

And we celebrate the battle of the Plains of Abraham not because of the sovereignty which it transferred, but because of the sovereignty which it founded and developed. What was the triumphant march of Wolfe to the triumphant march of liberty, and toleration and statesmanship which followed in its wake? In the ordeal of battle many of the noblest qualities of the human race are called into exercise, but it is only by the arts of peace, that a nation can reach its highest altitude, and the progress of humanity its greatest development. Who, in the light of history, regrets the battle of the Plains of Abraham, and who, that loves free speech in every tongue, a free conscience under every creed, and liberty under every social condition, would have it otherwise?

To the French Canadian the celebration on the Plains of Abraham may suggest some saddening reflections, and the words of Whittier may cross his mind:

“Of all the sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest of all is—it might have been.”

And are not these “sad words” the greatest riddle in the history of nations as well as individuals? What might have been? Ask this question over the ruins of Babylon and Tyre and Carthage; ask it as you read the history of Greece and Rome; ask it at Thermopylae, at Bannockburn, at Waterloo; ask it of Marlborough, of Nelson, of Wellington; all are silent. There is no response. Behind what human eyes can see and human reason explain is there not some mysterious power by which all things are determined and whose purposes we can neither vary nor comprehend. Happy are they who in the crash of their dearest expectations can rise on “stepping stones of their dead selves, to higher things.”

But hark! There is booming of cannon. The celebration has already begun. You look eastward, and on the shimmering waters of the St. Lawrence you behold a long procession of moving forms shrouded in smoke and pulsating as though stirred by some terrible passion. Look! What flag is that which flutters from the foretop of the great monster now leading the procession? I see it! Huzza! Who would not cheer that meteor flag of a thousand years? One hundred and fifty years ago it was seen where it now floats but with different feelings. And are the sailors whom you see on deck the same breed of men who fought at Trafalgar and the Baltic and the coasts of Spain, and are they looking for some enemy to encounter? Peace, there is no enemy to-day, and it is well. These monsters of the sea