

THE
College of
INAUGURAL ADDRESS,

I.
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OF

PROF. E. L. PATTON.

DELIVERED BY REQUEST

OF

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

OF

ERSKINE COLLEGE;

AUGUST 7TH, 1855.

DUE WEST, SOUTH CAROLINA.
TELESCOPE OFFICE.

1855.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

PHYSICS 309

LECTURE 10

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Correspondence.

ERSKINE COLLEGE, *August 8th, 1855.*

MR. E. L. PATTON,—Dear Sir:—We are authorized by the Board of Trustees of Erskine College, at a meeting held this afternoon, to tender you the thanks of the Board for the appropriate and able Inaugural Address delivered by you at their request, in Lindsay Hall last night, and to request a copy for publication,

Yours respectfully,

JAMES BOYCE, }
J. C. CHALMERS. } Committee.

ERSKINE COLLEGE, *August 9th, 1855.*

GENTLEMEN:—Your note of yesterday, requesting for publication a copy of the Address which I had the honor to deliver on the evening of the 7th inst., has been received. Being prepared at the request of the Board, it is now, in deference to the same authority, placed at the disposal of their Committee.

Accept my thanks for the flattering notice which you are pleased to take of my humble effort.

I am, with high regard, your obedient servant.

E. L. PATTON.

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ADDRESS.

MY FRIENDS:—I appear before you in obedience to a request of the Board of Trustees of Erskine College. With this request I have cheerfully complied, first, because the source from which it proceeded, entitled it to respect, or rather, gave it the authority of a command; and secondly, I was not willing to depart from a custom so generally observed, and one in itself both proper and becoming.—At the same time, it may not be improper to observe that want of experience in public speaking, and other causes, which it is unnecessary to mention, have awakened in my mind no little solicitude as to the result of the present undertaking.

The Board having kindly left to myself the choice of a subject, I have thought that a consideration of the claims of the Languages would not be inappropriate to the occasion. It is not expected of me to deliver an elaborate argument, but to offer some suggestions, very general in their character, illustrating the importance of the languages, *principally as a means of intellectual discipline.*

I am aware that the subject is not recommended by its novelty. It has often been discussed, at home and abroad, by scholars of the first reputation. Not many years since, it was argued with uncommon learning, eloquence and ability, by two distinguished citizens of

our own State—one of them educated in early life in this District; a scholar of whom we were justly proud, and whose untimely death was so widely and deeply deplored. It is hardly necessary to say that we refer to HUGH SWINTON LEGARE, the orator, the advocate, the statesman; an ornament of letters and the pride of the State!

The other was a “foeman worthy of his steel”—hardly less distinguished for his classical attainments, but, strange to say, differing very widely in his views on this subject. It would not have been surprising, had one, who was an utter stranger to the merits of the classics, been found in the herd of fierce and vulgar assailants. But MR. GRIMKE did not belong to this class. He was intimately acquainted, not only with the literature and languages of antiquity, but with the literature and languages of Modern Europe. It might have been expected that he would have been frequent and warm in his praises of the classics; that, being so largely indebted to them himself, he would earnestly have recommended them to others; that, in reference to them, he would, on all occasions, have been ready to adopt the language of DANTE to VIRGIL:

Tu se' lo mio maestro e'l mio autore :

Tu se' solo colui da cui io tolsi

Lo bello stile che m'ha fatto onore.—*Inferno. Canto I.**

On the contrary, he entertained the opinion, publicly and deliberately expressed, that they were princi-

* ——— My master thou, and guide!

Thou he from whom alone I have deriv'd

That style, which for its beauty into fame

Exalts me. ——— *Carey's Trans.*

pally valuable as models of style; that in all important respects, they were greatly inferior to their modern rivals; and, consequently, that the time, so laboriously spent in acquiring a knowledge of them, was a great deal worse than wasted. His arguments are enforced with great learning and eloquence; but, fortunately, the poison contains the antidote. His language is redolent of the fragrance of the classics, and reminds the reader of those gales of Paradise so beautifully described by the poet, which "whispered whence they stole their balmy spoils." Peace to his ashes! He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one. Like his illustrious rival, he was prematurely struck from his pride of place by the inexorable hand of death. Over the common grave, the State, the common parent, may well take up the beautiful and touching lament of the Hebrew Minstrel: "they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions; they were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in death they were not *far* divided." We return from this digression, into which we were betrayed by the wish to pay a tribute, however feeble, to the memory of the illustrious dead.

Since this memorable discussion, the subject has not attracted much attention. The conviction appears to be general, that these studies, if not indispensable, are yet of great importance; and that, if in all cases it is not necessary to pursue them, in many others they cannot be safely neglected. Such being the fact, the following remarks may be regarded as *ex abundantia*. The truth, however, suffers nothing from repetition; and we avail ourselves with pleasure of this opportunity to contribute our mite to the defence of

Classical Learning. Much of the opposition to the classics is owing to a misapprehension. What is the end of education? This question properly answered, the controversy is at an end.

It is a common but erroneous impression, that the end of education is knowledge, and, consequently, that a college is a place where every thing may or ought to be taught. It is taken for granted that there is nothing within the compass of the human faculties, which ought not to be familiar to the possessor of that mysterious scroll, known, in common language, as the *diploma*. This *bit of parchment* is supposed to possess magical properties—a charm more potent than the *open sesame* of Arabian story. It is true that it has lost a portion of that reverence, with which it was formerly regarded, experience having demonstrated that it is not always an infallible indication of superior attainments.

It is obvious, on a moment's reflection, that the period devoted to study in our Colleges, is utterly insufficient to the accomplishment of these magnificent results. Is it to be expected that a space of four or at most six years, is adequate to the task of universal knowledge? The idea is preposterous! All that can be accomplished within the time prescribed, is to make the student acquainted with those general principles, which lie at the foundation of all knowledge; to lead him to the threshold of the temple of learning; to direct his attention to its magnificent proportions; to inspire him with the hope of being one day admitted into the *penetralia*, where the Goddess "sits enthroned in the full blaze of her beams."

If the end of education were the acquisition of a thorough knowledge of any one department of science, the period of instruction should be greatly extended. Instead of five or six, it should be increased to ten, fifteen, or even twenty years. The mastery of any science is the result of severe and protracted labor, when the judgment is matured by experience, and all the higher powers of the mind are in full vigor.

Many students, under the impression that their proficiency is to be measured by the extent of their knowledge, in other words, by the ground traveled over, plunge at once *in medias res*. They are impatient of the laborious discipline of the languages, and mathematics. They have found a royal road to learning. From their imaginary superiority, they look down with self-complacency, with a feeling of pity, perhaps of contempt, on the *plodders*, as they are tauntingly called. They advance boldly, in the face of all opposition, even at the risk of sustaining as signal an overthrow as the Knight of La Mancha in his encounter with the wind mills. Sometimes they make very rapid progress, leaving their competitors far behind them, perhaps losing sight of them altogether. Their success resembles the rapid conquests of the Eastern Kings; but, unfortunately, the parallel holds good in another respect—it is just as transient and fruitless.

Knowledge, of itself, is a result of comparatively little importance. It is true, the pursuit of knowledge is natural to the human mind, and the possession of it affords the highest gratification. But the *discipline of the mind* is of infinitely greater importance. The

mind is immortal; and those habits which are the result of early training, are as lasting as the living principle itself. The present life is but the beginning, merely the dawn of a brighter and more glorious existence. The knowledge of the present will be swallowed up and lost in the revelations of the future, as the light of the stars fades away in the superior effulgence of the king of day, when he goeth forth from his chambers in the East, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run his race! Compared with the clearer and sublimer wisdom of the skies, all terrestrial knowledge shall "vanish away." But the mind, the thinking being, with its godlike powers, its habits formed in the dawn of existence, still survives, fresh in immortal youth, perpetually adding to its original stock of knowledge, and advancing in the career of improvement with accelerated velocity.

Hence, we perceive the infinite importance of early culture. When we consider the nature of habit, we are startled at the magnitude of the responsibility assumed by the teacher. We are taught that after death the *moral* character is unalterably fixed. Those habits which were insensibly formed by "repeated acts," have become inveterate. Their victim is like the unfortunate lady in the play, under the spell of the wizard Comus—"bound in icy fetters, fixed and motionless"—but alas! no

"——— rod revers'd

And backward mutter of dissev'ring power"

will ever release him from their fearful and abhorred thralldom. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still."

Why may not this be equally true of intellectual

habits? Both classes are formed in the same way, that is, in the language of Butler, already quoted, by "repeated acts." Both are conditions of the same spiritual being, for the mind is one. It is not improbable, therefore, that with reference to intellectual habits, the present is a state of probation.

From this vantage ground, we perceive the immense importance of intellectual discipline. "A habit of thinking," says Dr. Thornwell, "is worth a thousand thoughts." What would it profit a man if he were possessed of the most various knowledge, without a corresponding discipline of the intellectual powers? He would be in reality, what Garrick or Walpole described Goldsmith—"an inspired idiot." Minds possessed of knowledge, without discipline, may be compared to reservoirs, which are soon exhausted; while those which possess the advantage of thorough discipline, may be likened to *fountains*, fresh, exuberant, inexhaustible.

These remarks are intimately connected with the subject under consideration. If the end of education be as stated, it will follow that "the selection of studies," in the language of an eminent authority, * "must be made, not with reference to the comparative importance of their matter, or the practical value of the knowledge, but with reference to their influence in unfolding and strengthening the powers of the mind—as the end is the improvement of the mind, fitness for the end is the prime consideration." The most enthusiastic admirer of the classics will not for a moment

* Dr. Thornwell.

contend that they are *intrinsically* more important than many other studies. He will readily admit, that, if reference be had exclusively to their matter, there are other studies of vastly greater importance. The admission does not, in the least, affect the point in controversy. To borrow a familiar illustration—there can be no doubt that the exercises of the *Gymnasium*, so familiar to the Greeks and Romans, were highly beneficial, in developing the powers of the body, in imparting vigor, grace and elasticity to the movements; but *surely the labors of sowing and reaping were much superior in practical importance*. Does it therefore follow that the latter should have taken the place of the former, as affording the best exercise for the body? So it is with the languages. In the active pursuits of life the student may forget his Latin and Greek—he may not be able to construe the plainest sentence in those authors with which he was once so familiar. It is true, he may and ought to retain his knowledge of them. He may, by giving a little attention to them from time to time, not only maintain his present ground, but make still further attainments in these delightful studies. But admitting, for the sake of the argument, that after a few years, he retains “little Latin and less Greek,” as Jonson said of Shakspeare—are we to draw any discouraging inference? By no means. His mind has been elevated by communion with the great and the gifted of other days, and his whole intellectual being permeated, so to speak, by the influence of his earlier studies.

So, we remark incidentally, with the mathematics. The student, after crossing the threshold of college for

the last time, (and it is well if it does not happen sooner) may discard his old masters—may “let Euclid rest and Archimedes pause.” This may, and generally does, happen. But the results of the process through which he has passed, are permanent. He has acquired a habit of close and patient investigation, which will follow him through life and beyond life.

It is a truth confirmed by long experience, that the languages (and mathematics) are eminently adapted to the proper end of education, viz: the improvement of the mind. All the most celebrated seats of learning; Oxford and Cambridge, in England; the Continental Universities; Yale and Harvard in our own country; and many others of less note, bear witness to their superiority as a means of discipline, and with one voice exclaim against that rash and shallow spirit of innovation which would abate the tithe of a hair from their just fame. By such means have been fashioned those immortal minds—those “demigods of fame”—who have controlled the destinies of nations, and left an indelible impress on all succeeding time.

Indeed, the importance of the languages, as a means of intellectual discipline, (and we take no other ground,) is readily apparent. The mind is possessed of different powers or principles, or by whatever name distinguished, whose development is subject to the same law. “Powers,” says Sir WILLIAM HAMILTON, “are developed only as they are exercised.” “Habits of the mind,” says BUTLER, with special reference to moral habits, “are formed by the exertion of inward practical principles.” “Going over the theory of virtue in one’s thoughts, talking well of it, and draw-

ing fine pictures of it, is so far from certainly, or necessarily, conducing to form a habit of it in him who so employs himself, that it may harden the mind in a contrary course, and gradually render it more insensible." Nor will even a sincere and unaffected admiration of virtue produce a habit of it in the subject of that emotion. It is impossible for any rational being, however degraded, not to see and acknowledge her divine lineaments. Hence, MILTON, with singular propriety, makes the enemy of all good pay involuntary homage to Virtue, and forces the reluctant acknowledgement—"how lovely!" This is one of those elements in the character of the fallen Archangel, that make him majestic even in ruins, and irresistibly call to remembrance the original brightness and glory of the Son of the Morning.

Intellectual habits are subject to the same law.—They are formed by constant and long continued exercise. He who should expect to develop his intellectual powers without reference to this fundamental law of his being, would be guilty of a gross absurdity.

Keeping in view this law of our nature, the wisdom of the established system of instruction, in which the languages hold so important a place, becomes immediately apparent. It is generally admitted that as instruments of discipline they are unrivaled, and such is the concurrent testimony of all ages and countries. On this part of the subject, therefore, it is unnecessary to dwell.

Our leading proposition was, that the end of education is the improvement of the mind; and, secondly, we attempted to show, that the languages are, of all

other studies, the best adapted to this end, *because they furnish the best exercise for the mind*. If these propositions are admitted, the inference is obvious. It will also follow by way of corollary, that the objections commonly urged against the languages are irrelevant. For example; it is asked, why not use translations, and thus save a great deal of time and labor? We answer; it is for that very reason that we discard translations, because they obviate the necessity of labor.

Apart, however, from this consideration, who, that possesses the most superficial acquaintance with the original, would have recourse to a translation?—"Works of taste," says LEGARE, "it is impossible to translate; and we do not believe that there is any such thing in the world as a faithful version that approaches the excellence of the original. They are casts in plaster of Paris of the Apollo or the Venus, and, indeed, not near so good, inasmuch as eloquence and poetry are far less simple and more difficult of imitation than the forms of sculpture and statuary. There remains nothing but the body, and even that, not unfrequently, so altered in its very lineaments, that its author would scarcely recognize it—while 'all the vital grace is wanting; the native sweetness is gone, and the color of primeval beauty faded and decayed.'"

Thus far our remarks have been confined to an exhibition of the benefits which flow indirectly from a study of the languages. It would not be difficult to show that the *direct* results are of a most beneficial character. We offer but one or two considerations.

It will not be denied that a knowledge of the ver-

nacular is an object of great importance. The English language is one of the noblest ever spoken or written by civilized man. It is the language of eloquence, of poetry, and philosophy. It is the language of SPENSER, of SHAKSPEARE, of BACON, of MILTON, of BUNYAN, and of that incomparable version of the Bible, known as KING JAMES' Translation. It is the language of the Constitution of the United States, the wisest political instrument ever devised by the wit of man. It is spoken throughout the civilized world, and even in the barbarous East. An accurate acquaintance with such a language is certainly a valuable accomplishment.

We do not say that a very competent knowledge of English may not be acquired without a previous acquaintance with the Greek and Latin languages; but the difficulties in the way of the student will, in such a case, be much more numerous and formidable.

“As for the modern languages,” says an experienced teacher, “a good classical scholar can learn, so far as the *reading* of books is concerned, any modern language in a few months, sometimes in a few weeks, sometimes in a few days. Languages like the Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and French, he can read with a grammar and dictionary almost at sight.”

In the present state of society, such an attainment is not to be despised. One of the most striking and interesting *phenomena* of the times, is the *spirit of immigration*, which has led to results which the most sagacious have failed to anticipate. Our own country is the theatre on which these results are most strikingly displayed. Here are represented all the civilized

nations of the globe. From the East and from the West, a current of immigration is setting in with irresistible force. What will be the result of this mingling of the nations, it is impossible to predict. One thing, however, is certain—it becomes us to study the character and designs of our neighbors—and in order to do this, some acquaintance with their languages is necessary, or, at least, useful.

Again, an acquaintance with the great models of Greek and Roman genius, cultivates the taste—in a word, all those finer feelings of our nature, which minister so much to our enjoyment. To the man of cultivated taste, all nature becomes beauty to the eye or music to the ear. He holds communion with her visible forms—with whatever of awful or of fair she presents to his pleased or astonished vision. He experiences a pleasure that he would not exchange for the most exquisite gratifications of the voluptuary—

“ — A sacred and home-felt delight,
A sober certainty of waking bliss.”

In concluding these very imperfect and desultory remarks, which are to be regarded rather as a collection of hints, than as forming a connected discourse, we would, again, urge the necessity and importance of classical studies. We would remind the youthful aspirant that they constitute, if not the *speediest*, certainly the surest road to usefulness and distinction. Let him, then, with untiring zeal, devote himself to these elegant pursuits, consoled and animated with the hope of being “let into that great communion of scholars of all ages and all nations—like that more awful communion of saints in the Holy Church Universal—and feel a sym-

pathy with departed genius, and with the enlightened and gifted minds of other countries—as they appear before him in the transports of a sort of Beatific vision, bowing down at the same shrines and glowing with the same holy love of whatever is most pure, and exalted, and heavenly, and divine in human nature.”

GENTLEMEN OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:—But a few years have elapsed since the College, whose interests have been committed to your care, commenced its existence. To-morrow we expect to celebrate the 13th anniversary. The occasion is full of interest and encouragement. The crisis in the history of the College is past. The difficulties which embarrassed the commencement of its career, have mostly disappeared.

One of the first and most serious, was the want of suitable buildings. The corner-stone of the building opposite, was laid in 1842, and the work completed before the end of the ensuing year. Within a recent period, has been added the beautiful temple of letters in which we are at present assembled, a monument to the liberality of the public, and the taste of its projectors.

Another difficulty was the want of the necessary funds. Hence originated the Plan of Endowment—an enterprise which has succeeded beyond expectation. Its success was due to a variety of causes, not the least of which was the zeal of the indefatigable agent.

Such is a brief statement of the history and present condition of the College. To its friends, one and all, its success must be highly gratifying; but peculiarly so to him whose honored name it bears, the present

chairman of your Board—the founder, benefactor, and first President of Erskine College.

Not many years since, the young men of this State were sent abroad to be educated—to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, England—a necessity attended with great expense and other inconveniences. Now, there are within our borders, not fewer than six Colleges, besides numerous academies of a high order. We hail this increase as a most auspicious omen. Let us see that we fall not out by the way. There is work enough for all. All have a common mission—the diffusion of knowledge—and all sustain a common relation to the State, the common parent. It is true, as other parents sometimes do, she manifests an overweening fondness for one of the number; but of this, at present, we are not disposed to complain. At the same time, candor compels us to declare that our hearts would be much encouraged by a few drops of that golden shower which annually falls within the favored meridian of Columbia.

GENTLEMEN:—The task imposed by your kindness has been performed. Permit me, in conclusion, to thank you for the honor conferred in my election to the Professorship of Latin in Erskine College—an honor conferred without solicitation on my part, and accepted with many misgivings. It is but due to say that the difficulties of my position have been diminished by the co-operation of the Faculty—the President, upon whose shoulders the mantle of his predecessor has so worthily fallen, and his associates, whose learning and various worth would do honor to any institution.

I avail myself of this opportunity to bear testimony to the kindness and courtesy, which I have uniformly experienced from the Students.

I conclude with expressing a wish for the continued and increasing prosperity of Erskine College.