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UTILITY AND PROGRESS.

[Commencement Oration delivered by O. F. Morton, June 11th, 1879.]

THE world is never quiet. The manner in which men think and act varies with each successive age. This fact, it behooves us to consider. Without its due recognition, the phenomena of social life are ever in danger of being misunderstood.

Progress lies in the continual readjustment of social forces. The new is ever appearing to modify or supplant the old. Progress, again, is independent of human control. If its movements seem blind and indeterminate, time only will correct that tendency which assumes an evil aspect.

The present age is one of confusion. It is witnessing the rapid spread of forces that have thus far been rudimentary. Their incongruity with those which have hitherto predominated, has produced a conflict between the discordant elements. Nowhere is this fact more apparent than in our own country. The seething caldron of Niagara is but a fit symbol to represent the restless movements of American society.

In the discoveries of science, we find

the chief reason for the peculiar nature of the age. So long as science was encumbered with metaphysical sophistry, its power over the world was limited. But when it became eminently experimental, it began to revolutionize all former modes of thought and types of industry. Two simple inventions, the telescope and the microscope, have, by revealing innumerable wonders, made a general wreck of all theories that stood in their way. But great as their influence has proved to be, it is overshadowed by that of the countless inventions which meet the more practical needs of men. In this form, science is potent and subtle, and it is felt in every department of our social life.

When once a new field is open to the free play of the intellect, the activity of thought knows no bounds. Through the very pleasure of exercise, it seems resolved to leave nothing untouched in the course of its speculations. In this fact, lies the secret of the social turmoil. If the inquiries of modern science have revolutionized both industry and thought, they have not yet acquired the stability of age. The old impulses, through their inertia, must ever retain a large share of their influence.

Amid the confusion, speculation and doubt are rife. One class of men speak