

A NATION'S GENESIS.

The genesis of other nations has been legendary and obscure. They have had an unrecorded infancy and childhood of fable and mythology. Their dawn has emerged from a dim twilight peopled with vague shadows and phantoms, gods and giants and heroes whose loves and wars are written in the Iliad and odes of race. But there is no Romulus and Remus business about the United States of America; none of its founders were suckled by wolves on the banks of the James or the inhospitable shores of Massachusetts Bay.

The forty thousand Englishmen who migrated to Virginia and New England in the first half of the seventeenth century are no strangers. We know their names, where they were born, why they came, the day and hour they landed, and what they did when they set foot on shore. We know, for they have told us, that Massachusetts was discovered by accident and settled by mistake.

The Pilgrims did not intend to land at Plymouth, and they would not have remained there could they have gotten away. They sailed for the Hudson, and after a tempestuous voyage of more than two months, the *Mayflower* anchored off Cape Cod.

From November 9 till December 22 they explored the sunless sea, and then, landing on Plymouth Rock, founded the famous colony without the knowledge of the corporation

that claimed the territory, and without the sanction of the Government by which it was chartered. They were neither much better nor much worse than the average American citizen to-day. No doubt they wanted the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience; but six days in the week they had an incredibly keen eye for the main chance.

Those sombre exiles brought in their cargo many things that did not appear in the invoice. They unloaded from their shallop the elements of a civilization the most rapacious, the most arrogant, the most relentless ever known in the history of mankind. Those who signed their names to the compact of government in that dingy cabin released social and political ideas of inconceivable energy, self government, liberty of conscience, universal education. The same spirit that penned that charter wrote the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Proclamation of Emancipation, guided the pen of Lincoln, unsheathed the sword of Grant, trained the guns of Dewey at Manila, and created the splendor and opulence and power of the civilization of the nineteenth century.

The prescriptions of these pioneers were simple. They were neither dreamers nor doctrinaires nor philosophers. They were not perplexed with theories nor abstractions. They were tired of kings. They were fatigued with hereditary distinctions of rank and birth and station. They resolved to build a state in which all men should be politically equal. For the divine right of kings they substituted the sovereignty of the people. In the place of prerogatives and privilege for the few they put equal opportunities for all. They determined to secure the universal diffusion of

social and political rights among all citizens, accompanied by sufficient guarantees for the protection of life, the security of property, the preservation of liberty. They projected that the means of education should be co-extensive with the desire to know, and that the conditions of happiness should be commensurate with the capacity to enjoy.

Anniversaries are the exclamation points of history. The mind takes mysterious pleasure in their return. The birthday of a hero recalls him from the tomb and he lives again in the souls of millions who rehearse his triumphs and deplore his death.

Upon the dial-plate of nations centuries are the hours, and although the twentieth century does not begin until January 1, 1901, it is not inappropriate to recount the vast achievement of democratic principles in the hundred years now drawing to their close.

It is certain that in 1800 the most sanguine advocates of democracy had no premonition of the coming grandeur and glory of the Republic. Its area was then much less than one million square miles, which was more than doubled in 1803 by the sudden and unauthorized acquisition of the Louisiana Territory from Napoleon, and has since been increased by purchase and conquest to three and a half millions, exclusive of our possessions in the West Indies and the Pacific.

It is far within bounds to say that humanity has made greater progress in the last hundred years than in all the six thousand that preceded.

In everything that makes life rich and valuable and worth living for, health, comfort, beauty and happiness, the humblest artisan enjoys what kings could not purchase with their treasures a century ago.

When John I. Blair, who died a few weeks ago at ninety-seven, was born, it took longer to go from Boston to Washington than it does now to travel from New York to San Francisco, and cost half as much to make the journey. There were no railroads nor steamboats nor telegraphs nor telephones. The only means of public conveyance were stage-coaches, sailing vessels, and canal-boats. Communication by mail was equally costly and uncertain. Cincinnati and St. Louis were frontier outposts, and the name of Chicago was not written in the gazettes. There was not a friction match in the world. Fire, the indispensable minister of civilization, was preserved by being covered in the ashes at night or struck from the flint and steel into tinder. Illumination was by candles. Electricity for light, heat, and power was unknown. The awful horrors of surgery and the pangs of death had not been mitigated by chloroform. Intelligent sanitation and scientific nutrition had not been discovered. The typewriter, the sewing-machine, and agricultural machinery were phantoms of hope. Every acre of grain was sowed broadcast, reaped by the sickle, and threshed by the "dull thunder of the alternate flail."

It is difficult to conceive the conditions and incidents of existence when John I. Blair was born, and incredible that the span of a single life should include these miracles of discovery and invention by which earth has been robbed of its secrets and the skies of their mysteries.

The mind is bewildered by the contemplation of its marvellous achievements in the nineteenth century.

If time and space signified now what they did in 1800, the United States could not exist under one government. It would not be possible to maintain unity of purpose or

identity of interest between communities separated by such inseparable barriers as Oregon and Florida. But time and distance are arbitrary terms, one depending on the transmission of thought, the other on the transit of ourselves and our commodities, our manufactures and our harvests. The continent has shrunk to a span. The oceans are obliterated. London and Paris and Peking and New York are next-door neighbors.

These vast accomplishments of our race have rendered democracy possible. Steam, electricity, and machinery have emancipated millions and left them free to pursue higher ranges of effort. Labor has become more remunerative. The flood of wealth has raised myriads to comfort and many to affluence.

A. D. 2000 seems remote, but the interval will pass like a vision in the night when one awaketh. He who shall tell its story to the eager, listening multitudes that distant morning may possibly assure them that the encroachments of capital have been restrained and that labor has its just reward; that the rich are no longer afflicted with satiety nor the poor with discontent; that we have wealth without ostentation, liberty without license, taxation without oppression, the broadest education, and the least corruption of manners. Perhaps not. He can hardly record any great additional victories over Nature, unless it be aerial navigation. We have conquered the earth and the sea. Some twentieth century Edison may conquer the atmosphere.