

PROGRESS OF MIND.

A POEM.

BY

M. T. CARPENTER

DELIVERED BEFORE THE
LITERARY SOCIETIES
OF
OAKLAND COLLEGE,
AT THE
COMMENCEMENT, APRIL 1851.

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Professor Chamberlain
with Respects of
The Societies

PROGRESS OF MIND.

OAKLAND COLLEGE, APRIL 2, 1851.

M. T. Carpenter, Esq.,

DEAR SIR:—At a called meeting of the two Literary Societies of this College, immediately after the delivery of your Poem; it was suggested, and there-upon unanimously adopted that committees be appointed by each Society, to request a copy of the Poem for publication: Hoping that it may be your pleasure to comply with our earnest request,

We remain, with respect and friendship, Yours,

JOHN H. NEW,
R. SHOEMAKER,

Com. of Adelpic In.

S. S. GRANBERRY,
W. O. LEA,

Com. of Belles Lettres.

OAKLAND COLLEGE, APRIL 2, 1851.

Gentlemen:

Your communication informing me that the two Literary Societies, at Oakland College, are desirous of procuring a copy of my Poem delivered this morning, has been received. This Poem was hastily prepared at such leisure moments as could be spared from my daily occupation; and were I to consult, only my own reputation, I would not permit its publication in its present form. But as it was prepared, only with a desire to oblige you, I consent, from the same motive, to your request, and herewith enclose the Poem to be at your disposal.

Very, Respectfully.

M. T. CARPENTER.

PROGRESS OF MIND.

A glorious heritage is ours—
A land of mountain and of plain,
Of mighty lakes and rivers vast,
And teeming fields of yellow grain ;
And more than this, the free-born thoughts
Which dwell within the patriot's breast ;
More precious than the gems that shine
Upon a monarch's haughty crest.
Such is our heritage, and we
Should ever hold its blessings dear ;
And ne'er on our escutcheon let
One stain of tyranny appear ;
For, pure as it was given us
From our immortal sires of old,
Should we transmit it to our sons,
A gift whose worth may ne'er be told.

O, Freedom ! words were weak to give
An idea of thy priceless worth—
To paint thee lovely as thou art,
The fairest angel-hope of earth.
The hearts, by stern oppression bowed,
Thou makest strong and young again,
Till they with high impulses beat,
And abject slaves become as men.
Thou drivest hence all coward fear,
And openest boundless fields of thought
To minds, which, thirsting after truth,

In nature's school would fain be taught ;
Thou rendest bonds that bind the soul,
And clouds of darkness melt away ;
And men, rejoicing in thy light,
Can ne'er become a tyrant's prey.
As well attempt to chain the waves,
Or tropic tempest safely bind,
As to enslave the will made strong
By free and well developed mind.

Then we, the children of brave sires
Who, burning with indignant shame
That men should wear a tyrant's chain ;
Drew forth their swords in Freedom's name,
Nor sheathed them till the plains were red
With the best blood of patriot dead ;
Till they had freed their native land
From stern oppression's iron hand,
And they were what they sought to be,
Not slaves, but men, unbound and free ;
Then we, who claim such glorious birth,
To keep unstained our native hearth,
Should strive to elevate our kind
By the true discipline of mind ;
And thus build up within our clime
A power which may not yield to crime,
A mental power, which e'er shall stand
The mightiest safeguard of our land ;
To which, the brands of war and death
Are vain and weak, as idle breath,
Which slaves may waste in trembling fear
Upon a soulless tyrant's ear.

Where ignorance prevails, there freedom pines,
For she is reason's fairest child,

And shrinketh from the gloom, where seldom shines
The light of truth, so calm and mild,
Where prejudice and passions wild
Obtain the mastery over mind ; for there
Her radiant form and all her beauties rare
May find no faithful worshippers like those,
Who, heedless of the number of their foes,
On Marathon and proud Plataea's plains
Met Persia's hosts, and saved their land from chains.
But whereoe'er enlightened virtue dwells,
Be it on barren wastes, in rugged dells,
In frozen climes, or where the south winds play
O'er tropic vales which know not winter's sway,
Will her blest smiles that favored land illumine,
Warm patriot hearts, and gild the patriot's tomb ;
And shower her blessings with a lavish hand
On all the children of her own fair land ;
For there her altars may unstained arise,
In peaceful grandeur to her native skies,
Fearless that they, which rise so fair to-day,
Will on the morrow fall, the tyrant's prey ;
For mind, and freedom's march, is but the same,
Where one is wrecked, the other sinks in shame.

Look to the past ! In that dark night of mind,
When Roman manhood, Grecian taste refined,
Had passed like gleaming meteors from the sight,
And human freedom felt the mildew blight
Of passion, ruling with ungoverned sway,
O'er right and reason rudely swept away ;
No glorious hope of liberty appears
To check tyrannic power—to still the fears
Which made men crouch to force, like dastard slaves,
And kiss the hand that filled their land with graves.

O'er all the intellectual world
A cloud of darkness hung ;
The words which ancient wisdom spake,
Which mighty poets sung,
Had ceased to vibrate on the air,
To rouse the minds of men ;
And earth, so beautiful and fair,
Seemed drearier far, than when
Primeval darkness o'er it hung,
Ere from the realms of night
Urose the sun, at His command,
Who said, " let there be light ;"
For chaos o'er the realms of mind
Held undisputed sway ;
The eloquence and poetry
Of Greece were in decay :
The learning that her sages taught,
The deep philosophy of mind,
The arts, her men of genius had
Perfected and refined ;
The proud and sterner virtues which
Imperial Rome had known,
The lofty flights of eloquence
Whose strength was all her own,
Though they were softened and refined
By Grecian art and taste,
Were passed, and e'en their memories
Had wildly run to waste.
No longer poesy inspired
The poet's gifted song ;
Nor genius gave the orator
The power to scourge the wrong ;
The painter and the sculptor slept
Forgotten in their graves,
While o'er them tyranny and crime

Rolled their engulfing waves ;
And nations were disjointed things
Which e'en a breath might sweep
From their foundations—as the winds
A bubble from the deep.
The conquering tyrant of the day,
Might on the morrow fall,
Nor lift from ancient Freedom's form
The dark and dreary pall.
For tyrants, who by tyrants fall,
Still leave their scourge behind,
Nor loosen shackles that enchain
The coward will and mind.
Oh ! who can trace the history
Of those barbaric times,
When every virtue sank beneath
That carnival of crimes:
And feel not, glowing on his cheek,
The burning blush of shame,
That e'er so low in infamy,
Had sunk the human name ;
That ever mind—immortal mind—
Should thus become the prey
Of brutal force, and passions wild,
And grovel in decay ;
That e'er those lofty powers of soul,
Which God had freely given,
Should thus before the raging storm
A shattered wreck be driven ;
Without a glimmering ray of light
To pierce the night's dark gloom,
Which hung o'er earth more dreary than
The shadows of the tomb.

Yet from the very darkness sprang the light,
Which was to re-illuminate the world once more ;
For brutal outrage trampled on the right,
Until the cup of wrongs was running o'er ;
And men, though groping in the darkness still
Of human ignorance, no more could bear ;
And bursting from the chains which bound the will,
They rose invigorated from despair.

And by uniting to resist the strong—
To shield themselves—protect the young and fair—
Arose that mighty fabric—cherished long
As Europe's pride—her brightest jewel rare.
From anarchy that institution sprung,
Whose power exceeded e'en the power of kings ;
By chivalry, the minstrels harp was strung,
Its praise, the burden of the song he sings.

With all its faults—its overweening pride—
It gave an impulse to the human mind ;
With war, religion, glory, love allied,
It led to follies, yet the age refined.
So strangely blent with justice and with crime,
With gentle courtesy, and barbarous strife,
It seized all passions, grovelling and sublime,
Paid beauty homage—plunged the murderous knife.

Throughout the Christian world, its influence spread,
And men became enamored of the charms
Of knightly valor. Fields with battle red,
And wild commotions, and the cry "to arms,"
Heated all minds, which thirsted after fame,
Till war, the pastime of each stalwart knight,
Their very element of life became—
Their guerdon, power and smiles of "ladye bright."

The sports of youth were feats of mimic war,
And when by valor, belt and spurs were won,
Their schooling ended; and their guiding star
Thenceforth was glory, which was reached by none
Save those who shrank not from a mortal foe,
Who e'er were ready to defend the fair,
To shield the weak from every threatened blow,
And meet undaunted all that man might dare.

But ere this martial frenzy reached its height,
A wider field appeared for its display;
For superstition called each valorous knight,
To free the Holy Land from Moslem sway.
The sepulchre of Christ, that sacred shrine
Which pilgrims sought with trembling and with fear,
Was desecrated, and the faith divine,
E'en there was scoffed with sacrilegious jeer.

The cry, which first the hermit raised, for aid
To rescue Palestine from sin and shame,
By prince and priest was echoed, and obeyed
By countless thousands. Onward spread the flame
Of superstitious zeal through every land;
And, joined to chivalry, it roused mankind;
And straight were seized the Cross and battle brand,
By old and young, decrepit and the blind.

And ages passed ere yet this strange wild freak
Of passion, sprung from folly, died away;
And untold lives and treasures could not wreak
Their vengeance dire, and crush the Moslem's sway;
Yet not in vain were Europe's treasures spent,
Her armies conquered, and her heroes slain;
It opened eyes to truth, and hearts which leant
On superstition, broke the galling chain.

All learning of the ancients, which survived
The wreck of nations and decay of mind ;
All works of art, ingeniously contrived,
Which had been spared through ages dark and blind,
Had found a refuge in the Eastern clime,
Where first maturely into life they sprung ;
Where first had sounded wisdom's voice sublime,
And mighty bards immortal strains had sung.

The pilgrimage of millions to a land
Which still some glorious traces of the past
Had saved from desolation—ruins grand,
So proudly beautiful, a radiance cast
On e'en the minds of warriors proud and stern,
Whose highest aim was to destroy the race
Who held unholy rites, above the urn,
Which earth's Redeemer once had deigned to grace.

They felt the influence of the past, and there,
Amid the wrecks of genius, learned to feel
A reverence for the beautiful and fair,
Which thus from Time, the ravager, could steal
His wand, whose touch was ruin and decay.
They felt and worshipped ; and the dawning light
Of mind began to streak the rising day,
Dispelling darkness of the mental night.

And when the zeal the hermit had inspired,
Through many ages burned itself away,
The minds of men, with nobler ardor fired,
Began to break from superstitions's sway.
By frequent crusades to the Holy Land,
Though they had failed to win the prize they sought,
They made a conquest, which shall ever stand
A living monument, with blessings fraught.

That conquest was the lesson which they learned:
They saw the blessings art and science give,
And, when from fruitless carnage they returned,
They brought a truer idea how to live.
Their minds from foreign intercourse became
More liberalized, expanded than before ;
And order, laws and commerce grew in fame,
And earth's long starless night of mind was o'er.

From thence, in wealth and power, the nations grew ;
Industrial arts, encouraged, rose in pride,
And agriculture sprang to life anew,
And commerce ventured on the briny tide ;
And men began to feel within them stir
Those lofty yearnings only freemen know,
Those embryo longings, which would yet confer
Fair freedom's crown, and lay the tyrant low.

When once commenced the onward march of mind,
Its force increased ; and as the gentle wind,
Whose zephyr breezes fan the unruffled shore,
A tempest grows ere sweeping ocean o'er ;
So mind, accelerated in its flight,
By its own progress, filled the world with light.
The midnight student, in his cloistered cell,
By painful study breaks the earth-bound spell,
And, bursting through the spirit's prison bars,
Soars and converses with the hosts of stars.
The artisan, to meet each new demand,
Plies with more zeal the vigor of his hand,
And calls inventive genius to his aid,
To furnish products for the growing trade.
The farmer drops his implements of strife,
To till the soil with nature's treasures rife ;
And where was naught but ruin, wild and drear,

Rich harvests and contented homes appear,
The merchant, as he sees his fortunes rise,
Glow with a love of glorious enterprise,
Till venturing forth with emulating pride,
His wealthy cargoes float on every tide.
The hardy mariner had found by far
A more successful guide than sun or star ;
Immortal GOYA had a compass made,
Whose point the polar magnet e'er obeyed,
And armed with this he left the treacherous shore
And boldly sailed the stormy billows o'er ;
And boldy sailed the stormy billows o'er ;
Secure his course on e'en the blackest night,
Though leagues of ocean hid the land from sight.

Such was the prospect, when a single mind
By one majestic stroke set unconfined
The thoughts of men, which sped the wide-world o'er
To interchange at once on every shore.
Of all inventions skillful art hath wrought,
Stands out in bold relief, the loom of thought—
The nimble types, the magic printing press,
With superhuman power mankind to bless.
In brazen letters on the scroll of fame,
Is graven, GUTTENBURG, thy living name ;
Which ne'er by ruthless hand shall be effaced
Till mind, and all its works, shall run to waste.
Then literature revived, and genius rose
Invigorated from her long repose ;
And finding means to reach the ears of men,
Retrimmed her lamp, resumed her burning pen,
And, tracing living thoughts on many a page,
She thus instructed and refined the age.

Thus far, the better genius of mankind,
Fair freedom, hand in hand, kept pace with mind ;

Though both, so lately risen from the tomb
Of their long sleep, were shrouded still, in gloom ;
But great events were on their eve of birth,
Which would enlighten and make free the earth,
To these, as glancing down time's ebbing stream,
We turn the thoughts of our protracted theme,
Which may, perhaps, e'en now have grown too long—
A fault, as frequent quite in prose, as song :

The impulse had been given, and reaching thought
With wildest hopes, Utopian dreams were fraught,
And for the unattained, untiring sought.
'Twas then, when speculative genius gained
Its height of power, and undisputed reigned
O'er intellect and passion, that arose
One giant mind, which spurning all repose,
With steady aim, which cold neglect, nor pride,
Despair, nor poverty, could turn aside,
Pursued its way, till back each taunt was hurled,
And stood revealed in pride, a new found world.

Oh ! if thy mighty shade, COLUMBUS, may
Descend from regions of eternal day,
To view the blessings which thy noble mind,
In singleness bestowed on all mankind ;
To watch the march of mind within that clime,
Whose spreading vales, and towering peaks sublime,
Preserve, from age to age, thy glorious fame,
And keep undimmed the lustre of thy name ;
Oh ! may no scenes of discord meet thy gaze ;
No riot of the passions, and the blaze
Of burning cities, and the blasting breath
Of civil war, whose very name is death :
But to thy vision may bright scenes appear ;
Homes blest with plenty, peace, and freedom dear,

And o'er that land, the freeman's flag unfurled,
In triumph wave, the bright hope of the world.

A new found world! The nations of the old
Were startled when so strange a tale was told ;
And wild ambitious hopes of wealth and fame,
Fired intellect and passion into flame ;
And men forsook the beaten tracks of life,
And sought new scenes, with emulating strife.
And while excitement heated every brain
With strange adventure, and the love of gain,
Thousands on thousands left their native shore,
And sailed the deep blue ocean's bosom o'er,
To found new homes within that far-off land,
Whose unpruned forests reared, sublimely grand,
Their towering branches o'er the virgin soil,
Which bore no traces of laborious toil.
Despite all hardships, want, and savage foes,
Village on village, from the wilds arose ;
The woodman's axe was heard on hill and plain,
And forests disappeared, and golden grain
In rich luxuriance springing from the soil,
Repaid the hardy laborer for his toil ;
And noisy mills were heard on every rill ;
And eager men, with iron nerve and will
In town and hamlet joined, nor joined in vain
The restless throngs who strove for honest gain ;
And trade increased, and commerce spread her sail,
And belying canvas courted every gale.

But yet, on Europe's shore, though mind had made
Such giant strides, was tyrant force displayed.
The superstitions of a barbarous age,
Weakened in power, but not in bitter rage,
Had summoned all their force, resolved to save,

From innovation's overwhelming wave,
Their fiend-like power to chain the human mind,
And Freedom's hallowed form, with fetters bind.
No middle course, no tampering compromise,
Could heal the widened breach, and win the prize ;
For mind and conscience, and tyrannic sway,
For one fierce strife were marshalled in array ;
And wise and good men, trembling held their breath,
For well they knew 'twas "victory or death."

'Twas then the new world, armed with justice strong,
Resolved to perish ere submit to wrong ;
Full in the tyrant's face her gauntlet hurled,
While stood astonished the expectant world.
The bloody scenes that followed fierce and wild,
Are known to fame, and every lisping child
Can tell how in that conflict for the right,
Their grandsires' blood ran down from Bunker's
height ;
And how, when years of toil and strife were o'er.
Waved freedom's flag o'er fair Columbia's shore.

And since that advent, many a year hath flown ;
The infant nation has to manhood grown,
Its power extending from Atlantic's shore,
To where the old Pacific's billows roar ;
From where Niagara leaps in chrystal pride,
Far Southward to the broad gulf's briny tide.
Yet all this favored land, from East to West,
From North to South, with peaceful freedom blest,
Displays contented homes, and scenes which seem
The realizations of a poet's dream.
And oh ! may we, the children of this clime,
Inheritors of blessings so sublime,
Strive nobly to extend to all mankind

That priceless boon—a well enlightened mind ;
For intellect and freedom, hand in hand,
Must sink together, or together stand ;
For reason is the strongest force of men—
The sword less mighty than the patriot's pen.

O Thou ! who from the darkness called the light,
Who formed the starry hosts to gild the night,
Whose dread command through space chaotic rang,
And world on world to life and order sprang ;
O, grant, that ne'er within this favored clime,
Shall come the day, when infamy and crime
May hold their riot o'er each peaceful hearth,
And trample heaven born virtues to the earth ;
That ne'er descendants of the great and free,
Whose graves are glorious shrines of liberty,
Whose mighty deeds and lofty virtues dwell
Within the memories of all hearts that swell
With proud emotions when great deeds are done,
And free-born thoughts from slavish bondage won ;
That they shall ne'er descend so low in shame,
Become to crime so callous that the flame
Which rises up from freedom's altar-fires,
Enkindled by the hands of deathless sires,
Shall be extinguished ; and with dastard hand
And nerveless grasp let fall the patriot's brand ;
Their hearts, so black with guilt, so steeped in crime,
So lost to all that's glorious and sublime,
Still live, though all for which their fathers died,
Be sunken in one ruin vast and wide ;
Still choose to live, when slavery, worse than death,
Is drawn with every foul polluted breath.