CONCORD ORATION.

Mr. George William Curtis' Brilliant Review.

The Revolution Began in Blood and Ended in Glory.

HAIL TO THE HEROES!

Lord Percy's Zeal for His God and King.

"Atlantis Hath Risen from the Ocean."

1775 TO 1875.

From the Colony of Georgius Rex to the Empire of Freedom and Power.

MR. CURTIS' ORATION.

We are fortunate that we behold this day. The heavens bend benignly over, the earth blossoms with renewed life and our hearts beat joyfully together with one emotion of filial gratitude and patriotic exultation. Citizens of a great, free and prosperous country, we come hither to honor the men, our fathers, who on this spot and upon this day, a hundred years ago, struck the first blow in the contest which made that country independent. Here beneath the hills they trod, by the peaceful river on whose shores they dwelt, amid the fields that they sowed and reaped, proudly recalling their virtue and their valor, we come to tell their story, to try ourselves by their lofty standard to know if we are their worthy children; and, standing reverently where they stood and fought and died, to swear before God and each other, in the words of him upon whom in our day the spirit of the Revolutionary fathers visibly descended, that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

This ancient town, with its neighbors who share its glory, has never failed fitly to commemorate this great day of its history. Fifty years ago, while some soldiers of the Concord fight were yet living—twenty-five years ago, while still a few venerable survivors lingered—with prayer and eloquence and song you renewed the pious vow. But the last living link with the Revolution has long been broken. Great events and a mightier struggle have absorbed our own generation. Yet we who stand here to-day have a sympathy with the men at the old North Bridge, which those who preceded us here at earlier celebrations could not know. With them war was a name and a tradition. So swift and vast had been the change and the development of the country that the Revolutionary clash of arms was already vague and unreal, and Concord and Lexington seemed to them almost as remote and historic as Arcola and Sempach. When they assembled to celebrate this day they saw a little group of tottering forms, eyes from which the light was fading, arms nerveless and withered, thin white hairs that fluttered in the wind—they saw a few venerable relics of a vanished age, whose pride was that before living memory they had been minute men of American Independence. But with us how changed! War is no longer a tradition, half romantic and obscure. It has ravaged how many of our homes! it has wrung how many of the hearts before me! North and South we know the pang. Our common liberty is consecrated by a common sorrow. We do not count around us a few feeble veterans of the contest, but we are girt with a cloud of witnesses. We are surrounded everywhere by multitudes in the vigor of their prime—behold them here to-day sharing in these pious and peaceful rites, the honored citizens, legislators, magistrates—yes, the Chief Magistrate of the Republic, whose glory it is that they were minute men of American liberty and union. These men of to-day interpret to us with resistless eloquence the men and the times we commemorate. Now, if never before, we understand the Revolution. Now we know the secret of those old hearts and homes. We can measure the sacrifice, the courage, the devotion, for we have been in it all. Green hills of Concord, broad fields of Middlesex, that heard the voice of Hancock and of Adams, you heard also the call of Lincoln and of Andrew, and your Ladd and Whitney, your Prescott and Ripley and Melvin, have revealed to us more truly the Davis and the Buttrick, the Hosmer and the Parker of a hundred years ago.

The story of this old town is the history of New England. It shows us the people and the institutions that have made the American Republic. Concord was the first settlement in New England above tidewater. It was planted directly from the mother country, and was what was called a mother town, the parent of other settlements throughout the wilderness. It was a military post in King Philip's war, and 200 years ago—just a century before the minute men whom we commemorate—the militia of Middlesex were organized as minute men against the Indians. It is a Concord tradition that in those stern days, when the farmer tilled these fields at the risk of his life, Mary Shepard, a girl of fifteen, was watching on one of the hills the savages, while her brothers threshed in the barn. Suddenly the Indians appeared, slew the brothers and carried her away. In the night, while the savages slept, she untied a horse which they had stolen, slipped a saddle from under the head of one of her captors, mounted, fled, swam the Nashua River and rode through the forest home. Mary Shepard was the true ancestor of the Concord matrons who share the fame of this day—of Mrs. James Barrett, of the Widow Brown, of Mrs. Amos Wood and Hannah Burns, with the other faithful women whose self-command and ready wit and energy on this great morning show that the mothers of New England were like the fathers, and that equally in both their children may reverence their own best virtues.

A little later than Philip's war, 186 years ago last night, while some of the first settlers of Massachusetts Bay still lingered, when the news came that King James the Second had been dethroned, a company marched from this town and joined that general uprising of the colony which the next day—this very day—with old Simon Bradstreet at its head, deposed Sir Edmund Andros, the King's Governor, and restored the ancient charter of the colony. We demand only the traditional rights of Englishmen, said the English nobles, as they seated William and Mary upon the throne. We ask nothing more, said the freemen of Concord as they helped to dissolve royal government in America, and returned to their homes. Eighty-five years later the first Provincial Congress, which had been called to meet at Concord if for any reason the General Court at Salem were obstructed, assembled in the old meeting house on the 11th October, 1774, the first independent legislature in Massachusetts and America; and from that hour to this the old mother town has never forgotten the words nor forsworn the faith of the Revolution which had been proclaimed here six weeks before:—"No danger shall affright, no difficulties intimidate us; and if, in support of our rights, we are called to encounter even death, we are yet undaunted, sensible that he can never die too soon who lays down his life in support of the laws and liberties of his country."

But the true glory of Concord, as of all New England, was the town meeting, the nursery of American independence. When the Revolution began, of the 8,000,000 of people then living in Old England only 160,000 were voters, while in New England the great mass of free male adults were electors, and they had been so from the landing at Plymouth. Here in the wilderness the settlers were forced to govern themselves. They could not constantly refer and appeal to another authority twenty miles away through the woods. Every day brought its duty that must be done before sunset. Roads must be made, schools built, young men trained to arms against the savages and the wildcat, taxes must be laid and collected for all common purposes, preaching must be maintained, and who could know the time, the means and the necessity so well as the community itself? Thus each town was a little and a perfect republic, as solitary and secluded in the New England wilderness as the Swiss cantons among the Alps. No other practicable human institution has been devised or conceived to secure the just ends of local government so felicitous as the town meeting. It brought together the rich and the poor, the good and the bad, and gave character, eloquence and natural leadership full and free play. It enabled superior experience and sagacity to govern, and virtue and intelligence alone are rulers by divine right. The tories called the resolution for committees of correspondence the source of the rebellion; but it was only a correspondence of town meetings. From that correspondence came the confederation of the colonies. Out of that arose the closer majestic union of the constitution, the greater phœnix born from the ashes of the lesser, and the national power and prosperity to-day rest securely only upon the foundation of the primary meeting. That is where the duty of the citizens begins. Neglect of that is disloyalty to liberty. No contrivance will supply its place, no excuse absolve the neglect; and the American who is guilty of that neglect is as deadly an enemy of his country as the British soldier a century ago.

But here and now I cannot speak of the New England town meeting without recalling its great genius, the New Englander in whom the Revolution seemed to be most fully embodied, and the lofty prayer of whose life was answered upon this spot and on this day. He was not eloquent like Otis, nor scholarly like Quincy, nor all-fascinating like Warren, yet bound heart to heart with these great men, his friends, the plainest, simplest, austerest among them, he gathered all their separate gifts, and adding to them his own, fused the whole in the glow of that untiring energy, that unerring perception, that sublime will, which moved before the chosen people of the colonies a pillar of cloud by day, a fire by night. People of Massachusetts, your proud and grateful hearts outstrip my lips in pronouncing the name of Samuel Adams. Elsewhere to-day, nearer the spot where he stood with his immortal friend Hancock a hundred years ago this morning, a son of Massachusetts, who bears the name of a friend of Samuel Adams, and whose own career has honorably illustrated the fidelity of your State to human liberty, will pay a fitting tribute to the true American tribune of the people—the father of the Revolution, as he was fondly called. But we also are his children and must not omit our duty.

Until 1768 Samuel Adams did not despair of a peaceful issue of the quarrel with Great Britain. But when in May of that year the British frigate Romney sailed into Boston Harbor, and her shotted guns were trained upon the town, he saw that the question was changed. From that moment he knew that America must be free or slave, and the unceasing effort of his life by day and night, with tongue and pen, was to nerve his fellow-colonists to strike when the hour should come. On that gray December evening, two years later, when he rose in the Old South, and in a clear, calm voice said, "This meeting can do nothing more to save the country," and so gave the word for the march to the tea ships, he comprehended more clearly, perhaps, than any man in the colonies, the immense and far-reaching consequences of his words. He was ready to throw the tea overboard because he was ready to throw overboard the King and Parliament of England.

During the ten years from the passage of the Stamp act to the fight at Lexington and Concord, this poor man, in an obscure provincial town beyond the sea, was engaged with the British Ministry in one of the mightiest contests that history records. Not a word in Parliament that he did not hear, not an act in the cabinet that he did not see. With brain and heart and conscience all alive, he opposed every hostile order in Council with a British precedent, and arrayed against the government of Great Britain the battery of principles impregnable with the accumulated strength of centuries of British conviction. The cold Grenville, the brilliant Townsend, the obsequious North, the reckless Hillsborough, the crafty Dartmouth, all the ermined and coroneted chiefs of the proudest aristocracy in the world, derided, declaimed, denounced, laid unjust taxes and sent troops to collect them; cheered loudly by a servile Parliament, the parasite of a headstrong King—and the plain Boston Puritan laid his finger on the vital point of the tremendous controversy and held to it inexorably. King, Lords, Commons, the people of England and the people of America. Intrenched in his own honesty, the King's gold could not buy him. Enshrined in the love of his fellow citizens, the King's writ could not take him. And when on this morning the King's troops marched to seize him, his sublime faith saw beyond the clouds of the moment the rising sun of the America that we behold, and, careless of himself, mindful only of his country, he exultingly exclaimed, "Oh! what a glorious morning!"

Yet this man held no office but that of Clerk of the Assembly, to which he was yearly elected, and that of constant Moderator of the town meeting. This was his mighty weapon. The town meeting was the alarm bell with which he aroused the Continent. It was the rapier with which he fenced with the Ministry. It was the claymore with which he smote their counsels. It was the harp of a thousand strings that he swept into a burst of passionate defiance or an electric call to arms or a proud pæan of exulting triumph, defiance, challenge and exultation—all lifting the Continent to independence. His indomitable will and command of the popular confidence played Boston against London—the provincial town meeting against the royal Parliament, Faneuil Hall against St. Stephen's. And so long as the American town meeting is known its great genius will be revered, who with the town meeting overthrew an empire. So long as Faneuil Hall stands Samuel Adams will not want his most fitting monument; and when Faneuil Hall falls its name with his will be found written as with a sunbeam upon every faithful American heart.

The first imposing armed movement against the colonies on the 19th of April, 1775, did not, of course, take by surprise a people so prepared. For ten years they had seen the possibility, for five years the probability, and for at least a year the certainty, of the contest. They quietly organized, watched and waited. The royal Governor, Gage, was a soldier, and he had read the signs of the times. He had fought with the provincial troops at the bloody ambuscade of Braddock, and he felt the full force of the mighty determination that exalted New England. He had about 4,000 effective troops, trained veterans, with brilliant officers, who despised and ridiculed the Yankee militia. Massachusetts had provided for a Constitutional army of 15,000 men. Minute companies were everywhere organized, and military supplies were deposited at convenient towns. Everybody was on the alert. Couriers were held ready to alarm the country should the British march, and wagons to remove the stores. In the early spring, Gage sent out some of his officers as spies, and two of them came in disguise as far as Concord. On the 22d of March the Provincial Congress met in this town, and made the last arrangements for a possible battle, begging the militia and minute men to be ready, but to act only on the defensive.

As the spring advanced it was plain that some movement would be made, and on Monday, the 17th of April, the Committee of Safety ordered part of the stores deposited here to be removed to Sudbury and Groton and the cannon to be secreted. On Tuesday, the 18th, Gage, who had decided to send a force to Concord to destroy the stores, picketed the roads from Boston into Middlesex to prevent any report of the intended march from spreading into the country. But the very air was electric. In the tension of popular mind every sound and sight was significant. It was part of Gage's plan to seize Hancock and Adams, who were at Lexington, and on the evening of the 18th the Committee of Safety at Cambridge sent them word to beware for suspicious officers were abroad. A British grenadier, in full uniform, went into a shop in Boston. He might as well have proclaimed that an expedition was on foot. In the afternoon one of the Governor's grooms strolled into a stable where John Ballard was cleaning a horse. John Ballard was a Son of Liberty, and when the groom idly remarked, in nervous English, that "there would be hell to pay to-morrow," John's heart leaped and his hand shook, and asking the groom to finish cleaning the horse, he ran to a friend, who carried the news straight to Paul Revere, who told him he had already heard it from two other persons.

That evening, at ten o'clock, 800 troops, under Lieutenant Colonel Smith, took boat at the foot of the Common and crossed to the Cambridge shore. Gage thought that his secret had been kept, but Lord Percy, who had heard the people say on the Common that the troops would miss their aim, undeceived him. Gage instantly ordered that no one should leave the town. But Dr. Warren was before him, and as, the troops crossed the River, Ebenezer Dorr, with a message from Warren to Hancock and Adams, was riding over the Neck to Roxbury, and Paul Revere was rowing over the river further down, to Charlestown, having agreed with his friend Robert Newman to show lanterns from the belfry of the Old North church—

One if by land and two if by sea—

as a signal of the march of the British. Already the moon was rising, and while the troops were stealthily landing at Lechmere Point their secret was flashed out into the April night, and Paul Revere, springing into the saddle upon the Charlestown shore, spurred away into Middlesex.

How far that little candle throws his beams!

The modest spire yet stands, reverend relic of the old town of Boston, of those brave men and of their deeds. Startling the land that night with the warning of danger, let it remind the land for ever of the patriotism with which that danger was averted, and for our children as for our fathers still stand secure, the pharos of American liberty.

It was a brilliant April night. The winter had been unusually mild and the spring very forward. The hills were already green. The early grain waved in the fields and the air was sweet with blossoming orchards. Already the robins whistled, the bluebird sang and the benediction of peace rested upon the landscape. Under the cloudless moon the soldiers silently marched and Paul Revere swiftly rode, galloping through Medford and West Cambridge, rousing every house as he went spurring for Lexington and Hancock and Adams, and evading the British patrols who had been sent out to stop the news. Stop the news! Already the village churches were beginning to ring the alarm, as the pulpits beneath them had been ringing for many a year. In the awakening houses lights flashed from window to window. Drums beat faintly far away and

THE MINUTE-MAN.

on every side. Signal guns flashed and echoed. The watch dogs barked, the cocks crew. Stop the news! Stop the sunrise! The murmuring night trembled with the summons so earnestly expected, so dreaded, so desired. And as long ago the voice rang out at midnight along the Syrian shore, wailing that great Pan was dead, but in the same moment the chorning angels whispered, "Glory to God in the highest, for Christ is born," so in the stern alarm of that April night seemed to many a wistful and loyal heart to portend the passing glory of British dominion and the tragical chance of war, it whispered to them with prophetic inspiration, "Good will to men: America is born!"

There is a tradition that long before the troops reached Lexington an unknown horseman thundered at the door of Captain Joseph Robbins in Acton, waking every man and woman and the babe in the cradle, shouting that the regulars were marching to Concord and that the rendezvous was the old North Bridge. Captain Robbins' son, a boy of ten years, heard the summons in the garret where he lay, and in a few minutes was on his father's old mare, a young Paul Revere, galloping along the road to rouse Captain Isaac Davis, who commanded the minute men of Acton. He was a young man of thirty, a gunsmith by trade, brave and thoughtful, and tenderly one of his wife and four children. The company assembled at his shop, formed and marched a little way, when he halted them and returned for a moment to his house. He said to his wife, "Take good care of the children," kissed her, turned to his men, gave the order to march, and saw his home no more. Such was the history of that night in how many homes! The hearts of those men and women of Middlesex might break, but they could not waver. They had counted the cost. They knew what and whom they served; and as the midnight summons came they started up and answered, "Here am I!"

Meanwhile the British bayonets, glistening in the moon, moved steadily along the road. Colonel Smith heard and saw that the country was aroused, and sent back to Boston for reinforcements, ordering Major Pitcairn with six companies to hasten forward and seize the bridges at Concord. Paul Revere and Dorr had reached Lexington by midnight and had given the alarm. The men of Lexington instantly mustered on the green, but as there was no sign of the enemy they were dismissed to await his coming. He was close at hand. Pitcairn swiftly advanced, seizing every man upon the road, and was not discovered until half past four in the morning, within a mile of two of Lexington meeting house. Then there was a general alarm. The bell rang, drums beat, guns fired and sixty or seventy of the Lexington militia were drawn up in line upon the green, Captain John Parker at their head. The British bayonets, glistening in the dawn, moved rapidly toward them. Pitcairn rode up and angrily ordered the militia to surrender and disperse. But they held their ground. The troops fired over their heads. Still the militia stand. Then a deadly volley blazed from the British line, and eight of the Americans fell dead and ten wounded at the doors of their homes and in sight of their kindred. Captain Parker, seeing that it was massacre, not battle, ordered his men to disperse. They obeyed, some firing upon the enemy. The British troops, who had suffered little, with a loud huzza of victory, pushed on toward Concord, six miles beyond.

Four hours before Paul Revere and Ebenezer Dorr had left Lexington to rouse Concord, and were soon overtaken by Dr. Samuel Prescott, of that town, who had been to Lexington upon a tender errand. A British patrol captured Revere and Dorr, but Prescott leaped a stone wall and dashed on to Concord. Between one and two o'clock in the morning Amos Melvin, the sentinel at the Court House, rang the bell and roused the town. He sprang of heroic stock. One of his family thirty years before had commanded a company at Louisburg and another at Crown Point, while four brothers of the same family served in the late war, and the honored names of the fallen who perished are carved upon your soldiers' monument. When the bell rang the first man that appeared was William Emerson, the minister, with his gun in his hand. It was his faith that the scholar should be the minute man of liberty—a faith which his descendants have piously cherished and illustrated before the world. The minute men gathered hastily upon the common. The citizens, hurrying from their homes, secreted the military stores. Messengers were sent to the neighboring villages, and the peaceful town prepared for battle. The minute men of Lincoln, whose captain was William Smith, and whose lieutenant was Samuel Hoar, a name not unknown in Middlesex, in Massachusetts and in the country, and wherever known still honored for the noblest qualities of the men of the Revolution, had joined the Concord militia and minute men, and part of them had marched down the Lexington road to reconnoitre. Seeing the British, they fell back toward the hill over the road at the entrance of the village, upon which stood the liberty pole.

It was now seven o'clock. There were, perhaps, 200 men in arms upon the hill. Below them, upon the Lexington road, a quarter of a mile away, rose a thick cloud of dust, from which, amid prodigious rolling drums, 800 British bayonets flashed in the morning sun. The Americans saw that battle where they stood would be mere butchery, and they fell gradually back to a rising ground about a mile north of the meeting house, the spot upon which we are now assembled. The British troops divided as they entered the town, the infantry coming over the hill from which the Americans had retired, the marines and grenadiers marching by the high road. The place was well known to the British officers through their spies, and Colonel Smith, halting before the Court House, instantly sent detachments to hold the two bridges and others to destroy the stores. But so carefully had these been secreted that during the two or three hours in which they were engaged in the work the British merely broke open about sixty barrels of flour, half of which was afterward saved, knocked off the trunnions of three cannon, burned sixteen new carriage wheels and some barrels of wooden spoons and trenchers; they threw some 500 pounds of balls into the pond and wells, cut down the liberty pole and fired the Court House.

The work was hurriedly done, for Colonel Smith, a veteran soldier, knew his peril. He had advanced twenty miles into a country of intelligent and resolute men, who were rising around him. All Middlesex was moving. From Acton and Lincoln, from Westford, Littleton and Chelmsford, from Bedford and Billerica, from Stow, Sudbury and Carlisle, the sons of Indian fighters and of soldiers of the old French war poured along the roads, shouldering the firelocks and lowing pieces and old King's arms that had seen famous service when the earlier settlers had gone out against King Philip, or the later colonists had marched under the flag on which George Whitefield had written "*Nil desperandum Christo Duce*"—Never despair while Christ is Captain; and those words the children of the Puritans had written on their hearts. As the minute men from the other towns arrived they joined the force upon the rising ground near the North Bridge, where they were drawn into line by Joseph Hosmer, of Concord, who acted as adjutant. By nine o'clock some 500 men were assembled, and a consultation of officers and chief citizens was held. That group of Middlesex farmers, here upon Punkatasset, without thought that they were heroes, or that the day and its deeds were to be so momentous, is a group as memorable as the men of Rütli on the Swiss Alps, or the barons in the meadow of Runnymede. They confronted the mightiest empire in the world, invincible on land, supreme on the sea, whose guns had just been heard in four continents at once, girdling the globe with victory. And that empire was their motherland, in whose renown they had shared—the land dear to their hearts by a thousand ties of love, pride and reverence. They took a sublime and awful responsibility. They could not know that the other colonies, or even their neighbors of Massachusetts, would justify their action. There was as yet no Declaration of Independence, no Continental army. There was, indeed, a general feeling that a blow would soon be struck, but to mistake the time, the place, the way, might be to sacrifice the great cause and to ruin America. But in conscience and their judgment assured them that the hour had come. Before them lay their homes, and, on the hill beyond, the graveyard in which their forefathers slept. A guard of the King's troops opposed their entrance to their own village. Those troops were at that moment searching their homes, perhaps insulting their wives and children. Already they saw the smoke as of burning houses rising in the air, and they resolved to march into the town and to fire upon the troops if they were opposed. They resolved upon organized, aggressive, forcible resistance to the military power of Great Britain, the first that had been offered in the colonies. All unconsciously every heart beat time to the music of the slave's epitaph in the graveyard that overhung the town—

God wills us free; man wills us slaves
I will as God wills; God's will be done.

Isaac Davis, of Acton, drew his sword, turned toward his company, and said, "I haven't a man that's afraid to go." Colonel Barrett, of Concord, gave the order to march. In double file and with trailed arms the men moved along the causeway, the Acton company in front, Major Joan Buttrick, of Concord; Captain Isaac Davis, of Acton, and Lieutenant Colonel Jonas Robertson, of Westford, leading the way. As they approached the bridge the British forces withdrew across it and began to take up the planks. Major Buttrick ordered his men to hasten their march. As they came within ten or fifteen rods of the bridge a shot was fired by the British, which wounded Jonas Brown, one of the Concord minute men, and Luther Blanchard, fifer of the Acton company. A British volley followed, and Isaac Davis, of Acton, making a war for his countrymen, like Arnold von Winkelried at Sempach, fell dead, shot through the heart. By his side fell his friend and neighbor, Abner Hosmer, a youth of twenty-two. Seeing them fall, Major Buttrick turned to his men, and, raising his hand, cried, "Fire, fellow soldiers! for God's sake, fire!" Joan Buttrick gave the word. The cry rang along the line, the Americans fired. The Revolution began! It began here. Let us put off the shoes from our feet, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground.

One of the British was killed, several were wounded, and they retreated in confusion toward the centre of the village. The engagement was doubtless seen by Smith and Pitcairn from the graveyard. If that overlooked the town and the shots were heard by all the searching parties, which immediately returned in haste and disorder, Colonel Smith instantly prepared to retire, and at noon, 100 years ago at this hour, the British columns marched out of Lexington square, then and there began the retreat of British power from the American colonies. Through seven weary and wasting years it continued. From Bunker Hill to Long Island; from Princeton, Trenton and Saratoga; from the Brandywine, Monmouth and King's Mountain; through the bloody snow at Valley Forge, through the treachery of Arnold and of Lee, through cabals and doubt and poverty and despair; but steadily urged by one great heart that strengthened the continent—the heart of George Washington—the British retreat went on from Concord Bridge and Lexington green to the plains of Yorktown and the King's acknowledgment of American independence.

Of the beginning of this retreat, of that terrible march of the exhausted troops from this square to Boston, I have no time fitly to tell the tale. Almost as soon as it began all Massachusetts was in motion. William Prescott mustered his regiment of minute men at Pepperell and Timothy Pickering at Salem and Marblehead. Dedham felt no man behind between the ages of sixteen and seventy. The minute men of Worcester marched out of the town one way as the news went out the other and, flying over the mountains, sent Berkshire to Bunker Hill. Meanwhile the men of Concord and the neighborhood, following the British over the bridge, ran along the heights above the Lexington road and posted themselves to await the enemy. The retreating British column, with wing-sweeping flankers, advanced steadily and slowly. No drum beat, no fife blew. There was the hushed silence of intense expectation. As the troops passed Merriam's Corner, a little beyond Concord, and the flank guard was called in, they turned smoothly and fired upon the Americans. The minute men and militia instantly returned the fire, and the battle began that lasted until sunset.

When Colonel Smith ordered the retreat, although he and his officers may have had some misgivings, they had probably lost them in the contempt of regulars for the militia. But from the moment of the firing at Merriam's Corner they were undeceived. The landscape was alive with armed men. They swarmed through every wood path and by way, across the pastures and over the hills. Some came up in order along the roads, as from Reading and Billerica, from East Sudbury and Bedford, and John Parker's company from Lexington waited in a woody defile to avenge the death of their comrades. The British column marched steadily on, while from trees, rocks and fences, from houses, barns and sheds, blazed the withering American fire. The hills echoed and flashed, the woods rang, the road became an endless ambuscade of flame. The Americans seemed to the appalled British troops to drop from the clouds, to spring from the earth. With every step the attack was deadlier, the danger more imminent. For some time discipline and the plain extremity of the peril sustained the order of the British line; but the stifling clouds of dust, the consuming thirst, the exhaustion of utter fatigue, the wagons full of wounding men moaning and dying, madly pressing through the ranks to the front, the constant falling of their comrades, officers captured and killed, and through all the fatal and incessant shot of an unseen foe, smote with terror that haughty column, which, shrinking, bleeding, wavering, reeled through Lexington panic-stricken and broken. The officers, seeing the dire extremity, fought their way to the front, and threatened the men with death if they advanced. The breaking line recoiled a little, and even steadied under one of the sharpest attacks of the day. For not as yet were Hessians hired to enslave Americans, and it was English blood and pluck on both sides. At two o'clock in the afternoon, a half mile beyond Lexington meeting house, just as the English officers saw that destruction or surrender was the only alternative, Lord Percy, with a reinforcement of 1,200 men, came up, and opening with two cannons upon the Americans, succored his flying and desperate comrades, who fell upon the ground among Percy's troops, their parched tongues hanging from their mouths.

The flower of General Gage's army was now upon the field, but its commander saw at once that his sole hope of safety was to continue the retreat. After half an hour's delay the march was resumed, and with it the barbarities as well as the sufferings of war. Lord Percy threw out flanking parties, which entered the houses upon the line of march, plundering and burning. The fields of Menotomy or Arlington, through which lay the road, became a plain of blood and fire. But the American pursuit was relentless, and beyond Lexington the lower counties and towns came hurrying to the battle. Many a man afterward famous was conspicuous that day, and near West Cambridge Joseph Warren was the inspiring soul of the struggle. It was now past five o'clock. The British ammunition was giving out. The officers, too much exposed in the saddle, alighted and marched with the men, who, as they approached Charlestown, encountered the hottest fire of the day. General Gage had learned the perilous extremity of his army from a messenger sent by Percy, and had issued a proclamation threatening to lay Charlestown in ashes if the troops were attacked in the streets. The town hummed with the vague and appalling rumors of the events of the day, and just before sunset the excited inhabitants heard the distant guns and soon saw the British troops running along the old Cambridge road to Charlestown Neck, firing as they came. They had just escaped the militia, 700 strong, from Salem and Marblehead—the flower of Essex—and as the sun was setting they entered Charlestown and gained the shelter of their frigate guns. Then General Heath ordered the American pursuit to stop and the battle was over. But all that day and night the news was flying from mouth to mouth, from heart to heart, rousing every city, town and solitary farm in the colonies; and before the last shot of the minute men on the British retreat from Concord Bridge was fired, or the last wounded grenadier had been rowed across the river, the whole country was rising; Massachusetts, New England, America, were closing around the city, and the siege of Boston and the war of American independence had begun.

Such was the opening battle of the Revolution, a conflict which, so far as we can see, saved civil liberty in two hemispheres, saved England as well as America, and whose magnificent results shine through the world as the beacon light of free popular government. And who won this victory? The minute men and militia, who in the history of our English race have been always the vanguard of freedom. The minute man of the American Revolution—who was he? He was the husband and father who, bred to love liberty, and to know that lawful liberty is the sole guarantee of peace and progress, left the plough in the furrow and the hammer on the bench, and, kissing wife and children, marched to die or be free. He was the son and lover, the plain, shy youth of the singing school and the village choir, whose heart beat to arms for his country, and he felt, though he could not say, with the old English cavalier:—

I could not love thee, dearе, so much,
Loved I not honor more.

The minute man of the Revolution. He was the old, the middle-aged and the young. He was Captain Miles, of Concord, who said that he went to battle as he went to church. He was Captain Davis, of Acton, who reproved his men for jesting on the march. He was Deacon Josiah Haynes, of Sudbury, eighty years old, who marched with his company to the South Bridge at Concord, then joined in the hot pursuit to Lexington, and fell as gloriously as Warren at Bunker Hill. He was James Hayward, of Acton, twenty-two years old, foremost in that deadly race from Concord to Charlestown, who raised his piece at the same moment with a British soldier, each exclaiming, "You are a dead man!" The Briton dropped, shot through the heart. James Hayward fell mortally wounded. "Father," he said, "I started with forty balls; I have three left. I never did such a day's work before. Tell mother not to mourn too much; and tell her whom I love more than my mother that I am not sorry I turned out."

This was the minute man of the Revolution, the rural citizen trained in the common school, the church, and the town meeting, who carried a bayonet that thought, and whose gun, loaded with a principle, brought down not a man, but a system. Him we gratefully recall to-day—him, in yon manly figure wrought in the metal which but feebly typifies his inexorable will, we commit in his immortal youth to the reverence of our children. And here among these peaceful fields; here in the county whose children first gave their blood for American union and independence, and eighty-six years later gave it first also for a truer union and a larger liberty; here, in the heart of Middlesex, county of Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill, stand fast, Son of Liberty! as the minute man stood at the old North Bridge. But should we or our descendants, false to liberty, false to justice and humanity—betray in any way their cause—spring into life as a hundred years ago, take one more step, descend and lead us, as God led you, in saving America, to save the hopes of man.

At the end of a century we can see the work of this day as our fathers could not; we can see that then the final movement began of a process long and unconsciously preparing, which was to intrust liberty to new forms and institutions that seemed full of happy promise for mankind. And now for nearly a century what was formerly called the experiment of a representative republic of imperial extent and power has been tried. Has it fulfilled the hopes of its founders and the just expectations of mankind? I have already glanced at its early and fortunate conditions, and we know how vast and splendid its early growth and development were. Our material statistics soon dazzled the world. Europe no longer sneered but gazed in wonder, waiting and watching. Our population doubled every fifteen years, and our wealth every ten years. Every little stream among the hills turned a mill; and the great inland seas, bound by the genius of Clinton to the ocean, became the highway of boundless commerce, the path of an unprecedented empire. Our farms were the granary of other lands. Our cotton fields made England rich. Still we chased the whale in the Pacific Ocean, and took fish in the tumbling seas of Labrador. We hung out friendly lights along thousands of miles of coast to tempt the trade of every clime; and wherever on the dim rim of the globe there was a harbor it was white with American sails. Meanwhile at home the political forcooding of federalism had died away, and its very wail seemed a tribute to the pacific glories of the land.

The ornament of beauty is suspect.
A crow that flies in heaven's sweetest air.

The government was left to be but a hand of protection and blessing; labor was fully employed; capital was secure; the army was a jest; enterprise was busting through the Alleghanies, grasping and settling the El Dorado of the prairies, and still, braving the wilderness reached out toward the Rocky Mountains, and, reversing the voyages of Columbus, rediscovered the Old World from the New. America was the Benjamin of nations, the best beloved of Heaven, and the starry flag of the United States flashed a hue of celestial light around the world, the harbinger of freedom, peace and prosperity.

Such was the vision and the exulting faith of fifty years ago. "Atlantis hath risen from the ocean!" cried Edward Everett to applauding Harvard; and Daniel Webster answered from Bunker Hill, "Oh we fall popular governments are impossible." So far as they could see they stood among the unchanged conditions of the early Republic. And those conditions are familiar. The men who founded the Republic were few in number, planted calmly along a temperate coast, remote from the world. They were a homogeneous people, increasing by their own multiplication, speaking the same language, of the same general religious faith, cherishing the same historic and political traditions, universally educated, hardy, thrifty, with general equality of fortune and long and intelligent practice of self-government, while the slavery that existed among them, inhuman in itself, was not seriously felt, and was believed to be disappearing. But within the last half century causes then latent, or wholly incalculable before, have radically changed those conditions, and we enter upon the second century of the Republic with responsibilities which neither our fathers nor the men of fifty years ago could possibly foresee.

Think, for instance, of the change wrought by foreign immigration, with all its necessary consequences. In the state of Massachusetts to-day the number of citizens of foreign birth who have no traditional association with the story of Concord and Lexington is larger than the entire population of the State on the day of battle. The first fifty years after the battle brought to the whole country fewer immigrants than are now living in Massachusetts alone. At the end of that half century, when Mr. Everett stood here, less than 300,000 foreign immigrants had come to this country, but in the fifty years that have since elapsed, that immigration has been more than 9,000,000 of persons. The aggregate population in the last fifty years has advanced somewhat more than three-fold, the foreign immigration more than thirty-fold, so that now immigrants and the children of immigrants are a quarter of the whole population. This enormous influx of foreigners has added an immense ignorance and entire unfamiliarity with republican ideas and habits to the voting class. It has brought other political traditions, other languages and other religious faiths. It has introduced powerful and organized influences not friendly to the republican principle of freedom of thought and action. It is to the change produced by immigration that we owe the first serious questioning of the public school system, which was the nursery of the early republic, and which is to-day the palladium of free popular government.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not lamenting even in thought the boundless hospitality of America. I do not forget that the whole European race came hither but yesterday, and has been domesticated here not yet three hundred years. I am not insensible of the proud claim of America to be the refuge of the oppressed of every clime, nor do I doubt in her maturity her power, if duly directed, to assimilate whole nations, if need be, as in her infancy she achieved her independence and in her prime maintained her unity. But if she has been the hope of the world, and is so still, it is because she has understood both the conditions and the perils of freedom, and watches carefully the changing conditions under which republican liberty is to be maintained. She will still welcome to her ample bosom all who choose to be called her children. But if she is to remain the mother of liberty it will not be the result of those craven counsels whose type is the ostrich burying his head in the sand, but of that wise and heroic statesmanship whose symbol is her own heaven-soaring eagle, gazing undazzled even at the spots upon the sun.

Again, within the century steam has enormously expanded the national domain, and every added mile is an added strain to our system. The marvellous ease of communication both by rail and telegraph tends to obliterate conservative local lines and to make a fatal centralization more possible. The telegraph, which instantly echoes the central command at the remotest point, becomes both a facility and a temptation to exercise command, while below upon the rail the armed blow swiftly follows the word that flies along the wire. Steam concentrates population in cities. But when the government was formed the people were strictly rural, and there were but six cities with 8,000 inhabitants or more. In 1790 only one-thirtieth of the population was in cities; in 1870 more than one-fifth. Steam destroys the natural difficulties of communication; but those very difficulties are barriers against invasion, and protect the independence of each little community, the true foundation of our free republican system. In New England the characteristic village and local life of the last century perishes in the age of steam. Meanwhile the enormous accumulation of capital engaged in great enterprises, with unscrupulous greed of power, constantly tends to make itself felt in the corruption of the press which moulds public opinion, and of the Legislature which makes the laws. Thus steam and the telegraph tend to the concentration of capital and the consolidation of political power, a tendency which threatens liberty, and which was wholly unknown when the republic began, and was unsuspected fifty years ago. Sweet Liberty is a mountain nymph, because mountains baffle the pursuer. But the inventions that level mountains and annihilate space alarm that gracious spirit, who sees her greater insecurity. But stay, heaven-eyed maid, and stay forever! Behold, our devoted Wills shall be thy invincible Alps, our loyal hearts thy secret bower, the spirit of our fathers a cliff or adamant that engineering skill can never pierce nor any foe can scale!

But the most formidable problem for popular government which the opening of our second century presents springs from a source which was unsuspected a hundred years ago, and which the orators of fifty years since forbore to name. This was the system of slave labor which vanished in civil war. But slavery had not been the fatal evil that it was, if with its abolition its consequences had disappeared. It holds us still in mortmain. Its dead hand is strong as its living power was terrible. Emancipation has left the Republic exposed to a new and extraordinary trial of the principles and practices of free government. A civilization resting upon slavery as formerly in part of the country, however polished and ornate, is necessarily aristocratic and hostile to republican equality, while the exigencies of such a society forbid that universal education which is indispensable to wise popular government. When war emancipates the slaves and makes them equal citizens, the ignorance and venality which are the fatal legacies of slavery to the subject class, whether white or black, and the natural alienation of the master class, which alone has political knowledge and experience, with all the secret conspiracies, the reckless corruption, the political knavery, springing naturally from such a situation and ending often in menacing disorder that seems to invite the military interference and supervision of the government—all this accumulation of difficulty and danger lays a strain along the very fibre of free institutions. For it suggests the twofold question whether the vast addition of the ignorance of the emancipated vote to that of the immigrant vote may not overwhelm the intelligent vote of the country, and whether the constant appeal to the central hand of power, however necessary it may seem, and for whatever reason of humanity and justice it may be urged, must not necessarily destroy that local self-reliance which was the very seed of the American Republic, and fatally familiarize the country with that employment of military power which is inconsistent with free institutions, and bold resistance to which has forever consecrated the spot on which we stand.

These are some of the more obvious changes in the conditions under which the Republic is to be maintained. I mention them merely; but every wise patriot sees and ponders them. Does he therefore despond? Heaven forbid! When was there ever an auspicious day for humanity that was not one of doubt and of conflict? The robust moral manhood of America confronts the future with steadfast