AN

oration,

on the

Life, Character and Public Services

of the late

President James K. Polk,

delivered at Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, October 8, 1849.

by

Samuel B. Garrett,

Lawrenceburg:
Printed at the "Middle Tennessean" Office.

1849
SIR—

The undersigned, a committee appointed by a previous meeting of the members of the Bar, respectfully request, for publication, a copy of your Address, delivered on the 8th instant, upon the “Character and Public Services of James K. Polk,” late President of the United States.

We cannot close this communication without expressing our individual gratification for the very able and faithful manner in which you have portrayed the character and the public services of our late gifted Chief Magistrate—whose death we all alike deplore as a great national calamity.

Very respectfully,

Your obt. servt.

A. WRIGHT,
L. M. BENTLEY,
R. H. ROSE,

Samuel B. Garrett, Esq.,
Lawrenceburg, Tenn.

MR. S. B. GARRETT,

Sir: The undersigned respectfully request a publication of the Eulogy, upon the life and character of our late President, James K. Polk, delivered by you at the court-house, on Monday the 8th instant, and oblige,

Yours, &c,

S. E. ROSE,  C. B. CROOK,
S. ORR,  W. P. ROWLES,
FRANK. HUGHES,  SAML. LUCKIE,
J. Y. LUCAS,  R. H. GLOVER,
C. ESTES,  H. C. ANGEL,
WM. E. AUSTIN,  T. D. DEAVENPORT,
ISAIAH IVY,  N. M. DALE,
M. L. BENTLEY,  W. A. EDMISTON,
G. T. SIMONSON,  F. C. ALLEN,
A. S. ALEXANDER,  R. D. PARRISH,
J. B. KOSURE,  GEO. C. HERRON.
FELLOW-CITIZENS:—A disposition has ever been shown by the enlightened portion of mankind to honor the memory of those who while living were eminent for genius and learning united with great moral worth and devoted to their country's service and the advancement of the well-being and happiness of their fellow-men. When it is made known that such an one, having laid aside what is mortal, has put on immortality, a consciousness of the bereavement they have sustained spreads a gloom over the minds of his countrymen; they feel that a benefactor, a friend has been taken from them; that a link is broken in the great chain which united them with the past—a tie severed which no gratitude or affection however ardent can ever restore. Their thoughts dwell on the character and conduct of the deceased, and as each noble trait and each meritorious and honorable action that distinguished his career, presents itself to their minds, their tenderest sensibilities are awakened; a chord in their bosoms is touched which vibrates to the most generous impulses of their nature, and an irresistible desire is felt to give some outward manifestation of the painful emotions their bereavement has occasioned.

To such feelings as these—feelings so honorable to our nature, and utterly opposed to that callous selfishness which usually governs the actions of men—we must ascribe the funeral rites of the great and renowned whom death has removed, "the hearse with 'scutcheons blazoned and waving plumes of ostrich crowned," the solemn funeral procession, the sable badges and symbols of
mourning which the living put on, and all the pomp and pageantry of grief by which they seek to testify their respect for the memory of the deceased and the sorrow his loss has occasioned.

But these pageants, much as they deserve commendation for the motives which prompt them, are not free from objection.—Addressing themselves entirely to the imagination of the beholder, they convey no useful instruction and make no permanent impression on his mind. Like the fleeting shadows of pantomime, the images they convey are indistinct and confused—the ideas of which they are the intended emblems are too vague and indefinite thoroughly to enlist the feelings or instruct the understanding. Passing quickly away, they leave to the spectator "an aching void," a painful sense of their inadequacy to express the emotions of a rational mind, and of their utter vanity when offered as a tribute to departed worth.

This sense of their inadequacy to the purpose for which they are intended, has led to another custom more suited to the tastes and more in harmony with the spirit of a cultivated and enlightened age. It is now the practice, when Death overtakes any individual eminent for his virtues and for the benefits he has conferred on his fellow-men, to select some person acquainted with his character and history, who may embody as nearly as possible in words the vivid emotions of the multitude, and direct their thoughts to whatever in his character and conduct may be worthy of contemplation and remembrance. This practice commends itself both to our reason and our affections; for, whilst it pays the highest possible tribute to the memory of the dead, it excites the emulation of the living, exalts their patriotism, and infuses into free government that public spirit which, if not essential to its existence, is at least one of its firmest and most durable supports.

In conformity with this usage, and in compliance with the wishes of my brethren of the Bar, to whose kind partiality I owe the call they have made upon me, I appear before you to-day to recount the public actions, and as far as my humble powers will allow, to portray the private virtues of one who after a life spent
in high civil employment and illustrated by numerous brilliant events in which he was a prominent or the chief actor, has at last ceased from his labors and gone to his reward. I am to speak to you of the life, character and public services of James K. Polk, late Chief-Magistrate of this Republic. If a bare enumeration of the virtues of this eminent man, or of the honors successively bestowed upon him by his countrymen, were all that you required or expected of me on this occasion, my task would be comparatively easy and pleasant. But interwoven as his history is with that of his country; breathing as he did for many years of his life a political atmosphere; and stamped as our institutions are with the impress of his mind and his opinions, I shall be compelled in the discharge of the duty assigned me to remark upon his official conduct. In doing so it is not improbable that I shall utter sentiments directly opposed to those entertained by many of my hearers. To such let me here say that, following the example of all former eulogists of deceased statesmen, I shall speak of Mr. Polk’s acts with all the freedom of an American citizen reviewing the conduct of a public servant, and bestow such commendation on the measures of his Administration as I think they deserve. At the same time I shall endeavor to treat with due respect the feelings and opinions of those who differ with me, and I trust that when I conclude I shall have the satisfaction to know that not an expression has fallen from my lips to which the most sensitive or the most fastidious can take any just exception. We came not here, fellow-citizens, to seek a renewal of party strife around the grave of our departed President, or to desecrate that grave with unfriendly remembrances. Laying aside our party differences, we have met together in the spirit not of partizans, but of American freemen, to testify our regret for the loss of an illustrious countryman, and to offer to his memory the tribute of our gratitude and admiration. There is a moral grandeur, a sublimity, a beauty in such a scene which cannot fail to impress the mind of every beholder. Far be it from me to seek to mar such beauty by tearing open the healed wounds of party. Far be the thought or the wish to disturb the pious har-
mony which prevails by mingling with the voice of mourning a single note of discord.

In the State of North Carolina, on the southern border of that State is a county called Mecklenburg, a rural and secluded district, remote from the pomp of courts, the bustle of cities and the din of trade. In this county of Mecklenburg, about a century ago, an event occurred which though overlooked in the whirl of the mighty revolution that followed, is now one of the most famous in our country's annals—I mean the First Declaration of American Independence. The Genius of Liberty driven by despots from the Old World, and by the servile tools of a despot, England's provincial governors from the Atlantic shores of the New found a secure retreat amid the romantic solitudes of Mecklenburg. There reposing till God's appointed time was come, she sprang forth at His command from her hiding place, and waving her wand of deliverance over a prostrate and down-trodden people, bade them arise and be free. The county selected by Providence as the scene of this memorable event, gave birth to him whose life and character form the subject of my discourse.—

In Mecklenburg, on the 2nd day of November, 1795, James K. Polk first saw the light of the natural day, and of that bright moral day which had succeeded the dark night of his country's tribulation. Enviable distinction to have his birth thus associated with that of a nation's freedom! Happy privilege to be welcomed to the scenes of earth with the smiles of those who were the first to assert and among the bravest to defend their country's independence! Under the watchful eye and guardian care of these bold champions of freedom the infant years of the future Statesman and Magistrate were passed. By them his infant tongue was first taught to lisp the sacred name of liberty. From their lips he first learned the thrilling story of his country's wrongs, her sufferings and her triumphs; and from them his young bosom caught the inspiration of that lofty patriotism which guided him through the many and trying difficulties of a course of public service embracing the most eventful period of his country's history. The impressions made on the tender and suscep-
ible minds of the young are the deepest and most durable.—
Happy the man who like James K. Polk receives those impressions from the daily converse of the wise, the virtuous and the brave; and happy, thrice happy, the country whose rulers, instead of being early imbued with the arbitrary spirit and taught the arbitrary maxims of despotism, learn the true end and aim of human government from the friends and defenders of the rights of mankind.

In the year 1806, young Polk being then in the 11th year of his age, his father, Maj. Samuel Polk, left North Carolina and migrated to Tennessee; selecting for his residence the county of Maury, at that time in the infancy of its settlement, but now the most densely populated and best cultivated part of the State.—From an apprehension that his son's health was too much impaired to bear the confinement and sedentary habits of professional life, Maj. Polk determined to dedicate him to mercantile pursuits, and accordingly, after having him properly instructed in the elementary branches of an English education, placed him as a clerk in a commercial house.

But the position of a tradesman, honorable and respectable as that position is, did not suit the tastes, or accord with the ambitious views of James K. Polk. He felt that he was created for a more extended sphere of action—he thought that a higher destiny awaited him than after a life spent in what he considered the inglorious drudgery of trade and the obscurity of the counting-room,

To sink down
To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonored and unsung!

Nature had left in his bosom no place for the auri sacrafames. The pursuit of gain, the accumulations of the most successful traffic, were viewed by him with indifference and contempt—the indifference and contempt of one who fondly hoped, ere life's journey ended,

The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar.

With such aspirations thus early kindled in his bosom, it is not
surprising that his vocation soon became intolerably irksome, and that he besought his father to allow him to follow the bent of his own inclination. His father's anxieties for his health at length yielded to his importunities and to his own high appreciation of the value of intellectual culture, and he determined to afford him the means of acquiring an education. Having taken this resolution, he sent him first to the Academy at Murfreesboro, from which institution, after the usual preparatory study, he transferred him to the University of North Carolina.

The conduct of James K. Polk, while at the University, was a model of diligence and subordination to the government of the institution. Though belonging to that class of society which furnishes to our seminaries of learning so many of the votaries of pleasure; the idle, voluptuous and dissolute habits of those of his associates who preferred the midnight debauch to the odor of the "midnight oil," had no charms for him. Avoiding their excesses, their frivolities and their follies, and secluding himself as much as possible from their society, he applied himself with an assiduity seldom equalled, never surpassed, to the improvement of his mind. So persevering, so constant was his application that during the whole of his collegiate course, it is said, he was never known to be absent from a recitation. The consequence of such diligence was, that he outstripped every competitor for collegiate distinction, and received at each semi-annual examination, including that which closed his collegiate course, the highest honors of his class.

Returning to Tennessee with health impaired, but his mental powers greatly invigorated by the severe training they had undergone, he commenced the study of Law in the office of the late Felix Grundy. Under the instruction of this eminent jurist he was soon qualified for practice, and in the year 1820, was admitted to the Bar. His short, but brilliant professional career presents no incident worthy of particular mention. Adhering to the habits of diligence formed in his youth, he thoroughly mastered the details of every case in which he was engaged, and bringing to bear upon it the resources of a fertile and active mind, well-
stored with legal and general learning, he seldom failed of success. In one year from the time of obtaining license he found himself in the possession of a lucrative practice, and ranking, in the estimation of the community and in the deference paid to his legal opinions, with the oldest members of the profession. Such success is unusual even on a provincial theatre and leaves us no room to doubt that his continuance in the profession would have soon secured to him its highest honors and rewards. But his friends and neighbors discovered in his varied attainments a capacity for usefulness in another walk of life. They saw that he possessed qualifications for the duties of legislation; and they called him into the political field. At their earnest solicitation, in the year 1823, he became a candidate and was elected to the Legislature as the Representative from Maury. In this position he remained two years, and so ably and satisfactorily did he discharge his duties, that at the expiration of that time, the people of the District of which Maury forms a part, elected him their Representative in Congress.

The period of Mr. Polk’s service in Congress extends over a space of fourteen years, embracing the whole of the administrations of John Quincy Adams and Gen. Jackson and a part of that of Mr. Van Buren. It was a stormy period in American politics. Two great parties, advocating widely different measures, were arrayed against each other and struggling for the ascendancy with all the fierceness of the most rancorous political animosity. In this struggle, Mr. Polk was an active participant, and though he stood aloof from the personal wranglings which so often disgraced the proceedings of Congress, and in his conflicts with the opposition disdained to use the favorite weapons of weak politicians, personal invective and abuse, he zealously defended and maintained the doctrines of the political faith received from his fathers. In the discussion of the great questions that came before Congress, he took a prominent, often a leading part, exhibiting in his speeches an originality, vigor and depth of thought, a fullness of research, and a force of reasoning which soon placed him in the front rank of debaters in a body of men
numbering among its members some of the most gifted intellects of the nation. The language spoken of the late Mr. Adams, with a slight variation may be applied with equal truth to him: "He was not the Salaminian galley to be launched only on extraordinary occasions, but he was the ready vessel, always launched when the duties of his station required it, be the occasion great or small. As a Member of the House of Representatives, the obscure committee room was as much the witness of his laborious application to the drudgery of legislation, as the hall of the house was to the ever ready speech, replete with knowledge, which instructed all hearers, enlightened all subjects, and gave dignity and ornament to debate."

At the opening of the House in the year 1835, he was called to preside over its deliberations as Speaker. The post of Speaker is one of high trust and responsibility, its duties arduous and difficult. During the time Mr. Polk held the office the discharge of these duties was rendered doubly arduous by the embarrassments and difficulties which a bitter political, and with respect to some members personal, animosity threw in his way. Of the manner in which he acquitted himself, as well as the assiduity with which he attended to business before his elevation to the Speaker's chair, some idea may be formed from the statement he made when about to retire from Congress at the close of the session of 1839. "Since I have been a member of this House," said he, "I have not failed to attend its sittings a single day, except on one occasion when prevented for a short time by indisposition. During the time I have filled this chair, it has been made my duty to decide more questions of parliamentary law, some of them of a complex and difficult character, than have been decided by all my predecessors since the foundation of the government. My decisions have been uniformly sustained by the House, without distinction of the political parties of which it is composed."

Such was James K. Polk in the character of Legislator. Diligent, prompt to obey every call of duty, punctual in his attendance on the sittings of the House, attentive to all business that came before it, whether it was some war-worn veteran's humble peti-
tion for a pension or a vast and vital question affecting the interests of millions, he was the same untiring, indefatigable servant of the people, the whole people. No fatigue of excessive or protracted labor could drive him from his seat; no seeming security of the public interests relaxed his vigilance. A faithful sentinel on the watch-tower of liberty, he was never found slumbering at his post. His conduct is perhaps without a parallel in our legislative history, and it should be the study and the model of all to whom shall hereafter be committed the high trust of framing their country's laws and guarding her rights and honor.

During the five years that elapsed from the time of his retirement from Congress, till his elevation to the Presidency, he was alternately engaged in the political struggles of his own State or the prosecution of his profession. Passing over this interval as barren of interest and developing no new feature of his character, (unless it be the manly firmness exhibited by him under political defeat, equal if not superior to his modest dignity in the hour of his most splendid triumphs,) we will proceed to consider his conduct in the high position to which the voluntary and unsolicited suffrages of his countrymen called him in the year 1844—the exalted, arduous, and responsible position of Chief-Magistrate of this great Republic.

The election of 1844 will be long remembered for the unusual animation of the canvass that preceded it, and the number of the great questions it involved. In proportion to the number and magnitude of these questions was the interest felt by the people in their decision. So absorbing was this interest—so completely did the state of our affairs engross the thoughts and feelings of the community, and so thoroughly were their passions and prejudices aroused, that all classes for a time laid aside their several vocations, and resuming the functions delegated to their representatives, resolved themselves into a sort of 'committee of the whole' to debate the affairs of State. Every question of policy, foreign and domestic, was thoroughly canvassed before them; every subject relating to commerce, manufactures, finance or other national interest, was subjected to the ordeal of the most
rigid and searching examination of all its practical bearings upon the prosperity of the country. At length, after months of discussion, the people through the ballot-box pronounced their judgment on the issues before them. Whatever opinion you may have formed, fellow-citizens, of the correctness of that judgment—whether you regard it as one of those sudden and unaccountable popular impulses so common in Republican communities, or as the deliberate and enlightened verdict of a people competent to decide the great questions before them, you are compelled to admit the obligation resting on Mr. Polk to conform to that judgment in administering the affairs of government.—The issues on which the election turned, the discussions which preceded it, and the decision in which those discussions terminated, plainly pointed out the path he was expected to pursue—he could tread in no other without a gross breach of duty, honor, and gratitude to those who elected him. Much, then, as you may condemn the policy he pursued, you must admire the stern republican spirit which prompted him topersevere with unshaken and unyielding constancy against every obstacle and difficulty in carrying out the will of those to whom he owed his elevation.

Among the issues involved in the election of 1844, was that of a high or low Tariff—taxation for revenue or for protection.—From the earliest period of the Republic to the present time the question of the Tariff has been the touch-stone, the shibboleth of party. No other has drawn party lines so broadly and deeply; no other, not entirely of a sectional character, has given rise to such vehement and angry controversy. On the one side, a large class of our fellow-citizens, comprising much of the talent and wealth of the country, contend that Congress, in adjusting the revenue, should look beyond the mere object of raising the means to carry on the government, and so lay the duties that the necessary result will be protection to some favorite branch of industry. Opposed to these is a class composed, for the most part, of the agricultural portion of the people, who maintain that to make the revenue laws the means of fostering any particular class, can be done only at the expense of all other classes, and is a perversion
of the powers of Congress to purposes not warranted by the Constitution; that it favors capital at the expense of labor, encourages monopoly, cripples commerce, promotes the growth of a lordly and pampered aristocracy, and engenders a narrow sectionalism dangerous to the peace and safety of the Union. Maintaining this doctrine, they demand that our revenue system shall be confined strictly to the object of raising the means of meeting the expenses of government, and they ask no other protection than that which is incidentally afforded by a Tariff brought within such a standard.

The contest between these parties, commencing soon after the foundation of the government, continued with various success until the year 1842. At that time the advocates of protection being in the ascendancy, eagerly embraced the opportunity afforded by their temporary control of the government to carry out their long cherished principles. The system which they established, known as the Act of 1842, was framed with the utmost care and skill of some of the most experienced political architects of the day, acting under the immediate supervision and direction of their great leader. This system, when completed, they fondly hoped was destined to a duration commensurate with that of the government. But in this they were disappointed. The people were dissatisfied, and in four years from the time the Act of '42 went into operation, their representatives, in obedience to their demands, voted its repeal.

But the interests of the country required of its rulers to enact as well as repeal—to build up as well as to pull down. In furtherance of these interests Mr. Polk and his co-laborers (among whom was that great financier and statesman, Mr. Walker, whose improvements and reforms have introduced a new era in the finance of our country) reared another structure in the place of that just overturned, of simple plan, just proportions, and admirably adapted by the principles of justice and impartiality on which it was based to find favor with a republican people, loving equality and jealous of any encroachment on their constitutional rights. The Tariff of 1846, discarding the minimum and specific features of that of 1842, and avoiding all artificial distinctions and unne-
cessary discriminations, rests on the broad basis of the *ad valorem* principle, and imposes no duty not strictly within the revenue standard. The consequence of adhering to these just principles is, that its operation has been eminently favorable to the prosperity of the country, far exceeding the hopes of its friends and disappointing the expectations of its enemies. No desolation, no ruin has followed. The mechanic, with light heart and active hands, plies the implements of his craft, receiving profitable wages for his labor. The fields yield abundant harvests to the agriculturist, for which he obtains a ready and adequate price; and the voice of every streamlet that meanders through the valleys of New England, comes to the ear of the manufacturer, mingled with the gladsome sound of the loom and the spindle. Every branch of industry and every class of the people have been left by Mr. Polk, under the operation of this admirable Tariff, in the most prosperous condition.

Intimately connected with the revenue, and of hardly less importance to the prosperity of the country than the act of 1846, was the revival by Mr. Polk of the mode of keeping and disbursing the public money, known as the Independent or Sub-Treasury. An experience of the disasters produced by the dependance of Government on private corporations, had deeply impressed the public mind with the want of some efficient fiscal agent of the Government. To supply this want Mr. Van Buren established the Independent Treasury. Struck down by the blow of repeal before it had time to develop its utility, it was revived under the administration of Mr. Polk, and is now in successful operation. — A complete revolution in the financial condition of the country has been the consequence of its revival. The government, freed from its degrading vassalage to faithless and soulless corporations, keeps its own money and makes its transfers and disbursements as the exigencies of the public service require. The whole brood of rotten corporations, *monstrorum horribilium* gens, sprung from the illicit connection of the government and Banks, have perished. Inflations, contractions and expansions have ceased to convulse the currency and derange the business of the country; dis-
trust has given place to universal confidence; and the national credit, no longer pliant to the will and subservient to the sordid schemes of unprincipled stock-jobbers, has risen to a point never before attained since the foundation of the Government.

Besides these measures of domestic policy, Mr. Polk accomplished others highly judicious and salutary. Among these may be mentioned his postage reform; his establishment of territorial governments; and of a new department of the General Government; the ware-housing system; the erection of fortifications on our western frontier and along the Atlantic coast; and various measures to give greater efficiency to the Army and Navy. But it is to his foreign and not to his domestic policy we must look for the chief glory of his administration and the highest evidence of his ability as a Statesman.

Soon after he assumed the reins of government the public mind was thrown into the highest state of excitement by the question of the North-West boundary. England, prompted by that spirit of cupidity, that insatiable lust of dominion which dictates her actions to other nations and has cast so dark a shade over her otherwise glorious history, set up claims to a portion of Oregon, to which in the opinion of our Executive our title was "clear and unquestionable." The issue thus joined between the two countries naturally excited the deepest interest, and soon became the absorbing topic of discussion in the halls of legislation, in the newspapers, and in private circles. As the discussion progressed and the question still remained undecided, the public mind was gradually wrought up to the highest pitch of anxiety. Nor can we wonder at this state of feeling when we consider the momentous nature of the crisis that produced it. On the one hand the people saw the white-robed innocence of heaven-born Peace—virtue, justice, contentment, plenty following in her train. On the other they saw grim-visaged war advancing his bloody ensigns—desolation following in his track, cities plundered, temples desecrated, chastity violated, the innocence of childhood exposed to the rage of a ruthless soldiery, the hoary locks of age clotted with gore! No wonder they felt anxiety and alarm.
But if they were affected thus, what were the feelings of him on whom all anxieties centred, to whom all looked for the preservation of peace and the prevention of the calamities of war, and on whose judgment, skill and prudence, at this critical juncture, were suspended the lives and happiness of so many thousands of his fellow men? Mr. Polk felt all the weight of the responsibility resting on him; but he faltered not, he shrank not from the high duties it imposed. Unshaken, undismayed by the perils that encompassed him, like the ancient pilot, when navigating an unknown and tempestuous sea, he watched the polar-star that shone forth through the thick gloom to direct his uncertain way. Ere long the shoals are passed, the danger escaped, and the good old ship once more bounding over the billows, with a favoring breeze and a clear sky, her prow turned to her destined haven, "walks the waters like a thing of life."

The negotiations set on foot for the peaceful adjustment of the Oregon difficulty were at first greatly embarrassed and impeded by the arrogant tone and unreasonable demands of the British Envoy. Notwithstanding these obstacles—obstacles which, from England's well-known pertinacity in urging her demands however unjust, might have been well deemed insuperable—Mr. Polk, in consideration of the magnitude of the interests at stake, persevered in the negotiation when persons of less discernment than himself and less acquainted with the ground on which he stood, would have desisted from all further efforts to bring about an amicable arrangement as tending only to widen the breach between the two countries and precipitate the very catastrophe he was striving to avert. To this well-timed and judicious firmness on his part we owe the final settlement of this delicate and dangerous question, so long the subject of fruitless negotiation, and the source of so much jealousy, irritation and discord between the two countries. Its settlement on terms honorable to the United States, reflects the highest credit on the diplomatic abilities of the President and his Secretary of State, while their anxious solicitude to preserve the peace of two countries standing in such interesting relations to each other and to the world as England.
and the United States, is in the last degree honorable to their
feelings as men, as philanthropists and as christians. Whatever
praise may be accorded to the other acts of Mr. Polk's administra-
tion, in my humble judgment this peaceful termination of the
Oregon controversy, drawing two great nations together in the
bonds of a holier attachment, and bringing mankind nearer to the
millenial state of a universal brotherhood, is the crowning act of
his political life; the brightest flower in his chaplet of renown—
when all the rest shall have withered and perished, this shall bloom
in perpetual freshness and beauty.

While the President, by his firmness and prudence, was thus
arranging our differences with Great Britain, he was not inatten-
tive to another great question of boundary which had arisen be-
tween this country and Mexico. Texas, a neighboring and sister
republic, moved by a sense of her weakness or a feeling of attach-
ment to our institutions which neither the unfeeling diplomacy
that ceded her away nor our subsequent cold neglect could entire-
ly obliterate, asked to be restored to that place in the great fam-
ily of States to which as a branch of the same parent stem with
the rest, and an heir of the same inheritance, she was justly enti-
tled. Having just brought her glorious struggle for independence
to a successful close, her locks still soiled with the dust of battle,
hers garments dripping with blood, she presented herself at the door
of the Union and asked for admittance. The people heard her
petition, and forthwith the order was given to their representa-
tives for her reception. On Mr. Polk, as Executive of the nation,
the delicate but pleasing duty devolved of carrying out the peo-
ple's wishes. Under his direction the necessary preliminaries
were arranged; and before the close of the first year of his ad-
ministration the work of re-union was complete, and Texas be-
come an integral part of the Union;—the "lost Pleiad" was re-
stored to her sphere; the "lone star" so long dimly shining above
the southern horizon, emerged from the clouds that obscured its
light, and amid the rejoicings of millions of freemen, resumed its
appropriate place among the brightest of the American Galaxy.

Although the annexation of Texas was the result of the volun-
tary and deliberate choice of two independent powers competent to contract, and involved no infraction of the rights of other nations, no sooner was the measure consummated, than unequivocal indications were given by Mexico of a hostile spirit; and she avowed her determination to maintain her asserted title to the annexed territory by the ultima ratio of nations, an appeal to arms. In pursuance of this determination extensive warlike preparations were set on foot by the government of that country, and the troops already collected were ordered to proceed to the Rio Grande, and having crossed that river, to attack any American troops found within the limits of Texas.

The conflict which followed this movement, fellow-citizens, is known to you all. The brilliant victories which marked the progress of that conflict from the time our banner was unfurled at Palo Alto until it waved in triumph from the walls of the Capitol, are yet fresh in your recollection; and I should but fatigue your patience by detailing them here. Equally uninteresting would it be to you to listen to a discussion of the various causes which conspired to bring about the collision of the two Republics, if such discussion were appropriate to the occasion. It is sufficient for the objects of this address to say that whatever of guilt the Mexican War involved, rests not with us. It lies, and in the judgment of impartial history it must forever lie at the door of her who provoked it. Our escutcheon is untarnished; our brave troops wear no laurels stained with innocent blood.—Mexico, long before the annexation of Texas, forgetting the assistance received from our countrymen during her own struggle for independence, had manifested towards this country a spirit of the most inveterate and deep-noted hostility, and heaped upon our flag and our citizens a series of the grossest insults and outrages. Our government, in that spirit of magnanimity which a powerful nation should ever exhibit towards a weak one, forebore to resent these indignities until Mexico emboldened by our forbearance which her infatuation led her to mistake for pusilitanimity, marched her troops across her Eastern boundary and shed the blood of our citizens on our own soil. At this outrage the pent-
up wrath of the people could no longer be restrained. They rose in their strength to vindicate their rights and avenge their insulted honor. But though their wrath was fierce, it was tempered with mercy. Possessing all the dreadful energy of the simoom of the desert or the tropical tornado, it exhibited none of their destructive violence. It was rather the northern storm—grand, sublime, awful in the majesty of its power, but comparatively harmless in its effects. True, here and there a bolt descended and a city rocked to its foundations; but when the tempest had swept over it, the air was again tranquil and serene, the pulse of the people beat quicker, their hearts were lighter, and they breathed more freely than in an atmosphere polluted by the breath of tyrants and loaded with the bondman’s groans. When Napoleon, “lord of desolation,” led forth his locust legions over the plains of Europe, he carried in one hand the sword, in the other the torch. Blood flowed at his bidding like torrents from the mountain, and the light of burning cities revealed the wolf and the jackal holding their midnight carnival over the ghastly heaps of the slain. Ambition—remorseless, unquenchable, insatiable ambition steeled his heart to human suffering and drove him onward in his devastating career, a besom of destruction to mankind, banishing peace, hope and happiness from the world. The spirit of this fell destroyer of his race was the spirit of Cæsar and Tamerlane, and of every blood-stained conqueror since the world began. It was in this spirit Alexander led his invincible myrmidons to the Indus and Ganges, and Alaric let loose his Gothic herdes on the plains of Italy. In this spirit the Autocrat of Russia called his wild Cossacks from their bleak wastes,

When leagued oppression poured to northern wars
Her whiskered pandoors and her fierce hussars.

Far different is the spirit with which the citizen-soldier of America goes forth to battle. He seeks no triumphs with bloody trophies graced, nor spoils of plundered cities. No unhallowed lust of dominion impels him to deeds of rapine and cruelty; no brutal thirst of blood prompts him to tarnish the lustre of victory with
acts of wanton barbarity. Animated with a patriotism as pure as it is ardent, he fights to maintain the rights and uphold the honor of his country. It was such a patriotism that drew an Allen, a Hardin, and a Ringgold to the gory field to offer up their lives a sacrifice for their country, leaving behind them names as imperishable as the fame of the fields which their valor helped to win—more deeply engraven on the hearts of their countrymen than on the stately columns which friendship and gratitude have reared to commemorate their heroic courage and untimely fall. For their country the brave comrades of these gallant men breathed the iron hail of the enemy on many a field of carnage, and bore their banner in triumph from city to city, from conquest to conquest, enhancing the lustre of their achievements by their humanity to the vanquished, and obliterating with the blessings of their country’s civilization the bloody traces of their career of victory.

The humanity displayed by the American troops during the war with Mexico, though proceeding in a great measure from that noble and chivalrous generosity of disposition which forms so striking a trait in their character and in this respect distinguishes them from the troops of all other nations, must be attributed in some degree to the precepts and injunctions of him on whom the duty devolved of exercising a general superintendence over the operations of the army and of laying down the principles on which the war was to be conducted. Mr. Polk, in issuing his instructions through the War Department, after reminding the troops of the objects for which the war was undertaken, enjoins them to abstain from all acts of pillage and of unnecessary violence towards their enemies; to retaliate no outrage in a manner not sanctioned by the laws and usages of civilized nations; but ever bearing in mind that they were the representatives of a Christian and enlightened nation, sent forth to defend its rights and honor, to do no act unworthy of so high a mission. Such was the spirit of the instructions given by him at the commencement of hostilities. And these instructions were not disregarded. Our troops were as generous in the use of victory, as they were heroic in battle; as sparing of the blood of their vanquished enemies, as
in the hour of conflict they were profuse of their own. The history which transmits to posterity the record of their triumphs, while it relates that these triumphs were unbroken by a single reverse, will draw additional lustre from the fact they were disgraced by no act unworthy of a magnanimous, chivalrous and Christian soldiery.

What influence a war conducted on such humane principles will exert in softening the ferocity of the military spirit of other countries, and what effect it will have on the political condition of Mexico and on the martial spirit of our own people, are questions which present a wide and interesting field of inquiry to the philosophic and reflecting mind. Into this field the limits I have prescribed to myself forbid me to enter, were I so inclined. The most that I can do without going beyond these limits and protracting this address to an unreasonable length, is to point out the results of the war so far as they affect our own political condition.

What are those results? Among the most prominent are a greater elevation of our character abroad as a warlike nation—a prestige to our name henceforward more terrible than our arms; indemnity for past injuries; security against future aggressions; a greater proficiency among our troops in the art of war; increased confidence among the people in their valor and patriotism; and last, though not least, a vast accession of national strength and wealth and resources by the acquisition of valuable territory. Mexico, impoverished by the exactions of her rapacious civil rulers and a licentious priesthood, could make no pecuniary indemnity for her spoliations on our commerce, much less for the expenses of the war. But if she had not money, she had land—vast tracts of surpassing fertility, unoccupied and uncultivated. By the treaty concluded at the close of the war, a portion of these surplus lands, equal in area to the original thirteen States, was ceded to this country. The acquisition of this territory, if it were the only successful achievement of Mr. Polk's administration, would more than redeem all the errors ever imputed to him, and rescuing his name from the obloquy which political animosity has heaped upon it, place it among the most illustrious that
grace the annals of our country. Other Presidents have added States to our domain; and some have even thought they were acquiring permanent fame and establishing a just claim to the gratitude of their countrymen by extinguishing the Indian title to a few leagues of territory already in the occupation of our citizens. What, then, shall be the measure of our gratitude, or what limits shall we assign to the fame of him who has given us an Empire—an Empire, not like the dominions of the Czar, locked in eternal ice and snow; not like the oriental possessions of Britain, the chosen abode of pestilence and death; nor shut up, as Thibet, from the pale of civilization by howling wastes and impassible mountains, but an Empire occupying the middle of the Temperate zone, of easy access from all parts of the world, and containing in its bosom "the wealth of Ormus and of Ind." California—

I must pause, fellow-citizens, when I have uttered a name presenting ideas so vast, so overwhelming. California! thou gilded dome of Freedom's temple—Nature's bright diadem! what in comparison with thee are Oman's banks of pearl and palmy isles, Ceylon's spicy groves, or Italia's sunny skies? In thee is realized all that the wildest fancy has conceived of the imaginary El Dorado. In thee the fictions of poetry are exceeded by the reality of thy wondrous excellence. At thy name the American heart swells with pride; his imagination kindles; and busy speculation ranging in the far distant future, through countless images of grandeur, glory and magnificence, is lost in the new and brilliant scenes thou openest in the great drama of man's existence!

To an observer of the works of Nature she appears to have bestowed her gifts on other countries on the plan of an equal and impartial distribution. To some she has given fertility of soil; some she has enriched with immense deposits of mineral wealth; while others seem to have been created only to charm the eye by the beauty and variety of their scenery. In California this plan of distribution seems to have been laid aside. Nature grown impatient of restraint, breaks through the laws of the Divine Economy, and rising in her conceptions and her efforts to the production of a chef d'œuvre that should eclipse her other works; collects
her richest stores and blends them here in a beautiful and harmonious whole. Here she has placed a soil which Java may not boast. Here the mild zephyrs of a stormless ocean purify the atmosphere and equalize its temperature. The prairie spreads out its velvet lawn inviting the weary emigrant to repose. By its side majestic forests rise, teeming with animal life, offering food to the hungry and shelter to the houseless wanderer. Bright, sunny lakes reflect from their glassy surface the azure of Jamaica skies; while far in the distance the chrysal torrents leaping down the craggy sides of the Nevada, form at its base majestic rivers rolling their ceaseless floods to the ocean, like the ancient Pac-tolus, over beds of golden sand.

Such is California—not as fancy paints it—not as it is conceived in the day-dream of the enthusiast; but as described by those who have seen, who have explored it. The travellers and emigrants to this interesting region, perhaps without a single exception, bear testimony to its genial climate, its fertile soil and boundless stores of mineral wealth. That it contains some waste places, even vast tracts “cursed with eternal barreness,” cannot be denied; but of a large, perhaps the larger part of the country, equal in extent to several of our largest States, I have presented you no overwrought picture.

The acquisition of so favored a land and of the adjacent territory of New Mexico, must in the very nature of things produce results of incalculable benefit to this country and to mankind.—It will pour into the Atlantic States, (and indeed is already pouring into them,) an immense flood of the precious metals, stimulating enterprise and industry, increasing the wages of labor, and augmenting the nation’s wealth. It furnishes new and happy homes for the down-trodden millions of Europe—the toil-worn and starving son of Erin, the sturdy and laborious German, the frugal Swede and the chivalrous Pole. It opens a door through which the civilization of the New World may pass into the benighted regions of the Old, awaking Asia from her long slumber and bringing the nations which sit in darkness into the glorious light of the Sun of Righteousness. Securing to a great commer-
cial nation a long line of Pacific coast indented by some of the most capacious harbors in the world, it opens a channel of commercial intercourse between the extremes of the Eastern Continent, free from the dangerous navigation, the stormy capes and tempestuous seas of the old and circuitous route around the Cape of Good Hope. Into this channel "the powerful agency of steam acting on a placid ocean" will soon draw the commerce of the Old World in its transit across the New, and will pour into the United States the incalculable riches of the oriental trade—a trade which has successively enriched the most renowned maritime nations of modern times; which reared the gorgeous palaces of Venice, and gave into the hands of her merchant-kings the sceptre of the seas; which is the source at the present day of England's wealth and power; and which, more than a century ago, with the potency of Neptune's magic trident that drew Delos from the depths of the sea and gave it "a local habitation and a name," rolled the waves from the breast of Holland and made the ocean's slimy bed the abode of commerce, civilization and the arts.

Such are some of the great results which will flow from the acquisition of this territory. Nor is the accomplishment of these results as remote as, looking only at their magnitude, we might be led to suppose. What is now spoken in "the faltering language of prophecy," is in a process of rapid fulfilment; and before many who hear me shall have ceased to live, will give employment to the historian's pen. A tide of migration is flowing towards California, unexampled in the history of mankind. Our countrymen lured by the prospect of gain and impelled by that restless energy which is ever urging them forward in search of new fields of enterprise and adventure, are severing the ties that bind them to their homes, bidding adieu to kindred and friends, and turning their faces towards the setting sun are taking up their line of march to the new "promise land." A few weeks of toil and privation borne with characteristic patience and fortitude, bring them to the foot of the Cordilleras, those stupendous elevations which rise up before them as so many grim sentinels guarding the approaches to the treasures beyond. Undiscouraged by
the difficulties of the ascent, they climb their rugged steeps and from their summits amid the clouds look down with ravished eyes upon the bright landscape which stretches out, to the utmost reach of vision, towards the western ocean. With spirits revived and strength renewed by the cheering prospect, they hasten down the western slopes, and disappear in the depths of the forest.

A few years roll by, and lo! the wondrous change they have wrought. The forests have been cut down; innumerable towns and villages have sprung up; majestic steamers plow the waters of the San Joaquim and Sacramento; "the iron horse courses along the base of the Nevada;" the arts flourish; the fields smile with agriculture, and busy commerce spreading her snowy pinions over the wide Pacific, bears to every clime the fruits of American genius and industry with the flag which is the emblem of their ever advancing dominion.

Westward the course of Empire takes its way; The four first acts already past, 
A fifth shall close the drama of the day— Time's noblest offspring is the last.

The occasion seems to require that I should notice, in this connection, the fears of a large and respectable class of our citizens who imagine that they see in the continued extension of our territory imminent danger to the perpetuity of our institutions.— Happily the fears of this class, in every instance in which they were indulged, have proved groundless; the doleful predictions they have uttered of the dreadful consequences of expansion have in no case been verified. Neither the annexation of Louisiana, Florida, or Texas in the slightest degree disturbed the public tranquility or weakened the bonds of the Union. Nor is there any ground for apprehending such disastrous results from our recent acquisitions. Men who are capable of self-government when confined within narrow limits, require no despot's arm to keep them in check when their boundaries are enlarged and their dominion extended over a wider area. A comparison of the peaceful progress of our own country with the frequent convulsions of England and the terrible revolutions that have so of
Sen deluged France with blood, will show that territorial expansion, instead of tending to discord and alienation, is a nation's safety-valve, through which the passions and prejudices of the people may find vent without disturbing their peace or endangering the stability of their government. If this were not so, and if, as some of our citizens contend, the permanence of Republican institutions were in an inverse ratio to the number of acres over which they extend, the smallest Indian tribes could better maintain such institutions than millions of Anglo-American freemen; and while the latter would be forced by vast extension to the dire alternative of dismemberment or submission to the iron rule of monarchy, the circumscribed domain of the untutored aborigines would present a secure receptacle to the blessings of civil liberty and insure their safe transmission to posterity!

Such are the absurdities in which the opponents of the acquisition of territory find themselves involved. A little reflection would show them that the duration of political institutions is not to be measured by the surveyor's chain, or calculated from the statistics of the census-taker. The principles of free government are, (so to speak,) universal principles—as applicable to the government of a million as of a thousand; and it is as absurd to say that Republican institutions are adapted to small States, but cannot be safely extended to large ones, as that rules of domestic government which promote harmony among six children, would introduce discord among twelve. That the laws of a State should be modified according to its local wants and circumstances, all will allow; but the fundamental principles of right government are the same in all countries and under all circumstances, eternal, immutable; and like the laws of God's moral universe, capable of indefinite extension.

But I will not seek to establish by argument a proposition which is self-evident—I will not weary you with the discussion of a question which has been already decided. The policy of territorial enlargement has received the sanction of so many administrations that it may now be regarded as the settled policy of the government. The question raised by the annexation of Louisiana
is a question no longer; it is res adjudicata, and the people in their
sovereign capacity were the tribunal that decided it. They have
said, "Give us room; give us room. Enlarge the area of freedom;
spread abroad the principles of liberty and free governments."—
In obedience to their high behests these principles have spread,
and are still spreading. The attempt to confine them within the
narrow limits of the original thirteen was as futile as it was un-
wise. The swelling, bursting tide of American freemen cannot
be restrained; it is rolling onward, and still onward, a mighty tor-
rent, broad, deep, irresistible, sweeping away as chaff the institu-
tions of despotism and the feeble barriers erected to stay its pro-
gress. Roll on, mighty tide! and God speed the day when every
tyrant's foot-print shall be obliterated and every noxious exotic
uprooted from American soil, and when a hundred millions of
freemen, breathing the pure air of liberty, shall raise with one
voice the soul-inspiring chorus,

No pent-up Utica contracts our powers,
For the whole boundless continent is ours.

The sketch I have given you, fellow-citizens, of the acts of Mr.
Polk's administration, though confined to the most important of
those acts, presents a brilliant array of great, wise and just mea-
sures, stamping his name forever illustrious on the page of histo-
ry, and establishing on an impregnable basis his claims to the
gratitude of his countrymen. No one term of any former Presi-
dent—nay, it is questionable whether the whole political life of
any other American Statesman, living or dead, presents so splen-
did a galaxy of civil achievements, as the single term of Mr. Polk.
The short period during which he held the helm of State, forms
an epoch in the life of the nation, and will be hereafter referred
to as one of the great landmarks of history. Providence, as if
unwilling that anything should be wanting to signalize his admin-
istration, vouchsafed to him almost a monopoly of the great cri-
eses requiring the skill, forecast and energy of the Statesman, and
crowded into his single term the events of a century. What these
events will bring forth, and what judgment mankind will pro-
sounce on his various measures when they come to be viewed in
that clear light which only an experience of their effects can furnish, it is of course now impossible to determine. That a difference of opinion should now exist is natural—it is the necessary result of that freedom of opinion guarantied by the sacred charter of our liberties. All who live under that charter may and ought to hold firmly their honest convictions. The right of thought, is the birthright of every American freeman, one of his essential attributes and highest prerogatives, which it would be “a base abandonment of reason to resign.” But honestly as men may differ with regard to the soundness of Mr. Polk’s policy, there can be no difference among them as to the patriotic devotion and zeal with which he labored in the public service. And here it may not be improper to contrast his noble self-dedication to his country with the heartless rapacity and ambition of some of his cotemporary rulers, the crowned potentates of Europe. I will not dishonor his memory by comparing him with that painted image of royalty, that empty shadow of power the regal puppet that sits upon the English throne. An individual better suited to my purpose is found in the person of the exiled king of France, who, whatever may have been his faults and his errors while swaying the sceptre of that country, was no nonentity in intellect or power, but a sovereign in deed as he was in name, possessing the highest abilities of a Statesman, and active as he was able. Perhaps no monarch ever came to the throne under more favorable auspices, or enjoyed better opportunities of rendering himself a benefactor to his country and his race, than Louis Phillippe. The tranquility of Europe, the universal acquiescence of the French people in his assumption of the reins of government, their hopes and expectations raised to the highest pitch by his liberal professions of devotion to popular rights, all pointed to duty as the easiest and safest line of conduct he could pursue, and to the advancement of his country’s welfare as the most effectual means of cementing his power and transmitting it to his posterity. But no sooner had he climbed to the dizzy height of the first throne of Europe, than a fatal infatuation seized him. He forgot his pledges, his early professions and practices, the lessons of experience, the warning
fate of Louis and of Charles X. Truth, honor, justice, the rights and happiness of his subjects, were lost sight of or trampled under foot in the all-engrossing pursuit of the objects of a selfish ambition—the consolidation of his power and the perpetuation of his dynasty. To attain these objects he strained to the utmost the resources of the country, and committed the grossest abuses of his power. Vice received at his hands the seal of legality, and political corruption and profligacy became the pensioners of government. His whole reign was a continual war on the morality and virtue of his people—a series of the grossest usurpations and outrages on their rights and liberties. Unable at length longer to endure his monstrous oppressions, they snatched from his hands the rod that smote them, dashed from them the yoke he was fastening to their necks, hurled him from his throne, and drove him forth, an outcast and a fugitive from the land of his fathers, "to seek an asylum on the soil of his country's hereditary and most inveterate foe."

Such was the ignominious close of the career of this gifted but infatuated prince—such the terrible, but just retribution of his base recreancy. In contrast with his deep humiliation and shame, how pleasing to the true republican the bright halo that encircled his great trans-Atlantic cotemporary, when having faithfully discharged the duties of his exalted station, he voluntarily disrobed himself of the vestures of office, and retired to the shades of private life, followed by the benedictions of his grateful and admiring countrymen. Let the rulers of the earth take warning and learn wisdom from the examples of Louis Phillippe and James K. Polk. Let them learn that the path of duty is the path of glory; that military establishments, however vast, are a feeble support to abused and ill-gotten power; that neither armies, nor fortresses, nor gates of brass, nor walls of iron can shield an oppressive ruler from the just rage of a betrayed and outraged people.

Of the personal qualities of Mr. Polk, his peculiar cast of mind, and the virtues that distinguished him in private life, I deem it necessary to say but little to the audience I see before me. Personally known to most of you, (to some of you intimately,) no
formal delineation of his character is necessary to your appreciation of his exalted worth. What I have to say, therefore, on this branch of my subject, will be confined to such of his qualities as formed the most prominent ingredients of his character and exerted the greatest influence on his conduct.

Conspicuous among these qualities was his Ambition. Like all those who have risen to great eminence among their fellow-men, Mr. Polk desired and sought distinction—not the ephemeral distinction of the demagogue, the deceitful glitter of vain renown, whose gleams, like the false and fickle light on the warrior's plume, sometimes attract the momentary gaze of the multitude to the weakest and most worthless of their kind. His was the ambition of being as great as he seemed to be—he felt the desire of distinction founded on merit, the longing sublime and aspiration high for exalted worth;

the impatient throb
And longing of the heart that pants
And reaches after distant good.

He courted fame as a spur to honest deeds; he sought the glory of great and noble actions. Such glory attained, he could look with composure on the decaying monuments of demagogues and kings, applying to himself the exultant lines of the poet,

Exegi monumentum aere perennius,
Regalique sit pyramidum altius.

Another leading trait in his character was his unbending integrity. Honesty that could not be corrupted by prosperity or shaken by adversity, was written on every lineament of his strongly marked countenance, on every action of his life, every word that fell from his lips. No instance can be shown in the whole course of his life, in which he swerved from the strictest probity and honor, or sacrificed the interest of a friend or of his country to his own personal aggrandizement.

Closely allied to this trait was that transparent sincerity and open-heartedness—that total absence of all hypocrisy and dissimulation, which marked his intercourse with his fellow-men, both as a public man and private citizen. No man can say that James
K. Polk over betrayed him; that he held out false colors to the world, or deceived it by false professions and promises.

A man of pure and simple heart,
Ever disdaining a double part,
He needed not a screen of lies,
His inward bosom to disguise.

Energy and decision were possessed by him to a degree tending to rashness and obstinacy. But this tendency was happily counteracted by strong moral principle and the native unaffected benevolence of his heart. To this union of the sterner qualities with the benevolent affections he owed the admirable harmony and symmetry of his character—firmness which no danger could daunt, a steady perseverance which no difficulties, however formidable, could relax, united with an easy gracefulness and urbanity of manner, a delightful amenity and benignity of temper which won the strong personal attachment of so many of his countrymen, diffused a perpetual sunshine around the domestic hearth and the social circle, moderated the heat of political discussion, and threw the charm of a friendly cordiality over the cold formality of official intercourse; thus softening down the asperities of life, and strewing his rugged path with flowers.

That a man possessing so many noble traits, so faithful to every public trust and exemplary in all the private relations of life, should incur the hatred of any portion of his fellow-men and become the object of detraction and abuse, much as it is deplored, will occasion no surprise when we reflect that such has been the common lot of all whose talents and virtues have raised them above the common level of mankind. Mr. Polk, like all others of our great Statesmen, (prominent among whom stands his illustrious competitor for Presidential honors, the immortal Sage of Ashland, a man whose lofty and pure character every person not blinded by personal hatred or political prejudice must admire and revere, much as they may differ with him in political sentiment,)—like this great man and every distinguished Statesman of our country, Mr. Polk had enemies—bitter, malignant, implacable enemies. I allude not to fair and honorable political opponents, who disapproving the political principles he professed, conscientiously opposed his elevation to power: I speak of those men
of little souls and narrow minds, who "withering at another's good hate the excellence they cannot reach," and seek to conceal it from the public eye with obloquy and detraction.

The ignoble mind
Ever loves to assail with secret blow,
The loftier, purer spirits of their kind.

Calumny, like Death, loves a "shining mark." But its envenomed shafts fall harmless and pointless when directed against a man "armed so strong in honesty" as James K. Polk. Mankind, with all their malignity, have so strong a sense of justice and so high an appreciation of exalted merit, that it will rise above oppression and gather lustre from reproach. 'The vapors which gather round the rising sun and follow him in his course, seldom fail at the close of it to form a magnificent theatre for his reception, and to invest with variegated tints and a softened effulgence the luminary they cannot hide.'

Envy will merit, as it shade pursue,
And like a shadow prove the substance true;
For, envied worth, like Sol eclipsed, makes known
The opposing body's grossness, not its own.
When first that sun too powerful beams displays,
It draws up vapors that obscure its rays;
But even those clouds at last adorn its way,
Reflect new glories, and augment the day.

Besides the points in Mr. Polk's character already enumerated, there was one other which, if he had nothing else to recommend him to our affectionate remembrance, would make his memory ever dear to every true American—his Patriotism. From early youth he evinced an ardent love of country. It was the predominant feeling of his heart, his ruling passion, "impelling him," says one of his most distinguished eulogists, "to an ever advancing search for his country's welfare, at the sacrifice of domestic ease, the delights of friendship, and the consolations of health." His patriotism, unlike that of some of his countrymen, was not of that narrow sectional kind which is bounded by geographical lines and parallels of latitude. It comprehended in its grasp the whole country; it took in its embrace every valley and hill and plain shadowed by the wing of our eagle; and it scorned and despised that new-fangled and spurious patriotism which grows with rank.
luxuriance under the ardent sun of the South, but withers under the cold sky and biting frosts of the North. Such a patriotism, (if it can be called by that name,) was the object of his deepest abhorrence; and he lost no opportunity to reprobate and denounce it as of mischievous and fatal tendency. In his last message to Congress, he warns the people of the Spirits of Evil lurking abroad in the land, sowing the seeds of sectional discord, and striving to array one portion of the people in a hostile attitude towards the other. In language of thrilling eloquence he depicts the blessings we enjoy under the Union, and the desolation and ruin that would attend its downfall; and he solemnly exhorts every lover of his country, every friend of freedom to resist unto death the unprincipled demagogues and misguided fanatics who would madly destroy it. And permit me to ask, fellow-citizens, Has this appeal, so far as you are concerned, been made in vain? Are you prepared to see our glorious confederacy dismembered, or are you ready, if necessary, to offer up your lives, a willing sacrifice for its preservation. The Union—the work of a former age, the legacy of a past generation, hallowed by the blessings of its immortal authors and endeared to us by the toils and sufferings that gave it birth—such is the work which traitorous faction threatens and against which frenzied fanaticism lifts its impious hand. Will you guard, defend, protect it, or shall it fall, burying under its ruins the prosperity and happiness of our people, and the liberties, the happiness, and the hopes of mankind. For more than half a century our country has stood up before the world, an example to the oppressed of every clime. It has been to the moral what the sun is to the natural world. Under its genial influence the chilled hearts of Europe's vassals have been thawed, their torpid limbs loosened, their dormant energies awakened. They have recently arisen in their strength and achieved revolutions which, had they been predicted a few years ago, would have been considered to the last degree improbable, if not absolutely impossible. Every nation in Europe, with two or three exceptions, presents a new, and to the eye of freedom a pleasing aspect. France is already a Republic; the red surge of revolu-
tion has swept over Austria, and her hoary despotism totters to its fall. Hungary, bursting from the iron grasp of her oppressors, has written with their blood her stern and unalterable resolve to be free; and the Italian, the degenerate and servile Italian, fired with Brutus’ patriotic zeal, has thrown aside the badge of his degradation and put on the dignity of the Roman of the days of Fabius and Coriolanus. “Kings feel their thrones rocking beneath them;” they hear the rumblings of the volcano, and feel the throes and heavings of earth portentous of the approaching eruption.—

Man, rising from his depression, casts off the livery of his oppressors; the spell of his blind and stupid acquiescence in the doctrine of the Divine right of kings is broken. His fond attachment to ancient institutions, at once the mark and the source of his vassalage, is giving way to a spirit of bold and fearless investigation, which, if not arrested, will lead ere long to universal freedom.

Shall this work go on? Shall the moral world roll on towards its goal, or once more stand still? Shall man stand upright before his Maker, redeemed, disenthralled, with no manacles on his hands and no fetters on his conscience, or shall he again bow his neck to receive the despot’s yoke? You—the citizens of this great commonwealth are the arbiters of his fate. Preserve the commonwealth entire, and all is well. Sunder the bonds which unite us, and you extinguish the Light of the World, leaving mankind without a ray to cheer their hearts or guide their wandering feet, to grope their way through time into hopeless eternity.

Heed then, I implore you, the admonition of him who though dead yet speaketh, exhorting every citizen of the Republic to defend its integrity. The federal Union, it can, it must be preserved. Such are the words which come up from the tomb of the illustrious patriot whose loss we have met here to deplore. Let his words sink deep in your minds; write them on your hearts; and when the foe comes, if come he does, with traitor arm to strike a blow at this fair temple, gird on your armor, and rally to its defense.

I have now, fellow-citizens, performed to the best of my ability
the task assigned me. Though not executed in the way I could wish or you may have desired, yet even the faint outline I have presented of Mr. Polk's life and character affords abundant evidence that he was no ordinary man. Nature had cast him in no common mould—in every act of his life you see evidence of talents of a high order directed and controlled by strong moral principles. Unlike most of those on whom Nature has bestowed superior intellectual endowments, he did not consider his powers as entirely his own, but rather as given to him in trust for the benefit of his country and mankind. To this strong sense of moral accountability, this christian view of his obligations to his country and his fellow men he owed the spotlessness of a fame which, not confined to this country or this generation, extends to every spot where there are men who admire great talents in union with great virtues, and which will live when all the frail monuments of art, erected to commemorate the magnificence of kings, shall have crumbled into dust. A few words with regard to the closing scene of his eventful career, and I have done.

Having resigned the helm of State to his appointed successor, he hastened to return to his home in Tennessee. At every place on his route he was received with the highest distinction; the authorities of the various towns and cities through which he passed, vied with each other in showing him attention, and his appearance was everywhere hailed with the acclamations of the people. History records few instances of civil service awakening such enthusiasm in the minds of the people—few instances of a private citizen, however eminent for talents and devotedness to his country, receiving such strong manifestations of the attachment and gratitude of his countrymen.

Stricken down, a few months after reaching Nashville, by a malady to which he had been long subject, the ablest medical practitioners were immediately summoned, and his friends hastened to his side. But neither the skill of physicians, the sympathy of friends, nor the prayers of kindred could avail to prevent a fatal termination of his disease. Death had marked his victim—no mortal hand could turn aside his fatal dart. Seeing his end ap-
preaching Mr. Polk was reminded of a great duty he had hitherto neglected to perform—the duty of publicly declaring his belief in that religion which he had so strikingly exemplified in the unceasing rectitude of his own conduct, and illustrated by the soundness of the moral principles he had ever sought to instil into the minds of others. Summoning around him several ministers of the Gospel, amid all the solemnities of approaching dissolution he avowed his faith in the plan of salvation revealed in the Bible, and received the emblems of the “blood shed and body slain for man’s redemption.” This duty performed, he was ready to depart. On the 15th of June, of the present year, with a calm resignation to the will of Providence, supported in his last hour by the consolations of the Christian’s faith, and cheered by the retrospect of a well-spent life and bright anticipations of the resurrection and the life eternal, he yielded up his spirit unto God.—Like another eminent individual who had just preceded him—one who had filled the highest office in the gift of his countrymen, and adorned the walks of private life with every Christian virtue—he could look calmly on “the end of earth,” and say “I am composed.” And of his death his friends might say, as was said of the death of his venerable predecessor, *Hoc est nimimum, magis feliciter de vita migrare quam mori!*

Thus lived and thus died JAMES K. POLK. He whom we lately saw, fellow-citizens, at the summit of earthly greatness, with all his honors clustering thick around him, the object of the envy of some, of the admiration of all, is no longer among the living.—Cold, inanimate, insensible alike to our praise and our censure, he lies under the clods of the valley, and “no sound shall awake him to glory again.” “Full of honors, in the ripeness of his renown, surrounded by his family and friends,” the messenger of God appears and bids him come away. Obedient to the summons he has passed from the scenes of earth to the gloomy City of the Dead. Here his manly form shall be no more seen, nor his voice heard—the places that knew him shall know him no more forever. But why should we lament his departure?—why sorrow that “life’s fitful fever o’er, he has shuffled off this mortal coil”? 
His great mission having been fulfilled, his glorious work complete, it was meet that he should find in death that rest which was denied him in life. Sleep on, noble patriot! we cannot, we would not disturb thy rest with unseemly and unavailing grief. Sleep till the last trump of the Archangel shall summon Presidents and Kings, and citizens and subjects, to answer at the bar of the Most High for the deeds done in the body. Thy toils, thy privations have earned repose; and though thou art left alone to thy long slumber, and darkness covers thee, and silence reigns over thy narrow tenement, thou art not forgotten. Genius has recorded thy deeds; Truth and Justice shall guard thy fame. Thy countrymen, assembled round thy tomb, offer to thy cherished memory the homage of grateful hearts. In life their interests and their happiness were safely entrusted to thy keeping.—

When the bark in which they had launched their fortunes was tossed by the winds and waves of a tempestuous sea, thy eye saw through the gathering gloom the dangers that lay in its course, and thy hand guided it safely onward, through every peril, towards its destined haven. And now,

When hushed the rude whirlwind that ruffled the deep,
And the sky no longer dark tempests deform;
When our perils are past, shall our gratitude sleep?
No—thanks to the pilot that weathered the storm.

Unfeeling, unthankful we bask in the blaze,
When the beams of the sun in full majesty shine;
When he sinks to repose, with fondness we gaze,
And mark the mild lustre that gilds his decline.

Lo! Polk—when the course of thy greatness is o'er,
Thy talents, thy virtues we fondly recall;
Now justly we prize thee, when lost we deplore,
Admired in thy zenith, but loved in thy fall.