted attempt to achieve it, we have the greatest cause for the doubt, whether it be not beyond the grasp of the human mind, in its present state of cultivation. But I am unwilling to think that this theme, immeasurably the grandest which can be contemplated by the mind of man, will never receive a poetical illustration, proportioned to its sublimity. It seems to me impossible that the time,—doubtless far distant,—should not eventually arrive, when another Milton, divorcing his heart from the delights of life;—purifying his bosom from its angry and its selfish passions;—relieved by happier fortunes from care and sorrow;—pluming the wings of his spirit in solitude, by abstinence and prayer, will address himself to this only remaining theme of a great christian epic.

Two or three more extracts, and we shall have done: though full fain would we copy the whole Address.

The following is germane to what we have before quoted, upon the dignity and importance of education. Can the thought fail to strike a Southern reader,—if the defects of instruction, complained of in the second paragraph below, exist in Massachusetts, where not one man in a thousand is unable to read, what adequate terms of self-reproach can be found for Virginia and her neighboring sisters, of whose adult white population a full fifth cannot read?

'It is at once melancholy and fearful to reflect, how much intellect is daily perishing from inaction; or worse than perishing from the false direction given it in the morning of life. I fear we do not yet fully realize what is meant, when we speak of the improvement of the mind. I fear it is not yet enough considered by legislators or parents, that there dwells, in every rational being, an intellect endowed with a portion of the faculties, which form the glory and happiness of our nature, and which, developed and exerted, are the source of all that makes man to differ essentially from the clod of the valley. Neglected and uncultivated, deprived of its appropriate nourishment, denied the discipline which is necessary to its healthy growth, this divine principle all but expires, and the man whom it was sent to enlighten sinks down before his natural death, to his kindred dust. Trained and instructed, strengthened by wise discipline, and guided by pure principle, it ripens into an intelligence but a little lower than the angels. This is the work of education. The early years of life are the period when it must commonly be obtained; and, if this opportunity is lost, it is too often a loss which nothing can repair. It is usual to compare the culture of the mind to the culture of the earth. If the husbandman relax his labors, and his field be left untilld this year or the next, although a crop or two be lost, the evil may be remedied. The land with its productive qualities remains. If not ploughed and planted this year, it may be the year after. But if the mind be wholly neglected during the period most proper for its cultivation, if it be suffered to remain dark and uninformed, its vital power perishes;—for all the purposes of an intellectual nature it is lost. It is as if an earthquake had swallowed up the uncultivated fallows; it is as if a swollen river had washed away, not merely the standing crop, but the bank on which it was growing. When the time for education has gone by, the man must, in ordinary cases, be launched upon the world a benighted being, scarcely elevated above the beasts that perish; and all that he could have been and done for society, for himself, is wholly lost.

'Although this utter sacrifice of the intellectual nature is rarely made in this part of the country, I fear there exists even here, a woful waste of mental power

through neglect of education. Taking our population as a whole, I fear, that there is not nearly time enough passed at school;—that many of those employed in the business of instruction, are incompetent to the work;—and that our best teachers are not sufficiently furnished with literary apparatus, particularly with school libraries. If these defects could be supplied, I believe a few years would witness a wonderful effect upon the community; that an impulse not easily conceived beforehand, would be given to individual and social character.'

How powerfully must the subjoined passages thrill upon the sensibilities of a Massachusetts hearer or reader!

'I am strongly convinced, that it behoves our ancient Commonwealth, to look anxiously to this subject, if she wishes to maintain her honorable standing in this Union of States. I am not grieved, when I behold on the map the enormous dimensions of some of the new states in the west, as contrasted with the narrow little strip which comprises the good old Bay State. They are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; their welfare is closely interwoven with ours; in every thing that can promote their solid prosperity, I bid them God speed with all my heart. I hear without discontent the astonishing accounts of their fertility;—that their vast prairies are covered with more feet of rich vegetable mould, than our soil on an average can boast of inches; and I can bear to hear it said, without envy, that their Missouri and Mississippi, the Mighty Abana and Phaphar of the west, are better than all the waters of our poor old New England Israel.

'All this I can bear; but I cannot bear that our beloved native state, whose corner-stone was laid upon an intellectual and moral basis, should deprive itself, by its own neglect, of the great counterpoise to these physical advantages. Give the sons of Massachusetts,—small and comparatively unfertile as she is,—the means of a good education, and they will stand against the world. Give me the means of educating my children, and I will not exchange its thirstiest sands nor its barest peak for the most fertile spot on earth, deprived of those blessings. I had rather occupy the bleakest nook of the mountain that towers above us,* with the wild wolf and rattlesnake for my nearest neighbors, and a snug little school-house, well kept, at the bottom of the hill, than dwell in a paradise of fertility, if I must bring up my children in lazy, pampered, self-sufficient ignorance. A man may protect himself against the rattle and the venom, but if he unnecessarily leaves the mind of his offspring a prey to ignorance and the vices that too often follow in its train, he may find too late for remedy,

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is,
To have a thankless child.

'A thankless child? No, I will not wrong even him. He may be anything else that's bad, but he cannot be a *thankless* child. What has he to be thankful for? No. The man who unnecessarily deprives his son of education, and thus knowingly trains him up in the way he should not go, may have a perverse, an intractable, a prodigal child, one who will bring down, aye, drag down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, but a thankless child he cannot have.'

In the next and last quotation, an evil is pointed out—the regard for *cheapness* more than for *qualification* in teachers—which is widely prevalent in Virginia. So numerous are those parents who prefer always the cheapest teacher, without looking to his mind or morals,—that, to a very considerable extent, the sacred office of instruction is a mere *sink* or drain, filled with the refuse of other pursuits. The latter part of the extract exhibits, most impressively, the irreconcilableness of war with the best interests of man.

* Saddle Mountain, between Williamstown and Adams.

'If the all-important duty of *leading out* the mental powers of the young, is entrusted to the cheapest hand, that can be hired to do the work;—to one who is barely able to pass a nominal examination, by a committee sometimes more ignorant than himself, in the modicum of learning prescribed by law; and slender as the privilege of such instruction is, if it be enjoyed by our children but for ten or twelve weeks in the year,—as is the case in too many towns in the Commonwealth,—it is plain to see, that they are deprived of the best part of their birth-right. I know it is said, that these few weeks, in the depth of winter, are all of his children's time, that the frugal husbandman can spare. But can it be so? Can the labors of the field, or any other labors be so hotly pressed among us, that ten or twelve weeks are all the time, for which the labor of the youth of both sexes can be dispensed with for five or six hours a day? I speak with diffidence on the subject, but such I apprehend cannot be the case. I cannot but think, that a majority of the citizens of Massachusetts of all pursuits and callings, might, without the least detriment to their interests, send their children steadily to a good school, seven months in the year, and more or less of the time the other five. Without detriment did I say? Nay, with incalculable advantage to their children, to themselves, and to the state. It would be more rational to talk about not affording seed-corn, than to talk about not affording our children as much of their time as is necessary for their education. What! shall a man plant his field and allow his child's intellect to run to weeds? It would be as wise to eat up all the wheat, and sow the husks and the chaff for next year's crop, as on a principle of thrift, to sow ignorance and its attendant helplessness and prejudices in your children's minds, and expect to reap an honorable and a happy manhood. It would be better husbandry, to go in the summer, and clatter with a hoe in the bare gravel, where nothing was ever sown but the feathered seed of the Canada thistle, which the west wind drops from its sweeping wings, and come back in autumn and expect to find a field of yellow grain nodding to the sickle, than to allow your son to grow up without useful knowledge, and expect that he will sustain himself with respectability in life, or, (if consideration must be had of self-interest,) prop and comfort your decline. Not spare our children's time? Spare it I might ask you from what? Is anything more important? Spare it for what? Can it be better employed, than in that cultivation of the mind, which will vastly increase the value of every subsequent hour of life? And to confine them, in the morning of their days, to a round of labor for the meat that perisheth, is it not when our children ask for bread to give them a stone; when they ask for a fish to give them a serpent, which will sting our bosoms as well as theirs?

'Our governments as well as individuals have, I must needs say, a duty to discharge to the cause of education. Something has been done,—by some of the state governments, much has been done, for this cause; but too much I fear remains undone. In the main, in appropriating the public funds, we tread too much in the footsteps of European precedents. I could wish our legislators might be animated with a purer ambition. In other parts of the world, the resources of the state, too often wrung from their rightful possessors, are squandered on the luxury of governments,—built up into the walls of stately palaces, or massy fortifications,—devoured by mighty armies,—sunk by overgrown navies to the bottom of the sea,—swallowed up in the eternal wars of state policy. *The treasure expended in a grand campaign of the armies of the leading states of Europe, would send a schoolmaster to every hamlet from Archangel to Lisbon.* The annual expense of supporting the armies and navies of Great Britain and France, if applied to the relief and education of the poor in those countries, would change the character of the age in which we live. Perhaps it is too much to hope, that, in the present condition of the politics of Europe, this system can be departed from. It seems to be admitted, as a fundamental maxim of international law among its governments, that the whole energy of their civilization must be exhausted in preventing them from destroying each other. With us, on the contrary, while the union of the states

is preserved, (and heaven grant it may be perpetual,) no obstacle exists to the appropriation to moral and intellectual objects of a great part of those resources, which are elsewhere lavished on luxury and war.

'How devoutly is it not to be wished, that we could feel the beauty and dignity of such a policy, and aim at a new development of national character! From the earliest period of history, the mighty power of the association of millions of men into a people, moved by one political will, has been applied to objects at which humanity weeps, and which, were they not written on every page of the world's experience, would be absolutely incredible. From time to time, a personal gathering is witnessed; mighty numbers of the population assemble *en masse*. Doubtless it is some noble work which they are going to achieve. Marshalled beneath gay and joyous banners, cheered with the soul-stirring strains of music,—honored, admired,—behold how they move forward, the flower of the community,—clothed, fed, and paid at the public expense,—to some grand undertaking. They go not empty-handed;—their approach is discerned afar, by a forest of glittering steel above their heads, and the earth groans beneath their trains of enginery, of strange form and superhuman power. What errand of love has called them out,—the elected host,—to go in person,—side by side, and unite the mighty mass of their physical powers in one vast effort? Let the sharp volley that rings along the lines,—let the scarcely mimic thunder which rends the sky;—let the agonizing shrieks which rise from torn and trampled thousands, return the answer. Their errand is death. They go not to create, but to destroy; to waste and to slay,—to blast the works of civilization and peace,—to wrap cities in flames, and to cover fertile fields with bloody ashes.

'I cannot, will not believe that social man can rise no higher than this;—that reason and experience,—self-interest and humanity,—the light of nature,—the progress of knowledge, and the word of God will forever prove too feeble for this monstrous perversion of human energy. I must believe, that the day will yet dawn, when the great efforts of individual and social man will be turned to the promotion of the welfare of his brother man. If this hope is to be realized, it must be by the joint action of enlightened reason, elevated morals, and pure religion,—brought home by a liberal and efficient system of education, and the aid of heaven, to every fireside, and every heart.'