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Our Nation's Glory.

An Oration,

delivered at the

Junior Prize Contest,

June 21st 1862.

Knowledge is fast gaining upon the world, and close at hand follows Wisdom, to turn every fresh accession of it to the purposes of utility. We do not speak of that knowledge taught in schools, but of that particular kind which tends to strengthen the reasoning powers of mankind. As a mass, men do much in ignorance, rarely in malice, unless misery urges them; when ignorance disappears misery vanishes. Virtuous men in private life are found everywhere; in fact the majority appears oftener on the side of justice than of injustice in regard to internal questions, but when we consider international concerns we see nearly every community, as it rises to power, disdain all law of right and submit only to that law of force which it seeks everywhere.

to impose. Hence the history of the world is filled with all crimes that make men odious, and the misanthropic doctrine that teaches the absolute wickedness of the human race appears to have a triumphant proof.

But it was left to the genius of America to exhibit a grand system of government which became at once the admiration of the wise and virtuous of every nation, was regulated by prudence, justice and humanity, and conducted by a people inspired with ardent patriotism. She bore witness in the world to the truths taught by Christianity, laid down the principles of human individuality in the face of enemies, and overcame them all; took from the heathen world her declaration of liberty, from the

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Christian world her declaration of equality, and is completing the work which Luther began. The pilgrim fathers, when they landed at Jamestown, touched the mystic harp, its music was pealed forth by eloquent tongues, it sounded freedom, it gave an impetus to the doctrine that man has a divine right to govern himself; that human rights and the sovereignty of the people must be respected; that liberty when combined with Christianity would develop the faculties of man.

The people, being freed from political oppression, and abject poverty, made extraordinary advancement in the arts and sciences, the freedom of her institutions afforded every stimulus to the development of independence, and animated that spirit of intelligence

which has done much towards enlightening the world. Not only has her power been felt in Europe, but passing through Asia and Africa she has disseminated Gospel truths, establishing religious liberty in the Ottoman empire, and Persia feels the healthful influence of Christian intelligence. She has breathed a higher life into the wild Indians, the cannibals of Africa, and thrown open the gates of the celestial empire. England has felt her power, and will not forever wield the trident of the seas. The child possesses as many advantages of situation with as great a field for the exercise of human action as the Mother; the old world receives its impulses from the new; we see it in the diffusion of the spirit of emancipation. It was here that the spark was kindled which ani-

mated and incited the nations of the old world to become free. Nations have arisen from the tombs where they have been for ages buried, and forgotten, and almost unknown races have sprung up, and demanded to be represented in the congress of nations. The spirit of republican liberty has sent kings and queens to die in exile, and although Poland, who struggled so nobly for liberty, has been erased from the lists of nations, and the beautiful plains, on which her proud cavalry were wont to assemble in the exercise of their rights, have been confounded in the vast empire of the North, still her sons cherish liberty and feel degraded by her downfall. She has aroused the dormant state of the masses, given the grandest achievement of intellect, taught nations to acknowledge that the hand that

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made them is divine, roused freedom
into action, and given that personal
liberty which is founded upon Gospel
principles. Royal races no longer have
a divine right in Europe. She does not
believe in the perpetual inheritance of
virtuous qualities, in the power of rever-
al; she conspires against them where-
ever they rule. Their power is decli-
ning and the supremacy of the
people must be acknowledged.

In exhibiting the glory of this
nation we go farther than to point
to her public buildings, marvelous
as they are; her commercial rela-
tions, extensive as they are; her
statesmen, brilliant as they are; her
army and navy, renowned as they
are. But we point to her schools,
her churches, the sacredness of conscience,

The public ministry, the diffusion of
The Gospel, the songs of rejoicing
That, swelled by many voices, echo
Through the land, glide exultingly
over Atlantic's waves, mingle with
The harmonious strains of distant
lands, prolonged from shore to shore,
until heathen worlds, catching its
beauty, acknowledge the power of
God.

Junior Prize Contest Oration of Henry Clay Speake, Class of 1863
Transcribed by Michael M. Geduldig, June 2005
Edited by Don Sailer, September 2009

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