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AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

TWO LITERARY SOCIETIES,

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA,

IN GERARD HALL.

ON THE DAY PRECEDING THE

ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT,

IN JUNE, 1843;

UNDER THE APPOINTMENT OF THE

DIALECTIC SOCIETY,

BY DOCTOR JOHN HILL.

Published by order of said Society.

RALEIGH:

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1843.

DIALECTIC HALL, *July 22d, 1843.*

DEAR SIR:—At a meeting of the Dialectic Society held on Friday night, the 21st of July, the undersigned were appointed a Committee to tender you the thanks of that Body for the very elegant and able Address delivered before the two Literary Societies on the day preceding Commencement, and to request a copy of the same for publication.

Permit us Sir, to express the gratification felt during its delivery, and to add our personal solicitations to those of the Society we represent.

With the highest esteem,

Your obedient servants,

ROB. H. COWAN, JR.

ED. D. COVINGTON,

THOS. RUFFIN, JR.

} *Committee.*

DR. JOHN HILL.

WILMINGTON, N. C. *July 31st, 1843.*

GENTLEMEN:—Your very kind letter of the 22d inst. came to me rather unexpectedly, and found me without a copy of the Address. It is in the possession of my friends, and as yet I have not been able to demand it. As soon as I do, and my health permits, I will send you a copy to be disposed of as you may think proper. I had expected no other disposition of it than it should be decently interred in the archives of our Society, and still think that our mutual interests will be subserved by giving it that direction. I claim no privilege however, of controlling it, and with this mere expression of my preference, and a deep sense of the friendly and courteous terms of your note,

I am gentlemen, with great regard, your friend,

JOHN HILL.

ROB. H. COWAN, JR. ED. D. COVINGTON, THOS. RUFFIN, JR.

WILMINGTON, N. C. *August 15th, 1843.*

GENTLEMEN:—The causes mentioned in my last have continued to produce delay, and not until the present moment have I been able to comply with your request, and to enclose you my Address. I felt too sensibly the compliment designed me, and the very kind terms in which it was conveyed, to permit unnecessary postponement, but the copy of which I spoke was only recovered on Saturday last.

With very sincere regard, your friend,

JOHN HILL.

ROB. H. COWAN, JR. ED. D. COVINGTON, THOS. RUFFIN, JR.

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE PHILANTHROPIC
AND DIALECTIC SOCIETIES :

This time-honored Anniversary is full of feeling and instruction. The past, the present, and the future, crowd upon our excited fancies; the avenues of memory are thronged with the spectres of departed joys, and the past is full before us, with its hopes, its fears, and its excitements.

The familiar crowd that once answered to our greeting—the chosen few who shared our sympathies, and warmed us with their friendship—the thoughts, the feelings and impressions of happy boyhood—the thousand misty incidents over which the curtain of time was fast closing, are brought back to us in their beauty and freshness, and we stand upon the theatre of our earliest efforts rejuvenated and buoyant, the halo of young life brightening around us.

We are assembled the Representatives of the past, to give to the aspirants of the future, the benefits of our experience. We have travelled over more than half the journey of life, and are approaching its inevitable goal. We return from its anxious cares, its agitating conflicts, its poor employments and its low ambition, to the scenes of our earliest and best enjoyments, the soothing bosom of our venerable Alma Mater; not indeed as once, to find shelter under her shades, brothers in every walk and the ringing laugh of happiness around us; not to participate in by-gone joys, nor to sit at her bubbling fountains and quaff the pure waters of knowledge; but to speak to you of the scenes in which we have mingled and to which we once looked forward from these walls with expectations as bright, eager and restless as your own. Shall I tell you what were our young hopes, and how they have been realized? Our dreams of friendship, till the silken cord was rudely snapped, or worn away by time? Ambition checked in its Eagle flight, and struggling with its chains, till the fiery soul exhausted and subdued, sunk to the patient drudge? Even woman's smile, and the blandishments of love, bringing no thrill to the weary and jaded heart?

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Why speak of dangers, you can neither realize or believe—why shake the pillars of your moral faith—why damp the ardor of your young minds, or cast a cloud over the bright heaven of your hopes? I will not; the moral is written in letters of light, and who has been taught by the sufferings and experience of others? You must gather around you the memories and the warnings of your own conflicts. Your past will be the best preacher to your future; and the lesson full soon will reach you. If the golden fruit turns to ashes on your lips, and the leaves wither from your tree of hope, while the breath of the morning is upon them; if fruition here teaches you that the world has nothing to satisfy the ardent longings of your divine natures, wearied in the fruitless search, it may point you to the glories and beatitudes of immortality.

But, gentlemen, against these moral revulsions, to which the finer and purer of our kind are more peculiarly liable, you are now making the best preparation, next to our holy Religion, which this world is capable of affording. You are disciplining your minds, by patient research, to the arduous duties which are before you. You are training them to philosophy and reason. You are imbuing them with the spirit and love of literature—you are laying up intellectual treasures, and enlarging all your capacities of enjoyment. Believe me, these are resources which can scarcely fail you. Betrayed by the world and wounded by the bosom on which you leaned—your affections paralyzed, and your faith in human nature gone, a cultivated taste and the charms of literature will remain to you, and you will find in the bright creations of poetry, and the sterling truths of philosophy, a refuge and a consolation which the embittered heart may refuse to receive elsewhere.

But important as they are, reflections like these are not new to you, and I must not press you to repletion. It may be as useful, certainly as appropriate, to review the progress of letters, and to trace briefly the developement of mind. The subject I know is of immense magnitude, and beyond the limits of an occasion like this. If I can win your interest, excite a spirit of investigation, stimulate your energies, and direct your enquiries, my objects are answered.

I need scarcely tell you, that the origin of letters and of social refinement, is hid in fable, and veiled in the mystery of time.

The claims of India to these proud honors are generally conceded, but Europe has been reluctant to acknowledge her obligations to Asia, and whether the tide flowed in from the East, is still an unsettled question. I shall not pretend to decide it. Yet we know that with the Jews "the wisdom of the East" was a proverb, and that the oldest Historians of Greece, speak of India as an old and populous country, abounding in the luxuries of wealth and the refinements of social progress. But the remains of Hindoo civilization, her pagodas and temples, her shattered porticos, prostrate obelisks and moss-grown sculptures, are existing evidences of her lost refinement and mournful monuments of its high antiquity. Yet replete with interest, as is the history of this gentle, delicate, and plastic people, I must not pause. The little rill thus rising in the dim and misty heights of fable, struggles onward through a thousand obstacles, from the sunny plains of Hindostan, gaining volume and current as it spreads through the land of the Pyramids and Nile; flowing forward bright, bold and majestic, through the lovely and classic groves of Greece, bearing on its bosom the wisdom of her lawgivers, the sweet soft voice of her philosophy, her matchless eloquence, and her imperishable poetry, till it burst upon the Roman world, vivifying Europe and receiving into its foaming channels the myriad tributaries of her splendid genius and her hardy industry.

The early periods of Roman history afford us few subjects for observation. It was at first a struggle for mere existence and then for political dominion. There was more of barbarian energy, of rude power, of strong indomitable will, than of intellectual progress and refinement. She had existed more than three hundred years, subject to all the uncertainties and disorders of traditionary Laws, before she adopted a written code, and borrowed the twelve Tables from Greece. This was a triumph of mind, and afforded food for still further acquisitions, but she had little leisure for the cultivation of elegant literature. The aggrandizement and security of political power, still absorbed her energies, and it was not till the end of the first Punic war, that the repose of peace brought a passion for the taste and elegancies of Grecian models, and infused into the masculine and martial genius of Rome, their meliorating and refining influences. There was now as little pause in her progress to mental, as to political dominion. Africa, Asia and Greece, all became her tributaries, and poured into her bosom the treasures of

their wealth and the refinements of their civilization. Taste, genius and ambition, flocked to her for employment and display, and the bright satellites of mind revolved around their sun, shedding a crowning glory. And Rome gave back some of the benefits she received. Her conquests were not like those of Greece, deadly and exterminating. She received the conquered into the pale of her society, placed them under the Ægis of her power, made them the children of her illustrious family, continued to them the refinements which they possessed, and extended to them those which were peculiarly her own.

Soon after the extinction of the Roman Republic, when the arms of the Empire were embracing the fairest portions of the known world, blessing them with its language, its literature and its institutions, the benign influences of Christianity were added to the existing elements of refinement, and governments were moulded to the dignity and importance which it gave to man, as a moral and immortal Being. A brutal and a sensual Paganism is superseded by the august revelations of the most high God, and a religion, the deformed offspring of human reason, aspiring to the mysteries of heaven, by the sublime inspirations of Deity. The human mind is awakened to its high destinies—society acknowledges a new and meliorating principle of refinement, and reaches a height of civilization which the world never before witnessed. But this colossal fabric trembled with decrepitude and inherent weakness. Its strength was in its cities, not in its virtuous yeomanry—public virtue and public intelligence languished—love of self had superseded love of country—an empire, the wonder of the world, was verging to its close—its days of glory were numbered, like the leaves of the Sybil, seeming to increase in value as their number diminished, and Cato's virtue and Tully's eloquence were alike impotent to redeem the fortunes of Rome or the destinies of mind. The barbarian came—wave after wave poured in, province after province yielded, wall after wall is broken down, the Goth, the Vandal and the Hun, thunder at her gates, Rome is Rome no longer, and Odoacer sits upon the throne of the Cæsars.

Then came the long night of intellect, when man was satisfied with the toys of sense, and absorbed with the baubles of imbecility. I have no desire to grope in its moral darkness, or to dwell upon the disgusting prostration of mind which followed the

subversion of the Roman Empire. It was the triumph of brute force, rioting with demoniac madness in its conquest over civilization, and destroying all the achievements of genius, all the memorials of a refinement that it despised or envied. But there was conservatism in the Christian Church. The rude barbarian paused before the majesty of her temples, and shrunk from the desecration of her sacred altars. Hidden in her secret sanctuaries, the rich treasures of past ages were preserved to us, to relumine mind and to stimulate its progress. Yet cheerless and gloomy as were the middle ages, the 7th century has been called the Nadir of the human mind, and until the close of the 11th century, it was difficult to find a layman who could write in Europe. It was the age of tournaments and chivalry, of empty pageantry, aimless enthusiasm, and sanguinary strife, when the mind ran wild with its own vacuity, and dallied with the sense still it lost all note of its immortal destiny; when the song of the Troubadour was the highest effort, and lady love the best reward of genius. In England too, where we have been accustomed to look for all that is venerable in language, refined in intellect or vast in genius, English was seldom written even in prose, before the middle of the 14th century. The earliest English work, Sir John Mandeville's travels, was written in 1356, and Chaucer, the first of her Poets, appeared in 1392. Then the progress of mind spread onward with electric force, and in less than two centuries, Shakespeare sat and still sits upon the throne of English genius, the delight and ornament of mankind. The general introduction of paper, and the discovery of Printing about the middle of the 15th century, terminated most happily, may we not say forever, the barbarism, humiliation and wretchedness which had so long hung its pall over Europe, and threatened to take from man the divine characteristic of his nature. The fetters of ignorance were broken. Books were multiplied and became the inmates of the humble cottage as well as of the lordly Palace. Prejudice, superstition and power were impotent longer to curb the unchained mind, and it sprung upward like the lark, to the very gates of Heaven, carolling its songs of joy and thankfulness.

Modern Europe and modern Literature date from 1500, when Grenada was added to Spain, and Brittany to France, perfecting those kingdoms, and establishing the fixed and independent governments which at present exist. The chains of the feudal sys-

tem too were broken, commerce was exerting its healthful influence upon the intelligence and personal independence of man, a new class was springing up, ardent in the pursuit of knowledge, jealous of its rights, and zealous to win an honorable position in the scale of society. Stability and order are fenced around with new guaranties, the security of man in the enjoyment of his privileges, and in the exercise of his powers is increased to him, he feels the withering debasement which had sunk him to the level of the brute, and in the majesty of disenthralled mind, shakes from him the palsy and the blight of ignorance and passion. Erasmus was the great leader in philological warfare. To his genius and ardent love of letters, are we mainly indebted for the restoration of learning, and for its humanising influence over the late barbarians of Rome. It was garlanding the Gothic column, with the tasteful capital of Corinth—engrafting on the hardy children of the North, all the elegance and crudition of the softer South.

Then came the Reformation, the collision of powerful minds impelled by the most powerful of causes—the bold, resolute and untiring Luther—the amiable and learned Melancthon, imbued with all the garnered wealth of antiquity, and lecturing on Greek and Latin Literature at 16 years of age—the daring Calvin, uncompromising as Luther, and learned as Melancthon, throwing down every barrier to free inquiry, and teaching a corrupt and licentious Priesthood that age cannot sanctify abuse, and that there were no subjects too sacred for the bold and full investigations of mind. Add to these the discoveries of Columbus, and of Vasco De Gama, opening new fields of enterprize, speculation and science, and we have a singular, nay almost providential combination of causes, for the establishment of a new era, and the impulsion of mind.

But it is to the development of English mind, and the progress of English Literature, (which are our own) that I must confine myself. I can but glance at results and deal in generalities. And if the reign of the Tudors was cold, bloody and remorseless, we must remember that the sea was still working with the physical disorder, the moral and intellectual tempest, which had followed the dead calm of the mediæval ages, and society but beginning to be adjusted. The times perhaps required a hard and iron nature to rule and direct the movement, and it may have been to the firm-

ness of their grasp upon the reins of government, that we owe the social order and the rapid development of mind which marked the period. The age of Elizabeth, of Spenser and Shakspeare, has been compared to that of Augustus, of Horace and Virgil, and it may be well to mark the analogy between them. The civil wars of Marius and Sylla, of Pompey and Cæsar, of Lepidus, Anthony and Octavius, with all their sanguinary horrors, were ended by the firm, despotic rule of Augustus, and followed by a splendor of intellect which still throws its halo around the Empire, and survives its glories. In England, the no less bloody enormities of the Houses of York and Lancaster, were closed by the supremacy, the cold and calculating firmness of the 1st Tudor, and the dull night is succeeded by the bright morning of genius. The Faery Queen, and the Venus and Adonis, appeared about 1590, and the creative mind of Shakspeare poured forth its matchless treasures with a rapidity almost equalled to its dazzling splendor. Where are the Titans of genius that now stand before him—where the vigor and variety of imagination—the deep knowledge of the human heart, which seemed almost the gift of inspiration? There are none, none! The power and the beauty of past ages seem to have been transfused into his great and all combining intellect, and he still stands out from the host of genius, sublime and inapproachable, the oracle of nature and its pride.

We might have mentioned, the gentle, the intellectual, the unfortunate Lady Jane Gray, so embalmed in our best and earliest sympathies, and who was as much a prodigy of learning, as of purity and virtue. Nor should we omit "rare Ben Jonson," as much above Shakspeare in acquirements, as below him in genius. A little further on, and the vast and philosophical mind of Lord Bacon, bursts upon us, prying into the mysteries of nature and seeking revelations from her hidden shrines by his inductive method; the leprous spot which rests upon his fame almost washed clean by the sanctity of his genius, and the calamities of age softened and relieved, by the munificent appreciation of his country.

If within the space of a little century, the literature and genius of England achieved triumphs like these, if from a state of disgusting barbarism, she sprung at once, like Minerva from the brain of Jove, into the full fruition of intellectual power, who shall dare limit the conquests of mind, who place the barriers of her bound-

less capacities? Who will now sneer at the confidence of Bacon in the power and reach of the human intellect—who say that “he placed the ultimate object of philosophy too high above the reach of man?” Since his day, the black cloud has been robbed of its fearful bolt, the vivid lightning of its arrowy danger. The recent discoveries of animal and vegetable developement, the application of the microscope to chemical and organic transitions, the improvements of science, and the enlargement of the circle of knowledge, which are daily occurring, are beyond the dreamings of Bacon’s enthusiasm, and should arouse us to increased energy and ceaseless assiduity. The divine emanation of Deity, who shall clip its wings, or chain it to the vile clay which profanes it? Who say, that we may not enter into the vestibule of nature’s temple, and if we may not lift, gaze upon the curtain that hides her mysteries? The eloquent dreamings of Priestly and De Staël, that through the portals of wisdom we approach the temple of human perfectibility, may be but the bright illusion of enthusiastic genius, yet the universal liberation of mind, its new incitements to application, the prompt diffusion through the Press of its every acquisition, the progress of science, and the blaze of light which at the present day is shed upon subjects which but yesterday were shrouded in doubt, or hid in darkness, may well kindle our hopes of the grasp of intellect, and stimulate us to hang new trophies, on the Corinthian pillar of polished improvement.

But we must proceed with our review. In this age, which includes the 1st of the Stuarts, there was, we must confess, more of the vigor and splendor of genius, than of the refinement and delicacy of taste. But it had gotten rid of the jargon of the Schools and of polemical divinity, which had so fruitlessly occupied the attention and engrossed the efforts of mind, and the public eye became fixed upon the literature of the ancients. And let no one gainsay its importance; in this presence, at least, its defence were bootless. If there was one cause paramount to the rest, for the moral, political and intellectual regeneration of Europe, it was the treasury of knowledge which antiquity had laid up—it was the models of a refined and cultivated taste—the high mental progression of a past age, preserved to illustrate the true dignity and capabilities of man, to show him what he had been, what he was, and what he should be, and to point to the fountains where to drink and be restored.

The civil wars and convulsions which marked the reign of the 1st Charles, and the gloomy fanaticism, and absorbing political excitement of the Commonwealth, turned aside for a moment the current of taste, and checked the progress of literature and science. But in the midst of this frenzy and disorder, this mixture of passion, hypocrisy and superstition, with cool decision, high achievement and elevated patriotism, the divine mind of Milton, disciplined by age, poverty and misfortune, and perhaps purified in the alembic of anarchy and revolution, gave to his country his sublime Epic, rivaling the noblest efforts of ancient or modern genius, and throwing upon his name a flood of light which will shine on forever.

The licentiousness of the Court of the 2d Charles, cast its pollutions over the host of bright minds that might have illumined it, mistaking profanity for wit, indecency for truth to nature, corrupting all the fountains of taste, and giving us to mourn over the fine but perverted genius of Dryden. Yet if literature languished, and imagination soiled her bright wing in the impure atmosphere of vice, science received an impulse from Boyle and a crowning glory from the masterly mind of Newton which it is destined to wear forever. Theirs was the true philosophy, high above the affected stoicism of the porch, or the licentious softness of the garden, untouched by surrounding depravity, ranging with eagle eye the realms of thought, and "looking through nature up to nature's God."

"Philosophy, baptized

In the pure fountain of eternal love, has eyes indeed."

The progress of mental illumination in the reign of the Stuarts, is illustrated in the lives of Russell, Sidney and Hampden, in the constant struggle of liberty against power, and a juster appreciation of the dignity and rights of man. The suppression of the star chamber, and the removal of restraints upon the freedom of the Press, were vast conquests achieved for man, and mind had now few fetters, but public opinion and its own moral convictions.

It is not important to our inquiry to dwell upon the Revolution, and the election of the Prince of Orange to the throne of England. It was an era in politics, and with the Bill of Rights, brought further concessions to the side of liberty. But he was warlike, ambitious and unlettered, had few sympathies with the people he was

called on to govern, and did little for the promotion of literature or science. Taste however was reviving, there was a deep feeling of religion and morality about William, which curbed licentiousness; and the equable and bloodless reign of his successor, and her matronly virtues, gave an impulse and a cast to intellect, and produced a constellation of genius, which has rarely clustered in the firmament of mind. The English language was at once raised to its present dignity and perfection, and the writers of that period still retain the proud distinction of the "British Classics." There were Addison, Steele and Swift, Arbuthnot, Prior, Gay, Pope, the master of melodious metre, Thompson formed by nature's self to sing her glories, the versatile, depraved, but nobly gifted Bolingbroke; so esteemed by the younger Pitt, that amongst all the lost treasures of the past, he preferred to rescue one specimen of his eloquence. What age can boast of names like these, sparkling with wit, brilliant with imagination, imbued with erudition, captivating with eloquence? If not as illustrious as Shakspeare and Milton, together they form a galaxy of genius, which the mental eye delights to dwell upon.

The period of time that has since elapsed, has no cause to shrink from comparison with any that preceded it. It is illustrious with genius, and signalized by its loftiest efforts. The progress of mind has still been onward, with every thing to quicken its energies, and develop its powers. Every field of literature has been made to bring forth its annual harvest in rich abundance; every department of science tortured of its secrets by the microscope and crucible of sleepless genius. We are indeed blest with an illumination rich, luminous and mellow, and marked by strong and hopeful features of yet further improvement. The age is advancing in purity of sentiment and refinement of taste, and no longer tolerates the grossness and obscenity of the past. Sensuality is driven to its brothel, and hides its orgies in its lowest depths, and literature comes to us, clad in robes of unstained whiteness, breathing the influences of christian refinement, and delighting us with the force, the imagination, the high inspirations of poetry without its defilements. Compare the writers of the last fifty years, even with those of "good Queen Anne," and the truth is obvious.

But in Science, which is endless in progression, increasing its rewards at every step of its patient votary, and beckoning him still

forward to new conquests over the dominion of nature, the present age is rich in acquisition and boundless in prospect. Nor is it surprising that it should be so. To the delineation of natural objects, the portraiture of the passions, and the efforts of the imagination, there may be a limit and elevation beyond which we may not mount. The Poets, the Orators, the Painters of antiquity, we may have rivalled, but not excelled. Homer and Demosthenes still sit upon their thrones, the olympic garlands fresh upon their brows. But in physics and the various departments of science, it is otherwise. We collect materials, we lay up facts, and build monuments higher and more enduring than the pyramids. All of value that belonged to the past is ours. Truths laboriously won from nature, are eternal. They are incorporated into the frame-work of Society, and become identified with the sentiments and habits of the age. Acquisitions thus made, whether in the geography of the heavens or earth, in chemistry, religion or political economy, hold their places. Another and another is added, each throwing gleams of light upon a darkened truth, till genius seizes and combines them, tears away the veil that curtains the mystery, and some beautiful and eternal problem of nature stands revealed.

“Hark! the rushing snow!

“The sun-awakened avalanche! whose mass

“Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there

“Flake after flake, in heaven defying minds

“As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth

“Is loosened, and the nations echo round,

“Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.”

Nations are contending with nations, in exploring the fields, and adding new discoveries to the realms of science. From steam we have conquered another agent to quicken and assist investigation. Mind is at work upon magnetism, and who can foretell the issue? Daily some new light breaks upon us from nature's temple, to humble and confound our philosophy, and the understanding itself stands incredulous and appalled before the mystery and the splendor of her revelations. And yet, the further we advance, the deeper seem her mines of wealth, and the stronger our convictions of the poverty of our acquisitions.

It is a field, gentlemen, which is worthy of your genius, and which invites you to the harvest, with every faculty enlarged, disciplined by study, and hardened and invigorated by labor. It is

rich, teeming with rewards, and you can grasp them. But you must come prepared for conquest, every nerve swelling by industry and application, every faculty burning with enthusiasm, and throwing with lens-like power their concentrated rays upon the hidden point. The enervate and feeble will fall by the wayside—the strong, the resolute and hardy will trample on their weakness. Here, upon this spot, you must decide, whether you will contend for prizes, nobler than ever graced Olympic conqueror. Nature yields not her secrets to the laggard; personal effort is the price of excellence; toil, assiduous application, can alone win for you the victories of mind. The man of genius, without industry and indomitable will, is Prometheus bound to the rock, the vulture forever gnawing at his heart. Like the caged Eagle, he may beat his wings upon the iron bars of his prison, but can never mount to the bright empyrean of his aspirings.

Let me pray you then, that now, while the opportunities are yours, prepare yourselves for the proud and manly work which is before you. You must not be lured by the soft seductions of repose—"the perfume and the suppliance of a minute"—nor content with the poor mediocrity of Sloth. The fire, the tumult, the energy of intense action is around you. You must join the strife or ingloriously forfeit its rewards, and take the brand of imbecility. Your College has been asked for her illustrious sons, for the names that reflect her renown. Your State has been called the "Rip Van Winkle" of the confederacy. Protect them, if you love them, from the unworthy jeer and the derision. Your whole country has been sneered at. Europe has asked "where is your Literature and your Science?" It is yours to vindicate her character, and the high decision must now be made. Upon these walls you must inscribe yourselves her champions, and enlist for life, in the glorious cause of patriotism and knowledge, or the opportunity is lost to you forever. The same bright heaven is above your heads that shed its glories upon Galileo and Newton; the same infinite nature around you that has opened its arcana to the solicitations of industry, and blest it with immortality. Your magnificent country woos you to investigation. A new world is spread out, grand in all its proportions, and demanding enlargement of mind, and immensity of powers to develop its resources and to write its history. The proud work is for you and for those who follow.

'The field is so rich, so varied, and so boundless, that every variety of intellect may be occupied, and far reaching ambition sated of its conquests.

Well have our predecessors borne their parts in the stirring drama. They have not folded their arms in ignoble ease, nor merited the invidious sneer of the witling. With manly firmness, resistless energy, and enthusiastic enterprize, they have devoted themselves to the business of their day. From the Savage and the wilderness, they have won the loveliest domain that ever blest the industry of man, in soil fruitful as the gardens of the Hesperides, in climate varied as the universe. From a virgin soil, they have supplied the workshops and fed the poverty of Europe. They have fought the glorious battle of the Revolution, and again a war for national rights and honor. With Roads and Canals, the exemplars of the age, they have radiated and bound together their country, consulting at once the social convenience and political welfare of the people. They have set in motion a government, the marvel and admiration of the world, whose basis is the virtue and intelligence of the People, whose end their happiness and improvement. Recognise this truth then "that knowledge is power," and religion its beacon light.

Think not that Liberty
From Knowledge and Religion e're will dwell
Apart, companions they
Of Heavenly seed connate."

Since the days of Bacon, the inestimable truth is fixed, that all things are subject to reason and discussion. The people are the keepers of our political treasures, yea, the solvers of the great problem of the fitness of man for self government. They must not lack cultivation. Train then your own hearts and minds. Send the stream of christian education leaping and laughing through the land. Bathe the souls of our entire population in its pure waters of knowledge, and you have crowned the work of your Fathers, you have given perpetuity to their institutions, we are free forever, and you may well wear the unsullied honors of your Sires.

If within little more than three score years, they have won trophies like these, what, gentlemen, may not you accomplish in the long future of prosperous repose which they have left you? Your opportunities for mental culture, are far beyond any that they enjoyed; your responsibilities are such as have seldom fallen

on men. They have reared a noble monument to their virtues; you will not make it a melancholy mausoleum for your degeneracy and weakness.

GENTLEMEN OF THE GRADUATING CLASS:

The duties and the obligations of which I have spoken, attach peculiarly to you. "No primrose path of dalliance" is before you. You cannot shrink from the enforcement of your high destiny without dishonor, and you begin the struggle with every thing to inspire confidence and hope. Your first step is taken, you have won the meed of virtue and attainment, and your venerable mother sends you out, with her blessings and her honors upon you, to do battle in the cause of virtue, religion and letters. Higher motives, stronger incentives never addressed themselves to human action.

Much depends upon your beginning. If you would not fail, nor heap coals of fire on your heads, nor wither the clustering hopes of those whose affections are upon you, let me again remind you, that success is the fruit of labor, and untiring application the price of high mental distinction. Listen not to the blandishments of pleasure, nor to the sweet, soft voice of ease. If they tell you that you have achieved an era in your lives, and that some of your golden hours may now be yielded to their fascinations, remember that once within their circle, their dreamy net around you, it is difficult to free you from their spell. Hold fast the literary tastes and habits which are now yours: they will render your subsequent efforts more easy and agreeable, and protect you from a thousand snares which lay in wait for inexperience. The wisdom of the world is not hard to learn, your every step will furnish you a lesson, but the freshness of early life gone, its purity of sentiment and habit lost, are found no more.

The transition from this peaceful retirement, from communion with your books, and from the watchful guardians of your education, to the world and its active duties, is indeed an epoch in your lives, full of interest to you, and of solitude to your friends. Who can tell the influences that will meet you, to direct your outset and to color your future. Embarked upon the heaving bosom of life, its engrossing cares and distracting pleasures will leave you little leisure, either to improve the Literary foundation you have laid, or to build upon it the glorious superstructure which your generous and sanguine youth has painted for you. You are young, have abundant time,

and theoretically it would seem the better course to give the next years of your lives to perfecting the system which has been here begun; to storing your minds with the truths of Philosophy; the love of History; the refining influences of Poetry, and all the garniture of elegant literature. It would be giving to your intellects a power, a grace and a maturity, which would place you at once by the side of those who have preceded you; and it would be arming you in advance, with the weapons of taste, which the business of the world may never leave you leisure to select. But the age and the requirements of our country are so utilitarian—you are surrounded by so many seductions—so many petty objects to win you away from secondary pursuits, and your young hearts are so panting to grapple at once with the great and primary objects of your lives, that I would advise the immediate pursuit of your professions. Literature, you can make its handmaid; the sweet flower that will cast its perfume on the worldly waste; the elegant recreation of your minds, when overwrought and wearied by technicalities and drudgeries;

“Then take the instant way, ●

“Nor hedge aside from the direct.”

Be just and moderate in your estimate of mankind. Upon our entrance into the world, we are apt to be misled by the impulses of our own bosoms, and to judge of others by the ideal standard which has been erected there. Our expectations disappointed, and our credulity abused, we must guard against general distrust, and bitter misanthropy. There is more of weakness than of wickedness in man—of disgusting lolly, than of unmitigated baseness—more to pity than to punish. And in the best, the web of our nature is of a mingled yarn. Amidst many golden threads, one of coarser texture will appear to disfigure its beauty, but not to destroy its usefulness. And who so pure as to sneer at the common infirmities of man, or so wise as to say it were better it had been otherwise?

“Our virtues would be proud, if they were not whipt by our vices,

“And our vices would despair, if they were not cherished by our virtues.”

Value, then, your own integrity above gold and priceless rubies; cherish the noble endowments which nature and education have given you, and be careful that their lustre be not dimmed by collision with the world and familiarity with its vices. Yet think not too poorly of your kind, or too proudly of yourselves, lest it place

you on an elevation unreal and unsocial, unwarmed by the genial sympathies of life, unblest by its charities. True merit is ever indulgent to the infirmities of others, nor forgets "that the toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in its head."

Respect for the rights, and sympathy for the failings and misfortunes of others, are the constituents of refined social virtue. If we are content with the discharge of literal, legal obligations, we have learned, it is true, the practice of common honesty; but we forego that enlarged philanthropy, those sweet amenities and endearing charities, which bless at once both giver and receiver, and impart to the harshness of life, all its beauty and consolation, all its elegance and refinement. The glorious sun is sufficient for the warmth and sustenance of nature, but a beneficent Creator has decked the firmament with the grandeur of his starry host, and spread upon the teeming earth, not only the waving grain and the purple fruit, but the verdant carpet and the perfumed flower; and they are lessons of divine wisdom, which we may not safely neglect.

The positive requirements of society cannot be foregone without disgrace, but their performance brings no honor. To lie is to be dishonored, but to forbear to lie is no glory. The high merit and the glorious excellence consists in discharging the blessed offices of love, courtesy and kindness, which have no claims but upon our sensibilities, and offer no rewards but to our affections. These are the sweet Seraphs that watch over our moral beings, and whisper to us of the divinity and immortality of our nature—the golden links of the broken chain that bound us to the Paradise of God. You may pass through life and succeed without them; you may win wealth, reputation and distinction—but wanting these, nor countless hoards, nor splendid talents, nor unblemished honor can bestow upon you the character of accomplished Christian gentlemen. The diamond gives no light but from its polish.

"This above all, to thine own self be true,

"And it must follow as the night the day,

"Thou canst not then be false to any man."

