

WASHINGTON

AND

The Higher Education

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE CORNELL UNIVERSITY,
FEBRUARY 22, 1888.

BY

CHARLES KENDALL ADAMS,

President of the University.



ITHACA, N. Y.

PUBLISHED BY ANDRUS & CHURCH,

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Ladies and Gentlemen :

In our national calendar there are three days of the secular year that have been formally withdrawn from the contentions of politics and the turmoil of traffic, in order that the people may fittingly celebrate certain great facts and principles that are believed to have exerted a transcendent influence on the welfare of American society. One of these days belongs to Christendom; one of them is the birthday of the nation; one of them is the birthday of him who has been enshrined in the national heart as the Father of his Country. The nation that lives well, holds in sacred remembrance the best things in its history; therefore it is fitting that the people everywhere should come together on these festal days in order to revive their recollections, and keep alive and aglow the fires on the altars of patriotism. This University owes its origin, so to speak, to the happy union of national wisdom and private generosity; and it seems not inappropriate that the child of such a parentage should devote an hour on this anniversary to the contemplation of

some topic that will at least be in harmony with the life and purposes of Washington on the one hand, and on the other, with the great subject in which we are all, during our residence at the University, so much interested. I, therefore, have chosen as the subject of my address, Washington and the Higher Education.

I can easily imagine this phrase to be a surprise to some of those who honor me with their attention. I fancy that even among students of American History there may be some who are not perfectly acquainted with what Washington did, and desired to do, in the interests of education. It would not be strange if there were here some students of the history of the Revolution, who are so familiar with Washington's achievements, as to know with some exactness, why he appeared to be the one *indispensable* man of the revolutionary period, and of the period of the adoption of the constitution, who know well that their country was

" A bleeding land
Gasping for life under great Bolingbroke,"

and at the same time are so ignorant of his relation to the subject of higher education, as to be utterly unaware of the fact that for many years he was Chancellor of the most important seat of learning in Virginia. When the fact is recalled that for about a quarter of a century he stood at the head of the already respectable College of William and

Mary, and also that for many years he cherished with peculiar fondness certain enlarged ideas in regard to permanent provisions for the higher education of the American people, I think it will be admitted that the subject is not a fanciful one, or one altogether unworthy of our attention.

Though Washington himself was not what is called a college-bred man, it would be strictly true to say that he received the right to practice the vocation which for some years he followed, from a license given him as the result of an examination by the College of William and Mary. In those days the right of everybody to practice any profession or vocation, that is to say, the right of ignorance to impose on credulity, had not been established. It was the law of Virginia, that the surveyor, before he could practice his profession, should receive a license from the College, and that no license should be given until the college faculty by all proper examination should have satisfied itself of the candidate's attainments. It was in this manner that Washington was admitted to the privileges of one of the learned guilds of the time. Although, of course, the license he received was not of the precise form of a degree, yet it gave him what may be called professional standing, and even entitled him to be regarded as in some sense an alumnus of that venerable institution of which he afterwards was the official and honored head. The

world has long known that it was in the difficult and judicious practice of the art into which he was thus inducted, that Washington first gave evidence of those remarkable qualities which designated him as a fore-ordained leader of men, in whatever arduous enterprise was at hand.

And now that we have recalled the connection early established between Washington and what might be regarded as the higher education of his day, let us for a single moment look at the characteristics and organization of colonial education of the higher grade. Let us observe how it was organized, how it was supported, what its influence was, and, if possible, what its needs were, in order to enable it to do the work that was called for by the American people. It is in this way, perhaps, that we can best prepare ourselves to judge aright as to the wisdom of the schemes afterwards proposed by Washington.

In one important respect the colonial colleges even in the days of their infancy, resembled the institutions of learning in the old world. They were established and supported by the two-fold agency of the masses of the people on the one hand, and of private benevolence on the other. I am aware that this is by some regarded as a mooted question; but I am persuaded that a discriminating contemplation of the facts will dispel all doubt on the subject. It is sometimes said that

not a few of the universities of Europe were founded by the church, and so they were; but it is equally true, that at that time the church was supported by the people as a whole, and consequently that whatever the church had to give, had been derived from the population at large. The universities of Bologna and Paris, of Oxford and Prague, of Salamanca and Cambridge, and all the others that had a part in bringing Europe out of the darkness of the Middle Age into the Renaissance, were endowed, in some cases by the church, in others by kings and princes, it is true, but in all cases with moneys which directly or indirectly came from the masses of the people. In those days fortunes were not made by what is called private enterprise. The rulers, whether civil or ecclesiastical, were the State, and it is no misuse of words to say that whatever such rulers possessed, had come out of, and, strictly speaking, was a part of the public treasury. But in addition to such public endowment private benefactions were not wanting. If William of Wykeham, whose resplendent effigy appropriately stands as the central figure in our Walhalla of the great educational founders, devoted the revenues of his diocese to the establishment of New College at Oxford, Sir Thomas Bodley is fitly placed in the same group, in recognition of his princely gift for the establishment of the great Library which still bears his name.

On turning to this side of the Atlantic, we find that the same spirit and substantially the same methods prevailed. There were, of course, striking differences. In the American colonies affairs of the Church and affairs of the State were entrusted to the same control of the General Court. We find accordingly that in Massachusetts, in Connecticut, in Virginia, everywhere in fact, it is the General Court that takes the initiative in all educational movements. In Massachusetts Bay it was, as has so often of late been said, the General Court that founded Harvard, by a tax on all the people of the colony. In the course of the Colonial and Provincial days, Harvard more than a hundred times asked the Legislature for support, and more than a hundred times support was granted. The first President Dwight,—*clarum et venerabile nomen*,—exhorted his readers never to forget that it was to the Legislature of Connecticut that the founding and continuance of Yale College was chiefly due. Dartmouth again and again went to the Legislature of New Hampshire extending her empty palm, and again and again she came away bearing gifts in her hands. A little later, a similar spirit was manifested by the Legislature of Vermont, which, in generous recognition of a moral indebtedness to the College just across her border, voted a township of land for Dartmouth, and gave it the name of the College president.

But, while such help of the State was a universal method, it would be incorrect to suppose that it was in this way alone that the colleges of New England received their support. There was private benevolence as well. Besides John Harvard and Elihu Yale, whose benefactions have rescued their names from the fate that otherwise would have overwhelmed them, there were hundreds of others whose consecrated hardships and self-denials are among the most sacred remembrances of those early days. Surely Harvard would not be worthy of her precious heritage, did she not cherish with at least as loving care the record of the "peck of corn" and the "silver-tipped jug," contributed, like the widow's mite, to her slender treasury, as she does the legislative grants that gave her Wadsworth House and Massachusetts Hall.

Passing to Virginia, we are confronted with an interesting array of facts of a similar nature. The College of William and Mary was the second established in the colonies; but its antecedents ran back even before the founding of Harvard. It was as early as 1619, a year before the landing of the Pilgrims, that the Virginia Company in old England voted ten thousand acres of land for the establishment of the University of Henrico, in the colony of which that company was the patron. Of this amount one thousand acres were devoted to the founding of an Indian college, and nine thousand

to the establishment of "a seminary of learning for the English." In the same year the bishops of England contributed fifteen hundred pounds to the same cause. But these early evidences of good will, like so many other expressions of premature benevolence, were destined to be of no avail to the worthy cause. This interesting enterprise appears to have come to an end when Mr. George Thorpe, a gentleman of the Privy Chamber, who was sent over to be the superintendent of the new university, perished, with all that were with him, in the Indian massacre of 1622.

Nor was the next effort of this kind, though seemingly a worthy one, much more successful. In 1624, the endeavor to found what was called the *Academia Virginiensis et Oxoniensis* on the safe retreat of an island in the Susquehanna River failed through the death of its chief promoter, Mr. Edward Palmer, before any considerable advance had been made. Another interesting though also premature effort was made in 1660. The General Court now took a preliminary step for providing both higher and secondary education. The act revealed an admirable largeness of design; for it provided "that for the advance of learning, education of youth, supply of the ministry, and the promotion of piety, there be land taken upon purchases for a college and free schools, and that there be, with as much speede as may be convenient, housing erected

thereon for entertainment of students and scholars." But this was not all. In order that public appropriation might be reinforced by private benevolence, it was also ordered that the commissioners of the county court send orders throughout their respective counties for the purpose of raising money from such of the people as "have not already subscribed." The effort, however, admirable though it was in design and method, was not successful. Partly, as we may well suppose, because the number of children to need education, as yet, was small, and partly because of the leisurely way in which subscriptions were made and paid, neither college nor school was founded, as the result of the movement.

It was not until more than thirty years later that the colony had so far increased in population as to make a movement in behalf of education successful. And it may well be doubted whether even at that later date, it would have reached any considerable success, had it not been entered upon in a manner to connect itself not only with the spiritual and educational needs of the colonists, but also with their material interests in almost all of the phases of their daily life. The movement of 1692, in Virginia had three or four very interesting characteristics. In the first place the English government gave 20,000 acres of land and £2,000 in money. In the second place, the college, estab-

lished under the grant, and in honor of the benefactors named William and Mary, was given control of the office of Surveyor-General, and all the fees and profits arising from its administration. The College was furthermore authorized to appoint county surveyors whenever the governor and council should deem such officers necessary. Thus, the entire land system of the colony was placed in the hands of the college, a requirement which not only brought Washington, and all the other surveyors of the colony to the doors of the institution for an examination and a license, but also put into the college treasury till long after the Revolution, a sixth part of all the surveyor's fees.

But there was another characteristic of the movement that ought not to pass unnoticed. The law founding the institution provided for its liberal support by imposing for its benefit a tax of a penny a pound on all tobacco exported from the colonies of Virginia and Maryland. The history of the time, generally so stern, was not without its humor. Tobacco, as you know, was not only the chief product of the colony, but was the current medium of exchange, in fact, was money. Some of you will recall that one of the historians relates, for example, that the price of a wife was a hundred and fifty pounds of tobacco, and that whenever a ship arrived from England with eligible women on board, the unmarried men of the colony, bearing

the price in their arms, rushed down to the wharf with a fury of haste that was in proportion to their desire for an early choice. But the consideration here and now to be noted is the educational fact, that whenever a young man exchanged a hundred and fifty pounds of tobacco for a wife, he put a hundred and fifty pence into the college treasury.

In these several ways it was that the College of William and Mary was from the first intimately bound up with all the interests of the colonial life of the Middle States. It was long the only college within a radius of many hundreds of miles. It was the institution to which the young men of the South went for their education; and it served its purpose well. Its endowments were, from time to time, increased by legislative generosity. In 1734, to the tax on all exported tobacco was added a similar tax on all imported liquors. And so what with the tax on all tobacco that went out of the colony, and the tax on all liquor that came into the colony, we may well believe that the college was fairly well provided for.

And what a school of statesmen that college was! There were Harrison, Braxton, Nelson, and Wythe, all signers of the Declaration of Independence. There were also Peyton Randolph, first President of the Continental Congress; John Tyler, first governor of Virginia; Beverly Randolph, another governor of Virginia; John Mercer, governor of Mary-

land; Edmond Randolph, Attorney General and Secretary of State; James Innes, Attorney General of Virginia; John Blair, Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States; James Monroe, President of the United States, all these among the students of a few years, besides the greater names of Thomas Jefferson and John Marshall.

But notwithstanding the eminent service and the apparent prosperity of the College of William and Mary, it had one peculiarity, perhaps I should say, one element of weakness, that unfitted it to stand at the head of higher education in Virginia. Not only had it been established as a college of the Church of England, but in its organic law, it had been so tied up with religious, even with denominational restrictions, that, as time went on, it came to be more and more regarded as, in a somewhat narrow sense, merely a Church of England school. There are evidences that this peculiarity began to impair the usefulness of the college, even in colonial days; but when the Revolution came on, and the break with the mother country was irreparably made, it became immediately apparent that the college could no longer satisfy the demands of the State, and that the charter must either be modified in the interests of greater liberality, or new institutions would have to be established. Unfortunately, the efforts made to break down the denominational barriers were not successful. Two results,

perhaps inevitable, quickly ensued. The first was that a plentiful crop of other colleges, representing different religious denominations, sprang into a feeble existence. The second, which came not much later, was the gradual withdrawal of a very large body of the people from support of the denominational schools, and, after an unsuccessful effort to liberalize the College of William and Mary, the determination to establish an institution as broad and catholic as any of those existing on the continent of Europe. Of this idea Jefferson was the promoter and champion; and the well known result of the movement was the ultimate founding of the University of Virginia.

Such, then, was the situation, not only in Virginia, but also in the other colonies. The tendency was an unmistakable one. At the moment the Federal Government was set in motion, a strong current away from the policy of the earlier fathers, had manifestly set in. The separation of church from state was made complete in the adoption of the first amendment to the Constitution. There are few Americans bold enough to maintain that this separation has not been productive of great blessings to the nation. But thoughtful persons will, I fancy, have to admit that it was the harbinger of new risks, if not of new dangers. It threw upon every denomination, almost even upon every parish, the direction as well as the control of

its own affairs pertaining not only to religion, but also to education. With the religious consequences of this action we have, of course, in this connection, nothing whatever to do. But the educational effect is worthy of our thoughtful attention. The mere statement of the situation explains its peculiarities. It divided responsibilities and changed the seat of authority. Hitherto power had belonged to the colony, that is, to the State as a whole; henceforth it was to belong to the several denominations, to each within the jurisdiction of its own sphere.

Now, there were two or three peculiarities of the situation to which I beg leave for a moment to call your attention. In the first place, it was the introduction into educational affairs of something of that chaotic independence which, in political matters, wrought such disastrous results under the Confederation. It was a similar chaotic independence that demonstrated the necessity of establishing for political efficiency some central and regulating, if not controlling, authority under a Federal constitution. And I think it is not too much to say that, from that day to this, we have been living in what may be called the chaos of an educational individualism, as lacking in power of economical and efficient direction and administration as was that political confederation which demonstrated its weakness, and fell to pieces within ten years after it was constructed.

Another peculiarity in the situation was the fact that, while the State was inclined to keep its hold on the education of children, it appeared to be not unwilling to abandon its direction of the education of youth. In colonial and provincial days, the State, as we have seen, had all grades of education equally under its fostering care; but now that the churches began to contend with one another for the occupancy of the field in higher education, the State showed an unmistakable tendency to leave the endowment of the higher grades of schools to the churches and to private benevolence. This tendency in the Eastern States was not arrested or even interfered with, and, accordingly, even in the early years of the Federal Government, we are confronted with strange anomalies, and still stranger arguments for their support. The doctrine was often put forward, and soon came to be very generally held, that the moral and religious character of students in the higher schools of learning would be "unsafe" unless such schools were under the direct control of the religious denominations; a doctrine built up on the singular postulate that children, so long as they are at an age that is peculiarly susceptible to religious impressions, may safely be left under the guidance of State schools, while at the moment they emerge from that age and enter upon a period less susceptible to such impressions, they must be under a more

careful religious guidance than any which schools established by the State can afford.

Such was the situation, such were the tendencies, at the time of the adoption of the Federal Constitution. It was a situation that called for great statesmanship. In the political sphere, statesmen were not wanting. But in the educational world, where were the men who, like Fichte and Wilhelm von Humboldt, in a time of kindred necessity, could see that the highest efficiency of the State, as well as the largest good of the people, could be attained only by means of a general system of education which should bind together into a compact organization all the educational forces that were scattered in a chaotic and discordant condition over the country at large. Alas! alas! no such men were to be found. If there were here and there discriminating spirits, who saw the educational needs of the time, and tried to meet them, they were so few in number, and were so absorbed in other interests, that their power was unavailing, and their influence was dissipated into the thin atmosphere about them. The time when the Federal Government was formed was the occasion when provision should have been made for education in all of its grades. But the golden opportunity was lost. A few saw the

“Tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flow, leads on to fortune,”

but the number was too few to accomplish any result. Alas! that the next generations were to realize that

“ The golden opportunity
Is never offered twice.”

If there were not wanting a few who saw the need of more general and systematic provisions for higher education, I think it may justly be said that there were only two whose efforts are worthy of note—Jefferson and Washington,—the one through his successful endeavors to establish a university of character in his own State, the other through a still loftier though unsuccessful desire to found a national university at the national capital. These two purposes, though in many respects dissimilar, were so interwoven, the one with the other, that they can hardly be torn asunder, even in an effort to limit our study to the work of Washington alone. Let us, therefore, recognize the inseparable union of the two, and endeavor to trace the development and expression of their common purpose.

There are many reasons for supposing that the inadequacy of the system then existing first impressed itself upon the mind of Jefferson. It was as early as 1779 that he brought forward in the General Assembly of Virginia three bills for the reorganization of education within that State. One of these was directed to the establishment of primary and secondary schools, one to the establish-

ment of colleges, and one to the establishment of a State university. The colleges were to be analogous in character to the gymnasia of Germany, while the university was to be the crown of the whole educational system of the State. The effort, broad, noble, and comprehensive though it was, could not succeed. In 1796, the first bill, that relating to the lowest grade of schools, was adopted by the Legislature, though its efficiency was paralyzed by a fatal option that was given to the individual counties as to whether its provisions should be carried out within their jurisdiction. The second bill, that which was to provide for gymnasia or colleges, never became a law, though Jefferson returned to it again and again. The third, that relating to the university, was, after many years, adopted in modified form; but it was destined not to have the support of an organized system of secondary schools. Hence the University of Virginia, with its many strong and noble characteristics, has always had to float in mid air.

Jefferson's first idea was to transform the College of William and Mary, and then adopt it as the university of his new system. In his autobiography he explains why the plan did not succeed: "The College of William and Mary," said he, "was an establishment purely of the Church of England; the visitors were required to be all of that church; the professors to subscribe to the

thirty-nine articles ; its students to learn the catechism ; and one of its fundamental objects was declared to be, to raise up ministers for that church. The religious jealousies, therefore, of all the dissenters took alarm, lest this might give an ascendancy to the Anglican sect, and refused acting on that bill."

Thus it was that nothing but failure resulted from the plan of converting the College of William and Mary into the University of Virginia. It was an outcome, that, without any extraordinary foresight, might have been anticipated. No one is willing to be deprived of that upon which he places any dependence, and no one can be expected voluntarily to enhance the ascendancy of a rival. Hence it is not singular that in the whole history of the country no one of the denominational colleges has ever been converted into a state university.

But, although Jefferson failed in his effort to rally all the educational forces of Virginia to the support of William and Mary, justice requires that we should accord him credit for several important changes in the college itself. In 1779, he became one of the visitors of the institution, and we find that immediately afterwards he was instrumental in bringing about some modifications that may well be regarded as having historical significance. In addition to abolishing the preparatory department, he induced the board to sweep away the professor-

ships of divinity and oriental languages, and to substitute in their places three professorships; one of law and administration; one of anatomy, medicine and chemistry; and one of the modern languages. It is, perhaps, recognition enough of the new professorship of law and administration, to say, that at the very beginning, there came to its benches for guidance and inspiration, the youth who in after years was to be the most distinguished of all the interpreters of the constitution, John Marshall.

The next contribution of Jefferson to the cause of higher education in America was still more characteristic of his fertile and peculiar genius. It was that interesting proposal of his to take up one of the European universities, and transplant it to the soil of the United States. While on government service at Paris, he had observed as best he could from the French capital, the characteristics of European universities. He received the same impression that many others have since received, that on the other side of the Atlantic there are certain characteristics in education from which something may be learned even on this side. He had found that the University at Geneva, like so many other things in the time of the French revolution, was in trouble. The professors were discontented, perhaps even apprehensive of losing their places. The history of the affair is not very clear; but it is certain that the thrifty professors succeeded in

some way in convincing the imaginative American statesman that a great service would be rendered to science and letters, if the whole Genevan Faculty should be taken up bodily and transported to the New World. Surely the brilliancy of the idea was surpassed only by its absurdity. That any American should have favored it, is perhaps the most striking of all the numerous evidences remaining to us of an occasional tendency on the part of our good fathers to leave the solid earth and indulge in a temporary experience of the empyrean. The winged Hermes of our political gods here indulged in one of the most extraordinary of all his flights. The Genevan Faculty could lecture in French, and possibly a little in Latin; but they had thus far deemed a knowledge of English a superfluous accomplishment. Jefferson's serious and earnest proposition was, that this eminently respectable body of French speaking professors should transport all their learning to this New World, and give it out through the medium of their native tongue to the young men of Virginia. The rest of the gods must have turned away their faces, if they did not even thrust their tongues into their cheeks. It is said, you know, that Washington never laughed. Who can believe that when he received Jefferson's proposition, his dignified gravity did not indulge in a little needed relaxation?

But the Genevan episode, though in itself it never for a moment had any prospect of success, was not without one important result. It performed the service of calling attention to the weakness of the prevailing educational system. It tended to clear the atmosphere of the haziness on educational questions that everywhere seemed to prevail. Most important of all, it brought Washington to a decision on one important question concerning which, for a considerable time, he had been in doubt. If he did not turn the scheme lightly aside, as a project of no importance, we must suppose it was because of the really serious and elaborate importunities of Jefferson. The father of the project knew that Washington had contemplated an important gift toward the establishment of a national university. But even Jefferson's importunities failed to shake the wise judgment of Washington. The idea of a national university he was indeed in favor of. But the objections to the Swiss project seemed to him insurmountable. He distinctly avowed his unwillingness to subordinate the idea of an American university to a foreign body of professors, even were they, as a body, to constitute the most learned faculty in Europe. He declared that a foreign importation *en masse* might preclude some of the first professors in other countries from participation in the proposed national university. In short, while insisting that the new

university should be distinctively *American* in character, he took a broadly international view of the subject, and declared that they ought to hold themselves free to choose the ablest professors, in whatever country they were to be found.

It was on the 27th of November, 1794, that Washington returned the papers in regard to the Swiss faculty. In doing so he so wrote one sentence, which reveals his thoughts on the subject: "That a national university in this country," said he, "is a thing to be desired, has always been my decided opinion; and the appropriation of grounds and funds for it has long been contemplated and talked of." A few days later he wrote to the Secretary of State, Edmund Randolph, requesting that, in company with Madison, he would mature and present a proper course for the endowment of such an institution. Washington announced his purpose of contributing a definite sum to such an endowment. The Legislature of Virginia had appropriated a generous gift in acknowledgment of his distinguished services in behalf of the State. At first Washington had determined to decline the gift, as he had done when compensation for his services had been urged upon him by the Federal Congress. But, on mature thought, he decided to accept of the bounty of the State, on condition that he might be permitted to devote the sum to the benefit of some public institution. It was the sum

thus realized that Washington now determined to devote to the cause of higher education.

And the plan which he adopted shows at once his considerateness and his wisdom. He declared that he would have preferred to concentrate all his resources upon a national university; but as he owed to Virginia the very possibility of such an act, he felt obliged, out of a loyal deference to this fact, to divide his gift, and bestow a part on his native State, as well as a part on a national university to be established at the Federal Capital. With the gift to Virginia was established Liberty Hall, the secondary school, which afterwards took the name of Washington and Lee University. The relations which that school should sustain to the other were clearly outlined in the mind of the founder. Washington stated distinctly that it was to be "a seminary of learning on an enlarged plan, but yet not coming up to the idea of a university. The students who wish to pursue the whole range of science," he continued, "may pass with advantage from the seminary to the university, and the former, by a due relation, may be rendered co-operative with the latter." How similar was this idea to that of William of Wykeham in founding the Winchester school and the New College at Oxford!

Washington announced his views and purposes on many different occasions. There are two or three utterances, however, which contain so much

wisdom, as well as clearness of purpose, that no mere abstract can do them justice, and, therefore, I beg to quote the passages in full.

Before doing so, however, I would call your attention to the three reasons embodied in the extracts I shall quote. The first is a postulate, not so much expressed as taken for granted, that special, and careful, and somewhat elaborate training in governmental affairs is necessary to the political welfare of the country. In the second place, he deplores in express terms the going abroad of so many young men to complete their education, since, in their formative days, they are likely to imbibe political principles antagonistic to the institutions under which they are to live. And, in the third place, as if anticipating the very misunderstandings and prejudices that formed so large an element in bringing about our civil war, he dwells especially upon the importance of bringing the youth from all parts of the country to a common educational centre of higher learning, in order that, "by freedom of intercourse," and "collision of sentiment," their misunderstandings and prejudices may be worn away. Here are the words which he wrote :

"To the Governor of Virginia ;

"It is with indescribable regret that I have seen the youth of the United States migrating to foreign countries, in order to acquire the higher branches of education, and to obtain a knowledge of the sciences. Although it would be injustice to many to pronounce the certainty of their imbibing maxims not congenial to republicanism,

it must, nevertheless, be admitted that a serious danger is encountered by sending abroad among other political systems those who have not well learned their own. The time is, therefore, come when a plan of universal education ought to be adopted in the United States. Not only do the exigencies of public and private life demand it, but if it should ever be apprehended that prejudice would ever be entertained in one part of the Union against another, an efficacious remedy will be to assemble the youth of every part, under such circumstances as will, by the freedom of intercourse and collision of sentiment, give to the minds the direction of truth, philanthropy, and mutual conciliation."

To the Commissioners of the Federal District at the capital, Washington wrote in January, 1795, the following :

"I have greatly wished to see a plan adopted, by which the arts, sciences, and belles-lettres could be taught in their fullest extent, thereby embracing all the advantages of European tuition, with the means of acquiring the liberal knowledge, which is necessary to qualify our citizens for the exigencies of public as well as private life ; and (which with me is a consideration of great magnitude) by assembling the youth from different parts of this rising republic, contributing from their intercourse and interchange of information to the removal of prejudices, which might perhaps sometimes arise from local circumstances."

In his speech to Congress, in December of 1796, the President adverted to the same subject in still more impressive terms. He said :

"The assembly to which I address myself, is too enlightened not to be fully sensible how much a flourishing state of the arts and sciences contributes to national prosperity and reputation. True it is that our country, much to its honor, contains many seminaries of learning highly respectable and useful ; but the funds upon which they rest are too narrow to command the ablest professors, in the different departments of liberal knowledge, for the institution contemplated, though they would be excellent auxiliaries. Amongst the motives to such an institution, the assimilation of the principles, opinions, and manners of our countrymen, by the common education of a portion

of our youth from every quarter, well deserves attention. The more homogeneous our citizens can be made in these particulars, the greater will be our prospect of permanent union ; and a primary object of such a national institution should be, the education of our youth in the science of government. In a republic, what species of knowledge can be equally important, and what duty more pressing on its legislature, than to patronize a plan for communicating it to those, who are to be the future guardians of the country ?”

And, finally, as if unwilling to lose any, even the last possible, opportunity of impressing his views on this subject upon his countrymen, he recurs to it in his last will and testament, in the following impressive words :

“It has always been a source of serious regret to me to see the youth of these United States sent to foreign countries for the purpose of education, often before their minds were formed, or they had imbibed any adequate ideas of the happiness of their own ; contracting too frequently, not only habits of dissipation and extravagance, but principles unfriendly to republican government, and to the true and genuine liberties of mankind, which thereafter are rarely overcome ; for these reasons it has been my ardent wish to see a plan devised on a liberal scale, which would have a tendency to spread systematic ideas through all parts of this rising empire, thereby to do away with local attachments and state prejudices, as far as the nature of things would, or ought to admit, from our national councils. Looking anxiously forward to the accomplishment of so desirable an object as this is, (in my estimation), my mind has not been able to contemplate any plan more likely to effect the measure, than the establishment of a UNIVERSITY in a central part of the United States, to which the youths of fortune and talents, from all parts thereof, may be sent for the completion of their education, in all the branches of polite literature, in arts and sciences, *in acquiring knowledge in the principles of politics and government*, and as a matter of infinite importance, in my judgment, by associating with each other, and forming friendships in juvenile years, be enabled to free themselves in a proper degree from those local prejudices and habitual jealousies which have just been mentioned, and which, if carried to excess, are never failing sources of disquietude to the public

mind, and pregnant with mischievous consequences to this country. Under these impressions, so fully dilated, "I give and bequeath, in perpetuity, the fifty shares which I hold in the Potomac Company (under the aforesaid act of the Legislature of Virginia), towards the endowment of a university, to be established within the limits of the District of Columbia, under the auspices of the General Government, if that Government should incline to extend a fostering hand towards it; and, until such seminary is established, and the funds arising on these shares shall be required for its support, my further will and desire is, that the profit accruing therefrom shall, whenever the dividends are made, be laid out in purchasing stock in the Bank of Columbia, or some other bank, at the discretion of my executors, or by the Treasurer of the United States for the time being, under the direction of Congress, provided that honorable body should patronize the measure; and the dividends proceeding from the purchase of such stock are to be vested in more stock, and so on, until the sum adequate to the accomplishment of the object is obtained; of which I have not the smallest doubt before many years pass away, even if no aid or encouragement is given by the legislative authority, or from any other source."

Thus fully did Washington set forth his views. With what wisdom and prescience did he behold what was before the country! He foresaw the sectional jealousies that were likely to arise, and he sought to avert them. He deplored the alienation from republican institutions that would spring up in immature minds, educated under foreign skies. He saw, and again and again proclaimed, the necessity of thorough and elaborate instruction in the science of government, and he ardently desired that the necessity of going to foreign lands for such instruction should be obviated. He knew that private benevolence, even if supplemented with the resources of the States, would be inadequate to establish the needed institution. He saw that, of all

forms of government, those which are most dependent upon the intelligence and morality of the people, must make the most careful provision for education in morality and intelligence. He was fully aware that the ends which he sought could not be attained without the help of secondary as well as university education, and, therefore, he divided his gift between a preparatory school in Virginia, and a university at the National Capital. Thus we see that he labored under no such pestilent delusion as to suppose that an education in the mere rudiments of knowledge is a guarantee against the political dangers that were to be averted. It was a *University*, a UNIVERSITY in the broadest and highest sense of the term, that was the peculiar object of his educational solicitude.

There is something in the persistency and the nobility of Washington's thought on the subject of a national university, that reminds us of what occurred only ten years later at the capital of one of the nations of Europe. Prussia had fallen under the contemptuous displeasure of Napoleon, had been humiliated and well-nigh destroyed. Despoiled of her fortresses, robbed of half her territory, her army, even for purposes of defence, reduced to a handful of men, to her more than to any other of Napoleon's foes, it had been permitted

“To read the book of fate,
And see the revolution of the times
Make mountains level, and the continent,
Weary of solid firmness, melt itself
Into the sea.”

But through the welter of that sad ruin there rang out the clear voice of a philosopher, proclaiming that the only gospel of salvation for Prussia was the gospel of education. At the very moment when French bayonets were in possession of Berlin, Fichte lifted up his voice in the “Reden an die Deutsche Nation,” in which, throughout the elaborate argument of fourteen lectures, there was this ever recurring refrain: “Education is the only means by which we can be rescued from our present helpless condition.” The key note of that appeal, the pathetic eloquence of which resounded throughout Germany, was in the sentence: “I hope to convince Germans that nothing but education can rescue us from the miseries that overwhelm us.” And the foundation of his argument was laid in a doctrine which he was condensed into a single sentence. “Education,” said he, “education, as hitherto conducted by the church, has aimed only at securing for men happiness in another life; but this is not enough, for men need to be taught how to bear themselves in the present life so as to do their duty to the State, to others, and to themselves.” The lectures, which were little else than an eloquent and im-

passioned elaboration of this theme, made so profound an impression upon the country, and especially upon the government, that a commission of five of the most eminent scholars of Prussia was appointed to elaborate and recommend a system that would embody these ideas. All grades of education were remodeled and reduced to substantial uniformity of system. To us, in this discussion, it is of chief interest to note that one of the first fruits of the movement was the founding of the University at Berlin; a university which, now that three quarters of a century have passed, brings annually together, for the most advanced learning the world can give, more than five thousand of the most intelligent and the most aspiring young men of Germany. It would be easy to point out how the works of such men as Niebuhr, and Ranke, and Mommsen, and Savigny, and Boeckh, and Virchow, and Helmholtz, and others of kindred renown, each of whom, in his sphere, has stood at the very pinnacle of human knowledge, have inspired the thoughts and illuminated the paths of scholars, in all parts of the world. But, fascinating as this theme would be, it would be more to our purpose to-day to contemplate the effect of this system of education upon the German people and the German nation. It must, however, suffice simply to say that it has taken the shattered, and impoverished, and disheartened Germany of

1810 and made it the united, and prosperous, and confident Germany of the present day.

And it was work in some sense akin to this that Washington, *our* Washington desired to do for the American people. He saw and deplored certain disintegrating tendencies in education as well as in politics. In the political field, thanks to the efforts chiefly of Hamilton and Marshall and Webster, the thoughts of the country were so led that when the hour of trial came, the tendency was successfully thwarted and the danger, as we now trust, permanently overcome. But there were no Hamiltons or Marshalls or Websters for the work of education. The tongue of History is silent as to what has become of the bequest for a national university embodied in the last will and testament of Washington. Certain it is that the general apathy on the subject was so profound that the means provided for from Washington's private fortune for such a university have never been devoted to the noble purpose for which they were designed. In striving to live, the country forgot to make provision for living well.

It is perhaps in vain to speculate as to what results would have followed, if Washington's plan had been met in the spirit in which it was intended and announced. But it is at least not difficult to imagine that, if the same wisdom had prevailed in organizing our education that characterized our early political history, we should have had an edu-

cational centre that would have shed its elevating and inspiring influence over the whole country, and, as Washington said, by bringing the youth from all parts of the land together, would have tended, at least, to bind all sections of the country into a more sympathetic and harmonious union. Everybody now knows that one of the most pregnant causes of our civil war was the ignorance on the part of the North of the people of the South, and the ignorance of the people of the South in regard to the spirit and the resources of the people of the North; and it is probably not too much to say that, if that ignorance could have been enlightened, or, better still, could have been prevented, the horrors of a civil war would not have been necessary for the perpetuity of the Union and the abolition slavery. As to how much could have been done toward such an end by the establishment of a really great national university, is a subject of too momentous import, at this time, to receive our consideration. It is enough for us, here and now, to remember that one of the principal objects of Washington's project was, by bringing the youth of talents and fortune from all parts of the country into harmonious and friendly intercourse, to dissipate those very prejudices and enlighten that very ignorance which exerted so powerful an influence in making the war inevitable.

The view which I have endeavored to present to you, doubtless, seems not a very cheerful or inspir-

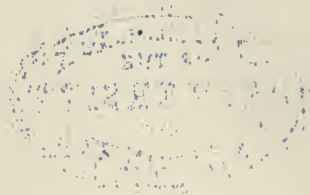
ing one ; but we do well to remember that it is the function of History to warn as well as to encourage. Nor ought we to dwell too much upon the shadows of the picture. Surely it has its encouragements for us who are assembled here to-day. If we are not a national university, in the sense contemplated by Washington, we yet have some of the most important characteristics of such an institution. Not only do we owe our material prosperity to the joint bounty of national and private generosity, but we bring together students from all parts of the country, and thus accomplish, in some slight measure, at least, one of the most important of the objects which Washington had at heart. We have come together here from thirty-seven of the States of the Union, and from ten of the countries beyond the national bounds. And yet, whether we, as teachers and students, have come from the forests and the snows of Maine, or from the plains and the sunshine of Texas ; whether we have been attracted hither from the lofty banks of the Columbia, or from the sunny borders of the Gulf ; whether we have left our native skies in Britain, or in Germany, or in Spain, or in South America, or in the Provinces of Canada, or in the isles of the Pacific ; whether our eyes first saw the light in the valleys of "far Cathay," or on the heights looking out upon

" Seas that flame with occidental gold,"

we are all drawn nearer to the coveted "brother-

hood of man," and, may I not say, are in some manner inspired with a common desire, a common purpose, and a common love. In one sense, at least, we are even more than a national university.

And so it is with a few of the other universities of the land. At last, after nearly a hundred years have passed away a few of our institutions are attempting, though it must be admitted in a somewhat feeble and halting way, to do the work of real universities. Within the past two or three decades, the higher education for the first time in the history of the country has been making a genuine and well directed effort to do something of that work which Washington would have provided for from the first. Though the means at the disposal of even the most favored of our universities is small in comparison with the demands laid upon them, and though for this reason the work done must be limited in variety and extent, in comparison with what is accomplished in the old world, yet it is a source of no small satisfaction to know that we are at last attempting, though in quite other ways, to correct the mistake that was made in neglecting the urgent advice of the Father of his Country. This tendency is surely the highest tribute the Higher Education can pay to the memory of Washington.



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