

HON. EDWARD EVERETT ON THE WAR.

Address Before the Boston Union Club on Thursday, April 9.

Hon. EDWARD EVERETT delivered an oration before the Union Club, of Boston, of which he has been chosen President, at its first meeting, on Thursday last. It is one of this great orator's greatest productions; and its magnificent rhetoric, impregnable logic and lofty patriotism, entitle it to rank with the masterpieces of the first great master of oratorical and patriotic eloquence. The oration is of great length, and the exigencies of space compel us to omit his argument overthrowing the postulates of the rebel chiefs, as well as those parts bearing upon the history of the Crittenden Compromise, and the necessity of unity in support of the Administration. But some passages are so appropriate to this day and hour, and to the proposed Union demonstration, that we cannot refrain from quoting them. After a few introductory words in reference to the Union Club, he opened:

"The struggle in which the Government and loyal people of the country have been now for nearly two years engaged, is one, I need scarce say, of almost unexampled magnitude, attended with all the difficulties, the sacrifices, the alternations of success and failure, which are incident to a contest of such stupendous dimensions. Scarce ever have there been arrayed against each other, on a field of action so vast, forces so numerous, at an expense so great, with such profusion of material supplies and financial resources, and what is infinitely more important, with interests so momentous at stake. The scene of the conflict, coextensive as it is with the settlements of the United States this side of the Rocky Mountains, is but little inferior in extent to Europe; the military forces in array, and amply supplied with the material of war, are as great as were ever placed in the field in the wars of the French Revolution; the sea coast held in rigid blockade by our navy is more extensive than that actually blockaded by the navy of Great Britain, during that war; our armies and navy, owing to the character of our soldiers and seamen, and the higher standard of comfort in this country, are sustained at greater expense than those of any other service, and the objects of the war are nothing less than to prevent a great and prosperous Union of States, under one Constitutional Government, from being broken up into wretched fragments; to protect the organic life of a mighty people, in the morning of their national existence, from the murderous and suicidal blow aimed at it; to rescue the work of our revolutionary and constitutional fathers, from ignominious ruin, and to hand down this peerless inheritance of public and private blessings unimpaired to our posterity.

Compared with these objects, how insignificant the scene, the operations, the objects of the recent wars in Europe, and how unimportant their results! The late Italian war had for its object, nominally to drive the foreigner beyond the Alps and to give Italy to the Italians, while its real object was to restore the military and political influence of France in Europe, and at least as far as Italy is concerned, annul the treaties of Vienna. But all Italy is not equal in extent to New-York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio; the Austrians still hold Venice and the best half of the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom; France is still entrenched at Rome, the very heart of the Peninsula, and the exiled dynasties are awaiting the next turn of the wheel of political fortune, for those revolutions in Empire which shall restore them to their former capitals.

The next preceding war had its ostensible origin in the struggles of the Greek and Latin Churches for ascendancy in the East; its real object was to check the progress of Russia in that quarter—it arrayed a half a million of men for the destruction or defence of one fortress in the Crimea. The Atë of that contest, 'came hot from hell, and let slip the dogs of war,' to settle the question whether the French or Russian Vice-Consul should keep the key of the church built upon the spot where the Prince of Peace was born. The war was fought, a hundred thousand families were cast in mourning—Russia still holds the Crimea, Sebastopol has risen from its ruins, and which Vice-Consul keeps the key of the Church of Bethlehem, few persons in Christendom outside of the three Cabinets know or care.

And then the great war of the French Revolution, which began with the invasion of France by the Prussians in 1792, and ended with the exile of NAPOLEON to St. Helena in 1815, which, more than any contest in modern times, resembles, in the vastness of its theatre and the magnitude of the forces in array, the contest in which we are now involved, how insignificant its issues compared with those here at stake! The Allies under the lead of England waged the war to check the progress of the French Revolution, and eventually to restore the Bourbons. The Bourbons are still in exile; the French Revolution is enthroned at the Tuilleries, and many of its political maxims have passed into the public law of Europe. The French, on their side, strove to overturn the remains of feudalism in Europe, to destroy the political influence and the maritime ascendancy of England, and to subordinate the continental Governments to France. Fierce battles with various fortunes were fought, millions of lives sacrificed, a great deal of old parchment was torn up, a great deal of new parchment written over, and, at the end of twenty-one years, England has come out of the contest stronger than ever; the equilibrium of Europe is substantially unchanged; the relations of the continental Powers to France not materially affected, and the great leaders of the Titanic struggle, France and England, united, seemingly at least, in a most beautiful *entente cordiale*. A few territorial and dynastic changes of no vital importance to the sum total have been made in Central Europe; a few German electors and Archdukes are styled Kings; Holland and Belgium have been raised to independent monarchies; Genoa has become a Sardinian city, and Venice has become an Austrian city; the nephew of NAPOLEON and the niece of GEORGE IV exchange friendly visits in their respective capitals, and the territorial and political map of Europe is substantially what it was when the assembly of the Notables met at Versailles in 1789.

In that year the Federal Constitution went into operation in the United States; the great political consummation of the design of Providence in the discovery and settlement of America; the happy framework of some of the wisest and best men that ever lived intended to effect the extension of civilization in the shortest possible time, over a vast continent lying in a state of nature; to provide a city of refuge for the starving millions of Europe; to prepare the way for the civilization and christianization of Africa by the return of a portion of her children from the house of bondage, and to combine upon a scale of unprecedented magnitude, the home-bred and fireside blessing of small States and local administrations with the security, influence and power of a great empire. For seventy years it has been working out these great results; it has conferred upon the rapidly increasing population of the country a degree of general prosperity never equaled; it has welcomed the surplus and suffering multitudes of Europe to the enjoyment of a state of well-being never before vouchsafed by Providence to the same extent to the sons of men; and not without the imperfections and woes, and I am sorry to add, the wrongs, which attend all human things, the incidents neither of republics nor of monarchies, but of our common frail humanity, it has conferred upon more than two generations an amount of good, with an exemption from the sacrifices and trials which have afflicted other States, altogether without a parallel in history.

And now the great question which we have to settle is, shall this mighty aggregate of prosperity perish or shall it endure? Shall this imperial heritage of blessings descend unimpaired to our posterity, or shall it be ignominiously, profrigately thrown away? Shall the territory of the Union, late so happy under the control and adjustment of the National and State Governments, be broken up into miserable fragments, sure to be engaged in constantly recurring border wars; and all lying at the mercy of foreign Powers, or shall it preserve its noble integrity under the aegis of the National Government? Admit the right of the seceding States to break up the Union at pleasure, nay of each and every State to do so, and allow them to enforce that right by a successful war—deny the authority of the Central Government to control its members, and how long will it be before the new Confederacies created by the first disruption shall be resolved into still smaller fragments, and the continent becomes a vast theatre of civil war, military license, anarchy, and despotism? Better, at whatever cost, by whatever sacrifice, settle the question at once, and settle it forever. For remember, my friends, that in this desolating war, the Government and loyal people of the country are the party assailed, and that they are clad in the triple armor of a just cause. The pretence is set up by the rebels that they are contending for the right of self-government; the unfriendly Press of Europe talks of its being a war of revenge and subjugation. Consider what makes a just war even in the opinion of those who condemn the North. England, a little more than a twelvemonth ago, thought it a just cause of war, that a merchant-ship was brought to at sea by a belligerent cruiser, in the exercise of the undoubted right of search, and that four persons were taken from it, as she considered, without warrant in the law of nations, though she in the last general war had taken more than 4,000 persons from our neutral vessels, equally without warrant in the law of nations. The Federal Government, in the paralysis of its powers caused by the interregnum between the old and new Administrations, submitted with patience to the affront of having two ships laden with families for a fort belonging to the United States, and upon its profound peace by a pretended Government unacknowledged at that time, even as a belligerent, by any foreign Power. It was not till the third act of open organized war, as mean as it was murderous—the assault on Fort Sumter from eleven batteries manned by eight or ten thousand men—a fortress belonging to the United States, built by the General Government, upon a spot ceded by the State of South Carolina to the United States and then occupied by one company of seventy men, provisioned but for forty-eight hours; not till the threat had gone forth, on the same day, from the capital of the pretended Confederacy, that in three weeks their flag should float over the dome of the Capitol at Washington, and in due time over Faneuil Hall; not till their emissaries in London had claimed that Mr. Adams, the Envoy of the United States, ought not to be received on his arrival, because before that event, the Confederacy would be installed at Washington, and the United States would have ceased to exist; it was not till all this

had taken place, that the General Government drew the sword.

In an Italian church-yard there is a monument with an epitaph on a man, who being well, dosed himself to death with unwholesome drugs. *Stovo bene, ma per star meglio, sto qui.* 'I was well, I wanted to be better; and here I am.' Mr. DAVIS was living about two years ago, as he tells us, under the best form of Government ever instituted by man; and no man blessing that to begin with as the world goes. There was no fault to be found with the manner in which it had been administered. Of now few governments can that be said, in ancient or modern times.

Was not this enough for man or people? Alas, no! Mr. DAVIS was not content with this exuberant felicity. He needed something more; he desired a 'nice and subtle happiness'; he sighed for 'Fraternality.' To get that precious boon, he dosed himself with the maddening drug of secession; and now behold him; the fetlocks of his war-horse wet with the blood of civil war, oozing from the trampled bosoms of friend and of foe, as he rages over the field of death in search of something better than the best of Governments; than an unexceptionable Administration; than a prosperity without example in the history of the world!

Is this patriotic statesmanship or is it ambitious frenzy? What! an unprincipled rebellion like this to be compared with the work of our sainted Fathers, of WASHINGTON and FRANKLIN, and JEFFERSON and ADAMS, the heroes and sages of the Revolution! This gigantic treason to be profanely lauded as the august foundation of a new State; to be fed with foreign gold and nursed with foreign favor! Then let all pretence of distinction between right and wrong, truth and falsehood be abandoned. Lift your heads, ye prison gates, and let your wronged inmates go free! Come home from the cannibal islands, ye missionaries, and let the honest savage gorge upon his 'strange flesh.' Throw open your doors, O just Bedlam, and send your abused philosophers, princes and statesmen to their homes! Cease your dull prates, ye teachers of morals! There is no crime, there is no barbarism, there is no madness. Those who make constitutions, not those who break them, shall henceforward be the traitors. Our legislators and judges shall be the culprits, not felons and thieves. Oaths shall no longer be the link, that binds the soul of the creature to the footstool of the Creator, but a base trap baited by knaves to catch the easy consciences of fools; and all this vaunted civilization, founded on institutions, hallowed by religion, buttressed by tribunals, accepted by the common sense of mankind, shall be proclaimed, in the face of the universe, a paltry show and a wicked lie!

Well did Mr. Vice-President STEPHENS observe, on the 14th of November, 1860, that 'the disappointment of ambitious aspirants to office had had much to do with bringing on the deplorable state of affairs.'

Such is his declaration, and if this assertion of the second officer in the Confederacy is well founded; if this tremendous war has indeed in no small degree been brought upon us for the reason stated by him; if the country has been called to stagger beneath this daily increasing mountain load of debt; if our lawful commerce has been surrendered to the rovers of the sea, fitted out with shameless cupidity to prey upon it; if the influence of our country, which so lately held high its head in the front rank of the family of nations, has for the time being been annihilated, and foreign Powers are already treating us with coldness and indifference, watching and waiting to see the noble Ship of State go to pieces on the breakers; if the bones of hundreds and thousands of our brethren are bleaching on the battlefield; if other hundreds and other thousands are languishing with cruel wounds and the diseases of the camp, mutilated, broken down, prematurely old, creeping from the wards of the hospital to their last bed in the churchyard; if the flower of our young men North and South has been cut down; if the bereaved and desolate parent, the heart-broken widow, the mourning sister, the orphan child, have been called to swell this frightful sum of human calamity; if all these numberless and nameless woes have been brought upon the land, because Mr. JEFFERSON DAVIS was not nominated nor Mr. JOHN C. BRECKINRIDGE chosen President, then, so sure as Heaven is just, the tears of the bereaved, the pangs of the wounded, the agonies of the dying will lie heavy on the souls of the authors of these crimes and woes; their memories will go down to the execration of the latest posterity; and their names stand recorded on the page of history by the side of the Benedict Arnolds, the Catilines, the Judas Iscariots of modern and of ancient times!

On the grim and bloody catalogue, which history unrolls to teach and warn us, we read of the merciless wars of the Assyrians and Chaldeans, of the Medes and Persians, which desolated the fairest regions of the earth in the morning of the world; of the disastrous conflicts of the Confederate States of Greece, in which their short-lived prosperity was blasted, their cities razed, their fighting men massacred by thousands, their women and children sold into Slavery—prototype as far as the laws of modern warfare permit of the ruin which awaits our Union if the poison of secession is admitted into the veins of the body politic; of the steadily growing ferocity and the murderous struggles of party in the Roman Republic, passing through the bloody gates of proscription and civil war to the dreary calm of a merciless despotism, at whose abominations human nature stands aghast. We read of the secular wars of the Italian Republics, of the factions which rent the vitals of England for generations, of the wars of the Reformation, of the thirty years' war in Germany, of the wars of Louis XIV. and the Spanish succession, of the constantly renewed struggle for the balance of power in Europe, and finally of the gigantic wars of the French Revolution; but I defy any one to produce in all these bloody pages the record of a war undertaken to overthrow a Government admitted to be by those who levy it, the most perfect, the best administered, the most productive of prosperity which the world has seen. That madness was reserved for the annals of this rebellion; and I do not scruple to say that, from the dawn of history to the present time, there is not on record a war so unprovoked, so causeless, so unprincipled, so pregnant with bootless suffering to all concerned, so destructive of good, so fertile of crime and woe, as the war now waged by the oligarchy of the South, for the purpose of breaking up this mild and beneficent Government.

'My friends, there is no alternative but to acknowledge the independence of the Confederacy, or to subdue the rebellion by the strong arm of military power. To suppose that there is hopes of any other settlement is the grossest delusion.'

Can you then recognize the independence of the Confederacy? Remember that it carries with it acknowledged defeat, in a war of aggression, arrogantly provoked, by an enemy notoriously inferior in numbers, financial means and all the resources of war; that a peace made on that basis would be a standing invitation, not only to foreign Powers, in all our disputes, but to an insolent antagonist, flushed with triumph, to resort, on every future occasion of controversy between the two Governments to menace, insult and invasion.

We are expected to give up to a foreign Power, (and a bitterly hostile foreign Power it will be,) and that under the coercion of a barbarous war waged upon a wretched metaphysical quibble, half this fair territory of the United States; a seacoast of two thousand miles; some of the best harbors and military stations of the country; the fortresses that guard our coastwise commerce; some of the great lines of communication East and West, North and South; the control of the navigation of the Gulf of Mexico, and of the outlet of that great system of internal waters which gives its character to the central basin of the Continent; to give it up too on a principle, in virtue of which each and every one of the seceding States may fall into the arms of any European Power that chooses to persuade or coerce the surrender. To suppose such a thing possible on the part of the United States, except at the last spasm of national strength, the last sigh of national honor, the last struggle of national agony, would be to apply to the whole country Judge PRYOR's conception of the State of South Carolina.

Can any man look at a map of the Union and then seriously entertain the opinion that the United States, brought to the very verge of a war with Great Britain, after a diplomatic struggle of sixty years for the possession of a few acres of unsettled land on the banks of the Aroostook, are going to permit a foreign power to trench itself at the entrance of Chesapeake Bay, and thence to stretch its boundary westwardly, wherever it chooses to draw the lines—over the hills, through the central plains, across the Rocky Mountains, to the setting sun?

But it is time to draw this discussion to a close. War is justly regarded as one of the greatest evils that can befall a nation, though it is not the greatest, and of this great evil, civil war is the most deplorable form. Thus far, it is true, we have the satisfaction of reflecting, notwithstanding the barbarities inflicted upon Union men in the seceding States, that the contest has been carried on without the atrocities which have been too apt, in all ages and countries, to mark the progress of civil war. Still it is a dire calamity. I want words to express the sorrow with which from the first I have contemplated, and unceasingly contemplate, the necessity laid upon us to wage this war for the integrity of the Nation. Few persons, I think, have entertained visions more glowing of the amount of blessings stored up for the latest posterity, in the perpetual Union of the States. I had seen them already expanded from sixteen States and 4,000,000 inhabitants, which were the numbers at the time of my birth, to a family of thirty-four States and a population augmented eight fold; and reason and imagination were alike tasked to find a limit to the natural growth of the country. But numbers and space are but the relation of material things. I saw exemplified in this Western world—long hidden and late revealed—the idea of a form of government as nearly perfect as our frail nature admits; prodigal of blessings to the millions now on the stage; and promising a millions in the same rich inheritance to the millions on millions that should follow us. I grew up beneath the shadow of our beautiful flag, and often when I have seen it floating on distant seas, my heart has melted at the thought of the beloved and happy land, whose union was emblazoned on its streaming folds. On a hundred festive and patriotic occasions, my voice has dwelt—would it had been more worthily—on the grateful theme, and my prayer to Heaven has been, that it might be hushed in death, rather than it should be compelled to abandon that joyous strain. Not without deep solicitude, I saw the angry clouds gathering in the horizon North and South; and I devoted the declining years of my life, with a kind of religious consecration, to the attempt to freshen the sacred memories that cluster round that dear and venerated name which I need not repeat; memories which survived the multiplying causes of

alienation, and were so well calculated to strengthen the cause of Union. To these humble efforts, and the time and labor expended upon them—truly a labor of love—I would, as Heaven is my witness, have cheerfully added the sacrifice of my life, if by so doing I could have averted the catastrophe. For that cause, I should have thought a few careworn and weary years cheaply laid on the altar of my country.

But it could not be. A righteous Providence in its wisdom has laid upon us the performance of this great and solemn duty. It is now plain to the dullest perception, that the hour of trial could not be much longer delayed. The leaders of the rebellion tell us themselves that they had plotted and planned it for an entire generation. It might have been postponed for four years or for eight years, but it was sure in no long to come; and it, by base compliance, we could have turned the blow from ourselves, it would have fallen with redoubled violence on our children.

Let us then meet it like men. It must needs be that offences shall come, but wo unto that man by whom the offence cometh. Let us show ourselves equal to the duty imposed upon us, and faithful to the trust to which we are called. The cause in which we are engaged is the cause of the Constitution and the Law, of civilization and freedom, of man and of God. Let us engage in it with a steadiness and fortitude, a courage and a zeal, a patience and a resolution, a hope and a cheer, worthy of the fathers from whom we are descended, of the country we defend, and of the privileges we inherit. There is a call and a duty, a work and a place for all; for man and for woman, for rich and for poor, for old and for young, for the stout-hearted and strong-handed, for all who enjoy and all who deserve to enjoy the priceless blessings at stake. Let the venerable forms of the Pilgrim Fathers; the majestic images of our revolutionary sires, and of the sages that gave us this glorious Union; let the anxious expectation of the friends of liberty abroad, awakened at last to the true cause and the great issues of this contest; let the hardships and perils of our brethren in the field, and the fresh-made graves of the dear ones who have fallen; let every memory of the past and every hope of the future, every thought and every feeling that can nerve the arm, or fire the heart, or elevate and purify the soul of a patriot, rouse and guide and cheer and inspire us, to do, and if need be, to die for our country.