

Demosthenes or Cicero, and when he rose to his greatest heights he reached a place beyond the fear of rivalry.

Would you have a practical proof and exhibition of this fact, turn to any serious and large debate in Congress, and you will find Webster constantly quoted, as he is in every session, quoted twenty times as often as any other public man in our history. He said many profound, many luminous, many suggestive things; he was an authority on many policies and on the interpretation of the constitution. But there have been others of whom all this might be said; there were kings before Agamemnon, but they are rarely quoted, while Webster is quoted constantly.

He had strong competitors in his own day and in his own field, able, acute, and brilliant men. He rose superior to them, I think, in his lifetime, but now that they are all dead Webster is familiar to hundreds to whom his rivals are little more than names. So far as familiarity in the mouths of men goes, it is Eclipse first and the rest nowhere. It is the rare combination of speech and literature; it is the literary quality, the literary savor, which keeps what Webster said fresh, strong, and living. When we open the volumes of his speeches it is not like unrolling the wrappings of an Egyptian mummy, to find within a dried and shrivelled form, a faint perfume alone surviving to faintly recall the vanished days, as when—

"Some queen, long dead, was young."

Rather it is like the opening of Charlemagne's tomb, when his imperial successor started back before the enthroned figure of the great emperor looking out upon him, instinct with life under the red glare of the torches.

Let us apply another and surer test. How many speeches to a jury in a criminal trial possessing neither political nor

public interest survive in fresh remembrance seventy years after their delivery? I confess I can think of no jury speeches of any kind which stand this ordeal except, in a limited way, some speeches of Erskine, and those all have the advantage of historical significance, dealing as they do with constitutional and political questions of great moment. But there is one of Webster's speeches to a jury which lives to-day, and no more crucial test could be applied than the accomplishment of such a feat. The White murder case was simply a criminal trial, without a vestige of historical, political, or general public interest. Yet Webster's speech for the prosecution has been read and recited until well-nigh hackneyed. It is in readers and manuals; and is still declaimed by schoolboys. Some of its phrases are familiar quotations and have passed into general speech. Let me recall a single passage:

"He has done the murder. No eye has seen him; no ear has heard him. The secret is his own, and it is safe.

"Ah, gentlemen, that was a dreadful mistake. Such a secret can be safe nowhere. The whole creation of God has neither nook nor corner where the guilty can bestow it and say it is safe. . . . A thousand eyes turn at once to explore every man, everything, every circumstance connected with the time and place; a thousand ears catch every whisper; a thousand excited minds intensely dwell on the scene, shedding all their light, and ready to kindle the slightest circumstance into a blaze of discovery. Meantime the guilty soul cannot keep its own secret. It is false to itself; or, rather, it feels an irresistible impulse of conscience to be true to itself. It labors under its guilty possession, and knows not what to do with it. The human heart was not made for the residence of such an inhabitant. It finds itself preyed on by a torment which it dares not acknowledge to God or man. A vulture is devouring it, and it can ask no sympathy or assistance either from heaven or earth. The secret which the

murderer possesses soon comes to possess him, and, like the evil spirits of which we read, it overcomes him, and leads him whithersoever it will. He feels it beating at his heart, rising to his throat, and demanding disclosure. He thinks the whole world sees it in his face, reads it in his eyes, and almost hears its workings in the very silence of his thoughts. It has become his master. It betrays his discretion, it breaks down his courage, it conquers his prudence. When suspicions from without begin to embarrass him and the net of circumstance to entangle him, the fatal secret struggles with still greater violence to burst forth. It must be confessed; it will be confessed. There is no refuge from confession but suicide, and suicide is confession."

Those are words spoken to men, not written for them. It is a speech and nothing else, and yet we feel all through it the literary value and quality which make it imperishable.

Take another example. When Webster stood one summer morning on the ramparts of Quebec and heard the sound of drums and saw the English troops on parade, the thought of England's vast world-empire came strongly to his mind. The thought was very natural under the circumstances, not at all remarkable nor in the least original. Some years later, in a speech in the Senate, he put his thought into words, and this, as everyone knows, is the way he did it:

"A Power which has dotted over the surface of the whole globe with her possessions and military posts, whose morning drumbeat, following the sun and keeping company with the hours, circles the earth with one continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs of England."

The sentence has followed the drumbeat round the world, and has been repeated in England and in the Antipodes by men who never heard of Webster and probably did not know

that this splendid description of the British empire was due to an American. It is not the thought which has carried these words so far through time and space. It is the beauty of the imagery and the magic of the style.

Let me take one more very simple example of the quality which distinguishes Webster's speeches above those of others, which makes his words and serious thoughts live on when others, equally weighty and serious, perhaps, sleep or die. In his first Bunker Hill oration he apostrophized the monument, just as anyone else might have tried to do, and this is what he said:

"Let it rise, let it rise till it meet the sun in his coming; let the earliest light of morning gild it, and parting day linger and play on its summit."

Here the thought is nothing, the style everything. No one can repeat those words and be deaf to their music on insensible to the rhythm and beauty of the prose with the Saxon words relieved just sufficiently by the Latin derivatives.

The ease with which it is done may be due to training, but the ability to do it comes from natural gifts which, as Goethe says, "we value more as we get older because they cannot be stuck on." Possibly to some people it may seem very simple to utter such a sentence as I have quoted. To them I can only repeat what Scott says somewhere about Swift's style, perhaps the purest and strongest we have in the language. "Swift's style," said Scott, "seems so simple that one would think any child might write like him, and yet if we try we find to our despair that it is impossible."

Such, then, were the qualities which in their perfect combination put Webster among the very few who stand forth as the world's greatest orators. In this age of ours when the

tendency is to overpraise commonplace work, to mistake notoriety for fame, and advertisement for reputation, it is of inestimable worth to a people to have as one of their own possessions such a master of speech, such a standard of distinction and of real excellence as we find in Webster. Such an orator deserves a statue.

But there is yet another ground, deeper and more serious than this. Webster deserves a statue for what he represented, for the message he delivered, and for that for which he still stands and will always stand before his countrymen and in the cold, clear light of history.

He was born just at the end of the war of the Revolution, when the country was entering upon the period of disintegration and impotence known as that of the Confederation. He was too young to understand and to feel those bitter years of struggle and decline which culminated in the adoption of the constitution. But the first impressions of his boyhood must have been of the prosperity, strength, and honor which came from the new instrument of government and from the better union of the States. His father followed his old chief in politics as he had in the field, and Webster grew up a Federalist, a supporter of Washington, Hamilton, and Adams and of the leaders of their party.

As he came to manhood he saw the first assault upon the national principle in the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions. He had entered public life when the second attack came in the movement which ended with the Hartford Convention, and with which, New England Federalist as he was, he could feel no sympathy. Again fifteen years passed and the third assault was delivered in the Nullification doctrines of South Carolina.

Webster was then at the zenith of his powers, and he came

forward as the defender of the constitution. In the reply to Hayne he reached the highest point in parliamentary oratory and left all rivals far behind. He argued his case with consummate skill, both legally and historically. But he did far more than this. He was not merely the great orator defending the constitution, he was the champion of the national principle. Whether the constitution was at the outset an experiment or not, whether it was a contract from which each or all of the signatories could withdraw at will, was secondary. The great fact was that the constitution had done its work. It had made a nation. Webster stood forth in the Senate and before the country as the exponent of that fact and as the defender of the nation's life against the attacks of separatism. This was his message to his time. This was his true mission. In that cause he spoke as none had ever spoken before and with a splendor of eloquence and a force of argument to which no one else could attain.

It is not to be supposed for an instant that Webster discovered the fact that the constitution had made a nation or that he first and alone proclaimed a new creed to an unthinking generation. His service was equally great, but widely different from this. The great mass of the American people felt dumbly, dimly perhaps, but none the less deeply and surely, that they had made a nation some day to be a great nation, and they meant to remain such and not sink into divided and petty republics.

This profound feeling of the popular heart Webster not only represented, but put into words. No slight service this, if rightly considered; no little marvel this capacity to change thought into speech, to give expression to the feelings and hopes of a people and crystallize them forever in words fit for such a use. To this power, indeed, we owe a large part

of the world's greatest literature. The myths and legends of Greece were of no one man's invention. They were children of the popular imaginings—vague, varying—floating hither and thither, like the mists of the mountains. But Homer touched them, and they started up into a beautiful, immortal life, to delight and charm untold generations. Æschylus and Sophocles put them upon the stage, and they became types of the sorrows of humanity and of the struggle of man with fate. The Sagas of the far north, confused and diffuse, but full of poetry and imagination, slumbered until the Minnesingers wove them into the Niebelungen Lied and again until a great composer set them before our eyes, so that all men could see their beauty and pathos and read their deeper meanings. Sir Thomas Mallory rescued the Arthurian legends from chaos, and in our own day a great poet has turned them into forms which make their beauty clear to the world. Thus popular imaginings, dumb for the most part, finding at best only a rude expression, have been touched by the hand of genius and live forever.

So in politics Jefferson embodied in the Declaration of Independence the feelings of the American people and sounded to the world the first note in the great march of Democracy, which then began. The "Marseillaise," in words and music, burned with the spirit of the French Revolution and inspired the armies which swept over Europe.

Thus Webster gave form and expression, at once noble and moving, to the national sentiment of his people. In what he said men saw clearly what they themselves thought, but which they could not express. That sentiment grew and strengthened with every hour, when men had only to repeat his words, in order to proclaim the creed in which they believed; and after he was dead Webster was heard again in

the deep roar of the Union guns from Sumter to Appomattox.

His message, delivered as he alone could deliver it, was potent in inspiring the American people to the terrible sacrifices by which they saved the nation when he slept silent in his grave at Marshfield. Belief in the Union and the constitution, because they meant national greatness and national life, was the great dominant conviction of Webster's life. It was part of his temperament. He loved the outer world, the vast expanses of sea and sky, all that was large and unfettered in nature. So he admired great States and empires and had little faith in small ones or in the happiness or worth of a nation which has no history and which fears its fate too much to put its fortune to the touch when the accepted time has come.

It was not merely that as a statesman he saw the misery and degradation which would come from the breaking of the Union as well as the progressive disintegration which was sure to follow, but the very thought of it came home to him with the sharpness of a personal grief which was almost agonizing. When, in the 7th of March speech, he cried out, "What States are to secede? What is to remain American? What am I to be?" a political opponent said the tone of the last question made him shudder as if some dire calamity was at hand. The greatness of the United States filled his mind. He had not the length of days accorded to Lord Bathurst, but the angel of dreams had unrolled to him the future, and the vision was ever before his eyes.

This passionate love of his country, this dream of her future, inspired his greatest efforts, were even the chief cause at the end of his life of his readiness to make sacrifices of principle which would only have helped forward what he

dreaded most, but which he believed would save that for which he cared most deeply. In a period when great forces were at work which in their inevitable conflict threatened the existence of the Union of States, Webster stands out above all others as the champion, as the very embodiment of the national life and the national faith. More than any other man of that time he called forth the sentiment more potent than all reasonings which saved the nation. It was a great work, greatly done, with all the resources of a powerful intellect and with an eloquence rarely heard among men. We may put aside all his other achievements, all his other claims to remembrance, and inscribe alone upon the base of his statue the words uttered in the Senate, "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable." That single sentence recalls all the noble speeches which breathed only the greatness of the country and the prophetic vision which looked with undazzled gaze into a still greater future. No other words are wanted for a man who so represented and so expressed the faith and hopes of a nation. His statue needs no other explanation so long as the nation he served and the Union he loved shall last.

SPEECH AT REPUBLICAN CONVENTION

DELIVERED AT PHILADELPHIA, JUNE 20, 1900

ONE of the greatest honors that can fall to any American in public life is to be called to preside over a Republican National Convention. How great that honor is you know, but you cannot realize, nor can I express the gratitude which I feel to you for having conferred it

upon me. I can only say to you in the simplest phrase, that I thank you from the bottom of my heart. "Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks, and yet I thank you."

We meet again to nominate the next President of the United States. Four years have passed since we nominated the soldier and statesman who is now President, and who is soon to enter upon his second term. Since the Civil War no Presidential term has been so crowded with great events as that which is now drawing to a close. They have been four memorable years.

To Republicans they show a record of promises kept, of work done, of unforeseen questions met and answered. To the Democrats they have been generous in the exhibition of unfulfilled predictions, in the ruin of their hopes of calamity and in futile opposition to the forces of the times, and the aspirations of the American people. I wish I could add that they had been equally instructive to our opponents, but while it is true that the Democrats, like the Bourbons, learn nothing, it is only too evident that the familiar comparison cannot be completed, for they forget a great deal which it would be well for them to remember.

In 1897 we took the Government and the country from the hands of President Cleveland. His party had abandoned him and were joined to their idols, of which he was no longer one. During the last years of his term we had presented to us the melancholy spectacle of a President trying to govern without a party.

The result was that his policies were in ruin, legislation was at a standstill, and public affairs were in a perilous and incoherent condition. Party responsibility had vanished, and with it all possibility of intelligent action, demanded by the country at home and abroad. It was an interesting, but

by no means singular, display of Democratic unfitness for the practical work of government. To the political student it was instructive, to the country it was extremely painful, to business disastrous.

We replaced this political chaos with a President in thorough accord with his party, and the machinery of government began again to move smoothly and effectively. Thus we kept at once our promise of better and more efficient administration. In four months after the inauguration of President McKinley we had passed a tariff bill. For ten years the artificial agitation, in behalf of what was humorously called tariff reform, and of what was really free trade, had kept business in a ferment, and had brought a Treasury deficit, paralyzed industries, depression, panic, and, finally, continuous bad times to a degree never before imagined.

Would you know the result of our tariff legislation, look about you. Would you measure its success, recollect that it is no longer an issue, that our opponents, free traders as they are, do not dare to make it an issue, that there is not a State in the Union to-day which could be carried for free trade against protection. Never was a policy more fully justified by its works, never was a promise made by any party more absolutely fulfilled.

Dominant among the issues of four years ago was that of our monetary and financial system. The Republican Party promised to uphold our credit, to protect our currency from revolution, and to maintain the gold standard. We have done so. We have done more. We have been better than our promise.

Failing to secure, after honest effort, any encouragement for international bimetallism, we have passed a law strengthening the gold standard and planting it more firmly than

ever in our financial system; improving our banking laws, buttressing our credit, and refunding the public debt at 2 per cent interest, the lowest rate in the world.

It was a great work well done. The only argument the Democrats can advance to-day in their own behalf on the money question is that a Republican Senate, in the event of Democratic success, would not permit the repeal of a Republican law. This is a specious argument when looked at with considerate eyes, and quite worthy of the intellects which produced it. Apply it generally. Upon this theory, because we have defeated the soldiers of Spain and sunk her ships we can with safety dispense with the army and navy which did the work.

Take another example. There has been a fire in a great city; it has been checked and extinguished, therefore let us abolish the fire department and cease to insure our homes. Distrust in our currency, the dread of change, the deadly fear of a debased standard were raging four years ago, and business lay prostrate before them. Republican supremacy and Republican legislation have extinguished the fires of doubt and fear, and business has risen triumphant from the ashes. Therefore abolish your fire department, turn out the Republicans and put in power the incendiaries who lighted the flames and trust to what remains of Republican control to avert fresh disaster.

The proposition is its own refutation. The supremacy of the party that has saved the standard of sound money and guarded it by law is as necessary for its security and for the existence of honest wages and of business confidence now as it was in 1896.

The moment the Republican Party passes from power, and the party of free silver and fiat paper comes in, stable cur

rency and the gold standard, the standard of the civilized world, are in imminent and deadly peril. Sound currency and a steady standard of value are to-day safe only in Republican hands.

But there were still other questions in 1896. We had already thwarted the efforts of the Cleveland Administration to throw the Hawaiian Islands back to their dethroned Queen and to give England a foothold for her cables in the group. We then said that we would settle finally the Hawaiian question. We have done so. The traditional American policy has been carried out. The flag of the Union floats to-day over the crossroads of the Pacific.

We promised to deal with the Cuban question. Again comes the reply, we have done so. The long agony of the island is over. Cuba is free. But this great work brought with it events and issues which no man had foreseen, for which no party creed had provided a policy. The crisis came, bringing war in its train.

The Republican President and the Republican Congress met the new trial in the old spirit. We fought the war with Spain. The result is history known of all men. We have the perspective now of only a short two years, and yet how clear and bright the great facts stand out, like mountain peaks against the sky, while the gathering darkness of a just oblivion is creeping fast over the low grounds, where lie forgotten the trivial and unimportant things, the criticisms and the fault findings which seemed too huge when we still lingered among them.

Here they are, these great facts: A war of a hundred days, with many victories and no defeats, with no prisoners taken from us and no advance stayed, with a triumphant outcome startling in its completeness and in its worldwide mean-

ing. Was ever a war more justly entered upon, more quickly fought, more fully won, more thorough in its results? Cuba is free. Spain has been driven from the Western Hemisphere. Fresh glory has come to our arms and crowned our flag.

It was the work of the American people, but the Republican Party was their instrument. Have we not the right to say that here, too, even as in the days of Abraham Lincoln, we have fought a good fight, we have kept the faith, we have finished the work?

War, however, is ever like the sword of Alexander. It cuts the knots. It is a great solvent and brings many results not to be foreseen. The world forces unchained in war perform in hours the work of years of quiet.

Spain sued for peace. How was that peace to be made? The answer to this great question had to be given by the President of the United States. We were victorious in Cuba, in Porto Rico, in the Philippines. Should we give those islands back to Spain? "Never!" was the President's reply. Would any American wish that he had answered otherwise? Should we hand them over to some other Power? "Never!" was again the answer.

Would our pride and self-respect as a nation have submitted to any other reply? Should we turn the islands, where we had destroyed all existing sovereignty, loose upon the world to be a prey to domestic anarchy and the helpless spoil of some other nation? Again the inevitable negative. Again the President answered as the nation he represented would have had him answer.

He boldly took the islands, took them knowing well the burden and responsibility, took them from a deep sense of duty to ourselves and others, guided by a just foresight as to