

country such as Canada, where success in life depends so much upon practical mental activity, should be without them.—*Ottawa Citizen*, November 25, 1854.

### THE RISE AND FALL OF NATIONS.

*From Lord John Russell's recent Speech at Bedford.*

There have been many causes assigned for this rise and fall; but the common delusion is, that as so many nations of ancient times have gone through these changes, all States must go through similar periods of prosperity and decay. That this is a common theory and common supposition, I need not go far to prove; for an admirable writer, whose friendship I have the good fortune to enjoy, who invests with the rich treasures of his fancy whatever he undertakes, describes a New Zealander standing on a broken arch of London Bridge sketching the ruins of St. Paul's.\* Now I could never contemplate that picture with comfort. (Laughter.) It is a very disagreeable subject, and I want to know what necessity there was for making such a prophecy. ("Hear," and laughter.) If I were to investigate that subject I should engage you the greater part of the night; but I should suggest certain topics to follow out at your leisure, some of the most fitting subjects for lectures, in connection with the rise and fall of states. Many states have fallen because they were too small to contend against their more powerful neighbors; because it is obvious when surrounding states have 100,000 or 200,000 men under military discipline that the smaller ones with ten to twenty thousand will fall under the superior force of the other. We have the case of Athens and the case of Florence, then I might allude to the great state of Germany and the smaller one of Portugal. I need scarcely allude to England, because this country is large enough and strong enough to maintain itself for ages to come. (Applause.) But there is another source of decline, and which is celebrated in a line of the Roman Satirist as the immediate cause of the fall of the Roman Empire, which, after stretching its armies into almost every part of the world, fell from the effects of luxury. Well, we in modern days carry luxury to a greater extent than ever it was carried before. Many enjoyments are within the reach of most of us, and we indulge in far greater luxuries than were possessed by the ancient world, yet we have no sign that men thereby become indolent; on the contrary, we have seen that men having every means at command, when called upon to perform their duty to their country have not shrunk from encountering the greatest hardship, though previously surrounded by and living in the midst of the most refined luxuries. (Applause.) We do not perceive that the position of Her Majesty's household brigade, where it may be readily imagined luxury prevails to a considerable extent, has at all unfitted those soldiers to contend against a powerful enemy. It does not by any means follow that our soldiers are not able to overcome every obstacle opposed to courage and determination because they are not in the condition of that iron chief who kicked away the pillow of snow from under the head of his son, saying that it was too luxurious a bed for any chief to indulge in. (Cheers.) I think, therefore, that mere luxury, unless the nation itself is feeble, unless it has lost its spirit, has not that direct tendency to effect its ruin. But there are other causes which it behoves us to consider, which have occasioned the decline of nations. There have been despotic institutions, where men have been forbidden to investigate subjects of science, or discuss any improvement in art—where they have been forbidden, under penalty of fire, from holding any religious opinion different from that of the State. Where that despotism has existed—where that persecution has prevailed, the nation has withered under the influence. (Loud applause.) Where such principles prevail, the state will always be unstable; but I say there can be no danger to the people of this country on that account, appreciating as they do the liberty of thought and of expression which they enjoy, and who would not under any consideration surrender that liberty to any power whatever. (Applause.) Well, no doubt there are other causes to show why nations pass from one phase to another—from prosperity to decay—which may be meet subjects for your meditation. Nations have found, as Holland found in the last century, that the generous efforts made in the last war to secure European independence of those who ranked in the scale of nations have been disappointed, and the circumstances arising out of that period are weighty and proper subjects for the consideration of those entrusted with the financial administration of a nation: this matter, however, has an immediate political bearing, and I will not further allude to it. There is another cause which greatly tended to the decay of ancient nations, which introduced many crimes, caused a weakening of the manly character, and a falling off of the fortitude and industry which distinguished the early period of history. There was the institution of slavery—that institution which led the Romans to neglect the true interests of the empire, resulting in crime, which led them to leave the cultivation of the land to slaves—those lands which at an earlier period received cultivation from the hands of freemen. But happily those changes are not felt by this country; so far as our dominions are concerned we have got rid of that curse. In an early period we find

that the church spoke out strongly against the maintenance of slavery; and at a later period we have practically improved upon it, and those who carry on occupations of various kinds, whether agricultural, commercial or manufacturing in our dominions, are free from the curse of personal slavery. (Applause.) We have, therefore, a recognition of those mutual obligations upon which the ancient nations divided themselves, and which, as may be pointed out in the history of nations, cannot affect our personal safety. (Applause.) There are also other sources of decline—from the consequences of political events, from the calamities of war, from struggles long continued, from other objects of national interest, and other motives the effect of which no person can perceive, and upon which no man would ever be entitled to your confidence, or the confidence of a nation if he pretended to prophesy. These are subjects connected with the future, the knowledge of which is not given to man. Events may come to pass and contradict and overrule all his anticipations; but upon that subject you and your successors have a duty to perform as well as hopes to realise. It behoves you to maintain the liberty of this country, to maintain the Christianity of this country—(applause)—and my belief is, that by cultivating your minds, by extending as much as possible your researches, whether in science, whether in literature, you will contribute to that end, you will strengthen the religious and political institutions of the country. (Applause.)

### LORD ELGIN'S VALEDICTORY AT SPENCER WOOD.

For the last time I am surrounded by a circle of friends with whom I have spent some of the pleasantest hours of my life. For the last time I welcome you as my guests to this charming residence, which I have been in the habit of calling my house. I did not, I will frankly confess it, know what it would cost me to break this habit until the period of my departure approached and I began to feel that the great interests which have so long engrossed my attention and thoughts, were passing out of my hands. I had a hint of what my feelings really were upon this point—a pretty broad hint too—one lovely morning in June last, when I returned to Quebec after my temporary absence in England, and landed at the cove below Spencer Wood, because it was Sunday, and I did not want to make a disturbance in the town, and when with the greeting of the old people in the cove, who put their heads out of their windows as I passed along, and cried "welcome home again" still ringing in my ears, I mounted the hill and drove through the Avenue to the house door. I saw the drooping trees on the lawn, with every one of which I was so familiar, clothed in the green of spring, and the river beyond, calm and transparent as a mirror, and the ships fixed and motionless as statues on its surface, and the whole landscape bathed in a flood of that bright Canadian sunshine which so seldom pierces our murky atmosphere on the other side of the Atlantic. I began to think that those persons were to be envied who were not forced by the necessities of their positions, to quit those engrossing retreats and lovely scenes, for the purpose of proceeding to distant lands, but who are able to remain among them until they pass to that quiet corner of the garden of Mount Hermon which juts into the river and commands a view of the city, the shipping, Point Levi, the Island Orleans and the range of Lorentine hills, so that through the dim watches of that tranquil night which precedes the dawning of the eternal day, the majestic citadel of Quebec, with its noble train of satellite hills, may seem to rest for ever on the sight, and the low murmur of the waters of the St. Lawrence, with the hum of busy life on their surface to fall ceaselessly on the ear. I cannot bring myself to believe that the future has in store for me any interests which will fill the place of those I am now abandoning. But although I must henceforward be to you as a stranger; although my official connection with you and your interests will have become in a few days a matter of history, yet I trust that through some one channel or another the tidings of your prosperity and progress may occasionally reach me, that I may hear, from time to time, of the steady growth and development of those principles of liberty and order, of manly independence in combination with respect for authority and law, of national life in harmony with attachment to British connection which it has been my earnest endeavor, to the extent of my humble means of influence, to implant and to establish.

### THE POWER OF MEMORY.

The power of memory as exhibited in some of the best authenticated examples, was beyond measure surprising. Drusus, it is said, could repeat the whole of Homer. Sallust knew the whole of Demosthenes. Mithridates could speak twenty-two languages. And Cyrus could repeat the name of every soldier in his immense army. The lecturer then gave a number of instances to illustrate the extent of memory, and among the rest mentioned that of Saint Anthony, the hermit, who although he could not read, could repeat the whole of the Scripture from having heard them. He also mentioned instances where men's memories had been impaired by disease, but had recovered again by dint of application. Cases of parties having been able to repeat discourses after hearing them once, were also very numerous. Painters

\* Macaulay's Essays.