

WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song

Fourth of July Oration

HORACE MANN

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Not everyone in the new Republic was confident that the Spirit of 1776 and our life of ordered liberty would be safely preserved and perpetuated to posterity. For example, in a remarkable speech on the subject of perpetuating our institutions, the young Abraham Lincoln addressed the dangers of lawlessness and mob rule and urged that reverence of the law and the Constitution become the “political religion” of the nation, to be “breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe, that prattles on her lap.”¹ But in a polity in which the people rule, more than law-abidingness and ancestral piety would seem to be needed if the Ship of State is to be steered prudently and honorably.

To provide the proper education for America’s citizen rulers was the lifelong cause of Horace Mann (1796–1859), father of the “Common School [Public School]” movement, promoter of “Normal Schools”[for training of teachers], politician, and president of Antioch College. This (excerpted) Fourth of July oration, delivered in 1842 before the civic leaders of Boston, is guided by a single idea and purpose: to convey the importance of implementing and expanding more and better public education.

Review the stages in Mann’s argument. How and why does he move to the call for public education? How should the new republic regard the speeches and deeds of the Founders? Why, according to Mann, is education especially important in a democratic republic? What dangers does he foresee if the citizens are not enlightened? What kind of civic-minded education does Mann have in mind? Why the emphasis on both intellectual and moral education, on both wisdom and integrity? In your opinion, is Mann right to emphasize widespread public education? Or, might the new republic be better served by educating well what W. E. B. Du Bois later called “the talented tenth,” those potential leaders who will inform and greatly influence our culture and ways?

Fellow Citizens,—It is meet that we should assemble to mingle our congratulations in public, on the recurrence of this Anniversary. The celebration of festival days in honor of illustrious progenitors is a universal fact in human history. It therefore proves the existence of a universal sentiment in human nature, which finds its appropriate utterance

¹ Read Lincoln’s speech at www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-meaning-of-america/the-perpetuation-of-our-political-institutions.

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in such commemorations. This is a sentiment of gratitude and reverence towards the great and good; and it is honorable both to author and object. Under the impulse of these feelings, the heroes of ancient times were deified by their descendants. To consecrate their memory, sculpture reared statues and shrines. Architecture built monuments and temples. Poetry hymned their praises. Eloquence and its responsive acclamations made the arches of heaven resound with their fame; and even the sober muse of history, dazzled by the brilliancy of their exploits, exaggerated fact into fiction, until the true was lost in the fabulous.

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In our day, this sentiment is modified but not extinguished. All modern nations celebrate the anniversary of those days, when their annals were illuminated, or their perilled fortunes rescued, by some grand historic achievement.

The universality and unbroken continuity of these observances seem prophetic of their continuance.

But it is especially worthy of remark, that these public and joyous tributes are paid only to propitious events, or magnanimous deeds,—to what is grand in conception, or glorious in achievement. No days are set apart to commemorate national disaster or ignominy for its own sake. The good only is celebrated. The base, the cowardly, whether in motive or in action, is consigned, through silence, to oblivion.

What a lesson is here, were we so teachable as to learn it! How soon will our position be changed from that of posterity to ancestors; and the strict rules by which we honor or despise predecessors, be applied to us by impartial descendants. Whatever of true, generous, or morally heroic, is wrought out by us, shall be gratefully embalmed in the memories of men; and around millions of firesides, many millions of hearts shall leap with joy at its oft-recurring narration. But what is sordid, perfidious,—a perversion of public good to private ends,—shall be scoffed and hissed at; and its happiest fate shall be an early forgetfulness.

It is, indeed, an impressive thought,—one full of the deepest significancy,—that throughout this vast country, over all its degrees of latitude and longitude, and on the seas which bind the globe in their azure and glorious cincture,²—soon as the beams of this morning's sun gilded spire or mast-head, the shout of exultation and the peal of artillery arose, and sweeping onward and westward like the tidal wave, they are now circuiting the

² *Liturgical vestment, worn encircling the body around or above the waist.*

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globe, in honor of those heroes and martyrs who, only sixty-six years ago, pledged “fortune, life, and sacred honor” to establish the Independence of these United States. How many times has this story been rehearsed, and yet to the patriot’s ear, it never grows old. How curiously has the history of that great revolutionary epoch been investigated; and even now, if some minute of a council,—whether of war or of state,—held at midnight; some memorandum of an order given at a critical juncture; or some hitherto elusive letter, can be found among the records of our government, or pursued across the ocean and drawn from its lurking-place in British or French archives, it is published, read and reiterated by all, and the original is prized, almost like the relic of a saint among the faithful. And all those doings and achievements were less than seventy years ago,—less than the period allotted by the Psalmist to the life of man. Nay, some of the actors in those scenes are amongst us still; and we have proof of the reality not from their lips merely, but honorable scars are their credentials—the hieroglyphs wherein the sacred history is chronicled. Not only have we the mausoleums of battlefields, but every churchyard in New England is thickly strown with the graves of the heroic dead, whose simple inscriptions,—nobler than armorial bearings,—proclaim that they sought toil as a pleasure and rejoiced in self-sacrifice, that they might do good to us, whom they saw only with the eye of faith.

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And yet, let me again say, how obvious it is that we stand in the same relation to posterity that our ancestors do to us. And, as we boldly summon our forefathers to our tribunal for adjudication upon their conduct, so will our conduct be brought into judgment by our successors. Each generation has duties of its own to perform; and our duties, though widely different from theirs, are not less important in their character, or less binding in their obligations. It was their duty to found or establish our institutions, and nobly did they perform it. It is our duty to perfect and perpetuate these institutions; and the most solemn question which can be propounded to this age, is, are we performing it nobly? Shall posterity look back upon our present rulers, as we look back upon Arnold, or as we look back upon Washington? Shall posterity look back upon us, as we look back upon the recreants³ who sought to make Washington Dictator, and would have turned those arms against their country, which had been put into their hands to save her? or shall posterity look back upon us with the heart-throbbings, the tears and passionate admiration, with which we regard the Saviour-like martyrs who, for our welfare, in lonely dungeons and prison-ships, breathing a noisome atmosphere,—their powerful and robust frames protracting their tortures beyond the common endurance of nature, until they slowly but literally perished by starvation,—and when the minions of power came round,

³ Cowards.

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day after day, and offered them life and freedom and a glad return to the upper air, if they would desert their country's cause—refused, and died?

I have said that it is our especial and appropriate duty to perfect and perpetuate the institutions we have received. I am aware that this has been said for the last fifty years, thousands of times every year. I do not reiterate the sentiment, therefore, for its originality; nor even for its importance; but for the sake of inquiring, in what manner this work is to be done? It has long seemed to me that it would be more honorable to our ancestors, to praise them, in words, less; but in deeds, to imitate them more. If from their realms of blessedness, they could address us, would they not say? “Prove the sincerity of your words, by imitating the examples you profess to admire. The inheritance we left you is worthless, unless you have inherited the spirit also by which it was acquired. The boon we would bequeath to the latest posterity, can never reach and bless them, save through your hands. In these spiritual abodes, whence all disturbing passions are excluded, where all illusions are purged from our eyes, we can neither be beguiled nor flattered by lip-service. *Deeds* are the only language we understand; and one act of self-sacrifice for the welfare of mankind is more acceptable to us than if you should make every mountain and hill-top a temple to hallow our names, and gather thither the whole generation as worshippers.”

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Such is the spirit in which I believe our sainted fathers would admonish us. But, alas for the holiday patriot! it is so much easier to praise and get up jubilees than it is *to work*;—it is so much pleasanter to encore a song, than to enlist for a campaign with its privations and diseases and death;—this in-door declamation and psalm-singing so much better befit the nice and dainty sentimentalist, than to go forth into the conflict, and year after year, to wrestle with difficulties, as with an angel of God, until Heaven yields to the importunacy of our struggles what it denied to the formality of our prayers!—all this poetic contemplation of duty is so much easier and cheaper than its stern performance, that we are in perpetual danger of degenerating from effort and self-sacrifice into ceremony and cant.

Were a stranger to come amongst us, and to hear our National Songs, our Fourth of July Orations, and Caucus Speeches, he would say, “Verily, there never were such patriots as these since the days of Thermopylæ.” But were he to remain with us, and become familiar with the spirit of ambition and self-seeking that afflicts us, if he thought

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any more of Thermopylæ, it would be, not of the Spartans, but of Xerxes and his plundering invaders.⁴

Fellow-Citizens, we have sterner duties to perform than to assemble here annually, to listen to glorifications of our great country and our great people, of our super-Ciceronian and super-Demosthenean orators,⁵ and to praise poetry and art and genius that are to be, *at sometime*; and then, after refreshing ourselves with feast and jovial song, to close the day with some garish show, and forthwith to vote ourselves upon the pension list, for the residue of the year, in consideration of such meritorious services. The quiet seat of an honorary member in our community, is not so easily won. Trusts, responsibilities, interests, vaster in amount, more sacred in character, than ever before in the providence of God were committed to any people, have been committed to us. The great experiment of Republicanism,—of the capacity of man for self-government,—is to be tried anew, which wherever it has been tried,—in Greece, in Rome, in Italy,—has failed, through an incapacity in the people to enjoy liberty without abusing it. Another trial is to be made, whether mankind will enjoy more and suffer less, under the ambition and rapacity of an irresponsible parliament, or of irresponsible parties;—under an hereditary sovereign who must, at least, prove his right to destroy, by showing his birth, or under mobs, which are like wild beasts, that prove their right to devour by showing their teeth. A vacant continent is here to be filled up with innumerable millions of human beings, who may be happy through our wisdom, but must be miserable through our folly. Religion,—the ark of God,—which, of old times, was closed that it might not be profaned,—is here thrown open to all, whether Christian, Jew, or Pagan; and yet is to be guarded from desecration and sacrilege, lest we perish with a deeper perdition than ever befell any other people.

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These are some of the interests committed to our keeping;—these are some of the duties we have to discharge. These duties, too, are to be discharged by a people, who are liable to alienation from each other by all those natural jealousies which spring from sectional interests, from discordant local institutions, from differences in climate, language, and ancestry. We are exposed to the jealousies which bad men—or which good men, whose knowledge is disproportioned to their zeal,—may engender amongst us.

⁴ *The Battle of Thermopylæ (480 BC) was fought between an alliance of Greek city-states, led by King Leonidas of Sparta, and the Persian Empire of Xerxes I over the course of three days, during the second Persian invasion of Greece.*

⁵ *Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC–43 BC), a Roman philosopher and statesman, widely considered one of Rome's greatest orators and prose stylists. Demosthenes (384–322 BC), a prominent Greek statesman and orator of ancient Athens.*

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And, on many questions of equal delicacy and magnitude, are we not already armed and marshalled against each other, rather than allied and sworn for common protection?

In this exigency, I affirm that we need far more of wisdom and rectitude than we possess. Preparations for our present condition have been so long neglected that we now have a double duty to perform. We have not only to propitiate to our aid a host of good spirits, but we have to exorcise a host of evil ones. Every aspect of our affairs, public and private, demonstrates that we need, for their successful management, a vast accession to the common stock of intelligence and virtue. But intelligence and virtue are the product of cultivation and training. They do not spring up spontaneously. As yet, all Utopias belong to fiction and not to history; and these fictions have so little verisimilitude, that ages have passed since the last one was written. We need, therefore, unexampled alacrity and energy in the application of all those influences and means, which promise the surest and readiest returns of wisdom and probity, both public and private.

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This is my subject on the present occasion;—a demonstration that our existing means for the promotion of intelligence and virtue are wholly inadequate to the support of a Republican government. If the facts I have to offer should abate something from our national vain-glory and presumption, I hope they may add as much to national prudence and forethought.

The sovereignty of a great nation is surely one of the most precious of earthly trusts. The happiness or misery which a government dispenses, has dimension in two directions,—depth, as well as superficial extent. It not only reaches widely around, amongst contemporaries; but far downwards amongst posterity. Hence, as the well-being of many generations,—each of these generations consisting of many millions,—depends upon the administration of a government,—there is something sublime and awful in the mere contemplation of the interests committed to rulers; and we see the reasonableness of the requisition that they should rule in righteousness. . . .

It is impiety towards the memory of our fathers to suppose that they contended merely for the transfer of the source of misgovernment from one side of the Atlantic to the other. If we were to be governed forever by ignorance and profligacy, it mattered little whether that ignorance and profligacy should reside in King George, or in King Numbers,—only as the latter king, being much stronger than the former, and subject to the ferocity without the imbecility of madness, is capable of committing far wider havoc upon human welfare than the former. A voter may go to the polls with as light a feeling of responsibility to God and man, or with passions as vindictive, as ever actuated the

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British ministry when they passed the Stamp-act, or denounced Adams and Hancock as traitors, and gloated, in imagination, over their quartered bodies. No! Our fathers gave their pledge of “fortune, life and sacred honor,” and redeemed it to the letter, that here, on this broad theatre of a continent which spread around them, and with time before them, their descendants might work out that glorious destiny for mankind,—that regeneration, that deliverance from the fetters of iron which had bound the body, and from the fetters of error that had bound the soul,—which the prophets and apostles of liberty, in all ages, had desired to see, but had not seen. . . .

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In addition to the multitude of questions for decision, is the mode of deciding them. This, indeed, is the grand distinctive feature of our government. The questions which arise for decision, are submitted, not to one man, nor to a triumvirate, nor to a Council of Five Hundred, but to millions. The number of votes given at the last presidential election, was nearly two millions and a half. When the appointed day for making the decision arrives, the question must be decided, whether the previous preparation which has been made for it, be much, or little, or none at all. And, what is extraordinary, each voter helps to decide the question as much by not voting as by voting. If the question is so vast or complicated that any one has not time to make up his mind in relation to it; or if any one is too conscientious to act from conjecture, in cases of magnitude, and therefore stays from the polls, another, who has no scruples about acting ignorantly or from caprice or malevolence, votes; and, in the absence of the former, decides the question against the right. . . .

But it is not the legislative branch only of our government, into which the power of the people directly enters. As jurors, they decide almost all questions of fact in the judicial department. As witnesses, they are the medium for furnishing the facts themselves to which the court applies its law; and here the witness may be said to govern the court; for, accordingly as he testifies to one thing or its opposite, one legal principle or its opposite arises in the judge’s mind, and is applied to the case. And again, in the absence of a standing army, the people are the only reliance of the executive power for enforcing either an act of the Legislature or a decree of the Court, which meets resistance. . . .

If then every government,—even the simplest,—requires talent and probity for its successful administration; and if it demands these qualities in a higher and higher degree, in proportion to its complexity, and its newness; then does our government require this talent and probity, to an extent indefinitely beyond that of any other which ever existed.

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And if, in all governments, wisdom and goodness in the ruler, are indispensable to the dignity and happiness of the subject; then, in a government like our own, where all are rulers, all must be wise and good, or we must suffer the alternative of debasement and misery. It is not enough that a bare majority should be intelligent and upright, while a large minority is ignorant and corrupt. Even in such a state, we should be a house divided against itself, which, we are taught, cannot stand. Hence knowledge and virtue must penetrate society, through and through. We need general intelligence and integrity as we need our daily bread. A famine in the latter, would not be more fatal to natural health and life, than a dearth in the former to political health and life.

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Two dangers then, equally fatal, impend over us;—the danger of ignorance which does not know its duty, and the danger of vice which, knowing, contemns it. To ensure prosperity, the mass of the people must be both well informed, and upright; but it is obvious that one portion of them may be honest but ignorant, while the residue are educated but fraudulent.

When, therefore, we say that our government must be administered by adequate knowledge, and according to the unchangeable principles of rectitude, we mean that it must be administered by men who have acquired this knowledge, and whose conduct is guided by these principles. The knowledge and virtue we need are not abstractions, idealities, bodiless conceptions;—they must be incarnated in human form, imbodyed in the living head and heart; they must glow with such fervid vitality as to burst forth spontaneously into action. Instead of our talking so much of these qualities, they must be such a matter of course as not to be talked of.

Such must have been the theory of those who achieved our Independence, and framed the organic law of our government. They did not brave the terrors of that doubtful struggle, to escape from a supposed one-headed monster on the other side of the Atlantic, into the jaws of a myriad-headed monster on this side. No! we should rob the patriots of the Revolution of their purest glory, did we not believe that the means of self-elevation and self-purification, for the whole people, was an infinitely higher object with them, than immunity from pecuniary burdens. Our fathers did not go to the British king, like a town pauper, demanding exemption from taxes; but they went, like high-priests of God, to reclaim the stolen ark of Liberty,—and to bring Dagon⁶ upon his face, again and again, till it should be restored. . . .

⁶ *A Mesopotamian god.*

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But men are not *born* in the full possession of such an ability [*to rule*]. They do not necessarily develop any such ability, as they grow up from infancy to manhood. Competency to fill so high a sphere can be acquired only by the cultivation of natural endowments, and the subjugation of inordinate propensities. We laugh to scorn the idea of a man's being *born* a ruler or lawgiver, whether King or Peer; but men are *born* capable of making laws and being rulers, just as much in the Old World as in the New. With us, every voter is a ruler and a law-maker, and therefore it is no less absurd to say, here, that a man is fit to be a voter by right of nativity or naturalization, than it is, in the language of the British constitution, to say, that a man shall be Sovereign, or Lord, by hereditary descent. Qualification, in both cases, is something superadded to birth or citizenship; and hence, unless we take adequate means to supply this qualification to our voters, the Bishop of London or the Duke of Wellington may sneer at us for believing in the hereditary right *to vote*, with as good a grace as we can at them, for believing in the hereditary right *to rule*.

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And here a fundamental question arises,—the most important question ever put in relation to this people,—whether, when our government was changed from the hereditary right to rule, to the hereditary right to vote, any corresponding measures were taken to prevent irresponsible voters from abusing their power, as irresponsible rulers had abused theirs. Government is a stewardship, always held by a comparatively small portion of those whose happiness is dependent upon its acts. Even with us, in States where the right of suffrage is most extensive, far less than a quarter part of the existing population, sway the fortunes of all the rest,—to say nothing of their power over the welfare of posterity. This precious deposit in the hands of the foreign steward had been abused; we reclaimed it from his possession, and divided it amongst thousands; but what guaranty did we obtain from the new depositaries, that our treasure should not be squandered or embezzled, as wantonly or wrongfully as before? It is more difficult to watch the million than the individual. It is a case, too, where the law of bond and suretyship does not apply; because, when the contract is broken, we have none to apply to for redress save the contractor and surety, who themselves have violated their obligation. There is but one practicable or possible insurance or gage, and that is, the capacity and conscientiousness of the fiduciary.

When the Declaration of Independence was carried into effect, and the Constitution of the United States was adopted, the civil and political relations of the generation then living and of all succeeding ones, were changed. Men were no longer the same men, but were clothed with new rights and responsibilities. Up to that period, so far as government

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was concerned, they might have been ignorant; indeed, it has generally been held that where a man's only duty is obedience, it is better that he should be ignorant; for why should a beast of burden be endowed with the sensibilities of a man! Up to that period, so far as government was concerned, a man might have been unprincipled and flagitious.⁷ He had no access to the statute-book to alter or repeal its provisions, so as to screen his own violations of the moral law from punishment, or to legalize the impoverishment and ruin of his fellow-beings. But with the new institutions, there came new relations, and an immense accession of powers. New trusts of inappreciable value and magnitude were devolved upon the old agents and upon their successors, irrevocably.

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Now the rule of common sense applicable to analogous cases, applies emphatically here;—confide your fortunes only to the hands of a faithful and competent agent, or if, through legal limitation or restriction, they must pass into the hands of one at present unqualified to administer them; spend half, spend nine-tenths of the fortune itself, if need be, to qualify the new agent for his duty.

If, at the epoch to which I have referred, there was any class of men who believed that republican institutions contain an inherent and indestructible principle of self-preservation, or self-purification,—who believed that a Republic from the necessity of its nature is infallible and incorruptible, and, like a beautiful goddess, endowed with immortal youth and purity; or, if there is any class of men at the present day holding this faith, let me say it is as fatal an error as was ever harbored by the human mind; because it belongs to that class of errors which blind while they menace,—whose deadly shaft is unseen until it quivers in the heart. A republican government is the visible manifestation of the people's invisible soul. Through the ballot-box, the latent will bursts out into authoritative action. In a republican government the ballot-box is the urn of fate; yet no god shakes the bowl or presides over the lot. If the ballot-box is open to wisdom and patriotism and humanity; it is equally open to ignorance and treachery, to pride and envy, to contempt for the poor or hostility towards the rich. It is the loosest filter ever devised to strain out impurities. It gives equal ingress to whatever comes. No masses of selfishness or fraud, no foul aggregations of cupidity or profligacy, are so ponderous or bulky as to meet obstruction in its capacious gorge. The criteria of a right to vote respect citizenship, age, residence, tax, and, in a few cases, property; but no inquiry can be put whether the applicant is a Cato or a Catiline.⁸ To secure fidelity in the discharge of their

⁷ *Criminal; villainous.*

⁸ *Lucius Sergius Catilina (108 BC–62 BC), a Roman senator of the 1st century BC infamous for the Catilinarian conspiracy, an attempt to overthrow the Roman Republic.*

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duties, an oath is imposed on the most unimportant officers,—constables, clerks, surveyors of roads, of lumber, leather, fish,—while the just exercise of this highest function of the citizen, by which law makers, law expounders, and executive officers are alike created, is secured by no civil sanction. In all business transactions, especially where any doubt or distrust attaches to character, we reduce our stipulations to writing; but in conferring the right to vote, we take no promise beforehand that it shall be honestly exercised, nor do we reserve to ourselves any right of subsequent redress, should the privilege be abused. . . .

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I have said that schools should have been established for the education of the whole people. These schools should have been of a more perfect character than any which have ever yet existed. In them the principles of morality should have been copiously intermingled with the principles of science. Cases of conscience should have alternated with lessons in the rudiments. The multiplication table should not have been more familiar nor more frequently applied, than the rule, to do to others as we would that they should do unto us. The lives of great and good men should have been held up for admiration and example; and especially the life and character of Jesus Christ, as the sublimest pattern of benevolence, of purity, of self-sacrifice, ever exhibited to mortals. In every course of studies, all the practical and preceptive parts of the Gospel should have been sacredly included; and all dogmatical theology and sectarianism sacredly excluded. In no school should the Bible have been opened to reveal the sword of the polemic, but to unloose the dove of peace.

I have thus endeavored to show, that with universal suffrage, there must be universal elevation of character, intellectual and moral, or there will be universal mismanagement and calamity. . . .

Some have thought that, in a Republic, the good and wise must necessarily maintain an ascendancy over the vicious and ignorant. But whence any such moral necessity? The distinctive characteristic of a Republic is, the greater freedom and power of its members. A Republic is a political contrivance by which the popular voice is collected and uttered, as one articulate and authoritative sound. If then, the people are unrighteous, that utterance will be unrighteous. If the people, or a majority of them withdraw their eyes from wisdom and equity,—those everlasting lights in the firmament of truth; if they abandon themselves to party strife, where the triumph of a faction, rather than the prevalence of the right, is made the object of contest,—it becomes as certain as are the laws of omnipotence, that such a community will express and obey the baser will.

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Suppose a people to be honest, but unenlightened either by study or experience; and suppose a series of questions to be submitted to them for decision, more grave and important than were ever before evolved in the history of the race. Suppose further, that many of the leading men among them, and the principal organs which hold communication with them, instead of striving to enlighten and instruct, only inflame and exasperate one portion of them against another portion,—and in this state of mind they proceed to the arbitrament. Would it not be better, like the old Roman soothsayers, to determine the question by the flight of birds, or to learn the oracles of fate by inspecting the entrails of an animal?

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When a pecuniary question, however trifling, is to be submitted to a bench of judges, composed of the most learned men in the land, the parties whose interest is at stake, employ eminent counsel, that the whole merits of the case may be developed, and conduce to a just decision. And the court will not suffer its attention to be withdrawn, or its judgment to be disturbed, by vilification of an opponent, or flattery of the tribunal, or the introduction of any other irrelevant matter, but rebukes them as a personal indignity. Now the people have questions to decide infinitely more important than are ever submitted to any court,—they may have the question of the court's existence to decide on,—and should not they, therefore, demand of all their advisers, whether elected or self-constituted, a corresponding truthfulness and gravity?

All philosophers are agreed in regard to all the great truths of astronomy, chemistry, engineering, mechanics, navigation;—if any new point arises, they address themselves most soberly and sedulously to its solution; if new instruments are wanted, they prepare them; if they are deficient in any collateral branch of information, they acquire it. And yet philosophy has no questions more difficult or important than those which are decided with us, by a major vote. Why then should we wonder that on all the great questions which, as yet, have arisen under our government,—the increase or reduction of the army and navy; peace or war; tariff or anti-tariff; internal improvements or no internal improvements; currency, bank or no bank, sub-treasury or no sub-treasury;—why should we wonder, that on all these and other vital questions, we should already have precedents and authorities on both sides, and every thing as yet unsettled;—nay even a wider diversity and a fiercer conflict of opinion, at the present time, than at the foundation of the government? . . .

And what, I again ask, are we doing, to impart soundness and permanency to that which we profess so much to value and admire? We all bear witness that there is but one salvation for the State,—*the knowledge of duty and the will to do it*, among the people.

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But what measures are we taking, to cause that knowledge to spring up, like a new intellectual creation, in every mind; and to cause that will to be quickened into life, in every breast? We all agree,—the universal experience and history of mankind being our authority,—that, in nineteen cases out of every twenty, if the human mind ever is to be expanded by knowledge and imbued with virtuous principles, it must be done during the susceptible years of childhood and youth. But when we come to the *sine qua non*,—to the *work*,—to the point where volition must issue forth into action, or it is valueless,—when we come to the taxing, to the building, to the books, to the apparatus, to the whole system of preparatory and contemporaneous measures for carrying on, and perfecting the work of education;—where wishes and sympathy and verbal encouragement are nothing without the effective co-operation of those muscles which perform labor and transfer money,—when we come to this point, then excuses teem, and the well-wishers retire from the stage, like actors at the close of a drama. . . .

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Remember, then, the child whose voice first lisps, to-day, before that voice shall whisper sedition in secret, or thunder treason at the head of an armed band. Remember the child whose hand, to-day, first lifts its tiny bauble, before that hand shall scatter fire-brands, arrows and death. Remember those sportive groups of youth in whose halcyon bosoms there sleeps an ocean, as yet scarcely ruffled by the passions, which soon shall heave it as with the tempest's strength. Remember, that whatever station in life you may fill, these mortals,—these immortals, are your care. Devote, expend, consecrate yourselves to the holy work of their improvement, Pour out light and truth, as God pours sunshine and rain. No longer seek knowledge as the luxury of a few, but dispense it amongst all as the bread of life. Learn only how the ignorant may learn; how the innocent may be preserved; the vicious reclaimed. Call down the astronomer from the skies; call up the geologist from his subterranean explorations; summon, if need be, the mightiest intellects from the Council Chamber of the nation; enter cloistered halls, where the scholiast⁹ muses over superfluous annotations; dissolve conclave and synod, where subtle polemics are vainly discussing their barren dogmas;—collect whatever of talent, or erudition, or eloquence, or authority, the broad land can supply, *and go forth*, AND TEACH THIS PEOPLE. For, in the name of the living God, it must be proclaimed, that licentiousness shall be the liberty; and violence and chicanery shall be the law; and superstition and craft shall be the religion; and the self-destructive indulgence of all sensual and unhallowed passions, shall be the only happiness of that people who neglect the education of their children.

⁹ *One of the ancient commentators who annotated the classical authors.*