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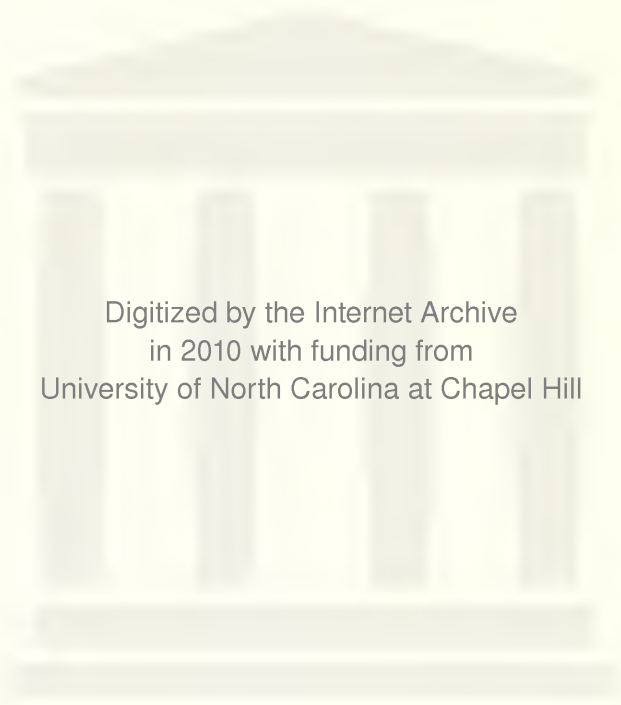
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AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ALUMNI AND GRADUATING CLASS

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA,

AT CHAPEL HILL,

ON THE AFTERNOON OF JUNE THIRD, 1841,

BY

JAMES C. BRUCE, ESQ.

OF HALIFAX, VIRGINIA.

RALEIGH:

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE NORTH CAROLINA STANDARD.

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1841.







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1841.

Philanthropic Hall, June 3d, 1841.

Dear Sir: At a meeting of the Philanthropic Society, held on the 2d inst., the following Resolution was unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the Committee of Correspondence be instructed to tender the thanks of this Society to JAMES C. BRUCE, Esquire, for his highly eloquent and classic Address delivered before the Alumni and Graduating Class on the evening preceding Commencement, and request a copy of the same for publication.

In addition, permit us to convey to you the gratification we experienced during its delivery, and respectfully to add our personal solicitations to those of the body we represent.

Yours respectfully,

WM. F. MARTIN,

A. W. SPAIGHT,

WM. A. BELL,

Committee.

To JAMES C. BRUCE, Esquire.

Chapel Hill, June 3d, 1841.

Gentlemen: Your note of this morning, gratifies me with the assurance, that my Address was well received by the members of our Society, and I will with great pleasure furnish you, as you desire, with a copy for publication.—Grateful for the distinction which their selection has conferred upon me, I have only to regret that I cannot acquit myself of the obligation by presenting them with a performance more worthy of their acceptance.

With the best wishes for the prosperity of the Society and the happiness of its members,

I am, gentlemen,

Your friend and fellow-member,

JAMES C. BRUCE.

To WM. F. MARTIN, A. W. SPAIGHT, WM. A. BELL, *Committee.*

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN ALUMNI:

It was the custom of our fathers, and one even now held sacred by many a family of my acquaintance, to call together once in the year, all of its members, whom the various pursuits of life had scattered abroad. They assembled on some high religious festival, around the same domestic altar, for the purpose of honoring their earthly parents, and worshiping their heavenly father.—The powerful aids of a purifying religion were called in, to invigorate the hallowed sentiment of filial reverence and obedience. The mysterious web spun in the nursery, and wound around the hearts and affections of the offspring of the same parents, worn by time, or alas! as too often happens, torn by the conflicts of interest or passion, were at these holy periods wove anew. Impelled by a kindred feeling, gentlemen, we the children of the same bountiful mother, have now come together in obedience to her annual call, to offer to her the homage of our affection, our gratitude, and our reverence; and to prove to each other that mutual kindness is still the tenant of our bosoms, and that the toils, the anxieties, the cares, and the strifes of a busy life, have made no impression on our hearts which friendship need disown, or this spot hallowed in our memory and its associations, need rebuke.—We have the pleasure too, of shaking by the hand many of our younger brethren, whom though unseen before, we can not look on as strangers, without forgetting, that they were nursed on the same lap with ourselves, have read the same books, tenanted the same rooms, received instruction from the same lips, frequented the same haunts of amusement, and heard the same bell, whose sound was alternately solemn, melancholy, or pleasing, as it summoned to devotion, to lecture, or to idleness.

Amid all the pleasures, and they are not small nor few, which memory is calling up in connexion with this place, our recollection is busy in vindicating the melancholy truth, inscribed on each page of earth's history, teaching us that every rose has an attendant thorn, and every pleasure a pain, which clings to it, as a part of it. Moments passed here in idleness, that should have been consecrated to study and improvement, rise up to rebuke us, and reveal to our consciences, that they are gone forever. In counting over our living friends, how many

of our dead companions stand up before us, to proclaim how busy has been "the insatiate archer" amidst our ranks! His shaft has been aimed at the most shining marks. Three of my own class at the moment of putting on the *toga virilis*, and but a short time after they were clothed with the honors of this institution, and had become hopeful candidates for the honors of the world, were snatched away from us forever. Imagination bursts the cerements of the grave and calls up before us the venerable man, who so long, and so beneficially presided, over the destinies of this institution. He has fallen in the maturity of his years and his virtues, and thousands of young men on whom he buckled the armor of learning, religion, and virtue, and sent forth into the world, to honor and usefulness, will shed a tear to his memory. No genuine son of this institution, can revisit the scene of his labors and his life, without giving up a few moments, at least, to mournful contemplation, at the recollection of so much learning, so much piety, and so much devotion to the noble cause of education, now lost to the world forever; nor without a whispered prayer that his mantle with all the wearers sanctity about it, may descend to his successors through all time. But it is not my purpose to call up unavailing regrets—they come without the calling—nor to attempt an analysis of that mysterious alchimy which converts much of what memory holds of early days, even things indifferent or painful, into the most delightful present enjoyments. What these scenes can not effect, any language of mine would fail to accomplish.

If each individual whom I now address, would give to us his experience of the world, and show to us the picture he had drawn of men and things as they appeared to him while looking from the windows of these college buildings, revised and corrected, after ten years jostling with the beings, whom business or pleasure caused to walk the same path with himself, I doubt whether the Louvre or the Vatican could show any thing more curious, more instructive, or more entertaining. What a wonderful and diversified mingling there would be, of light and shade! Still the objects painted are always the same, the difference of coloring depending altogether on the variant positions of each canvass. To the gloomy, the light would be as dark as that which steals through the stained glass of a Gothic window, to the light hearted and joyous, it would dance and dazzle as through a crystal prism, while to him who dwelt in the temperate zone of subdued and sober, yet gladsome feeling, the world would appear, as it is, some-

thing to weep over and rejoice at, with hills of elevation and plains of depression, firm ground and morasses, arid prospects and enchanting views—in short neither all good nor all bad.

There is one feeling of disappointment, which every young man, who exchanges the seclusion of a college for the bustle and business of the world, is bound to meet and endure. He finds the weapons of college warfare are not those precisely suited to collisions with men in active life. His Diploma, for which he so long labored, and for which he burned the midnight lamp, and surrendered so many hours, which in vain allured him to idleness and pleasure, he finds entitles him to but a small share of the honor and consideration of the world, which he had fondly anticipated. He comes at length to see in it but the certificate from his masters, of an apprenticeship honorably ended, authorizing him to commence work on his own account. His classical lore which was to be the *open sesame* to honor and consideration, he carries to a market where few appreciate, and still fewer will purchase. His small stock of literature and science, which he has collected with toil and gloated over with the feelings of the miser, when he surveys his hidden gold, is converted by the disenchanting touch of the world, into rubbish and stone, not equal to the purchase of one "poor penny's worth of bread." He finds that all these things have no exchangeable value, though his after experience teaches him, that they are not without their use. The mental training which he has received in their acquisition, has imparted powers which properly exercised, may enable him to win any prize which he may choose to run for; as the exercise of the chase, where the deer or the boar is the only enemy, may so strengthen the thews and sinews, so nerve the courage, and so sharpen the sagacity, as to qualify the votary, for the more severe and arduous duties of war.

Another disappointment every young scholar feels at the very first touch of the public pulse. The pursuits which he has been taught to look on as the most noble, the most elevated, and the most worthy of an intelligent being, the public of our country has but little sympathy with. There is no Republic of letters here. Beyond the outer walls of our universities and colleges, there is but little veneration for learning or the learned. The Greek and Latin which we took with us into the world, I appeal to you my friends, has it not perished for lack of food and a congenial atmosphere? Do we bring back with us to day, as much as we carried away from this place, years ago?—

Would not the laconic account of the Bard of Avon's learning by the immortal Ben Johnson, "he has little Latin and less Greek," suit each and all of us? The sad account which we the Alumni of the University of North Carolina this day give of our stewardship over the talents entrusted to us by our Alma Mater, will find an echo in the candid responses of the Alumni of every institution within our wide spread borders. I dare pronounce the honest though grating truth—grating to our pride and self complacency, that the soil of the United States has not proved the most favorable to the growth of literature. This is a count in every indictment which has been drawn up against us by the English press, and has galled us the more, because of its truth.—But it should not gall us—*non omnia possumus omnes*, we can not do every thing, or be every thing. It is glory enough for us, that we have formed a model of government the most perfect that the world has ever seen—have in an unparalleled short space of time extended the empire of civilization over regions uninhabited, save by savage beasts and more savage men—have bound together a tract of country three thousand miles in extent, embracing every climate, every soil, and every language, into one compact mass of people, with one feeling, one interest, and hearts all bounding at the same watch words of union and liberty—have dug more canals and made more rail roads than all the modern civilized world together, and in comparison with which all that Rome in her palmiest days had done, dwindle into insignificance. Our flag floats proudly in every sea and is respected by every nation—we have the best fed, the best governed, and the most contented, and happy population on the face of the globe—our manufactures are competing with the English in every market—we taught the world the application of steam to the propelling of boats on the water, and are every day sending steam engines to the land of Bolton and Watt—all this and more we have accomplished in the space of a man's life, but a day in the lifetime of nations. What disgrace then is there in the concession, that we are not a literary people—that our country is not the realm of fancy—that the ornamental arts of life—poetry, painting, sculpture—are not indigenous here? Our national character is reflective rather than imaginative—we prefer the useful to the beautiful—had rather minister to the solid happiness of the great mass, than cater for the refined appetites of the luxurious few. Would we know the cause of this? seek it in our government, in the character of the age, the period of our birth as a nation, our relations with other countries;

and we will cease to be surprised at our present literary poverty, or mortified by the prospect before us. To repine at the literary fame of other nations, or to be jealous of it, would show a vanity as ridiculous as that of the great French Cardinal who not content with the character of the most accomplished statesman of his time, which he was, would be what nature never intended he should be, a gallant and a poet.

But I must invoke your attention and patience, while I avail myself of this opportunity to dwell with more minuteness, on the causes which have hitherto impeded, some of which will probably for a long time to come, continue to impede, our progress in polite literature and the fine arts.

That our country has as yet contributed but little to the wealth of the great Republic of letters, may be taken as confessed. We have erected no monument of poetry and have perhaps not a single isolated statue or painting, which will withstand the corrosion of a century. Of the long list of our authors in verse and prose, how few, whose names do not sound strangely, in the ears, even of our reading public? That this is owing to any mental inferiority of our people, involves a sarcasm, which our abundant and overwhelming success in other departments of human genius, has triumphantly refuted. The deductions of the crazed philosophy, which taught that all animals degenerate in the Western Hemisphere, have long since, been abundantly disproved. The other causes assigned for it, though more flattering to our self love, are not more true. We are too young, it is said, for literature—at our age other nations had done nothing—we had a wilderness to subdue—wild beasts to exterminate—savages to drive from our borders—the means of living to provide, and capital to accumulate—in a word that America like every other country must be material before she can be ideal, active before contemplative. These excuses are more specious than true. Our country is not strictly new. Our fathers came from the most civilized nation of Europe. They brought with them the literature and arts of England—were the inheritors of the glories of Locke, Bacon, and Boyle, of Shakespear, Dryden, and Milton—were the children of fathers who had waved the banner of freedom over a thousand well fought fields, and sealed with their hearts best blood, their devotion to civil and religious liberty. But there is one touch-stone to test the validity of this plea of minority. The boy with his diminutive figure and undeveloped muscles, is not expected

to have the strength of a man—but from his daily improvement in both of these particulars, we anticipate with some degree of exactness his future strength and stature. Compare the literary stature of the United States now, with what it was fifty years ago, and the quantum of past growth will be a fair measure of future increase. I fear this test will give us but poor encouragement. We have more writers now—having more readers and more population—but have we better? There were more classical learning and more ripe scholarship in the first Congress that convened, than have been assembled since; Benjamin West is still our best painter, Benjamin Franklin our greatest philosopher, and—*longo intervallo*—Joel Barlow our best, our only Epic poet. The philosophic inquirer must probe deeper for the real cause of our stunted literary growth, though in probing, he should wound, or even sever, the nerves of our national vanity.

Some of the influences which are operating injuriously on our own literature, are by no means common to us, but are endemical among all nations. Ever since the French revolution, the foundations of the great deep of human society have been broken up. Individuals and communities have been busy in improving their physical condition. The great body of the people have been engaged in examining into the legality of the pretensions set up by the few, the more favored classes in resisting this spirit of investigation, so hostile to their power. In the midst of such a hurlyburly of interest and passion, the dreams of the poet have been disturbed, the contemplations of the philosopher broken in upon, and the imagination drawn down from its airy heights, to realities more attractive than its own visions. Physical man has been exalted, the intellectual depressed. Mind has triumphed over matter it is true, but it is the triumph of the slave; for the body puts forth its hands and enjoys all the spoils of its richest conquests. The locomotive as it whistles by us, is but wings to the body, breaking up space, and imparting to it the ubiquity, so long the proud prerogative of mind. Philosophy years ago, but the toy of the mind, the dreamer's plaything, is now the poor servant of commerce, which feeds and clothes our bodies; and Chemistry, once the transmuter of every mean thing which it touched, into glittering gold, is now a scullion of the kitchen, serving the body's basest uses. Is it strange then, that in an age so physical, so utilitarian, when the comforts of the body are so intensely thought of, that the gratifications of the mind should cease to attract our thoughts and divide our cares; that science should flourish and

polite literature dwindle, that reason should be exalted and imagination decay? Such is the fact. While civilization is every where triumphing, and science is smoothing the way for the growth and extension of all the arts of life, imagination is constantly and in the same proportion, losing its sway over its old domains of poetry and its sister arts. Whether reason and imagination are two hostile sovereigns, who can not brook the rivalship of a divided reign, or whose sway will be kindest, gentlest, best, are questions which each will answer in accordance with his own peculiar temper, and habits of feeling and thought.

Every created thing, even at the moment when it bounds into existence, has within it the germ of its future character and destiny.—It is the peculiarity of our country, a peculiarity which forbids a comparison with other nations, that it has not passed through the lingering, yet interesting periods of infancy and childhood. We sprang, like Minerva from the brain of Jupiter, fully grown and fully armed.—The shadowy forms and dim recollections of childhood, its infantile associations and superstitions, and “the story telling glen and fount and brook” the very woof and warp of poetry and romance, are all wanting to us. Tradition which so delightfully beguiles other nations with its marvels, stands here rebuked into silence under the cold unsympathising eye of history. We see our pilgrim fathers touch the rock at Plymouth, we trace them in all their journeyings through the wilderness, every incident is an item of history, and combined, a wonderful history they make, but not a perch is offered for imagination to rest her weary wings, as she flies around our land. We have no heroic age, when men were heroes, and heroes gods, no monuments of antiquity, no relics of superstition, casting their dim shadows on the mind and infusing into the imagination a lively sympathy with departed age, and a half belief in its traditionary marvels. Take from Greece and Rome their gods and demi-gods, their superstition, their fabulous origin; in fine, take from them all that we have not, and the world would not be astonished and delighted by those splendid creations of genius which are at once monuments and models of taste and of beauty. Without a mythology there would have been no such poet as Homer, no painters like Zeuais and Parrhasius, sculpture could not boast of its Phidias or Praxiteles, the drama its Sophocles or Euripides, nor possibly eloquence a Demosthenes.

It is true that modern Italy far removed from these glorious times, has rejoiced for a brief period, in a revival of the arts and literature

which made the "eternal city" famous. Christianity was to it, what mythology was to ancient Rome. Monkish fraud and popular superstition had converted the holiest truths of revelation into the most ridiculous fables, and God became the Jupiter, the saints the demi-gods, and the martyrs the heroes of the modern religion. The Deity was not a spirit, nor was his worship spiritual, nor can any one of proper religious feeling contemplate the paintings or read the poetry of this period, without experiencing in the impiety of the authors, a considerable drawback on his delight and admiration. The conclusion is, that much of Grecian and Roman, celebrity is due to a false religion, and of modern Italian, to a corrupt one.

Our relations with England are unfavorable to that originality of effort which alone constitutes Genius in literature and the fine arts.—Our position dooms us to the humble office of copyists. The child always looks up to the parent with sentiments of exaggerated respect, and parental precept, parental example, and parental influence, bear with a weight, which reason and judgment in vain attempt to shake off. We are the offspring of England; speak the same language, read the same books, have the same prejudices, boast of the same excellencies, and bear a striking resemblance in every national feature. Our commercial relations are most intimate, and our mutual feelings of good will, with the exception of an occasional "flare up," most cordial. Add to this the wealth and the power of England, her commanding position as the centre of modern civilization, her military glory, her freedom, her genius vindicated by her successes in every department of human enterprise; her brilliant host of orators, statesmen, and poets, her learning, her religion, and need we wonder at our laying claim to kindred with such a nation, and making a model of so much moral and intellectual excellence? Nations like individuals are their own copyists. Genius treads over and over again the path which its own hands have cleared, and a mine once opened is worked, till the last ore is exhausted. No language living or dead boasts of more than one epic, though in each there are many copies. The human mind unconscious of its own power, cowers in the presence of a master, feels the effort to excel what it has been taught to deem perfect as presumptuous, and seeks some new field of labor or as more frequently happens, sinks the boldness of invention into the drudgery of imitation.—The English literature of the present age gives abundant illustration of this fact. The teeming press is busy in throwing off copies of the

masters of a former age. The multitude of novels and romances which every year brings before us, are but the copies of a copy, the shadow of a shade; and the drama, and every day brings forth a new one, is Shakespeare in a thousand dresses. The literature of modern nations is like the magnificent feast given to Pompey the Great, by his host of Epirus; the table groaned under the weight of a multitude of dishes, yet when critically tasted, they were all found to contain the same ingredient—pork in a thousand forms. A dozen originals and a thousand copies, constitute the literature of the most polished of modern nations. Take from England, Shakespeare, and Milton, and Dryden and Pope, and her glory is eclipsed; she could better spare a hundred of her ephemeral authors, who show themselves on the literary stage, command applause for a moment, and then disappear forever.

To ensure a high standing in literature and the fine arts, a nation must have *originals*, beautiful reflectors of universal nature, which will please all men in all ages—a single one of which our country has not yet, and will never have, till we reach that proud elevation which will enable us to give to, more than we receive from England; when, in a word, we shall be the planet and she the satellite.

But, gentlemen, powerful as are the influences of the causes which I have thus concisely glanced at, over the literary prospects of our country, there are others connected with the very frame-work of our political institutions, which can not be overlooked. Most of the nice shades which mark the differences in the tastes of nations, as well as the broad lines which distinguish and divide their variant social systems, are all owing in a great degree to peculiarities in their Governments. It is not only the province of political institutions to restrain the passions, to protect the weak, and to establish justice, but they mount higher, and seize on the affections, direct the imagination, and control the taste. The American democracy has no prototype in the history of the world. The petty States of Greece, with Governments compounded of the wildest license and the most cruel oppression, of anarchy and aristocracy,

“Where men

All, but a few, were bought and sold and scourged

And killed, as interest or caprice enjoined,”

bear no resemblance to our glorious system but in name—as much alike, as a “horse chesnut and a chesnut horse.” Ours is a representative Government, in which the voice of the people is heard through

their agents—theirs, a Government, if Government it could be called, where a few, and they the lowest and most degraded of the population, spoke in their own right; calling themselves, not the representatives of the people, but the people themselves. Ours is the first representative democracy that the world has ever seen. The honor of first reducing to successful practice what was before deemed a Utopian dream, and of demonstrating that the people themselves are their best rulers, is all our own. We alone have carried out the great Church reform which Martin Luther commenced, by breaking up the unholy connexion between the priest and the politician—we alone have no aristocracy but what God and man's own merit have made—have no armed soldiery to imbrue their hands in the blood of their brethren—no sinecures—no bloated wealth—no squalid poverty. If all this be the fruit of our democracy, and it can be further shown, that this same democracy has drawn around our hearths every domestic virtue, surrounded our altars with piety, given wisdom and dignity to our public councils, patriotism to our rulers, and valor to our soldiers, need we fear the acknowledgement if truth should require it, that it does not foster those lighter and more graceful accomplishments which it is our boast to have overthrown? Having rejected a court with its vices and its oppressions, why look to its refinements? Having turned our backs on Egypt and its chains, why sigh after its flesh-pots and its luxuries?

Political equality is the great characteristic of democracy, legibly stamped on its outward features, while its *inward* spirit is *universal* equality. European nations have their nobility, their gentry, their peasantry; their literary, their scientific and their fashionable circles, each separate and distinct. Democracy breaks down all such dividing barriers. Society here, can not be represented by a pyramid or cone, but a plain, and before an individual can rise, he must first raise the plain on which the feet of the whole community are planted; for each bears the same relation to the whole mass, which a member of European society bears to his class. Every ambitious individual struggles to obtain the applause of the Society to which he is attached. The author writes for the applause of the literary circle, the painter courts the approbation and patronage of the lovers of art, and the orator addresses himself to the tastes and passions of the holders of political power; while in a country like ours, where all classes are blended in one, ambition woos the smiles of the majority. Genius grasps at universal applause and strives to please the universal taste. The taste of

the majority here nor no where else, can sympathise with the worship of the muses, nor with the contemplation, the solitude, the passionless *consideratio nature*, which gave to the ancient philosophy such charms. They are too passive, too contemplative, too ethereal for the gross beings who constitute the mass. Their taste is more for the useful than the beautiful—for them a fine ship has more attractions than the dome of St. Peters', and the Patent Office is richer in the creations of genius, than the Sistine Chapel or the Galleries of Florence.

Another circumstance operates injuriously on the growth and diffusion of letters in our country. We have no great capital like London, or Paris, or Vienna, to serve as a meeting point for all the learned of the country, enabling them to concentrate science and taste, and extend their influence through the means of National Academies and Royal Societies. The seat of our Federal Government is a petty town, with a small population and still smaller resources, and the residence of a sovereignty so limited, that it has not the power to establish or endow a University, or to appropriate the smallest sum for the encouragement of science or the fine arts. All the power of the nation for these noble and beneficent purposes is divided and frittered away among twenty-six sovereignties, who are unable or unwilling to appropriate the means necessary to give to literature and the ornamental arts, that commanding influence which they would exert under more favorable auspices. Without more concentration of effort, but little can be effected, and this the character of our political institutions forbids. Centralization, so inimical to liberty, is indispensable to the growth of letters, and adds another to the thousand instances, all serving to demonstrate the inability of man to form a system of Government, that will protect every interest and foster every improvement.—His whole life is but a series of compromises, in which he sacrifices the beautiful to the useful, elegant enjoyments to homely comforts, and the refinements of the few to the necessities of the many. The Utopian dreams of a speculative philosophy, must first be realized, before he can hope to see all of these benefits flow from the same Government.

As an indemnity, however, for the absence of these great and acknowledged advantages, so highly prized by the literary man and the *virtuoso*, we have the satisfaction of seeing all the useful arts of life brought to the highest perfection—practical science cultivated by all classes, and unlocking her secrets, not to the idle importunities of here

and there a solitary votary, but opening her vast store-house of wonders and blessings, to the gaze and enjoyment of all. A new idea in practical philosophy, or a new improvement in art, does not here as elsewhere, commence with the first class of society, the apex of the cone, and percolate slowly till it is brought by gravity within the reach of the mass below, but it passes with the rapidity of lightning through the whole body of the people, and before a single one can say it is mine, it is in the possession of all. The whole people march on together, and have the same tastes, the same prejudices, and the same character. To estimate the merits of such a people, we should not select individuals as samples, but look on them in the aggregate. We have no Mont Blancs nor Chimborazos, with towering tops, to attract the gaze of the world, but our country is based on the most elevated plain on the face of the earth. We present the mighty spectacle of a whole population lifted up; not indeed to the airy heights of imagination and taste, but to the genial elevation, of a sound morality, and a practical philosophy; and this effected by the mighty lever of Democracy. Frigid indeed must be that man's philosophy and harder than adamant his heart, who would purchase for his country, high literary renown at the expense of the mass of that country's citizens, and found an emporium of fine arts, on an ignorant and degraded population! And yet such is the philosophy of Kings and aristocrats all the world over.

But, gentlemen, before dismissing this subject, I must refer you to one branch of the fine arts, which it is thought the peculiar province of freedom to foster. I allude to the sister of poetry—eloquence. Democracy has been ever looked on as the cradle of eloquence; and while I have no disposition to call into question so respectable a truism, yet it would be well for us, before drawing from it too favorable an augury, to remember that the democracy of the United States is a very different thing from that of Greece or Rome. We have a territory so extensive, and a population so large, that but a small portion of our people can assemble at one place—our public affairs are conducted by the representatives of the people, and not the people themselves—we have Constitutions which bind our representatives, and confine them within a very narrow range. The Grecian States had no Constitutions nor representatives, and the people could be easily assembled, and their decisions were prompt and final—circumstances all favorable to the purposes of the orator. The character of the populace, too, was just

such as to bring it under the influence of eloquence—fickle, passionate, enterprising, rash, and unreflecting. The Prince of Orators, when in the presence of such an assembly he launched his thunder against the ambition and tyranny of the Macedonian King, was not greeted with the usual testimonials of applause—shouts and acclamations—but the deep-mouthed response, amid the clangor of arms, “let us march against Philip.” Eloquence could produce no such thrilling effect on an American assembly. The power of the orator is weakened by the genius of our institutions, which is singularly cool, dispassionate and reflecting. Our people are so slow in passing from conception to execution, and there is so much delay, so much consultation, and so many constitutional impediments, that the passions excited by the art of the speaker evaporate, and reason has time to resume the helm, from which she had been for a moment driven.

In our legislative assemblies, two causes exert a depressing effect on their eloquence—the duty of obedience to the constituent body, and the spirit of party. The one takes away the will on which it is the province of eloquence to act; the other, narrows the heart and deadens those emotions, in the absence of which there can be no sympathy with magnanimity, virtue, or honor.

The art of printing, in every other respect so fruitful of blessings, has acted injuriously on the eloquence of the present age. Such is the rapidity with which copies of a speech are multiplied, and such the velocity with which they fly to the most distant parts of our country, that the orator does not so much address the small assembly which sees and hears him, as the country at large; nor does he so much adapt himself to the excited feelings of a crowd, which sympathise with every tone and every gesture of the speaker, as to the calm reason of men who read and weigh in solitude. The three approved weapons of ancient eloquence,—action, action, action—are discarded for the more potent engines—fact, argument and reason. Any effort to rouse the passions, or touch the heart, at once excites jealousy and distrust. Liberty and patriotism are no longer sentiments, at the bare mention of which, the heart vibrates along every chord, but things to be reasoned of, weighed, measured, and calculated, with the same coolness that we estimate the blessings of steam, or the value of the spinning jenny. Hence the speeches of the present day are didactic, argumentative, and statistical; but sadly wanting in fervor, pathos and vehemence.

These views are not presented for the purpose of disparaging the eloquence of America, but to warn us against expecting from our democratic institutions, that rich and overflowing harvest, which was reaped in "the fierce democracies" of Greece. Our institutions, as schools of political eloquence, are inferior to the ancient Republics, but equal to those of England, and superior to all the other monarchies of Europe. Our success is just equal to these advantages. While we have no names to compare with the great masters of Grecian and Roman eloquence, yet none others living or dead but will find their parallel in our brief annals. The commanding energy of a Chatham, is equalled by our Henry, while the deep philosophy and gorgeous elocution of Burke, find their counterpart in our Pinckney. Living orators of our own country could be named, if it were not invidious, who might proudly challenge a comparison with the most eminent of the age.

In pulpit eloquence, we have as yet, gathered no laurels. In the midst of a host of learned and sound theologians, there is no radiant gem of eloquence. Channing may constitute an exception; he is copious, fluent, and elegant, but too cold and artificial, to rank with the great models of France, or the comparatively inferior ones, of England. How much soever the efforts of Martin Luther and his followers may have purified our religion, it must be confessed, that in ridding our churches of their ornaments, they have robbed our pulpits of their flowers. Catholic countries, are with few exceptions, superior to their protestant neighbors, in the eloquence of the pulpit. Whether this is the result of fortuitous coincidence, or owing to the greater materiality of the catholic faith, compared with the spirituality of protestantism, which gives a stronger hold on the imagination of the people, and offers by this means a greater range to the fancy of the preacher, would involve considerations, which I have not the time to enter on nor you the patience to listen to. I will content myself with the remark, that the eloquence of the pulpit depends more on the forms of the church and the character of the faith which it inculcates, than on the political institutions of a country.

The views, Gentlemen, which I have thus concisely offered for your consideration, are not, I know, such as are deemed best calculated to find favor with an American auditory. But I place far too high an estimate on the candor and intelligence of the Alumni of this University, to imagine for a moment, that their patriotism, or their taste,

would be gratified by a fulsome panegyrick, or indiscriminate praise of our institutions. Our government and people have enough of real excellence, to enlist our pride and our affections, without rendering it necessary, to robe ourselves in fancied perfections, or to risk the ridicule which is always provoked by lofty, but unfounded pretension.—The language of flattery has been heard long enough—Europe nauseates, and America at last begins to sicken. We have lived too long on the glories of the dead, and dwelt too much on the contemplations of the past. Let us look forward, that our posterity may not be ashamed to look back. The whole civilized world is in motion, earnestly striving in the race of improvement. Old countries animated by the spirit of the age, are throwing off their lethargy, and are manifesting a degree of activity and enterprise, which we have flattered ourselves, was all our own. England during the last thirty years, has doubled her population, and quadrupled all her resources of strength, of comfort, and of happiness. From the icy mountains of Siberia, to the sunny plains of Egypt, the spirit of improvement, is moving on the face of the water and the land. On our altars was the sacred fire first kindled, and may our people stand among the nations, as did the tribe of Levi among the people of God, distinguished by the high and peculiar honor, of furnishing a priesthood, to feed the holy flame and keep it burning forever!

That part of the United States, gentlemen, which we inhabit, needs awakening. The South is too supine. While the North and the West are pursuing with vigor the path which their high destiny is pointing out to them, and wooing every breeze which may waft them onwards, we have cast anchor, and are amusing ourselves with conjuring up phantoms of a past age, discussing the principles of a departed race of politicians, and idly talking of bringing back the Government to its old republican tack; as if any Government ever did or ever can go backwards. The political institutions of a country, may be wrecked on the rocks of faction, or engulfed in a vortex of effeminacy or vice, may fall from too much weakness or too much weight, yet it is certain, that no nation was ever rescued from a danger before it, by an attempt to recede, or ever found a grave near the spot where it was rocked in its cradle. It is high time that the South was giving up its old prejudices and antiquated modes of thinking—that it was breaking the ties which unite it to a departed age, and bind together the living and the dead. Our ancestors used the lights of *their* age,

why should we reject the brighter ones of our own? They ran a-head of their times, why should we lag behind ours? They were dissatisfied with their condition, and improved it, let us do likewise; they were wise in their generation, let us be wise in ours. We should imitate, but not ape our fathers. It is not so much their improvements, that we should adopt, as their spirit of improvement; not so much their thoughts, as their modes of thinking. Many of our Alumni, are members of Legislative bodies, and their position is one of great power, and great responsibility. It is to be hoped that they will give an impulse to that spirit in North Carolina and Virginia, which is effecting such wonders in other parts of our country. They must have strangely forgotten the early lessons of their youth, if they do not war on the ignorance of the land, and cherish that greatest of all systems of internal improvement, which takes under its charge, the heads and hearts of the people. The claims of the poor, who are stretching forth their hands for what is far more valuable than bread, can no longer be safely disregarded. In a Despotism the youthful heir to the throne is carefully educated, is put under the charge of the wisest and best men of the nation, who fill his tender mind, with lessons of political wisdom, and instill into his heart, the precepts of virtue and religion. The children of America are its future sovereigns, its destiny will soon be in their keeping, and yet we are content to place no restraint on their vices, and give no illumination to their minds. The parent who refuses to his child the advantages of education is justly looked on as a monster of folly or wickedness, and often by the very men who refuse all legislative aid to the cause of popular education.

We read with horror, of the descent of the savage hordes of Goths and Vandals, on the fair plains of France and Italy, overturning in their wild career, all the boasted monuments of Roman civilization, and prostrating in the dust, whatever of law, religion, and learning, there remained of a past age. We it is true, have no such enemies hanging on our frontiers, but let our population become dense and crowded, as it must in a short time, and let us continue to neglect as we have done, that cheap defence of nations, popular education, and we shall have barbarians to encounter, as ignorant, as lawless, and as savage, as the great northern hive ever sent forth, on an expedition of rapine and plunder. Our populous towns, will empty the filthy contents of their streets and cellars, on our ballot boxes. The charter which now secures our property from encroachment, and our persons

from violation, will be invaded, and our beautiful system of order, justice, and equal rights, will fall into ruin, to escape from which we will embrace despotism in despair; and thus rival the imbecility of the fool, who in the confusion of a sinking ship, seized on an anchor, that he might ride in safety to the shore. We should make timely provision against such a calamity. A safe and easy mode of escape lies open before us. Educate the rising generation, and all will be well. Here is a case, in which an enlightened self-love, pleads the cause of philanthropy. Not only charity, but pecuniary interest impels us. To educate the poor is to convert idle consumers into active producers, and I have not a doubt, but in the long run, besides adding to the taxable wealth of the State, that it would save the full cost, in diminished appropriations under our present system of poor laws. The well educated are rarely poor enough to solicit the bounty of the State, or the charity of individuals. Let us then, gentlemen, here in the presence of our Alma Mater, under the eyes of our old instructors, and in the face of this large and respectable audience, resolve, each within the sphere in which his destiny may be cast, to exert every power of his mind and all the influence of his station, whether public or private, to extend the blessings of education, to every tenant, of every hamlet, within our borders. Then we will bear some resemblance to the picture which our vanity has drawn, and be indeed and in truth, the most enlightened, the most powerful, and the best governed people, on the face of the earth.

GENTLEMEN OF THE GRADUATING CLASS:

You will soon be emancipated from College rules and enter on a new and untried scene. Commencing life has been aptly compared to launching a boat on the waters of the ocean. There is, however, this striking difference. The mariner in passing wide wastes of unknown waters, is provided with a compass to direct his course, and a chart to inform him of the nature of the coast which he approaches, and the position of every dangerous rock and concealed reef. Under such guidance, he pursues his journey in safety over the pathless ocean. Not so the traveller along life's dreary road. He sets out with no compass but his own good sense, and with no chart but his own prudence; for the experience of those who have preceded him in his journey, throws but a flickering and doubtful light on his path, full as likely to mislead as to guide him. There is so little sympathy

between the young and the old, that the latter are at best but bad counsellors of the former. Youth is the season of hope and enjoyment, and it deals with the present and the future. The dreams of the aged are of the past, for the present yields to them little enjoyment, and the future in this life no hope. To the young, the world is in its first blossom, full of gayety, redolent of sweets, and inspiring with promises of delightful fruit. To the old the blossom is gone, the fruit has been plucked, and the winter of life is at hand, without the hopes of a returning spring to chase away its darkness and its gloom. He who is in the midst of the "first bright tumult of existence," finds the bitter experiences of age, contradicted by his own sweet hopes and keen enjoyments, and he turns from them with an incredulity, which can only be dispelled by the feelings of three score. And this is perhaps the wiser and the better philosophy; for cold and unmitigated indeed would be the lot of human existence, if the clouds of a gloomy future were allowed to rest on and obscure the bright moments of the present. To refuse to inhale the odour of flowers because they are fleeting, or to enjoy the exhilaration of spring, or the mellow delights of summer and of autumn, because they fly away at the dreary approach of coming winter, is no dictate of wisdom or piety.

Your first impressions, gentlemen, on entering the world will be painful, and your first experience of its disappointments will be bitter. The independence which you have so long sighed after, will when first tasted, be found a mixed feeling of pleasure and pain, and the responsibility which accompanies it, will rest on you as a heavy burden, till time and habit render it easy. Separated from your companions, and cut off from the society of your College friends, you will feel yourselves strangers in the world, and a sensation of loneliness will creep over you, which will be painfully oppressive. Your new pursuits too, will be so different from your former ones, the men of the world so unlike the companions, whom you have left behind, and their occupations, their prejudices and their tone of feeling, will appear so strange to you, that you will almost despair of ever making yourselves at home with your new acquaintance. These feelings however, will soon wear off, and you will in a short time be prepared, to enter earnestly on the part which you are to play in the great drama of life.

Much, I may say every thing, depends on the first step which you may make—if a false one it may never be recovered. Between your labors here and in the world let there be no interregnum, no

giving up a year or two to pleasure and looking about, but enter at once on the profession or employment which is to secure you honor and independence. The cup of pleasure, which you may think to sip for a few days or months and then relinquish forever, rely on it, there is great danger of your draining to the dregs. Every day that you put off your labors adds to the difficulty of their commencement, until at last you will come to swell the number of your predecessors, who have fallen the hopeless victims of inglorious idleness, or consuming vice.

In selecting a profession, remember, that but little depends on the choice, but every thing on the degree of industry and energy with which it is followed. Professions now, thanks to the liberality and intelligence of the age, begin to rank in respectability according to their usefulness, and the envious classification of learned and unlearned, is fast disappearing, and men have at last found out, that learning and science are as useful in directing the labor of the Farmer and the Mechanic, as of the Lawyer, the Physician, or the Divine, and that the former have been base and the latter respectable, simply because it has suited the pride or the caprice of the learned, to call them so. But a better and a juster feeling is now abroad in the land, and every useful profession is fast rising to the same level; each being an indispensable link, in the social chain which binds individuals together. As an evidence of this, we are told that more statues have been erected in Great Britain, to the memory of the inventor of the steam engine, than to the conqueror of Napoleon, and there are few persons I am sure, who would not prefer the reputation of a Fulton or a Whitney, to that of a Mansfield or a Sydenham. Whatever may be your calling, gentlemen, be assured that there is no necessity for your intellects to stagnate in its prosecution. Every one presents a wide field for the exercise of invention, and the play of genius. Will you cultivate the earth? As much as science has done for this honorable and ancient art, how much remains undone? how many secrets are locked up—how many meliorating processes, by which the soil might be made to yield greater products at the call of labor are as yet unknown, and how many useful implements remain to be invented? In Medicine, how much false practice remains to be corrected, how many pernicious theories to be exploded, how many conflicting opinions to be reconciled? In Law, how many intricacies to disentangle, how much that is feudal and antiquated to be abolished, and how much that is inapplicable to our age and our country to be dispensed with? Survey every field of human industry, and you

will find in each, much that calls for the hand of skill and enterprise.

In selecting your profession, lose no time in vain efforts to find out which is best suited to your genius or bent of mind. Whatever one devotes himself to earnestly, he will come to love, and whatever he loves, he will succeed in. I do not mean to say, with Helvetius, that all men are born with the same natural powers, or that they differ from brutes, only in the gift of hands and fingers, but I do believe that the same force of mind equally exerted, would secure the same success in the various pursuits of life. Some young men after commencing a profession, throw down their books, under the impression that they have mistaken their genius, and turn their attention to something else. Such rarely succeed in any thing. They want the energy, the constancy, and the power of concentration, without which, genius is useless and unavailing.

But, gentlemen, while an earnest and untiring attention ought to be given to your profession, I am very far from recommending an *exclusive* devotion to it. The technicalities of a profession, when unrelieved by various knowledge and a cultivated taste, narrow the mind. A Corinthian capital need not detract from the strength of the massy pillar which it adorns, nor the flowers by which it is encircled and beautified, diminish its utility. As there is no spot so desolate, but that cultivation may improve, so is there no profession so dry, but may be rendered pleasing, by the adornments of genius and taste. The knowledge of the ancient languages which you have acquired here, is the key which admits you to the vast treasure houses of Greece and Rome. But a small portion of their contents have as yet been surveyed by you, and a life-time of study would scarcely make you familiar with them all. Let the moments which can not and ought not to be devoted to the toils of life, and which too many surrender to the vacuity of idleness, or the intoxications of sensual and unsatisfying enjoyment, be given up by you to those refined pleasures, which spring from a familiar and oft renewed acquaintance, with the philosophy and poetry of the ancients. This will not only fill up an aking void in existence, and increase the happiness of life, by adding a new resource of refined and rational enjoyment, but may be made subservient to your success in your more serious employments. How much bad taste and coarse invective would be banished from our legislative halls, and how much of disgusting and unmitigated dullness would be excluded from our forensic pleadings, if our legislators and lawyers would devote but a

half hour in the week, to the cultivation of letters! Scarcely an eminent man in America, but labors under the heavy reproach, of wanting the taste and refinement, which are derived from a thorough and familiar acquaintance with the classics of Greece and Rome. While every incident of their civil and military history, and every wheel in the machinery of their Government, is familiar to our politicians, how little do they know or understand of their literature? Who can point to a single ripe scholar in either branch of our national legislature—a single individual who can read without faltering a page of Sophocles or an oration of Cicero? How barren is our eloquence of classical allusion, how dry and forbidding the speeches of our ablest men, how unattractive their arguments, how uninviting their profoundest speculations! Reason has been cultivated to the neglect of the imagination, and logic to the exclusion of rhetoric. It is to be hoped that the rising generation will wipe off this disgrace from our country, by causing their college acquaintance with the classics, to become more and more intimate, and by giving a closer attention to the beautiful models of taste and genius, which have come down to us, from a past age. They will best subserve the purposes of truth, and extend furthest the influences of virtue, who shall succeed in rendering them most attractive. Truth should no longer be permitted to take up her habitation in the bottom of a well, where all the approaches to her, are dark, gloomy, and forbidding, but she should be elevated to a lofty pedestal and adorned with flowers of loveliness and gems of beauty; then, like “the statue which enchants the world,” she would challenge the admiration of every eye, and the homage of every heart.

In a country like ours, where a passion for politics is universal, I take it for granted that you will soon catch the infection. Under a popular Government, it is the duty of every citizen to qualify himself to vote intelligently on the questions which are annually presented to his judgment, for decision. There are, and will perhaps continue to be, but two great parties among us, and you will be forced to side with the one or the other. Truth, no doubt, occupies the middle ground between them, but such is the force of the passions when awakened, and here they never sleep, that few are found so phlegmatic or so firm, as to remain long in this safe position. We reverse the order of nature, and gravitate not to the centre but to the poles; and the least disturbance in our balance, hurries us to the one or the other extremity. The safer course for a young man then, is, for a short time at least, to

form "entangling alliances" with neither party, until by study and reflection, he fixes his political principles. He can then throw his weight into the scale of that party, whose creed and practice, approach nearest to his own well considered opinions. Should your inclination or sense of duty, lead you to take a prominent part in politics, remember, that the honor and interests of your country are too serious and sacred, to be made stepping-stones for your personal ambition. The distinction drawn between private and public honesty, has no foundation in truth. A dishonest politician is a dishonest man, and he who would betray the interests of his country, or the confidence of his constituents, in a place of public trust, would, with the same temptation in private life, risk the discipline of a prison or the pillory. This arbitrary and false distinction, drawn by the American Press, has done more to encourage public profligacy, than all other causes put together. Let the knave who barter his principles for profit or for place, and makes the interests of the people which he has sworn to defend, subsidiary to his own grovelling ambition, be banished from public confidence and separated like a leper from the society of honest men! For so long as our politicians are allowed to enjoy the wages of political iniquity, and the consideration which attaches to private worth, most will grasp at the double reward, leaving those Platonists who love public virtue, independently of the public esteem, in a small minority.

I will not insult my young friends, by supposing it possible, that they can, under any circumstances, descend to the low arts of the demagogue. This is a creature of some intelligence and cunning, who finding himself cut off by his vulgarity and his vices, from all the sympathies of the refined, the virtuous, and the good, courts the degrading distinction of a reputation, gained by the applause of the ignorant, the vulgar, and the base. His whole purpose is to disturb the harmonies of life, break the chain of mutual dependencies which bind mankind together, array classes against each other, foster prejudices, hunt down reputations based on honest principles and faithful public service, and foment jealousy, discontent, and restlessness, throughout the whole body politic. He opposes the school master, for the same reason which led Demetrius of Ephesus to discourage the preaching of St. Paul—his craft is endangered. He lives on the ignorance of the people; withdraw the congenial aliment and he dies. Against the contagion of such a character as this, I do not warn you, for the certificate of virtue and learning which you are about to receive from the faculty of the Uni-

versity is warrant enough for your safety, but against appealing to the passions and prejudices of the ignorant, at all. Even when the motive is good, it is so dangerous and so liable to abuse, that the best intentions can barely raise it to a level with that questionable morality, which works evil that good may come of it. The exalted and elevated parts of human nature should alone be addressed—truth, honor, reason, patriotism.

An opposite fault is characteristic of many young men and ought to be sedulously avoided. I allude to the feeling of contempt, which they express, of the intelligence and virtue of the uneducated class.—Such sentiments deprive many a virtuous and intelligent man of that influence with the people, which might otherwise have been exerted for their benefit, and his own honorable promotion; and causes him to play unconsciously into the hands of the demagogue, and strengthen the power which all ought to aid in wresting from his grasp. Our Government is founded on the will and power of the people, and we shall be better employed in invigorating and encouraging what is good, and curbing folly and excess, by the mild influences of our example, than in impotent railing, and contemptuous ridicule.

There is another subject, gentlemen, which I will in conclusion allude to; a subject which though more becoming another speaker and another occasion, is so intimately connected with the morality and happiness of the people, and the stability of our Government, that I can not pass by, without expressing my opinion of its value and importance. You readily perceive, that I allude to religion. At the present day, when light is breaking from so many new quarters on the cardinal truths of christianity, when reason, and science, and investigation, are piling up proofs upon proofs, he who is tinctured with infidelity, displays far more of weakness, than wickedness. It is a superficial philosophy, says the immortal Bacon, which leads to unbelief and atheism, but when profoundly studied, produces veneration for God, and renders faith in him the ruling principle of our life. A striking illustration of this beautiful truth, is found in the history of the modern science of Geology. While in its infancy, its vague and doubtful testimony was seized on by the enemies of revelation, for the purpose of overturning the fundamental truths of Mosaic history. Its friends were for a moment staggered; but their fears were short-lived. From every fresh dive which the Geologist made into the bowels of the earth, he arose, freighted with the richest illustrations of the truth of sacred history.—

Buried worlds rose at the bidding of science, to reveal the hidden records of antedeluvian existence, and put to shame the doubts and cavils of the most unblushing infidelity. Atheism is forced once more to have recourse to its old weapon—ridicule—for reason and science when properly interrogated, give no encouraging response.

The christian religion is emphatically, the religion of civilization, of man, in his highest state of improvement. The world has witnessed the rise and fall of a thousand creeds, built with the facility of card houses, and blown away as easily, the offspring of ignorant superstition or ambitious fraud. Our religion has withstood the corrosion of eighteen centuries, has resisted the fires of persecution, and the assaults of infidelity, and it still stands an everlasting monument of the wisdom, the goodness, and the benevolence, of its founder. Its witnesses are not the ignorant, the superstitious, and the enslaved, but the brightest intelligences have been the most earnest in testifying to its truth.—Newton, Curier, Locke, Bacon, and Boyle, the deepest explorers into the phenomena of nature, and the most patient and successful investigators into the laws of the human mind, are united and decided in their belief of the leading truths of revelation. The most intelligent and virtuous nations of the earth, are those where a belief in the doctrines, and a practice of the precepts of christianity, are most general. As man ascends in the scale of being, as he is lifted up by virtue and intelligence, nearer the throne of Omnipotence, his views conform more and more nearly to revelation, and his faith becomes more ardent, more strong, and more undoubting. The higher he mounts, the clearer his atmosphere, and the brighter his hopes. Whatever is valuable in modern improvement, whatever is beneficial in modern reform, whatever refinement there exists in modern society, whatever ameliorations there are in the lot and condition of man, are all owing to the influence of the Bible. It was the influence of this book, which elevated the character of our WASHINGTON, purified his patriotism, chastened his ambition, and called forth in bold relief, that colossal grandeur of soul, which marked him the purest of patriots, and the first of men. It was the influence of this same book, which gave beauty to the character, value to the services, and a charm to the name of HIM, whose newly made grave is yet moist with a nation's tears!



