

**FACTS AND CONDITIONS OF
PROGRESS IN THE NORTH-
WEST: BEING THE ANNUAL
DISCOURSE FOR 1850**

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Facts and Conditions of Progress in the North-west: Being the Annual Discourse for 1850 by
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WILLIAM D. GALLAGHER

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FACTS AND CONDITIONS
OF
PROGRESS IN THE NORTH-WEST.

BEING THE
ANNUAL DISCOURSE FOR 1850,

BEFORE
THE HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF OHIO; DELIVERED
APRIL 8, THE SIXTY-THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST
SETTLEMENT OF THE STATE.

BY WILLIAM D. GALLAGHER.

WITH AN APPENDIX,
CONTAINING A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF THE SOCIETY, AND
OTHER MATTER.

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DISCOURSE.

By the constitution of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, it is made the duty of the President of this association, at the anniversary each year, to deliver a public discourse on some subject lying within the appropriate fields of its investigation. Occupying, at the present time, the position referred to, I appear before you, Gentlemen of the Society, for the purpose of discharging the duty thus imposed. And the theme to which I have thought proper to invite your attention, is—
THE FACTS AND CONDITIONS OF PROGRESS IN THE NORTH-WESTERN SECTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

That part of American Literature, which is made up of the different descriptions of the Public Discourse, delivered on occasions of anniversary and other periodical celebrations, though characterized by a brilliant diction and a philosophic spirit, and informed with the learning of by-gone ages, has been too often deficient in the great events bearing upon our own immediate times, and, consequently, lacking in that prophetic spirit, whose broad and intelligent survey extends at once over the past and the future, and founds upon the present an encouraging hope for man.

The great majority of these discourses, which do not perish in the day that gives them birth, are evidently the work of abilities far beyond my own, and filled with a wisdom to which I make no pretensions. It would ill be-

come me, especially on an occasion like this, to usurp the seat of literary justice, and pronounce judgment upon them, even if satisfied, as I am not, that their defects were many. All I mean to say is, that it seems to me they too often, though filled with the wisdom of Egypt, the art of Greece, and the grandeur of Rome, though charged with the learning of the European Continent and instinct with the spirit of liberty that has moved with a mighty presence from the Isle of Britain, yet fail to produce and array, as they might, the facts that have borne upon our own past, and shape our immediate present, and will enter into our near and far future. Many of them have also been deficient, I think, in making that clear and distinctive presentation of the conditions of our progress as a people, which would be useful to us, both as warning voices and as guiding hands.

In attempting to do for our own section of the Union, what so many have failed to do for other sections and for the whole, I may be undertaking that which is beyond the capabilities of a single discourse, and fail also. But feeling, in the broad and beautiful region of country to which I belong, an interest surpassed by that of no other man; having watched its progress for a quarter of a century, with a closeness that has permitted little to pass unobserved; and possessing some views as to its future advancement, which are the result of my best reflections, I feel impelled, be the hazard what it may, to make the attempt.

My subject divides itself naturally into two parts: the first, treating of the facts of our past progress; the second, of the conditions of our future advancement.

I. The Facts of Past Progress in the North-Western States.

The facts of our past progress, I do not propose to show in anything like detail. This would be an encyclopedic task — even were it desirable — for which I should not have time, nor you patience. Beside, our history is so recent, that its details are familiar to the minds of all of adult age. The general features of that progress, with the grand outline of the domain upon which it has been made, are all that I shall attempt to present.

PROGRESS being one of those indefinite terms, which are made, in the using, to mean, at times, almost anything, and at other times almost nothing, it may be proper to determine its signification as employed in this discourse. Ordinarily, it is made to stand for almost anything in the nature of *movement*, physical, moral, or spiritual — forward, sidewise, or backward. Here, it is used in its most comprehensive sense, as the equivalent of the term Human Civilization. But even this explanation may be unsatisfactory; for CIVILIZATION itself is a word more easily understood through its popular signification, than defined from its classical origin. Symbolically, it may be described as a plant of everlasting growth, whose roots are in the nature of man, which germinates in his savage state, which sends up its stately trunk and develops its beautiful foliage in his political or social condition, which unfolds its flowers only in a state of human excellence that has not *yet* been reached by any nation of the earth, and which finally matures its fruits among the angels of heaven, in the Great Hereafter. Or it may be presented

as an unbroken chain of events and consequences, whose beginning is in the soul of man as he exists upon earth, whose links are perfect to the Eternal Eye, though to the human vision their connection is often lost, whose different sections stretch from historic epoch to epoch, under the Supreme design and guidance binding together the whole, and whose end is in the bosom of God.

But in less abstract terms, Civilization may be described as that part of human progress which takes man in his savage or his nomadic state,— that state which had its type in the Gothic hordes before the Conquest of Rome, or that which is represented now by the wild Indian tribes of the North-American Continent,— and instructs his understanding, cultivates the affections of his heart, elevates his tastes and desires, improves his physical condition, till he is endowed with the arts generally of peaceful and associated life : agriculture, commerce, trade, manufactures, science, painting, sculpture, music, literature, and others of the more elegant and refining accomplishments of Society.

The art and the weapons of war belong to the nomadic and the savage state, as do also religions, and, to some extent, the marriage relation, with more or less skill in rude fabrics. These, therefore, are not *peculiar* to civilization, though existing with it, and carried by it to a condition of refinement of which their original state gives but the feeblest promise.

Neither Christianity, nor a knowledge of God, is necessarily a part of human civilization, in all its first developments, even to a state of very great perfection. The Apostle Paul found a high civilization at Athens,

where temples the most beautiful the world has seen were dedicated, in express terms, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." Robespierre lived amid the highest civilization known in the eighteenth century, and in it the names of God and Christ were both mocked, and Human Reason was enthroned as the Supreme Intelligence.

Modern civilization, however—which is but another term for *Christian* civilization—has a more comprehensive signification than the word Civilization simply. The ancient civilizations were essentially selfish. Kings, priests, and nobles, were the almost exclusive recipients of their bounties, while the masses of people remained ignorant, oppressed, superstitious, and were of little weight in either the church or the state.* Amid the splendors of those old civilizations, agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, flourished; the art of war was carefully cultivated; and, among the opulent and selfish few, the elegant arts, literature, science, and the refinements of life generally, were carried to a high state of perfection. But all this was for the *castes* and *orders*, and not for the masses of men. The results were, the elevation of the few, and the degradation of the many.

From those ancient civilizations, the modern civilization differs essentially. *It* is emphatically the civilization of MAN: not that of kings, priests, and nobles. It is pervaded by the spirit of Love—the spirit of Jesus—which is a spirit of good to man. It is full-charged with

* From this general characterizing, the Hebrew civilization, which *had* the knowledge of God, and was in some peculiar manner under his immediate direction, is, of course, excepted.