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WITH THE RESPECTS OF MRS. B. F. PERRY.

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

LITERARY SOCIETIES

OF

Erskine College,

ABBEVILLE DISTRICT, S. C.,

ON THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY,

SEPTEMBER 18, 1844.

By B. F. PERRY.

Delivered forty-three years ago, and re-published by his wife, that his words
of wisdom may still benefit the rising generation.

GREENVILLE, S. C.

1887.

THIRD EDITION.

PHILOMATHEAN HALL, Sept. 18, 1844.

Major B. F. PERRY:

Sir:—We, the undersigned, having the honor of representing the Philomathean Society, after having heard your very eloquent and elaborate address on this day, do tender you our individual thanks for honoring us as you have done, and request a copy of same for publication, desiring that the noble and profound sentiments contained therein may be disseminated throughout our country.

Yours respectfully,

A. F. QUAY,
W. A. STOKES, } *Committee.*
J. F. DONALD, }

LINDSAY'S HOTEL, Sept. 18, 1844.

Gentlemen:—A copy of the address which I had the honor of making before you to-day is herewith sent you. It is at your disposal.

Permit me again to express to you the high gratification which your performances to-day have given me. They would have been creditable to any college in the Southern States. And I can but express my regret, that the modesty and diffidence of your learned president and professors have prevented their institution being so well known abroad as it ought to be. But their merits, and the merits of Erskine College, are destined to be known and appreciated by the whole country.

With great respect, gentlemen, I am yours, etc.

B. F. PERRY.

Messrs. QUAY, STOKES and DONALD, *Committee.*

ADDRESS.

An illustrious poet has said, more in the spirit of philosophy than of song, that "the proper study of mankind is man." The wisdom of this remark can but strike the mind of every one. It is not only the proper study of man to know his own faults and imperfections, to find out his own intellectual powers and ability, so that he may govern his passions and evil propensities, and cultivate judiciously those gifts of mind and body which God has bestowed upon him, but it is proper that he should study the lives and characters of his fellow-men, see *their* faults, and learn to imitate their virtues.

Nothing can conduce more to the improvement of the young mind than the reading and contemplation of the lives of great men—men who have borne an illustrious part in the affairs of this world. It is by knowing and studying their virtues, their noble deeds and heroic daring, that we are inspired with emulation and encouraged to imitate their noble examples. In the history of such men we are taught by example to turn from vice, and to admire and love virtue. We see how great and happy they have become, how much they have been honored, and what noble rewards they met for their well-doing in this life. And although in many instances their cotemporaries may have been ungrateful, yet succeeding generations have never failed to do them justice.

It is said that men are known and to be judged by the company they keep. That there is something in human nature which has a tendency to adapt itself to the circumstances which surround us must be obvious to

every one. And it is perhaps fortunate that we are so constituted—otherwise our unhappiness and discontent would be greatly augmented in this life. Is it not something, then, to be in company with the wise and great who have gone before us? In the study of biography we are in such company. We are made familiar with their lives, actions and thoughts, and they leave their impress upon our own characters and feelings.

No man ever read the autobiography of Franklin, and studied his character, without feeling himself a wiser and better man. The young, entering upon the trying and busy scenes of this world, feel themselves stimulated and encouraged by the trials and difficulties which beset the early path of that sage benefactor of mankind. In the character of Franklin there was a rare combination of wisdom, simplicity and greatness, without one feeling of envy or unkindness towards his fellow-men. His sole object in this life seems to have been to do good to others, and to prepare himself for doing the greatest good. There is no one whose life is more worthy of being read, or whose character can be studied to greater advantage.

He rose from the humblest walks of life, without education, and without the aid or assistance of any one, to be, in the language of the Earl of Chatham, "an ornament to human nature, and the admiration of all Europe." The secret of his rise and greatness was his industry and integrity of purpose. They naturally and necessarily lead to the cultivation of those other virtues which so beautifully adorn his character. And there is scarcely one in which he did not excel. He knew well that no one could be great or useful without industry, no matter what may be his talent or genius.

Let me here remark, that this principle cannot be too strongly impressed upon the minds of young men. In every pursuit of life, industry and application are everything. The human mind is so constituted that we cannot be altogether inactive. Employment of some

kind we must have. If not usefully and wisely employed, we shall certainly be engaged unwisely or viciously. Hence the absolute necessity of selecting some useful pursuit in life, and early learning habits of industry and study.

The industry of Franklin was as remarkable as his success in life was wonderful. Whilst an apprentice boy he lived on bread and water, in order to have time to read while his companions were gone to their meals. He was equally industrious in after life, wherever we see him, whether as an editor of a newspaper, the colonel of a regiment, a member of congress, the ambassador at foreign courts, or the sage and philosopher amidst the learned societies of Europe. He was a man of great observation as well as industry, and no opportunity escaped him, either at home or abroad in noticing and treasuring up the remembrance of everything which came before him. In this way he made many of his most important discoveries in natural philosophy. He tells us that he reaped the truth of a proverb which he was early taught by his father: "Seest thou a man diligent in his calling, he will stand before kings and princes." He had the honor not only of *standing* before many kings and princes, but even that of *sitting down* at the same table and dining with some of them.

Franklin's benevolence and justice were equal to his industry and economy. No one had the good of mankind more at heart than he had; no one ever labored more assiduously to improve the condition of his fellowmen. He practised what few seem to know, that the most acceptable service we can render our God is that of doing good to one another. He refused to take out patents for his important discoveries in the useful arts because they were discoveries which would lead to the comfort and benefit of mankind, and to the free enjoyment of them he would lay no restrictions. So high was his sense of justice that he gave to charitable and

public purposes all that he had saved from his salary whilst in the employment of his country.

Franklin united in his character the simplicity of a child with the wisdom of the sage. His boldest and most brilliant experiments in natural philosophy were conducted with a simplicity truly amazing. A silk cord, a key, and a piece of brown paper, were the only apparatus used by him in drawing down the lightnings from heaven.

The character of Washington is a noble and proud model for the study of the patriot and hero. History can give us no other example at once so perfect and so illustrious. He was an utter stranger to that feeling which has darkened the character of so many who have rendered great services to their country. He possessed a proud purity of purpose and magnanimity of spirit which never permitted him to entertain one selfish feeling—all that he did was for the good of his country, wholly and solely. He lost sight of himself altogether whilst in the service of his country. His greatness sprang from and rested on a pure heart and unerring judgment. He made no pretensions to the brilliancy of genius or the wisdom of learning. His only ambition was to be useful to his country. He cared not for power, and looked with indifference on mere honors. He accepted office only to render service to his country.

In the character of this great man there is one feature which we cannot study too much. Like Franklin, his aim through life was to master himself and have the control of his own feelings and passions. He was by nature a man of violent temper, strong feelings and passions. They would have often led him astray but for his command of himself. And his self-control was as perfect as his ambition was spotless.

How few are there in this world who make it their study to control and master their own passions and bad feelings! And yet how important is this study in the life of every one. How much of evil, how much of dan-

ger, and how much of misery and ruin should we avoid, if we were to do so. Franklin's self-scrutiny carried him so far as to make him keep a diary of his faults and errors. He not only rose in the morning with a determination to do well, and restrain all of his evil passions and propensities, but at night he inquired of himself whether he had done so, and wrote down every omission.

In the lives and characters of most great men, we shall find that their greatness is too often sullied by some weakness or glaring faults of character. Few men are perfect. But we may profit as much by the *faults* of great men as by their *virtues*. Like dark spots on a bright picture, we see them the more readily, and more deeply regret them on account of the brightness of the picture.

Such must be the feelings of every one in contemplating the character of Lord Bacon, who has been justly styled "the wisest, greatest, basest of mankind." He was endowed by nature with a mighty intellect, a genius which seemed to encompass the whole circle of human science. He had amassed treasures of learning which no one man ever before possessed. And yet, with all his genius and learning, he possessed weaknesses and faults which would have sullied the character of the humblest man who lived in his day and time. One would naturally suppose, too, that such a man, possessing a mind imbued with so much wisdom and philosophy, would soar above the ordinary vices and frailties of our nature. But not so. Lord Bacon has been charged with base ingratitude to his friend and patron, the Earl of Essex. He not only forgot all the magnificent presents which the noble earl had ever made him, and all the generous acts of kindness which he had received at his hands when poor and humble, but he sought the blood and life of his patron with all the insolence and vengeance of a malignant and unprincipled persecutor. He has likewise been charged with

bribery and corruption whilst discharging the high duties of Lord Chancellor of England.

That these charges are true, to the extent to which they have been made, may admit of some doubt. For his conduct towards the Earl of Essex there are some excuses offered by his biographer. But no excuse can palliate the crime of ingratitude so wanton and so foul. That he received money from suitors whilst Lord Chancellor is very certain; but it was then the custom and habit of that court. And although Lord Bacon never refused money which was offered him as a bribe, he nevertheless decided all of his cases according to law and equity, without being influenced by the bribe which he had pocketed.

The great faults in the character of Lord Bacon grew out of his want of firmness—a natural defect in his character, which no genius or learning could supply. But for this infirmity, terrible as it proved in its consequences, his character would in all probability have been as bright as his genius was illustrious. He wanted firmness to resist the overtures and commands of his sovereign. Owing to this, he engaged in the prosecution of his early friend and patron, instead of boldly resigning his office, and giving up all future honors at the Court of Elizabeth. Owing to this want of firmness, he was induced by the threats and persuasions of King James and his infamous minister, the Duke of Buckingham, to plead guilty to all the charges of high crimes and misdemeanors which had been preferred against him. Had he possessed the high, indomitable courage which should have belonged to his genius, he could have defended himself with great plausibility, if not with entire success. But then the odium which fell on his head would have had to be borne by the king and his favorite minion.

Without firmness and high moral courage no man can act correctly, no matter how pure his principles may be. Without firmness no man is to be depended on in any

great emergency. He may know the proper course to pursue, and resolve to pursue it, but he will not be able to resist the importunities and threats of those who would mislead him.

In his philosophy, Lord Bacon manifested as much boldness and originality as he did meanness and subserviency in politics and law. This was because he had not to contend with his fellow-man. He was left in the field of philosophy to his own genius. And it is strange that one should have the boldness to explore the mysteries of nature, and to pry into the highest works of his God, and yet want *firmness* enough to resist the importunities of an unprincipled courtier. However corrupt Lord Bacon may have been in law and politics, or friendship and morals, he was perfectly pure and correct in his philosophy. In other matters he may have sought honors, or been mercenary in his feelings, but in this, his great system of philosophy, he sought only *truth*.

Lord Bacon lived in the most illustrious age of English history, and was surrounded by many of the greatest and most remarkable men the world ever produced. Shakespeare and Ben Jonson were his cotemporaries. Lord Coke was his great *rival* at the bar and his *victor* at the shrine of beauty. The learned, brilliant and accomplished Sir Walter Raleigh flourished at the same court, as did the equally unfortunate Essex. But the genius of Bacon was towering invisibly high above them all—no one approached him, and no one was to be compared to him. He stood alone in the greatness of his learning and the splendor of his mighty genius.

To pass from the character of Lord Bacon, the great statesman, lawyer and philosopher, to that of Napoleon Bonaparte, the hero and conqueror, is easy and natural, although they differ so widely in many of their essentials of greatness. Bonaparte, without any learning, to be called by that name, possessed a genius more gigantic, an intellect more mighty than ever before fell to the lot

of human nature. No one can read his life and study his character without being struck with awe as to the extent of his genius and ability. What others learned by hard study and laborious research, he seemed to have by intuition. He had scarcely ever read a legal principle in his life, and yet in the formation of the Napoleon Code he showed himself more familiar with the principles of law than the wisest and most learned lawyers of France. As a civil ruler he never had an equal. It is doubtful whether all the sovereigns of the earth, from the creation of the world to the present time, could furnish, if their rarest and highest gifts were selected, the materials to compose so great a governor of mankind and ruler of nations as Napoleon Bonaparte.

As an orator few men ever equalled him, if we are to judge of eloquence by the effects which it produces on the audience. Bonaparte would say more striking things in a speech of ten minutes than was ever said in an hour by Cicero or Demosthenes. He could accomplish the intended effect of a speech before the polished Roman or Athenian would be able to get through the exordium. As a writer his style is worthy of being taken as a model by every one who wishes to express his ideas in the fewest words and in the most forcible manner. He is also the most voluminous writer the world has ever produced. It is said by Allison, in his charming history of Europe, that Napoleon wrote more than Voltaire, Bolingbroke and Sir Walter Scott, all put together. This he did in the midst of his army on the field of battle, and whilst governing, with the minutest particularity, the varied interests of the millions who were subject to his sway.

As a general he surpassed all the conquerors who had ever preceded him. It is true that Alexander was a younger man than Napoleon when he made his Eastern conquests, and the countries subdued may have equalled those conquered by Napoleon in population and extent of territory, but the Persians, Egyptians and Indians.

were an effeminate and luxurious people, and never have been able to withstand a hardy, disciplined and organized force. The conquests of Great Britain at this time in a portion of that country, show the facility with which an army may pass through these Eastern nations. There seems to be something in the climate of a Southern people which enervates and enfeebles them.

Hannibal may, with more propriety, be compared to Napoleon as a general. There is some analogy between them and their fortunes. They both had to contend with the same difficulties in many instances, and they both fought against disciplined forces, experienced generals and a highly civilized people. They were both highly successful for a time, and were both ultimately conquered; but Napoleon knew how to improve on a victory and secure a country when once conquered. This the Carthaginian seems not so well to have understood.

Julius Cæsar and Napoleon Bonaparte were very much alike in their characters and conduct as generals—attending to the comforts of their soldiers, enduring fatigue, exposing themselves to danger, robbing the conquered countries to maintain their own armies and corrupt their own citizens. They were alike in the rapidity of their movements and the secrecy of their attack. But Cæsar's conquests were all made over a barbarous and half-civilized people, except the conquest of his own country. In point of intellect there may also be instituted some sort of comparison. Julius Cæsar was one of the first orators of Rome—perhaps next to Cicero himself. He was also a beautiful writer, as may be seen by his Commentaries. That he was a wise and successful governor of mankind cannot admit of a doubt.

The great fault in Bonaparte's character was his *selfishness*. This led to all the errors of his life. He was by nature kind-hearted and affectionate. There was nothing of cruelty in his temper or disposition, except when it became necessary to promote his own

selfish views. He loved Josephine ardently and passionately; she had shared with him his humbler fortunes, and had patiently endured with him the fatigues of some of his campaigns; but he put her away and married a woman whom he had never seen, because she was the Arch Duchess of Austria, and he was anxious to have an heir to his throne. He loved his brothers, and made them kings and princes; and yet he treated them like slaves for the gratification of his own ambition. He loved his officers and crowned them with honors, wealth and distinction; he was as kind as a father to his soldiers, and has been seen administering with his own hand to the humblest wants on the field of battle; he studied the comforts of his army with a philanthropy which would do credit to a Howard; he has been known to yield his own horse to his sick soldiery, and expose his life in the hospitals of Egypt attending to their comforts. But in order to gratify his unhallowed ambition to gain a battle or conquer a nation, or add a new laurel to his brow, he would sacrifice officers and men by thousands and hundreds of thousands.

In one respect he was certainly the opposite of Lord Bacon. There was no want of firmness in his character. His courage was indomitable. Nothing could shake it. To his mind there were no terrors. He cared not for the combined forces of Europe. With an army of fifty thousand men he would undertake to conquer one of three hundred thousand. We see him, almost solitary and alone, escaping from Elba, and throwing himself into the midst of an army of ten thousand, sent to capture him. Without an army, and without a dollar in his treasury, we see him putting himself in hostile array to the combined forces of England, Austria, Prussia and Russia. Neither power nor wealth, nor the smiles of beauty, nor the fascinations of glory and fame could make him yield or falter in his resolution.

But for his selfishness, Napoleon would have been one of the *best*, as well as one of the *greatest* of men.

His fame would have been sullied by no crime, though it might have been far different from what it is in splendor and brilliancy. But in how many characters, great and small, do we see this same fault blazing forth conspicuously and marring and destroying all that is beautiful or useful in their lives. How common a fault is it in the character of mankind. We find it more or less in the heart of every one. How hard, therefore, should we endeavor to guard against it. In the character of Bonaparte, how fatal was it. With what crimes did it cover him all over. For twenty years it destroyed the peace of Europe, over-turned Empires, subdued nations, and destroyed the fairest and richest cities of the earth.

There is much to study in the character of Dr. Johnson, the great moralist—many traits to admire and some to condemn. His life, as written by Boswell, is, perhaps, the most admirable specimen of biography to be found in the English language. It makes us thoroughly and minutely acquainted with the man. And how different does Dr. Johnson appear in the pages of Boswell from any character which we may form of him from his own writings. In fact this great leviathan of literature had two characters—the character in which he wrote, calm, dignified and philosophical—and the one in which he spoke, which was impatient, violent and rude, approaching vulgarity. He was overbearing and insulting in his conversation and intercourse with his fellow-men. But in his writings he acts and speaks the moralist and philosopher in every line. His style of writing is stiff and formal, showing great labor of thought in the formation of his sentences. But he conversed in a free, easy and natural style.

Dr. Johnson was a man of great learning and ability, great labor and industry, but not regular in his studies or mental efforts. He was a most kind-hearted and charitable man, but he had no respect for the feelings of others. No man would relieve physical want or suffer-

ing more cheerfully than Dr. Johnson, or make greater sacrifices to do so; but he would inflict the greatest mental anguish without being moved, and do it with a deliberation truly savage. He was a man of great and sincere piety, but his religion was not free from the blindest superstition. With all of his strength of intellect he was possessed of weaknesses which would be laughed at in a child. He believed in ghosts and would always enter the house with a particular foot first, never being known to enter with the other foremost. He was a very patriotic man, but he most cordially despised those who differed with him in politics, although they were equally patriotic with himself. Such were some of the inconsistencies in the character of this great man, and they are found in some measure, in the character of every one.

Dr. Johnson had great confidence, as well he might have, in his virtue, morality and piety. He was a philosopher, and could advise others to look with indifference on this life and all its charms and pleasures. He was wedded to no absorbing pleasure, and had no strong ties or attachments to bind him to this world. And yet he could never contemplate death without the greatest horror. The idea of dying would always fill his mind with terrors unspeakable.

But the great fault in his character was his want of manners, his violence, his rudeness and his coarseness. If he had tried as hard to improve his temper and manners as he did to treasure up learning, he might have left behind him a more enviable character; one which we could study and imitate to much greater advantage. The scholar and learned man is too apt to disregard the study and practice of those courtesies and amenities of life which make our intercourse with each other pleasant and agreeable. Manners are to be acquired as well as science and literature, and they are just as important to us through life.

One of the proudest and noblest characters in English history is that of John Hampden. He was a gentleman

by birth and education. He was a gentleman in manners, feelings and intercourse with his fellow-men; a country gentleman of learning, talents, high honor and noble patriotism. He was a bold and disinterested man, modest and unassuming; he never thrust himself forward in the world. When a great and terrible crisis came in the affairs of his country, he cheerfully took the position of danger and responsibility; he placed himself at the head of those who were contending for the constitutional rights and liberties of England, and nobly did he sustain his position. His character may well be studied. It is a model for the gentleman, the scholar, the statesman, the patriot and the noble and disinterested man. His firm spirit and high sense of justice could not see the laws and chartered rights of his country trampled upon by a tyrannical and perfidious sovereign without nobly exposing his person, his fortune and his life in their defence. He was the more moderate of his party, and the most disinterested of all who thought of opposition to Charles the First. But no sooner did he hear that the great privilege of an English Commoner, that of granting supplies, was to be taken from him, and taxes levied in the shape of ship money, that he determined not to pay those taxes, however trifling his share of them might be. Unfortunately for his country, unfortunately for English liberty and the cause of humanity, he fell in the first skirmish which took place between the King and his Parliament. For purity of purpose, devotion to the principles of constitutional liberty, high and unflinching firmness in defence of those principles, he has had; but one equal; that was Washington; and like Washington, his public career is faultless. Well may he be taken as the patriot model.

The character of the Earl of Chatham, the great Commoner of England, is that of a proud patriot, possessed of all the greatness of a bold and fearless statesman, brilliant and overpowering in his eloquence, but with none of the simplicity of true greatness. Every

thing which he did, every word which he uttered was done for effect. He was, indeed, as his critics have said of him, a stage actor. His whole life was a piece of acting, but it was noble, brilliant and dazzling. He was, however, a pure patriot, incorruptible, and if ambitious of power, it was only for the purpose of serving his country more effectually.

The eloquence of Chatham was of the highest order. The speaking of no man perhaps ever produced a more grand effect on his audience. His denunciations, his sarcasm, his scorn, were terrible and overpowering. Much, however, of the effect which his speeches produced, was no doubt owing to his manner. He spoke to a few hundred persons and not to the English nation. His speeches were not to be reported, and therefore his only care was about their immediate effect. He believed with the great Athenian orator, that action was everything where a speech was only to be heard. But action is nothing when the speech is to be read, and all speeches are now made with that view. There can be no doubt that this fact has had a most fatal effect on modern eloquence. No longer do we witness in the halls of legislation the fire and energy of Demosthenes or the thunder and lightning of Chatham. In their places, we have a cold and verbose eloquence which, instead of firing up and carrying off the feelings of the audience, only tends to make them more dull and lethargic.

The difference between listening to a speech and reading it cannot be better illustrated than by reference to the speeches of Edmund Burke and Patrick Henry. The English language does not afford speeches more profound, more philosophic, more brilliant or more eloquent than those of Burke. His style is indeed rich and magnificently ornate, but the statue is worthy of the drapery. His argument and illustrations are as able and as beautiful as his language is ornamental. Whilst reading his speeches, we know not whether

most to admire, his profound reasoning or his rich and gorgeous style. One would suppose from reading these speeches that the eloquence of such an orator would have been irresistible and overpowering—that the stillness of death would have prevailed whilst one of them was being delivered in the House of Commons, and that crowds would have gathered from all parts of the great metropolis of England to hear them. But how different was the fact. Burke could never get a respectable audience to listen to one of his speeches. The announcement of his intention to speak was literally a clearing of the House. Even friendship and respect for the speaker could not induce many to bear the infliction of his dullness. One of his speeches, that on American taxation, was said to be so dull that an intimate friend could not endure its delivery, but sneaked out of the House of Commons under tables and benches to prevent being seen. The next morning, however, when that speech was reported in the London papers, this friend not only read it, but wore out the newspaper in reading it over and over again.

How different are the speeches of Patrick Henry. The thrill of his eloquence has become traditionary in Virginia, and yet tradition cannot tell us what he said. The effect is remembered, and has been repeated from father to son, but the words were forgotten as well as the sentiment or idea expressed. His powers as an orator were, however, irresistible. No one ever thought of leaving the Virginia House of Burgesses whilst Patrick Henry was speaking. Nor did his audience think of anything else whilst he was speaking, except what fell from his lips. He held them spell-bound, physically and mentally. Their thoughts, their reason, their judgment, and their feelings were all, for the time being, surrendered to him, and he made them think, feel and act as he pleased.

Fortunately for the fame of his eloquence few of his speeches have been handed down to us. Those that we

have, and some of them were regarded as his greatest efforts, are so destitute of all the essentials of great speaking and eloquence, that they would do no credit to a school boy. Whilst reading them we naturally inquire of ourselves whether it is possible such speeches could have come from the Virginia Demosthenes; and above all, whether they could have produced the wonderful effects they did on the people of Virginia.

In the Virginia debates on the adoption of the Federal Constitution, we have the speeches of Patrick Henry, Chief Justice Marshall and James Madison, thrown side by side. Henry was incomparably the most eloquent of the three, if we judge from the reputation they have left behind them. But it will not do to compare their written speeches. We had as well think of instituting a comparison between the efforts of a young Sophomore and those of a profound statesman and orator.

We have a few of the speeches of Lord Chatham. Those that we have are more the speeches of Johnson and the other reporters than they are of Chatham. None of his speeches were written out by himself, or even corrected by him. They must, therefore, be badly reported; but after making these just allowances they fall very far short of his reputation as an eloquent and powerful debater. It is said that Lord Chatham was nothing in reply—that he did not care for the last word in debate, which was always a matter of so much importance to his great rival, Lord Holland. Like Demosthenes, he could say nothing unless he had thought beforehand on the subject.

This trait in the character of certain great orators deserves our serious consideration. It is said that Demosthenes never could be induced to take a part in any discussion without previous preparation. When called on by the Athenians to reply to some one who had spoken, he kept his seat, and could not be induced to speak. But Demosthenes was a mere orator. He was

not, like Cicero, an accomplished scholar and profound statesman—a man of great learning and science. Hence the reluctance which he had to speaking without preparation. It is idle to suppose that any one can speak well on a subject which he has not thought of and studied at some period of his life. And, on the contrary, it is an easy matter for any one to speak on a subject familiar to his mind, and which he thoroughly comprehends. Nothing can be more erroneous than the idea that some men are more eloquent without any preparation at all. If they had been eloquent on the spur of the occasion, it is always owing to the fact that the subject has long occupied their thoughts and feelings. If they had not studied the subject of their speech the day before, they had the year before, or at some previous time.

It was thought of Sheridan, that many of his most magnificent bursts of eloquence were *impromptus*—that they were made extempore, and without previous thought or preparation. But instead of this having been the case, it was afterwards discovered that he had written out at length all of those eloquent speeches which seemed to have been the production of the moment. He had, however, studiously concealed his labor and preparation from his associates. Such, too, will be found to be the case with all ready and eloquent speakers. It is a mistake to suppose that any one can be great without an effort—and equally mistaken is the notion that any one can be eloquent without study.

Eloquence and liberty are congenial. They have always flourished together. The one cannot exist without the other. And the world knows nothing of eloquence, except as it existed in Greece and Rome, and still exists in England and America. The French nation never produced an orator until the spirit of liberty burst asunder the chains which had so long enslaved that people. The first germs of French eloquence are to be found in their Revolutionary assembly.

Mirabeau is, perhaps, the first Frenchman who deserves the name of an orator, and he was by far the greatest, as well as the first. His eloquence was of the most powerful and commanding order. He governed the National Assembly from the time he first took his seat in it to the day of his death, with absolute power. He was a man of great talents, great boldness, commanding person and huge, hideous, though intellectual head and face. He was a nobleman by birth, but had been rejected by his own order in the elections. He then became the representative of the people, and swore vengeance against that nobility from whose confidence and society he had been expelled. During this stormy period of French history there arose many orators and eloquent men. They disappeared, however, as soon as the tyranny of Robespierre had gained the ascendancy.

On the accession of Napoleon to power, he soon suppressed what little of eloquence had again sprung up in the French Chamber of Deputies. But he was the great and munificent patron of literature, the arts and sciences. And how different is the spirit of literature from that of eloquence. The one seems as naturally to seek the quiet and stillness of despotism as the other does the rough and stormy violence of liberty.

In the existence of great men there is one thing remarkable. If we look into ancient and modern history we shall see that most great men have existed in clusters. They have seldom appeared solitary and alone, but have always had cotemporaries and associates in their greatness. Homer and Hesiod, the most ancient of poets, and still the most remarkable, were supposed to have lived about the same time. Herodotus, the father of historians, was the cotemporary of Thucydides and Xenophon, two of the most beautiful of ancient historians. Sophocles, Euripides and Æschylus, the most distinguished dramatic poets of Greece, flourished about the same era. In philosophy, there were living at the same time, Socrates and Plato—the tutor and pupil

teaching the immortality of the soul; and inculcating the sublimest principles of morality and virtue. Demosthenes flourished with many orators, Lysias, Isocrates and others, who would have been more conspicuous but for his own great and overshadowing eloquence. He was also the cotemporary of Aristotle, the most distinguished of ancient philosophers. And Aristotle was the friend and tutor of Alexander, the greatest captain and conqueror of antiquity. Themistocles, Aristides and Alcibiades, the most eminent of Grecian statesmen, were all cotemporaries and rivals.

If we examine Roman and English history we shall find the coincidences of greatness at particular eras equally as remarkable. Cicero, the greatest of Roman orators, was the cotemporary of Julius Cæsar, the greatest of Roman generals. The Augustan age of Rome was distinguished by a galaxy of great names—great in everything but eloquence. The capital and mistress of the world had then lost too much of the spirit of liberty for eloquence to flourish within her walls. But she was great in literature, science, refinement and civilization. Horace and Virgil at this period lived and wrote their immortal poems. Many others might be mentioned.

In England, I have already referred to the age of Queen Elizabeth, when Lord Bacon, Sir Edward Coke, the Cecils, Sir Walter Raleigh, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and others, almost equally illustrious, lived and flourished. I have also spoken of another period of English history which produced the Earl of Chatham, Dr. Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke and Lord Holland. Charles James Fox, who has been called the Demosthenes of England, and William Pitt, the great statesman, who became Prime Minister of England at the age of twenty-four, were the sons of Lord Holland and the Earl of Chatham, and may be referred to the same age. Dr. Oliver Goldsmith was also their cotemporary, than whom the world has pro-

duced few poets more beautiful, or prose writers more elegantly simple and natural. About the same era there lived Burns, the immortal ploughman of Ayrshire and poet of Scotland. The age of Queen Anne is another period in English history, bright with a galaxy of illustrious names. Addison, Pope, Swift and Steele were amongst those who adorned and elevated the literature of England at that time.

If we were to examine the histories of France, Germany, Italy and Spain, we should find coincidences equally as remarkable. The history of America, too, would afford many instances. I will mention one. It is near us. The District of Abbeville has produced *four men*, who are now living, and one of whom would be enough to have immortalized an age or a nation. The proudest period of Roman greatness would have been adorned by such a man as Langdon Cheves: For greatness of intellect, profound wisdom, boldness and purity of purpose, he has no superior. He has discharged the duties of every station which he has filled with an ability which has never been surpassed. As a Judge, he was learned and profound; as a member of Congress he displayed great wisdom, and an industry and ability which have been seldom equalled; as a financier, at the head of the great banking institution of the country, he evinced a boldness, a sagacity and wisdom which have never been surpassed. The honor of his birth is due to Abbeville District—the city of Charleston, however, claims the double honor of having distinguished, and been distinguished by him.

John C. Calhoun, as every one knows, owes his birth to this District. Had he been born in England instead of the United States, he would have graced the brightest period of her history. As an orator and parliamentary debater, he would have ranked with the Foxes and Pitts. As a man of genius and a brilliant statesman, he would not have been surpassed by the proudest names of which England can boast. In private life he

has always sustained a character pure and spotless. His career in Congress was a most brilliant one. He entered the House of Representatives a very young man, immediately preceding the declaration of war, and his devotion to business, united with his genius and ability, soon placed him at the head of that body, filled, as it was, by the greatest men the country afforded.

General McDuffie, though not a native of Abbeville District, was educated and brought up in it, and now resides here, after having long represented the District in Congress with distinguished honor to himself and country. As an orator, his bold and fearless eloquence at the bar, in the House of Representatives, and in the Senate of the United States, has placed him amongst the most distinguished speakers of this or any other age. For many years he had no equal, no rival in the halls of Congress. He stood, as it were, alone, the master spirit of that great assembly, towering far above his compeers and associates.

James L. Petigru is a native of Abbeville District. He is known only as a lawyer, and an upright, pure and noble-hearted man. Like Sir Samuel Romily, he has devoted himself to his profession, and in learning and ability he is surpassed by no one, either in the United States or England. The resemblance between him and Romily is not altogether professional. There are many traits in their characters strikingly similar. They were both of French descent, and rose from the humbler walks of life. There is a simplicity, a benevolence and a pureness in the character of both which we seldom meet with. They were both devoted to their profession, and cared not to mingle in public affairs. Like the great English lawyer, Mr. Petigru is the admiration of his friends and associates.

There are many others, natives of Abbeville District, who might be named, filling high places in this and other States. When we see such a cluster of great men, all springing from one district, at one and the same

time, well may that District claim to be the Athens of South Carolina. Well may she, like the Roman matron, when asked for her jewels, point to her sons.

But Abbeville has now given another claim to this distinction. She has not only sent forth her sons, like the proud city of Greece, to fill the highest offices within her own and the neighboring States and the Confederation, and to receive the highest and noblest honors which their country can bestow, but she has now erected a College, where her sons, and the sons of her neighboring Districts, and the adjoining States, may reap the advantages of a thorough and complete education. No higher evidence can be given of the virtue, intelligence and intellectual attainments of any people, than the establishment of schools and colleges. Nor can any stronger guarantee be offered that a people will remain wise and virtuous.

The founders and patrons of Erskine College will long receive the gratitude and thanks of the country. Their sagacity and wisdom were shown in the location of this institution. It too frequently happens that where schools and colleges are founded in towns and cities, the temptations to dissipation and extravagance are so great that it may well be questioned whether the students derive more of benefit or injury from their collegiate course. Here they are removed from all such temptations, and their only pride and ambition must be to excel each other in their studies. The foppery and frippery of dress cannot excite their jealousy or rivalry.

The students of this institution will go hence, with their minds imbued with the great principles of science and literature, virtue and religion. These are the foundation on which their future happiness, fame and prosperity must depend. From other similar institutions, surrounded with all the fascinations of vice and extravagance, it too often happens that the student carries with him into the world, feelings, principles and habits, there contracted, which prove his ruin and

destruction. The fond parent, instead of being proud of him, for his virtues and attainments, will have to repent in pain and sorrow, the disgrace and misery which their love and kindness have brought upon one of their own offspring.

GENTLEMEN OF THE "PHILOMATHEAN SOCIETY:" I have the pleasure of distributing amongst you the honors which your talents, industry and good behavior have won for you. Here they are—take them, as the just rewards of your merit—but do not look upon them as filling the measure of your fame and usefulness. Instead of having passed through the labors of your life, you are now only on the verge of them. Your education, instead of being finished has only commenced. The foundation is laid, nothing more. You are to build hereafter the superstructure. If you have been heretofore industrious, you must still be more so, as you advance in life, and your cares and responsibilities increase. Do not flatter yourselves with the belief that this life is one of ease and pleasure. We were placed here by an all-wise Being for higher and nobler purposes than the mere enjoyment of idle pleasures.

Let me entreat you, gentlemen, by all that can endear you to life, to apply yourselves at once to your different professions and pursuits. Enter on the study of them immediately, and steadily persevere in them, as long as you live. Never permit yourselves to be disheartened, or to hesitate in your onward course. Industry and prudence, honor and integrity, will never fail to crown your exertions with success.

You were told by the learned, eloquent and pious Judge who addressed you on your last anniversary, that the end and aim of all our exertions was happiness. Let me tell you that idleness and happiness can never exist together—I care not how much of wealth, luxury and splendor may surround you, if you wish to be happy, you must not be idle. It was intended by the Creator of all things that we should all labor. By the sweat of his brow man is to gain his livelihood.

If you select one of the learned professions for a pursuit in life, you must not do so under the impression that it will not be necessary for you to labor. Your life, on the contrary, if you aspire to any of the honors and distinctions of your profession, will be one of endless labor. And whilst you are pursuing your studies or profession, let me beseech you to avoid all temptations which may be thrown in your way. Avoid all bad company, all evil or idle associates, as you would shun vice itself. You will very often meet with persons high in life, surrounded by wealth and fame, who are idle and vicious. Shun them and their society as you would a pestilence. By your associates are you known, and every one of you must rise or fall to the level of the company you keep.

The next danger I would caution you against, is that of giving way to your passions of anger and resentment. Be slow unto wrath, is the command of our holy and blessed religion. Never cease to bear in mind that it is more magnanimous to forgive than to resent an injury. True courage is more often tested by the one than the other. A coward is very often tempted to resent some insult or imaginary grievance, whilst a brave man only has courage to forgive or pass it by unnoticed. Be sure that you are always right, and no circumstance can then force you into any personal altercation with your fellow-man.

The painful and agonizing event which has so recently cast a melancholy gloom over the walls of this institution, and filled your hearts with the bitterest pangs of sorrow and mourning, should be an awful warning to you through life, to restrain your feelings and govern your passions. In a moment of thoughtless excitement and passion, caused by some trivial and unimportant consideration, a fellow-student, filled with high hopes and expectations, has fallen by the hand of his College companion, who, perhaps, had never entertained towards him any other than feelings of kindness and love. How

forcibly does this sad and painful catastrophe illustrate to us the truth of the remark, that when passion rules, reason is dethroned—we are no longer masters of ourselves.

In conclusion, gentlemen, let me impress on you, as you are about to leave this institution, to carry with you and treasure up in perpetual remembrance, those great principles of virtue, morality and religion, which have been taught you by your learned President and Professors. If you are disposed to regard your happiness and prosperity in this life, and your future welfare in a world to come, these are the lessons to which your minds will most often revert, and which will be the last to depart from your memories. You have been long associated as companions and friends. Let me assure you that early friendships, like early lessons of piety and religion, are the most permanent. You are now going to separate, perhaps forever. In all human probability, your destinies may be cast in different and distant countries. You may never meet again in this world—but let this be your bond of union and sympathy. At night, when you have offered up your prayers to God, and in the morning, when you have returned your thanks for your preservation during the past night, let your thoughts revert to your *Alma Mater*, and her lessons of wisdom and religion, which were taught you all in common. Go, prosper and be happy. My earnest and fervent prayers go with you.

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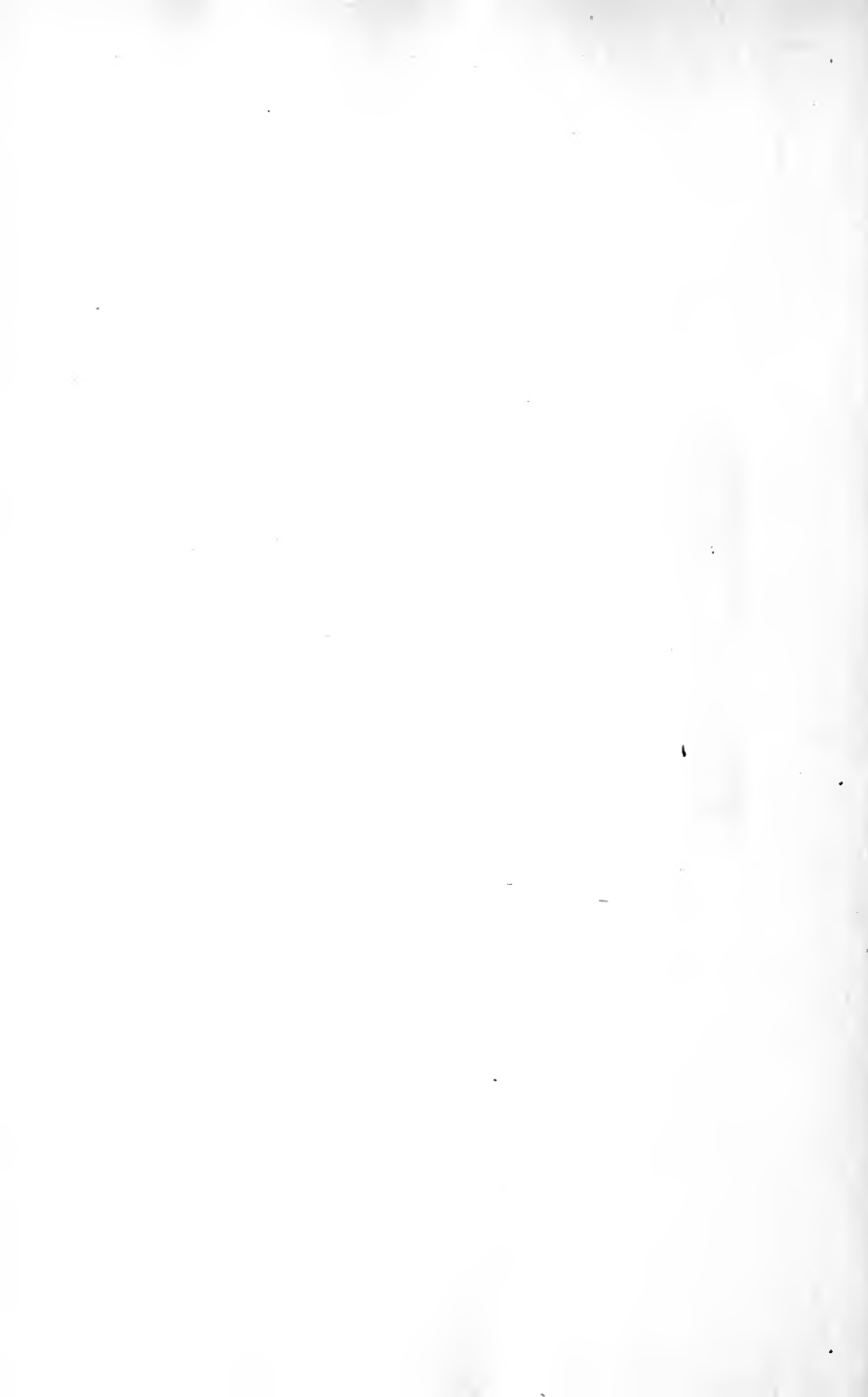
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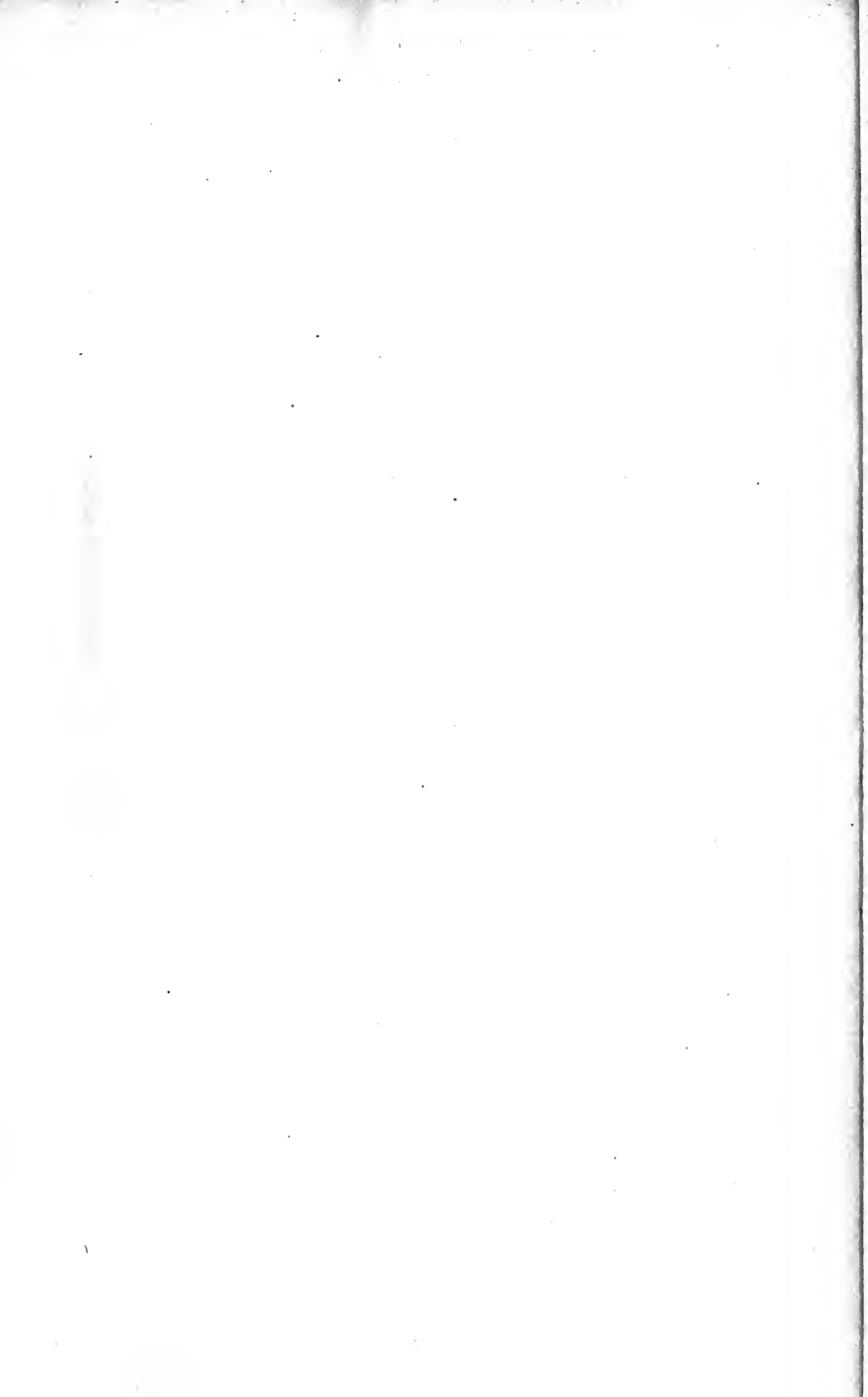
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