

HIGHWAYS OF PROGRESS

CHAPTER I

THE NATION'S FUTURE

THE highest conception of a nation is that of a trustee for posterity. The savage is content with wresting from nature the simple necessities of life. But the modern idea of duty is conservation of the old and modelling of the new in order that posterity may have a fairer dwelling place and thus transmit the onward impulse. The ideal of the prudent, loving, careful head of every family is the true ideal for a nation of rational men. The people of the United States, as far as any perhaps, have meant to follow this pattern. It is worth while to consider how far they have been successful and where they have failed.

The average man is often more interested in speculative theories than in his plain duty toward himself and his neighbour. The average state is filled with visions of its place in the procession of the years, while it overlooks the running account of daily expenses. Problems we have found and trifled with, in confusing number and variety; but the problem of the future material condition of our country, of an inventory of