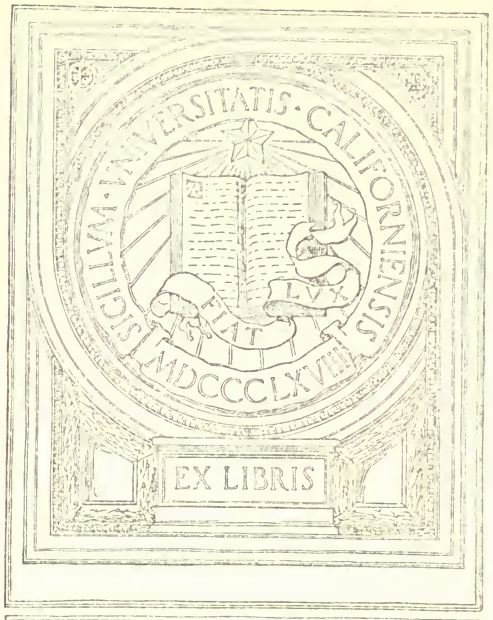
SIGILLVM · VNIVERSITATIS · CALIFORNIENSIS
LVX
FIAT
MDCCCLXVIII
EX LIBRIS

James Westfall Thompson

With kind regards from

Cora L. Scofield.

AN

ADDRESS

DELIVERED JULY 20, 1830,

BEFORE THE

PEITHESSOPHIAN AND PHILOCLEAN Societies

OF

RUTGERS COLLEGE.

BY

HON. WILLIAM WIRT.

Delivered and Published at the request of the Peithessophian Society.

FOURTH EDITION.

New-Brunswick:
A. ACKERMAN, PUBLISHER.
....
1852.

PUDNEY & RUSSELL, PRINTERS.

Committee of Publication.

EDWARD S. VAIL,
HENRY R. BALDWIN,
EDWARD W. APPLETON,
CORNELIUS L. WELLS,
DENISE H. SMOCK.

PREFACE.

The following Address was originally published by the Peithessophian Society in pamphlet form, for the special benefit of the Literary Institution before which it was delivered; but the distinguished reputation of the author, as a scholar and a patriot, together with the great merit which the work was found to possess, caused it to pass rapidly through three editions. In the meantime it found its way across the Atlantic, and was re-published in England. Soon after, it was translated into the French language, and published in Paris; and subsequently in Germany, in the German language. During all this time there has been a regular and an increasing demand for the work at home, which has induced the Society to put it in a more substantial and desirable form.

The prophetic language of the author, in relation to the future prospects and perils of our Republic, and the influence which the educated youth of our country may have upon its future destinies, will render this work, especially at this critical period of our history, a valuable acquisition to the library of every youthful patriot.

New-Brunswick, *January*, 1852.

INTRODUCTION

BY

HON. THEODORE FRELINGHUYSEN, LL. D.,

PRESIDENT OF RUTGERS COLLEGE.

William Wirt, the author of the following address, was one of the most distinguished public men of our country; a native of Maryland; born on the 8th of November, 1772, and died at the City of Washington, on the 18th of February, 1834. He was a man of noble and generous feelings, of rare and various learning, refined taste and vigorous intellect. The address which follows, especially in its counsels to young men, illustrates his character, and will embalm his memory. And to crown and adorn the whole, Mr. Wirt was a Christian; deeply read in the plague of his own heart, and in the nature and glory of the way of salvation. His accomplished biographer* has given an interesting and graphic sketch of his religious character:

"As life advanced, his convictions of the truth and value of Christian revelation, and of the duties it imposed upon him, became more earnest and profound. He devoted a portion of his time every day to the reading of the Scriptures; engaged in a comprehensive study of theology; cultivated habits of prayer and meditation, which he promoted and encouraged throughout his family; and frequently employed his leisure in the composition of religious essays and records of private devotion. He took great interest in the promotion of moral and religious institutions, in the missionary labors of the churches, in the extension of the Sunday-schools, in the success of the Bible societies; and was, at the time of his death, the President of the State Bible Society of Maryland. He was a most effective friend of the cause of temperance, and often sought opportunity to testify to the great importance which he attached to the labors of the societies connected with it. 'I have been, for more than forty years,' he remarks, in a letter which has been frequently published, 'a close observer of life and manners in various parts of the United States; and I know not the evil that will bear a moment's comparison with intemperance.' In short, the latter years especially, of Mr. Wirt's life, furnish us the spectacle of a highly-gifted, thoughtful and accomplished mind, stimulated by a fervent and sincere piety, and employed in the promotion of every good work, suggested by enlightened benevolence or Christian duty.

His theological studies were systematically pursued through many years, in whatever leisure his profession allowed him. His favorite authors were Hooker, Baxter, Watts, Faber, Flavel, Robert Hall, Doddridge, and Jay. Massillon and Bourdaloue were frequently in his hands. Of Baxter, he says, in a letter to his daughter: 'I took up the *Saint's Rest* lately, and found it like an old sandal-wood box, as ayish and fragrant as if it had just been made, although it has been exhaling its odor for one hundred and eighty years.'

"He had been a careless witness, in his younger days, to that prevalence of free-thinking, in reference to the authenticity of the Christian religion, which, at that period, had become somewhat notable in Virginia. The reflections of his riper age pictured this tendency of opinion to his mind as an insidious and fearful malady, which was not less destructive of the integrity of the social constitution, than it was perilous to the individual. He had himself read Voltaire, Bolingbroke, Hume, Gibbon, Shaftesbury, Rousseau, Paine, and Godwin, and other strong or striking writers of that school; but they had not shaken the ground-work of his faith. He could read and admire, discriminate and repel. He was, nevertheless, fully aware of the fascination which their learning, genius, wit and eloquence gave to their intrepid skepticism. He had often occasion to remark how brilliant paradox and bold assault upon common opinion, witty apothegm and dexterous satire captivate even vigorous minds, predisposed by education or by temper to assail whatsoever rests upon the authority of the past; and his personal experience had warned him how much more subtly these devices were calculated to ensnare and capture the unfortified mind of youth. This conviction ripened into a painful solicitude, of which we have many proofs in his correspondence."

ADDRESS.

Young Gentlemen of Rutgers College:

It is by your invitation that I am here, and to you, of course, that I am expected to address myself. Permit me, in the first place, to thank you for the honor of the invitation. You have done me justice in believing that I take a deep interest in the pursuits of my young countrymen, and that I would not, lightly, permit any consideration of personal inconvenience to disappoint the desire you have expressed to hear me. You will probably learn, from my compliance, one lesson of experience, at least—and lessons of experience cannot come too soon—which is, that in the intellectual as well as the material world, distant objects are apt to loom larger than the life, and that you are not to trust, with implicit confidence, to the Reports of Fame, whether they relate to men or things.

Gentlemen, you do not, I hope, expect, from me, an oration for display. At my time of life, and worn down, as I am, by the toils of a laborious profession, you can no longer look for the spirit and buoyancy of youth. Spring is the season of flowers; but I am in the autumn of life, and you will, I hope, accept from me the fruits of my experience, in lieu of the more showy, but less substantial, blossoms of spring.

Gentlemen, I could not have been tempted hither for the puerile purpose of display. My visit has a much graver motive and object. It is the hope of making some suggestion that may be serviceable in the journey of life that lies before you—of calling into action some dormant energy—of pointing your exertions to some attainable end of practical utility—in short, the hope of contributing, in some small degree, towards making you happier in yourselves, and more useful to your country. This alone could have tempted me to forego the short interval of repose allotted for my health, and to venture upon a field of speaking so far removed from the ordinary walks of my profession.

I consider the cause of education as the cause of my country; for the youth, who are now at their studies, will soon compose that country. On them, in a very few years, must rest the whole burthen of sustaining the political institutions, the

liberty and happiness of the United States. I consider the learned men, who are directing the studies and forming the character of our youth, as engaged in the noblest employment that can task the powers of man. They are, in truth, weaving the web of the future destinies of our country, and on their skill and fidelity depend, in a great degree, the texture, the strength and the color of that web. I hold it to be the duty of every American citizen, who can aid them in this process, to furnish the aid; if it be only by those demonstrations of respect which are calculated to cheer them and their pupils onward, in their arduous and honorable task, this tribute should be promptly and willingly rendered.

Such, my young friends, are the sentiments which have led to my visit; such the feelings with which I have come among you. You have been pleased to think that I may be of some service; and I have been willing, as you see, to make the experiment. But you will permit me to speak for your instruction, rather than your amusement, and to leave it to younger men to play the orator.

Suffer me, in the first place, to call your attention to the power of this great magician—Education—in forming and directing the human character. It is of consequence that you should distinctly apprehend the prodigies of which it is capa-

ble, in order that you may perceive the decisive importance of the work in which you are engaged, and apply yourselves, with corresponding earnestness, to the performance of this work.

We learn, from divine revelation, a truth, which, to the discomfiture of the infidel, the discoveries of modern science are rapidly confirming—that the whole human family has descended from a single pair. With this fact before us, how wonderfully curious is it to observe the vast variety of character into which this common family has been modified; their religion, laws, manners, customs, opinions, sentiments, tastes, how infinitely diversified! How is this to be explained? Whatever share climate, accident or caprice, may be conjectured to have had in the origination of this variety, we know that from time immemorial, it has been continued among them by the force of education; and that from the earliest period of authentic history to the present day, they have been, and still are, the mere creatures of education. But let us pass from this general survey to one more particular, in which extrinsic causes could have had no agency; but the whole phenomenon must be referred to the force of education. Those two small republics of Greece, Athens and Sparta, are, both of them, believed to have been, in their origin, Egyptian colonies; they had, therefore, the same mother

country. They were nearly coeval in their settlement: they were, therefore, of the same age. They were near neighbors; they lived, therefore, under the influence of the same climate. Their general political interests were the same, and their intercourse was frequent and constant. Yet were they, in their modes of thinking, speaking, and acting, as diametrically, as obstinately, and proudly opposed, as if they had inhabited the opposite sides of the globe. Nor need we leave the walls of Athens itself, to see exemplified the astonishing power of this great moral lever—Education. The different sects of philosophers in that city, were as strikingly distinguished, and the classes of men whom they threw into society, from their schools, were as strongly contrasted in their modes of thinking and principles of acting, as if they had been parted by the poles. The same is equally true in modern times. Compare France with her neighbor, Switzerland—compare the different cantons of Switzerland among themselves—nay, compare even the different counties of the small kingdom of England; cast your eyes over the earth, in any direction, and you will see, on every hand, the most interesting and convincing proofs of the plastic temper of man, and of the infinite variety of forms into which he may be moulded by the single force of education. It is th power of the potter

over the clay, which makes one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor; with this advantage in our favor, that unlike the vessels of the potter, we have a voice, and a voice potential too, if we choose to exert it, in fixing our own destination; since, for our consolation, but, at the same time, to our fearful responsibility, it depends essentially on ourselves, whether we will be doomed to honor or dishonor.

And this leads me, gentlemen, to another remark, to which I invite your attention. It is this: *The Education, moral and intellectual, of every individual, must be, chiefly, his own work.* There is a prevailing and a fatal mistake on this subject. It seems to be supposed that if a young man be sent first to a grammar school, and then to college, he must, of course, become a scholar; and the pupil himself is apt to imagine that he is to be the mere passive recipient of instruction, as he is of the light and atmosphere which surround him. But this dream of indolence must be dissipated, and you must be awakened to the important truth that, if you aspire to excellence, you must become active and vigorous co-operators with your teachers, and work out your own distinction, with an ardor that cannot be quenched, a perseverance that considers nothing done while anything yet remains to be done. Rely upon it, that the ancients were right

—*Quisque suæ fortunæ faber*—both in morals and intellect, *we* give their final shape to our own characters, and thus become, emphatically, the architects of our fortunes. How else should it happen, gentlemen, that young men, who have had precisely the same opportunities, should be continually presenting us with such different results, and rushing to such opposite destinies? Difference of talent will not solve it, because that difference is very often in favor of the disappointed candidate. You shall see issuing from the walls of the same school —nay, sometimes, from the bosom of the same family—two young men, of whom the one shall be admitted to be a genius of high order, the other, scarcely above the point of mediocrity; yet, you shall see the genius sinking and perishing in poverty, obscurity and wretchedness; while, on the other hand, you shall observe the *mediocre* plodding his slow but sure way up the hill of life, gaining steadfast footing at every step, and mounting, at length, to eminence and distinction, an ornament to his family, a blessing to his country. Now, whose work is this? Manifestly their own. *They* are the architects of their respective fortunes. The best seminary of learning that can open its portals to you, can do no more than to afford to you the opportunity of instruction: but it must depend, at last, on yourselves, whether you will be instructed

or not, or to what point you will push your instruction. And of this be assured—I speak, from observation, *a certain truth: There is no excellence without great labor.* It is the *fiat* of Fate, from which no power of genius can absolve you. Genius, unexerted, is like the poor moth, that flutters around a candle till it scorches itself to death. If genius be desirable at all, it is only of that great and magnanimous kind, which, like the Condor of South America, pitches from the summit of Chimborazo above the clouds, and sustains itself, in that empyreal region, with an energy rather invigorated than weakened by the effort. It is this capacity for high and long-continued exertion—this vigorous power of profound and searching investigation—this careering and wide-sweeping comprehension of mind—and those long reaches of thought, that

> —— Pluck bright honor from the pale-faced moon,
> Or, dive into the bottom of the deep,
> Where fathom line could never touch the ground,
> And drag up drowned honor by the locks—

This is the prowess, and these the hardy achievements which are to enrol your names among the great men of the earth.

But how are you to gain the nerve and the courage for enterprizes of this pith and moment? I will tell you: As Milo gained that strength which astounded Greece: *By your own self-disci-*

pline. In hoc signo vinces: for this *must* be *your* work, not that of *your teachers;* and, gentlemen, it is on that part which you are to bear in your own education, that I propose to address you. Your learned professors will do their part well. Be you not wanting to yourselves, and you will accomplish all that your parents, friends, and country, have a right to expect.

The remarks which I am about to address to you will be founded on the hypothesis, that you have it in your power to make yourselves just what you please; and of the truth of this hypothesis, to an extent quite incredible to yourselves at this time, observation and experience leave no doubt in my own mind. You may, if you please, become literary fops and dandies, and acquire the affected lisp and drawling nonchalance of the London cockney; or you may learn to wield the herculean club of Doctor Johnson. You may skim the surface of science, or fathom its depths. You may become florid declaimers, or cloud-compelling reasoners. You may dwindle into political ephemera, or plume your wings for immortality, with Franklin, Hamilton, Jay, Jefferson, the Adamses, and a host of living worthies. You may become dissolute voluptuaries and debauchees, and perish in disgrace; or you may climb the steeps of glory, and have your names given, by the trumpet of Fame, to the four

quarters of the globe. In short, you may become a disgrace and a reproach to this institution, or her proudest boast and honor; you may make yourselves the shame or the ornament of your families, and a curse or a blessing to your country. Can it be doubted which of these two destinies a generous and a high-minded youth will choose? I cannot permit myself to doubt it; but will take for granted that you are disposed to receive, with attention, whatever my experience may suggest in advancement of that nobler course, on which you are resolved to enter; and to these suggestions I will now proceed.

Let it be your first object to form to yourselves a character suited to the country in which your lot is cast, so as to be able to play, with honor, your part in the various scenes both of public and of private life, in which you may be called to act or to suffer. If you have not yet thought of the subject, in this point of view, it is high time that you should do so: for you will soon begin your journey, and ordinary prudence dictates that you should be providing the means to render it comfortable and successful. If you had to travel through a hot and barren desert, like that of Arabia, you would load your camels with water and provisions. If your way lay through a savage wilderness, or over mountains infested with banditti, you would furnish yourselves with armor for your

defence. The same prudent foresight calls upon you to examine well the character of the country, and of the age into which it has been the pleasure of Providence to place you: and to supply yourselves, now, with those qualities, moral and intellectual, that may best enable you to sustain, with advantage, the various parts that may be cast for you in the drama of life. Permit me to assist you in this preparatory examination, not with reference to the whole train of your duties, (for that would be beyond the compass of a discourse like this,) but with the view of discovering whether there be any leading or master quality, which the character of the country and of the age indicate as pre-eminently worthy of peculiar culture.

The duties which you will have to perform divide themselves into two classes: they are public and private. By your public duties, I mean those which result from the political institutions under which you live: and to ascertain those duties, it is obviously necessary that you should understand well your institutions and the relation in which they place you towards society. I propose only to take a passing glance at this subject, since the nature of this discourse will bear no more.

The political phenomenon, then, on which your eyes have opened, is that of a great national government, composed of a confederacy of many states;

each of these being, in itself, a separate sovereignty. This confederacy extends from north to south, through several degrees of latitude, and stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. The states which it embraces are various in their soil and climate, and necessarily various in their productions, in the pursuits of their citizens, and in their local interests.

All these governments, both state and federal, are republics: that is to say, the whole power is in the body of the people. These governments all belong to them, were formed by them for their own good, and are administered by officers chosen by them and responsible to them. But in order to qualify the people to enforce this responsibility with effect, it is necessary that they should understand well the boundaries which part the powers of the federal and state governments, and that they should understand, also, their interests, foreign and domestic; since otherwise, it will be impossible for them to know whether those boundaries have been properly respected by their servants, and those interests faithfully and judiciously pursued.

These institutions are beautiful in theory, but they are complex: and the principal dangers which environ them are these: first, lest the people should not sufficiently understand them, and, not understanding them, should fall into the hands of corrupt

and ambitious leaders, who will contrive to make a job out of these governments for themselves, and, by their rival struggles for power, finally destroy both the people and their institutions; and, secondly, lest the conflicts of local interest in this widely-extended empire, and the collisions between so many separate sovereignties, operating at the same time over the same territory, should produce a concussion which may bring down the whole fabric in ruins about your ears.

Hence, it is manifest that the success of these beautiful institutions depends entirely on the illumination, the wisdom and virtue of the people. These it is the function of education to impart; and as you are soon to belong to the body of the people, in the character either of constituent or representative, you cannot but perceive that, if you mean to qualify yourselves eminently for the discharge of your public duties, and not to become "hewers of wood and drawers of water" to the ambitious, it should be your ardent and unwearied study now to acquire all that strength and power of character which may qualify you to protect and defend your institutions, and hand them down, unimpaired, to your posterity.

From this glance at the political character of the country, let us pass, for a moment, to that of the age, for the purpose of ascertaining how far the dangers

which were to have been apprehended from the theory of our institutions, have been realized by practice.

This is delicate ground, and I am aware of the impossibility of treating the subject with candor, without exposing myself to illiberal and invidious criticisms. But I have undertaken a duty towards you, and, with Heaven's assistance, I will perform it, honestly. I should not expect the banditti either of the desert or mountains to thank me for warning the traveler to arm in his defence. I might expect the gratitude of the traveler himself; and even if I missed that, I should have the consolation of knowing that I had done my duty. You, gentlemen, I am sure, will not suppose me capable of prostituting an occasion like this, to party-purposes. I am no party-man. I belong to no party but that of my country: to that alone do I wish you to belong. In relation to those duties on which you are soon to enter, I think it right to give you a political sketch of the age; and I shall give it on the historian's maxim: *Ne quid falsi audeas, ne quid veri non audeas dicere.* My remarks will be general, not personal. I propose to describe the age, not the individuals who compose it: and if any one choose to make a personal application of what is intended to be general, I can only say, *qui capit, ille facit.*

The first impulse which the people have to give their institutions, in order to set them in motion, is by the election of their public officers; and in such a number of republics, state and federal, in which all the officers, from the highest to the lowest, are elective, these elections must be continually going on. Now, according to the theory of our governments, these elections are to be made by the people themselves, on their own mere motion. They are, of their own accord, and by their own option, to call from their own body such of their fellow-citizens as they deem best qualified by their wisdom and virtue to serve them. We had a beautiful example, a fine practical exposition of this feature in our government, in the election of the first President under the federal constitution. Gen. Washington did not offer himself. All of you who have read the history of his life, by a man of closely analogous character, must have been struck by the virtuous diffidence with which he shrunk from the office, and the extreme difficulty with which it was overcome by his compatriots throughout the Union. *Sed tempora mutantur:* The importunity is now on the other side: and were that illustrious man now alive to witness the number of competitors, and the unblushing importunity with which this high and fearful office is solicited, he might well exclaim with Epaminondas, on a similar occasion,

(if, indeed, he could indulge in a sarcasm on any occasion,) "I rejoice that my country has so many better men than myself." One of the most striking features of the age is this avidity for office. Every man now thinks himself qualified for any office: and

"Fools rush in, where angels fear to tread."

These elections are, at once, our glory and our shame: our glory in theory; our shame in practice. Real merit is always modest and retiring. Such was Washington's. But this is no longer sought after. It is only those who impudently obtrude themselves on the public notice, and clamor for their own elections, that are deemed worthy of the suffrage of the People. And at the recurrence of these elections, and the canvass which precedes them, what disgraceful scenes do we continually witness! What corrupt combination in some quarters; what vile intrigues in others; what slander and falsehood; what criminations and recriminations; what "fending and proving" throughout the land; what hollow promises made merely *ad captandum;* what coarse and vulgar flattery, and wheedling and coaxing of the Dear People! And the people themselves, who on these occasions should be everything, what have they become? In some parts of our country, literally nothing; and the fatal leprosy is rapidly spreading through-

out the Union. For we learn from the mutual accusations of the parties of the day, (I speak of them all,) that among other devices, a kind of electioneering machinery is in use in some places, by which the people have become spell-bound, and taught to play the part of automatons in their own elections. If these accusations be true, (and I have not seen them contradicted,) the people, where this machinery prevails, are no longer, in any proper sense of the term, free agents, but act by a kind of fatal necessity; and our elections are not, in truth, made by the people, but by the power of machinery. In those quarters of our country, in order to calculate the probability of the election of an individual, the question is no longer "is he honest, is he capable?" but is he a good engineer, with powerful machinery? Thus, instead of permitting the people to practice on the theory of our constitution, by choosing for themselves, and of their own accord, the best and wisest of our citizens, they are constrained by a sort of mechanical duress, to choose the ablest juggler. And, as the success of one juggler naturally invites the competition of others, and one patent machine is sure to lead to rival discoveries, the evidences of this species of internal improvement are multiplying and thickening over the land; and, by the time that you come on the stage, your streets and highways will be beset by political

mountebanks, and your whole society will be stunned and deafened by the clangor, or dismembered by the violence, of this high-steam apparatus.

Such, gentlemen, are the scenes which you must soon be called to witness, and in which you must play your parts according to your respective tastes; unless you shall be rescued from the disgrace by some great and glorious revulsion of public sentiment and feeling. But how is such a revulsion to be brought about? You have no longer a Washington: and it is much to be feared that it would require all the magic of the living man to touch with his wand this disgraceful scene, and force it to vanish. There is another cause that might produce it; and to this the virtuous part of the community look with hope, not for themselves, but for you. It is Education, which, by pouring on the rising generation a purer and a stronger light, by investing them with more energy of character, by inspiring them with loftier conceptions of their own importance, and of the honor and dignity of their country—a holier patriotism may, at once, dispose and enable them to crush these spiders in their webs, and annihilate the whole train of their sycophants and dependents. Unless some such revolution shall take place, the whole value of your institutions is gone. Your governments are no longer republics, but corrupt aristocracies. You will degenerate into a mob.

To borrow a bold figure from a deceased patriot, your people will become horses, "ready saddled and bridled," to be mounted at pleasure by every bold and crafty adventurer who chooses to boot and spur himself for the occasion; and you will rush first into anarchy, and then—emerge from it in the form of a despotism.

Besides this frightful jarring throughout the land produced by the struggles of rival ambition, there is another cause which threatens us with a long succession of storms: it is the realization of the other danger which has been already noted, as seated too deeply, I fear, in the theory of our institutions; the conflict of local interest, and the collisions between the Federal and State authorities. These have already risen to such a height as to menace, openly, a rupture of the Union: and, indeed, from the sharpness of the conflict, and the increasing acrimony with which it is maintained, there is too much reason to fear that the spirit of mutual concession and forbearance which animated our fathers, has been buried in their graves, and that their children will, in their wantonness, pull down the noble edifice which it cost them so much pains and anxiety to build up for our happiness.

Thus, gentlemen, you perceive that your lot has been cast in stormy times: and every political indication warns you tha the quality which, above all

others, you should seek to cultivate, is *strength of character: strength of character*, as displayed in *firmness of decision*, and *vigor of action*.

If, gentlemen, you were about to embark in the voyage of life on a summer's sea, in a barge like that of Cleopatra, with zephyrs only to fan, and soft music and sweet perfumes to breathe around you, I might recommend it to you to give yourselves up entirely to the culture of those bland and gentle accomplishments which contribute to cheer and sweeten social intercourse. But I foresee, distinctly, that you will have to double Cape Horn in the winter season, and to grapple with the gigantic spirit of the storm which guards that Cape; and I foresee, as distinctly, that it will depend entirely on your own skill and energy whether you will survive the fearful encounter, and live to make a port in the mild latitudes of the Pacific. Hence it is that I recommend it to you most strenuously to devote yourselves, with unwearied zeal, to the cultivation of those bold and manly qualities which are calculated to bear you, fearless and triumphant, through the fierce contention.

The excellence of a character consists in its fitness to the times and the service to be performed. We are disgusted with effeminacy in a man, on occasions which call for courage; and are shocked to see him play the trembling dastard, or whining

sentimentalist, at a moment when he should be blazing in the front of war. Thus, when we see Henry the VIth, in Shakspeare, retiring from the battle on which his crown and life depended, and, seating himself pensively on the side of a hill, hear him exclaim,

> "O God! I would I were an humble swain,
> To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
> Thereby to see the minutes how they pass—"

how painfully do we feel his unfitness for his station, and how do we long for that bold and dauntless voice of his father, which, at the storming of Harfleur, cried out,

> "Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more!"

Gentlemen, you will not confound the firm and strong character which I am recommending, with a turbulent, factious, incendiary spirit. Nothing can be more contrary. The blusterer is seldom brave. True courage is always calm, and is never so captivating as when set off by courtesy. The Chevalier Bayard, one of the proudest ornaments of the age of chivalry, was the flower of courtesy, and he was not more *without fear* than *without reproach*. No, gentlemen: every good man prefers peace. It is the only condition that accords with that brotherly love which ought to prevail among men; the only state that reason and humanity can approve. But it has

grown into a maxim, that the best mode of preserving peace is to be prepared for war. That strength of character, which I recommend, is for armor of defence, not of offence. Heaven forbid that we should ever see the war of the Roses enacted in real life, in our own land! But if we ever should, it will proceed from that ignorance, and consequent imbecility, on the part of our people, which will surrender them as tools into the hands of ambition, and make them the instruments of their own destruction. An enlightened community, who understand their rights, and possess the skill and firmness to assert them, are in no danger from the intrigues of the selfish and designing. Peace is lovely. Those moral and intellectual qualities that adorn it, have charms for a virtuous mind that ought not to be resisted. But their attainment is perfectly compatible with the habitual cultivation of that firmness and energy which are the best, and, indeed, the only earthly guardians of Peace itself; and without which, our altars and firesides will be no protection against the insidious visits of unprincipled and ruffian ambition. What I recommend to you, therefore, is, to endeavor to unite in your characters the quiet, but determined, heroism of the patriot soldier, with that love of peace which becomes the Philanthropist and the Christian.

Gentlemen, I have hitherto urged this quality upon you with reference, only, to your public or political duties. Give me leave, now, to add, that decision of character is as indispensable in private as in public life; and that there can be no success, in any walk, without it. Whether you are destined for either of the learned professions, or prefer the pursuits of agriculture, commerce, or manufactures, you will find that you can make no distinguished progress in either, without this bold and manly quality. The man who is perpetually hesitating which of two things he will do first, will do neither. The man who resolves, but suffers his resolution to be changed by the first counter suggestion of a friend, who fluctuates from opinion to opinion, from plan to plan, and veers, like a weathercock, to every point of the compass, with every breeze of caprice that blows, can never accomplish anything great or useful. Instead of being progressive in anything, he will be at best stationary, and, more probably, retrograde in all. It is only the man who carries into his pursuits that great quality which Lucan ascribes to Cæsar—the *nescia virtus stare loco*—who first consults wisely, then resolves firmly, and then executes his purpose with inflexible perseverance, undismayed by those petty difficulties which daunt a weaker spirit, that can advance to eminence on any line. Let us take,

by way of illustration, the case of a student. He commences the study of the dead languages: presently comes a friend, who tells him that he is wasting his time, and that, instead of learning obsolete words, he had much better employ himself in acquiring new ideas. He changes his plan, and sets to work at the mathematics. Then comes another friend, who asks him, with a grave and sapient face, whether he intends to become a professor in a college, because if he does not, he is misemploying his time; and that for the business of life, common arithmetic is quite enough of the mathematics. He throws up his Euclid and addresses himself to some other study, which, in its turn, is again relinquished on some equally wise suggestion; and thus his life is spent in changing his plans. You cannot but perceive the folly of this course; and the worst effect of it is, the fixing on a young mind a habit of indecision, sufficient of itself, to blast the fairest prospects. No, gentlemen, take your course wisely, but firmly; and having taken it, hold upon it with heroic resolution, and the Alps and Pyrenees will sink before you. The whole empire of learning will lie at your feet, while those who set out with you, but stopped to change their plans, are yet employed in the very profitable business of changing their plans. Let your motto be, *Perseverando vinces*. Practise upon it, and you

will become convinced of its value, by the distinguished eminence to which it will conduct you.

Success in life depends far more upon this quality, than on the possession of what is called genius. For decision of character is, by no means, a necessary attendant upon genius. On the contrary, there is frequently allied with it, a tender, and even morbid sensibility, which is very apt to generate indecision, and to plunge its victim into melancholy, despondency, and lethargy. You will meet with frequent instances in life, in which this bold and hardy quality will give to an inferior mind the command over the superior. Nay, you will see it among boys, and even among girls, at school. The leader of their amusements, and all of their little enterprises—the individual, to whom all the rest instinctively look to give the word of command, is frequently the inferior in point of genius to many of those who willingly obey that word. This phenomenon results entirely from superior decision of character. And you may gather from the fact this useful lesson, that if you wish, hereafter, to have influence among your neighbors, you must acquire, now, this commanding decision of character, to which weaker spirits willingly bow, and find even a relief in bowing to it, and obeying it.

Gentlemen, this same quality will be one of the best guardians of your virtues. Why is it that

young men are so often drawn off from their studies and tempted to dissipation, which their consciences condemn? It proceeds from indecision of character. They have not the firmness to say "No" to an improper proposal. They yield to the tempter, and they call it *good nature* and *good fellowship*. And they soon acquire such a habit of yielding, that temptation has only to show herself, in any form, to be followed, though she beckon them over a precipice. What is the remedy for this ruinous facility of temper? Decision of character: that bracing and vigorous decision, which, having once taken the correct course, is deaf to the syren voice of the tempter, and blind to her beauties.

Thus, both in public and in private life; in the learned and the unlearned professions; in scenes of business, or in the domestic circle, the master quality of man is decision of character.

But you will not confound this *decision*, of which I speak, either with obstinacy, or with rudeness of manners. Not with *obstinacy*, because it is the character of *obstinacy* to persist in conscious error: whereas, it is the character of *decision* to renounce an error the moment it becomes manifest, and to renounce it with equal promptitude and firmness. But it is not often that a decided character is put to this humiliating change. Because the first step

has not been rashly, but wisely and deliberately taken; because having been thus taken, it is not the mere difficulty of the execution that will induce a change; for all difficulties yield to a decided character; and, because it is only the development of after circumstances, which could not be taken into the first calculation, that demonstrates the error, and demands the change. Indecision is the mere creature of caprice, "a feather for every wind that blows," and is seen continually tossing, in different and opposite currents. Obstinacy resolves ignorantly, or rashly, and (to borrow a word from Doctor Johnson) persists *doggedly* in error, against the light of its own understanding. Decision holds the middle course, and is the best earthly ally of wisdom and virtue. It is, indeed, the chief executive officer of their high decrees.

Nor will you confound decision with rudeness of manners. There is not the slightest connection between them. Decision is calm and steady as the polar star. She must be cool and dispassionate; for any perturbation would disturb her course. Satisfied with the correctness of that course, she is no less serene than she is intense; and can smile at suggestions that would ruffle into rudeness a character less firm. We are apt to consider rough, abrupt and arrogant manners as the natural indications of a firm and decided character. Nothing is

more fallacious. These manners are frequently the mere cover for pusillanimity. Gentlemen, be assured, that there is nothing graceful, or courteous, or fascinating, in address that is not perfectly compatible with the most manly firmness, and even the best evidence of its existence. Nay, you find this quality, frequently, in its highest perfection in the softer sex. It is this that carries them through their arduous, and, frequently, painful duties, with such undeviating steadiness, and enables them to persist in the lofty course of virtue, with a constancy and dignity which put us often to the blush. Yet this quality does not make *them* rude. On the contrary, you find it in company with meekness, patience, gentleness, kindness, and frequently with all that innocent gayety of heart, and spirited gracefulness of manner, which diffuse enchantment around them, wherever they go. With such bright and attractive examples before us, let it never be said, that rudeness is the necessary concomitant of decision of character.

Gentlemen, I think that you are, by this time, ready to admit the great value of this quality, and that you wish to understand whether it be an innate quality, which depends entirely on peculiar organization; or, whether it be one of those qualities that may be acquired by discipline? Let us attend for a moment to these questions.

If it be a quality which depends entirely on organization, it must have been born with us, or we can never possess it; and, on this hypothesis, I might have spared both you and myself the trouble of this address. But this is not the opinion which I entertain. I admit that there is a difference in our organization, and that, so far as it depends on this circumstance, we do bring with us into the world different degrees of this quality. Some men are born with firmer texture of muscle, with tougher sinews and stronger nerves, and, may be said to be, *constitutionally*, decided characters. But what, at last, is this decision but a modification of courage? and if courage itself may be acquired, it would seem to follow, by necessary consequence, that decision, which is an emanation from it, may, also, be acquired. Now, as to courage, nature has also made a difference among men. Some men are constitutionally brave, others timid. But we know that this natural timidity may be overcome by moral considerations, and that courage may be gained and established by habit. Frederick the Great of Prussia, is said to have fled with precipitation from his first battle, and not to have taken the rowels from his horse's sides until he had placed many leagues between his enemy and himself. Yet this man became the wonder of Europe, not more by the depth and combinations of his policy,

than coolness and firmness of his personal valor. To descend from great things to small: we are told of an inferior officer, in our Revolutionary War, who was nicknamed Captain Death, and who, in that portion of the army to which he belonged, was always singled out for the most desperate enterprises. If a forlorn hope was to be sent out, a strong battery to be stormed, or any other peril that demanded nerves of steel, this man was always selected to head the adventure; and yet, it was remarked of him, that he was never called up to receive a proposal of this sort, that he did not turn as pale as his namesake, and tremble from head to foot. He never failed, however, to accomplish the purpose, and, I believe, that he went safe and unhurt through the war. But apart from particular examples, which might be easily multiplied: which of us, that has ever looked long, with an observant eye, on the dawning character of childhood, has not seen that a boy, naturally shy, and even cowardly, may be trained by erroneous education to become a bully, and to delight in battle? A better discipline would have given him all the firmness of a gentleman, without the ferocity of the ruffian. Veteran legions are composed of men, some of whom will confess that in their first engagement, they were far more disposed to fly than to fight, and that nothing kept them in their ranks but

shame and the fear of punishment. Yet, by degrees, they became brave, and were, at length, as calm, and even cheerful, amid showers of bullets, as when enjoying the festivities of their tents. In short, although nature may have denied this stability and stubbornness of nerve, yet I entertain no doubt of the power, I had nearly called it the *omnipotence*, of education to overcome this infirmity, and, that both courage and decision may be acquired by well-directed discipline. I am farther of the opinion, that that which we do so acquire, is of a far higher order than the brute material which organization gives, since, instead of being directed to the perpetration of crimes, as is most frequently the case where it is the mere effect of native temperament, it will be always guided by wisdom and virtue to the accomplishment of good.

Assuming it now that decision of character may be acquired by discipline, what is the best course to gain it? I answer, the firm resolve of mind to do, always what is right, at every peril: and the knowledge which is necessary to direct our choice.

With regard to the first: the man who is so conscious of the rectitude of his intentions, as to be willing to open his bosom to the inspection of the world, is already in possession of one of the strongest pillars of a decided character. The course of such a man will be firm and steady, because he has noth-

ing to fear from the world, and is sure of the approbation and support of Heaven; while the man, who is conscious of secret and dark designs, which, if known, would blast him, is perpetually shrinking and dodging from public observation, and is afraid of all around, and much more of all above him. Such a man may, indeed, pursue his iniquitous plans steadily; he may waste himself to a skeleton in the guilty pursuit; but it is impossible that he can pursue them with the same health-inspiring confidence, and exulting alacrity, with him who feels, at every step, that he is in the pursuit of honest ends by honest means. The clear, unclouded brow, the open countenance, the brilliant eye which can look an honest man steadfastly yet courteously in the face, the healthfully beating heart, and the firm elastic step, belong to him whose bosom is free from guile, and who knows that all his motives and purposes are pure and right. Why should such a man falter in his course? He may be slandered; he may be deserted by the world: but he has that within which will keep him erect, and enable him to move onward in his course with his eyes fixed on Heaven, which he knows will not desert him.

Let your first step, then, in that discipline which is to give you decision of character, be the heroic determination to be honest men, and to preserve this character through every vicissitude of fortune, and

in every relation which connects you with society. I do not use this phrase, "honest men," in the narrow sense, merely, of meeting your pecuniary engagements, and paying your debts; for this the common pride of gentlemen will constrain you to do. I use it in its largest sense of discharging all your duties, both public and private, both open and secret, with the most scrupulous, Heaven-attesting integrity: in that sense, farther, which drives from the bosom all little, dark, crooked, sordid, debasing considerations of self, and substitutes in their place a bolder, loftier, and nobler spirit: one that will dispose you to consider yourselves as born, not so much for yourselves as for your country and your fellow-creatures, and which will lead you to act on every occasion sincerely, justly, generously, magnanimously. There is a morality on a larger scale, perfectly consistent with a just attention to your own affairs, which it would be the height of folly to neglect: a generous expansion, a proud elevation, and conscious greatness of character, which is the best preparation for a decided course in every situation into which you can be thrown; and, it is to this high and noble tone of character, that I would have you to aspire. I would not have you to resemble those weak and meagre streamlets, which lose their direction at every petty impediment that presents itself, and stop, and turn back, and creep around, and

search out every little channel through which they may wind their feeble and sickly course. Nor yet would I have you to resemble the headlong torrent that carries havoc in its mad career. But I would have you like the ocean, that noblest emblem of majestic Decision, which, in the calmest hour, still heaves its restless might of waters to the shore, filling the Heavens, day and night, with the echoes of its sublime Declaration of Independence, and tossing and sporting, on its bed, with an imperial consciousness of strength that laughs at opposition. It is this depth, and weight, and power, and purity of character, that I would have you to resemble; and I would have you, like the waters of the ocean, to become the purer by your own action.

Let me illustrate this character, by supposing it in a given situation, and contrasting it, with its opposite, in the same situation.

Some of you may be, hereafter, disposed to embark in a public life: if so, and you belong to this high order of character, you will feel that it would be unjust, and therefore dishonest, to propose yourselves, or permit yourselves to be proposed for any office, to whose duties you do not feel that you are competent; for you would know that the assumption of any office, is an engagement to the public, to whom the office belongs, to fulfill its duties, and, you would undertake nothing that you could not

perform. You will, therefore, not consider what office is most desirable in itself; but what is most desirable with reference to your capacity to discharge its duties. You will compare, not superficially and conceitedly, but modestly and severely, your talents and attainments with the whole range of duties that belong to the office; and you will take care to qualify yourselves, eminently, for the discharge of those duties, before you seek it or accept it. You will make yourselves masters of all the facts, historical and political, which stand connected with it. You will invigorate, by exercise, those faculties of mind which must be called into exertion in the discharge of its duties. And, above all, you will raise yourselves to the high resolve to go for your country, and to devote yourselves, on every occasion, fearlessly and exclusively, to her honor, her happiness, her glory. Your ambition will be to enrol your names among those over whose histories our hearts swell, and our eyes overflow with admiration, delight and sympathy, from infancy to old age; and the story of whose virtues, exploits, and sufferings, will continue to produce the same effect, throughout the world, at whatever distance of time they may be read. It is needless, and it were endless to name them. On the darker firmanent of history, ancient and modern, they form a galaxy resplendent with their lustre. To go no

farther back, look for your model to the signers of our Declaration of Independence. You see revived in those men, the spirit of Ancient Rome in Rome's best day; for they were willing, with Curtius, to leap into the flaming gulf, which the oracle of their own wisdom had assured them could be closed in no other way. There was one, however, whose name is not among those signers, but who must not, nay, cannot be forgotten; for, when a great and decided patriot is the theme, his name is not far off. Gentlemen, you need not go to past ages, nor to distant countries. You need not turn your eyes to ancient Greece, or Rome, or to modern Europe. You have in your own Washington, a recent model, whom you have only to imitate to become immortal. Nor, must you suppose that he owed his greatness to the peculiar crisis which called out his virtues; and despair of such another crisis for the display of your own. His more than Roman virtues, his consummate prudence, his powerful intellect, and his dauntless decision and dignity of character, would have made him illustrious in any age. The crisis would have done nothing for him, had not his character stood ready to match it. Acquire his character, and fear not the recurrence of a crisis to show forth its glory. Look at the elements of commotion that are already at work in this vast republic, and threatening us with a moral earthquake that will

convulse it to its foundation. Look at the political degeneracy which pervades the country, and which has already borne us so far away from the golden age of the revolution; look at all "the signs of the times," and you will see but little cause to indulge the hope that no crisis is likely to recur to give full scope for the exertion of the most heroic virtues. Hence it is, that I so anxiously hold up to you the model of Washington. Form yourselves on that noble model. Strive to acquire his modesty, his disinterestedness, his singleness of heart, his determined devotion to his country, his candor in deliberation, his accuracy of judgment, his invincible firmness of resolve, and then may you hope to be in your own age what he was in his, "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of your countrymen." Commencing your career with this high strain of character, your course will be as steady as the needle to the pole. Your end will be always virtuous, your means always noble. You will adorn as well as bless your country. You will exalt and illustrate the age in which you live. Your example will shake, like a tempest, that pestilential pool, in which the virtues of our people are already beginning to stagnate, and restore the waters and the atmosphere to their revolutionary purity. The young will take you for their bright exemplar and their guide: the old will hail you as the resurrec-

tion of their patriot hopes; and virgins and matrons will bless you, for the benign influences you will shed on the happiness of society.

Now reverse the picture. Suppose you take for your model those little men, who sometimes gain, by their cunning, a momentary ascendency. You will learn from them, that real virtue, and patriotism, are the mere creations of a Utopian brain: and that, although it may be very well to have *the words* often on your lips, it would be folly and madness, in the extreme of Quixotism, to have *the things* in your hearts. That your business is to act, always coolly from the head, never from the heart. That you must take care to steel your nerves against the approach of sensibility, and keep the hearts in your bosoms as cold and as hard as adamant, lest you should be surprised into some genuine touch of sympathy, or some compunctious visiting of conscience, which may throw you off your guard, and unhinge all your plans. These men will teach you, by their example, whatever they may profess to the contrary, that every man is born for himself, and for himself only, and that, with regard to your country, you are to think of it, as Shakspeare's Pistol did of the world—"this world's mine oyster, which I with sword will open." In pursuance of this selfish philosophy, they will teach you that the *summum bonum* of life is your own political ad-

vancement, and that this holy end will sanctify all the means you may think proper to adopt for its accomplishment. They will instruct you that all other men were made for your use, and will tell you, with Jugurtha, and Sir Robert Walpole, that all men may be bribed, in some form or other: either in the form of money, or office, or promise; that, by skillful management, you may form and discipline around yourselves, such a band of devoted adherents, and give them such a location throughout the community, that by touching the spring nearest to you, you may set the whole machine, at once, into motion, and work it to your ends. That you must create as many alliances of interest as you can, throughout the community, and spread your web for rapid and extensive effect. That in forming these alliances, you are not to consider the respectability of the individual, but his fitness for your purposes. That ambition, like misfortune, must make us acquainted with strange bed-fellows: and, that, as your whole life is perfidy and treason against society, it would be foolishly nice and fastidious to object, either to the company or the services of a Judas Iscariot.

O, gentlemen, there is that inordinate ambition that makes the soul of an honest man sick but to contemplate it! You may talk of the corrupting power of avarice; but there is no such deadly and

desolating corrupter as ill-governed ambition. How often do we see those whom the Almighty had, in his mercy, formed to bless and honor their race, leap from this noble eminence to plunge and wallow in the mire of ambition! Who can look upon such a wreck without a sinking heart? Who can look upon that eye, in which the fire of every generous virtue once burned strong and bright: on that proud brow, on which Heaven had written only deeds of high emprise, and behold the one, blenched with conscious shame; the other, fallen, and furrowed, and haggard with guilt, without being disposed to utter curses on that ambition which had wrought this work of horror? Gentlemen, beware of ambition; or rather beware of that virulent ambition, which begins and ends in self, and consumes, like a cancer, all the virtues of the heart. If popularity have charms for you, cultivate a taste for that popularity only which follows virtuous deeds, and whose laurels will flourish in immortal green; and despise that poor ephemeral notoriety, (for it deserves no better name,) which is gained by base compliances with a vicious age; which is run after, and fished for, by cunning appeals to the prejudices of the moment; by the affected adoption and flattery of vulgar errors, which, in your hearts, you despise, by diffusing error and corruption among the people themselves, and thus poisoning the whole republic, in its

fountain-head. Despising all parties for men, with the whole tissue of their depraved and despicable works, be it your ambition to be purely and greatly useful, and to live for your country. In a word, let your ambition be that of Washington; the only kind of ambition that can benefit the public, or find a welcome in an honest heart.

But let us pass from this agitating view of the subject, to one more tranquil. Many of you will, probably, devote yourselves to professional, or still more, private pursuits. In all of them you will find the necessity of that masculine quality which is the chief subject of my address; and in all you will find that the firmest basis of this quality, is that pure good faith which I distinguish by the name of honesty. Do good to all men. Do harm to none. Cultivate peace and charity with all around you, so far as it can be done without giving countenance to their vices. Repress vice, both public and private, by your precept and example. Show the world, in your own lives, the beauty of virtue. Pursue your own calling, whatever it may be, kindly and fraternally towards your competitors; justly and honorably towards all men: but with inflexible decision, with invincible perseverance. Throw indolence behind you with one hand, and dissipation with the other; press forward steadily, calmly, vigorously, always tasking your powers to their utmost strength,

and resolved, so far as depends on yourselves, to reach the highest point of which you are capable. The ancients have told you, that if you wish to live after death, you must die while you live. You must die, at least, to the world of sensual indulgence and voluptuous idleness. You must dedicate your hours, whether solitary or social, to the development and invigoration of your intellectual faculties, and to the industrious cultivation and expansion of those moral qualities, which may enthrone you justly in the hearts of your countrymen, and enable you, by and by, to read your history in a nation's eyes. Pursue this course, and your success in life is almost certain. You will become useful citizens, and, so far as may be compatible with this state of things, you will become happy men. But, by the way of final warning on this head, take no short cuts either to wealth or fame. *Ne festinas locupletari; ne festinas glorificari.* Beware of avarice, whose bosom friend is knavery; and of that

> "Vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself,
> And falls on the other side."

Gentlemen, I have said that the discipline, which is to give you decision of character, is to be directed, first, to the firm resolve to do, always, what is right, at every peril; and, secondly, to the knowledge which is necessary to direct your choice. Of the

first I have spoken; permit me, now, to call your attention to the last.

Our knowledge is a compound of what we derive from books, and what we extract, by our own observation, from the living world around us. Both of these are necessary to a well-informed man: and, of the two, the last is, by far, the most useful for the practical purposes of life. You all know that the mere cloistered scholar is one of the most impotent and helpless of beings, when called to actual scenes of business. The worms, that feed on his books, are scarcely more imbecile. Whereas, on the other hand, the man who is wholly unlettered, but who has been from his childhood a keen and vigilant observer of what is passing around him, will acquire a sagacity and a tact that will make him a shrewd and dexterous manager of his own affairs, and often, a useful adviser to his neighbors. But, he will be exceedingly apt to be a cunning man, rather than a wise one; and he will be a prodigy, indeed, if he possess much of that liberality and elevation which literature is so eminently fitted to give. It is only the man who combines the teaching of books, with the strong and close observation of life, that deserves the name of a well-informed man, and presents a model worthy of your imitation. Such were Oxenstiern of Sweden, Ximenes of Spain, Sully of France, and Cecil, Lord

Burleigh, of England. Such have been the most distinguished men of your own country; and such is every man who is at once the scholar and the man of business.

But, both the acquisition of solid learning, and the sagacious observation of life, demand a clear and sound judgment. This is, indeed, an indispensable ingredient in that strength of character, which is certainly to fix your grade in society. Hence, gentlemen, it is to the cultivation of a sound judgment that you must direct your chief mental efforts. Young men are exceedingly apt to make a sad mistake on this subject. *Haud inexpertus loquor.* There is a pleasure in the indulgence of the lighter faculties, fancy, imagination, wit—and there is an admiration which follows their successful display, which youthful vanity can, with difficulty, resist. But, throw this brilliant youth into the same *arena* with an antagonist who has gone for strength of mind, and whose reason and judgment have been the chief objects of discipline, and you will soon see the sparkling diamond reduced to carbon and pounded to dust. The genius, himself, if he possess any *stamina*, will speedily discover that, if he does not mean to be "set down an *ass*," or, at the best, a splendid trifler, of but little account, he must change his battery, and learn to load with ball, instead of blank cartridge. I give you this warning,

that you may not waste your time in this marching and countermarching of your minds, but, that you may take the true direction at once, and hold it with undeviating constancy. I do not mean that, if you possess wit and fancy, you should seek to extinguish them; because they are often useful auxiliaries to the strongest reasoner. But I do mean that you should not mistake the auxiliary for the principal; ornamental qualities for business qualities; and waste on their culture that precious time, which should be given to the discipline of higher faculties.

My advice to you, then, is, to make your reason and judgment the primary objects of your attention. All the studies that will be offered to you here, will have a bearing, more or less, on these faculties, because they will all go to increase your general stock of knowledge, the materials on which reason and judgment work, and the armor with which they fight; and, because, in the acquisition of any one of them, reason and judgment must be, in some degree, exerted. Even in *Belles-Lettres*, the lightest and most dangerous, because the most fascinating of them all, you are compelled at every step to compare and to prefer; which is, at once, the exercise both of reason and judgment. Besides, throughout the whole empire of human knowledge, there are certain curious analogies, which are of

great use, not only to the writer and speaker, but to the thinker, with a mere view to private judgment; and, consequently, the more you enlarge your stock of knowledge, the more do you increase those stores of analogy and illustration, which constitute an essential part of your strength. Old-fashioned economists will tell you never to pass an old nail, or an old horse-shoe, or buckle, or even a pin, without taking it up; because, although you may not want it now, you will find a use for it, some time or other. I say the same thing to you with regard to knowledge. However useless it may appear to you at the moment, seize upon all that is fairly within your reach. For there is not a fact within the whole circle of human observation, nor even a fugitive anecdote that you read in a newspaper, or hear in conversation, that will not come into play some time or other; and occasions will arise when they will, involuntarily, present their dim shadows in the train of your thinking and reasoning, as belonging to that train, and you will regret that you cannot recall them more distinctly.

But, while this is true of knowledge in general, there are certain branches of education which are better fitted than others to strengthen your reason and clear your judgment; and, among the initiatory studies in use in our grammar schools, the best of them, in my opinion, is that on which we are

commonly first put, the study of the Latin language. It is a superficial error to consider it as a mere exercise of memory. It is one of the best exercises of youthful reason and judgment. I speak of it as it used to be taught, not being familiar with any modern innovations which may have taken place. The application of the rules of syntax, in parsing this language, is a continual exertion of reason and judgment. The fundamental rules are, indeed, not very numerous; but the qualifications and exceptions to them are almost infinite, and, to apply them promptly and correctly, in every case, demands an acuteness of discrimination, which compels the pupil to become a strict and severe reasoner, and a sound judge.

Again: the disentanglement of an involved sentence, under the guidance of those rules of concord and government, so as to render the sense neatly and clearly, is another beautiful exercise of reason and judgment. And, from the mass of synonymes which belong to both languages, the selection of the English word, which hits, with precision, the exact shade of the Latin, is another fine exercise, not only of reason and judgment, but of that subtile modification of them, which constitutes taste.

I am speaking of this language, merely, as a discipline of reason and judgment. I may add, that it

is eminently instructive, also, as to the best dress in which reason can appear. For there is a delicate and felicitous precision in this language, which gives out the idea with unrivalled clearness and beauty. The man who has acquired a decided taste for this language, and reads it, *con amore*, in its best authors, will, imperceptibly, imbibe from it a spirit of accuracy and elegance combined, that will render it difficult for him to express himself either coarsely or obscurely. He will be contented with no form of expression which will not enucleate the thought neatly, distinctly, and beautifully. The Greek is still more simple, and severely chaste, and has an energy and majesty better fitted for the sublime. But we are now on the discipline, merely, of reason and judgment; and, although I am aware that some distinguished men have spoken lightly of the dead languages, as of little or no use, yet, I must be permitted to speak of the market as my own fares and that of my neighbors have gone in it; and, thus speaking, I have no hesitation in advancing the opinion, that the radical acquisition of the dead languages is one of the finest intellectual *gymnasiums*, in which the reason and judgment of a young person can be trained.

Passing to later studies, mathematics claims the precedence. It is in this severe science that reason and judgment find their most masculine employ-

ment. It is in this that we learn to look through a series of naked and connected propositions, to a certain conclusion. It is in this that we learn to perceive, with accuracy, the strict dependence of proposition upon proposition, to combine them with strength, and to walk, on a right line, to the unerring result. Every man perceives, therefore, and admits at once, the inestimable value of this science, as a discipline of reason and judgment.

But, I must warn you of the danger of becoming so enamored of your mathematics, as to carry them on every occasion into the business of life. For moral truth does not admit of mathematical demonstration, and, to attempt it, would be to torture and lop truth on the bed of Procrustes. I knew once an astronomer, who was also a legislator, a learned and amiable gentleman, and, for many years, the chairman of the committee of finance in the General Assembly of the state. It was the constant effort of that gentleman's mind, to bring his favorite science of mathematics to bear on his legislative duties, and to make Euclidian demonstrations in political economy. But, he met with the fate of the traveling tutor, in one of Smollett's novels, who attempted to reclaim a libertine pupil by demonstrating to him, on the principles of plane trigonometry, the existence of a future state of rewards and punishment; he produced only a laugh,

when, in the simplicity of his heart, he looked confidently for conviction.

The business of life is conversant with moral truth, which admits no nearer approach than that of high probability, and cannot be subjected to rigorous demonstration. You must learn, therefore, to reason well for the business of life. To accomplish this, I know of no better method of discipline, than to read critically the works, and listen to the arguments of those who are most distinguished for the power of reasoning. As, for example, among the writers, Bacon, Hooker, Sidney, Locke, and a host of others, to whom their fame will, by and by, direct you. Mr. Locke recommends Chillingworth as a master teacher in the art of moral reasoning; but Mr. Locke himself is, in my opinion, greatly the superior of the two: and I beg leave to recommend to you, in an especial manner, as immediately connected with this subject, and as supplying the imperfections of this sketch, his masterly treatise "On the Conduct of the Understanding." Among other golden rules, which he gives us in that work, for the guidance of our reason, there is one to which I cannot forbear calling your attention; because I have observed that the neglect of it, is one of the most frequent causes of failure in our reasonings. Man, he observes, is a being of limited faculties, and from the indolence and

impatience which are natural to him, he is very apt to take short views of subjects, and to rest his conclusions on the few facts which lie immediately within his reach, regardless of those that are farther off, but which must be taken into the account, if he would avoid error. This rule is, never to precipitate your conclusion by an indolent or hasty view, but to look far and wide around you, with a scrutinizing inspection, and to be sure that nothing has escaped you which belongs to the just consideration of your subject. You are not to look at one side only of the case, on which, perhaps, your prepossessions lie; but to dismiss all prepossessions, and to examine both sides with equal candor and fullness; and, in order that you may do so, you are to imagine yourself the advocate first of one side, and then of the other. It is only by thus stating the account, fully and fairly, on both sides, without the omission of a single unit that belongs to either, that you will be able to ascertain on which side the balance stands. This is what Mr. Jefferson calls "seeing the whole ground;" and what Mr. Locke himself has called, "*large, sound, round-about sense*:" the only kind of sense worth the possession, either for the great or smaller concerns of life.

This comprehensiveness of mind is to be acquired by discipline; and, if nature has not altogether

denied the germ, it is inconceivable to what an extent it may be expanded by culture. With this view, one of the best exercises is to study, with ardent and intense curiosity, the operations of other minds, particularly of those which have been distinguished for extent and power. By observing the strength with which they grasp their subject, the vigor with which they traverse the whole field of inquiry, and the energy and skill with which they winnow the chaff from the grain, your own mind will take the impulse from theirs, until the momentum becomes habitually established. You can no longer trifle with any subject that you take in hand. You will go to work with the determination "*to think it out*," if I may borrow a phrase from a living giant; and, *delenda est Carthago*, will be your war-cry in every assault.

In this discipline, the rival theories of eminent metaphysicians is a good study. I speak of it as a mere exercise of reason. One can feel no great confidence in the theories of these gentlemen, which are continually supplanting each other, without giving us any new foothold that promises greater security than the last. They have reduced their battle-field to a perfect Golgotha, a place of skulls: and the last victor of the moment can only stand till another champion shall make his entry, to send him after his predecessors, and then to follow in

his turn. Their works, nevertheless, present a good study. They will teach you the valuable habit of self-observation; and show you how the mind can turn in upon itself, and expatiate among its own powers. Their adversary discussions will impress you with the importance of taking into the account all the facts which belong to any disquisition; and they will instruct and discipline you, by the vigor and address with which they push their arguments.

But this science, too, is not without danger as applied to the practical business of life. In this case, the danger is a propensity to over-refinement and subtilty. The man who has imbibed too much of the spirit of metaphysics, is seldom a prompt and able tactician, either in public or private affairs. In thinking, speaking, or acting, we must move forward with strong and bold steps. But the metaphysician hangs upon his point, until he has refined it to death, and his adversary has gained the goal, before he has fairly started.

Again: I have already suggested it as the duty of you all, as American citizens, whatever may be your destination in life, to understand *well* the Constitution of the United States: and it happens that in connection with this study, and in exposition of the instrument, there are, within your reach, several works which are among the finest models

of comprehensiveness and cogency of argument, that any country, in any age, has presented to the admiration and respect of the world. I allude to the justly-celebrated essays of the Federalist, and to the constitutional opinions of Chief Justice Marshall, of the Supreme Court of the United States. These are the works of giant minds, and it is impossible to peruse them without being filled with wonder at the force of the human understanding, and touched with a generous desire to emulate these achievements.

These works have another great advantage for those who aspire to the study and practice of eloquence. They give you the finest models of the nervous and the manly, and will teach you to despise the worthless tinsel with which young minds are apt to be caught and dazzled. They will teach you *to think strongly*, which should be your first object: and to *express your thoughts clearly and forcibly*, which completes the crown of intellectual greatness. Some of the numbers of the Federalist are illumined with the finest touches of beauty. But the flowers are never sought for; they spring up, fresh and spontaneous, in the track of thought, never encumbering, but always relieving and illustrating the course of the argument, and manifestly, starting, in the chasteness of their beauty, from a mind heated by its action on the principal theme.

Gentlemen, you must not despair of reaching the eminence on which these great men stand, because you cannot gain it by a single step. They gained it, as you must do, by toiling up the steep, *gradatims*, and with efforts that were frequently foiled, before their success became complete. *Omnia vincit labor.* Exert yourselves now, in proportion to your strength, and you will find your strength to increase by every new exertion. *Feret taurum qui tulit vitulum.* Lift the calf every day, and you will, by and by, be able, like Milo, to shoulder him when grown to an ox.

Gentlemen, the subject of education is inexhaustible. As long as I have detained you, I have yet done little more than to touch a few of its more prominent heads. These hints (for they deserve no better name) are not intended to be limited to the time you will employ here. They look farther. They look to the time after you shall have left college; and their chief design is to recommend the tone and complexion of character which you should labor to acquire, and support, with dignified consistency, through life. You do not, I hope, suppose that what you are to gain here is to constitute the whole of your education. If you do, you have taken a most erroneous view of the subject. This is the mere cradle, at best, the nursery of education. You learn to walk here; but it is not until

you shall have taken your place in the ranks of life, that you will learn to march, with the firm and well-measured step of the soldier. You will lay the foundation and acquire the rudiments of education here; you will acquire, too, I hope, those habits of systematic application, which are to operate through life; and you will, here, give that just direction to your moral and intellectual character, which it will be your passion to sustain till the hour of your deaths. But if your ambition be not that of an ephemeron, your whole life will be one of arduous study, and of progressive improvement, and enlargement. Your first step from the walls of the college will usher you on the stage of the world, where you will have it in your power to correct the theories of your books, by the close and constant inspection of actual life. It is on that theatre that we are to learn the use which you will have made of your time here. It will be in vain to show us your diplomas. We shall require higher evidence. Show us pure and steady habits; high-souled principles, and solid learning. Show us strength of character, as displayed in firmness of decision, and vigor of action, under the constant guidance of virtue and of sound judgment. Give to your country great and bright examples of genuine patriots and honest men. Teach your chil-

dren, and your children's children, how to live and how to die.

Gentlemen, I am about to take my leave of you, and, perhaps, shall never see you more. Indulge me, then, in a word at parting, without uttering which I cannot leave you with a tranquil conscience. I have endeavored to show you the road to worldly eminence. But I should be false to the trust which I have assumed, of communing with you freely on the subject of your happiness, if I did not tell you farther, that my own humble experience, so far as it has gone, accords with that of all men in all ages, that there is no worldly eminence nor any other good that this world can bestow, that will not leave you disappointed and unsatisfied. Pope has described our condition in a single line, with melancholy truth:

"Man never *is*, but always *to be* blessed."

Our happiness is never present, but always in prospect. We are constantly reaching forward to some object ahead of us, which we flatter ourselves will fill

"The craving void now aching in the breast."

Thus, Hope cheats us on, from point to point; and, at the close of a long life, however successful it may

have been, we find that we have been chasing meteors which have dissolved at the touch. We have, it is true, passing amusements, temporary gratifications, which satisfy us for the moment. This day, for example, is one of them. The society, the love, the applause of our friends is sweet. The admiration of the world is thrilling. But we soon collapse, and the same fearful void returns to haunt us. We strive to forget it, by plunging anew into business. We endeavor to fill our minds with new occupations, either serious or frivolous. We start new meteors, that we may run away from ourselves in the chase. We seize them, and they burst—and the same fearful phantom of desolation stands again before us. And so it must ever be, until we find some object that can fill an immortal spirit with its immensity, and satisfy those vast desires with which it is continually burning. Gentlemen, all experience confirms the truth of revelation, in this: that Religion is the only pure and overflowing fountain that can quench the thirst of our spirits, and give us ease and contentment, even in this world. Every thing else leaves us feverish, and restless, and fretful; irritated with trifles; harassed with a thousand real or imaginary evils; vexed with our disappointments, and mourning, like Alexander, even over our victories.

Lift up your eyes, then, to the Hills from whence

cometh all our help; and may the Being, who fills the Heavens and the Earth with His Immensity, bless you with that Peace, which this world can neither give nor take away!