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Catalogue

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, 1845,

UNDER THE APPOINTMENT OF THE

DIALECTIC SOCIETY,

BY THE REV. THOMAS F. DAVIS.

.....

Published by order of said Society.

RALEIGH:

PRINTED BY W. R. GALES—REGISTER OFFICE.

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DIALECTIC HALL, *July 26th, 1845.*

Sir : At a meeting of the Dialectic Society, held on Friday night July 25th, the undersigned were appointed a Committee to tender you the thanks of that body, for the very able and interesting Address delivered before the two Literary Societies on the day preceding Commencement, and to request of you a copy of the same for publication.

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

With sentiments of the highest respect,

Your obedient Servants,

SION H. ROGERS,
DAVID S. JOHNSTON, } Committee.
WM. F. CARTER.

To Rev. THOS. F. DAVIS,
Salisbury, North Carolina.

SALISBURY, *July 30th, 1845.*

Gentlemen : Accept my thanks for the kind and flattering manner in which you have communicated to me the wishes of the Society, that the Address delivered the day before Commencement should be published. I can see no sufficient reason for withholding it from you, and therefore forward it, only wishing it were more worthy of your regard.

Very respectfully, and truly

Your friend and servant,

THOS. F. DAVIS,

To Messrs. ROGERS, JOHNSTON and CARTER,
Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

ADDRESS.

*Gentlemen of the Philanthropic
and Dialectic Societies :*

Your annual festival has returned, with its appropriate solemnities. Willing guests have visited you. Here are assembled, spectators, friends, parents—the eye of curiosity, the interest of kindness, the heart of anxious affection. At your request, I, too, have come, to re-visit the theatre of early life, and to discharge the duty, your kindness has assigned me. Around me are the scenes of other days—within, their memory. Thoughts, too long, perhaps, suffered to sink into forgetfulness, come thronging back—bearing with them vivid realities. The past rises up—mingles with the present, and imparts to it, its own aspect. The occasion is full of pleasing, yet chastened emotion. The mind is brightened with this reviviscence of youth, but saddened as it reverts to what time and mortality have done. The extremes of life meet here. Into the view, come both the morning and the evening twilight.

I come to endeavor to do for you, what, more than twenty years ago, older friends and wise monitors did for me and my companions—to assure you of fraternal regard—to cheer you on, in the opening career of life—and to offer you the benefits of counsel sanctioned by maturity—the lessons of *experience*, that hard, but wholesome teacher.

But, upon what subject, and with what words, shall I address you? In looking back upon the history of these annual commemorations, I find little to encourage me. This is no new task. None that has, herto, been unskillfully performed. Before me, have trod the sons of genius and of

science. In this place, have stood your first men—men not unknown to fame—whose very names, were both incitement and authority. They have given you the ripe fruits of their understanding, and poured out before you, the treasures of their learning. Every subject of taste, interest and excellence, they have adorned and exhausted. What is there left for me? Believe me, I feel the difficulties of my position. Nor is this all. To say truth—some of us, who come here from the world to address you, find ourselves poorly fitted to the office. Common life, with its homely duties, and stern demands, has too much debased and hardened us. Necessity has driven away recreation; utility usurped the seat of pleasure, and reality, impaired imagination. We have ceased to “listen to the whispers of fancy, or to follow the phantoms of hope.” Because of these things, in the literary tournament, we are unworthy knights. Our armour is rusted—our lances turn aside. Our skill has forsaken us. And shall I confess it, our valour is bleached. The days of chivalry are o’er with us, and, if you knew all, you would have to write, *craven*, upon our crests. Our apology is, that we are not volunteers in the lists. We enter at your behest, and rely upon your forbearance. For our puissance, we claim not guerdon of your clemency; we solicit indulgence.

Permit me, passing over the details and ampler descriptions of the various subjects, already treated of before you so successfully, to direct your attention to the source of all—the Mind itself. It is not my purpose to enter into the depths of its philosophy—to disturb the secrets of metaphysics, but simply to lay before you some of the advantages and pleasures of a cultivated intellect. I propose them, as communicating to man, his highest ornament and dignity; and, to life, its finest relish.

If we look abroad over nature, we shall at once perceive, that man has, here, unquestioned pre-eminence. He, also, bears his Creator’s image upon earth. We shall find, too, that the special manifestations of this, are in the spiritual part of his being—in his reason—in the distinctive and pro-

gressive faculties of his understanding. Nature blooms around him in her loveliness, and towers above him, in her magnificence and grandeur. He acknowledges it, and, as he looks upon the glory which God has thrown over creation, and upon the wonders of his hand, is ready to shrink within himself, as he feels his own insignificance. But, when he would go forth to hold converse with these works of the Almighty, there is none to answer—no return of intellect—no soul of sympathy. Unrevealing, silent, lies before him, the inanimate world. The earth nourishes his body, but furnishes no food to his Soul. “The depth saith it is not in me, and the Sea saith, it is not with me.” If he turn and elevate his view to animate nature, he beholds an advance in the quickening impulses of life and a guidance of instinctive power; but no demonstrative principles of reason, no similitude, in kind, with himself. There are no rational discriminations—no expansions of mind—no multiplications of attainments. Other animals come into the world, with bodily powers, equal to his own in exact and perfect mechanism—superior in extent and strength. Sooner, too, are they matured and qualified to act their parts. But he finds no spirit of the mind, no developments of intellect. Not so, with himself. His chief and noble distinction is, discourse of reason and progress in spirit. He is not limited to nature and to instinct. He finds that within him, which points him onward—carries him beyond—lifts him above. Elements of increase, of universality, of eternity, are his. He feels their power. He sees their honor and majesty. Divine providence, too, in the endlessness of its varieties and fulness of its bounties, calls upon him, to rise up to the exercise and enjoyment of his privileges—to put forth the distinctive might of his intellect, and gather from all sources, physical, social, scientific, moral, the riches of his glorious inheritance. Thus are we urged to exert our faculties, and fulfil our high destinies. The indications, then, of the world without, and the impulses of the world within, unite to show us, that a man’s proper duty, is the culture of his nobler part. The

properties of his mind are his great endowment. In them he must find his distinction, his honor and his felicity. To neglect them, is to thwart the benign purpose of his Creator. To pollute them is crime. How unfaithful to himself is that man, who improves not this rich gift bestowed upon him—this sacred trust committed to his care! How far below his nature is he, who, disregarding the voice within, and forgetting his high prerogatives, humbles himself to the passing moment, and to the poor pleasures of sense and of the world. How guilty is he, who immerses his Spirit in defiling thoughts and purposes—who corrupts his own Soul, and grovels in base sensuality, and brutish vice. Not for this has God made us. Far from us, be such desecration.

The most exalted perhaps, of the benefits and pleasures of a cultivated mind, is its self-sustaining power—its independence of external circumstances, through its own resources. I would not here, betray you into error by the pride of a transcendental theory. In our highest state, we are not, in such wise, superior to our condition in life, that we can afford to contemn it. Its duties were ordained, not to be forsaken, but discharged. And, we are so constituted, as to find the proprieties of our being, in their relation and conformity to our state in life. True wisdom, is in the balance of all our affections and duties. He is the perfect man, whose faculties, sound and pure, are in right arrangement—all the principles of whose internal organization are drawn out, and meet and harmonize with, their correspondent demands. This is that perfection which is of mortal mould—the symmetry and consummation of our excellence. He, therefore, who would fly the world mistakes the purposes of his creation. He, also, misdirects his pursuit of happiness—and while he grasps at pleasure, would but embrace a shadow. I would not, then, too much depress man's condition in the world. But I must not too much exalt it. This were to teach error, and hasten on your disappointment by exposing the tenderness of feeling to too early a blight. Not to escape life, not vainly, to force ourselves above it, but to learn to bear it

well, is the ethical precept. Happy is that man, who while he lives without, lives also, a higher and better life within—who has in his own bosom, the invisible power, which both sustains life, and raises him above its unhappiness and injury. Happy he, who can, at any moment, turn aside from its din and its dust, its tumult and its troubles, to calm retreat and refreshing waters; who can look upon, and understand, and yet not be affected by its low employments, its petty cares, its sordid avarice and its vulgar pleasures. Amid it all, he regards but his own duty. Through it all, with undefiled garments, he passes up to his own castle on a rock. Thence, as from a citadel of strength invulnerable, he looks out upon the poor struggles below, not with complacent pride, but with the calm composure of freedom—the pure and blessed serenity of a mind at ease—unmoved and immoveable. Here is that which is our own—with which a “stranger intermeddled not,” which no man taketh from us. Here we can smile at the world’s frowns—defy its enmity—and defeat its malice. We can even rise above the infirmities of nature, and exult in that in us which decays not. What a noble instance of the mind’s triumph have we in Milton! With what admiration, amounting to reverence, do we behold the poor old blind man, as “broken by the storms of State,” and driven from the world, he paid the debt, he promised to posterity. With what pathos of feeling, do we hear his appeal for that illumination inwardly, which was lost to his bodily organs—and with the faith of a Christian and conscious power of a Poet, tune his harp to sacred themes, and fling from it strains that shall never die. Another instance, we have in Lord Bacon. In banishment from all that he had held too dear—in dishonor, disgrace, contempt, he sought in his mind, resources of life and dignity and found there, what the world had never given. Do you ask, can mind be so humiliated? I ask again, what but mind could so rise amid humiliation? What could have so despoiled infamy, and in despite, even of her accusations of truth, have still given his name to his country a pass word and an honor. Nor will we limit this

superiority of the mind to subjects of high and grave import. We are entitled to claim for it, all its luxury. It is not below our dignity, and certainly takes nothing from our delight, to come down to its sports and pastimes. All its delectations of thought, feeling and expression—the spirit of the pleasing—the sense of the amusing—its flashes of wit—its absurdities of humour, all belong to us and we claim them all. Who shall tell us the inward delights of the Bard of Avon, as his myriad mind threw its enchantments over the subjects of its own creation. Here was a Monarch. Compared with him, what was the haughty Queen upon her throne, or the tinselled and obsequious courtiers that surrounded her? She ruled them and other subjects of her will and power. He ruled probably, no human being. His kind and gentle soul asked no such government. But, at his feet, lay the whole world of Spirits and of nature. His subjects were his offspring—bore his lineaments, and were to be looked upon with pleasure, and with pride. Must he not have had, too, presentient convictions of their immortality? How must he have rejoiced in himself, as his creative fancy drew its pictures! All have wondered at his singular wit, his inimitable touches of nature, his admirable perception of the humorous and grotesque in character. Still more astonishing, is the power, by which he threw his thoughts into life. His characters are all true to him, true to themselves. He has made them, *even yet*, to live and speak among us. Amid what exuberance of thought, what a tumult of delight, must he have seen them, rise up before him, and take, from his originating, combining genius, form and motion? Shall we follow the Poet farther, as he

“bodies forth

The forms of things unknown,
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.”

Shall we, in despite of ourselves, keep company with Falstaff, though we despise him—frolic with Prince Hal—laugh at Malvolio—sympathize with the tender, jealous, and

honorable Moor—weep over the gentle Desdemona—admire, at the wayward and exquisite charm of the Prince of Denmark's subtilizing mind, with its under-current of refined philosophy? I forbear! The subject is dangerous. It too readily leads to excess. It is one, on which the lover of genius and of nature is not willing to grow cool, and knows not where to stop. The wand of the Poet is on us. We are unfitted for cautious prudence and sober thought. We are in hisland of fairies, and will not be disenchanted. The world below is too bright and beautiful—the Heavens above too glorious. We are enamored with Lorenzo, and say—

“How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears.”

Another very lovely feature of the cultivated mind is its spirit of young life—its ceaseless rejuvenescence. It is never old—ever springing up into beauty and freshness, and fertility. Like the celebrated Egyptian Queen

“Age cannot wither it, nor custom stale
Its infinite variety.”

It places upon the hoary head a crown of perennial verdure. Impressed with the frailty of life—burdened with its cares—sinking under the weight of its labours—passing away with its advancing years, we naturally look around for some token of better things. With what joy, then, do we recognize the evidences of perpetual youth, and hail the premonitions of eternity? How delightful it is to witness the exhibitions of the life of mind? It is with the fondest emotion, we listen to the tongue of age, while it gives utterance to the spirit within. How we revel with that spirit as it disports itself with the pleasures of the imagination—returns to the gardens of youth, and gathers fragrance from the flowers of hope. After years of struggle, sorrow, and suffering, we find it baptized with the dews of the morning, and rejoicing, even as in the dawn of life. We listen, and seem to hear the

murmur of streams, and song of birds. We stand still, and the breath of spring comes over us, redolent and balmy—the sweet South, from a “bed of violets.” This spirit of the mind how quick and fresh it is? How lovely, and how pure—the blessing of the present, the promise of the future. Among its finest illustrations, let me refer to one of whom we are justly proud, and whose memory is in all our hearts. Who is there that knew him, and knew him well, that has not often hung upon the lips of WILLIAM GASTON. I speak not now of that majestic eloquence, which commanded Senates—of those wonderful professional abilities, which directed and determined the issues of jurisprudence—nor of all those rich and varied attainments, which ranked him among the very first men of his age. I allude to the ever elastic play of his mind—to its wit, its vivacity, its buoyancy. I would call up again, that youthful joy, and ever-brightening life of the spirit which breathed, and moved and quickened, imparting charm to his conversation, and giving delight to his hearers—which threw its halo around departing life, and would not be either removed or repressed, by the elevated superiority of his understanding, nor the acknowledged dignity of his character. He has passed from among us, but has impressed on our thoughts, the model of whatever is great in a man, united with all that is pleasing and honorable in a gentleman. The line of light which he has left behind him, is still bright—and let it be to the young men of North Carolina, the subject of frequent contemplation.

When thus we witness the continued youth of the mind, it is not to us only as a picture of loveliness. It does, indeed, excite the admiration, captivate the imagination, and satisfy our inmost sense of beauty. But it does more. It appeals to all our deepest feelings and sympathies. We see in it a law of our nature—an exultation and glory of the immortal spirit. It is a living energy—a corporate power—an inherent, essential principle of our common humanity. It draws us, then, to more profound meditations. This ad-

vancing culture and perpetual youth of the mind, lifts our thoughts higher than to present pleasure and pride. It is the promise and prefiguration of nobler, and more enduring triumphs. You remember, Gentlemen, the paper of Mr. Addison, in which with that classic elegance and simplicity of truth, for which he is so remarkable, he discourses on the soul's immortality, and draws his chief arguments from its spiritual capacity and unceasing progress." With what astonishment and veneration may we look into our own souls, where there are such hidden stores of virtue and knowledge—such inexhausted sources of perfection. Can an infinitely wise Being exult in abortive intelligences? Would he give us talents that are not to be exerted? Capacities, that are never to be gratified? How can we find that wisdom, which shines through all his works, in the formation of man, without looking on this world as only a nursery for the next, and believing that the several generations of rational creatures, which rise up and disappear in such quick successions, are only to receive the first rudiments of existence here, and afterwards to be transplanted to a more friendly climate, where they may spread and flourish to all eternity." In this chaste and expressive language of the first British Classic, we have brought before us a subject of intense and endless consideration. Without this belief in and expectation of futurity, man is an inexplicable problem—born to no end commensurate with his nature—living to no fulfilment correspondent with his faculties—a flower blighted in its bud—a plant withered before its perfection. Look upon that child—blooming beautiful infant, perfect in its formation—uniting all faculties of body and soul. It has brought with it into the world, the impress of a Divine Creator. All its capacities bear the promise of life, joy and fruition. But it has only breathed upon that world into which it is born, and it is gone. The tyrant Death has cut it down and stopt its course. Is it forever? Will God be thus triumphed over? Is he weaker than his enemies? Shall this, his creature, which he hath so wonderfully made, endowed and brought into being, be

thus, at once and forever, frustrate of its Creator's beneficence, and sink again into the abyss of emptiness and darkness? Or is there for it, a never-ending existence, a futurity, in which it shall expand its faculties eternally?

Look at that young man! In nature's prime. The model of early manhood in person. In intellect, quick, pure and excellent. In attainment, though still young, a scholar "ripe and good!" He is bursting forth into the maturity and fullness of his powers. He feels within him all the ardour and sanguine expectation of life—all the acute sensibilities of genius—all the quickening impulses of Spiritual intelligence. He feels, too, that though much is learned, much more is before him. He is but launching his bark upon the vast ocean of life and knowledge. Eager wishes, insatiable desires are within him. He longs to hoist his sail and be away. But just as all the fields of science and of morals open before him, as their rich repast invite his taste, and he is springing forward to acquire and enjoy, Death strikes the blow, and extinguishes the light of life and hope. Shall it be forever? Is there no other world? Is there no other theatre for man's knowledge and attainment? Did God create these high faculties—these unquenchable desires and aspirations, only to destroy them? Did he place, before the lips, the full cup of natural and intellectual enjoyment, only to dash it away forever? Or is there an hereafter? A world beyond the grave, where this ardent expectant spirit shall meet with its complete felicity? Is there an eternity of life and of joy—a boundless existence in which mental advancement, and immortal delights shall commingle their harmonies forever?

One more instance! It shall be in the extreme of life. Look upon that old man—of grey hairs and tottering limbs. The breath of Heaven may not visit him too roughly. A more than second childhood is upon his mortal frame. The powers of nature are attenuated to their finest, frailest thread. All his functions tremble to their extinction. A little longer, and "the silver cord is loosed"—"the golden bowl broken."

He must fulfil the primal universal law, and return his dust to dust. On his corporeal structure, are all the infallible symptoms of decay and dissolution. But within are the liveliest energies of intellectual life. There, the rational Spirit displays her unspent powers—gives manifest proofs of undiminished vitality and of unceasing progress. In that Spirit we see fancy and reality—memory and hope—the full understanding of the present—the fresh and luxuriant anticipation of the future. In eminent and amazing contrast, stands out the spiritual, from the physical—must we not say, the immortal from the *mortal*? Is not here the eternal hand of God—the full assurance of ever-lasting, and ever-progressing life? These are the pleasing conclusions of analogy and reason. Revelation confirms their reality and truth. We shall not be disappointed in these foreshadowings of futurity—these solaces of humanity. There is a time before us, when every anticipation shall be possession. There is a kingdom prepared for us, in which every aspiration of the mind shall be realized—every throb of expected glory find its exaltation, and every holy hope, its consummation and its bliss. In a world that knows no night, and whose life knows no decay, the rapt Spirit shall drink in from fountains that ever flow, pleasures that never cease.

It is most true, that while the progressive elements of the mind indicate eternity, they do not, of themselves, secure to us a blessed immortality. As in this world, to live, is not always to be either good or happy, so, in the world to come, to live forever, is not itself, the bliss of immortality. In the cultivation of the intellect, science alone cannot furnish our proper reward, nor fulfil the end for which we were created. But who supposes that there is no moral department in our Spiritual constitution? Or that the education of man to benefit and pleasure, does not involve the Soul's advance in goodness and truth? In the union and progress of the intellectual and the moral, must be sought the blessings of which we speak. We commend not to you, the mere pride of intellect, nor would allure you to pleasures unsatisfying

and poisoned. We know nothing so vain and presumptuous—so poor and empty, as the gilded trophies of lettered infidelity. Such men, with their exclusive and vain-glorious claims of reason, have forgotten her office and her subjection to her author. With their proud boast of manhood, therefore, they often betray the imbecilities of a child. Not among them have shone out upon the world, the great lights of science and of mind. Let then, the Goddess of reason find her grave where she found her birth, in a land sick with crime and flowing with blood. Her orgies are amid guilt and atheism. May her worshippers never be found among us. Far from us, and from our happy country, be the day when freedom shall ally herself with ungodliness. Then shall the Heavens be dark and the clouds drop blood. “Jehobod” shall be written upon our standards. The pillars of our political fabric shall be shaken and our honor laid in the dust. May the author of our greatness and the preserver of our rights, save us from a downfall over which Angels would weep, and Evil Spirits rejoice.

The mind which seeks its glory without religion, prepares for itself but wretchedness of existence, and the phrenzy of despair. We deny not, the supremacy of reason. We would not depreciate the value of knowledge. The very object of this address has been to elevate both. But never would we separate reason and knowledge from the throne of God. We would not have them to lie in darkness, but to light their fires at the altar of Jesus Christ. We would have the illumination of reason, receive guidance and sanction from the “spirit of truth.” Let its influence be from holiness—its authority from Heaven. In this beautiful blending of the rational with the moral—this union of reason with religion—this mutual progress of mind and holiness, is the true idea of intellectual culture. In these must we seek our highest accomplishments. In these, our purest enjoyments. By them we must prepare ourselves to be useful on earth—to be blessed in Heaven. Here then, Gentlemen, we would have you start right, and affectionately assure you, that *now* is

the time. Seed are sown within you of glorious light. It is the spring time of life. The moral earth is opening and yielding under genial influences. The dews and rains from above, fall sweetly, gently, productively. Prepare for an abundant and honorable harvest. You are now open to impressions. Your affections are warm and tender. Your minds, ductile and quick to apprehend and acquire. Sensibility awakens you to feel, and kindness impels you to sympathize. The pleasures of the imagination play around your heart. The thrill of joy is exquisite, and hope, bright hope, is beckoning you onward. She is a true guide when she takes the right direction; when the wrong, a false enchantress. Heed her, only, when she points to truth. Follow her only, when she leads to parity. Now is the time, with you. It is the season of ardent emotion, and of the pure ideal. The form of abstract and perfect beauty, captivates you. Unchecked by any contradicting experiences of life, you look and you love. We would not altogether remove this vision, or subdue this rapture. If we have to tell you, that the mind's perfect conception, and the heart's pure passion, may not find their objects in real life, yet are they, in themselves, both glorious and prophetic. They are the elements of pure Spirit, and a world intended for them. If it be not here, let us look above. With unwavering faith, and unwearied step, let us through the Soul's progresses, prepare her for her glory.

Declare yourselves for the mind, for truth, and for religion. Buckle on their armor and go forth to win their battles. Not without the strongest emotion, do we, who are going out of life, look upon you who are coming into it. We have tried the world, and know what it is. Such as it is, to you it must be committed. We see more clearly than you do, the intimate connexion you must have with society, and how your character will affect its interests. From you and such as you, the next generation must take its stamp. And, be assured, the world sadly needs improvement in the "stuff that life is made of." Say that you will improve it.

That from your example, there shall go out none, but salutary and elevating influences. Set for yourselves a standard of perfect integrity and of unflinching industry. Be true, be laborious. In your measures, and for good, seek to impress yourselves upon your age. Fond eyes are upon you. Warm hearts beat for you. The hope of good men, is in you. The Old North State is calling to you. Rise up then, to the high demands of parents, friends and country. Shake off ignoble ease. Despise low vice. Beneath you, be all artifice and cunning. Step forward in the simple spirit of truth, and take her banner into your hands. Bear it humbly, but bear it nobly. There is for you the highest authority, the most sacred example. Be the followers of Him, who in the trial of injustice, that terminated in His death declared—"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."





