**American Civilization**

*As the Civil War ground on, and the fate of the young nation hung in the balance, Ralph Waldo Emerson argued vehemently for a federal emancipation of the slaves. "Morality," above all else, he asserted, "is the object of government." He lauded President Lincoln for his principled moves in that direction.*

**By Ralph Waldo Emerson**

A certain degree of progress from the rudest state in which man is found,—a dweller in caves, or on trees, like an ape, a cannibal, an eater of pounded snails, worms, and offal,—a certain degree of progress from this extreme is called Civilization. It is a vague, complex name, of many degrees. Nobody has attempted a definition. Mr. Guizot, writing a book on the subject, does not. It implies the evolution of a highly organized man, brought to supreme delicacy of sentiment, as in practical power, religion, liberty, sense of honor, and taste. In the hesitation to define what it is, we usually suggest it by negations. A nation that has no clothing, no alphabet, no iron, no marriage, no arts of peace, no abstract thought, we call barbarous. And after many arts are invented or imported, as among the Turks and Moorish nations, it is often a little complaisant to call them civilized.

Each nation grows after its own genius, and has a civilization of its own. The Chinese and Japanese, though each complete in his way, is different from the man of Madrid or the man of New York. The term imports a mysterious progress. In the brutes is none; and in mankind, the savage tribes do not advance. The Indians of this country have not learned the white man's work; and in Africa, the Negro of today is the Negro of Herodotus. But in other races the growth is not arrested; but the like progress that is made by a boy, "when he cuts his eye-teeth," as we say,—childish illusions passing daily away, and he seeing things really and comprehensively,—is made by tribes. It is learning the secret of cumulative power, of advancing on one's self. It implies a facility of association, power to compare, the ceasing from fixed ideas. The Indian is gloomy and distressed, when urged to depart from his habits and traditions. He is overpowered by the gaze of the white, and his eye sinks. The occasion of one of these starts of growth is always some novelty that astounds the mind, and provokes it to dare to change. Thus there is a Manco Capac at the beginning of each improvement, some superior foreigner importing new and wonderful arts, and teaching them. Of course, he must not know too much, but must have the sympathy, language, and gods of those he would inform. But chiefly the sea-shore has been the point of departure to knowledge, as to commerce. The most advanced nations are always those who navigate the most. The power which the sea requires in the sailor makes a man of him very fast, and the change of shores and population clears his head of much nonsense of his wigwam.

Where shall we begin or end the list of those feats of liberty and wit, each of which feats made an epoch of history? Thus, the effect of a framed or stone house is immense on the tranquillity, power, and refinement of the builder. A man in a cave, or in a camp, a nomad, will die with no more estate than the wolf or the horse leaves. But so simple a labor as a house being achieved, his chief enemies are kept at bay. He is safe from the teeth of wild animals, from frost, sun stroke, and weather; and fine faculties begin to yield their fine harvest. Invention and art are born, manners and social beauty and delight. 'T is wonderful how soon a piano gets into a log-hut on the frontier. You would think they found it under a pine-stump. With it comes a Latin grammar, and one of those towhead boys has written a hymn on Sunday. Now let colleges, now let senates take heed! for here is one, who, opening these fine tastes on the basis of the pioneer's iron constitution, will gather all their laurels in his strong hands.

When the Indian trail gets widened, graded, and bridged to a good road,—there is a benefactor, there is a missionary, a pacificator, a wealth-bringer, a maker of markets, a vent for industry. The building three or four hundred miles of road in the Scotch Highlands in 1726 to 1749 effectually tamed the ferocious clans, and established public order. Another step in civility is the change from war, hunting, and pasturage, to agriculture. Our Scandinavian forefathers have left us a significant legend to convey their sense of the importance of this step. "There was once a giantess who had a daughter, and the child saw a husbandman ploughing in the field. Then she ran and picked him up with her finger and thumb, and put him and his plough and his oxen into her apron, and carried them to her mother, and said, 'Mother, what sort of a beetle is this that I found wriggling in the sand?' But the mother said, 'Put it away, my child; we must begone out of this land, for these people will dwell in it.'" Another success is the post-office, with its educating energy, augmented by cheapness, and guarded by a certain religious sentiment in mankind, so that the power of a wafer or a drop of wax or gluten to guard a letter, as it flies over sea, over land, and comes to its address as if a battalion of artillery brought it, I look upon as a fine metre of civilization.

The division of labor, the multiplication of the arts of peace, which is nothing but a large allowance to each man to choose his work according to his faculty, to live by his better hand, fills the State with useful and happy laborers,—and they, creating demand by the very temptation of their productions, are rapidly and surely rewarded by good sale: and what a police and ten commandments their work thus becomes! So true is Dr. Johnson's remark, that "men are seldom more innocently employed than when they are making money."

The skilful combinations of civil government, though they usually follow natural leadings, as the lines of race, language, religion, and territory, yet require wisdom and conduct in the rulers, and in their result delight the imagination. "We see insurmountable multitudes obeying, in opposition to their strongest passions, the restraints of a power which they scarcely perceive, and the crimes of a single individual marked and punished at the distance of half the earth." \*[Dr. Thomas Brown.]

Right position of woman in the State is another index. Poverty and industry with a healthy mind read very easily the laws of humanity, and love them: place the sexes in right relations of mutual respect, and a severe morality gives that essential charm to woman which educates all that is delicate, poetic, and self-sacrificing, breeds courtesy and learning, conversation and wit, in her rough mate; so that I have thought it a sufficient definition of civilization to say, it is the influence of good women.

Another measure of culture is the diffusion of knowledge, overrunning all the old barriers of caste, and, by the cheap press, bringing the university to every poor man's door in the newsboy's basket. Scraps of science, of thought, of poetry are in the coarsest sheet, so that in every house we hesitate to tear a newspaper until we have looked it through.

The ship, in its latest complete equipment, is an abridgement and compend of a nation's arts: the ship steered by compass and chart, longitude reckoned by lunar observation, and, when the heavens are hid, by chronometer; driven by steam; and in wildest sea-mountains, at vast distances from home,

"The pulses of her iron heart
Go beating through the storm."

No use can lessen the wonder of this control, by so weak a creature, of forces so prodigious. I remember I watched, in crossing the sea, the beautiful skill whereby the engine in its constant working was made to produce two hundred gallons of fresh water out of salt water, every hour,—thereby supplying all the ship's want.

The skill that pervades complex details; the man that maintains himself; the chimney taught to burn its own smoke; the farm made to produce all that is consumed on it; the very prison compelled to maintain itself and yield a revenue, and, better than that, made a reform school, and a manufactory of honest men out of rogues, as the steamer made fresh water out of salt: all these are examples of that tendency to combine antagonisms, and utilize evil, which is the index of high civilization.

Civilization is the result of highly complex organization. In the snake, all the organs are sheathed: no hands, no feet, no fins, no wings. In bird and beast, the organs are released, and begin to play. In man, they are all unbound, and full of joyful action. With this unswaddling, he receives the absolute illumination we call Reason, and thereby true liberty.

Climate has much to do with this melioration. The highest civility has never loved the hot zones. Wherever snow falls, there is usually civil freedom. Where the banana grows, the animal system is indolent and pampered at the cost of higher qualities: the man is grasping, sensual, and cruel. But this scale is by no means invariable. For high degrees of moral sentiment control the unfavorable influences of climate; and some of our grandest examples of men and of races come from the equatorial regions,—as the genius of Egypt, of India, and of Arabia.

These feats are measures or traits of civility; and temperate climate is an important influence, though not quite indispensable, for there have been learning, philosophy, and art in Iceland, and in the tropics. But one condition is essential to the social education of man,—namely, morality. There can be no high civility without a deep morality, though it may not always call itself by that name, but sometimes the point of honor, as in the institution of chivalry; or patriotism, as in the Spartan and Roman republics; or the enthusiasm of some religious sect which imputes its virtue to its dogma; or the cabalism, or esprit du corps, of a masonic or other association of friends.

The evolution of a highly destined society must be moral; it must run in the grooves of the celestial wheels. It must be catholic in aims. What is moral? It is the respecting in action catholic or universal ends. Hear the definition which Kant gives of moral conduct: "Act always so that the immediate motive of thy will may become a universal rule for all intelligent beings."

Civilization depends on morality. Everything good in man leans on what is higher. This rule holds in small as in great. Thus, all our strength and success in the work of our hands depend on our borrowing the aid of the elements. You have seen a carpenter on a ladder with a broad-axe chopping upward chips and slivers from a beam. How awkward! at what disadvantage he works! But see him on the ground, dressing his timber under him. Now, not his feeble muscles, but the force of gravity brings down the axe; that is to say, the planet itself splits his stick. The farmer had much ill-temper, laziness, and shirking to endure from his hand-sawyers, until, one day, he bethought him to put his saw-mill on the edge of a waterfall; and the river never tires of turning his wheel: the river is good-natured, and never hints an objection.

We had letters to send: couriers could not go fast enough, nor far enough; broke their wagons, foundered their horses; bad roads in spring, snow-drifts in winter, heats in summer; could not get the horses out of a walk. But we found out that the air and earth were full of electricity; and it was always going our way,—just the way we wanted to send. *Would he take a message?* Just as lief as not; had nothing else to do; would carry it in no time. Only one doubt occurred, one staggering objection,—he had no carpet-bag, no visible pockets, no hands, not so much as a mouth, to carry a letter. But, after much thought and many experiments, we managed to meet the conditions, and to fold up the letter in such invisible compact form as he could carry in those invisible pockets of his, never wrought by needle and thread,—and it went like a charm.

I admire still more than the saw-mill the skill which, on the sea-shore, makes the tides drive the wheels and grind corn, and which thus embraces the assistance of the moon, like a hired band, to grind, and wind, and pump, and saw, and split stone, and roll iron.

Now that is the wisdom of a man, in every instance of his labor, to hitch his wagon to a star, and see his chore done by the gods themselves. That is the way we are strong, by borrowing the might of the elements. The forces of steam, gravity, galvanism, light, magnets, wind, fire, serve us day by day, and cost us nothing.

Our astronomy is full of examples of calling in the aid of these magnificent helpers. Thus, on a planet so small as ours, the want of an adequate base for astronomical measurements is early felt, as, for example, in detecting the parallax of a star. But the astronomer, having by an observation fixed the place of a star, by so simple an expedient as waiting six months, and then repeating his observation, contrived to put the diameter of the earth's orbit, say two hundred millions of miles, between his first observation and his second, and this line afforded him a respectable base for his triangle.

All our arts aim to win this vantage. We cannot bring the heavenly powers to us, but, if we will only choose our jobs in directions in which they travel, they will undertake them with the greatest pleasure. It is a peremptory rule with them, that *they never go out of their road*. We are dapper little busybodies, and run this way and that way superserviceably; but they swerve never from their foreordained paths,—neither the sun, nor the moon, nor a bubble of air, nor a mote of dust.

And as our handiworks borrow the elements, so all our social and political action leans on principles. To accomplish anything excellent, the will must work for catholic and universal ends. A puny creature walled in on every side, as Donne wrote,—

-- "unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!"

but when his will leans on a principle, when he is the vehicle of ideas, he borrows their omnipotence. Gibraltar may be strong, but ideas are impregnable, and bestow on the hero their invincibility. "It was a great instruction," said a saint in Cromwell's war, "that the best courages are but beams of the Almighty." Hitch your wagon to a star. Let us not fag in paltry works which serve our pot and bag alone. Let us not lie and steal. No god will help. We shall find all their teams going the other way,—Charles's Wain, Great Bear, Orion, Leo, Hercules:—every god will leave us. Work rather for those interests which the divinities honor and promote,—justice, love, freedom, knowledge, utility.

If we can thus ride in Olympian chariots by putting our works in the path of the celestial circuits, we can harness also evil agents, the powers of darkness, and force them to serve against their will the ends of wisdom and virtue. Thus, a wise Government puts fines and penalties on pleasant vices. What a benefit would the American Government, now in the hour of its extreme need, render to itself, and to every city, village, and hamlet in the States, if it would tax whiskey and rum almost to the point of prohibition! Was it Bonaparte who said that he found vices very good patriots?—"he got five millions from the love of brandy, and he should be glad to know which of the virtues would pay him as much." Tobacco and opium have broad backs, and will cheerfully carry the load of armies, if you choose to make them pay high for such joy as they give and such harm as they do.

These are traits, and measures, and modes; and the true test of civilization is, not the census, nor the size of cities, nor the crops,—no, but the kind of man the country turns out. I see the vast advantages of this country, spanning the breadth of the temperate zone. I see the immense material prosperity,—towns on towns, states on states, and wealth piled in the massive architecture of cities, California quartz-mountains dumped down in New York to be re-piled architecturally along-shore from Canada to Cuba, and thence westward to California again. But it is not New-York streets built by the confluence of workmen and wealth of all nations, though stretching out toward Philadelphia until they touch it, and northward until they touch New Haven, Hartford, Springfield, Worcester, and Boston,—not these that make the real estimation. But, when I look over this constellation of cities which animate and illustrate the land, and see how little the Government has to do with their daily life, how self-helped and self-directed all families are,—knots of men in purely natural societies,—societies of trade, of kindred blood, of habitual hospitality, house and house, man acting on man by weight of opinion, of longer or better-directed industry, the refining influence of women, the invitation which experience and permanent causes open to youth and labor,—when I see how much each virtuous and gifted person whom all men consider lives affectionately with scores of excellent people who are not known far from home, and perhaps with great reason reckons these people his superiors in virtue, and in the symmetry and force of their qualities, I see what cubic values America has, and in these a better certificate of civilization than great cities or enormous wealth.

In strictness, the vital refinements are the moral and intellectual steps. The appearance of the Hebrew Moses, of the Indian Buddha,—in Greece, of the Seven Wise Masters, of the acute and upright Socrates, and of the Stoic Zeno,—in Judea, the advent of Jesus,—and in modern Christendom, of the realists Huss, Savonarola, and Luther, are causal facts which came to forward races to new convictions, and elevate the rule of life. In the presence of these agencies, it is frivolous to insist on the invention of printing or gunpowder, of steam-power or gas light, percussion-caps and rubber-shoes, which are toys thrown off from that security, freedom, and exhilaration which a healthy morality creates in society. These arts add a comfort and smoothness to house and street life; but a purer morality, which kindles genius, civilizes civilization, casts backward all that we held sacred into the profane, as the flame of oil throws a shadow when shined upon by the flame of the Bude-light. Not the less the popular measures of progress will ever be the arts and the laws.

But if there be a country which cannot stand any one of these tests,—a country where knowledge cannot be diffused without perils of mob-law and statute-law,—where speech is not free,—where the post-office is violated, mail-bags opened, and letters tampered with,—where public debts and private debts outside of the State are repudiated,—where liberty is attacked in the primary institution of their social life,—where the position of the white woman is injuriously affected by the outlawry of the black woman,—where the arts, such as they have, are all imported, having no indigenous life,—where the laborer is not secured in the earnings of his own hands,—where suffrage is not free or equal,—that country is, in all these respects, not civil, but barbarous, and no advantages of soil, climate, or coast can resist these suicidal mischiefs.

Morality is essential, and all the incidents of morality,—as, justice to the subject, and personal liberty. Montesquieu says—"Countries are well cultivated, not as they are fertile, but as they are free"; and the remark holds not less, but more, true of the culture of men than of the tillage of land. And the highest proof of civility is, that the whole public action of the State is directed on securing the greatest good of the greatest number.

Our Southern States have introduced confusion into the moral sentiments of their people, by reversing this rule in theory and practice, and denying a man's right to his labor. The distinction and end of a soundly constituted man is his labor. Use is inscribed on all his faculties. Use is the end to which he exists. As the tree exists for its fruit, so a man for his work. A fruitless plant, an idle animal, is not found in the universe. They are all toiling, however secretly or slowly, in the province assigned them, and to a use in the economy of' the world,—the higher and more complex organizations to higher and more catholic service; and man seems to play a certain part that tells on the general face of the planet,—as if dressing the globe for happier races of his own kind, or, as we sometimes fancy, for beings of superior organization.

But thus use, labor of each for all, is the health and virtue of all beings. Ich Dien, *I serve*, is a truly royal motto. And it is the mark of nobleness to volunteer the lowest service,—the greatest spirit only attaining to humility. Nay, God is God because he is the servant of all. Well, now here comes this conspiracy of slavery,—they call it an institution, I call it a destitution,—this stealing of men and setting them to work,—stealing their labor, and the thief sitting idle himself; and for two or three ages it has lasted, and has yielded a certain quantity of rice, cotton, and sugar. And standing on this doleful experience, these people have endeavored to reverse the natural sentiments of mankind, and to pronounce labor disgraceful, and the well-being of a man to consist in eating the fruit of other men's labor. Labor: a man coins himself into his labor,—turns his day, his strength, his thought, his affection into some product which remains as the visible sign of his power; and to protect that, to secure that to him, to secure his past self to his future self, is the object of all government. There is no interest in any country so imperative as that of labor; it covers all, and constitutions and governments exist for that,—to protect and insure it to the laborer. All honest men are daily striving to earn their bread by their industry. And who is this who tosses his empty head at this blessing in disguise, the constitution of human nature, and calls labor vile, and insults the faithful workman at his daily toil? I see for such madness no hellebore,—for such calamity no solution but servile war, and the Africanization of the country that permits it.

At this moment in America the aspects of political society absorb attention. In every house, from Canada to the Gulf, the children ask the serious father,—"What is the news of the war today? and when will there be better times?" The boys have no new clothes, no gifts, no journeys; the girls must go without new bonnets; boys and girls find their education, this year, less liberal and complete. All the little hopes that heretofore made the year pleasant are deferred. The state of the country fills us with anxiety and stern duties. We have attempted to hold together two states of civilization: a higher state, where labor and the tenure of land and the right of suffrage are democratical; and a lower state, in which the old military tenure of prisoners or slaves, and of power and land in a few hands, makes an oligarchy: we have attempted to hold these two states of society under one law. But the rude and early state of society does not work well with the later, nay, works badly, and has poisoned politics, public morals, and social intercourse in the Republic, now for many years.

The times put this question,—Why cannot the best civilization be extended over the whole country, since the disorder of the less civilized portion menaces the existence of the country? Is this secular progress we have described, this evolution of man to the highest powers, only to give him sensibility, and not to bring duties with it? Is he not to make his knowledge practical? to stand and to withstand? Is not civilization heroic also? Is it not for action? has it not a will? "There are periods," said Niebuhr, "when something much better than happiness and security of life is attainable." We live in a new and exceptional age. America is another word for Opportunity. Our whole history appears like a last effort of the Divine Providence in behalf of the human race; and a literal slavish following of precedents, as by a justice of the peace, is not for those who at this hour lead the destinies of this people. The evil you contend with has taken alarming proportions, and you still content yourself with parrying the blows it aims, but, as if enchanted, abstain from striking at the cause.

If the American people hesitate, it is not for want of warning or advices. The telegraph has been swift enough to announce our disasters. The journals have not suppressed the extent of the calamity. Neither was there any want of argument or of experience. If the war brought any surprise to the North, it was not the fault of sentinels on the watch-towers, who had furnished full details of the designs, the muster, and the means of the enemy. Neither was anything concealed of the theory or practice of slavery. To what purpose make more big books of these statistics ? There are already mountains of facts, if any one wants them. But people do not want them. They bring their opinions into the world. If they have a comatose tendency in the brain, they are pro-slavery while they live; if of a nervous sanguineous temperament, they are abolitionists. Then interests were never persuaded. Can you convince the shoe interest, or the iron interest, or the cotton interest, by reading passages from Milton or Montesquieu? You wish to satisfy people that slavery is bad economy. Why, the "Edinburgh Review" pounded on that string, and made out its case forty years ago. A democratic statesman said to me, long since, that, if he owned the State of Kentucky, he would manumit all the slaves, and be a gainer by the transaction. Is this new? No, everybody knows it. As a general economy it is admitted. But there is no one owner of the State, but a good many small owners. One man owns land and slaves; another owns slaves only. Here is a woman who has no other property,—like a lady in Charleston I knew of, who owned fifteen chimney-sweeps and rode in her carriage. It is clearly a vast inconvenience to each of these to make any change, and they are fretful and talkative, and all their friends are; and those less interested are inert, and, from want of thought, averse to innovation. It is like free trade, certainly the interest of nations, but by no means the interest of certain towns and districts, which tariff feeds fat; and the eager interest of the few overpowers the apathetic general conviction of the many. Bank-notes rob the public, but are such a daily convenience that we silence our scruples, and make believe they are gold. So imposts are the cheap and right taxation; but by the dislike of people to pay out a direct tax, governments are forced to render life costly by making them pay twice as much, hidden in the price of tea and sugar.

In this national crisis, it is not argument that we want, but that rare courage which dares commit itself to a principle, believing that Nature is its ally, and will create the instruments it requires, and more than make good any petty and injurious profit which it may disturb. There never was such a combination as this of ours, and the rules to meet it are not set down in any history. We want men of original perception and original action, who can open their eyes wider than to a nationality, namely, to considerations of benefit to the human race, can act in the interest of civilization. Government must not be a parish clerk, a justice of the peace. It has, of necessity, in any crisis of the State, the absolute powers of a Dictator. The existing Administration is entitled to the utmost candor. It is to be thanked for its angelic virtue, compared with any executive experiences with which we have been familiar. But the times will not allow us to indulge in compliment. I wish I saw in the people that inspiration which, if Government would not obey the same, it would leave the Government behind, and create on the moment the means and executors it wanted. Better the war should more dangerously threaten us,—should threaten fracture in what is still whole, and punish us with burned capitals and slaughtered regiments, and so exasperate the people to energy, exasperate our nationality. There are Scriptures written invisibly on men's hearts, whose letters do not come out until they are enraged. They can be read by war-fires, and by eyes in the last peril.

We cannot but remember that there have been days in American history, when, if the Free States had done their duty, Slavery had been blocked by an immovable barrier, and our recent calamities forever precluded. The Free States yielded, and every compromise was surrender, and invited new demands. Here again is a new occasion which Heaven offers to sense and virtue. It looks as if we held the fate of the fairest possession of mankind in our hands, to be saved by our firmness or to be lost by hesitation.

The one power that has legs long enough and strong enough to cross the Potomac offers itself at this hour; the one strong enough to bring all the civility up to the height of that which is best prays now at the door of Congress for leave to move. Emancipation is the demand of civilization. That is a principle; everything else is an intrigue. This is a progressive policy,—puts the whole people in healthy, productive, amiable position,—puts every man in the South in just and natural relations with every man in the North, laborer with laborer.

We shall not attempt to unfold the details of the project of emancipation. It has been stated with great ability by several of its leading advocates. I will only advert to some leading points of the argument, at the risk of repeating the reasons of others. \*\*[I refer mainly to a Discourse by the Rev. M. D. Conway, delivered before the "Emancipation League," in Boston, in January last.]

The war is welcome to the Southerner: a chivalrous sport to him, like hunting, and suits his semi-civilized condition. On the climbing scale of' progress, he is just up to war, and has never appeared to such advantage as in the last twelve-month. It does not suit us. We are advanced some ages on the war-state,—to trade, art, and general cultivation. His laborer works for him at home, so that he loses no labor by the war. All our soldiers are laborers; so that the South, with its inferior numbers, is almost on a footing in effective war-population with the North. Again, as long as we fight without any affirmative step taken by the Government, any word intimating forfeiture in the rebel States of their old privileges under the law, they and we fight on the same side, for Slavery. Again, if we conquer the enemy,—what then? We shall still have to keep him under, and it will cost as much to hold him down as it did to let him down. Then comes the summer, and the fever will drive our soldiers home; next winter, we must begin at the beginning, and conquer him over again. What use, then, to take a fort, or a privateer, or get possession of an inlet, or to capture a regiment of rebels ?

But one weapon we hold which is sure. Congress can, by edict, as a part of the military defense which it is the duty of Congress to provide, abolish slavery, and pay for such slaves as we ought to pay for. Then the slaves near our armies will come to us: those in the interior will know in a week what their rights are, and will, where opportunity offers, prepare to take them. Instantly, the armies that now confront you must run home to protect their estates, and must stay there, and your enemies will disappear.

There can be no safety until this step is taken. We fancy that the endless debate, emphasized by the crime and by the cannons of this war, has brought the Free States to some conviction that it can never go well with us whilst this mischief of Slavery remains in our politics, and that by concert or by might we must put an end to it. But we have too much experience of' the futility of an easy reliance on the momentary good dispositions of the public. There does exist, perhaps, a popular will that the Union shall not be broken,—that our trade, and therefore our laws, must have the whole breadth of the continent, and from Canada to the Gulf. But, since this is the rooted belief and will of the people, so much the more are they in danger, when impatient of defeats, or impatient of taxes, to go with a rush for some peace, and what kind of peace shall at that moment be easiest attained: they will make concessions for it,—will give up the slaves; and the whole torment of the past half century will come back to be endured anew.

Neither do I doubt, if such a composition should take place, that the Southerners will come back quietly and politely, leaving their haughty dictation. It will be an era of good feelings. There will be a lull after so loud a storm; and, no doubt, there will be discreet men from that section who will earnestly strive to inaugurate more moderate and fair administration of the Government, and the North will for a time have its full share and more, in place and counsel. But this will not last,—not for want of sincere good-will in sensible Southerners, but because Slavery will again speak through them its harsh necessity. It cannot live but by injustice, and it will be unjust and violent to the end of the world.

The power of Emancipation is this, that it alters the atomic social constitution of the Southern people. Now their interest is in keeping out white labor; then, when they must pay wages, their interest will be to let it in, to get the best labor, and, if they fear their blacks, to invite Irish, German, and American laborers. Thus, whilst Slavery makes and keeps disunion, Emancipation removes the whole objection to union. Emancipation at one stroke elevates the poor white of the South, and identifies his interest with that of the Northern laborer.

Now, in the name of all that is simple and generous, why should not this great right be done? Why should not America be capable of a second stroke for the well-being of the human race, as eighty or ninety years ago she was for the first? an affirmative step in the interests of human civility, urged on her, too, not by any romance of sentiment, but by her own extreme perils? It is very certain that the statesman who shall break through the cobwebs of doubt, fear, and petty cavil that lie in the way, will be greeted by the unanimous thanks of mankind. Men reconcile themselves very fast to a bold and good measure, when once it is taken, though they condemned it in advance. A week before the two captive commissioners were surrendered to England, every one thought it could not be done: it would divide the North. It was done, and in two days all agreed it was the right action. And this action which costs so little (the parties injured by it being such a handful that they can very easily be indemnified) rids the world, at one stroke, of this degrading nuisance, the cause of war and ruin to nations. This measure at once puts all parties right. This is borrowing, as I said, the omnipotence of a principle. What is so foolish as the terror lest the blacks should be made furious by freedom and wages ? It is denying these that is the outrage, and makes the danger from the blacks. But justice satisfies everybody,—white man, red man, yellow man, and black man. All like wages, and the appetite grows by feeding.

But this measure, to be effectual, must come speedily. The weapon is slipping out of our hands. "Time," say the Indian Scriptures, "drinketh up the essence of every great and noble action which ought to be performed, and which is delayed in the execution."

I hope it is not a fatal objection to this policy that it is simple and beneficent thoroughly, which is the attribute of a moral action. An unprecedented material prosperity has not tended to make us Stoics or Christians. But the laws by which the universe is organized reappear at every point, and will rule it. The end of all political struggle is to establish morality as the basis of all legislation. It is not free institutions, 't is not a republic, 't is not a democracy, that is the end,—no, but only the means. Morality is the object of government. We want a state of things in which crime shall not pay. This is the consolation on which we rest in the darkness of the future and the afflictions of today, that the government of the world is moral, and does forever destroy what is not.

It is the maxim of natural philosophers, that the natural forces wear out in time all obstacles, and take place: and it is the maxim of history, that victory always falls at last where it ought to fall; or, there is perpetual march and progress to ideas. But, in either case, no link of the chain can drop out. Nature works through her appointed elements; and ideas must work through the brains and the arms of good and brave men, or they are no better than dreams.

Since the above pages were written, President Lincoln has proposed to Congress that the Government shall cooperate with any State that shall enact a gradual abolishment of Slavery. In the recent series of national successes, this Message is the best. It marks the happiest day in the political year. The American Executive ranges itself for the first time on the side of freedom. If Congress has been backward, the President has advanced. This state-paper is the more interesting that it appears to be the President's individual act, done under a strong sense of duty. He speaks his own thought in his own style. All thanks and honor to the Head of the State! The Message has been received throughout the country with praise, and, we doubt not, with more pleasure than has been spoken. If Congress accords with the President, it is not yet too late to begin the emancipation; but we think it will always be too late to make it gradual. All experience agrees that it should be immediate. More and better than the President has spoken shall, perhaps, the effect of this Message be,—but, we are sure, not more or better than he hoped in his heart, when, thoughtful of all the complexities of his position, he penned these cautious words.