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# ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

TWO LITERARY SOCIETIES

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA,

JUNE 5, 1850,

BY HON. JAMES C. DOBBIN.

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SECOND EDITION.

BY ORDER OF THE PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY.

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1859.



PHILANTHROPIC HALL, March 1859.

This Address was delivered before the two Literary Societies of the University of North Carolina, by the HON. JAMES C. DOBBIN, at the annual Commencement of 1850.

It is so popular and in such great demand that the Philanthropic Society, at whose request it was delivered, has ordered this, the second edition to be published.

WM. T. NICHOLSON, }  
GEORGE L. WILSON, } COMMITTEE.  
GEORGE P. BRYAN. }

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# ADDRESS.

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GENTLEMEN OF THE DIALECTIC AND PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETIES :

IN undertaking the task which your generous solicitation has imposed, I cannot forego the expression of unaffected regret, that the lot has not fallen on one more capable of contributing to the entertainment of those who come to partake of the Annual Literary Festival of our time-honored University.

Not many years ago it was my lot to form one of the restless throng of College youth, who, with buoyant hopes and eager expectation, sat as anxious listeners, and drank in with generous confidence and affectionate admiration, those moral lessons, those encouraging maxims, those warning admonitions, so eloquently, so impressively addressed to us, by the great, the good, and the lamented GASTON. Well do I remember that look of earnest and heartfelt sincerity, with which that venerable man sought to teach us, that "Happiness as well as greatness, enjoyment as well as renown, have no friends so sure as Integrity, Diligence, and Independence;" that "we are not placed here to waste our days in wanton riot or inglorious ease, with appetites perpetually gratified and never palled, exempted from all care and solicitude, with life ever fresh and joys ever new."— Well do I remember (and may none of us ever forget) that thrilling, heart-moving burst of patriotic eloquence, with which he held up to our gaze, the gloomy picture of a Union dissolved, the sundered, bleeding limbs of a once gigantic

body, instinct with life and health and vigor; his proud exultation that "still we are great, glorious, united and free;" his touching appeal to the youth then before him, that surely "such a country and such a constitution have claims which cannot be disregarded." That eloquent lesson is now familiar to you all, and a student would blush not to know it by heart. That beloved statesman is now beneath the sod. His State mourns his loss, and his memory will ever be cherished by all who appreciate virtue, love excellence, and admire learning. *He* spoke the experience of one who had nearly completed the journey of life, and had himself played no humble part in the race of honorable ambition.

He who *now* comes at your bidding, hath made but little way in his pilgrimage, and might well be content to return from the dust and bustle and turmoil of a thus far busy life, for the first time to his Alma Mater—this starting point in the journey—and assure you who have kindly invited him, and who are now panting to enter on "life's fitful course," that thus far he hath found the maxims of that lamented statesman to be founded in true wisdom—that "Integrity" is the crowning virtue—that "Labour is not more the duty than the blessing of man"—that our beloved country *does* present to "the eyes, the hopes, and gratitude of man, a picture as lovely and brilliant" as he painted it in his loftiest declamation. And well might I now add, that country, now—more than ever *now*—challenges all your wisdom, all your virtue, all your patriotism, to uphold and maintain it: to save it from the angry strifes of the *impetuous* and the *rash*—the mischievous machinations of the *ambitious* and the *selfish*—the reckless madness of misguided *fanaticism*.

But, my young friends, while it would be vain repetition of what others have done so well before, were I to indulge in the effort to point out the dangers that ever beset impetuous youth in the perilous voyage of life:—while it would be presumption in me to inculcate here the teachings of vir-

tue, and to persuade you to tread the paths of morality, in the presence of the wise men from whose lips you have been daily wont to catch the purest lessons ;—it may not be inappropriate, nor entirely unprofitable, on this spot, consecrated to learning, and among those who have come to evince their devotion to the sacred cause—and in this, if not golden at least gold-searching era, to *reïssert* the superiority of mind over matter—to impress *afresh* on the minds of the youth here present, that the highly cultivated intellect is the wealth at last to secure real independence—to purchase, as far as frail mortals can, true happiness in this world below. That El Dórado that floated like a vision before the dreamy enthusiasts of other times, and haunted the imaginations of the indolent, who loved to fancy some fabulous land where the glittering dust grew so luxuriantly that ease and sloth could laugh at the ancient toils of industry and frugality, in *our* favored day, by too many is conceived to have been at last discovered. And even in this age of progress, when old empires have been made to tremble under the convulsive throes of a liberty-seeking populace—when the world is startled by the astonishing achievements of the human mind in fields hitherto unexplored,—when genius, with the Printing Press as her engine, hath scattered with a lavish hand her rich productions to instruct, to entertain and to amuse ; yet so wondrous are the tales of golden treasures leaping into the lap of the traveller beyond the mountains, by a magic that mocks at the homely labours our fathers taught us, that too many of our ingenuous, educated youth, captivated with the gilded charms, the glitter and tinsel and proud parade of wealth—tiring in their slow pursuits of learning, to which “no royal road” hath yet been found. *forget* for awhile that the well-stored mind is better far than the overflowing coffers—that the low, grovelling, fleeting pleasures of wealth, are literally but dust in the ballance, compared with the pure, enobling enjoyments of intellect :

—*forget* that Inspiration hath said, “amid all thy gettings get understanding,” and that “*wisdom's* ways are ways of pleasantness, and all *her* paths are peace;”—*forget* the picture of the unsatisfying character of sordid lucre, so vividly drawn by Goldsmith—

“As some lone miser, visiting his store,  
Bends at his treasure, counts, recounts it o'er;  
Hoards after hoards his rising raptures fill;  
Yet *still he sighs*, for hoards are *wanting still* ;”—

*forget* the truth so forcibly presented by Young—

“Soon as this feeble pulse, which leaps so long,  
Almost by miracle, is tired of play,  
Like rubbish, from exploding engines thrown,  
Our magazine of hoarded trifles fly;  
Fly divers : fly to foreigners, to foes,—  
New masters court, and call the former fools;  
(How justly,) for dependence on their stay  
Wide scatter, first our playthings, then our dust.”

Let us then, in withdrawing for a day or two from the sterner demands, and trying struggles, and petty strifes of every day life—while once more partaking of this fountain head of learning, and breathing the refreshing atmosphere of this classic retreat, contemplate anew the *superior pleasures, the superior advantages*, (not forgetting the *higher responsibilities*) of the *man of cultivated mind*, over those who grope their way in untutored blindness—dull and inanimate amid the dazzling triumphs of genius,—insensible to the instructive beauties of nature,—strangers to the captivating charms of polite literature,—

“Born capable indeed of heavenly truth,  
But down to latest age from earliest youth,  
Their mind a wilderness, through want of care,  
The plough of wisdom never entering there.”

I purpose not, however, to speak to-day of the mere intrinsic value of education—its moral tendency—its incalculable importance;—but of the exalted pleasures of cultivated taste, the exquisite enjoyments of him who can luxuriate in the green pastures and amid the fragrant flowers of elegant Literature, with such companions as Addison, and Johnson, and Dryden, and Milton, and Shakspeare; who

loves to linger anon in the sublimer departments of Science, and behold its developments from the remote period of the wonder-struck Chaldean Shepherd to the time of the philosophic Newton; who delights to wander through the instructive pages of History, and learn and appreciate its teachings, from "man's first disobedience" to his present position, after centuries of revolutions and changes; who keeps the store-house of his mind well furnished with those intellectual treasures, begetting that genuine independence that keeps its master self-sustained amid the distractions of adversity and the feebleness of age,—an independence, elevated high above that misnamed independence, the spurious offspring of wealth, fleeting as the treasures that beget it, which "moth and rust" are sure to corrupt and "thieves break through and steal."

"Knowledge is power," is the trite and ancient maxim; but shall it be sought after merely because it is power?—"Learning is useful," and although we live in a utilitarian age, shall it be commended merely because it can be turned to good account? become profitable by way of speculation, and for the virtue it may possess of giving one man an advantage over his neighbor who hath it not? Shall Literature be favoured merely because it adorns its votary and lends a finish, a charm, an elegance, to his productions?—Shall Astronomy be looked into merely because, forsooth, an acquaintance with the stars may assist the mariner as he ploughs through the trackless waters of the ocean? Or may we be pardoned for presenting to the young mind,—Science, Literature, Learning, and History, as *full* of attractions—worthy of all their wooing—because of their intrinsic loveliness—because of the magic charm about them that is sure to impart to their assiduous votary an exquisite satisfaction, worth far more than the price of drudgery and time required to obtain them.

Literature, Polite Literature! What pencil can paint in too glowing and fascinating colours—in tints too delicate and pleasing—its bewitching loveliness, its heart-stirring charms, its refining, softening, elevating influences? Who can borrow from its richest ornaments expressions of adequate force—figures of sufficient beauty—to illustrate to the young mind its genuine character? Who is not even bewildered and embarrassed, to attempt the selection of even specimen flowers in its vast field, decorated with clusters of every hue, and redolent with sweetest fragrance? Who is not confused in the throng of illustrious names that break upon the vision, as he looks to mark out the choice Spirits who have lent their genius to posterity for its entertainment and instruction? And without recurring to remote periods, what educated mind hath not feasted on the sumptuous repasts served up by literary epicures even in our own days? And although the severe moralist, in his rigid scrutiny to “mark iniquity,” may here and there find much to carp at, yet who hath not borrowed many a moment of joy from the exquisite genius of Scott? Who hath not strolled with delight over the wild heath, and ragged cliff, and along the quiet lakes, and broken towers, and ivy mantled castles, consecrated—touched with enchantment—by the magic wand of that wizard of the North;—and felt that they were resting places in our pilgrimage here below—where Imagination could triumph awhile over busy memory, and chase away the remembrance of envyings, and bickerings, and jealousies, and check the workings of sordid cupidity and ungenerous aims that so often, and alas too often, poison life's sweetest moments, and fling the blighting mildew on Hope's most cherished flowers? How oft have the sweeter sounds of his minstrel harp touched the heart of many a care-worn victim of despondency and misfortune, till by their melting cadence,

“The present scene—the future lot—  
 His toils, his wants were all forgot,  
 Cold diffidence, and age's frost,  
 In the full tide of Song are lost.”

But time would fail us to-day, were I to invite you to linger amid the beautiful gems that lie scattered in rich profusion through the works even of this man of Letters. And in this age when the world is flooded with the trashy and vicious ebullitions of the penny-seeking novelist—if the mind *will* seek sport and recreation in works of fiction, *his* are those that may be more safely resorted to, as well for chaste and simple diction, as for the sure triumph that virtue is ever made to win over vice. Indeed, it is no little pleasure to intellects of no mean cast, to mingle with his characters, so strikingly and at times instructively illustrative of human nature, to admire even the touching specimen of female devotion in the obscure Jeannie Deans, pleading with greatness in behalf of misfortune;—to smile over the amusing enthusiasm of Old Buck for Roman camps and black letter;—to love the sweetness of Rebecca;—to almost see and hear the labors of old Mortality in his sad efforts to decypher moss-grown inscriptions; to associate with the thousand characters exhibiting in striking relief a vivid picture of the passions and emotions that elevate, and adorn, and debase man, while playing his part on this world's great stage.

What hours of pure mental recreation are lost to those who are content to grow up in indolent ease, heedless of a taste for Elegant Literature; who have never relished the pure diction of Dryden, the sublime sentiments of Milton, the touching melodies of Moore, the instructive Essays of Addison, the glowing pages of Macaulay, the elegant works of our own Irving, rich and brilliant as so much Literary embroidery, the still loftier productions of Shakspeare, of whom it hath been said, “He is the tallest and most graceful of them all, and will himself *alone* do, when his reader may feel under a cloud of gloom and say, like his own Macbeth,

“ My way of life is fallen into the sea,  
 The yellow leaf : and that which accompanies  
 Old age, as honors—troops of friends—  
 I must not look to have.”

But this species of intellectual exercise may be viewed as the mere holiday sports of the active mind, gamboling and frolicking in the fields of fiction and romance, with airy beings for associates, conjured into shape and life by the creative spirit of poetic genius.

But while glancing, even though slightly, at the attractions of Literature, it may be not deemed out of place to speak a word of the sublimity and beauty of the Literature of the Bible, which commends its study to the man of cultivated taste, however disinclined he may be to practice its holy precepts. Truly hath it been said by Sir Wm. Jones, (himself no common soldier in the cause of learning,) that “the scriptures contain, independent of a divine origin, more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than could be collected within the same compass from all other books ever composed in any age or any idiom.” New beauties are developed to the reader who has the heart to appreciate its heaven-born truths, and the mind to appreciate the touching simplicity and gorgeous imagery in which they are presented by inspired pensmen, apostles and prophets. What can surpass the touching stories of patriarchal simplicity that tell of Laban and Jacob—of Ruth and of Naomi—of Joseph and his brethren? What can approach the sublimity of Isaiah and Jeremiah? And if the thoughtful searcher after truth desires to learn where shall true wisdom be found, let him admire and tremble, and learn as he reads—

“ There is a path which no fool knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen : the lion's whelps have not trodden it. He putteth forth his hand upon the rock : he overturneth the mountains by the roots : he cutteth out rivers among the rocks, and his eye seeth every precious thing.



He bindeth the floods from overflowing, and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light. But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Destruction and Death say we have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof. When He made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder, then did He see it and declare it. And unto man He said, *Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*"

But the sources of enjoyment to the man of educated mind are far from being scanty. The field is boundless.—His may be the teachings of Philosophy, that enable him to penetrate the mysterious Laws of the physical and moral universe:—the teachings of History, that present in a vivid picture to the eye the follies and fortunes of man:—the charms of Eloquence, by the powers of which at one moment the terrors of bloody revolutions are roused, and the mild pursuits of peace and liberty secured at another. And yet *how often* is parental hope blighted by the infatuation of many a generous youth, who starts out well in the race, but by the seductive allurements of vice, the lulling whispers of indolence, or the giddy longing after less substantial enjoyments, he soon "cares for none of these things," pants after "the dust of the earth," and as Lord Bacon discourses in his Errors of learning, "allows it to divert and interrupt the prosecution and advancement of knowledge, like unto the golden ball thrown before Atlanta, which, while she goeth aside and stoopeth to take up, the race is hindered." "*Declinat, cursus, aurumque volubile tollit.*" Need I venture *here* to address a word on the advantages which the reflecting and educated man gathers from the study of history. How instructive to the statesman, how profitable to the mere inquisitive mind, are the teachings of history, whose lessons in other times have been taught to us

by scholars of eminence, but in our days have come to us clothed in the graceful drapery thrown around them by the genius of a Macaulay, an Alison, a Prescott, a Bancroft, and an Irving, who lend to history the thrilling interest of romance without despoiling it of its truthfulness! What a field is there presented for the most expanded intellects to traverse—to behold the rise and progress, and the splendor, decline and downfall of kingdoms, republics, proud empires, and magnificent cities—the sad havoc of war, the genial influence of peace; to gather lessons from this “Philosophy teaching by example”—to stimulate enterprise, to encourage laudable ambition, to animate the desponding, to rebuke vain-glorious pride, to admonish aspiring, boastful man of “what shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!” How full of lessons indeed is man’s past history of man? To the proud man, whose restless spirit is for a moment stirred up with ambitious aims, and who frets and chafes in discontent with the dull monotony of calm and peaceful life, what a volume of admonition is contained in the magic words, “Austerlitz,” “Marengo,” “Waterloo,” “St. Helena!” For he who by one of history’s startling pages, is bewildered and fired by the dazzling meridian brilliancy of the sun of Austerlitz shining on proud trophies and glistening prizes and a mighty Chieftain, is calmed into thoughtful meditation as another chapter soon points him to that sun setting in darkness and gloom, and the proud conqueror a prisoner on a rocky Isle of the ocean! Does the thoughtful youth whose heart beats with throbbings of laudable ambition, seek to learn where may be discovered an example of true greatness? History presents another chapter, that recites the romantic story of an infant colony once planted in a remote wilderness. They were called “Pilgrims,” seeking for liberty, with Puritan enthusiasm. Bright visions of bliss, and of unalloyed freedom, led them on, and whispered the hope that the shafts of oppression

could hardly reach them across the mighty ocean, however strong the arm that aimed them. But every gale that swept across that ocean, came laden with tidings that galled and oppressed, till an unhappy people began to think of Independence, and to seek a fit leader to animate their drooping hopes and dispel the mists that hung around them. In that eventful crisis, there arose among them a man whose virtues shone forth with a lustre whose effulgence attracted every beholder, whose stern courage quailed not in the darkest hour of the storm, whose wisdom was profound beyond all his compeers ; whose prayers were sent up to that God who sees that " the race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong." *That* man became that colony's leader. And he triumphed ; and the world was filled with his glory. And now, to him who asks where shall the model of true greatness be found, History responds, and points to *one name*, and that name is " WASHINGTON, the Father of his Country !" And truly, what a moral is taught to the young men of America by this illustrious chapter in history, which says, " Ye who aspire to read your history in a Nation's eyes," and seek to tread the path that leads to true glory, and leave behind you a monument of fame, high and deep and solid and enduring. come read the life of one who lifted himself above the poisonous malaria of low intrigue and ignoble strife, who practised virtue, revered God, loved his country—come read the history of WASHINGTON !

But among the varied teachings of History, what a bright page is that which reveals the wonderful influence of the introduction of Christianity into the world ?—how man has been regenerated and nations elevated by its heavenly influence—how other systems have for a season flung their flickering, deceptive light upon the misguided, and gone out like fleeting meteors, while Christianity still continues to shed its pure and genial radiance, with steady and in-

creasing brightness, to comfort and bless fallen man ;—how under its beneficent operation woman has been gently elevated from the humiliation to which infidelity had consigned her, to her true position, until now, in return, she not only blesses and adorns and elevates, but by the rich and sparkling poetry of a Mrs. Hemans, the powerful dramatic works of a Joanna Baillie, the beautiful and elegant and touching productions of a Mrs. Opie, and Miss Edgeworth and Mrs. Sigourney, and a bright galaxy of others, the genius of Woman has truly embellished the literature of the age, with gems that glitter among the most dazzling that glow on its pages.

But in the long catalogue of accomplishments that impart pleasure and secure influence to the educated mind,—there is perhaps none more entitled to your assiduous cultivation, than the art of Eloquence. 'Tis true the art of Printing hath encroached much on its province, and the press now daily sends forth orations that fly on the wings of the wind and the lightning's wires from the centre to the circumference of our wide-spread Republic. Yet in all countries it has ever been the most potent art for effective operations on the heart and on the mind; and under our republican government, where the popular feature so powerfully predominates,—where the struggle for increased liberty and the wakeful jealousy of power are ever animating the masses,—where every citizen feels that by genius and industry he can cut out his own pathway from the lowest obscurity to the most distinguished eminence, and the voice of the diffident school boy of humblest lot may in his manhood be heard to electrify the Senate and teach wisdom in the halls of Justice,—in such a Country the rhetorical art has peculiar claims upon the consideration of him who aspires to fame, and influence. For not only has it been written, "*Magna eloquentia sicut flamma materia alitur a motibus excitatur; urendo clarerit,*" but also, "*Pacis comes otäque,*

*sociâ et jam bene constitutæ republicæ alumna eloquentia.*" It is an art by which man can successfully play upon the passions of his fellow man ;—at one moment startle with his brilliant flashes, and annihilate with his withering sarcasm ; at another melt the heart with his touching pathos and win the admiration by those persuasive tones and thrilling appeals that lend effectiveness to the most cogent reasoning and proclaim the triumph of true eloquence. How oft indeed, when the fires of liberty have been well nigh extinguished, and her votaries sunk in the depths of sadness and despair, hath Eloquence stepped forth to reanimate the drooping and to rekindle the smothered fires into a brighter blaze ? How often has Eloquence checked the desolations of war,—protected the blessings of peace,—encouraged the arts, and touched the chords of a thousand hearts in the holy cause of religion and piety ?

Your earliest readings tell of its powers. It was Grecian eloquence that gave her orators the sway over the multitude, that roused all Greece by its thunders to rally and resist the encroachments of her Macedonian enemy, and gave the great master of Eloquence a renown that two thousand years have only increased. It is Roman Eloquence that will ever perpetuate the glory of the Eternal City. It is British Eloquence that has thrown a halo around the Seagirt Isle, that will last when the future traveller will wander amid the ruins of her fallen grandeur. Burke and Chatham, Pitt and Fox, and Sheridan and Grattan and Erskine, are names whose immortality attest the powers of Eloquence, illustrated by their brilliant efforts in struggles for their country's glory, or in the attainment of laurels in the race of personal ambition. What did not American Eloquence achieve, when Henry, and Adams, and Ames spoke ? what hath it not since achieved in many a memorable era in our young Republic's history ?

And if this be the art that may thus be triumphantly exerted to protect liberty, to disseminate the Gospel, to plead

for innocence, to win immortality, can its attainment be too sedulously courted, and its true characteristics too cautiously pointed out? And this most noble art has been mastered by those whose mighty intellects struggled under difficulties and impediments the most discouraging. The great master of Eloquence is the happiest illustration of the trite maxim, "Labor omnia vincit." He trusted not to the inspiration of genius; he affected no shame under the charge that his orations smelt of the lamp, for well he knew, and in himself exemplified, the truth, that while he who trusts to the inspiration of the moment often astonishes with his brilliant displays, he who brings to his aid the allies that Labor is sure to enlist, rarely fails of a triumph. The flashy parade of the orator who scorns to permit his genius to stoop to the drudgery of labor, may at times win a shout of applause as fleeting as the breath that uttered it; but he who aspires to win laurels worth wearing—to promote his country's glory—to advance great principles—to secure a controlling influence with his fellows,—will soon find that well turned sentences and pompous verbiage are far from being the chief elements of true Eloquence, and are very properly estimated by those too whose rough exterior is too often misjudged to be the evidence of the obtuse mind, but who often know better than the conceited orator himself, that what he hath spoken is often a "tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, and signifying nothing." But above all let it ever be remembered, that at last virtue and morality can alone inspire confidence and give to Eloquence its magic charm. Fox was the British orator whose lucid reasoning, powerful declamation, and profound statesmanship, gave him immortal fame; but the administration of his illustrious rival Pitt rarely yielded to the terrible batteries of Fox's Eloquence;—for history weeps over the melancholy truth, that Fox, with all his eloquence, lacked that pure morality, that inflexible virtue, without which, there yet has not been, nor ever can be, enduring influence.

But in the short compass of an Address, no power of condensation is adequate to the task of presenting more than the most meagre picture of the sources of either the enjoyment or influence of the cultivated mind. The vast field lies before you, teeming with rich and delicious fruits, that cluster luxuriantly at every step, grateful to the taste, pleasant to the sight, nourishing to the mind. But *remember*, that those precious fruits fall not into the lap of the idle passer-by, who strolls to linger a moment, and casts but the wishful glance;—but can be gathered by him alone who strives to secure them with such friends as Diligence and Virtue, that rarely fail of their objects. *Remember* what Cicero has truly said, in his essay on old age, “Youth is the vernal season of life, and the blossoms it then puts forth are indications of those future fruits to be gathered in succeeding periods.” Remember too what Aiken makes *virtue* to say in one of his beautiful allegories, “I cheer the cottager at his toil, and inspire the sage at his meditation: I mingle in the crowd of cities, and help the hermit in his cell; I have a temple in every heart that owns my influence, and to him who wishes for me I am ever present. *Science* may raise thee to *eminence*: *I alone* can guide thee to *felicity*.” Start well in the race here, and the goal will the more surely be reached hereafter. Time was when a stripling youth was seen here on this same hill, struggling with his compeers for the modest prize of the College honors. Stern morality tempered his ambition; diligence bore him through in triumph; parental smiles and greeting friends cheered him as he was decked with the University honors. Time passed on. A vast multitude throng the Eastern Portico of the Capitol of the Republic. Fashion and wealth, the curious and the gay, the great men and wise of the land are there. For a moment solemn stillness pervades that assembly; then the air is rent with the shouts of rejoicing; for a great people have just placed upon the brows of a statesman the highest honors of the proudest Republic on earth! Let the aspiring student learn and be encouraged by the interesting truth, that *that statesman* was the stripling boy, who began by winning his first honor at the University of North Carolina, and ended by wearing that of a mighty Republic.

## GENTLEMEN OF THE GRADUATING CLASS—

To you this is a peculiarly interesting occasion. From this quiet seat of learning you have been long wont to gaze on the great world before you as a Landscape, and young imagination hath been busy and fertile in robing it with brightness. Through the dim twilight of fancy things at a distance have been gleaming on you beautifully, and impulsive ardor hath often fretted in impatience under wholesome restraint and well meant discipline. Often have your glad hearts leaped with joy, in anticipation of this hour of emancipation from fancied thralldom. Well, the hour has at last come. It suits not my taste to stifle the pleasing suggestions of hope, and bid you tremblingly beware of the green verdure and the rich and beautiful flowers of life—because, forsooth, of the piercing thorns and biting serpents that oft lie hid in rosy ambush. It suits not my taste to damp your ardor at the outset, because, forsooth, it often happens, that many a wayfarer before you, hath become faint and feverish under the burning heat, or chilled and benumbed with the cold and storms of life. I prefer on this occasion the language of a gifted countryman, full of sentiment and truth and beauty: *“Look not mournfully into the past : It comes not back again. Wisely improve the present : It is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy future, without fear, and with a manly heart !”*

“Your lot is given you in a land  
Where busy arts are never at a stand ;  
Where science points her telescopic eye,  
Familiar with the wonders of the sky ;  
Where bold inquiry, diving out of sight,  
Brings many a pearl of truth to light ;  
Where naught eludes the persevering quest  
That fashion, taste, or luxury suggest.”

The arts, science, agriculture, commerce, liberty, theology, all, all have received fresh impulses. The human family seems animated with new hopes, the human mind seems



inspired with unwonted vigor. When Franklin's silken cord first trembled with electricity the world was startled with what then were esteemed the grand discoveries of that great intellect. But in *your* day the lightning is made our common news-carrier, and is managed by the boys to dispatch hasty messages between remote cities. When Fulton ventured with his Steam Engine along our rivers, the spectacle amazed many a wonder-struck beholder, who felt in his heart, that it was tempting Providence thus to hazard human life. But in *your* day proud steam-ships, with splendid saloons and gay pleasure parties, plough the briny ocean, and in their noisy pomp, seem to mock the storm. And what a country too is that in which your lot is cast, that makes us *all* glory in the name of American citizen,—that makes us all so proud of the past, so proud of the present, so hopeful of the “shadowy future!” Poetic imagination is overtaken in the effort to picture its real grandeur;—so changeful the scene, so rapid the transition, so wonderful its strides from infant weakness to giant manhood! *Once* a mighty wilderness, a continent of unquelled forests, the home of the fierce savage and the howling panther; *now* a beautiful land of cultivated fields, and filled with Statesmen, Orators, and Philosophers! *Once* a modest flag, adorned with thirteen stars, affixed to a flag-staff planted between the mountains and the Atlantic, waved over three millions of American freemen. *Now* a broad ensign, bearing on its ample folds, not *thirteen*, but *thirty* stars, nailed to a flag-staff, planted, not on the narrow confines between the mountains and the Atlantic, but *on* the mountains, on the valleys of the Atlantic and the Pacific, and the great Gulf of the south—affording protection not to three but to twenty millions of free citizens of an “Ocean-bound Republic!” Of other lands poetic prophecy reveals only sad visions of decay and downfall. British genius hath already written of our father land,—

“England, like Greece, shall fall despoiled, defaced,  
 And weep, the Tadmor of the watery waste.  
 The wave shall mock her lone and manless shore,  
 The deep shall know her freighted wealth no more ;  
 And unborn wanderers in the future wood,  
 Where London stands, shall ask where London stood.”

But if American sons prove worthy of American sires ;—if Education be truly the protectress of Liberty ;—if time and christianity, instead of elevating and blessing, have not debased man,—*yours* is the land whose future grandeur and magnificence will continue to baffle the conceptions of the wildest imagination. We read in sacred history, that for the preservation of the human family, Noah was seen constructing an ark. The fancy of the gifted Headly has graphically painted the scene,—that as the huge edifice went up, “The farmer returned at evening from his field, and the gay citizen of the town drove past and christened it ‘Noah’s folly,’ and the workmen engaged upon it laughed as they drove the nails and hewed the plank. But when the terrible storm came—up-borne on the flood, the heaven-protected ark rose above the buried cities and mountains, and floated away on the shoreless deep. And when the deluge was stayed, with its inmates unharmed, it at last safely reposed on the summit of the sacred mountain Ararat.” We read too in profane history, that time was when our Washington was seen, constructing a political, a republican ark, for the final protection of human liberty. When with his sage compeers he was rearing the novel edifice, and constructing it of rafters and beams of Republican simplicity and popular freedom, titled nobility and ribboned pride in other lands mocked and smiled at it as *unfit* for the storms that would surely assail it. But thus far, under the blessings of Providence, amid the terrible events that ever and anon have crushed the rights of man elsewhere,—amid angry storms and the wildest billows of party rage—upborne on the flood, *our* heaven-protected ark of Freedom *still* floats on, and amid the tempests at their darkest hour there

has *still* continued to stream from it a steady light to cheer and gladden and encourage. And when that most terrific of tempests shall come,—(which may God in his mercy avert,)—when domestic fanaticism or party madness shall rage,—when the voice of Patriotism shall for a moment be hushed amid the hoarse clamor of discordant factions—when the flood of fraternal strife and sectional hostility shall for a moment deluge the land—*still* may we not cling to the hope of the Father of his country, that when it shall please heaven to stay the storm, our ark may also find *its* sacred resting-place, *and that may be on the glorious Union of the States?* But while a patriotism should be cherished, liberal enough and comprehensive enough to embrace our country, our whole country,—while your young hearts should beat with proud emotions as you behold the grand yet novel spectacle of thirty independent States, moving in the same orbits and encircling a common centre,—I trust I may be pardoned on this occasion, in this place, at this interesting era in our State's history, to express the hope and to encourage the sentiment, that among these republican planets that move thus harmoniously in a common orbit, there is one for which every bosom here should throb with peculiar affection,—one that is entitled to a place in our "heart of hearts;" and that one is *North Carolina!* Not that I would have you love your whole country *less*, but North Carolina *more*.

And disguise it as we may—regret it as we should,—yet, my friends, is there not too much of reproachful truth in the suggestion now not unfrequently uttered, that the Statesmen of North Carolina, gifted as they have been, patriotic as they ever are, have done much for the Union, but surely not much for North Carolina?—have grown pale often at the midnight lamp with anxious meditation on the affairs of the Union, but have rarely wasted or seriously impaired their mental or physical machinery in efforts to advance the prosperity and glory of their own State?—have electrified

masses by their pompous eloquence on matters of Federal policy, but have only ventured now and then to timidly breathe forth a half-suppressed, hesitating suggestion, that *perhaps* something *should* be done to save the "good Old State;" until at last, when a youth of genius and high promise, starts out on his career, clad with University honors, how often do parental pride and affectionate friendship intimate, that surely *he* will not remain *here*, but will seek *his* fortunes in some more genial clime? This should not be so. And the part *you* act in the future, (which now will soon be the present with *you*,) may have much bearing on the honor, the prosperity, and reputation of your State.—*Study well her character—learn well her wants.* Still in her *past* history there is not a little to excite your pride; in her present condition, much to animate and encourage. *Still* we may be proud that the brightest page in our national history that recites the thrilling story of American Independence, must also tell to future generations, that its birth-place was North Carolina. *Still* you will find that her people have one crowning virtue, called *integrity*, that makes them happy at home, and honored abroad. *Still* we have fertile fields, beautiful streams, a healthful climate, and a mountain scenery as grand and lovely as the pencil of nature hath ever sketched in any land. And if you, who gather your earliest lessons here from her own bounty—if *you* be true to *her*, true to *yourselves*—you may yet do much to aid her to make a generous struggle with her proud sisters in the race; if she be not the swiftest, the gayest and the richest, she may yet be honored and admired for her cheerful face and her sterling qualities. Keep bright the mental armory furnished you here: it will serve you good part in many an intellectual conflict hereafter. "*Look not mournfully into the past: it comes not back again. Wisely improve the present: It is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy future, without fear and with a manly heart.*"













