



1872

Reception of the Statue of Roger Williams

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PROCEEDINGS IN CONGRESS,

ATTENDING THE RECEPTION OF THE

Statue of Roger Williams,

FOUNDER OF THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND.

PRESENTED BY THE

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND.

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.



A. CRAWFORD GREENE, PRINTER TO THE STATE.

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Proceedings in the Senate.

REMARKS

OF THE

HON. WILLIAM SPRAGUE, OF RHODE ISLAND.

AND THE

HON. H. B. ANTHONY, OF RHODE ISLAND.

DELIVERED JANUARY 9TH, 1872.

MR. SPRAGUE.—Mr. President: I formally present, in the name and in behalf of the State of Rhode Island, a memorial statue of its founder, to the people of the United States, to be preserved in the national Capitol, with the statues of those other worthies whose services and merits, in the judgment of their grateful descendants, entitle them to this preëminent honor.

It is less to be regretted that the artist, who has created so striking an ideal conception of Roger Williams, had no authentic source from which he could reproduce the likeness of the man, since the name of Roger Williams is rather iden-

tified with the living ideas of which he was the exponent, than with any mere individualities of form and feature.

Two centuries and a half have almost elapsed since the General Court of the Plymouth Colony expressed the intolerant bigotry of a political clergy by pronouncing sentence of banishment upon Roger Williams. His chief offence was a denial that the civil power extended to matters of faith and conscience : and for this he was driven beyond the pale of what was then, in New England, the abode of religion and civilization. .

After experiencing the privations of a bitter winter in a wilderness among savages he landed, after a second warning from his persecutors, with a handful of devoted friends, upon the western shore of the Seekonk, in the early summer of 1636. From this beginning sprang the now proud and prosperous city of Providence.

But it is not because he was the founder of a city, nor because he planted a colony, from the loins of which has sprung a vigorous State, that Rhode Island has resolved to set up his statue in the Capitol of the nation ; but she has accorded him this honor because he successfully vindicated the right of private judgment in matters of conscience, and effected a moral and political revolution in all the governments of the civilized world.

The doctrine of absolute separation between Church and State is so universally recognized by the men of this generation, as a cardinal necessity to the existence of a free and healthy Government, and appears to us to be such an evident political axiom, that it requires an effort to suppose that it was not a principle of political philosophy from the earliest settlement of this country. It was not so. The Puritans of New England were willing to suffer to the last extremity for conscience sake, but they were in no sense martyrs to liberty of conscience, and were as intolerant of heresy to their be-

lief as the Conformists of England, or the Church of Rome. The Puritans brought with them the best results of the Reformation which had agitated Europe from the time of Wickliffe to Luther, but as a body they had no conception of the idea that in matters of faith the conscience of the man, and not the law of the State, was supreme. The merit of Williams in announcing and maintaining this, then strange and heretical doctrine, is therefore to be estimated with reference to the adverse tendencies and opinions of the period. He alone brought the great work of the Reformation to its last grand stage of development.

It is a mistaken idea that violent revolutions are the only crises which determine the fortunes of a people. There are other influences less startling, but not less important, more gradual in their culmination, but not less certain, which modify and shape by their silent but ceaseless power, the destiny not merely of a single people, but of a whole race. When we contemplate, as with just pride we may, the boundless resources of our common country, and realize that with each succeeding year we are giving strength and permanency to that lively experiment in self-government which for less than a century has been nursed on this continent, we may well gratefully inquire how much of this great progress and political triumph is due to the spread and adoption of that idea, which, in weakness and in discouragement, was first resolutely exhibited in a scheme of self-government by a single master-spirit, in 1636, on the hills of Providence.

It was a happy thought, which suggested that the several States should contribute to form a national gallery of the statues of the men who have been most prominent in their history. Rhode Island would have been untrue to her antecedents, had she failed to name her first citizen for this dignity. She presents, in prompt response to the opportunity, this memorial in marble, for the contemplation of

those who resort hither to witness the best development of a Republican Government, and in grateful acknowledgment of the services which, not to her alone, but to the whole world, have been rendered by Roger Williams.

THE VICE PRESIDENT.—The Secretary will report the resolutions offered by the Senator from Vermont, chairman of the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, which are concurrent resolutions.

RESOLUTIONS ACCEPTING THE STATUE OF ROGER WILLIAMS.

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring) that the thanks of Congress be presented to the Governor, and through him to the people of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations for the statue of Roger Williams, whose name is so honorably identified with our colonial history.

Resolved, That this work of art is accepted in the name of the nation, and assigned a place in the old Hall of the House of Representatives, already set aside by act of Congress for statues of eminent citizens, and that a copy of this resolution, signed by the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, be transmitted to the Governor of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

MR. ANTHONY.—Mr. President, I had not intended to interpose any remarks, at this time ; for although it is always an easy and a pleasing duty for a Rhode Island man to discuss the character, to recount the history, and to celebrate the praises of the great Founder of our State, I have received no intimation from those who had charge of the subject at home, that anything from me was expected or desired. And yet, sir, it is hardly possible for a Rhode Island Senator to remain entirely silent, when, in this high presence, the theme

is Roger Williams ; and I am sure you will not deem it an intrusion or an invasion of the province of my colleague, to whose abler hands this matter has been committed and who has so well performed the duty assigned to him, if I detain you, very briefly, before the question is put.

My colleague has well said that it was a happy idea to convert the old Hall of the House of Representatives into the Pantheon of America. The idea originated with my distinguished friend who sits upon my right, [Mr. Morrill, of Vermont,] then a leading member of the House, as he is now of the Senate. It was indeed a happy idea to assemble in the Capitol the silent effigies of the men who have made the annals of the nation illustrious ; that here, overlooking our deliberations, inspiring our counsels, and animating us by their example, they may seem to guard the greatness which they founded or defended.

And I do not deem this proceeding an idle form, but rather a high ceremonial of the Republic ; and I anticipate, with a patriotic pleasure, that it will be repeated, from time to time, until every State shall have sent here her contribution to this assemblage of heroes and patriots and statesmen and orators and poets and scholars and divines—of men who, in every department of greatness, have added lustre to the American name. And as often as this scene is repeated ; when Virginia shall send to us the statue of Washington, which cannot be too often found repeated in the Capitol ; and with it that of Thomas Jefferson or of Patrick Henry ; when North Carolina shall send us Nathaniel Macon, and South Carolina shall send us Sumpter or Marion, and Georgia shall send us Oglethorpe ; when Kentucky shall send us Daniel Boone and Henry Clay, and Tennessee shall send us Andrew Jackson, and Illinois shall send us Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglass, and Missouri shall send us Thomas H. Benton ; when New York shall send us Peter Stuyvesant and Alexan-

der Hamilton ; when Connecticut shall send us Roger Sherman and Jonathan Trumbull—I believe they are here already ; I know that the blood of both is represented in this Chamber by men coming from States that were not born when the names which their Senators worthily bear were first made illustrious—when Vermont shall send us the stalwart form of that hero who thundered at the gates of Ticonderoga “in the name of the Continental Congress and the great Jehovah ;” when New Jersey shall send us the great-grandfather of the Senator who sits on the opposite side of the Chamber [MR. STOCKTON] and the uncle of the Senator who sits nearer me, [MR. FRELINGHUYSEN ;] when Pennsylvania shall send us William Penn, and when Massachusetts, pausing in the embarrassment of her riches, looking down the long list of her sons who, in arms, in arts, and in letters, in all the departments of greatness, have contributed to her glory, shall, with hesitating fingers, select two to represent that glory here ; then, and on every such occasion, I trust that the spirit of party will cease, that the voice of faction will be hushed, and that we shall give an hour to the past. We shall be the wiser and better for it.

In all our history no name shines with a purer light than his whose memorial we have lately placed in the Capitol. In the history of all the world there is a no more striking example of a man grasping a grand idea, at once, in its full proportions, in all its completeness, and carrying it out, unflinchingly, to its remotest legitimate results.

Roger Williams did not merely lay the foundation of religious freedom, he constructed the whole edifice, in all its impregnable strength, in all its imperishable beauty. Those who have followed him, in the same spirit, have not been able to add anything to the grand and simple words in which he enunciated the principle, nor to surpass him in the exact

fidelity with which he reduced it to the practical business of government.

Religious freedom, which now, by general consent, underlies the foundation principles of civilized government, was, at that time, looked upon as a wilder theory than any proposition, moral, political, or religious, that has since engaged the serious attention of mankind. It was regarded as impracticable, disorganizing, impious, and, if not utterly subversive of social order, it was not so only because its manifest absurdity would prevent any serious effort to enforce it. The lightest punishment deemed due to its confessor was to drive him out into the howling wilderness. Had he not met with more Christian treatment from the savage children of the forest than he had found from "the Lord's anointed," he would have perished in the beginning of his experiment.

Mr. President, fame, what we call human glory, renown, is won on many fields and in many varieties of human effort. Some clutch it, with bloody hands, amid the smoke and thnnder of battle. Some woo it in the quiet retreats of study, till the calm seclusion is broken by the plaudits of admiring millions, of every tongue and of every clime. Others, in contests, which if not bloody, are too often bitter and vindictive, seek it in the forum, amid "the applause of listening Senates," caught up and echoed back by the tumultuous cheers of popular adulation. All these enjoy, while they live, the renown which gilds their memory with unfading glory. The fame which attends them is their present reward. It stimulates them to greater exertions and sustains them in higher flights. And it is just and right.

But there is a fame of another kind, that comes in another way, that comes unsought, if it comes at all; for the first condition for those who achieve it is that they shall not seek it. When a man, in the communion of his own conscience, following the lessons of his own convictions, determines what

it is his duty to do, and, in obscurity and discouragement, with no companions but difficulty and peril, goes out to do it—when such a man establishes a great principle or succeeds in achieving a great amelioration of a great benefit to the human race, without the expectation or the desire of reward, in present honor or in future renown, the fame that shines a glory around his brow is a reflection from the “pure white light” in which the angels walk, around the throne of God.

Such a man was Roger Williams. No thought of himself, no idea of recompense or of praise, interfered to sully the perfect purity of his motives, the perfect disinterestedness of his conduct. Laboring for the highest benefit of his fellow-men, he was entirely indifferent to their praises. He knew, (for God, whose prophet he was, had revealed it to him) that the great principle for which he contended, and for which he suffered, founded in the eternal fitness of things, would endure forever. He did not inquire if his name would survive a generation. In his vision of the future, he saw mankind emancipated from the thralldom of priestcraft, from the blindness of bigotry, from the cruelties of intolerance. He saw the nations walking forth in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. He saw no memorial of himself, in marble or in bronze, or in the general admiration of mankind. More than two centuries have passed since he flourished; nearly two centuries have passed since he died, buried like Moses, for “no man knoweth of his sepulchre;” and now the great doctrine which he taught pervades the civilized world. A grateful State sends up here the ideal image of her Founder and her Father. An appreciative nation receives it, and, through her accredited representatives, pledges herself to preserve it among her most precious treasures.

• The VICE PRESIDENT put the question on the resolutions, and they were agreed to unanimously.

Proceedings in the House of Representatives.

REMARKS

OF THE

HON. BENJAMIN T. EAMES, OF RHODE ISLAND.

DELIVERED JANUARY 11TH, 1872.

MR. PENDLETON.—I move that the House proceed to business on the Speaker's table.

The motion was agreed to.

The first business on the Speaker's table was the following concurrent resolutions from the Senate :

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
January 9, 1872.

Resolved by the Senate, (the House of Representatives concurring,) That the thanks of Congress be presented to the Governor, and through him to the people of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, for the statue of Roger Williams, whose name is so honorably identified with our colonial history.

Resolved, That this work of art is accepted in the name of the nation and assigned a place in the old Hall of the House of Representatives, already set aside by act of Congress for statues of eminent citizens, and that a copy of this resolution, signed by the President of the Senate and

the Speaker of the House of Representatives, be transmitted to the Governor of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

Attest :

GEORGE C. GORHAM,
Secretary.

MR. EAMES.—Mr. Speaker, I ask the indulgence of the House while I speak of Roger Williams and his claim as the representative of that principle in the science of politics which secures the right of private judgment in matters of religious faith and practice.

The duties of the present press so hard upon us, that we find but little time to reflect upon the past or to think of the future. Passing events make their impression on the memory, but this impression, as the present imperceptibly glides into the past, gradually becomes less distinct, until at last it fades almost entirely away. And yet as a people we gratefully acknowledge our obligations to the past, and our duty to preserve fresh in memory, as an inspiration in the present and for the future, the great events which stand as time-marks in the history of the country. We record these events upon the page of history, and in the biographies of those who were identified with them. We give visible expression to them upon the glowing canvas, and in statues of bronze and marble, in the stately shaft, and the memorial monument.

Every nation justly cherishes with peculiar pride the names of those whose acts have marked the great epochs of its history. And in this respect the people of a free government especially ought to guard and preserve with jealous care the memory of those who have taken a prominent part in advancing the glory and fame of the Republic.

The Congress of the United States, not unmindful of this obligation, imposed alike by patriotism and gratitude, has set apart the old Hall of the House of Representatives for the statues of citizens of the States, illustrious for their his-

toric renown or distinguished for civic or military services. And no country, either in ancient or modern times, has among its names, made illustrious in the arts of peace or war, better material with which to mark its progress, or to illustrate by its representative men, its history, than the Republic of the United States of America.

The statue of Washington, already occupying the central position in the old Hall, suggests at a glance the principal events of that period in the history of the country when the colonies became "free and independent States." The statue of Hamilton recalls the history of that period when these States, weak and powerless under the Articles of Confederation, became strong and united under the Constitution. And the statue of Lincoln quickens into a present reality the recent struggle which secured for all time to come the supremacy of the law and the union of the States under the Constitution. And when grouped around the statues of these immortal men this old Hall shall be filled with the sculptured forms of the illustrious dead of every State in the Union, whose lives were associated with the prominent events in the history of the country, these statues will become to the American citizen far more expressive in their silence as incentives to duty and patriotism than ever were the living lips of the statesmen whose eloquence in this old Hall asserted and defended the rights of the people, and directed in peace and in war the policy of the Republic.

The State of Rhode Island, in response to this act of Congress, has already placed in the old Hall the statue of Major General Nathaniel Greene, whose name, by common consent, ranks next to that of Washington, for his distinguished military services in the struggle of the colonies for independence; and now presents, through Congress, to the country, and places by the side of that of Greene, the statue of Roger Williams, one of the most remarkable men of the early colo-

nists, the founder of the State, and the great advocate and defender of soul liberty.

This tribute to the memory of Roger Williams is paid by the people of Rhode Island, in grateful remembrance of the sacrifices which he made and the services which he rendered in the first settlement of the colony of Rhode Island, as also for the noble qualities which he exhibited in his intercourse with the natives, and the invaluable services which, from his friendly relations with them, he was able to render in the most critical period of the history of the New England colonies, in preventing an alliance between the Pequots and Narragansetts against the colonies, which, if made, would inevitably have resulted, in their then defenceless condition, in the extermination of the whites from the "storm shores of New England." But especially do the people of Rhode Island pay this tribute to Roger Williams as the first and foremost of all the great and good and wise men of that period to assert, maintain, and triumphantly establish that grand principle of religious liberty, freedom to worship God unrestrained by the civil authority; the right of private judgment in matters of religious faith and worship.

But little is known of the early life of Roger Williams. He was educated at one of the English universities. He was a minister of the gospel "with precious gifts." He was admitted to orders in the English Church, but before leaving England became a rigid separatist. He claimed perfect liberty of conscience for all men in matters of faith and worship, and if he ever assumed the charge of a parish in England he must speedily have been deprived of his office. He was a man of ardent temperament, of a clear and strong intellect, and of marked courage, decision, and individuality of character, and by the irresistible impulses of his nature must, while in England, have fearlessly asserted the great idea of his life, the freedom of the soul. If, then, men like Win-

throp and his associates, who still retained a lingering affection for the mother church, were constrained for cause of conscience, with moistened eyes and sorrowful hearts to leave their native land, surely a man of the character of Williams, who had while in England "presented to Cotton and Hooker his arguments from Scripture why he durst not join with them in the use of the Common Prayer," could not for a moment have retained a benefice of the established Church in any part of the kingdom, or have escaped the persecution to which the spirit of intolerance which then prevailed exposed alike clergy and laity who refused an absolute and unqualified submission to the liturgy, rites, ceremonies. and ecclesiastical polity of the English Church.

To escape the persecution to which he was exposed under the arbitrary rule of Charles I, and the bigotry and caprice of Laud, like the Pilgrims and Puritans, Williams sought refuge in America. Upon his arrival here, in 1631, he naturally supposed that the colonists, who had so recently been driven from England by persecution for cause of conscience, would be tender of the consciences of others, and would cheerfully concede to all the full enjoyment of the faith and forms of worship which their reason and judgment approved; and least of all did he anticipate that they would invoke the aid of the civil power to enforce against those who differed from them submission to the religious faith, practice and ecclesiastical polity which they might prescribe. Immediately, however, upon his arrival, although he was kindly received by Winthrop and his associates at Boston, it became apparent that differences existed between them, not only upon questions relative to forms and ceremonies, but upon others of vital importance, and involving principles dearer to him than life itself.

The Puritans had separated, "not from the Church of England, but from its corruptions." They held to the doc-

trine, but divested their church polity from the rites and ceremonies of the English Church. They "came into these parts of America to enjoy the liberty of the gospel in purity and peace," but denied this privilege to others who differed from them either in faith or practice. And if they did not assert that the civil authority should be subordinate to the church, they required that the civil government should conform to their ecclesiastical polity, and insisted that the magistrate "should take care of matters of religion, and improve his civil authority for observing the duties commanded in the first as well as the second table." Exiles from their native land, they claimed the right in the wilderness to adopt a faith and form of worship in accord with their own religious opinions; and, in the spirit of the hierarchy from which they had fled, and of the age in which they lived, to oppose and resist as heresy any other doctrine or practice; and, if necessary, "to use the sword of the civil magistrate to open the understanding of heretics, or to cut them off from the State, that they might not infect the Church or injure the public peace."

Williams, on the contrary, with a keen sense of its persecutions, not only renounced the rites and ceremonies of the English Church, but rejected its entire ecclesiastical polity. He, like the puritans, became an exile in the wilderness "to enjoy the liberty of the gospel in purity and peace;" but he desired no liberty for himself which he did not freely concede to all others. He believed that freedom of conscience in matters of faith and worship was the natural right of all men, and denied that the civil authority could lawfully interfere with its prerogative, unless its exercise impaired the civil or religious rights of others, or in some way disturbed the public peace. "The civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control opinion; should punish guilt, but never violate the freedom of the soul."

The Puritans held that the Church and State should be united in order to secure civil and religious liberty. They agreed upon their tenets of faith and form of worship, and adjusted the civil authority so that each would act in harmony with the other. As the great Cotton afterward expressed it :

“The order of the churches and the commonwealth was so settled in New England by common consent, that it brought to mind the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwells righteousness.”

It is not strange, therefore, that they demanded that every knee should bend at the altar which they had erected for the worship of their God.

Williams, with equal sincerity, believed that no human authority could lawfully impose restraint upon the conscience in matters of religion, or compel conformity with any faith or practice to which the conscience did not yield its voluntary consent ; or enforce even the practice of any religion whatever. He maintained that the Church and State should be entirely and absolutely separate ; that there was no civil without religious liberty ; and that all, whether Jew or Gentile, Christian or Pagan, infidel or atheist, should be equally protected by the civil power ; and drawing with wonderful accuracy the distinction between religion and politics, opinions and actions, he insisted that the Church and State should each act within its own sphere, the one with spiritual, and the other with temporal weapons to assert and maintain its authority.

These opinions were in conflict. They were entertained with equal sincerity by the Puritans and Williams. Neither would voluntarily yield to the other. Controversy was inevitable. It came as a thunderbolt from a clear sky immediately upon the settlement of Williams as teacher of the church at Salem in opposition to the magistrates and ministers who deemed this act of the church of Salem, in choos-

ing its own teacher, "without having advised with the Council, a great contempt of authority." Williams quietly withdrew to Plymouth, and thus for the time saved the Salem church from the gathering storm. But when, in the summer of 1633, yielding to the urgent solicitations of the church at Salem, as well as to his own inclinations, he was again, against the opposition of the magistrates, ordained teacher there, the controversy was immediately renewed, and from that time continued with even greater acrimony.

It was impossible for Williams, with his fearless nature and earnest convictions, to refrain from the expression of his opinions upon the great moral and political truth which had been revealed to him, which absorbed every energy of his being, inspired every impulse of his heart, and directed every action of his life. Upon his return to Salem, he again asserted his great principle of soul liberty, maintained by temperate arguments his views of the application of it alike to Church and State; and omitted no opportunity to defend it against every act, either of the magistrates or ministers, which was in conflict with it, or with any deduction fairly derived from it.

I may not here enter upon the consideration of the differences which gave rise to the subsequent controversies between the Puritans and Williams. It is enough to know that they had their origin purely in differences of opinion upon questions of religion or politics, which were with equal sincerity believed by each to be of vital importance to the well-being of the Church and State. But these differences were wholly irreconcilable. The one or the other must yield. Williams stood alone, but firm in the faith of the ultimate triumph of his principles. The magistrates and ministers were united, and equally firm in their belief that the opinions of Williams endangered the civil and religious polity which they had established and which it was their solemn duty to

protect. Williams was summoned time and again before the magistrates, and because he would not renounce his opinions, which all the magistrates and ministers "adjudged to be erroneous and very dangerous," he was on the 5th of November, 1635, banished from the colony. He had committed no crime. He was esteemed for the purity of his life. He had ventured to assert the doctrine of the freedom of the soul, and for asserting and maintaining this he was exiled.

No one will now justify this sentence; but the Puritans believed it to be their duty to expel Mr. Williams, in order to preserve their civil and religious liberty. They verily believed that they were in this doing God service; and so they were, for—

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform."

The banishment of Williams compelled him to seek some "nook or corner of the earth as a shelter for persons distressed for conscience;" and thus gave him an opportunity to realize in a civil government the principle which was the occasion of his exile. He supposed he had found this shelter when, by the friendly aid of the Indian sachem Massasoit, in the early spring of 1636, as he says, "he first pitched and began to build and plant" on the east bank of the Seekonk. But Gov. Winslow informed him that "he was within the edge of the bounds of Plymouth," and advised him to remove to the other side of the water, which was without the limits of any English patent, and where he would be as free as themselves. Williams immediately complied, and embarked with his companions in his canoe, and gliding down the Seekonk, touched at Slate Rock, on the other side of the water, and receiving, as tradition says, from the Indians the welcome of "What cheer, netop?" passed around the headlands and entered the beautiful waters of the Mooshasuck and landed at a spring on the east bank of the river.

Here, in an unbroken forest inhabited by one of the most warlike tribes of the Indians, whose confidence had been gained by his noble acts of kindness in their behalf while in Plymouth, with the sublime faith of an enthusiast in the principle which he had asserted, this heroic man, with his companions, commenced the first settlement in the colony of Rhode Island, which, in gratitude to the "Father of Lights and Mercies," who had directed his steps and watched over him in his distress and wanderings, he called Providence.

"Oh, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod ;
They have left unstained what they then found—
Freedom to worship God."

This settlement had its origin in religious persecution. Its purpose was to establish religious freedom. Recognizing the rights of the natives "as God's tenants of the soil," Williams had acquired from Canonicus and Miantonomi, chief sachems of the Narragansetts, in consideration of "his many kindnesses and services" to them, a title to the lands upon the Mooshasuck and Woonasquatucket, and from these rivers to the Pawtuxet. With a generosity worthy of his noble nature, he shared this princely domain with the companions of his pilgrimage, and other kindred spirits who had sought refuge there, reserving to himself "not one foot of land, nor one tittle of political power" more than he freely granted to them.

And then in the second year of the plantation this little band of pioneers, outcasts from civilized society, and unprotected by any English patent, but equal in their political rights, and as owners of the soil by title from the natives, entered into a compact for the administration of their civil affairs which will be memorable for the change which it initiated in the civil polity of the world so long as the love of civil and religious liberty shall find an abiding place in the

heart of an American freeman. That compact is in these words :

“ We whose names are here underwritten, being desirous to inhabit in the town of Providence, do promise to submit ourselves, in active or passive obedience, to all such orders or agreements as shall be made for public good of the body, in an orderly way, by the major consent of the present inhabitants, masters of families, incorporated together into a township, and such others whom they shall admit into the same, *only in civil things.*”

This simple instrument briefly but clearly expresses the great principles of civil and religious liberty upon which all free Governments rest. The will of the majority ascertained in an orderly way is binding upon all, and when so ascertained must be submitted to by all in active or passive obedience, alike in doing what it requires and yielding to what it imposes for the public good, *but only in civil things*. It confers no power except in relation to civil affairs, and by this limitation denies any control over religious opinions.

The compact entered into in the cabin of the Mayflower, like this, was a pure democracy ; but this, unlike that or any other form of civil government then existing, by the limitation which it imposed, secures to all the freedom of the soul. It confers full authority to regulate the duties of men in their civil relations to each other, but denies any right to control the conscience or to question its dictates. It tersely expresses Roger Williams's great idea of soul liberty, and unites with it the fundamental principle upon which civil liberty rests. It is the first compact of civil government which recognizes the principles of civil and religious liberty for which he contended. It initiated an entire change in the existing forms of civil government, and is the first civil government “ since Christianity ascended the throne of the Cæsars,” which separated absolutely the church from the State and left the individual responsible alone to his God for his religious faith and practice.

It was a light in the wilderness, sending forth its feeble rays and faintly penetrating the darkness of intolerance with which it was surrounded ; but it served “ as a lamp to the feet and a guide to the path ” of the little band of fugitives who commenced the first settlement in the colony of Rhode Island.

“ This simple instrument ”—

says Professor Knowles in his memoir of Roger Williams—
“ which combines the principles of a pure democracy and of unrestricted religious liberty, was the basis of the first government in Providence. It was undoubtedly drawn up by Roger Williams. It bears the impress of his character, and it was the germ of those free institutions under which Rhode Island has flourished till the present day.”

It was under this compact that Williams and his associates, called together by the beat of the drum, managed their civil affairs ; and with “ a sheaf of arrows ” as the signet of the colony, with the motto “ *Amor vincit omnia*,” protected their civil and religious rights during the first years of the settlement at Providence. Winthrop says :

“ At their first coming thither Mr. Williams and the rest did make an order that no man should be molested for his conscience.”

And they carefully guarded this leading principle upon the first delegation of power, and expressly agreed that “ as formerly hath been the liberties of the town, so still to hold forth liberty of conscience.”

To preserve this principle required the utmost vigilance. The colony of Massachusetts was apprehensive of its effect upon its civil and church polity. Other settlements upon like principles had been made at Portsmouth, Newport, and Warwick. Difficulties occurred in Providence and Warwick which were made the pretext of interfering with its internal affairs. An Indian war was threatened. The colony of Rhode Island was refused admission to the league which had been formed by the other colonies for their mutual protec-

tion, unless it would submit to the jurisdiction of Massachusetts or Plymouth. The only way to escape the dangers which surrounded them and preserve their rights of religious freedom, or even their political existence, was to seek protection under a charter from England.

Mr. Williams, who was the agent of the colony for that purpose, kept constantly in view the great principle of his life ; and in the charter which he procured in 1643 from the English Parliament, and under which the towns of Rhode Island, for the first time, were united under one form of government, this great principle was recognized and preserved.

This charter bears the impress of the original compact into which the first settlers of Providence entered. It grants full power to the inhabitants "to rule themselves by such form of civil government as by voluntary consent of all, or the greater part of them, they shall find most suitable to their estate and condition ; and for that end to make and ordain such *civil* laws and constitutions as they or the greater part of them shall by free consent agree unto." It prescribes no form of government, but clearly recognizes the great principles both of civil and religious liberty. It is by the voluntary consent of all, or the major part, that the will of the people is to be ascertained ; and it is only upon *civil* laws and constitutions that this will is allowed to act. The government under this charter, by the principles which it asserted, was democratical. It could make civil laws but had no control over the conscience.

This charter rescued the infant colony of Rhode Island from the perils which then threatened its existence. It was received with great joy, and one of the first acts under it was to adopt an Anchor as the seal, and Hope as the motto of the colony. It was under this charter that the first General Assembly, in May, 1647, (nearly two years before the

famous act of the colony of Maryland touching religious liberty,) after having adopted such a code of laws, limited expressly to the administration of their civil affairs, as they deemed "suitable to their estate and condition," reasserted the leading principle of the colony, and expressly declared that, otherwise than as in this code provided, "all men may walk as their consciences persuade them, every one in the name of his God." And thus under a legally organized government, the colony "still held forth liberty of conscience."

But the early years of this colony were a constant struggle for its life. It had hardly started on its career under the charter of 1643 before it met with other dangers and encountered other perils, which again menaced its existence. The colonies around it attempted to partition among themselves its limited territory. Plymouth claimed the islands; Connecticut, the Narragansett country; Massachusetts, the residue. A commission had issued to Coddington as Governor of the island of Rhode Island, including the towns of Portsmouth and Newport. The accession of Charles II to the throne of his ancestors had thrown doubt upon the validity of the charter obtained from the Earl of Warwick in time of civil war.

In this exigency, and to save the jewel which was more precious to them than "their lands or lives," the inhabitants again sought the protection of the English Government. The commission to Coddington, through the agency of Williams and Dr. John Clarke, was immediately revoked; and in 1663 another charter was obtained for the administration of the civil affairs of the colony, the like of which never before received the signet of a king. It confers, as the other charter did, the most ample powers of self-government, with full authority, among other things, to elect civil and political officers, to establish courts of justice, to appoint military

officers, and to arm and discipline the inhabitants for their defense, and to resist as well by sea as by land any attempt to infringe their rights or invade their territory. It defines more accurately the limits of the colony, and secures to all the inhabitants the right freely to pass into the other English colonies; and complying with the desire expressed in the petition of the inhabitants "to hold forth a lively experiment that a most flourishing civil State may stand, and best be maintained, and that among English subjects, with full liberty in religious concerns" gives, marvelous as it may appear, considering the arbitrary political principles of the Government from which it was obtained, and the tone of religious feeling then prevailing in England, its direct sanction to the great idea of soul liberty which was the cause of the first settlement in the colony of Rhode Island, and expressly declares that—

"No person within the said colony at any time hereafter, shall be in any wise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question, for any differences in opinion in matters of religion who do not actually disturb the civil peace of our said colony."

Here, then, we find safely secured in a royal casket "the jewel," for the preservation of which Roger Williams, in his defense of his grand idea before the magistrates at Boston, declared that he was "ready to be bound and banished, or even die in New England."

This charter is the first republican government which ever received the direct sanction of a king, and the first, at least in modern times, which expressly provided for the right of private judgment in matters of religious faith and worship. It placed the colony of Rhode Island in a position where it was free from the control or interference of the other colonies. If its first settlers were but a band of outlaws, with no authority to make the first compact—if they had no legal existence under the charter granted by Parliament in time

of civil war—there was no question now but that they were in every respect the equals of the other colonies, with full power to preserve order within their own limits and to resist any interference from without, and free to work out their mission of realizing in the civil polity of a State the principle which was “set forth and maintained in the colony from the very beginning thereof.”

No wonder, then, that the historian of the United States, writing of the liberty of conscience secured by this charter, and of its struggle for an existence in the form of a civil government, at a period when the experiment had become successful, says :

“The annals of Rhode Island, if written in the spirit of philosophy, would exhibit the forms of society under a peculiar aspect. Had the territory of the State corresponded to the importance and singularity of the principles of its early existence, the world would have been filled with wonder at the phenomena of its history.”

Under this charter the people of Rhode Island lived and prospered for nearly one hundred and eighty years, protected in their rights of life, liberty, and property, and in all their material, social, and religious interests. Under the impulses inspired by the principles of liberty which it secured citizens of Rhode Island sunk the first British war vessel in 1769, in the harbor of Newport ; struck the first blow and fired the first gun in the struggle for independence, when in May, 1772, the *Gaspee* was burned in the waters of Narragansett bay ; and the General Assembly of the colony, in May, 1776, passed the first act in effect declaring the colony free and independent of the British crown ; and incited by the same love of liberty, Rhode Island has ever been quick to resist every act of oppression, and prompt in the discharge of every duty to its own citizens and to the country.

The government under this charter was recognized as republican in form when Rhode Island was admitted into the

Union ; and when this charter, which had so gloriously subserved its purpose, was superseded by the existing constitution, these great principles of civil and religious liberty were incorporated in the fundamental law of the State.

And thus it appears that this grand idea of religious liberty which was asserted as of vital importance in the simple compact entered into by the first settlers of Providence, has been guarded with jealous care, and has been retained and preserved in Rhode Island as an essential element of a free government, through all the varying changes in the history of the colony and State from its first settlement to the present time.

Through all their trials, dangers, and perils, Williams and his associates in the early existence of the colony held fast to this principle as the anchor of their safety, and by prudence, patience, and hope, triumphantly sustained and realized it in the civil polity of a State on the soil of Rhode Island.

When first asserted and attempted to be applied, it met with the most determined opposition, as tending to subvert all religion, and destroy all civil government. It is now as generally recognized as it was then rejected. It has its place in the constitution of every State, and in that of the United States. Indeed, this Union never could have been formed if this principle had not been incorporated in its fundamental law. It has made this grand inheritance of ours a place of refuge for the oppressed of all nations. It has given religious peace to this country, and when universally adopted will insure religious peace throughout the world. It is making rapid strides toward its ultimate triumph. Its advancing steps may be seen in divesting the Pope of his temporal power, in the prevailing opposition to the dogma of infallibility, and in the movements in Germany, Austria, France, and England in the direction of an entire separation

of religion and politics, Church and State. It is based on eternal truth, and must ultimately prevail ; and then, in the beautiful sentiment of Roger Williams, in the introduction to the great work in which he asserted, and with matchless power defended, the grand idea of his life ; peace and truth will have met each other on earth, persecution for cause of conscience will cease, and in matters of religion " peace and good will to men " will universally prevail.

Now, I do not claim that Roger Williams was the first to announce this grand idea as a principle in the science of politics ; but I do assert that he was the first to reduce this principle to practice, and the first successfully to apply and actualize it in the civil government of a State. Light breaks gradually upon the world. It is first seen in the gray streak blended with the rosy hues of the dawn ; then gilds the mountain tops and the hills, until in its advance it shines upon every plain, and penetrates every valley and ravine. And so it was with this idea as a principle in politics. It struggled through centuries in the past to its realization in the organic law of a civil State. It was announced in theory in the schools of philosophy in Europe. It may be imperfectly seen in the earliest struggles with the Romish Church, and in the subsequent conflicts of that church in the religious controversies of the sixteenth century. It was clearly enunciated by William, Prince of Orange, in the struggle of the Dutch republic against the persecutions of the Spanish throne. "The Hollanders demand liberty of conscience," was the noble utterance of that heroic prince. It may be traced in the renunciation by England of the spiritual power of the Pope, and the separation of the English from the Romish Church ; and its advancing steps are plainly visible in the refusal of the Pilgrims and Puritans to conform to the rites and ceremonies of the English Church, and their voluntary exile for cause of conscience to America. Step by step

through these centuries this idea was advancing, and gradually weakening the bonds between Church and State, until these bonds were snapped asunder when this idea was at first imperfectly applied under the simple compact which was adopted by the first settlers at Providence for the management of their civil affairs, and then completely and triumphantly realized in the lifetime of its graat advocate and defender under the charters which were subsequently granted to the colony of Rhode Island.

Roger Williams"—

says Professor Gervinus, in his introduction to the history of the Nineteenth Century—

“founded in 1646 a small, new society in Rhode Island, upon the principles of entire liberty of conscience, and the uncontrolled power of the majority in secular concerns. The theories of freedom in church and state, taught in the schools of philosophy in Europe, were here brought into practice in the government of a small community. It was prophesied that the democratic attempts to obtain universal suffrage, a general elective franchise, annual parliaments, entire religious freedom, and the Miltonian right of schism, would be of short duration. But these institutions have not only maintained themselves here, but have spread over the whole Union.” * * * * “They have given laws to one quarter of the globe, and, dreaded for their moral influence they stand in the background of every democratic struggle in Europe.”

It is the practical application of great principles in science, art, and politics to the affairs of life which excites the admiration and secures the gratitude of mankind. Fulton first applied steam as a motive power. Morse invented the mechanicism by which the first electric dispatch was flashed from Washington to Baltimore. And to Fulton and Morse are justly due the honor for the benefits which these inventions have conferred upon the world. And in this sense Roger Williams stands forth without a peer, or even a rival, as the first successfully to apply and realize this grand idea of soul liberty in the civil government of a State ; and for

the accomplishment of this he is eminently entitled to the admiration and gratitude not only of the people of the State in which it was first applied, but of the States and the national Government by which it has been recognized and adopted.

But few men have suffered more to establish a great truth in the science of politics, and no one with greater patience, trust, and fortitude. Like the Hollanders, he demanded liberty of conscience, and like their heroic prince "he cared neither for words or menaces in any matter where he could act with a clear conscience, and without doing an injury to his neighbor."

I shall attempt no analysis of the writings of Roger Williams. They indicate the strength, grasp, and originality of his intellect, and reflect as a mirror the peculiar qualities of his intellect and his heart. .

The leading events of his life point out the prominent traits of his character. He was what John Adams describes as the model of an American citizen in the Capitol of the nation, "of simple manners, pure morals and true religion."

This beautiful statue, wrought with exquisite skill in spotless marble, is a fit emblem of the purity of his life, and although in form and features purely the ideal creation of the artist, is truthfully expressive of the noble qualities of his nature ; his generous and independent spirit ; his courage ; his love of liberty, justice, and truth ; and his unwavering devotion to principle.

The State of Rhode Island has erected on its soil no monument to the memory of Roger Williams. We need no monument there to remind us of his virtues and services. The principles which he there first applied can never be effaced from the memory of its people. But after the lapse of nearly two centuries since his dust mingled with the soil which his footsteps first consecrated to the freedom of the

soul, the people of Rhode Island gladly and gratefully place in the national Capitol this beautiful statue, in the hope of keeping fresh in the memory of the present and future citizens of this great Republic the principles of civil and religious liberty which were illustrated in his life, and which have immortalized his name.

In presenting to the country the statues of Williams and Greene, the State of Rhode Island has discharged its duty under this act of Congress. Let the other States follow, and this old Hall will become an historic gallery which will impress so indelibly upon the minds and hearts of the Representatives of the people in Congress and the citizens of the Republic who shall come up from all parts of the country to the Capitol of the nation, the great principles which underlie a free Government, and the virtue and patriotism which are necessary to sustain and perpetuate it, that this Republic will continue to be through the centuries yet to come, as it now is, and as it was intended by the fathers of the Republic that it should be—the light of the world in matters of civil government.