

complete of the seemingly weaker party, a rout so disastrous of the stronger. Often as it has been repeated, it will bear another repetition; it never ought to be omitted in the history of constitutional liberty; it ought especially to be repeated this day; the various addresses, petitions, and appeals, the correspondence, the resolutions, the legislative and popular debates, from 1764 to the Declaration of Independence, present a maturity of political wisdom, a strength of argument, a gravity of style, a manly eloquence, and a moral courage, of which unquestionably the modern world affords no other example.

This meed of praise, substantially accorded at the time by Chatham, in the British Parliament, may well be repeated by us. For most of the venerated men to whom it is paid it is but a pious tribute to departed worth. The Lees and the Henrys, Otis, Quincy, Warren, and Samuel Adams, the men who spoke those words of thrilling power which raised and ruled the storm of resistance and rang like the voice of fate across the Atlantic, are beyond the reach of our praise.

To most of them it was granted to witness some of the fruits of their labors; such fruit as revolutions do not often bear.

And what, fellow citizens, are to be the fruits to us and to the world of the establishment of this perfect system of government? I might partly answer the inquiry by reminding you what have been the fruits to us and to the world; by inviting you to compare our beloved country, as it is, in extent of settlement, in numbers and resources, in the useful and ornamental arts, in the abundance of the common blessings of life, in the general standard of character, in the means of education, in the institutions for social objects, in the various great industrial interests, in public strength and national

respectability, with what it was in all these respects fifty years ago. But the limits of this occasion will not allow us to engage in such an enumeration; and it will be amply sufficient for us to contemplate in its principle the beneficial operation on society of the form of government bequeathed to us by our fathers. This principle is equality; the equal enjoyment by every citizen of the rights and privileges of the social union.

The principle of all other governments is monopoly, exclusion, favor. They secure great privileges to a small number and necessarily at the expense of all the rest of the citizens.

In the keen conflict of minds which preceded and accompanied the political convulsions of the last generation the first principles of society were canvassed with a boldness and power before unknown in Europe, and from the great principle that all men are equal it was for the first time triumphantly inferred, as a necessary consequence, that the will of a majority of the people is the rule of government. To meet these doctrines, so appalling in their tendency to the existing institutions of Europe, new ground was also taken by the champions of those institutions, and particularly by a man whose genius, eloquence, and integrity gave a currency which nothing else could have given, to his splendid paradoxes and servile doctrines.

In one of his renowned productions¹ this great man,—for great, even in his errors, most assuredly he was,—in order to meet the inferences drawn from the equality of man, that the will of the majority must be the rule of government, has undertaken, as he says, “to fix with some degree of distinctness an idea of what it is we mean when we say ‘The

¹The appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.

People;” and in fulfilment of this design he lays it down “that in a state of rude nature there is no such thing as a people.

“A number of men in themselves can have no collective capacity. The idea of a people is the idea of a corporation, it is wholly artificial, and made, like all other legal fictions, by common agreement.”

“In a state of rude nature there is no such thing as a people!” I would fain learn in what corner of the earth, rude or civilized, men are to be found who are not a people more or less improved. “A number of men in themselves have no collective capacity!” I would gladly be told where, in what region,—I will not say of geography, I know there is none such,—but of poetry or romance, a number of men has been placed, by nature, each standing alone and not bound by any of those ties of blood, affinity, and language which form the rudiments of a collective capacity. “The idea of a people is the idea of a corporation, it is wholly artificial, and made, like all other legal fictions, by common agreement.”

Indeed, is the social principle artificial? Is the gift of articulate speech which enables man to impart his condition to man, the organized sense which enables him to comprehend what is imparted—is that sympathy which subjects our opinions and feelings, and through them our conduct, to the influence of others and their conduct to our influence—is that chain of cause and effect, which makes our characters receive impressions from the generations before us, and puts it in our power, by a good or bad precedent, to distill a poison or a balm into the characters of posterity—are these, indeed, all by-laws of a corporation?

Are all the feelings of ancestry, posterity, and fellow citizenship; all the charm, veneration, and love bound up in the

name of country; the delight, the enthusiasm, with which we seek out, after the lapse of generations and ages, the traces of our fathers’ bravery or wisdom, are these all “a legal fiction?”

Is it indeed a legal fiction that moistens the eye of the solitary traveller when he meets a countryman in a foreign land? Is it a “common agreement” that gives its meaning to my mother tongue and enables me to speak to the hearts of my kindred men beyond the rivers and beyond the mountains? Yes, it is a common agreement; recorded on the same registry with that which marshals the winged nations that,

“In common, ranged in figure, wedge their way,
Intelligent of seasons; and set forth
Their airy caravan, high over seas
Flying, and over lands, with mutual wing
Easing their flight.”

The mutual dependence of man on man, family on family, interest on interest, is but a chapter in the great law, not of corporations, but of nature. The law, by which commerce, manufactures, and agriculture support each other, is the same law in virtue of which the thirsty earth owes its fertility to the rivers and the rains; and the clouds derive their high travelling waters from the rising vapors; and the ocean is fed from the secret springs of the mountains; and the plant that grows derives its increase from the plant that decays; and all subsist and thrive, not by themselves but by others, in the great political economy of nature.

The necessary cohesion of the parts of the political system is no more artificial than the gravity of the natural system, in which planet is bound to planet, and all to the sun and the sun to all. Insulate an interest in society, a family, or a man, and all the faculties and powers they possess will avail them little toward the great objects of life; in like manner, as not all the

mysteriously combined elements of the earth around and beneath us, the light and volatile airs, that fill the atmosphere; not the electric fluid, which lies condensed and embattled in its cloudy magazines, or subtilely diffused through creation; not the volcanic fires that rage in the earth's bosom, nor all her mines of coal and nitre and sulphur; nor fountains of naphtha, petroleum, or asphaltus,—not all, combined and united afford one beam of that common light which sends man forth from his labors, and which is the sun's contribution to the system in which we live.

And yet the great natural system, the political, intellectual, moral system, is artificial, as a legal fiction! "O that mine enemy had said it," the admirers of Mr. Burke may well exclaim. Oh that some impious Voltaire, some ruthless Rousseau had uttered it. Had uttered it! Rousseau did utter the same thing; and more rebuked than any other error of this misguided genius is his doctrine of the Social Contract, of which Burke has reasserted, and more than reasserted, the principle in the sentences I have quoted.

But no, fellow citizens; political society exists by the law of nature. Man is formed for it; every man is formed for it; every man has an equal right to its privileges, and to be deprived of them, under whatever pretence, is so far to be reduced to slavery. The authors of the Declaration of Independence saw this and taught that all men are born free and equal. On this principle our constitutions rest; and no constitution can bind a people on any other principle.

No original contract that gives away this right can bind any but the parties to it. My forefathers could not, if they had wished, have stipulated to their king that his children should rule over their children. By the introduction of this principle of equality it is that the Declaration of Independence has at

once effected a before unimagined extension of social privileges.

Grant that no new blessing (which, however, can by no means with truth be granted) be introduced into the world on this plan of equality, still it will have discharged the inestimable office of communicating, in equal proportion, to all the citizens, those privileges of the social union which were before partitioned in an invidious gradation, profusely among the privileged orders, and parsimoniously among all the rest.

Let me instance in the right of suffrage. The enjoyment of this right enters largely into the happiness of the social condition. I do not mean that it is necessary to our happiness actually to exercise this right at every election; but I say the right itself to give our voice in the choice of public servants and the management of public affairs is so precious, so inestimable, that there is not a citizen who hears me that would not lay down his life to assert it. This is a right unknown in every country but ours; I say unknown, because in England, whose institutions make the nearest approach to a popular character, the elective suffrage is not only incredibly unequal and capricious in its distribution; but extends, after all, only to the choice of a minority of one house of the legislature. Thus, then, the people of this country are, by their constitutions of government, endowed with a new source of enjoyment, elsewhere almost unknown; a great and substantial happiness; an unalloyed happiness.

Most of the desirable things of life bear a high price in the world's market. Everything usually deemed a great good must, for its attainment, be weighed down in the opposite scale, with what is as usually deemed a great evil—labor, care, danger. It is only the unbought, spontaneous, essential circumstances of our nature and condition that yield a liberal

enjoyment. Our religious hopes, intellectual meditations, social sentiments, family affections, political privileges, these are springs of unpurchased happiness; and to condemn men to live under an arbitrary government is to cut them off from nearly all the satisfactions which nature designed should flow from those principles within us by which a tribe of kindred men is constituted a people.

But it is not merely an extension to all the members of society of those blessings which, under other systems, are monopolized by a few; great and positive improvements, I feel sure, are destined to flow from the introduction of the republican system. The first of these will be to make wars less frequent, and finally to cause them to cease altogether. It was not a republican, it was the subject of a monarchy, and no patron of novelties, who said,

"War is a game which, were their subjects wise,
Kings would not play at."

A great majority of the wars which have desolated mankind have grown either out of the disputed titles and rival claims of sovereigns or their personal character, particularly their ambition, or the character of their favorites, or some other circumstance evidently incident to a form of government which withholds from the people the ultimate control of affairs. And the more civilized men grow, strange as it may seem, the more universally is this the case.

In the barbarous ages the people pursued war as an occupation; its plunder was more profitable than their labor at home in the state of general insecurity. In modern times princes raise their soldiers by conscription, their sailors by impressment, and drive them at the point of the bayonet and dirk into the battles they fight for reasons of state.

But in a republic, where the people by their representatives

must vote the declaration of war, and afterward raise the means of its support, none but wars of just and necessary defence can be waged. Republics, we are told, indeed, are ambitious,—a seemingly wise remark, devoid of meaning. Man is ambitious; and the question is, where will his ambition be most likely to drive his country into war; in a monarchy, where he has but to "Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war," or in a republic, where he must get the vote of a strong majority of the nation?

Let history furnish the answer. The book which promised you in its title a picture of the progress of the human family turns out to be a record, not of the human family, but of the Macedonian family, the Julian family, the families of York and Lancaster, of Lorraine and Bourbon. We need not go to the ancient annals to confirm this remark. We need not speak of those who reduced Asia and Africa in the morning of the world to a vassalage from which they have never recovered.

We need not dwell on the more notorious exploits of the Alexanders and the Casars, the men who wept for other worlds to visit with the pestilence of their arms. We need not run down the bloody line of the dark ages when the barbarous North disgorged her ambitious savages on Europe, or when at a later period barbarous Europe poured back her holy ruffians on Asia; we need but look at the dates of modern history,—the history of civilized, balanced Europe. We here behold the ambition of Charles V involving the continent of Europe in war for the first half of the sixteenth century, and the fiend-like malignity of Catherine de Medici and her kindred distracting it the other half. We see the haughty and cheerless bigotry of Philip persevering in a conflict of extermination for one whole age in the Netherlands and darkening the English Channel with his armada; while France prolongs her civil dis-

sensions because Henry IV was the twenty-second cousin of Henry III.

We enter the seventeenth century and again find the hereditary pride and bigotry of the House of Austria wasting Germany and the neighboring powers with the Thirty Years' war; and before the peace of Westphalia is concluded England is plunged into the fiery trial of her militant liberties. Contemporaneously, the civil wars are revived in France, and the kingdom is blighted by the passions of Mazarin.

The civil wars are healed and the atrocious career of Louis XIV begins; a half century of bloodshed and woe, that stands in revolting contrast with the paltry pretences of his wars. At length the peace of Ryswick is made in 1697 and bleeding Europe throws off the harness and lies down like an exhausted giant to repose. In three years the testament of a dotting Spanish king gives the signal for the Succession War; till a cup of tea spilt on Mrs. Masham's apron restores peace to the afflicted kingdoms. Meantime the madman of the North had broken loose upon the world and was running his frantic round. Peace at length is restored and with one or two short wars it remains unbroken till, in 1740, the will of Charles VI occasions another testamentary contest; and in the gallant words of the stern but relenting moralist,

"The queen, the beauty, sets the world in arms."

Eight years are this time sufficient to exhaust the combatants, and the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle is concluded; but in 1755 the old French war is kindled in our own wilderness and through the united operation of the monopolizing spirit of England, the party intrigues of France, and the ambition of Frederick, spread throughout Europe.

The wars of the last generation I need not name, nor dwell

on that signal retribution by which the political ambition of the cabinets at length conjured up the military ambition of the astonishing individual who seems in our day to have risen out of the ranks of the people to chastise the privileged orders with that iron scourge with which they had so long afflicted mankind; to gather with his strong plebeian hands the fragrance of those palmy honors which they had reared for three centuries in the bloody gardens of their royalty.

It may well be doubted whether, under a government like ours, one of all these contests would have taken place. Those that arose from disputed titles and bequests of thrones could not of course have existed; and making every allowance for the effect of popular delusion it seems to me not possible that a representative government would have embarked in any of the wars of ambition and aggrandizement which fill up the catalogue.

Who then are these families and individuals—these royal *lanistæ*—by whom the nations are kept in training for a long gladiatorial combat? Are they better, wiser than we? Look at them in life; what are they? "Kings are fond," says Mr. Burke, no scoffer at thrones, "kings are fond of low company." What are they when gone? *Expende Hannibalem*. Enter the great cathedrals of Europe and contemplate the sepulchres of the men who claimed to be the lords of each successive generation. Question your own feelings as you behold where the Plantagenets and Tudors, the Stuarts and those of Brunswick, lie mournfully huddled up in the chapels of Westminster Abbey; and compare those feelings with the homage you pay to heaven's aristocracy,—the untitled learning, genius, and wit that molder by their side. Count over the sixty-six emperors and princes of the Austrian house that lie gathered in the dreary pomp of monumental marble in the vaults of the

Capuchins at Vienna; and weigh the worth of their dust against the calamities of their Peasants' war, their Thirty Years' war, their Succession war, their wars to enforce the Pragmatic Sanction, and of all the other uncouth pretences for destroying mankind with which they have plagued the world.

But the cessation of wars to which we look forward as the result of the gradual diffusion of republican government is but the commencement of the social improvements which cannot but flow from the same benignant source. It has been justly said that he was a great benefactor of mankind who could make two blades of grass grow where one grew before. But our fathers—our fathers were the benefactors of mankind—who brought into action such a vast increase of physical, political, and moral energy; who have made not two citizens to live only, but hundreds, yea, unnumbered thousands to live and to prosper in regions which but for their achievements would have remained for ages unsettled, and to enjoy those rights of men which but for their institutions would have continued to be arrogated as the exclusive inheritance of a few.

I appeal to the fact. I ask any sober judge of political probability to tell me whether more has not been done to extend the domain of civilization in fifty years since the declaration of independence than would have been done in five centuries of continued colonial subjection. It is not even a matter of probability; the king in council had adopted it as a maxim of his American policy that no settlements in this country should be made beyond the Alleghanies; that the design of Providence in spreading out the fertile valley of the Mississippi should not be fulfilled.

I know that it is said, in palliation of the restrictive influ-

ence of European governments, that they are as good as their subjects can bear. I know it is said that it would be useless and pernicious to call on the half-savage and brutified peasantry of many countries to take a share in the administration of affairs by electing or being elected to office. I know they are unfit for it; it is the very curse of the system. What is it that unfits them? What is it that makes slavish labor, and slavish ignorance, and slavish stupidity their necessary heritage? Are they not made of the same Caucasian clay? Have they not five senses, the same faculties, the same passions? And is it anything but an aggravation of the vice of arbitrary governments that they first deprive men of their rights and then unfit them to exercise those rights; profanely construing the effect into a justification of the evil?

The influence of our institutions on foreign nations is—next to their effect on our own condition—the most interesting question we can contemplate. With our example of popular government before their eyes the nations of the earth will not eventually be satisfied with any other. With the French Revolution as a beacon to guide them they will learn, we may hope, not to embark too rashly on the mounting waves of reform.

The cause, however, of popular government is rapidly gaining in the world. In England education is carrying it wide and deep into society. On the Continent written constitutions of governments, nominally representative,—though as yet, it must be owned, nominally so alone,—are adopted in eight or ten late absolute monarchies; and it is not without good grounds that we may trust that the indifference with which the Christian powers contemplate the sacrifice of Greece and their crusade against the constitutions of Spain, Piedmont, and Naples will satisfy the mass of thinking men in

Europe that it is time to put an end to these cruel delusions and take their own government into their own hands.

But the great triumphs of constitutional freedom to which our independence has furnished the example have been witnessed in the southern portion of our hemisphere. Sunk to the last point of colonial degradation they have risen at once into the organization of free republics. Their struggle has been arduous; and eighteen years of chequered fortune have not yet brought it to a close. But we must not infer from their prolonged agitation that their independence is uncertain; that they have prematurely put on the *toga virilis* of freedom. They have not begun too soon; they have more to do.

Our war of independence was shorter; happily we were contending with a government that could not, like that of Spain, pursue an interminable and hopeless contest in defiance of the people's will. Our transition to a mature and well-adjusted constitution was more prompt than that of our sister republics; for the foundations had long been settled, the preparation long made. And when we consider that it is our example which has aroused the spirit of independence from California to Cape Horn; that the experiment of liberty, if it had failed with us, most surely would not have been attempted by them; that even now our councils and acts will operate as powerful precedents in this great family of republics, we learn the importance of the post which Providence has assigned us in the world.

A wise and harmonious administration of the public affairs, a faithful, liberal, and patriotic exercise of the private duties of the citizen, while they secure our happiness at home, will diffuse a healthful influence through the channels of national communication and serve the cause of liberty beyond the equator and the Andes. When we show an united, concilia-

tory, and imposing front to their rising states we show them, better than sounding eulogies can do, the true aspect of an independent republic. We give them a living example that the fireside policy of a people is like that of the individual man. As the one, commencing in the prudence, order, and industry of the private circle, extends itself to all the duties of social life, of the family, the neighborhood, the country; so the true domestic policy of the republic, beginning in the wise organization of its own institutions, pervades its territories with a vigilant, prudent, temperate administration; and extends the hand of cordial interest to all the friendly nations, especially to those which are of the household of liberty.

It is in this way that we are to fulfil our destiny in the world. The greatest engine of moral power which human nature knows is an organized, prosperous state. All that man in his individual capacity can do, all that he can effect by his fraternities, by his ingenious discoveries and wonders of art, or by his influence over others, is as nothing compared with the collective, perpetuated influence on human affairs and human happiness of a well-constituted, powerful commonwealth.

It blesses generations with its sweet influence; even the barren earth seems to pour out its fruits under a system where property is secure, while her fairest gardens are blighted by despotism; men—thinking, reasoning men—abound beneath its benignant sway; nature enters into a beautiful accord, a better, purer *asiento* with man, and guides an industrious citizen to every rood of her smiling wastes; and we see at length that what has been called a state of nature has been most falsely, calumniously so denominated; that the nature of man is neither that of a savage, a hermit, nor a slave, but that of a member of a well-ordered family, that of a good neighbor,

a free citizen, a well-informed, good man, acting with others like him. This is the lesson which is taught in the charter of our independence; this is the lesson which our example is to teach the world.

The epic poet of Rome—the faithful subject of an absolute prince—in unfolding the duties and destinies of his countrymen, bids them look down with disdain on the polished and intellectual arts of Greece, and deem their arts to be

“To rule the nations with imperial sway;
To spare the tribes that yield; fight down the proud;
And force the mood of peace upon the world.”

A nobler counsel breathes from the charter of our independence; a happier province belongs to our free republic. Peace we would extend, but by persuasion and example—the moral force, by which alone it can prevail among the nations. Wars we may encounter, but it is in the sacred character of the injured and the wronged; to raise the trampled rights of humanity from the dust; to rescue the mild form of liberty from her abode among the prisons and the scaffolds of the elder world, and to seat her in the chair of state among her adoring children; to give her beauty for ashes; a healthful action for her cruel agony; to put at last a period to her warfare on earth; to tear her star-spangled banner from the perilous ridges of battle and plant it on the rock of ages. There be it fixed forever,—the power of a free people slumbering in its folds, their peace reposing in its shade!

THOMAS CORWIN



THOMAS CORWIN, American statesman and orator, was born in Bourbon Co., Ky., July 29, 1794, and died at Washington, D. C., Dec. 18, 1865. Removing with his parents to Ohio in 1798, his youth was passed on his father's farm. His educational opportunities were meagre, but early in life he began the study of law, and in 1818 was admitted to the Bar. Four years later he entered the Ohio legislature, making a speech in opposition to the proposed introduction of the whipping-post into Ohio. After seven years' service in the legislature, he entered Congress and became prominent there as a Whig leader. He resigned in 1840 to become a candidate for the governorship of Ohio. During the political campaign that ensued, Corwin spoke several times a day for over three months. He was elected by a large majority, but was defeated in a similar contest in 1842. In 1844, he was elected to the United States Senate, where he was a conspicuous opponent of the war with Mexico. During the administration of President Fillmore (1850-53), Corwin was Secretary of the Treasury, and on the expiration of Fillmore's term he returned to the practice of his profession at Lebanon, O. From 1858 to 1861, he sat in Congress, and was subsequently Minister to Mexico (1861-64). Corwin was a brilliant speaker, alike at the Bar and in Congress, and his social qualities made him a general favorite. His strenuous opposition to the Mexican War, however, interfered with his political advancement. His "Life and Speeches," edited by Strohn, were published in 1859 at Dayton, Ohio.

FROM SPEECH ON THE MEXICAN WAR

DELIVERED IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE, FEBRUARY 11, 1847

THE President has said he does not expect to hold Mexican territory by conquest. Why then conquer it? Why waste thousands of lives and millions of money fortifying towns and creating governments, if, at the end of the war, you retire from the graves of your soldiers and the desolated country of your foes, only to get money from Mexico for the expense of all your toil and sacrifice? Who ever heard, since Christianity was propagated among men, of a nation taxing its people, enlisting its young men, and marching off two thousand miles to fight a people merely to