

Oration

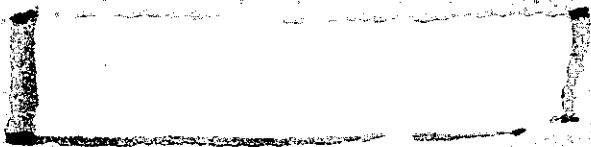
THE

Watch-Words of the Century.

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An Oration.

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## POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

—THE—

### WATCH-WORDS OF THE CENTURY.

Nine golden decades of our century are gone. Let us pause upon this the threshold of the last and recall a few of the achievements which must ever adorn the pages of the nineteenth century's history.

Turn your gaze eastward. The dawning of this century saw Europe a battlefield, on which two mighty forces were contending for political supremacy. On one side the people whose rights for centuries had been ignored, whose lands were stolen by feudal lords and a worthless priesthood.

Behind them were the Magna Charta, The Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence. They were animated by the writings of Voltaire, Rousseau, Hume, Priestly, Goethe, Franklin, Jefferson, Lessing, and other writers of that period. The printing press had become the friend of the oppressed, and contempt for inherited institutions, disdain of birthright, obedience to law, separation of church and state, confidence in man, these teachings found their way into the mud huts of our peasants. Kings were reading

from the Old Testament their divinity; the masses were reading from the New the sovereignty of man.

The discovery of the art of making gunpowder and its application in modern warfare rendered the armor of the knight a cumbrous load. Oppressor and oppressed were clad in the same garb of battle. There was but one thought in the hearts if ~~not~~ upon the lips of the multitudes: governments are made for man, not man for the government. This same thought a century before sat in judgment on the divinity of British kings, secured the Declaration of Rights and exiled the house of Stewarts. It had been borne to the New World by the Puritans and in seventeen seventy-six became the language of the Déclaration of Independence, a document which has given to the nations of two continents representative governments. [Constitutional liberty lingered for a century upon the waves of the English channel.] The continent was reached. Opposed to this new and throbbing thought, full of incoherent hopes and imagined ideals were the kings, the feudal and the privileged society of Europe. An anxious world awaited the result. Historians and writers have called this uprising of the people the French Revolution. It was an European revolution bursting into flame on French soil. It was not occasioned by the Girondists, the Cordeliers, or the Jacobins. Political parties never make issues; neither can they evade them. Despotism with all its golden garb of power was doomed to perish in this incoming tide of liberty.

Louis Sixteenth of France was the first to offer resistance. He closed the hall of the National Assembly. The hated Bastille was captured.

Soon upon the angry billows of freedom's wave were seen the stars and crowns of France. Austria and Italy united for the defense of the French nobility. The angry

Invented  
at least  
500 years  
before 1806  
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threats of their soldiers were heard in the streets of Paris. The Day of the Sections approached. The bondmen of Europe met and acknowledged their redeemer.

Then for nearly a quarter of a century wherever that tri-colored flag and its leader were seen, personal liberty and representative government have followed in their pathway. France, Germany Russia, and the Balkan states have in turn abolished serfdom.

But two examples of despotism remain upon the continent. How many have failed to read aright the history of this greatest revolution of modern times? They have seen in it but the carrying out of the ambitious schemes of a tyrant. True at Milan Napoleon took the iron crown of the Lombards and gave it to a friend, but he had first given Italy to the Italians. The sun of Austerlitz went down to rise no more upon that Holy Roman Empire which since the days of Charlemagne had pressed its Popish paw upon the neck of European manhood. On the field of Auerstadt prostrate at his feet lay the fourth coalition of Europe's powers, but not European liberty. Ere the conqueror won glories on another field the League of Virtue united all true German hearts in a common love of country. A great leader had led a continent out of bondage, had spoken words of courage to the feeble hearts of nations. Turning aside to exalt his own glory, then it was that he angrily smote the rock. The dumb show in Europe's history was ended. Real players came upon the stage. Free speech left its prison home. Thought found a tongue. On the banks of the Danube, Seine and Rhine stand hory castles, grim and gray. No warden sounds their bells. Those tocsin knells are still.

On the ruins of Bastille where for centuries brave souls perished because they dared to think, now stands a statue



of liberty. In its right hand is a broken chain. In its left is freedom's banner. Liberty smiles where once she wept. Not alone in Europe but throughout the world has the great work of man's political emancipation progressed during this century.

"When a deed is done for freedom throughout the broad earth's aching breast,

Runs a thrill of joy prophetic, trembling on from east to west."

The southern hemisphere, for countless centuries the home of untamed beasts and savage men has joined hands with her northern sister in this great struggle for the rights of man. South America's last king has taken his departure. That continent is now a family of peaceful, prosperous republics.

Political liberty has erected her altars in the Dark Continent. Where a century ago came men to steal the black child from its mother and sell it into cruel bondage, now come Christian teachers with hearts of love for a benighted race.

Japan has joined the list of constitutional governments. England elects a purely Democratic House of Commons. Castellar is martialing the masses of Spain for a final overthrow of privileged rule.

Ninety years ago of the thousand million inhabitants of earth only twenty-five millions were self-governing. Today almost one-half the human race obey constitutions and not the decrees of kings. The nineteenth century has torn divinity from the crowns of kings and placed it upon the foreheads of peasants. It has transferred the source of temporal power from the scepter to the ballot box. Its laws have not been the prerogatives of the strong. It has taken the bandage from the eyes of the goddess of justice and in judgment permitted her to see the wan features and tears of

the innocent and helpless. It has acknowledged the influence of woman in the regenerating of the world.

She has not yet been given a voice in the legislative councils, but she has been crowned empress of the school room. Cruel laws and stygian rites, which in past centuries have made her the servant rather than the helpmate of man, have been repealed. Nobly have the women of the nineteenth century improved the opportunities which have been given them. In every great social reform may be seen their self-sacrificing efforts. In the mythology of Greece there were but three Graces whose duty it was to beautify all that pertains to home life. In United States alone there are a half a million Christian women whose white hands of charity are carrying blessings and truth into homes made desolate by the legislation of man. Were I a sculptor I would erect a monument. At its base I would carve the form of Washington; in his hand a sword, and at his feet tyranny and despotism. Then I would carve the form of Lincoln; in his hand a broken sword, and at his feet the shackles of four million slaves. But above these I would carve the form of woman; at her feet the broken wine cup, and in her hand the white flag of peace inscribed with these words: "For God, Home, and Native Land."

Ye centuries, bring forth your richest treasures of thought! Compare them with a single sentence of this century: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State, on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." That is the Emancipation Proclamation of the human race.

This century has witnessed the overthrow of spiritual systems which fettered the minds and consciences of men, and made them worshipers of a God whose delight like

Olympian deities was in blind obedience to commands however repugnant they might be to the educated and refined tastes of men.

A God of love cannot be a God of hatred and revenge. Man has an instinct for worship which has manifested itself in all ages and among all peoples. Every system of philosophy the world has ever known, whether Christian or Pagan, has been an attempt to know the Infinite. Men once beheld the lightnings flash from cloud to cloud; the rain and the snow descend; and the falling dew kiss back to life the weeping flowers. In this phenomenon of the sky was a manifestation of power, and ignorant of the true cause they made for themselves a god and called him Zeus. When the Norwegian is told of the fruits of the tropical climes, he has naught to compare them with save the berries which grow on his own snow clad hills.

The Grecians had nothing with which to compare their god save their own heroes living and dead. These had been given in marriage, so unto Zeus were given helpmates almost a score.

Again they saw the gentle rays of the springtime sun call the flowers from out their winter shades and loose the streams from their frozen bondage. Herein was manifestation of power, so unto the Olympian household was added Apollo. In earth, sea, sky, air, and the motions of their own spirits, they sought to draw aside that mystic curtain that veils the dim unknown.

O, ages of idolatry, we read thy history not to criticise but to sympathise with thee in thy struggles for truth! We view thy fallen cities; we enter thy temples and behold thy broken idols, and all these tell us that a common father has written his laws upon the hearts of all men.

We see the sacrifices upon thy altars, typical of the one to be in the fullness of time and this again is God's handwriting.

In all systems of idolatry good and evil gods are found showing,

"That in all ages every human heart is human,  
That in even savage bosoms,  
There are longings, yearnings, strivings  
For the good they comprehend not."

The annual overflow of the Nile made the Egyptian a mathematician; Greece with its cloudless sky and hills fanned by zephyrs of the sea was by nature the cradle of liberty and the home of the bard.

Surrounded by hostile nations, on the altar of Mars the Roman placed his richest offering. England, situated between two worlds, has become the mistress of the seas. Luxuriant, sombre Palestine, where the divine hand longest lingered in the work of the creation inspired the Hebrew mind with the loftiest conceptions of a creator. They gave us the Old Testament, a book of literature which contains man's earliest conceptions of a Spirit God. Christianity, a new growth from the parent stem, sought to unite mankind into one grand and holy brotherhood, whose badge is a principle and whose motto the Golden Rule.

Words ever have failed to describe the suffering of those who in that age endeavored to guide their lives by such principles.

Nero's blazing gardens lighted up with Christian martyrs only convinced the Roman mind that there is a greater God than Jupiter, a higher throne than Olympus.

The fall of the Western Empire was the church's opportunity. The bishops sought political power. In the eighth century the Lombards invaded Italy, but were defeated by

Pepin. Ravenna and Rome passed under the temporary dominion of the bishops. The church forgot its mission. Three centuries passed. The tenth of January, ten hundred and seventy, saw Europe's greatest sovereign stand bare-foot before the castle gate of Canossa, imploring the pardon of Gregory the seventh. Where then was Christianity?

View it in the glittering sword of the Crusader.

Read it in the indulgences of popes. Behold it in the inquisitions of France, Spain and Italy. Judaism had triumphed over the teachings of the Nazarene. Then followed the midnight of history in which all the base passions of man held <sup>the</sup> carnival of woe. Heaven was purchased with gold if such can be. In the fifteenth century a new power entered the world before which kings and priests have been compelled to lay aside their robes of authority and become the servants of the people. That power was the printing press. It made possible the Reformation. It gave to the humblest advocate of truth the world for an audience and the thinking mind for a jury. The age of creeds followed.

The soul free from the tyranny of the Roman church sought its lost paradise.

Milton's epic, dark as the vision of its author, and full of the superstitions of the period in which it was written, for two centuries has been the theological telescope through which divines have viewed heaven as a battlefield and earth a realm where demons share the rule with Jehovah.

The perfecting of the printing press, the change from monarchial to republican forms of government, the public schools, and the extension of science have been the leading causes why doctrines which seemed fixed as mountains have been once more placed in the trying crucible. Whence cometh truth? What is her message to the world? No longer angry priests protest or racks or dungeons intimi-

date the inquirer. Is all that man shall ever know of life or death or love or duty contained in the written word? I answer no.

"To him who in the love of nature, holds  
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks  
A various language.  
Go forth under the open sky, and list  
To nature's teachings, while from all around,  
Earth and her waters, and the depths of air,  
Comes a still voice."

Every truth of science is a sermon as eloquent as ever fell from the lips of prophet or saint. The nineteenth century has given the world a church without a sword. It has said to the church "Your duty is to teach men how to live." Political power in the church built the inquisition, erected the stakes at Smithfield and kindled the fires at Geneva's lake.

The church no longer bows to her Calvins, Luthers, or Wesleys. She has clasped the hand of science and reads the Bible in the light of the century.

She no longer persuades men by fear or frightens them by myths of a sulphurous lake; but heeding the injunction of him who spake as never man spoke is teaching the truth, "And the truth will make men free."