

In regard to my principles on great moral and political questions, I beg leave to say, that time and the progress of events have justified nearly every position I have ever occupied. I advocated the abolition of slavery very early, opposition to lotteries, a perfectly free ballot, universal suffrage, democratic institutions, toleration of all religions alike, no union of church and state, free schools and higher free institutions of learning, including free text-books; free trade in the necessaries of life and raw materials for manufacturers, the evolution philosophy, liberal laws in regard to social institutions, marriage, divorce, etc., free investigation of all great questions of science, religion and law. I voted with the free-soil and republican parties from the time they were instituted till about 1872. I petitioned the legislature for freer divorce laws. They have since been so changed that a divorce is now granted for cruelty, neglect of support on the part of the husband, confirmed drunkenness, three years' desertion, instead of five, imprisonment for several years, joining the Shakers, etc. I petitioned for the single, secret ballot, and we have it in the Australian law. I petitioned for a law to have a report made on the condition of the town, county, parish and probate records of Massachusetts, and helped to produce the report. The procuring of that report was one of the proudest successes of my life. It was wholly my idea, my conception and accomplishment so far as the reform was concerned, but I enlisted many prominent men in the cause even before the legislative resolve was obtained. I drew up a petition and sought advice from noted antiquarians, studied the laws of England on the same subject, and the laws of Massachusetts respecting records, corresponded with persons in many places about the condition of the public records. A. C. Goodell, Esq., who had considerable acquaintance with probate records, registries of deeds and court records, took special interest in my petition and suggested important means to be used in the cause. He said we must not ask for money, but trust to making a report at our own expense. I went to such men as ex-Govs. Rice, Gaston and Claffin, Hon. S. E. Sewall, E. S. Toby, H. W. Paine, Nath'l J. Bradlee, Geo. W. Nichols, Geo. E. Ellis, Edward Avery, Philip H. Sears, Wm. H. Whitmore, Stillman B. Allen, Carroll D. Wright, D. W. Gooch, Lyman Mason, A. T. Perkins, etc., and they not only signed my petition, but gave me much credit for making this effort for a greatly needed reform; and several of them said it was the strangest thing in the world that such a report had not been made long ago, because now, when suggested to them, it appeared that there was no public interest in the whole commonwealth of such importance, that had been so much neglected, as the publishing of a directory and description of the public records, to identify each volume and show its present condition, whether defaced or badly