The Opening, The Use, And The Future Of Our Domain On This Continent.

Delivered Before The
New York Historical Society
On Its
Eighty-Second Anniversary,
Tuesday, November 16 1886,
By

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AT a meeting of the NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, held in its Hall, on Tuesday, November 16, 1886, to celebrate the Eighty-second Anniversary of the Founding of the Society :

The exercises were opened with prayer by the Rev. THOMAS E. VERMILYE, D.D., Senior Minister of the Reformed (Dutch) Church.

The President, BENJAMIN H. FIELD, Esq., introduced the Rev. GEORGE E. ELLIS, D.D., LL.D., President of the Massachusetts Historical Society, who then delivered the Anniversary Address, on " The Opening, the Use, and the Future of our Domain on this Continent."

Upon the conclusion of the address, the Hon. JOHN JAY rose and said :

" Mr. President, I rise to offer a resolution, which I am sure will be cordially responded to by this Society, whose Eighty-second Anniversary has been honored by the admirable discourse of our learned and distinguished friend from Massachusetts.

" During his honorable and useful career as historian and divine, Dr. ELLIS has done great service to American history by his varied and invaluable contributions on subjects extending from the early colonists to our own times. To-night, after his delightful and graphic reminiscences of scenes in the history of this Society, and connected with eminent statesmen, which some of us well remember, Dr. ELLIS has discussed the opening and uses of our national domain, and has closed his review of four hundred years of its past history by glancing at its future. This reminds us that the future of our national domain loomed up in the far distance before the searching and jealous gaze of European statesmen more than a century ago.

" When the Bourbon courts of Paris and Madrid secretly conspired in the plot, so happily discovered and defeated by the American Commissioners, and now so fully developed in the confidential correspondence of the French archives, published by M. de Circourt, the plot to confine our young Republic to a narrow strip along the Atlantic, which should never be enlarged except by the joint consent of the powers of Europe ; to restrict our western and northern boundaries ; to deprive us of the fisheries and the Mississippi, whose importance was alluded to by Dr. ELLIS, and which to-day, with its affluents, gives us 35,000 miles of navigation during the pendency of that plot, one of those far-sighted diplomats predicted that the Republic, then an infant, would become a giant.

" To-day the world recognizes the fulfilment of that prediction, and Mr. Gladstone says that we have ' a natural basis for the greatest continuous empire ever established by man.' Another English author remarks that ten years in the history of America is half a century of European progress. The London Times admits that our development in the West is the most important fact in contemporary

history, and a striking exhibit of the magnitude and resources of our national domain is given in Dr. Strong's startling work, " Our Country ; its Possible Future and Present Crisis."

" The whole subject, and the grave responsibility resting on this generation to preserve our American institutions and principles against the overwhelming tide of foreign emigration, to teach the new-comers, as Dr. ELLIS says, to reverence and cherish the institutions by which they are protected, are engaging the grave attention of our thoughtful citizens, and the discourse of this evening, apart from its historical value, is valuable and timely. I have the honor, Mr. President, to submit the follow-ing resolution :

" Resolved, That the thanks of the New York Historical Society be presented to the Rev. Dr. GEORGE E. ELLIS for the able, learned, and instructive address which he has delivered this evening, and that he be requested to furnish a copy for publication."

The Rev. HOWARD CROSBY, D.D., LL.D., rose and said that it gave him great pleasure to second the fitting resolution, offered by Mr. JAY, which he was sure would meet a hearty and unanimous response of approval from the members present, who had listened with such manifest gratification, appreciative interest, and rapt attention to the eloquent and instructive address of the learned President of our sister Society. The address embodied the clear-sighted thought and admirable historical philosophy to be expected from the scholarly methods, notable ability, and deep research of the speaker in the field of learning with which his name and life-long labors have been so honorably identified. He hoped that a copy would be secured for publication under the Society's auspices, as a charming and suggestive contribution to our historical literature, which, it seemed to him, it was at once the duty and privilege of the Society to offer to the student of our country's career.

General WILLIAM T. SHERMAN rose to express his personal gratification at the address, and called attention to that portion of it which referred to the rapidity of the country's progress during the present century. He then anecdotically depicted some of the striking contrasts and changes which it had been his lot to witness, he might say, in nearly all the zones of our national domain. The extinction of the buffalo and disappearance of the Indian, which he himself had seen in different parts of the spacious West, giving almost immediate place to great cities of commerce and civilization, marked the peculiar era of our generation and nation. The liberty-loving people of those communities, far and wide, he felt could be relied upon, as they already had been, for their unwavering public spirit and patriotism in any moment of concern or danger to their country, whose institutions they love and cherish as they do their homes. He had listened with the deepest appreciation to the concise philosophical survey of the country's history, and the sagacious and patriotic suggestions as to its future, contained in the excel-lent and able address of Dr. ELLIS, and took especial pleasure in furthering the resolution submitted by Mr. JAY.

The resolution was then adopted unanimously.

A benediction was pronounced by the Rev. ROBERT COLLYER, D.D., Pastor of the Church of the Messiah.

The Society then adjourned.

Extract from the Minutes :

ANDREW WARNER,
Recording Secretary.

The opening, The Use, And The Future of our Domain on This Continent.

Mr. President and members of The New York Historical Society :

THIS is the third occasion on which, at long intervals of years, I have been privileged to attend your annual meeting. Twice, as a silent listener and observer, as then became my youth, I was here as a delegate of the Massachusetts Historical Society—your elder sister, to which you had sent invitations for representation at your fortieth and fiftieth anniversary observances. I well recall the occasion when, in November, 1844, then the youngest member of the Massachusetts Society, I was honored by being sent here with such associates as John Quincy Adams and Leverett Saltonstall. The occasion was one of great interest to you and your guests, who were received by your President, Albert Gallatin. The annual address was delivered by Mr. Brodhead, who had just returned from the European mission on which he was sent to obtain documents illustrative of the history of your State. He gave an admirable account of his well-rewarded researches. The New York Hotel was opened for the first time for a luxurious banquet on the occasion.

Of your guests, the most distinguished and the most vivacious of the after-dinner speakers was Mr. Adams, then in his seventy-eighth year. The unabated fire and ardor of his stern spirit, as you may read in his journal of the period, had been just at that time quickened and intensified by a personal challenge of his veracity, made by Andrew Jackson and others of his political foes. From such a hate-ful charge, he gloried that he could vindicate himself by his care and accuracy in keeping and filing notes, ephemeral papers, and records. General Jackson, in failure of memory, had asserted, that during a stated period he had had no intercourse with Mr. Adams, and would not even recognize him. The triumphantly indignant journalizer had shown me, as we came on in the cars, an autograph note of General Jackson, courteously accepting his invitation to dinner at that very time. On the back of the note were the names of the guests, Jackson's among them. Mr. Adams being toasted, or, as he wrote, "rather being roasted," by a compliment from Governor Bradish, calling him up from the table, made a keen and incisive speech. I well remember his advice to young men looking to public life, to interest themselves in historical societies, and to make and preserve important minutes and records of historical and personal matters. " Then," said he, pointing his advice with his stinging finger, twirling like the snapper of a six-horse whip-lash, " if ever the tongue of *Slander* assails you, you can vindicate yourselves."

In 1854 I was here again as a delegate at your fiftieth anniversary, the address being by Mr. Bancroft, while the eloquence of the Hon. Robert C. Winthrop, at the banquet at the Astor House, conveyed to you the response from the delegation of the Massachusetts Society.

On this occasion, you have done me the honor of inviting me to be the speaker. How shall I use the opportunity ? I should not presume to offer you a theme relating to your own State history ; nor should I care to deal with any matter specially concerning the people or the annals of my own State. Allow me, then, to take a theme which includes us both, and more. A large and all-comprehensive subject allures me, and you may judge it not unmeet for the occasion. It is as vast as the territory of our own national domain ; it is free on every side, open to the air all around us, grand and rich and picturesque, and burdened with momentous lessons—of actors, incidents, and results.

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The theme is one in which wild fancy, imagination, romantic adventure had the start ; to be displaced in due time by stern realities, by sober facts, through toils and tragic incidents, by enterprise, and by scientific processes of strict method and rewarding results. A picturesque past, a marvellously prosperous present, a shadowy but hopeful future. It is the story of the opening of a New World to human knowledge and use. It can never be repeated, either in its wholeness or in its larger incidents in human experience, unless men can open communication with a neighbor planet. The theme is so vast that it must find its attraction and interest rather in the crowding and shifting of scenes and events furnished to musing minds than in any adequate rehearsal of it.

We have to trace a process through nearly four completed centuries. Estimated by the life-term of an individual, the process has been a long one. It has had its intervals of slow and of rapid progress, most vigorous and on the grandest scale in the last half-century. It has had its shocks and its surprises. All the leading nationalities of the other half of the globe have had part in it ; and the diverse characteristics of those nationalities have been signally illustrated in methods and results.

Two distinct stages are marked in the opening of this continent to knowledge and use. The first is that under the prompting of curiosity and adventure, quickened by greed, fed by unintelligent wonder, passing by enterprise and exploration for rational and substantial purposes into the second stage, chiefly within this last century—in which the main impulse has been to certify positive facts by actual economical and scientific studies of the features and resources of the continent, for permanent occupancy and the enriching results of development. The process began under the quickening but beguiling spur of fancy ; it has passed in our time into the gatherings and attestations of sober facts. The change realized in its fulness may be stated thus. In the school geographies and maps of the boy-hood of many still living, the vast and unexplored region lying mostly between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains was set down in dismal and forbidding shadow, as the " Great American Desert," as if it were a larger Sahara. That region now, as set forth on our railroad maps, divided by the boundaries of magnificent States is strewn with sumptuous cities, whose homes and public build-ings have extinguished all the features of the wilderness. Perhaps the one most striking result reached by the opening of this continent is that which, so wonderful in its method, has already lost its surprise for us—by which we have a daily prophecy, presented to us on the sea-board, of the weather indications, computed and decided for us by air and storm-currents passing through mountains and valleys in the inner depths of the continent, reported by the electric wires to a central bureau. What pioneers and explorers must have accomplished to render possible and available those atmospheric calculations from storm-centres and currents, through mountain and valley, is a grand illustration of the process by which science reaches its highest fruitage through materials for the labor of the brain on materials wrought out by brain and muscle. Passengers on mid-ocean have said that, in thinking upon the cable that runs under the waves, they have had a feeling of a sort of home comfort and security. The feeling must be rather undefinable. But those " talking wires," as the Indians on the plains call them, which weave our continent, as in a loom for home fabrics, have a strange power of neutralizing the sense of remoteness over vast expanses.

To the first discoverers and explorers most justly accrued the privilege and responsibility of attach-ing names to objects and localities all new to them. These names, titles, epithets, given as chance or fancy or some subtle working of memory, reverence, or the associative instinct might prompt, were assigned spontaneously, generally with little thought or regard for fitness. The natural features of these novel, strange scenes and objects would affect first the senses, and only vaguely and gradually engage the mind. There was a double purpose to be kept in view in attaching these names and epithets to objects and natural features, as successively disclosed to foreign eyes. The first was, to identify a spot or scene for subsequent recognition ; and the second, to aid in the preparation of maps and charts. Of course, in both cases the intent was to establish sovereign and national claims to new territories. In this assigning of names and epithets, it is not strange that the privilege and responsibility exceeded the exercise of judgment and good sense—certainly, in many cases, of good taste. The new scenes broke on the view of discoverers as surprises, and then received their names from the emotions which they excited.

There are often earnest and perplexed debates in house-holds, in which the birth of a child is anxiously awaited, as to the name which it shall bear. The contingency of sex must be allowed for. When that is decided, choice is free, but often embarrassed. Discretion and good sense generally con-fine themselves to familiar household names. There are risks involved in the indulgence of eccentric fancies and pet preferences. Blanche does not prove a fitting baptismal name for a girl who grows up with the complexion of an Indian ; nor does Grace or Lily become the unlovely or the aggressive of their sex. There are many men and women around us who fret through their lives under the names they are compelled to bear. When this continent was born to the light for the eyes of adventurers from the other half of the planet, the whole expanse, as one, and every spot and scene in it, of land and water awaited a name. Happily the names first assigned were not necessarily permanent or un-

changeable, and many of them very soon had an *alias*. National rivalries, signal events of war or disaster, historic incidents, the names of illustrious persons, and lingering memories of aborigines have each a share in our territorial vocabulary.

How did the first navigators and explorers from the Old World use this privilege and responsibility of assigning names and epithets to the objects which their eyes first beheld here ? Very clear and sensible is the statement made by Dionise Settle, the scribe of the account of the second voyage of " Master Martin Frobisher" to our north and northwest coasts, in 1597, as given in Hakluyt. He writes : " I have also left the names of the countries on both shores [of the great bays] untouched, for lack of understanding the people's language ; as also for sundry respects not needful as yet to be declared. Countries new explored, where commodity is to be looked for, do better accord with a new name given by the explorers than an uncertain name by a doubtful author. Our general (Frobisher) named sundry islands, mountains, capes, and harbours after the names of divers noblemen, and other gentlemen, his friends, as well on the one shore as also on the other."

This last statement reminds us of the fact, that the northern and northwestern lands and waters of our continent, more aptly and faithfully than those of any other part, preserve the names of the bold adventurers and their patrons.

The first comers were generally ready to accept, at least temporarily, the names of islands, mountains, streams, etc., given them by the natives, when they could be caught by the ear or spoken by the foreign tongue. The merest chance or passing incident often attached the name or epithet. The Spaniards and the French had a full repertory for lavish use furnished them in the sanctities and calendar of their creed and church their saints and holy days and sacraments. The heroic and all-suffering missionaries of the Church are most worthily identified with the scenes of their toil. Still the sprinkling over this fresh continent of more than one series of names presents, on the whole, a curious conglomerate of associations. Most incongruous, even painful—if one pauses to think of it—as he traces the historic pathway, of invaders and devastators, are the sacred epithets strewn over our isles and mainlands, so many of which are associated with some dark atrocity. It is a relief in many cases to get back to names of native use, and to retain only the fairest and the best. We will not grudge to the great Bishop of Hippo his standing as god-father to the oldest of our cities, St. Augustine. St. Laurence at the north and St. Mary at the south may well keep their guardianship over historic streams. The whimsical Hennepin may be left as sponsor for St. Anthony's Falls, and St. Louis may endlessly hold the memory of the monarch of France. Not without suggestions of gleams of humor are some of the designations assigned by the first sight-seers here, and the substitutions for them. What is now known as the beautiful Isle of Orleans, in the St. Lawrence, was first seen by Jacques Cartier, richly clad in vines. He being a Breton called it Ile de Bacchus. Next came the Normans, who, having pulled up the vines, chose to call the island Pomona and Ceres. New Spain, New France, New Holland, New England, and New Sweden are names by which the whole or large expanses of the territory of the United States have successively been known. Most fitting is it that the rushing, turbid stream which divides the length of our domain should part with its Spanish name as the " River of the Holy Spirit," and resume its Indian title as the Mississippi.

There is a graver matter concerning the bestowment of names for this continent, which involves alike historic and poetic justice as touching the rights and the just fame of the great discoverer. Most happy was the anticipation before the fact was certified, that immediately assigned to the disclosures made on this side of the ocean of the appellation of the " New World." Most remarkable, too, was it, that the epithet was in direct contradiction of the belief of the great admiral, his companions, and many of his successors. He had no idea that he had found a new world. On the contrary, he believed that he had found what alone he had been seeking for—a part of the Old World, reached by a new route. He died in the belief that he had touched an outlying island off the mainland of the old Cathay, or India. He had no knowledge or idea of the wide-reaching continent and the vast sea which lay between. It was only on his third voyage, in 1495, that he had touched the narrows of the mainland of the continent at the Gulf of Paria. And the Cabots had sighted our northern coasts a year earlier than Columbus' view of the southern.

How was it that Columbus was defrauded of the right that his name, as something synonymous with the New World, should be borne by the whole, while the names of a host of navigators after him are attached to gulfs and straits and bays, to lakes and rivers, to States and mountains ? Your own Society, in 1845, initiated and invited the co-operation of other societies in the project for considering " the expediency of the adoption by this country of a national name." The main intent, doubtless, was to do justice to Columbus. Other names suggested, as " The Republic of Allegania," " The Republic of Washington," did not find favor. The project failed. It was in a reply made by John Quincy Adams, in behalf of a committee of the Massachusetts Society, to your solicitation, that the venerable patriot used this strong language: " The name of ' America,' irretrievably stamped by uncompromising usage upon both continents of the new hemisphere, is a perpetual memorial of human injustice, by confer-ring upon one man a crown of glory justly due to another." This " irretrievable" wrong, by which this continent takes its name, not from Columbus, but from Amerigo Vespucci, is all the more to be regret-ted, because seemingly unaccounted for and accidental.

Whether Vespucci had really anticipated both the Cabots and Columbus in sighting our coasts, is a question which seems now to be hopeless of decision. All known authorities which bear directly or even indirectly upon it are inconclusive. For only Vespucci himself, without a shadow of support, is the authority for a voyage made in our waters in 1497 ; though he was not in his lifetime charged with injustice on the score of his claim. His name is not found on any map of the country till after his death. The inexplicable and seemingly unwarrantable hap by which a name was attached to our whole continent has naturally been followed by confusion and unfitness in the consequences which have fol- lowed it. An Englishman, a Frenchman, German, Italian, Scotchman, or Irishman, all the world over, is content to be called by his local name, and generally will insist upon it. But a citizen of the United States, as if to minister to his alleged vanity, is called everywhere, and commonly calls himself, an American ; thus taking a name from a whole continent. His contemporaries on the southern half of the continent, and even Mexicans and Canadians, are more modest. In a convention of one of our religious fellowships held this year, a proposition was made for adopting the title of " the Church of America"—again a claim by our citizens to the whole continent.

In connection with the names first assigned on the continent to places and natural features, there is much that is significant in the terms used by the first explorers for grouping objects in the vast pan-oramas which opened before them as they penetrated within the country. These terms are large, but vague, suggesting an unknown whole from a fragment of knowledge. Many of these terms still linger in use ; others have been displaced by more defined and limited substitutes. Take, for instance, the term " head-waters," as applied to the original sources of a mighty river, as one stood midway along its flow. When one large stream was perceived to be the confluent of many tributaries, it was re-cognized as a monarch sustained by as yet unknown subjects, or at least as a prince of the region, a royal magnate. All the untraced tributaries which contributed to swell it were called its " head-waters," and the regions through which they flowed became provinces of the river-king. These tributaries might be other mighty streams, with their tributaries ; or the outflow of mighty lakes ; or the ooze of vast swampy basins, or the drain of lofty mountains. " Head-waters," indeed, they were. The sky had as much to do in contributing to them as had the earth. Many great national treaties have been complicated and contested by that grandly vague term for vast unknown water-courses, their beds and springs. The term was easily and glibly spoken and written ; but it required long, continuous, and ex-tended search to verify it. " A divide" is another of those vague terms, designating a swelling vertebra or ridge in some back-bone of the whole, or of a section of the continent, which turned the rain-drops and the flow of its springs to the Arctic Sea, or the Southern Gulf, to the Eastern or the Western Ocean. What a difference and distance of time, progress, and familiarity with stupendous natural feat-ures is marked, when what was once known as a range of mountains is all taken apart, distributed into its heights and peaks and hills, each of which receives its separate name ! And " The Forks," a term once so familiar, as designating at combined streams the spot where two or more rolling rivers unite their waters.

We are struck by the use of the official title of " pilot," as applied to a very important and trusted seaman on each of the fleets or vessels, beginning with those of Columbus, sailing on these unknown waters. With us the title pilot suggests a thoroughly trained expert, who, in succession to and with the

help of the experience of others, has been educated through eye and ear and hand, by native aptitude and by acquired skill, to guide a vessel in familiar waters by known signs on sea and land. If the word pilot is from the old French, it suggests a *ship* ; if from the Dutch, it suggests a *plummet*. We associate a pilot with harbor-waters which are familiar to him. But for the old navigators, qualities and character and skill took the place of knowledge in the responsible office. An eye for keen study of color and currents of water, an ear alert for the sound of breakers, a ready hand at the helm, a watch-ful gaze at the clouds, aptness in casting the lead, and a wise choice of a place of anchorage were the credentials of the trusted leader of pioneer seamen. Still, these self-relying men occasionally met the experience of the Irish pilot, who, on being asked by an anxious passenger on his vessel if he knew of the sunken rocks around him, replied, " Yes ;" and, as the vessel at that moment struck, with sharp crash, added, " and, in faith, that's one of them."

Much the same as to the difference between early and modern pilots through our waters may be said of guides and pioneers by land in tracking wilderness scenes. Even native guides were not always trustworthy, and were often innocently, blunderingly, or fraudulently misleading. The Indian Tejos led Guzman on a wild-goose chase after the Seven Cities of Cibola ; and the lying Vignan entrapped the patient and confiding Champlain far up toward the Arctic waters, where he pretended that he had seen a foreign ship, that had come in through the coveted ocean pathway.

In the full view of the disclosure of a new world to the earliest visitors from the Old World, we are profoundly impressed by the range of the alternatives in the realities which might present themselves. These alternatives as to possible realities and results, balanced, as we shall see, the most momentous consequences in the opening and use of the new continent, and suspend in deep shadow its future.

It required more than a century of imagining and of enterprising to assure to positive knowledge whether this newly revealed territory was an island, an archipelago, or a continent. It was to be tracked and probed and tested, point by point, for all its secrets, along its coasts, through its bays, and into its recesses. And then, was it peopled or unpeopled ? If peopled, how was humanity represented here, in condition, development, and resources ? Science, through its masters, now assures us that this continent, by its geological antecedents and condition, was the earliest section of the globe adapted to sustain animal and human life. A scientific speculation, in its theories of evolution, development, and the survival of the fittest, might, in its application here, have shown a race highly advanced in civilization, attainments, and power.

It was for the new comers to test the truth on this wholly unknown matter. The members of the human family to be met in these strange realms, for anything known or to be imagined to the contrary, might prove to be, in some respects, the superiors of their visitors, physically, intellectually, socially, and certainly morally—to have reached a higher stage in all resources, in civilization, art, refinement, government, wisdom, and power. More than than this : the people disclosed to sight and knowledge here might have been heroic, warlike, proud, and skilled in prowess and defence. They might have been able and disposed successfully to withstand and resist the intruders here, driving them into the sea, or triumphing over them in every usurping effort. They might have exhibited some type of Asiatic civilization, or some of the characteristic qualities of the Indians of the East, which it was supposed would be found here. As it proved, the inhabitants were found to be but rudimental people—children, lacking physical virility. Their very simplicity, which might have drawn to them a considerate tender-ness, if not humane justice, made them but the subjects of a grasping and cruel rapacity from their first invaders.

Another most serious alternative suspended the value of the prize to be won here by invasion and conquest. The continent in the whole, or in large portions of it, might have shown itself inhospitable, even uninhabitable—blasted and scorched by volcanic action, desolate as the surface of the moon appears through the peering telescope. Superstition was lively at the period of the discovery to imagine all sorts of marvels and monsters as keeping guard on the continent, and warning off in-truders. Had there been a lack of indigenous food, animal or vegetable, or of potable water, only the strongest lure of gold and pearls would have encouraged a renewal of visits.

All these alternative conditions, when ignorance should yield to knowledge, were suspended in un-certainty for the first comers. The process of verifying was slow and tentative, quickened by greed and an enormous enthusiasm, inspired by what stood for religious faith. Take into one full view the process of this revealing. As already suggested, there can be no repetition of it for those living on this earth. It may be that this globe is not exhausted of surprises in scenes and objects grand and startling, wondrous and sublime, for the first human eyes that shall gaze upon them. But when and where shall again be revealed to the gazer such an awing and gorgeous view as Balbo de Nuñez beheld, when, after climbing the ocean-peak, where our continent is nearly severed by the isthmus, he looked out upon the Pacific Sea ? Columbus, Verrazano, the Cabots, Cartier, Gilbert, Raleigh, John Smith, Champlain, Cortes, De Soto, La Salle, and a few others were first to be admitted to a private view of the grand features of the New World. True, Humboldt, in his turn as an explorer, saw more, and knew more about what he saw, than did all these first gazers ; but, for the most part, he knew what he was to see. It is this mystery of ignorant expectation for revealings to human intelligence and effort, which gives the inspiration of endeavor and endurance to man, kindles his enthusiasm, and revives his hope. There was something near akin, in the feelings and longings of the first comers to this new world as they waited for its revealings, to those which engage the last thoughts of human beings passing from an earthly life, as they brood upon the august and awful problems of the life to come.

How fascinating and enthralling were the scenes which, either in some vast massings and group-ings or in some surprise of nature, burst upon the gaze of the first explorers ! Some of them—perhaps they were the few—had the sense, the appreciation, to take in the aspects of grandeur and beauty. We have many touches of awe, pathos, and graceful description from their pens. The first impression from all scenes and objects would come in the form of contrasts with all to which they had been wonted in the Old World. They had come from scenes where human life was drear and jaded, often dull and spiritless, worn by toil, disappointment, and jarring passions ; where everything for sight, use, or value was appropriated by an owner ; where bounds and walls and fences marked individual rights ; fields and cities that had been scarred by war ; fortified and battlemented strongholds, castles, palaces, churches, ruins, and cemeteries. Here nature was wild, fresh, and exuberant, free from task-work. In the view of the first comers the continent had no owners, even if it had claimants and occupants. Some adobe walls, without grace or proportions, were all that could be called structures. Humanity— if any of the creatures roaming here deserved the title—were patterned after a strange, poor fashion.

Rich in its illustration of the energies and resources, the heroisms, the vices, and the follies of human nature is the progressive rehearsal of the history of the opening of this continent. All the motive impulses of every tone and tinge and essence which have sway in the human breast have here found their field, their quickening, their aliment, and their retributive experiences. We might give an exhaustive inventory of all that there is in capacity, in inspiration and constancy of aim, in fortitude and recuperative courage, in the range of man’s endowments or acquisitions, as drawn out here. They are all but tamely expressed by such words as enterprise or adventure. Passions wrought to a fever heat, longings and expectations absolutely unbounded in their scope and intensity, and visions borrowing more from un-realities than from verities became the ordinary diet of the prime agents in these achievements. The belief in a fountain here, the bathing in whose waters would renew and perpetuate youth for human heart and limbs, seemed to be but in harmony with the means and de-lights for renewing here a prolonged and varying feast on life’s banquets and revels.

What rich and exhaustless material for art, for the painter and the poet, is laid by in the progressive revealings and occupancy of this continent ! The scene and subject suggested may be of groups of races, strange to each other as they met in our inner wildernesses as friends or foes, and furnished the beginnings of our history. The occasions were not all hostile or tragic. Romance, humor even, are not lacking. The field is a rich one for a succession of “ Knickerbockers,” in text and illustration. The scenes and examples are most suggestive, in the cases of solitary pioneers.

There are two classes of names or epithets by which, as alternates or moral distinctions, we may characterize the acts and actors standing out in signal prominence among the navigators, the invaders, the explorers and conquerors of the waters and lands of the New World. Shall we allow

their chival-rous prowess to assure to them a noble name, or shall we describe them from their spirits and deeds as pirates, marauders, and desperadoes, goaded by cupidity, rapacity, and inhumanity ? To extend the empire of their respective sovereigns over unknown realms ; to enrich old, impoverished states ; to convert and humanize heathen and barbarous peoples—were the motives assigned in royal licenses and charters as the commission of those adventurers by land and sea. But even those three paramount and noble objects might be found not to run harmoniously in one course, and they were subject to complications, interference, and rivalries from many personal ends and minor aims, as well as from warring national sovereignties. The assumption from the start, that whatever there might be here of people or of goods was to be regarded as spoil, as fair booty, to be appropriated by the new comers, gave a hard character to the whole achievement, not to be relieved.

The romance, the glamour, and chivalry of those so-called conquests are features of them which they may have for us, but which did not show themselves to those children of nature, whose gentle welcome received the first comers as heavenly visitors, and who never afterward lost their amaze-ment over the rapacity and cruelty of their invaders as transcending all the passions of their own heathen hearts. The fiendish atrocities which wrought such havoc on the islands were repeated on the main in the track of Cortes through Mexico, and the raiding, reckless, and tragic coursing through Florida of De Soto.

The slowly progressive stages of the opening of this continent, its coasts and its interior, to positive knowledge, as a substitute for blank ignorance and fanciful conjecture, have left singularly interesting historical illustrations in an almost unbroken series of maps, charts, and itineraries. It is less than a hundred years—namely, in 1795—since the first engraved map of the whole American continent was executed. The three preceding centuries were all laboriously and ingeniously spent in gathering and certifying the materials for it. As we look through the series now extant of the drawings, profiles, sketches, and conjectured localities, from the first navigators and explorers who had made sure of one or more spots in space, and were free to imagine its relations to the unknown around it, we are left to muse over the relations which any present moment of time bears to the two eternities before and after it. But in the case of these first adventurers, as in all other enterprises, a beginning of a process well assured was the pledge of progress. We have some very early maps, which ventured wholly by con-jecture to set forth what was supposed to be the whole of this unveiled world, made by those who saw only some few miles of its coast from their vessels. The first query to dispose of, when they dis-embarked upon firm soil, was whether they were upon a continent or an island. The vast bays and estuaries on our coast, which are land-locked, though one sailing upon them may see no land on either side, baffled many navigators. The assumption made from the first, and by all of them, that there must be some water-passage through this continent to Asia, was a lure that was tenaciously followed. Cortereal, in 1500 was the first to suggest that Hudson Strait was such a passage. There are many early maps which unite Asia and America in the north. Lower California was discovered by Cortes in 1533. This proved that the continents were severed in that latitude and longitude. But it was not till 1728 that Behring decided the complete severance between them by passing from the Pacific to the Arctic.

But no mere coast-views, no pricking and probing of the shores, no entering of bays alone, could solve the problems of the New World. The interior must be opened to knowledge. Ships must be left, or at best exchanged for shallops, and foot-travel, with weapon and food and courage and resources for dealing with wild beasts and men, and all imaginable and unimaginable ventures must pursue the search. The cumulative results of exploration, as gathered from tentative and abortive enterprises, mistakes, corrections, and verifications by enthusiasm and heroism, by zeal renewed after disaster and thwarted efforts, assured the facts, and turned mystery and uncertainty into positive knowledge. There is a curious map in the British Museum of the date of 1560, which gives us Chinamen and elephants in the Mississippi Valley. We owe more to the prowess of individual explorers, who were their own patrons and commissaries, than even to government parties. The natives, when in friendly relations with explorers, were found to have a marvellous skill in delineating from their own tenacious memories, as the gathering of their keen observations, the most minute natural features of vast regions of territory which they had tramped over, if only once. With a bit of charcoal on a sheet of bark, or with tracings by a stick in the sand, they would draw a most serviceable outline of a

region, its plains and elevations, its lakes, water-courses, and its springs. Indicating by the sign of sleep the length of a day's journey, they would convey quite a proximate idea of distances. To climb a hill or mountain would satisfy an observer that he was not reaching the tumbling-off place of the earth in his endless stretch. Each little scrap of paper still extant, or truthfully transcribed, which gives the course and the actual surroundings of an explorer on his way, is highly prized by the subsequent chronicler and historian as an item of worth in the making up of a whole. An expert learns to discriminate between the draughts of an honest witness like Champlain and those wrought out of the imagination, like Hennepin's.

These paper-draughts begin about two hundred and seventy-five years ago, mainly of our northern lakes and their tributaries, extending southward and westward. A comparison of a chronological series of the maps drawn by the first explorers in succession, down to the productions of our scientific engineers, would in itself be a most instructive study. They show the processes by which the wilder-ness was opened. Blank ignorance, keen curiosity, and dazed bewilderment as to what it might con-tain, yielded slowly and grudgingly to patient persistency, till the whole mystery was cleared. The records of progress and enlightenment are kept by those paper-witnesses as faithfully as if there had been a series of surveyors' land-marks set up over the continent. But it is not yet complete. Actual surveys have not yet tested and verified the allotment, except by latitude and longitude, of some of our inner depths. A vast region of the Northwest, the abysses of the Black Hills, the spaces of the Lava Beds, and even the neighboring Adirondacks, still await the exact trigonometrical process with the base-line, the theodolite, and the chain.

The most interesting and graphic method by which the successive stages in the opening of our national domain could be illustrated, especially for the young in their training in history, would be by a series of colored maps, executed by taste and skill. The first of this series should show the whole continent, without name, boundary, or division of any sort, simply with its natural features, land and water, plains, mountains, lakes and streams, as what it was for the aborigines and their uses ; the water-ways serving them precisely as do our railroads the uses of civilized man. The next map should show in colors, with vague outlines, the regions respectively occupied or explored by the different European nationalities. The next should indicate, by strips from north to south, the original sea-board colonies on the Atlantic, planted or held by the English, incorporating the Swedes and the Dutch, with another strip for the regions beyond the Alleghanies coming to us by treaty, to mark the birth of our own nation, or afterward attained by purchase from Spain and France. Another map might show the successive lines of forts and military posts as our Government pushed westward ; another, the series of actual frontier settlements, with forest-paths and wagon-roads, till the maps that go with our rail-road time-tables would complete the story.

The Use..

The continent having been opened, especially that part of it which most concerns us our own national domain upon it by the processes and stages just rehearsed, we turn now to the uses, the pur-poses, which the magnificent field and opportunity have been made to serve. Here, again, a broad range of critical alternatives, as to what might have been, and what is, presents itself. We shall find that the possible and the actual uses of our domain before it was appropriated for us decided the fund-amental contingency as to its ownership, its mastery. The prize was to be contested between the three leading nationalities of the Old World—Spain, France, and England. Italians, Dutchmen, Scotchmen, Swedes, and Germans were for the most part later claimants. There was an Irishman and an English-man (William Herries and Arthur Lake, *Winsor*, II., 10, u) with Columbus on his first voyage. A note-worthy fact, under the circumstances of the opening of the New World, was that the foreign invaders, alike of all the nationalities, under their complimentary title of " Christians," very quietly assumed a sort of unchallenged right of authority, ownership, and possession over whoever and whatever in human shape might be found here, and over the whole inventory of nature. They never asked permis-sion or said " by your leave," or even regarded themselves as guests, on willing or unwilling hospit-ality. There might be more or less of disputing as to the respective rights among the invaders ; but there was no deference whatever to those in actual possession. It was an axiom which all the invaders assumed as having the sanction of the founder of the Christian religion, that the heathen must always

be dispossessed, whoever might come in for the spoils. It is another curious fact that these invading Christians, under the banners of their common faith, never formed a holy alliance for rooting out the heathen as such, but took them off in detail. More than this, the invaders, at each point where they probed the continent, finding the native tribes engaged in a vigorous internecine warfare, used them as allies in their own onslaughts on the savages, while rival European nationalities simply transferred their own hostilities to these warring tribes.

What there was of international law, at the period of the opening of the continent, assumed that newly discovered regions of the earth were to belong to the crown, and to be dominated by the European monarch whose subjects first sighted the territory. The Pope of Rome, as the sovereign of all these sovereigns, without waiting for the eggs, few or many, to be hatched, assigned the whole prospective brood to Spain. But the disposal was not regarded as satisfactory, even if authoritative, by those who had an interest in it. Rights of discovery soon yielded to rights secured by might. It was by no means from the first assured what the issue would be. It was decided, as we shall see, by the contingency of use which the grand prize should be made to serve. The great question which hung in suspense was as to the final and assured possession, mastery, and peopling of this domain by one or another nationality of the Old World. It might seem as if the way in which that question has found its solution was decided from the first, as the continent was so soon the scene of a deadly rivalry and struggle between the subjects of all foreign powers. The solution is, after the winking out of sight of all the rights of those who were actually in possession here, the native Indians—that all so-called Christian peoples should be admitted to the full, free rights of occupancy and possession, as representatives of those concerned in the earliest struggles here. But this solution was by no means anticipated, that our domain should afford an asylum, harborage, and homesteads for such a miscellaneous occupancy.

The first actual collision between rivals for possession was that between the French and Spaniards, in 1565, in Florida. The next was between the French and the English in the waters of Mount Desert, Maine, in 1607. Here we have the representatives of three potent nationalities brought before us, raising the prelude to the long and bitter strife, the end of which was to decide the disposal of the prize. Spain might offer its prior claims for discovery, and also for some tentative, though mostly abortive, attempts at occupancy by actual colonization. It is probable that Spaniards had rested at the site of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1526. Far better grounded in actual rights of possession attained by heroic enterprise, arduous toil, daring exploration, costly outlay, and the most ardent missionary zeal, as well as by conquest of some savage tribes, and friendly affiliation with other tribes, were the claims of France. No one, I think, of a considerate and generous mind can follow the career of Frenchmen, lay and priestly, on this continent for two centuries—in its persevering prowess, its continuous enter-prise, and its splendid achievements in first opening the region of the Great Lakes, and tracing from its sources to its mouth the mighty stream which divides our continent—no one can read thoughtfully the story of New France, without wondering at least over the decision of destiny which has assigned to her here only a little group of fishing islands in the Gulf of the St. Lawrence.

But, after all, it was the best and, wisest USE of the new domain—that is, the securing of it by actual improvement that was to decide its possession and mastership. The fatal flaw which very many, not unjust judges, have insisted, impaired the absolute rights of possession by the aborigines found on this soil, was that they were not owners of it, because they merely roamed over it and skimmed its surface, like the birds of the air and the beasts of the woods. They did not add to its value by improve-ment or enrichment. So it was not right that this wasteful sway of barbarism and savagery should appropriate one-half of the globe. The Spaniards and the French made little advance, as regards the rightful use of this splendid domain, upon the ways of the savages. They also were mainly engaged upon spoiling and skimming the continent. Gold and pearls were the ends of the Spaniards. Peltry and furs were those of the French. Meanwhile, between these roamers and skimmers on the southern and the northern bounds of the continent, companies of a sturdy English race planted themselves and their claims, by strong roots, on the Atlantic coast. They took possession in a way to hold it. They dug wells, built fences around tilled fields, and reared homes. They made sure of a base-line for supplies by land and water. The safe place on which to stay was the fruitful

place from which they might swarm. Colonization settled the use, and that decided the possession of this continent. And that was the method of extension and advancement. From such a base-line, the series of inner mountain ridges and of inviting valleys might be successively reached and occupied ; but only for the same purposes of permanency and improvement. And such have ever since been and are now the uses to which we have put our domain. The raw material of land, like those of iron, cotton, and wool, has been. manu-factured.. Labor and enterprise have been its fertilizers. Before the age of recorded title-deeds, there were three symbols of the rights of possession, national or individual—the Well, the Altar, and the Tomb. It was by these that the Israelites returning from Egypt claimed a heritage in Canaan—the Well of Jacob, the Altar of Bethel, and the Tomb of Machpelah. All these implied homes, and homes are the tenure of our domain. Nor can we complain that the spoils of mines have engaged the most laborious and attractive enterprise of so many of our pioneers. For behind them must be the uses of all ores, and the producers of food to feed the miners. And the rail-road bands which cross and bind the continent will secure possession and peace within it, however weak may be its sea-coast defences.

Under this heading, of the Use of the great domain, a very serious matter presents itself, again coming in the form of an alternative of conditions. The first use to which this continent was subjected —a use not yet wholly disused—was that of a thoughtless, reckless, wasteful draining and spoiling of it. The alternative of improvement and enrichment was one which was only slowly and gradually re-cognized. The notion assumed by all the early comers to this continent, and, indeed, perpetuated to our time, was that whatever might be found here, of resources and products, was practically in-exhaustible. The scale of natural outgrowths and hidden wealth was here so vast, mountains with their treasures were so grand, valleys were so exuberant in fertility, lakes and rivers were of such volume, forests so deep and sublime, and the wild beasts for skins and furs and food were so abounding and so rapidly multiplied under a prolific nature, that no draughts upon them for use or havoc could even sensibly reduce them. The recklessness of the generations preceding our own, in dealing at least with the surface products of this territory, so far as it was not the sport of utter thoughtlessness, proceeded upon this assumption, that prudence, fore-thought, economy, a regard for posterity had no occasion here. Already the veritable records of our early pioneers as to the enormous massings of bisons and other gregarious beasts, which they had beheld, are getting to sound like fables. For two hundred years the regions penetrated by the Hudson Bay Company were spoiled by a promiscuous destruction of the fur-bearing animals ; and it was not till the Indian servants of the company gave warning, that a pause was annually allowed for the breeding season. The camp fires of hunters and strollers have been nightly fed by the consumption of a grove of timber, as if under the purpose of warming " all-out-doors ;" and an unextinguished ember, left as the adventurers passed on, has caused many a forest conflagration, or swept an unbounded prairie, and left once well-watered territories to the desolation of deserts. It is true that we have not as yet had occasion here to institute those anxious discussions which annually engage the savans of the British Scientific Association as to the computable wealth still remaining accessible in mines of coal and the metals. But none the less our domain is measurable, and proximately calculable and ponderable in its resources. We have already reached the stage of ex-perience in the Old World at which huge disasters attend upon the embowelling of the earth by mining. Better than this, we have the experience and the forebodings which have called for the inter-position of the Government for the protection and the recuperation of forests. We have reservations for Indians, but none for the buffalo or the beaver. Nothing in or on this earth is really inexhaustible. The primitive mechanical forces used by men were such as were not consumed, and in no whit diminished in putting them to service. The water and the air were unimpaired in volume or in vigor after they had turned the wheels of the mill. But the ocean steamer, which consumes daily three hundred tons of coal, makes a cavity somewhere, which will never be filled.

The Future.

And now we face the question for us to ask, for others to await the answer—as to the *Future* of our national domain, the Fifth Act of Bishop Berkeley's world-drama to be enacted here :

" Westward, the Star of Empire takes its way :
The first four acts already past,
The Fifth shall close the Drama with the day.
Time's noblest offspring is the last !"

We have cast back a retrospect through nearly four hundred years. Dare we cast the horoscope of four hundred years in prospect ?

Happily I may take counsel here from the example of a shrewd, common-sense, sagacious New England minister of the old rural times. In opening a very grave subject to his attentive flock, he told them he should arrange his remarks on it under three heads. The first head would concern what he and they alike knew about it. The second head would cover what he knew about it, and they did not know. The third head would relate to what neither of them knew about it. That third head covers a vast amount of preaching. The future for our country ! Here, again, our subject comes to us under the grave conditions of alternatives. The opening and the use of this continent alike presented those alternatives as to what would be revealed here, its account and its mastership. The reality in both cases proved to be propitious for us. Let us take that as the omen of destiny. Where all is secret, there is no warrant for prophecy but through our wishes and hopes. But there are conceivable and, to an extent, reasonable alternatives. There are those who fashion dismal and hopeless forebodings for our country, and who point to the agencies and elements which are to work dismay and catastrophe. On the walls of the precious art-galleries of this Society hangs the series of most suggestive paintings, five in number, by Thomas Cole, called " The Course of Empire." They open with a fair scene of pure pastoral life on the virgin earth, and pass on through the stages of culture, wealth, development, struggle, and crowning prosperity, on still to scenes of art, splendor, and corrupting luxury, with temples and palaces, statues and fountains, to the catastrophe of ruin. These dark prophets bid us study and mark the lesson from those canvasses and pigments. There, they tell us, is the veritable history of the rise and the decay of the four great empires of the world ; and they ask if the catastrophe is not to be repeated here. We have reached the stage of enervating, corrupting luxury, amid palaces and statues and fountains. The water on which we live comes from polluted streams. Our public and private morals are degraded, and anarchy is in the air. The most splendid temples, altars, and statues of Greece and Rome were raised when all faith in the beings they represented had died out of men's minds and hearts. What shall we say to avert the omen, and to set forth the bright alternative ? Many there are among us—they are the purest, the best, the most generous, the noblest in sacrifice, in labor and holy effort in all our land—who with a serene confidence will answer thus : " We have a divine religion, as the great conservative, benedictive force, which all the preceding great empires had not. That is our sovereign security." If that were the conviction and confidence of all, or even of a large majority of our people, and if that conviction and confidence were strengthening by trial and ex-perience, it were indeed well. But there are those who doubt and deny that belief, and among such are those of whom we stand in dread. Others there are of such doubters and deniers, of whose purity, sincerity, and nobleness there is no question, who teach us that we must look to human and secular agencies, to attested knowledge, to certified and illuminating social science for the conservative and benedictive forces of society. Be it so, then, that there are these two classes of hopeful prophets of our future ; if, however, they differ as to means, they will unite their efforts and their energies for the same results. Certain it is, that no empire or government on this earth ever trusted as we do so much to human ability and resources. It is the only government in this world now that was not founded and is not maintained by force, but on the free will of free men. And that is why all Europe and Asia look to us with admiration and awe and a jealous watchfulness. The darkest shadow that now threatens us is that we are beginning to look to force to crush, by the vengeful energies of law, the cursed broodings of anarchy. The last place on earth where anarchy, the outgrowth of despotism, might be expected to show itself, is in a democracy ; that where all are free as the very air in the making of laws, there should be a defiance of all law ; that where all may be

engaged in rearing the grandest social fabric, we should have to deal with the desperate frenzy that would undermine it. Our confidence, however, is in this, that anarchy is not an indigenous product of our Government, but an imported, a foreign foe, not to be recognized for citizenship among us. We may look back to the Roman Horace for the first classical statement of the truth that men would be happy if they but realized how many means they have for happiness, and would but manfully use them. It is, indeed, a trying and a hazardous ex-periment which is at issue here. Our country was safe and hopeful when its citizens were alike the product and the makers of its own institutions. But we have opened it as a harbor to all people. Luck-less, unhappy, ill-trained in the lands from which they came, they have been most eager to crowd here to enjoy a heritage which others have wrought for them. The one condition for peace and for happiness for them, and for ourselves, is that they respect and honor and uphold the institutions whose privileges and blessings they have sought.

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