THE.SIS.
OUR
MOTHER COUNTRY
Nettie Ayers.
1884.
Some men are born great, and achieve greatness and
some have greatness thrust upon them.
As it is with men so it is at very largely with nations; but greatness
being only a relative term, and in general application to nations
some modifications.
Extent of territory, unbounded wealth, great numbers of inhabitants
and large standing armies are looked upon as indications
of National greatness.
By these we may standard, England stands in the front rank of
Nations in greatness.
Here is indeed a checked history.
After a thousand years of rude warfare, order commenced being
evolved out of chaos, and the government began to assume form.
The habits and characteristics of the people grew into and
became their custom and ways, and from these were evolved
their laws, and hence we may conclude that the civil,  
artificial and oppressive laws enacted for the government of
the people of England were but reflections of the private life
and character of its inhabitants during their almost
barbaric times.
Almost interminable wars were waged for the purpose of conquest
and retaliation, and the extending of her territorial limits.
The plundering and despoiling the goods of the enemy and
the demand of heavy ransom for prisoners captured in battle,
was the great punishment for the individual warrior.
As great principles being involved in the contest, they became
a source of plote, counterplot and betrayal.
By the expenditure of millions of money coming from the
people, and the sacrifice of thousands of lives for the aggrandi-
gement of her unprincipled rulers and deputies, England, after
being ruled for centuries by a band of petty tyrants and
seditious deputies, became great in that strange stuff, a name.
Today she stands as the leading nation of the globe and in
whatever her greatness may consist, if we examine her history
we find more for condemnation, than for commendation.
While in free America the citizen prizes above all things his
malenable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and the rights as a member of the commonwealth and state, a feeling which is the true basis for, and always produced in citizeine democracy, this principle was unknown in the English nation and could have no abiding place in a nation ruled by despote.

As the storm forbode the calm and the calm scene the greater by reason of the war and raging of the elements, so the unwarranted and unjustened affreemen of the people ground them down, and in the severe school of adversity and long and oft repeated outrages, they, becoming educated and developed to the full stature of men, avail by a heroic will and effort, arose as our war, throw off the offensive of the demand ed are now granted, as they suffered their full rights as citizeine. But has come it that England boasts of her Magna Charta, the great charter of Rights and Freedon? From whence came it? That great reformer brought about such great results?
Their advances toward freedom were all caused by the offensive and tyrannical actions of their wicked King.

That is a picture! his friends.

In youth so infantile and mean that everybody detested him, he flattered for the death of his brother, the husband who seduced his own wife. and abducted the wife of his friend. the soldier who was always promoting quarrels and always running away from fighting, the haughty of his realm who reduced, hiding to a department of the royal exchequer, the father of his people who hired foreign plunderers to rob and murder his children, those starved women and children to death in dungeons.... Such was the man and such the King that became the chosen instrument for inciting England to demand a charter as complete in its guaranties as his encroachments, as beneficent as he was pestilent, as monumental grandly as he was meanly, as man without a friend at home or abroad.

A stern resistance met the people in their very demand, but the more the King struggled and floth and lied, the greater
because the demand and the more was the conditions added there to. He tried to buy off the opposition with promises, but no one would trust the champions of equality. The sent out proclamation to put down his enemies, but every body took pride in being an enemy and there was no person to execute his wrath.

Strained and worn out, the King reluctantly affixed his name to the Great Charter.

All the circumstances attending the signing conspired to make the appointment of the time and place ideally, even romantically appropriate. It was at Runnymede, the Meade of Council, the grassy plot between the Thames and the foot hill of Surrey, where since old times Earls and Kings and the wise men had met to deliberate and treat, in the open air. It spoke of a time when men dared not trust each other in enclosures, of a people in thought and temper as free and large as "all out doors."

On that historical spot the power of England who could not
trust their King was the King who would trust no one.

And 2. John by his phenomenal wickedness had done the world all the good he could, but which he did not mean to do, he builted better than he knew.

King John, after shaving around London for two weeks, accompanied by seven hundred, with the whole army and the entire population turned against him, all watching and as it were, guarding him that he might not escape, was finally murdered, some hurt and forced to surrender unconditionally.

A signal victory had been obtained by the nation; for one week dissolute man, a man without friends or sympathy, and in his extremity almost denied the common courtesie of life.

As a general rule Kings have been given bad characters by the old historians, but there are exceptions to this plea.

The lapse of years has softened the memory of the historian and "Treacle had taken the place of vinegar in writing history." Thus Greece makes heroes of the coarse Sardis savage and heathen; Teutons subjugate and France Henry VIII, and even
Benedict Arnold and Judas Iscariot have their admirers and eulogists, and those who stand ready to excuse them for their base ingratitude and treachery. But where can one be found who has the courage to stand up for or palliate the grievous wrongs and offenses of King John? Much calumny would be required to whiten and make lovely the character of him who by all writers has been written up as worse than his Satanic Majesty, and yet to King John England owes her great Charter of Rights and Freedom that makes England what she is as to her free institutions.

But notwithstanding all the reform of existing abuses and provision for further justice, the remedy for the past and security for the future provided for in their Magna Charta, yet it took full five hundred years to make it a fixed fact. The promised and much desired rest from continental war was not to be yet realized.
A people scared and trained to the violence and excitement of camp life, the masses having no education save in military affairs, cared not to settle down and enjoy the comfort and quiet of a home life, nor always ready and willing to respond to the call of their leaders. To enter the lists and fight for the supremacy of the King and his absolute authority on one side, or the lawless and tyrannical Baron on the other.

Among the leaders and rulers the security of person and property were far from being ever yet established. Although the Great Charter accorded to the masses many rights and privileges, yet they were so completely in subjection to the will and under the control of the leaders of the several contending factions, that no time was given for their enjoyment. Being continually torn and harassed by internal factions and quarrels and constantly engaged in warfare with external foes, they became to a certain degree weakened and rendered unable to cope with all their enemies.
During the reign of Edward I, a continuous but unsuccessful effort had been made to crush the Scotch. His successor Edward II gave the Scotch time to recruit and drill a large army. While he was endeavoring to quell the disturbances and settle the quarrels in his own kingdom, long trains of events had rapidly succeeded each other and finally culminated in a very decisive battle in the month of June 1314 in which the Scotch, under the leadership of Bruce, were victorious, and the English exclaimed such a crushing defeat that it became known as one of the decisive battles of history. From that time on the prowess of the Scotch was acknowledged, their fighting qualities were established, and the victory of Bannockburn forever secured the independence of the Scotch.

It brought them the permanent alliance of France against England, out of which grew that long keeping war which cost England so dearly and prevented the final conquest of Scotland.
For three hundred years under the influence of the independen-
dence thus steadfastly maintained, Scotch character grew as
strong and self respecting as that of England, so that the
union between the two countries finally took place as a
partnership of equals, rather than upon the conditions under
which the lion and the lamb are said to lie down together,
the lamb inside the lion.
A different relation existed between England and Ireland with
all the consequences of shame to me and suffering to the
other, that the world has seen for centuries.
Over five hundred years have passed since the establishment
of the United Kingdom and England has grown to be a rich
and powerful nation and by conquest has so extended her
domain that it is truly said, that the sun never sets on
England's soil. But how has that great power and wealth
been used?
History records the facts and they can not be gainsaid,
that conquest and oppression have always played a role.
Conspicuous part in all her wars and treaties.

The most glaring example of her treachery, abuse, oppression, cowardice and know right’stattling, may be seen in the crime punished by her toward Louis Napoleon, when he, a citizen of France, having abdicated the throne, came in his humble capacity, and voluntarily placing himself under England’s flag for protection, was treated as an outlaw, held as a prisoner of war and treated worse than as condemned felons.

As Emperor, England could never cope with or capture him, but as a private citizen on board a war vessel, far from shore, guarded by a regiment of men and surrounded by other vessels of war, he could be securely held a prisoner.

Treated with the greatest indignity, his family separated from him, and refined the privilege of seeing him, his private papers examined by the English officers and many of them actually taken from him, and to cap the climax of all the cowardice and treachery, he unarmed and defenceless, put
to the lone Isle of St. Helena, there to suffer the indignities of the unmannerly, unprincipled, and unbridled English official, guarded day and night by an infatuated sentry and finally after years of achieve, pain and torment die, and through fear of the resurrection of a dead Emperor, denied the right of sepulture in his own native land. And all this from the great, enlightened, wealthy and powerful English Nation!

The English people moved very slowly in the direction of reform; their came only as they were forced upon them, and the people were very slow in adopting them. The two great relics of barbarism, feudalism and human slavery were never abolished by law; they disappeared and melted away before the advance of civilization.

Emancipation was sanctioned by royal writ, but Parliament not being a truly representative body of the people and containing a majority of slavholders, refused by act to confirm and carry out the royal decree.
About the middle of the fourteenth century, death in the shape of the Black Plague passed through the Kingdom and struck a fierce blow on human slavery.

Nearly one half of the people died, and by reason of this scarcity, labor became so scarce that the old laws finding the laborers to the soil became abortive and Parliament were forced to enact some new laws relative to labor, but these were so unjust and oppressive that they too became nugatory.

The theory of unrequited labor could not be enforced, and those who had tasted the sweets of freedom, banded together and became outlaws and chronic vagabonds rather than submit to such tyranny and uprisings and outbribe became frequent among the laboring classes.

Oppression followed oppression and preparation followed preparation until almost in a day, that Tyler who was the John Brown of that movement, found himself at the head of nearly a hundred thousand men, moving on London.

As they approached they came along the way of their triumphal
March, the gates were thrown open and they were received with a hearty welcome.

While the laboring classes were making gigantic preparations for their anticipated uprising, the French rulers were squabbling and contending for the control of the grandeur of the King. The then heir apparent to the throne who was but a child by then.

The uprising masses under their intrepid leader moved forward and laid siege to London. They desired to lay their grievances before the young King himself. Their coming being heralded in advance, a panic had preceded them.

Some of those who had exercised control over the young King were deserted and abandoned him and those who remained with him prevented him from meeting and talking with the insurgents.

The latter then determined to rescue him and lay their grievances before him in person.

Thus they marched on the City, sympathizing citizens opened the gates for them and on entering, they captured the Crown, erected the monument and their reward the King.
So far as it lay in his power, their wrong was redressed and a letter of pardon issued.

Charter of freedom and immunities were granted and accord with their request, the people returned to their homes.

They were doomed to disappointment.

The Parliament of slave-holding England refused to sanction the abolition of slavery and the King being persuaded by those gathered around him, within two weeks recalled and cancelled all his charters, and let loose the untrained progeny of the nobles on the people.

Richard, had he persisted on keeping faith with the laborers of his subjects, and placed his crown and life in the scale against human slavery, might have gone into history as the great Emancipator of the English commoner.

A ruler with almost absolute power, he could not take the chains off one of his subjects, while Abraham Lincoln in a situation of very limited funds, in a government of constitutional law, with a stroke of the pen decreed the emancipation.
Slavery did not disappear for two centuries, but the cause of human liberty. The people were first enfranchised as "other people," instead of being treated as the violent and bloody master that most historians make him.

Ever since the signing of the great charter of rights by King John, the people were compelling the rulers to recognize their rights and grant them still further privilege. But not until the middle of the fifteenth century did England make any great literary progress. The English mind was then singularly fertile, and some of the greatest names in the literature of England belong to the Elizabethan Age.

Passing by the faults of the government and the people, yet greater perhaps than those to be found in the annals of other European Nations, steady and gradual progress has
been made in the Arts, Science, and Literature. Liberty and Law have gone hand in hand together, each sustaining the other, and by means of her moral, intellectual, and material progress, England has become one of the first of Nations, and in some respects without a rival.