

ESSAY ON PROGRESS.

BY

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TO THE PUBLIC

The following Essay, originally intended for publication in Melbourne, was written during the residence of the author in the southern colonies, which will explain various incidents alluded to in the Poem. The writer having been called by business to New Zealand, abandoned the idea of publishing it then. Being a sojourner for a time among my native hills, I hereby offer it to the public without note or comment, feeling assured that if it has merit it needs no apology; if it has none, apology would be useless; and in that case it will certainly get none from me.

CHARLES FENERTY

Sackville, March 15, 1866.

ESSAY ON PROGRESS.

Could we, conveyed to an ærial seat,
View this huge orb revolve beneath our feet,
And from our pendant throne, minutely scan
The acts, acquirements, and pursuits of man;—
Backward in time, as at a glance survey,
The various arts of ages pass'd away;—
Far in the future, with prophetic ken,
Discern the future deeds of future men—
Say, what emotions would the view inspire,
To sink our modern pride, or raise it higher,
To emulate the arts of ages gone,
Or to admire the wisdom of our own.
Or to impress us with the inspiring thought,
That all the old, or modern world has wrought,
Compared with what her future shall unfold,
Will but appear as dross, compared with gold.
First to the view, say Egypt's ancient land,
Shone, with her arts magnificently grand;
As, in the splendour of her primal day,
When her proud Pharaohs held the regal sway;
Whose might, attested still by many a pile,
Like Cheops, towering o'er the classic Nile;
Or Karnak, glorious in its ruins vast,
An essay on the grandeur of the past.
While forced to own, the Architectural page,
Proclaims us pigmies of a meagre age,
'Twas superstitious power which raised on high,
Those massive towers, which time and storm defy;

When, Nations hastened at a Despot's call,
To found a Temple, or erect a wall.
Tyrants commanded, passive skill obeyed,
Millions repined, and pyramids* were made:
But we, rejoicing, that the age has pass'd,
To fill the world, with monuments, so vast,
By patient toil, and unrequited skill,
Passive, and subject to a Tyrant's will;
Yet, proudly claim achievements, greater far—
The ship, the factory, and the rushing car;
The mystic art, by which on wings of thought,
Nations remote, contiguous are brought,
And cities, scattered over half the Earth,
Converse, like neighbours round a social hearth.
We claim the Press, that wondrous art, alone
Worth more than all, to the great ancients known:
An orb of light, before whose powerful ray,
The mist of superstition melts away;
The voice, which science gave to liberty,
To instruct the oppres't, and teach them to be free.
Ever, oh glorious art, man's rights proclaim;
Speak with thy thousand tongues, in freedom's name;
Thine is a voice, more terrible by far,
Than all the thunders of tumultuous war;
Thine is a power, which spurns all base controul,
And stirs the Nations to the inmost soul;
Law, Justice, Order, venerate thy word,
And to the dungeon's depths, thy voice is heard:
Whilst thou in freedom's name, shalt dauntless speak,
The slave shall struggle, till his fetters break.
Immortal Freedom, glorious and divine,

* It is stated by Mr. Buckle in his History of Civilization, on the ancient authority of Diodorus Siculus, that the great Pyramid of Cheops required the combined labor of 120,000 men for a period of thirty-six years to accomplish its erection.

What conflicts and what triumphs, have been thine;
For thee, what pangs the suffering world has borne,
For thee, what millions yet are left to mourn!
See hapless Poland, trampled in the mire,
Despite her patriotic soul of fire;
Torn by the northern vulture, see her bleed,
And none to aid her to avenge the deed.
While sunbright Italy, long to the ground
By Ducal chains, in slavish fetters bound;
Now, girds her sword on Garibaldi's thigh,
And swears with him to conquer or to die.
See her lift up her ancient shield again,
And scourge the Tyrant from her fair domain;
See her, as if arisen from the dead,
Fresh, in the paths of generous progress tread.
Oh! ever thus, beneath fair freedom's smile,
Attendant happiness, is seen the while:
Where equal laws, a people's rights secure,
And guard alike the wealthy, and the poor:
In unpropitious situations placed,
How human energy, oft runs to waste,
Where, vain the hope, to see its powers expand,
As seek for verdure on an arid sand.
But, as in some fair soil, with ample room,
The bud expanding, ripens into bloom—
So shall meek labor yield its timely fruits,
Spread wide its branches and extend its roots.
Cradled in want, see poor misfortune's child,
Like Hagar's son, cast forth upon the wild;
Bowed down by poverty, and made to feel,
The cruel impress of its iron heel.
And is he doomed through life to hope no more,
Than the same drudgeries which his fathers bore;
A sad entailment of their hapless lot,
To live despised, and be in Death forgot,

No! in his breast exists the nobler aim,
To build his fortunes and to raise his name;
He feels the opposing force is hard and strong,
He knows the conflict will be fierce and long;
Yet, firm in his resolve, he wins the prize
For which he longed, or in the struggle dies.
These are the heroes, on life's battle field,
Who make the stubborn wilderness to yield;
Who storm stern Nature in her own stronghold,
Drive forth the bear, and pen the fleecy fold.
Where the gnarled oak and beech their branches spread,
And the brisk squirrel gamboled in the shade;
There, patient toil hath spread a grassy lawn,
Verdant and fair as eye may rest upon.
List to the harvest song so sweetly blythe,
List to the ringing of the marry scythe;
See blooming childhood gathering violets there,
And harebells wild, to deck their golden hair;
See the neat cottage on the slope above,
The home of comfort and the home of love.
These are thy goodly trophies, son of toil,
Greater than all a conquering nation's spoil:
War's cruel end and aim is to destroy,
But thou createst, and thy work is joy.
Yet not alone the work of toiling hands,
But toiling heads, the muse's praise demands;
Workers of science, they who ceaseless toil,
Through day's long hours, and "burn the midnight oil;"
Oft wearying on through pain and fortune hard,
Perfect the end, but taste not the reward.
The world, too late repentant of the wrong,
Record their names in history or in song;
Pile up their monuments, of parian stone,
As if to the poor dust they could atone.
So Ayrshire's minstrel, left in want to grieve,

Receives a homage, more than Kings receive;
A hundred years from his illustrious birth
Brings an *ovation round the extended earth.
'Tis not in mere material wealth we find
The world's advancement, but the march of mind;
Science and letters, labor's better parts,
Must give direction to the meaner arts;
'Tis they unlock kind Nature's teeming store,
And all her vast and secret things explore.
Time was when commerce plied the lab'ring oar,
In cumbrous barges, urged along the shore;
Treading the margin of the watery zone,
While all beyond was shadowy and unknown;
Till the discovery of the magnet gave
New arts, new power, new wealth, beyond the wave.
Mysterious magnet, what unseen control,
Blinds thee resistless to thy distant pole;
'Twas, taught by thee, the adventurous Genoese,
Guided his gallant bark through distant seas,
And trod with dauntless step the boundless waste,
Where never oar had dipped, or keel had traced.
Through the wide waste of waters held his way,
To regions, basking in the glare of day,
Where Nature's vastness, awed on every hand,
With giant streams, and mountains doubly grand.
Where Chimborazo, towering to the skies,
Sees Marañón and Orinoco rise;
And where the exulting mistress of the west,
Freights her rich stores, on Mississippi's breast;
And from her far interior to the main,
Sends her exhaustless stores of golden grain.
Or where St. Lawrence pours his ample flood,
And bears his commerce through Canadian woods;

* The BURNS Centenary.

To where the gorgeous Antilles swathed in light,
With tropic glories charm the enraptured sight.
These were thy gifts, mysterious power; by thee
The great world-finder cross'd the boundless sea,
And laid the seat of empires, whose extent
Embrace the zones on one vast continent.
Could he behold, when over Biscay's bay,
His feeble Argos held their outward way,
The bright results of his great mind's emprise,
Had surely seemed a marvel in his eyes.
Yet, 'twas the labors of one mighty mind
That gave these priceless treasures to mankind:
Commerce and wealth, attendant in her train,
Followed his track, and spread with ships the main;
Science, to aid the onward march of man,
Lent her bright powers, and hastened to the van;
She bade the ocean with new commerce teem,
And span'd a chaos with a bridge of steam;
An earthquake's power she gave to human hands,
Harness'd submissive with his iron bands;
The ponderous engine, masterwork of skill,
Moves at his bidding and obeys his will.
Now, on the iron road, with winged speed,
Behold it rushing like a goodly steed;
Now, on the ocean, battling with the gale,
See the proud vessel through its strength prevail;
Now toiling at the forge, the loom, the mine,
Moved as if by intelligence divine:
The patient ox may go unyoked, for now
The farmer drags with it the ponderous plough.
Oh! that our arts, productive but of good,
Could make our race a world-wide brotherhood;
That all man hath achieved may only be,
An infant's steps in his great destiny?
Lo! science mourns her sons in many lands:

As erst she mourn'd her Park on Afric's sands;
Far in Australia's wilds her *Leichhardt dies,
Alone in death, and none to close his eyes.
She mourns her Franklin, where Aurora throws
Sepulchral gleams upon eternal snows;
Where winter, seated on his icy throne,
Sways his rude sceptre o'er his frozen zone;
Where howling storms go forth at his command,
And spread their horrors round the dreary land.
Here, in this beauteous land of orient day,
Where Sol' dispenses his congenial ray;
Fresh as the autumn rain her grief distils,
O'er her undaunted †Burke and youthful Wills,
Who crossed a continent untracked before,
And perished in success—what could they more?
Joy, joy, for thee, meek labor; they have shown
A goodly realm, which thou shalt call thine own:
A verdant land of wealth before thee lies,
Go forth, young heart of hope, and claim the prize.
Go from the crowded cities' ceaseless din,
To thee the haunts of misery and of sin;
Go claim thy portion in that sunbright zone,
A promised land, thy children's and thine own.
And ye, poor artisans, ‡ who mourn your doom,
Pining in want beside your silent loom;
While bleeds your hearts to see your children fed
By public alms, and eat the pauper's bread.

* No vestige of that intrepid traveller was ever found to discover his fate.

† The melancholy fate of these two gallant explorers and the benefits resulting from their discoveries, will stand foremost in Australian history in all time to come.

‡ Alluding to the exodus of Lancashire weavers which occurred to that country from Great Britain through means provided by the new and flourishing colony of Queensland during the prevalence of the cotton famine.

Nay, pine no more, but cast your eyes abroad,
To that fair heritage so blest of God;
Where, in a quiet home, your age may rest,
Your hopes rewarded and your labors blest.
A little while, and now where silence reigns,
What countless flocks shall populate those plains;
What goodly cities soon shall crown the shore,
Where lonely *Arafura's billows roar.
The muse looks forward with prophetic eye,
A few brief years into futurity,
And sees the now wild waste replete with charms,
With verdant pastures and well-cultured farms.
Go, Peace and Industry, sweet heaven-born pair,
And for a future nation's birth prepare,
Whose sons shall from their noon-day toils recline,
Beneath the shadow of their fig and vine;
Fan'd by the gentle trade-wind's tempered breeze,
Breathed in its freshness over Indian seas;
While orange groves their golden fruitage spread,
And spicy shrubs a fragrant odor shed.
And as with honest pride a parent eyes
His children up to honored manhood rise,
Bearing his lineaments, his form and name,
Sharing his own hereditary fame.
So long, dear England, may thy off-shoots be,
A reflex of thyself, and knit to thee;
Their pride, while peopling realms from pole to pole,
Thy laws and language still pervades the whole.

* That comparatively unfrequented sea which lies between the northern shores of the Australian continent and the Island of Timor.