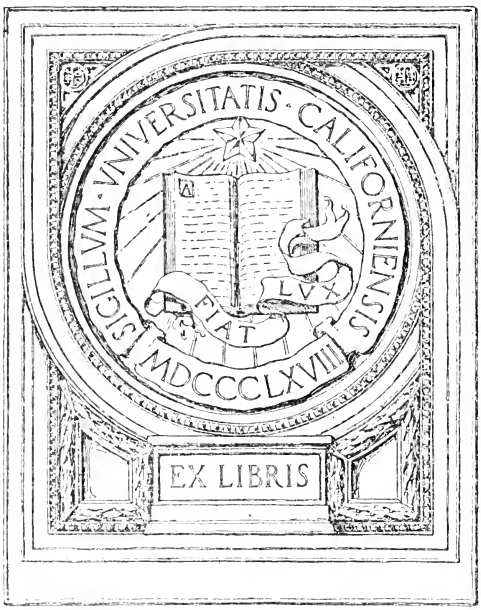

Public Education

UNIVERSITY ORATION

BY

Hon. WM. G. HAMMOND, LL. D.

DELIVERED AT

THE COMMENCEMENT

OF THE

STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA,

JUNE 17th, 1890.

PUBLIC EDUCATION,

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IN the history of human civilization there are two periods so far surpassing others that students who desire to measure man's capacity for improvement, or to derive instruction for the future, may well be excused for neglecting all the rest. So far indeed as our own Aryan branch of the race is concerned there are no others. Whatever antiquarian research may have shown, or may yet show us, of Chinese or Egyptian wisdom, or of the still more ancient "empires that sit in sullenness and gloom," buried beneath the waves of oblivion as deeply as the fabled Atlantis lies beneath the ocean traversed by the iron steamship of to-day,—yet none of their lessons can have for us the value of those we draw from these two periods. The earlier is that which men for centuries (and ever since modern life has been able to feel and appreciate its matchless charm) have agreed to call the classic age: the age in which the individual man seemed to attain his highest development as a model and canon for all aftertime—as delicate as the the Greek chisel, as strong as the Roman sword; profound in speculative thought as Plato, wide and exact in objective knowledge as Aristotle; embodying the most subtle moods and tenses of human thought in the infinite variety yet constant unity of a Greek verb, or sternly governing human action and human passion by the written reason of Roman law.

The later period dawned upon the dark ages when from feudalism as a stern father, and the Christian church as a cherishing mother, sprang the modern state which has made possible for us all the material prosperity of the present day. But its conquest of the external world is only the result of that strength of united action, that power of combination, which springs from the due order of relations among individuals, that perfect adjustment of legal rights and legal duties found in the "due process of law." Perhaps it has raised the individual little if any beyond the classic standard. We hear frequent complaints that it has not made him love his brother as himself. Everybody feels keenly that it has not made others eager to subordinate their own interests to his, or sacrifice themselves to himself. But in the failure of this ethical ideal it is a great satisfaction to know that it has at least saved the weak from the tyranny of the strong, and guarded the simple from the snares of the shrewd, by

making them equal before the law; and has done what it can to prevent the most highly developed and highly cultured individual from keeping his brother beneath his feet, as he did without let or hindrance, in the classic age.

I know it has often been said that the ancient state was elaborated at the expense of the individual, and that personal freedom and personal development are the achievement of modern times. As we have taken the word *polity* from the Greeks, it has been assumed that with it we have learned of them all we know of *politics*: and that their chief lesson to us has been that of merging the man in the state, and perfecting the organization of the latter.

In part I believe this view to be a mistaken one; but in larger part I admit it to be true, yet not inconsistent with what I have said before. that individual men reached almost their highest development in Greece and Rome, while the nice adjustment of their reciprocal rights and duties has been the work of modern times.

Undoubtedly the city-state was strong, almost tyrannical in its control of the citizen,in the classical period—though perhaps less so in reality than in the theoretic republic of Plato, and the hardly less fanciful constitution as described to us by foreigners, of Sparta. No modern state or king would dare to disregard the vested rights or the personal freedom of its subjects,as the fickle demos of Athens often did. But this was not through the perfection of its polity: it was rather the brute strength of the mob. It differed from modern constitutional government as the will of the master over the slave differs from the contract between employer and employed. The one is the first crude attempt at social order, the other its advanced product; and as slavery bears hard on the masses, while allowing the favorites to become the companions, equals, even masters of their owners, so in this crude and arbitrary form of polity the leading citizen, the rich man, the popular orator or the favorite sophist, had chances of individual development that could never be shared by a whole community of freemen. As Plato rises grandly to overshadow modern thinkers—as the thunders of Demosthenes, even now reverberating in the echoes of two thousand years, drown the voice of every modern orator—so, too, we look in vain among modern millionaires, in the House of Lords or in our own Senate, for a figure so splendid as Pericles, and the finest of our gilded youth seem mere gilded counterfeits beside the brilliant Alcibiades. Even in those fields of action where modern inventions have given us so great an advantage, as in warfare, have we a modern general or field-marshal to place above the young Greek volunteer who came out of the ranks to save his 10,000 companions in their darkest despair, and led them through a hostile empire and over all the opposition of the great King to the spot where their glad eyes again beheld home, safety, all that life held dear, in the dancing waves of their own sea Thalatta! Or to crown all with a single instance, study Caius Julius Cæsar, in all the details of his brief life, as calmly and critically as you can—the politician, the man of pleasure, the augur, the consul, the

general, the conqueror of Gaul, the moulder of the empire, the reformer of the world's calendar and of the Roman law, the orator, the historian—measure him as closely as you can in all these characters, and then, if you can, match him! The first emperor of Rome and of the world, it was his brilliant personality that converted the common title of a military commander into the proper designation of the highest civil dominion over men and kings. By a singular coincidence he was also the last of those whose private family name became the title of his successor. That this was a common practice in the early ages may be inferred from many instances, such as that of the Pharaohs of Egypt. I know of no other modern example but this. When man's aspirations for a universal monarchy came nearest to realization in the Holy Roman Empire of the middle ages, they called the monarch of all Christian men, by his name, pronounced if not spelled, as he probably spoke it; and to-day each European monarch that claims to be a king of kings, preeminent even among the rulers of the earth, is proud to name himself a *Kaiser*.

On the other hand, the surpassing excellence of the modern state seems to me to lie, not in its absorption of the individual, but in the full and equal development of individual characters combined with the widest variety of relations between them, and the most delicate adjustment of their mutual rights and duties. In all classic antiquity,—even in Roman law,—I find nothing to equal the definition of civil liberty, not yet a century old, as freedom to do all that is consistent with an equal freedom on the part of every fellow-citizen. At once a scientific definition and a practical test, it applies to all concrete rights with the flexibility of an algebraic formula: it measures every object of a legal right or legal duty like one of those great balances that can weigh a ship and her cargo, or turn with every drop of the water she displaces. Compare it with the maxims so often repeated to-day, as if their classic authors had uttered the last word of wisdom on this head two thousand years ago. "So use your own rights as not to injure others." "He who is using his own right cannot be injuring another." Unquestionably one of these is a charming piece of erudition — especially when quoted in the original — to adorn a decision for the plaintiff; and the other is equally so when the decision is for the defendant. But what help does either or both give until you have determined what is the right, or what is the wrong.

Do not understand me in this as claiming perfectness for modern law or infallibility for those who dispense it. No one will admit its imperfections more candidly than those who know it best. Ask the judge, who for almost a life-time has given to its administration the powers of one of the soundest of human intellects, and a conscience as spotless as ever ruled a human breast. Ask the eminent counsel, whose deep learning has never been prostituted to an unworthy call. I appeal to them for the weight their testimony will lend. But perhaps no man can feel the mistakes and imperfections of the law more profoundly than one whose humbler task it has been for years to repeat to beginners the mere A. B. C., the fundamental lessons —what *should be* the primary truths of the

law. He will never claim for it infallibility. But if he knows anything of its history for the seven or eight centuries of its modern life, he will tell you that it has constantly been enlarging its beneficial influence over human actions, and the reciprocal powers of every man over the conduct of his fellows. It has enabled him to claim at first safety from wanton attack on person or property—then from fraudulent injury under a specious guise—then care and diligence to avoid even indirect harm to one's neighbor—and at last self-restraint and watchful forethought in the use of his own possessions lest he endanger that neighbor in the like or equal use. Even the mistakes and fictions of modern law seem to have tended, or to have been over-ruled to the same end. The confusion of law and ethics under the name of the Law of Nature, and its antagonist theory of the social compact were alike herein. In this respect, at least, the merit of the latter lay in its baseless and visionary nature. No man could prove the terms of that original contract, for no man could prove its existence. Hence every generation was free to restate these terms for itself in accordance with its highest conception of social order and man's nature and destiny. It constantly led them to a higher ideal while the patriarchal theory, as then understood, perpetuated primitive tyranny. Something of the same character has descended from the social compact to its offspring, the *implied* contract of modern English law. New duties of man to man, almost numberless, have become legally enforcible by the beneficient fiction that one shall be supposed to have agreed to do whatever in justice or right he equitably should do for another.

I have dwelt so long on the contrast of these two great periods that I have left myself scant time for the main purpose of my inquiry—the causes of that difference. I say causes, for they are many. The great phenomena of history are too complex to be traced to a single or a simple origin. We have had indeed a pseudo philosophy of history that loves to fix attention on some trivial fact in the past, and say, Lo! if this had happened otherwise, all after history had been different! As when Sir Francis Palgrave gravely tells us that if Duke Richard, of Normandy, had not one fine morning happened to see the baker's daughter, Arlotta, washing her feet in a brook, there would have been no William the Conqueror, and therefore no Norman Conquest, no Magna Charta, no modern England. Such "philosophical reflections" are the merest tricks of an artificial rhetoric. No human intellect can compute the number of infinitessimal changes of person and detail that might have taken place at every step of the long pilgrimage of the race from savagery to civilization, without changing the order of the march or the regular development of each event in it from all that preceded. It is only the interweaving of many causes to produce each single result, the effect of a single causation upon many and unlike events, that prevents us from tracing these grand laws of human evolution upon which individuals and single facts have as little influence as the pieces on the chess board have upon the brain that orders the game. Men are nothing but pawns;

the world, the moral universe as well as the physical is governed by eternal law. We can only read that law in history, as we read the common law in its past decisions, which have the same weight whether it is John Doe or John Jacob Astor that is party to the record. So too, in the great laws that rule all history, as in common law of the courts, it is not the law itself that we read, but only its reflection in facts: *held*; that on such and such antecedents the law ordains such a consequence; the mighty, unwritten law that so ordains and "holds," no human tongue can formulate with authority. (Forgive me if I seem to carry out the comparison with professional pedantry. I do it because I believe it to be true. You who are to deal with the common law in its most practical and narrowest sense, will do your work better and far more intelligently, if you take with you the conviction that its methods and authorities are those of all human reasoning on abstract subjects, and that courts and judges do not make the law.)

Hence it is only by a large abstraction that we can say of any great event or any great phenomenon of life that it is caused by any other. *This*, working in unison with all contemporary causes, has produced, among all future phenomena, influenced by it, in a special and evident line of causation, *that*. It is only in this carefully guarded manner that I venture to state the two propositions to which at last I ask your attention as the end and purpose of all I have to say:

First, that the peculiar feature of modern civilization which I have tried to point out,—the mutual control of the fellow members of society over each other's conduct, for the welfare and happiness of all, by law in the form of reciprocal rights and duties,—is the result, in large measure—perhaps we may even say in the largest measure—of another factor of modern civilization, *i. e., public education.*

And second, that public education unknown to the ancient world, began with, has always been rooted in, and must live or die, flourish or decline with the *University*.

Public education does not necessarily mean free schools; though of all the senses we Americans attach to the word liberty, there is none more precious than the freedom of the poorest child in the land to enter the school house without a fee to teacher or to district. I hope the time is coming when every boy and girl of Iowa may come as a right to the highest school in the State, and to all its departments. But I must add that if to-day some fairy could give me the needful power, and the needful wisdom, to make of the whole educational system what it should be, I think there are other tasks that would claim the first place, rather than a mere abolition of tuition fees. In one sense, this and most of our western schools, are free already. Every young man or young woman who is thoroughly in earnest to get an education, can earn in a moderate time the money necessary to take their course throughout. I have myself known not a few that did it; and knowing what men and women, what lawyers, and physicians and teachers and engineers, they have made of themselves by their patience and industry and persistence of pur-

pose, I am not sure but they are better off for the obstacles they have surmounted:—obstacles that would have deterred weaker men, such as I have known elsewhere tempted into a profession for which they have no real fitness, by the mistaken kindness of parents or the largess of some society or fund.

The education here given is public even now in the most important sense; it is supplied mainly at the cost of the entire public, with no implied contract for the maintenance of any party, creed or section; and it is open to all alike as a means of direct preparation for their work in life, as chosen by their own free will, uninfluenced by their teachers. Perhaps we hardly appreciate the value of this, since it has become the dominant idea of higher education in this country. To know what an advance is already made, will require some comparison with the ages in which it was unknown.

Those of you who recall Macaulay's brilliant sketch of the education furnished by the daily life of Athens, may think I am unjust to the classic age when I call public education an innovation of modern life. But one needs to penetrate little beneath the surface, to see that ancient instruction was always in the hands of a small and privileged class, who sought to perpetuate their own *caste* and privileges rather than to diffuse the light of education as widely as possible; and further, that its method invariably was to transmit to pupils what the teacher thought it needful or advantageous for them to learn, instead of opening wide the doors of knowledge, and prompting all who came to enter for themselves and appropriate all they could seize and master for their own advancement in learning and in active life. It is in the absence of these two elements of genuine education that I find the difference of which I have already said so much.

So far as I know there is no trace in all ancient history, of one people's having studied the language or literature of another as a means of education. The Greeks were not likely to hold in such esteem the jargon of barbarians. Even the singular interest of Herodotus in Egyptian customs may have given him the reputation of a mere collector of foreign fables which has always clung to him until modern students have perceived the true value of his matter. If there is an exception to this narrow contempt of all foreign culture, it is the Roman affectation of Greek thoughts and phrases; and even that seems to have been the mark of a small *coterie* whom their contemporaries regarded much as Chaucer did the Abbess's affectation of French "after the schole of Stratford—atte Bowe." Of real linguistic and critical study, of world-culture, as the Germans say, there is not even a germ traceable anywhere till the revival of letters and of Greek came together in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—three hundred years after the rise of the first great University at Bologna.

Wherever we find anything that can be called systematic education in the ancient world—that is, anything beyond the mere training of children in the necessary arts of life, such as even the beasts and birds give to

their young—it is invariably the privilege of a small and chosen class. What is still more significant it consists in the imparting to these of a body of traditional learning—their formation by the hands and under the arbitrary direction of the teachers. Thus "the wisdom of the Egyptians" was confined with jealous care to the close corporation of the priesthood. So it was apparently with the Eastern magi, while even the sons of the nobles had to be content with a course that taught them only "to ride, to draw the bow and to speak the truth!" Pythagoras and all the sages of Greece taught their most important lessons only to an esoteric circle, and the sophists, to the sons of the wealthy. The chief offense of Socrates against the orthodoxy of his age seems to have been in his method of instructing any youth of bright parts whom he met in his walks, though even he made no effort to educate youth in general. In Rome, everything that we should call professional education, was long the secret of the patricians. From them it passed to be the prerogative of the rich. It is not inconsistant with this—though it sounds to modern ears like a paradox—that the best educated men and the teachers of rich men's sons were often themselves slaves. It would have been a much greater wonder if a poor freeman had ever had a chance to get an education; but we hear of not a single instance. The rich knight or Senator could buy education in a slave if a father's care had not bestowed it on him, or his own caprice or stupidity had refused it. In either case knowledge was in safe hands, conservative hands, not likely to peril the established order of things by innovations. Had a bright *proletarius* had the opportunity to acquire it, he might have discovered something new and thus periled the established order. But naturally the proletariat was content with *panem et circenses*. When the Western Empire went down like a huge ship, foundering beneath the waves of barbarism, much of this traditional learning disappeared with it, only to be recovered centuries afterward, as men find gold and jewels in the wreck of some Spanish galleon long at the bottom of the sea. But its methods were perpetuated through the Dark Ages by the church—aided by princes like Charlemagne and Alfred. These did their best to instruct in the traditional learning the rude races that had become dominant in Western Europe. After a time, every royal palace and every bishop's seat had its school, teaching the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*—after the most approved methods. The clergy seem to have been specially active in gathering into these schools the brightest minds they could find and instructing them in all that they themselves knew. They succeeded in making Latin the language of the Roman church, the tongue of all educated men. Their methods of instruction were probably little if any inferior to those of their predecessors in the classic times. They had a new race to deal with, rude and uncultivated, but eager, ambitious and capable. Single minds like Eginhard, Alcuin, Erigena, Lanfranc, arose to show that the capacity of the old method for training the individual, was not yet entirely effete. Each episcopal school had no doubt its group of these, that never attained posthumous

celebrity. But they failed to make any lasting impression on the great mass, or even on the most active leading minds of the class that governed the world. They added nothing to the traditional stock of knowledge and aroused no fresh desire for it. The vast majority of men had never known that desire, even in the classic age. The church absorbed and satisfied all who might have continued the higher cultivation of Greece and Rome. The most active and ambitious minds found in that cultivation nothing to their purpose and neglected it.

We are accustomed to think of the Dark Ages as a time of mere eclipse,—when the lights that had previously illuminated the world were darkened for six or eight centuries, only to shine out afterward with increased lustre. We thus leave out of view an important fact: that in many regions of Europe where the former light shone with greatest lustre it went out then never to be rekindled; and that the provinces where the newer light shines brightest now are those least brilliant in the earlier time. What has become of the eastern half of the empire which makes such a figure just before its decline? These were prosperous, wealthy, enlightened countries, while Gaul and Britain were scarcely out of barbarism. The entire southern coast of the Mediterranean was civilized as early as Italy itself. All felt the Dark Ages alike, but these never saw the sun of civilization rise again. It was not a mere eclipse, but rather the waning of an ancient luminary, the rise of a new. The old slowly expired under the bushel of the church. The new was set upon a mighty candlestick, as new as itself, called *university.*

The twelfth century was not a favorable period for literary activity or improvements in the science of education. Even the bishops and clergy were too busy in the great contest for supremacy between church and state to pay much attention to improvements in the *trivium*, or what we should call new theories of normal instruction. It was a period of "storm and stress" in which men were busy with the most practical questions — how each should save himself and his possessions from violence; how neighbors should live together in peace and security, yet without giving themselves up to the tender mercy of lords, feudal or clerical. The descendants of the northern barbarians who had never known a master, and those of the Roman provincials who had never lived free from a master, were seeking some common ground on which they could meet with equal rights. Moreover, Europe was full of young, strong and ambitious men, who sought a career, but could find it neither in brutal fights nor in the church. Among these, somehow, the news got abroad that an obscure teacher of rhetoric, in Italy, had turned up some volumes of the musty Roman law to find good rhetorical exercises for his pupils, and had got them so much interested in it, that he had undertaken to explain the hard words, and let them write down the explanation between the lines. It was not the first attempt to teach law, for the Lombard law had been glossed and taught for a century at Pavia. But that had never interested anybody but Lombards, and the thought of studying a foreign law for its scientific value was as yet to come. The

ancient Roman law was quite a different thing. The glamour of the Roman name was still powerful. The Roman empire was the one great successful state of which their histories told. Charlemagne, and the emperor of all Christian men, the only potentate that stood on a level with the Pope, still claimed authority as heirs of that empire. One could read a text of its law to a bishop or to a feudal lord with some hope of overawing his caprice. Even the monk Gratian had collected the Canon law of the church in imitation of it, and Obertus de Orto and Gerardus Niger, the authors of the Law of Feuds, had admitted its authority. The Archbishop of Canterbury himself had brought home from Italy a young man who knew all about the Code and Pandects, to help him in his own lawsuits with the papal legate, the king's brother.

According to the realistic belief of that age there could be but one true science of law, as of mathematics or astronomy. Every country might have its customs, differing like its climate, but this was universal truth, that could be learned in Italy as well as at home, and having been learned in Italy, could be put to practical uses at home. Hence aspiring young men from all Europe took the road to Bologna by thousands. Very possibly they went in greater numbers because no preparatory course in the Bishop's school was necessary. Nobody asked whether they had gone through the *trivium* or the *quadrivium* any more than whether they were orthodox or heretical, rich or poor; to the great scandal and regret of all experienced educators of the old school. Soon they were there in such numbers that some kind of school government was necessary. They elected a rector or president out of their own number, and made a set of college laws for themselves. They organized themselves into clubs called *nations* because each comprised all of a certain nationality. Finally the Pope was induced to give them the power of self-government by erecting them into a corporation or *university*. That was the meaning of the name which had nothing to do with the number of branches taught. The fiction that a university is so called because it teaches universal knowledge, or that the name has any connection whatever with the course of study, is of much later origin. The citizens of Bologna found it a good thing to feed them, let lodgings to them, etc. Probably they had a good influence on the price of house rent and vacant lots in Bologna. Consequently Pavia, Florence and other cities, soon had universities of their own; and popular lecturers, who could draw many students, were salaried from the public treasury, as a good way of reducing the city taxes.

It would take far too long to describe the extension of universities in Europe to Paris, Montpelier, Oxford, Prague, Heidelberg, etc., or even the extension of the system to other branches of learning, as medicine, theology, or the humanities. Salerno became famous for teaching medicine. Others were popular now with one class of students, now with another, as different professors came and went. But all were public schools in the sense that they opened their doors to all comers who sought to study in them; and that the vast majority of those who came

to them came to prepare themselves in one way or another for active life,to make their way in the world; and whatever else they learned there, they learned the art of living in the world on equal terms with their fellows. The "dark ages," as modern pedantry still reckons them, were not yet past. The "renaissance" of classic art and literature was yet far in the future; but in these rude, ill-disciplined bands of professional students—a mob, rather than a well-organized and properly graded institution of learning,—there was evolved for the first time the cardinal principle of *public* education—an education *of* the people, *by* the people, *for* the people, if I may so use the words made classical by that great American who was himself so grand an illustration of its central truth. For this *is*, I take it, the central truth of public education as a modern discovery unknown to the classic world: that the main factor in all true education is the pupil, and not the teacher: that its courses, its methods, its results, are shaped not by what the latter wishes to impart, but by what the pupil wants and needs to learn; and that whatever the school law or the college regulations may say, the real governance of the school —governance in the good old English and Roman sense of pilotage—will ever be with the learners and not the learned. Hence we see why this new truth first was seen in the university, the school which comes most immediately in contact with actual life,—where it was easiest for all to see the direct practical consequence of what they learned. Only by slow degrees has it gone farther and mastered the intermediate and primary schools more remote from that influence. It is the university that has given us our common schools, and not *vice versa*; for all public education depends mainly on the students' sense of need to prepare for something higher and beyond them. It is the university that has really given us *free* schools; for there men first learned to consider education, not as a privilege to be bestowed on those already favored beyond their fellows, but as an equal right of all to the means of doing well whatever work in life they had to do. It is the university that makes it worth while to sustain them.

We are now all agreed—even those who oppose anything higher,—that the State should secure to all its citizens a common English education, the power to read and write, with the other branches taught in our common schools. But how many go a step further and ask themselves why? In what consists the advantage *to the State* of having all its citizens able to read and write, instead of leaving them in the condition of the laboring classes in many civilized countries—the condition in which the great mass of our own English forefathers were a very few centuries ago,—dependent on the parish priest and the schoolmaster for all the reading and writing done in the community? The English yeoman of 300 years ago, worked and fought as sturdily, ate as much, prayed and praised God rather more, perhaps on the whole enjoyed this life as much as his descendants and had at least as firm a faith in a better life beyond. What have we gained by teaching him to read and write?—or to anticipate the first answer, by increasing his intelligence? Surely all

this vast expenditure of our school system is not made merely for the purpose of enabling a nation of men who can but just read and write, to exchange their ideas on paper rather than by word of mouth; nor even to enable them to read the newspapers. No man will see the truth of this position, on its face, better than those it directly concerns. Go to the farm-house and ask the plain sensible couple you will find there, reading perhaps the Bible on Sunday, and the newspaper of a winter evening, but working early and late, day after day, that their boys and girls may go to school, and one or more of them to the Academy or College—ask them if they would set such a value on their children's schooling, if the only use they were ever to make of it was to read the productions of other men no better educated than themselves, or write down the same thoughts that prompt their daily speech? They see, they feel, deeper than the Faculty of a University do, that the chief end and purpose and value of reading is, that it enables us to learn from those who are wiser and better than we are, but whom we never can hope to meet. I do not claim that *universities* have always been true to the theory of public education any more than I would assert that they have adhered to the simple organization of the twelfth century, or that university men have always written just such books as pious parents would wish their sons and daughters in the common school to read. It would have been impossible to keep up so many great institutions for seven centuries on the simple lines upon which the first universities were formed. The most we can truthfully say is that wherever universities existed public education was more widely diffused than where they were unknown, and that they have never at the worst been so inaccessible to the poor man's son as ancient schools, or so sterile of free thought as the church schools of the dark ages. No doubt there came very soon a strong reaction from the crude and simple methods of the primitive university. Some institutions were founded by kings and bishops on purpose to harness the new and untamed force and drive it in the reins of established power,—as in the case of Naples. The entire force of professional teachers of the day was ready to help in the task. They profoundly distrusted this new-fangled method of letting the young learn what they felt the need of instead of pursuing the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*. The old teacher almost inevitably becomes a conservative. He has begun by teaching children to know the straight *i* and the round *o*. Years of practice made him perfect in his art and his pride lies in the symmetrical joining of the perfect circle until he forgets that the perfectly rounded *o* of the school year marks only a cypher. The perfectly drilled pupil ends it at the very point where it began; the circle is perfect,—and empty. Too many of our most elaborate and be-lauded school courses are typified by that beautifully rounded *o*—and the classes whose interest lies in keeping the great majority of mankind in a perpetual tutelage, are always ready to help the instructor who can make the roundest *o's* with the least in them. The more industrious and conscientious he is, the easier they find it to reduce his labor to that of the mill-horse in his perpetual round.

More frequently perhaps the public university has been reduced to a mere machine for moulding human clay into uniform bricks, by the unconscious working of this conservative habit, strengthened by the influence of wealth. Oxford and Cambridge are noted examples. What teacher in either has written a book for poor but earnest students since Vacarius? The early divorce of its legal school from the practical studies of the Inns of Court may largely account for this; and the formation of that real university—as Fortescue calls it, and as it was for a time,—may almost make us forgive it.

I do not name the great English universities in reproach or in forgetfulness of the great services they have rendered to an important class of English society; but only to illustrate the danger there has always been and still is, wherever education is regarded as a private interest,—the particular prerogative of a rank, of a church, of an order of teachers, of any body less than the whole community. For the same end I have selected the term *public* education as most expressive of the advance made in modern times and have tried to point out its character as a public duty and public interest;—*duty* to *all* that are to be active members of the State, *interest* as preparing the way for that harmonious play of reciprocal rights and duties among men, that is the characteristic of modern civil liberty. Thus in a sense far higher than mere pecuniary support or normal instruction, it is the proper work of the State.

I desire to see the responsibility of the State for public education fully recognized, because I believe that in that way can the best interests of such education be secured for the future,—not for the next generation, not for the next century, but for the many centuries through which as we may reasonably hope will extend the life of the State. Nothing is better settled by experience than that our institutions for higher education must be permanent and enduring to do good work. The best organization for the common school is simple and inexpensive; it may even be the mere succession of "summer school" and "winter school" in which so many millions of Americans have learned all they know of book-learning, renewing its youth and ending its brief existence with each recurring season. The High School demands more machinery, teachers of more experience and longer consecutive terms, books, apparatus and other aids that cannot be renewed every year. Still the High School may change completely with every set of youth that pass through its course of three or four years and change for the better. Much of the best work that has been done in our High Schools and Academies, has been done by young men and women to whom the teacher's desk was only a temporary station for a year or two, between the close of their own instruction and the entrance upon active life. And so I believe it will always be. Talk as we may about elevating and separating the teachers' profession, I do not believe that we shall ever see our common schools and High Schools all in the hands of life-long professional teachers. Nor do I desire to see it, either for the sake of the scholars or for that of the teachers themselves, to whom a year or

two of such experience is simply invaluable. But when we reach the College, and still more the University, we find ourselves under very different conditions. These cannot be created in a day or a year. It is not merely because the libraries, and cabinets, and laboratories, cost very large sums of money; it is not even because they must gather from all parts of the country men learned and skillful, who have already spent years in mastering their respective subjects, and who must be asked to life-long positions if they are to be had at all; it is all this, but it is something more than this that gives a great university that character, that life of its own, which makes it an honor and a profit to be educated there, and to carry away its diploma. A rich man may lavish his millions upon a new-born college because, perhaps, its sponsers in baptism have given his name to it; but it will be generations before its graduates go out from it with the feeling of love and gratitude and profound respect with which middle-aged and grey-haired men all over this broad land look back to the red brick walls and scanty appliances of some little ill-provided New England college, whose hard-working, poorly-paid professors, teach in the same rooms where he and they sat together as classmates many years ago, and whose noblest and best endowment is the long roll of honored names that fill the many issues of the triennial catalogue. It is the old and hallowed associations of the name that make them love to call Bowdoin or Dartmouth or Williams or Amherst by that sweetest of all names, Alma Mater; and it is this reverence and affection for the cherishing and cherished mother of our souls that forms one of the best, if not the very best part, of a college education! How many Americans there are who would feel that a great moral bulwark were taken from their lives if Yale, or Harvard, or Princeton should close its doors to-day!

But Oxford and Cambridge have shown us that there is no charm in endowments to ensure good work for all time, or prevent the repetition of a similar treason to public education in New England or any part of the United States. If the oldest and proudest, the most venerated of American schools, become mere training schools for rich men's sons, whither young men go to display what they are or have already, and not modestly fit themselves to be something hereafter; if their greatest fame is to be found in the comic songs of a perambulatory quartette, or the "phenomenal kicker" of a foot-ball, or the pluck and bottom of a "varsity" crew—then upon the names that educated Americans have loved the most must be written "Upharsin!" and American public education must be found, for all time to come, in the "plebeian universities," the "one-horse colleges" producing a score of graduates where the others have a hundred, but every one of the score a *man*. But will you trust such sacred interests as the education of each rising generation to the fickle will of the populace? Are you not afraid that some coming Board of Regents, some future Legislature, may be untrue to their great trust, may "lower the standard," or "demoralize the tone," may admit free-thinking, or may banish the classics? Yes, I can foresee all these dangers, and I

should deprecate them. But I can see also that what may be lost or lowered in one year may be restored and re-elevated in another—that there will not be that utter incapacity of renovation which seems to be the characteristic of close corporations. And more than this, I can see that institutions thus open to the influences of the time will have but one danger to encounter, and not two. They may possibly feel the effect of a changed standard of education—and nothing can secure a school against this,—but they will not be in danger of being deserted entirely by those for whom they were intended, as has happened to so many endowed schools of the old world. It will do no good to keep up the standard if there is no one to apply it to! The great merits of State provision for the education of its citizens is that it can never fall into the clutches of private interests, or be made subservient to the prejudices of a past age. With every new generation the power that controls it must be renewed. There may be those who regard it as a benefit to our older colleges that they are anchored fast to the creeds or the political principles of the 16th, the 17th, or the 18th century. I do not wish to discuss the question whether these were better or worse than those of the 19th. My position is that in either case this anchoring is a mistake. All educational institutions are only means for bringing the new generation to a point where they may be of most service to their own contempararies, To serve that end, they must go forward with the great stream of history. The boat locked to the shore may be in a better or worse place than that to which the stream would carry it. In either case it cannot serve the purpose of him who would, him who must, by the law of his being advance with the stream.