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LECTURE

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(From the New York Freeman's Journal.)

Subject—TRUE CIVILISATION.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Civilisation is one of those important terms which are frequently used, generally understood, and yet rarely defined. Whether it be that the word is so clear that every one understands it without further explanation, or so vague that every one can take it in his own sense, it is a fact that few people, and fewer books, state to you what civilisation is. It is most commonly taken in the sense of national prosperity. To this the American mind would probably add an idea and style it, not only national prosperity, but, "national progress." What I have to say this evening about true civilisation will appear clearer from my division of the subject, than from its definition. That we may know, however, what we are talking about, I will give my notion of civilisation in a few plain words. *Civilisation is the orderly and happy existence of the individual, the family, and society engaged in obtaining the end for which they were created.* This definition, you observe, makes the normal state of society and its parts consist in their "orderly and happy existence." The word orderly shows the necessity of laws and magistrates, the term happy, the necessity of individual and social liberty and of the means of subsistence. The activity of society, as some would say the progress of the civilised world, is recognised only as it seeks the ends for which God created man and established society; any other activity would be destructive, and the civilisation depending upon it would be counterfeit and of short duration. The last item recognises also the religious element necessary for the existence of a civilised nation. Finally, the last part of the definition covers any want of order and happiness in particular cases, as they may not be destructive of the life of society so long as it can gain the end for which it was instituted. Where there is no order and no happiness—but where their opposites, unhappiness and disorder are universal—we can recognise no true civilisation except in its fragments and traditions.

For the sake of the subject which is of the very greatest importance, I hope you will not set me down as dry and tiresome against my wonted plan, if I invite you to analyse civilisation no longer in its definition, but as it works practically. Civilisation addresses itself of course to the whole man, and to the whole person of society. Yet nations, like individuals, are composed of parts, and civilisation may predominate in certain parts, and be languid in others. Civilisation may succeed particularly with the mind of a nation, with its body, with its will. Thus we have intellectual civilisation, moral civilisation, physical civilisation. The basis of intellectual civilisation is science, the basis of moral civilisation is religion, the basis of physical civilisation is labor. The highest grade of those mentioned is undoubtedly moral civilisation, the lowest, physical civilisation. Intellectual civilisation is a middle grade, and it may subserve either of the other two. In Italy intellectual subserves moral civilisation, for there science is made mostly the handmaid of religion. In the United States intellectual subserves physical civilisation; that is to say, science in this country is mainly esteemed as it influences labor, as it produces machinery, advances commerce, simplifies and renders available previous inventions, &c.

It strikes me that there is a great deal of light in this mapping out of the world under the heads of moral, intellectual, and physical civilisation. Of course in countries not inhabited by barbarians there is always something of all these three branches. There is religion, there is science, there is labor, just as there is intellect, will, and physical power. But we will most generally observe that the tendency of nations is to exaggerate the real or pretended interests of some one of these three at the expense of the others; or otherwise one of the three remains perfect, and the other two, or one of them, is allowed to die out. Bearing this in mind, it is easy to form a notion of a country's excellence without confusion. Look at Italy, which we have named. Here we find numberless institutions of learning; schools, and printing offices, ideas and books abound. The intellect of the country is in a state of culture decidedly. We examine the morals of the country, we find sound principles, we find religion, and even among bad men plenty of faith. But then we see no steam machines to speak of, no railroads of any importance, no extensive utilitarian improvements on the external features of the country. Physical civilisation is, com-

paratively speaking, at a low ebb. Look at the state of Ireland at the other end of Europe; it is unjust to call it an uncivilised country, it is not true in fact to say that with so much misery, and such stagnation in every department it is a highly civilised one. But with the method we have explained we can call Ireland a country with no physical civilisation worth mentioning, with only partial intellectual civilisation, and then knowing the purity of its women, the faith of its men, the unshaken fidelity of all classes of Irish people under unspeakable trials, I would have no hesitation to say that *morally* speaking it is the most highly civilised country in Europe. In Germany we see many admirable institutions of learning, a people generally well instructed, much activity of mind; but little improvement, and, as a general thing, less decency. We conclude that intellectual civilisation is prosperous, moral and physical civilisation dying, or just born, at all events weak. In Spain and Portugal civil war and freemasonry made the nation drunk, and set it to sleep afterwards. There is less of the physical improvement than there might be, yet morally and intellectually speaking, those countries are sound, and will one day rise again to the estate from which they have fallen. In England physical civilisation predominates; intellectual civilisation confined to a few of the middle class, the highest orders being too busy, and the lower orders too beastly to give it any thought. France has the three orders of civilisation, though all three imperfectly, yet nearly on a par. I believe it would not be hard to prove that France, speaking of civilisation in its full sense, is the most civilised nation on earth.

To speak now of our own country: we may notice the fact that the generality of Americans very modestly take it for granted that there is no country that can so much as begin to compare with our great country in any respect. Englishmen generally attribute this national propensity to puerile and foolish vanity. It is not wholly just to judge us so. There is no people in the world, except the French, more logical than the Americans. They are eminently a logical people. They will carry out their principles, good or bad, to their furthest length. They may have bad premises, but they go the whole figure. If then an American boasts of this country as the greatest under the sun, depend upon it he has a philosophical idea of greatness at the back of such a boast to which the country comes up. Improvement, material civilisation, labor extended, and rewarded, parts organised rapidly to obtain a greater result, these are the things he admires. These he calls progress, and places in them the essence of civilisation. There is a well-known anecdote related of a Yankee traveller at the Falls of Niagara, which illustrates the idea an American has of greatness. He stood on the favorite spot of poetic and religious sublimity, and gave vent to his enthusiasm amid the noise and rush of the multitude of waters by lifting up both arms and exclaiming, "Almighty river! go ahead!"

In this point of view certainly this young republic may well boast of being highly civilised, of being a great country. Some years ago it might have been necessary to prove this; now we take it for granted, for the whole world admits it, and England fears it. But can a country be truly great if its intellectual and moral civilisation is inferior to its physical civilisation? and again, is the intellect of this country, is the will of this country as highly disciplined and improved by science and religion as its body is by improvements upon labor? Two important questions, ladies and gentlemen, which we will, if it please you, briefly strive, to answer. A country cannot be truly great, it cannot be called highly civilised, if scientifically and morally its vigor is dormant. There may be outward improvement to an extent not witnessed heretofore by the world, and yet science and morality may not keep pace with the advance of labor towards perfection. Look at the glory of England some years ago; while France sought renown upon foreign battle-fields, England took the lead in establishing a fame which, though of domestic origin, was of world-wide influence. The light of her glory did not flash from the blade of carnage, but glowed from coal and iron, fired and put in motion by modern improvement. The noise of continental activity was elicited from the tramping legion, and the park of artillery; that of England from the clank and the rumble of machinery, the buzz and the roar of steam. We have seen paintings of the military genius of France with a trumpet in her hand, and laurels on her brow. Could not some one sculpture for us the manufacturing genius of England, with two steamboat pipes for its legs, a steam-boiler for its belly, and red hot coals encircling its iron coronet? What was the result of the manufacturing era, and its various commercial attendants, banks, railways, and dry docks, when all but exclusively pursued? Why, starration of thousands, brutish ignorance of tens of thousands, discon-

tent and unhappiness of millions. The whole world says that England is on the brink of ruin, and what the whole world says is rarely false. Civilisation must be sought after in all its three parts; if exclusively spread in one it cannot be great or lasting. Society is a moral person, it has a mind, a will, a body; cultivate the body exclusively, devote no time to cultivate mind or will, and a man will become strong in the body as a lion, and just as savage—and so will a nation.

Do you not believe that these outward improvements cultivate only the body, and elevate, or rather abbreviate and condense, only labor? But observe that mind only serves matter in this state of things; it makes possible to one some outward good that united thousands could hardly obtain before, and it multiplies for thousands what was only enjoyed by one. You or I can make a pin in an hour; a Yankee patent steam pin machine will strike off ten thousand in a minute, head and all. To me the telegraph is a steel pen, whose point is prolonged through the air and made to write at a thousand miles off. The steam engine is a horse of iron, with breath of flame, who pulls and pants like a horse proper, but runs faster. The leathern strap of a fly wheel and the cobs of the little wheels are substitutes for sinews, and fingers and turn bigger loads quicker. The wheel which propels a steamboat is nothing but the paddle of the Indian canoe, whose strokes are multiplied by a hundred per minute. Science comes only as it helps this simplification of labor, otherwise it is not cared for in the community where physical civilisation takes the lead.

This brings us to the second question asked: is the mind of this country and its will civilised as its body; in other words, is science and morality here on a par with material improvement? To answer this question as far as science is concerned, let us first agree that we all know how to read and write, and most of us to cypher; so far so good. But letters and figures are only the tools of science; how do we use them? *far as we use them in relation to the mathematical sciences practically applied, to engineering, surveying, chemistry, navigation, property of steam, mechanical improvements, merely utilitarian advantages in short—all the activity of science belong to physical civilisation.* What shall we look to, then? *theology?* that belongs to moral civilisation, and we must speak of it in that connexion. What is the condition of philosophy in this country? It is weak, rotten, or infidel, or all three together. There are books of philosophy studied by your children even in public schools, and in the free academy of this city, such as a decent pagan school would not tolerate in its classes. What other branch for general interest prevails? there is one branch outstripping all others—that is literature; I do not mean the practical utilitarian literature of newspapers—that we have disposed of already; but the works of the imagination. They are decidedly on the increase. Poetry of the most demoralizing kind from the subtle pantheism of the transcendentalist to the socialistic pedestrianism of blacksmiths, tailors, and printers, turned rhymsters; from the refined lasciviousness of the monthly magazine to the broad vulgarity of the Sunday paper—this is the science that is in great vogue, and on the ever increase. To these add your novels, your spick-and-span literature in yellow and blue covers, whether their contents were poured out from the heathen mind and polluted heart of a native corrupter of youth, or whether drawn from the pestiferous sinks of English and French impurity. For every good book that is printed hundreds of such come out daily, and for every good book that is read dozens of such are devoured. The student occasionally doses through a volume or two of the first kind; of the latter millions make their daily intellectual repast. The kind of science that is promoted by such literature in a country is a sign of feebleness and corruption, a forerunner of destruction; it made England a brothel under Charles II., and France a hell under Louis XV. and XVI. What do our universities and colleges, if we leave out the Catholic ones, do in the way of promoting philosophy and literature? What philosophy has been derived from them you may see in the so-called divines preaching sophistic treason from the pulpits, and in the politicians defending rebellion on principle from the tribune. As to literature, unless such as I have mentioned, what other is gained by the education of which we speak? There are probably not ten Americans educated in this country by Americans, who can speak Latin; not five probably who can write a Latin essay or poem which would pass muster as decent in the Jesuit College at Rome. There are probably not a half a dozen perfect Greek scholars in Massachusetts; and as to Hebrew, why, we never hear its accent except in regions devoted to the sale of old clothes. So much for languages, which in European universities and colleges are of every day

use. The branches of law and medicine are studied all over; what sort of training do the greater part of graduates in both show when they get out of school? If you do not know it yourself, may the Lord deliver you from ever learning it by experience. We have examined now briefly whether we stand high as a scientific nation, except in utilitarian pursuits. For my part, I am compelled to think that an American who boasts of our being more cultivated than Europeans in the higher walks of knowledge, makes a fool of himself and a laughing-stock of his country.

But we asked another question, and it was whether this country stands in point of moral civilisation as it does in physical civilisation? Before answering that question I have to state a proposition which is certainly one of the most important uttered yet, and which I wish all the citizens of this happy republic would write upon the tablets of their memory. It is this, "No nation can be truly great, unless it is truly virtuous."

Neither science, nor outward improvement and happiness will last long, if virtue, if morality is gone. The principles of morality have, as we have seen, for their province, to guide the will and the power of a nation. Science and improvement may strengthen with additional energy the will, and the power wielded by it, but without virtuous principles to control it, this energy will be only a new source of injustice and destruction. History has doleful records of nations whose virtuous principles were publicly recognised, and their practice insisted upon, but where they afterwards fell into disrepute, derision, and finally into oblivion. Who was stronger as a people than ancient Rome? An inspired author makes honorable mention of the justice, the fortitude, the wisdom, the patriotism of the Romans. (1 Mac. 3, 1.) If their armies abroad were victorious, it was not that their sinews were more rugged, or their armor more impenetrable than that of Greek, Egyptian, or Carthaginian. The wisdom, the gravity, and the prudence of the Senate and the magistrates at home was the reason of the conquests effected by the legions of Rome in foreign parts. Later, their knowledge increased and their virtues diminished. Read the history of the era when Augustus reigned Emperor of Rome; such was the state of science, arts, and literature, that his time in the chronology of the Republic of Letters is known as the golden age. But under that very reign a shock was given to the honesty and uprightness of the Romans that led to the decay of the Empire, and prepared the way for the barbarian conquerors of the North. France was virtuous, and continued strong amid hosts of enemies, though once during the Crusades all her nobles and soldiers of worth were away in Palestine, and her king, St. Louis, a captive in the hands of a Moslem chief. But when later, France publicly abandoned the principles of honor, integrity, and religion, her capital was insecure, though encouraged by the presence of an emperor, surrounded by spoils from every city, and by armed followers from every village in Europe.

We have passed some remarks already upon science in this country; let us now answer the question proposed, whether the morality of our nation and people is on a par with their physical prosperity. I unhesitatingly affirm that it is not. . . . It is a universal expression among us that the country is in danger; I firmly believe that it is so, and I hope to show the real grounds of this danger. Far be it from me to join those who cast ridicule upon the institutions and the people of this country; let that be the privilege of English tourists, and of simpletons among ourselves, who think they will become original by imitating their ways. But at the same time, I, for one, despise the conduct of men who, when their fellow citizens accord them a hearing, and they stand up to speak, dare not give utterance to the truth, and seek to please by flattering the ears and the passions of their audiences. Such speaking should be left to your itinerant English scribblers, your Bulwers and your Jameses, who seek to wheedle us Americans by after-dinner orations, wherein one thinks he can tickle our vanity by calling us children of England, very much, indeed, like our edifying papa; and the other, by a tissue of lectures before female and other institutes, wherein a patch-work of old orthodox history, pilfered from various authors, with a modern infidel coloring, is rolled out to astonish and please a gaping audience.

Let us examine the moral standing of a few classes of society among us, with reference to their influence more than to their conduct. Look first at the young; what is the tone of morals among them? endeavoring to become men before their time, they put on the vices of manhood as the badges of its honor. Impiety, blasphemy, excess, and criminal indulgence, of the worst kind, stare you everywhere in the face. The medical statistics of this community would show thousands upon thousands of dollars paid annually on account of the early commission of crime in this city. Quacks and pill-makers amass fortunes