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Letter from Peter Simpkins to James B. Finley

Peter Simpkins

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Chillicothe Ohio Jan. 25th 49.

My Dear Sir

Having leisure to day and being at a loss for employment to while away the time, it came into my head to write you as long since I fear uninteresting letter.

A ~~manuscript~~ authentication now going the rounds of the newspapers, purporting to give the substance of an interview between Dr Franklin when a boy and Governor Burnett, of the ^{then} colony of New York, suggested the train of thought. Franklin was but a student and by his fondness for books had attracted the attention of the captain of the vessel, on which he sailed from Boston to New York. Through the captain he was introduced to the governor's house. The governor was surprised at his education and what he had learned from ^{him} his means of education; he could not know him. The captain however confirmed Franklin's account of himself. The governor appeared astonished. The conversation turned upon books and education. The use of the chief languages & the virtues of Homer. Franklin opposed the study of the chief languages. For the reason that in a short life time, a man of talents has not the time to spare. That all that is worth any thing in ^{the} ancient literature has been well translated. That since - relies on the proper subjects of study and not sources. The governor replied that he differed with the learned with

and put forth their strength as end men
Demopho was certain - That I take to be
the great moral of the story - While the
ships were guessing about petty matters
and were choked - they could achieve
nothing - Achilles on Gillen saved and
silenced with his power from the camp - and
justified destruction and chased away
him until in the tenth year all the ships
harmoniously united and threw the walls
and broke and the city fell before the
mighty host of Greece - This I take it is the
moral of Homer's story of the Trojan war -
In this final Homer there has been thrown
into the story by the poet, cunning, and
craft - The city fell and the kingdom crumbled
before the combined efforts of Greece
cunning and his own and Greece
craft and subtlety - The wooden horse
is in opposition to the same morality of
the purpose of the story and one of the morals of
the poem - But how many of the young and
ambitious into whose hands the Iliad is
placed as a model of perfection, and the
master piece of genius - nor think or con-
tribute into the moral of the story - Their
magnations are fixed up - their papers
influenced influenced by the elegance of
the episode, the descriptions and general
of the piece - The elegance and beauty,
splendor and sublimity of the poet, fill
their imaginations with the most lofty notions
of the honor of the hero and they long for the
glory of the chieftain - In Greece that must
be the end and refined nature of antiquity
Homer's theme was to every young man as each

measures. All their literature ~~with~~ was
of the same general tendency - The character
history and now their arts were directed to
the same end - In ^{the} respect the Greeks
acted had the advantage over the modern
artist - He attempted to flatter the hero and
the prevailing superstitions, but his works were
chaste - He shunned every thing like indecency
in his representations - The whole policy of
Greece ⁱⁿ her laws, manners and taste was highly
favorable to chastity - Her glory and
honors ^{was} the theme of eloquence, song,
sculpture and painting and her
not only gave the model of literature and
taste but actually gave his nation their pro-
founding religion or rather gave the superstitions
of his age something of the nature of a system.
The poet's fancy and holy imagination
gave to the superstitions of his times all the
attractions that could be ^{to} imparted to them
by the inspiration of poetry - He saw to come
back on his knees - With such subtling
arts, literature and taste is it any wonder
that Greece was encircled with with bloody
bycants and butchery? Is it not rather a wonder
that there were not more of this and that there
were such ones among ^{the} as Aristotle the last -
Phocion and many others whose lives were
devoted to the true glory of Greece -
Athenes was the pupil of Aristotle
He devoted years to his tutelage, but all his wise
maxims and teachers of ^{knowledge} ~~reason~~, could
not tame the ambitious spirit of his royal
pupil who once gave with the bonus of his

two of the Trojan war - Angus battles ended
duels of nobles closing as they are called and
till the times of poets - This shows that
at some day, the rising, aspiring, courageous
demuths this, that he will to the subject of
immortal ^{poems} stimulates him to seek for it.
Thus was his before Agamemnon says
hesitate, but then eludes even then & last,
have been lost for want of a poet to immor-
talize them - So our day even thus there
is no lack for poets to give eclat to heroes
of every sort - All the great achievements
of his time since the days of Homer have
been ^{perpetrated} in song - If Homer has
recalled all who have succeeded him in
young glory even immortally to his time
his successors have imitated him so well
that the centuries feel no misfortune but
that if they do the elude of eluding that
which the world with awe, their deeds will
not be suffered to perish, but on the contrary
will be preserved in all the modes that
can possibly strike the imagination.

The martial pomp even elaborate displaying
splendor of the chieftains has always possibly
impressed the popular mind. And
in our own beloved country we have in our midst
evidence that the age of hero worship is not
past. We do not have storms excited to them
and fall elude before them even worship
them as did the ancients even as the Romans
worshiped their emperors. But we do give
them the highest places of honor and poetical prop.

There is a true genuine heroism that cannot
be too highly praised - It consists in devotion
to a great principle and a magnanimous

and exertion of all ^{the} powers for the
of the soul

Maintenance of that principle even
the good of mankind - Such an one thinks
not of the glory to himself personally but
makes every sacrifice, faces every danger
and performs no noble elude of nobles eluding
not for himself, his glory or honor, but for the
cause in which he is engaged in which
his soul is entirely absorbed. Take Washington
for example his story if written in the
highest strains of the most exalted poetry
could never give the imagination with the
ideal even our heroes gladden of the
mind his - Indeed his more martial part
would not make so strong an impression upon
the mind - The lofty, characteristic purity
of his character even the modest unaffected
goodness and simplicity of his heart together
with his ardent attachment to his country &
his serene would form the strong predomina-
ting features of the picture. His heroism, his
courage even intemperately on war, though equal
to that of any hero ^{there} but as slight shade
of his great character - His character is
not calculated on the heart to give the mind
with a love of martial glory & hence for
its own sake - In the descriptions we have
some of the most descriptions of heroes that
we have any where - And yet no more
by dwelling of the glories of Mars. Indeed
Devere even these we have his love
of glory even heroism influenced or his
preference for the more stimulated - The
endless goodness even wonderful works
of the Duty and the simple faith even

shortened up of his servants as the strong
impressions made upon the mind by reading
the accounts of these distinguished servants
of the Most High - Milton's Paradise Lost
is thought by many critics to be the master
poetic production of any age or country -
and is by all admitted to be the greatest
production of modern genius - It has no
such effect upon the imagination as the Greek
and productions of that sort - No heroes
battles on the grandest and most majestic
manner - The imagination is lifted up
and delighted with the most sublime images
and the mind is filled with thoughts almost
beyond human ken - Still no love of the clash
and clangor of arms is excited by it - no
delight with the view of furnished armour &
glittering steel and the glory of successful
war is excited to fire the minds of the young
and ambitious - But on the contrary the
majesty of the great God himself is deeply
impressed upon the mind and the standards
of virtue by its pursuit & study -
The Christian Church has ~~by~~ generally
condemned all works and concerns
which in ~~my~~ humble opinion are
well calculated to ~~subvert~~ ^{the cause of} religion and virtue -
Some of Scott's poems are better ^{the pursuit of which they oppose} called of history &
there seem to have any value else - The great
map of world however properly condemned -
Lord Byron's poems are generally
condemned and properly condemned - And
yet perhaps no modern poet has written better
than some passages in Byron - All his
works are good as works of genius - But they lack
moral beauty and also ~~become~~ ^{have} because of their

become ~~inflamed~~ - His writings are
immoral and calculated to spread
abandoned impurity - But all his mind
and his Christian mind if cold, saint
and sincere, are delighted with his
poetic and worship Homer as the master
guides of the world in the poetic art -
Poetry has always and always will
be a controlling influence upon the
tastes manners and refinement of the
people - It was well said by an experienced
man - Let me make the ballads of a nation
and I care but little who makes the laws -
If Christianity is really what it claims to be
a religion of peace and good will to men
If its final triumph is to turn the world
and to spread love throughout the world -
Why do its teachers incense the most power-
ful passions on the human breast to combat
against its precepts and its agreements -
War, bloodshed, carnage and slaughter
can never be stayed, they never will cease
while his worship continues - His will
always resist the earth while the ~~acknowledged~~
standard of the highest efforts of genius is
found in the ~~land~~ and that ~~land~~ of
poetry will ^{continue to} be cultivated - In works of art
the same indulgence is not tolerated by
Christian teachers - Poor's Greek slave
as most unjust work of art is properly
condemned as immoral - It may be that
the finest genius ever latent & exists to cut and
yet its exhibition must have an immoral
tendency - If the exhibition of Mr Collyer's

world artist is immoral, so must the upholders
of the free slave. At once the moral sense
of the whole community is shocked - & the
other many are pleased and think no
harm has come of it, but to the honor
of the churches & Christian ministers they have
generally condemned it.

In the long period of 1800 years why has
the world ever in existence been blessed
with slaves? The history of Christian nations has
been but a history of violence and domination.

It must not be so; whilst the steindasels
of literature make such things heros
and grow to fuses immutably and mon-
eeling senors - Such works will always
find and stimulate the natural feelings
of the human heart to stimulate the fuses
that also are now and no story and no song -

To works of the highest order of genius as well as every thing else the touchstone must be applied with it will it endure the course of virtue or will it elude from it — The heroic poetry of the ancients as well as the modern didactic effusions must be tested by the same rule —

The church will have to discontinue the
~~stand~~ ^{place} ~~and~~ all such works. If the use
 of place and goods ^{will} shall assu-

As a matter of fact the church was much poorer before its professors knew the truth than it now has become. It came acquainted with false science & literature. Its early converts and professors refused to submit to the Roman errors - But under the influence of the line of Constantine and with Eastern teachers skilled in Greek literature, including those fables of

Philosophy. The christians became generals
and filled the ranks of the army - The
honors of war have been sought for consumed
by christians princes and generals with
as much a tendency and zeal as they
have been by the pagans - And they
were stimulated to it by the introduced
cultures and universal admiration of
grecian & Roman literature, Particulated by
the Roman poetry - The Philosophy of Plato
and Aristotle now held much influence
upon the map of their nation - In after
times it has moulded the intellectual
development of the schools, But more
directly effected the morals of the people
Plato Socrates & Aristotle and now the
Gospel had but little effect to curb
the thirst for glory excited and kept up
by Homer and the grecian & Roman
poets - The church I repeat must
put itself against the spirit of martial
valour upon the true spirit of christianity
can be diffused through the world -

I have I fear asserted so long & tedious
that you will fatigue in the perusal of
it, & or do I know whether you will
thank me for my pains or whether you
will neglect me, I will since at any
rate I seek the consequence -

Rev. James Findley - Yours Respectfully
Peter Simpson

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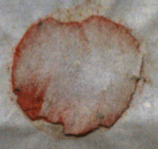
Rev. James B. Fairley

Columbus

Ohio



Mail



Peter Simpson

Blacksmith Jan 49