

Small, indeed, has been the space occupied by the deeds of the noble few who have tried to stem the general current, and to cultivate the arts of peace — to promote the progress of science and civilization, of pure liberty, and the elevation of the mass of mankind, by education and religion. Though their history deserves folios, and will live when that of political intrigues and of wars shall be forgotten, yet if given only in a proportionate space, it will be scarcely visible. For the business of man, thus far, has been to persecute and destroy his fellows, instead of blessing them; to waste and pervert his powers on unworthy or wicked objects, instead of using them for the good of the world. That, I say, has been his business; while benevolent effort has been only the infrequent exception.

I shall doubtless be referred to Greece and Rome, as sufficient examples to redeem the ancient world from the heavy charge of an almost universal waste of mind. These republics are, indeed, the brightest spots on the picture. But seen through the optics of Christianity, their light is mostly a lurid glare. With all their boasted wisdom, the inhabitants were idolaters; they were slaveholders; they were engaged in almost perpetual wars; and Rome, especially, in those most unjustifiable of all wars, — wars of conquest. They had more light than other nations; but they employed it all for the subjugation and destruction of their fellow-men, instead of their salvation. A few among them did, indeed, cultivate the arts of peace, and would gladly have blessed mankind. But those who controlled the public affairs suffered the people to grow up in ignorance, and made use of the discoveries and reputation of their philosophers and sages to aggrandize the nation, or a favored few, while the great mass, with much seeming liberty, were in fact under the worst kind of bondage.