

ADDRESS

DELIVERED

BEFORE THE

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

OF

WASHINGTON COLLEGE,

VIRGINIA,

ON

COMMENCEMENT DAY, JUNE 29th, 1843.

BY THE

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A D D R E S S .

Gentlemen, Alumni of Washington College :

It is a truth as fully established by experience as any other, that the human mind is eminently susceptible of improvement by culture. Indeed it cannot be denied that without some kind of education the intellectual faculties would not be developed ; and although the body might grow up to manhood, the mind would remain in a state of infantile feebleness. This truth is beautifully illustrated by a classic writer, who compares the uncultivated mind to the statue while it remains in the block of marble.

But although the necessity of education to improve the mind is acknowledged by all ; yet there exists much difference of opinion, respecting the best means of cultivating and strengthening the various powers and faculties which appertain to human nature. This is a subject on which knowledge can only be acquired by experience or the observation of facts. Here, mere theory is rather hurtful than beneficial. It is, indeed, by no means certain, that the best method of training and improving the faculties of the mind has been discovered. It would therefore, be unwarrantable to assert, that the systems of education, heretofore in use, were incapable of improvement. New discoveries may be made in regard to the laws of mind, as well as those of matter ; but the difficulty in this investigation is, that we cannot make experiments with safety. The mind of every human being is too precious a material, to be made the subject of experi-

ments, to ascertain what improvements might be made in the methods by which it should be educated. No man would consent to have his son trained in some untried way, the effect of which could not be foreseen. There have, indeed, been many pretenders, who professed to be in possession of the secret of bringing forward the faculties of man much more rapidly, and of elevating them to a much higher standard, than can be done by the system in common use. But experience has taught the most credulous, that all such pretensions are vain. The common beaten track, along which so many have risen to eminence and celebrity, is, after all, the safest and best. When new discoveries are made in the science of education, they will probably be incidental, and should be cautiously and gradually introduced. It is not disputed that very extraordinary effects may be produced on particular faculties by an artificial method of training. I have seen boys taught upon the Pestalozian plan, who could perform wonders at the black board, in various kinds of intricate calculation; but I never could ascertain, that the youth thus educated ever rose to eminence in any profession or art. We know to what extraordinary feats of activity children have been trained, to qualify them to become successful mountebanks, but would any judicious man suppose, that children thus trained to perform prodigies, could be better prepared than others, to be useful farmers, mechanics, or soldiers? And there is as little reason to believe that a precocious and extraordinary development of the mental faculties, by an artificial process, will qualify a man successfully to perform the duties of those professions in society, which require the best exercise of the powers of judgment, invention, and accurate reasoning. It is probable that, assiduous efforts to elicit the exercise of the intellectual faculties, at a period earlier than that in which in the common course of nature they appear, are rather injurious than beneficial to the mind. A precocious child may excite the wonder of visitors, and gratify the vanity of parents and teachers,

but can furnish no proof that this premature development will lead to superior intellectual energy. Such youth soon arrive at the acme of their maturity; that is, the too early development of the faculties probably has the consequence of an early decay. It is a proverb in more languages than one—*soon ripe, soon rotten*. It is not meant to discourage early education, but to suggest, that the kind of training should be adapted to the age of the pupil. Children are capable, at a very early age, of improving culture both intellectual and moral; but the judicious plan seems to be, not to attempt to forestall the process of nature, but to aid her, by meeting the opening faculties with such exercise and nutriment as is suited to give them strength and a right direction. In cities, where the children of the better class of citizens are necessarily kept, most of their time, in the house, or in the school, their progress in learning is often surprisingly rapid until the age of fourteen or fifteen, but here most of them stop; and though so many make a good beginning; very few attain to eminence in classical literature; for this however, other reasons may be assigned; [but it may not be useless to remark, that those parents judge wisely, who, having sons to educate, send them to a good school in the country. And where parents, residing in cities, are in circumstances to spend the summer months in the country, the effect on the minds as well as the bodies of their children will be very beneficial. The best part of education, as far as mere vigor of body and mind is concerned is derived from a familiar converse with the objects of nature.] Children reared from their infancy in crowded cities, and confined to school from the time they can speak and walk, have been fitly compared to plants raised in a hot house. They are commonly precocious, and bring forth early fruit; but it has a sickly appearance, and never acquires much strength, but soon falls in decay; and the fruit thus produced, wants the genuine flavor and fragrance of the same species when it comes to maturity in the open air, and under the common

influences of heaven. Injury may not only be done to the mind by attempting to force a too early maturity, but also by exercising unduly some one faculty, while the others are neglected. We know that particular muscles and members of the body may be strengthened at the expense of the other parts; but though this may be beneficial for the execution of some special work, it is for general purposes, a disadvantage. And so, the mind may, by a particular mode of treatment, acquire an extraordinary vigour of some one faculty; but such training is not judicious. A just balance, so to speak, should be preserved between all the faculties, so that while no one should greatly preponderate, no one should remain dormant. The memory being the first of our intellectual faculties which is developed, and being susceptible of continual improvement, it is more frequently cultivated unduly, or improperly, than any other. Indeed, in the earlier stages of education, the memory is principally the faculty with which the teacher has to do; and the power which at this age it possesses of acquiring and retaining language should be carefully improved. But it is an error to suppose, that such a memory may not be too retentive. Suppose a person to retain in memory, infallibly, every word and idea which ever entered the mind, would such a memory be advantageous? I think not. The mind of such a person would be encumbered with a multitude of useless ideas, which would be continually recurring, and associating themselves with other thoughts, so as to produce confusion and perplexity, and embarrass the reasoning faculty in its operation. A much more useful memory would be that which retained only important and useful things, while it let others slip. A good memory is the very opposite of a sieve which suffers the wheat to fall through, but retains the chaff; yet there are found among men, memories which greatly resemble the sieve; for while they suffer good things to pass away they are very retentive of those ideas which are frivolous and corrupting. The art of mnemonics is curious, and has, by

forming strong and arbitrary associations of ideas, performed wonders; but I have never known any one benefited by it. Indeed, I am of opinion that it is positively injurious, by fixing in the mind such associations as must be cumbersome and inconvenient; especially in close reasoning, when it is desirable to exclude from our thoughts every irrelevant idea. If it were of importance for a man to be able to retain in memory long catalogues of names, such as the dynasties of princes, this art could afford much aid; but in regard to such things and many others, it is better to have them in books than in minds. A memory tenacious of words in their order, is the lamest kind of memory; while that which disregards words and retains ideas in their proper relations, in a comprehensive, systematic manner, is the best. The reason why many young men do not realize the expectations which their recitations in college encouraged is, that they trusted too much to memory, while their judgment and reasoning faculty were but little exercised. In all cases where lessons are recited from text-books, the man of verbal memory will excel; while a competitor who depends more on his own judgment may appear on a common examination, far inferior, although in reality he may be much the superior of the two.

There is often a great mistake made even by intelligent teachers, in regard to the real talents of young men. The case of a mere verbal memory has already been brought to view; but there is another no less common, when a scholar excels every other, in his class, in the quickness of his apprehension, and also in the celerity with which he commits his lesson to memory. Such persons always appear on recitations and examinations, to great advantage, and are usually considered as possessed of superior mental endowments. But this judgment is often erroneous. Another may require much longer time to apprehend any new subject, but the very circumstance of its requiring a longer time for him to understand the point in question, leads him

to take a more deliberate view of it, in all its bearings; and it is proverbial, that that which is quickly memorized is readily forgotten; whereas, that which is fixed in the memory by dint of effort, is more apt to remain. Quickness of apprehension also is commonly united with volubility of speech; while slowness in taking up a new subject is usually attended with a slow method of communication. Hence the former, though not really superior, enjoys great advantages, in all hasty and superficial trials of talent and scholarship. And hence it comes to pass that in many cases, College honors are no certain criterion by which to judge of the degrees of eminence to which students will arise, when they enter upon their professional career. Men of slow movement are also under a greater necessity of improving all their time, and thus acquire habits of patient study and regular industry.

Of all qualifications in a student, there is none which is more certainly connected with future eminence than an inextinguishable thirst for knowledge—universal knowledge, as far as it is attainable. This very desire, however, may mislead, if not wisely directed. As for example, if a young man under its influence, should undertake to pursue all kinds of knowledge at once. He would waste his time and energies amidst a multiplicity of objects, and would become accurately acquainted with none. The principles of mental philosophy would lead to the conclusion, that a man can pursue, advantageously, only one branch of knowledge at once, unless some other can be made to serve as a relaxation of the mind. Some successful students confine their attention so closely to one study, that they feel a kind of indifference to all others, and do not wish to be interrupted by any thing else in the steady pursuit of their favorite object. Such men are commonly great in their own profession, but very deficient in general knowledge. I have known a man who was a profound lawyer, and thoroughly versed in all the intricacies of the legal profession, who knew no more of the improve-

ments in modern science than a child. What he might have learned at College he had long since forgotten; and when his eye met a scientific paragraph in the periodical papers which he perused, he would immediately turn away his attention to something else. Another, who practised at the same bar, was also accurately learned in all that related to his profession, and delighted in legal studies; but he had a mind forever awake to every species of knowledge; and wherever he was, he would find sources of information. An old volume in the window of a tavern, or even an old almanac, would be seized with avidity; and he would derive some information from every book and every person with whom he came in contact. And here it may be remarked to the younger part of my audience, that there is scarcely a man, or woman, in the world, from whom something might not be learned. This thirst of knowledge, when it does not draw the mind off from the proper studies of our profession, may lead us, without any loss of time, to amass an amazing store of general knowledge, and will fit us to be entertaining and instructive to all with whom we may associate.

The maxim which should be adopted by all who have enjoyed the benefit of a liberal education is, not to suffer any acquisition which they have made to be lost. If it was worth acquiring, it is worth preserving, especially as this can be done with so much ease. Yet there is nothing in which the alumni of our colleges, are, in fact, more generally censurable. Most of them, no sooner leave their alma mater, than they turn away their minds from all their college studies. They do not deliberately form the purpose to forget all that they have learned, but they actually pursue the course which leads to this result. A very short space, every day, or even twice a week, would, employed in these studies, enable the student not only to preserve the learning which he had acquired, but to increase it. And if this course were immediately pursued, it would be, from the first, a pleasing relaxation from business, or from severe professional stu-

dies. But after a few year's neglect, this knowledge seems to be encrusted with so thick a coating of rust, that to commence an attempt to recover what is so entirely lost, appears like beginning an education anew. But I wish to state one fact—which can only be learned by experience—and therefore is frequently unknown to the young, which is, “that knowledge, of any kind, which has been once possessed, however it may seem to be utterly obliterated, can easily be recovered. There is no need to go over the whole process of learning every thing anew in detail; but when the mind is a short time exercised in the reminiscence of a subject once known, suddenly the whole is revived as it formerly existed in the mind. This is an important law of the mind which should be extensively known.

It has appeared to me expedient, on the principle that perfection in any art or business, depends very much on the division of labor, that every educated man should select some one branch of science or literature, to which he would direct such special attention as to become master of it. By this means, we should have men so skilled in every branch as to be capable of giving instruction on it either by lectures, or from the press.

The field of learning has become so wide that no man can be accurate in his knowledge of every department. To excel in any particular branch, much time and attention must be devoted to it. And this special attention to some favorite object need not interfere with professional pursuits, nor with the steady pursuit of general knowledge. It might be made the amusement of vacant hours, which otherwise would run to waste. And if a man should never have occasion to make use of such knowledge by endeavoring to instruct others, still it would richly repay him for the time and attention bestowed upon it; as every one knows by experience, how much more satisfaction the accurate knowledge of a subject affords, than that which is partial and superficial.

There was a time, in this country, when there was dan-

ger of the learned languages being excluded from a course of liberal education. The prejudice against the study of Latin and Greek was so strong, that many parents were borne along with the current, and actually insisted that their sons should be educated in the sciences and in English literature, while the Latin and Greek classics were laid aside. The influence which these sentiments obtained over public opinion may be judged of from the fact, that in the "Annals of Yale College, it is stated that in the year 1827, a committee was appointed to inquire into the expediency of altering the regular course of instruction in this College, as to leave out of said course the study of the dead languages, substituting other studies, therefor." And in some other colleges, the Greek language was dispensed with, and some modern language substituted in its place. And the effect was to turn away the attention of youth from the dead languages, by which means classical learning has, in this country, been much retarded. But there is reason to hope that the tide has turned, and that now, there is an increasing opinion, that these languages are an important branch of a liberal education which cannot, without great injury, be laid aside. The arguments, however, in favor of excluding them, are so popular, and have been handled so adroitly, that there are still some, who consider this study as useless; or at least, as far less valuable than many branches of science which might be substituted in their place. And it may be expected that objections will continue to be made to the common course pursued in our schools and colleges, on this account. It may therefore, be proper, briefly to remark, that the opinion which is hostile to the study of Latin and Greek as a part of liberal education, mistakes the primary object of education. The argument goes on the supposition that the accumulation of useful knowledge is the only thing to be considered in judging of the efficiency of different plans; whereas, the most important end of education is to develop, exercise, strengthen, and direct the several faculties of

the mind. When these are well disciplined, the acquisition of every kind of knowledge will be easy ; without it the accumulation of stores of knowledge will be of little value ; or to speak more correctly, the mind which has not been properly trained is incapable of acquiring the most important branches of knowledge. It may be asked whether the mind may not be as well trained by learning other things, which may be turned to some useful purpose. To which we reply, that it has been found by long experience, that the study of these ancient languages has the effect, not only of exercising the memory but also the judgment. Besides, the compositions found in these languages are written with consummate skill ; and as specimens of exquisite taste, both in prose and verse, have nothing superior and scarcely any parallel in the writings of other nations. And a good taste in pupils is most effectually cultivated by intimate acquaintance with the best models. Our young men, who possess a talent for the fine arts, judge wisely in going to Italy, where they have before them the most perfect specimens of the arts in every department. But as the exquisite poems, orations, and histories of the ancients are capable of being easily transported from place to place, and multiplied by the press, we have no occasion to go abroad for these, but every student may have them in possession in his own study, and by a daily familiarity with these models it cannot be otherwise, but that the taste of the scholar will be gradually refined, and the judgment in regard to such matters, be rendered correct.

One of the things in the state of our country, which prevents the alumni of our Colleges from rising to eminence in their respective professions is, that the demand for their services and the openings for employment are so great, that they are induced to enter into public life, much too soon. It is indeed true that many continue to improve after engaging in the duties of public or professional life ; but it will be found that the degree of improvement will be in an exact ratio to the point from which they set out. The more knowledge a man

has, the greater is his capacity for improving in knowledge. That man, therefore, who goes into public life, with a mind well disciplined, and well furnished with professional and general knowledge, will rise faster than one who commences with lower attainments. As the professions which engage the attention of literary men become full, there will be an increasing necessity for those who aspire to honorable and useful distinction, not to venture on the theatre of public life until their minds are fully matured, and their knowledge enlarged and systematized. Hereafter men of superficial education, and meagre attainments, need not expect to rise as did men of this description in former times : pre-eminence in any learned profession can only be expected now, by those who have devoted years to preparatory studies.

But while it is true that many young men improve after entering on the practice of their profession, there are others who never advance : they remain stationary or rather retrograde in their course. Such bring no honor to their profession, but rather disgrace ; and are commonly useless members of society.

In answer to all that has been said in favor of regular education and long continued preparation, it has been alleged, that some of our greatest men have reached to the eminence which they possess, without any regular course of liberal education, and without the habit of close and systematic study. The fact cannot be denied, and should be considered as an exception to a well established general rule ; and every one knows that a general rule is rather established than subverted by the existence of a few exceptions. In reply to the objection it is sometimes said, that eminent as these characters are, they would have been more so, if they had enjoyed the advantages of a regular and liberal education. But the truth of this is not evident. I am of opinion, that some minds, peculiarly constituted, acquire greater power, and rise to greater eminence, by being thrown into circumstances favorable to the development and vigor of their faculties,

than if they had been trained in the regular course of eho-
 lastic studies. But it would be folly to neglect regular ed-
 ucation, and attention to study and discipline, which for ages
 have been found useful to most, because a small number of
 men have arisen, by an uncommon road, to superior excel-
 lence, without having been trained in the usual way. I have
 seen a boy of six years of age, who had never learned
 the first rules of arithmetic, who could in a minute, answer
 questions which a practised accountant could not answer in
 less than five or ten minutes; but would it be wise for this
 reason to omit teaching children the common rules of Arith-
 metic? It is however true, that men whose minds rise
 to a high degree of vigor in an extraordinary way, do al-
 ways labour under some peculiar disadvantages; their knowl-
 edge, though great and accurate, is confined to particular
 branches, while other departments are left untouched. A
 distinguished man, in this state, informed me, a few days
 since, that one of our greatest statesmen and most effective
 orators, knew no more of the British poets than a child.
 That such a man should be ignorant of the higher mathe-
 matics and sublimer parts of astronomy, would not be won-
 derful, but that he should be unacquainted with Milton and
 Shakespeare is really surprising. One excellent end of a
 regular college education is, that the youth is carried through a
 circle of the sciences, and surveys the general condition of po-
 lite literature. It is important to have some general acquaint-
 ance with the encyclopedia of human knowledge, and with the
 present state of advancement, in each particular branch.

The greatest difficulty which now occurs in conducting a
 liberal education, is, to know how much to include in the
 college course. The field of learning has become so ex-
 tensive, that an attempt to comprehend every branch would
 necessarily render the course superficial; and it should be a
 fixed principle in education, not to build a large structure
 upon a slender foundation. Solidity and strength should
 never be sacrificed for extent and variety. Some branches

of knowledge, both useful and ornamental, must be omitted, or slightly touched, in our literary institutions; and by those who desire an acquaintance with them, may be better acquired in other places. The rule should be to render the student thorough in the elementary and fundamental parts, and to add, of others, as much as can be comprehended in the time allotted to the course; still giving precedence to those branches which are most important and useful.

It seems to me, that the importance of education in all its stages requires that more qualified persons should devote their time and attention to teaching. The profession of an instructor in the lower and higher schools, should be held in much greater esteem, and more liberally remunerated, than they have been, in time past. Well qualified instructors should constitute another learned profession, and should be considered as standing on equal ground with gentlemen of the other learned professions. But well qualified teachers, we cannot have, in sufficient numbers, unless seminaries for the education of teachers, and normal schools, be instituted. By means of these, education in the kingdom of Prussia has been placed on a better footing, and extended more generally to all classes of people, than in any country on the globe. What has there been accomplished by a wise exertion of arbitrary power ought to be effected here by the voluntary and energetic action of the whole people. Great good often springs from small beginnings. The acorn grows up to be a sturdy oak in the forest. It is difficult to bring great schemes of benevolence into operation at once. Human wisdom is not sufficient to adapt them to all the varying contingencies which must be met. I like Dr. Chalmer's idea of beginning near home, and cultivating a small field thoroughly, and gradually enlarging our operations, and combining our efforts with those of others, as may be found convenient. The establishment of a good school for teachers, in this Valley, would be an enterprise deserving universal patronage, and could not but be a rich blessing to the country. And why

would not this place be suitable for such an Institution ?

The most dangerous error on the subject of education which is becoming prevalent in this country is, that of excluding religious instruction from our schools; especially from common schools. This error has been committed by some of the States of this Union, which have done most for the general promotion of education.

As religion is the most important of all subjects, it may seem strange, at first view, that there should exist any objection to its being made part of every system of education. But there are some plausible objections, which deserve to be noticed. It is alleged, that the minds of youth should not be prejudiced in favour of any religion, before the judgment has come to maturity; that the minds of children should be left unoccupied until they are capable of judging for themselves, on this important subject.

If this plan were pursued on all subjects, as well as religion, it would put an end to the education of youth, and we see not why the objection is not applicable to every species of knowledge, concerning which there can be any diversity of opinion. But the true and sufficient answer to this objection is, that the human mind cannot be kept free from the influence of all religious opinions and impressions, and if we neglect to inculcate sound principles, such as are erroneous and dangerous will be adopted. The only way to keep out error is to pre-occupy the mind with truth. The heart of man is like a rich garden, which if neglected will teem with noxious weeds, to prevent the growth of which the ground must be cultivated and good seed must be sowed. And if it were possible to keep the mind entirely unoccupied until manhood, the consequence would be that the powers of the mind would remain dormant, and its condition more deplorable than if it had been occupied with any system of instruction whatever, for every such system contains much truth; and among Protestant Christians, the instructions given to children are generally composed of the most important and necessary truths. Besides, religion is as much needed by the young, as by those of mature age. And the inculcation of its doctrines cannot be neglected without the greatest injury to the child.

Another objection, now more popular and prevalent, is, that since the people are divided into so many sects and denominations, in our country, religion cannot make a part of the system of education, without interfering with the creeds and consciences of one sect or another. This may be a valid reason for not teaching, in common schools, the peculiarities of any one denomination, but is no reason at all, why those things should not be taught in which all protestants agree. As all admit that the bible is true and the source of all correct information, on the subject of religion, there can be no reasonable objection to having it read in schools. This ancient and sacred book should be studied, if for nothing else, as a most venerable record of antiquity. The truth is, no education can be complete, even as it relates to the early history of the world, and of ancient nations, without the Bible. The early histories of other nations do not reach back with any distinctness, even to the time when the history of the Old Testament closes; and the history of early times by all profane authors, is so deformed with monstrous fables, that it furnishes no real instruction. The only difficulty which arises from the use of the Bible, in our schools is, the opposition of the Romanists, who do not approve our version, and who, indeed, are unwilling to have their children made acquainted with the contents of the Holy Scriptures; except such parts as their priests choose to communicate. Their people have not the privilege which the Bereans enjoyed, of daily searching the Sacred Scriptures, to see whether what is taught by their teachers is true or not: they must believe every thing with an implicit faith; so that for them, ignorance is better than knowledge. But as it regards these people, the difficulty only occurs in our large cities and a few other places, where Papists abound. Happily, in most parts of our country, this class of people are not found, or in numbers so small, that no exceptions need be made to accommodate them. And where they are numerous, they should be left to pursue their own course, undisturbed by the civil authority; and their children should be permitted to be gathered into schools of their own; but they should not be allowed to interrupt that course of instruction which is judged to be the most efficient, in a country where four-fifths of the people are Protestants. Religion, I repeat it again, is infinitely the most important and necessary part of education.

Leave this out, and it will be doubtful whether our schools will not do more harm than good, for sound morality rests on religion as its basis.

Gentlemen of the Alumni, the object of your association doubtless is, to promote the permanent prosperity of your beloved and respected Alma Mater. The character and success of every literary institution depends very much upon its Alumni in two ways. First, they stamp its character by the talents, scholarship, and principles which they exhibit, when they come before the world, in their respective professions, and public occupations. In this way they honor or disgrace the place of their education, without any direct design to promote its prosperity, or the reverse; for the public must and will judge of a College or Seminary, not by a few specimens favorable or unfavorable—but by the general character of her Alumni. The more eminent, then, gentlemen, you become, for wisdom and integrity in your several pursuits, the more honor will you reflect on your Alma Mater, and the want of ability or of virtuous principle in any of you, cannot fail, in some degree, to inflict a wound on her reputation. It may be, that more is expected of the Faculties of literary institutions, in disciplining the minds and moulding the characters of their pupils, than is reasonable; but the public possess no other means of appreciating the character and efficiency of such institutions, than the virtues and attainments of those instructed and trained in her halls; and the making this the criterion by which to judge of the comparative excellence of different Colleges, is fair, and devolves upon their professors and teachers a responsibility which ought to be felt, and which cannot but be salutary to the community.

The other way in which the Alumni of a college may promote her prosperity is, by individual and associated effort, to advance her interests. By defending her against calumny and misrepresentation;—by communicating information respecting the facilities and advantages of education which

she possesses ; by lending their aid to give effect to applications to the Legislature, or to the public, for funds which may be needed ; and especially, by selecting some one object connected with her reputation and interests, which by their combined efforts, they will promote. Such, for example, as the enlargement of her library. This is an object well worthy of the vigorous, and persevering efforts of the Alumni of Washington College. There is no reason why American institutions for educating youth may not stand on a level with the most celebrated of Europe, with this one exception, that compared with theirs, our libraries are small and meagre. Foreigners who visit our country, speak with contempt—as they justly may—of the insignificance of all the libraries in this country. Indeed, if they were all collected into one, it would not be so complete as the library of some single institution in Europe which might be mentioned. As to professors and teachers, there is no reason why our Colleges should be inferior to theirs ; for it cannot be doubted, that American genius is not inferior to European ; and many of our young men study in the best institutions of foreign countries ; and it is not found difficult to induce Europeans, who have acquired celebrity, to come as professors, to this country. But it will be long before we can vie with the European Universities in the extent and richness of our libraries. No doubt our Colleges are too much multiplied, but the evil will correct itself ; and, after a while, only those which are really needed will continue in operation ; and of these, those which shall possess the most extensive and valuable libraries will acquire a permanent pre-eminence. The attraction of distinguished and eloquent professors will be variable, but that college, or university, which shall establish a library superior to all others in the country, will possess a standing recommendation not only to students, but to able professors and authors, who need such a library to complete works of learning which may be profitable to the whole community. I cannot forbear, therefore, to recommend this object to the

special attention of the Alumni of Washington College, now convened.

I cannot conclude this address without pronouncing a brief eulogy on the man who deserves to be called the Father of this College, and whose memory should be venerated by all its Alumni. I mean the Rev. WILLIAM GRAHAM.

Mr. Graham was born in one of the eastern counties of Pennsylvania, and until the age of manhood was brought up in the business of agriculture, which he understood well and of which he was always fond. But at this period of his life, having undergone a great change in his religious views and feelings, he resolved to prepare for the work of the holy ministry. The obstacles in his way were, indeed, great, but being encouraged by the counsels and aided by the efforts and prayers of a most excellent mother, to whom he attributed in a great measure his success in this important enterprise, he ventured, under all discouragements, to go forward in endeavoring to obtain a liberal education, depending on the guidance and aid of Divine Providence. Having prepared himself to enter the College of New Jersey, at Princeton, he entered that institution, in company with a number of young men, who became eminent in the church or state. Among whom as a scholar he stood pre-eminent; for during the College course he gained a whole year; that is he anticipated the studies of the senior year, before the class entered on them, and was permitted to retire from College till the time of the examination of his class, when he attended with them, and was graduated in the year 1773. As his father was unable, conveniently, to bear the expenses of his son, while at College, he contributed to his own support, by teaching in the Grammar school, then under the special direction of Dr. Witherspoon, the President of the College. Having completed his College course, he pursued his theological studies under the tuition of the Rev. Mr. Roane, a pious and distinguished divine, who resided in the vicinity of his father. But, during the whole period

of his education, he was constantly engaged in the study of theology. But, among all his teachers he gave the preference to his excellent mother; and has been heard to say, that he learned more of practical religion from her, than from all persons and books beside.

When the Presbytery of Hanover determined to establish a school in this Valley, for the rearing of young men for the ministry, they applied to the Rev. Samuel Stanhope Smith, then itinerating in the State, to recommend a suitable person to take charge of their school, upon which, he at once recommended Mr. Graham; and at their request wrote to him to come on to the Valley of Virginia.* Before this time, a classical school had been taught at a place called Mount Pleasant, near to the little town of Fairfield. Here Mr. Graham commenced his labours as a teacher; and here we find the germ whence sprung this College. The acorn was then planted from which has proceeded the oak which is now spreading its branches abroad.

It was not long, however, before it was judged expedient to remove the infant school to Timber Ridge Meeting House, where a convenient house for the Rector was built, and also an Academy, and other small buildings for the accommodation of the students. A considerable sum was now raised, by subscription, for the purchase of books, and a philosophical apparatus, and Mr. Graham was entrusted with the business of selecting and purchasing such articles as he should judge most useful and necessary; and accordingly, he took a journey to Philadelphia, and executed, judiciously, the trust reposed in him. He also took a journey into New England, to solicit benefactions for the rising Academy, and not without some success, though not considerable. At this time, the prospects of the infant institution were very encouraging, and if no untoward events had occurred, there is

*At the same meeting of the Presbytery of Hanover at which Mr. Graham was appointed Rector, Mr. John Montgomery was appointed Tutor.

reason to believe, that it would have speedily risen to great eminence and usefulness. But the revolutionary war having burst on the country, threatening ruin and desolation, the attention of all true men was turned to the defence of the country; and from no part of the United States, it is believed, did more young men enter the public service, than from this very region; for in this whole country, half a dozen could not be found, who were not true friends to the liberty and independence of the country. Not only the youth who would have commenced a course of education were taken, but even those already in the institution, fired with an ardent patriotism, laid down their books, and seized the sword and the rifle. And it may truly be said, that the patriotic fire burned in no bosom with a warmer flame, than in that of the rector of this Academy. On a certain occasion, when by the invitation of the Executive authority of the State, it was resolved to raise a volunteer company of rifle-men, to go into active service, there appeared much backwardness in the men to come forward, he stepped out, and had his own name enrolled, which produced such an effect, that the company was immediately filled, of which he was unanimously chosen Captain, and all necessary preparations were made for marching to the seat of war; when Gen. Washington signified to the Governors of the States, that he did not wish any more volunteer companies to join the army.

The abandonment of the houses erected at Timber Ridge appears to have taken place,—though without authority,—as a matter of necessity. The income from the Academy was small, and his salary for preaching to the two congregations of Timber Ridge and Hall's Meeting House (now Monmouth) being paid in depreciated currency, it was impossible for him to support his family. He therefore resolved to return to farming, which, as has been said, he well understood. Accordingly, he purchased a small farm on the North River, within a mile or two of this spot.

The school at Timber Ridge was, however, continued for

some time after Mr. Graham retired to his farm, and he endeavoured to perform the duties of a rector, by visiting it and giving instruction several times in each week. But this being found very inconvenient to himself and disadvantageous to the school, after due deliberation, he resolved to relinquish the establishment at Timber Ridge, and to open a school in his own house. Here, the person who now addresses you, at an early age, commenced his course of classical learning. Even at this time, there was a respectable number of students in the school, most of them having reached the age and stature of men. After some time, a frame edifice was erected on ground given for the purpose, and the school was continued until, in the year 1782, application was made to the Legislature for an act of incorporation; and accordingly, a number of trustees were formed into a body corporate, to have full charge of the Academy, which received the name of LIBERTY HALL; which name it retained until it was endowed by General Washington, when his name was substituted for that which it had before borne.— Before this donation was received, Mr. Graham had resigned his office of rector, or president; though it is understood, that he used all his influence to secure this important endowment; and that he was the author of the letter addressed to General Washington, by the Trustees, in favour of this Institution.

Though Mr. Graham had some formidable opposers who had taken up strong prejudices against him, and although, after the close of the war, the character of the students who frequented the Academy was greatly deteriorated, and the difficulties which environed him were many and perplexing; yet it must be conceded, that in resigning his important post at this time, he was not guided by his usual wisdom. Whatever be the character of youth, every civil and sacred interest requires, that their education should be in the hands of pious men, and generally, of ministers of the Gospel. And how can we hope for a reformation among the youth of our

country, but by religious and moral instruction, and the exercise of salutary discipline. It is not expedient to bring distinctly into view, on this occasion, the disappointment which attended his favourite scheme of planting in the West a little colony of select families of like mind, who might live in peace, far from the contentions, bustle, and turmoil of the world.— All such schemes must fail in the present state of human nature.

It is a remarkable fact, that this institution, although not honored with the name of a College, by its charter possessed all the powers of a College; being expressly authorized to grant literary degrees; and altho' there were then no periodical Commencements; yet in several instances the degree of bachelor of arts was granted, and in one instance, at least, publicly. The course of study in the Academy was precisely the same as that pursued at Princeton, while Mr. Graham was a student in that College; even the manuscript lectures of Dr. Witherspoon were copied and studied by the students.

After this brief history, I will as concisely as possible, give the character of this distinguished man, whose memory appears to be in danger of falling into oblivion.

Mr. Graham possessed a mind formed for profound and accurate investigation. He had studied the Latin and Greek classics with great care, and relished the beauties of these exquisite compositions. With those authors taught in the schools, he was familiar, by a long practice in teaching, and always insisted on the importance of classical literature, as the proper foundation of a liberal education.

He had a strong inclination to the study of Natural Philosophy, and took pleasure in making experiments with such apparatus as he possessed; and he had procured for the Academy as good an one as was then possessed by most of the Colleges. In these experiments much time was employed, on which inquisitive persons, not connected with the Academy, were freely permitted to attend.

As he was an ardent patriot, and a thorough republican, the times in which he lived led him to bestow much attention on the science of Government; and one of the few pieces which he wrote for the press, was on this subject. By some he was censured for meddling with politics, but it should be remembered, that at that time, this country, having cast off its allegiance to Great Britain, and declared itself independent, had to lay the foundation of governments, both for the States, and the nation; and that the welfare of posterity as well as of the existing inhabitants of the country, was involved in the wisdom with which this work was done. The talents of every man, capable of thinking and judging on such subjects, seemed to be fairly put into requisition. It is a sound maxim that men living at one time, must not be judged by the maxims of an age, in which all circumstances are greatly changed. At the adoption of the federal constitution, which according to its original draft, he did not approve, he relinquished all attention to politics during the remainder of his life.

The science, however, which engaged his attention more than all others, except theology, was the **PHILOSOPHY OF THE MIND!** In this he took great delight, and to it devoted much time and attention. Though acquainted with the best treatises which had then been published, his investigations were not carried on so much by books, as by a patient and repeated analysis of the various processes of thought as they arose in his own mind, and by reducing the phenomena thus observed, to a regular system. The speaker is of opinion, that the system of mental philosophy which he thus formed, was, in clearness and fullness, superior to any thing which has been given to the public, in the numerous works which have recently been published, on this subject. And it is greatly to be regretted that his lectures were never fully committed to writing, and published, for the benefit of the world. It was, however, a fault, in this man of profound thought, that he made little use of the pen. And it was al-

so a defect, that in the latter years of his life he addicted himself little to reading the productions of other men ; and perhaps, entertained too low an opinion of the value of books.

But it is time that we should consider Mr. Graham as a theologian and a preacher. From the time of his ordination by the Presbytery of Hanover in 1775, he became a teacher of theology. Most of those who entered the holy ministry in this Valley, pursued their preparatory studies under his direction. And after the great revival, which commenced in this Valley in the year 1789, Mr. Graham had a theological class of seven or eight members, under his tuition, which was kept up for several years. It was his custom to devote one day in the week to hearing the written discourses of these candidates, and to a free discussion of theological points. In these exercises he appeared to take great delight ; and the students were always gratified and commonly convinced by his lucid statements and cogent reasonings. As most of those who enjoyed the benefit of his instructions in this incipient theological seminary are not now in the world, it may not be improper to say, that some of them rose to eminence in the church, and as Professors or Presidents of literary institutions. The influence which he gained over the minds of his pupils, while under his care, was unbounded. Seldom did any one of them venture to maintain an opinion, different from those which he inculcated. Yet he encouraged the utmost freedom of discussion ; and seemed to aim, not so much to bring his pupils to think as he did, as to teach them to think on all subjects for themselves. A slavish subjection to any human authority he repudiated ; and therefore, never attempted to add weight to his opinions by referring to a long list of authors, of great name ; but uniformly insisted, that all opinions should be subjected to the test of Scripture and reason. Some of his students have been heard to say, that the chief benefit which they derived from his instructions was, that by

this means they were led to the free and independent exercise of their own faculties in the investigation of truth.

Mr. Graham, in his theological creed, was strictly orthodox, according to the standards of his own church, which he greatly venerated; but in his method of explaining some of the knotty points in theology, he departed considerably from the common track; and was of opinion, that many things which have been involved in perplexity and obscurity by the manner in which they have been treated, are capable of being easily and satisfactorily explained by the application of sound principles of philosophy. As a preacher, he was always instructive and evangelical; though, in common, his delivery was rather feeble and embarrassed, than forcible; but when his feelings were excited, his voice became penetrating, and his whole manner awakening and impressive. And his profound study of the human heart enabled him to describe the various exercises of the Christian with a clearness and truth which often greatly surprised his pious hearers; for it seemed to them as if he could read the very inmost sentiments of their minds; which he described more perfectly than they could do themselves. When it was his object to elucidate some difficult point, it was his custom to open his trenches, so to speak, at a great distance; removing out of the way every obstacle, until he was prepared to make his assault on the main fortress. Thus, insensibly he led his hearers along, step by step, gaining their assent first to one proposition and then to another, until at last they could not easily avoid acquiescence in the conclusion to which he wished to bring them. As a clear and cogent reasoner, he had no superior among his contemporaries; and his pre-eminence in the exercise of this faculty, was acknowledged by all unprejudiced persons.

It has been hinted that Mr. Graham had enemies, who often had influence to impede or thwart his favorite schemes; and candor requires, that it should be acknowledged, that he sometimes imprudently made enemies of those who might

have been efficient friends, by too free an indulgence of satirical and sarcastical remarks ; which weapon he could wield with great power. And it must also be conceded, that towards his opponents, he never manifested much of a conciliatory temper, but seemed rather disposed to stand aloof from them, and to set them at defiance.

In the government of youth, Mr. Graham was from the first a rigid and unyielding disciplinarian. He laid it down as a principle, that, at every risk, authority must be maintained ; and when this was by any one resisted, however formidable the student might be in physical strength, or however many might combine to frustrate the regular exercise of discipline, he fearlessly went forward in the discharge of his duty, and generally triumphed over all opposition ; and often inflicted severe castigation on the thoughtless persons, who dared to rebel against lawful authority. Whether his rigor might not, in some instances, have been extreme, is a question on which judicious men would differ in opinion, and which need not be discussed.

As has been already hinted, the great error of his life was the relinquishment of the important station in which Providence had placed him, and for which he was so eminently qualified ; and that at a time of life when he possessed the ability of being more useful than at any former period. Having removed to the banks of the Ohio river, he fell into great embarrassments, in the midst of which he died, in consequence of a violent fever contracted by exposure to frequent, drenching rains, while on a journey to Richmond. In that city he breathed his last, in the house of his friend, the late Col. Robert Gamble : and his remains were deposited very near the south door of the Episcopal Church on the hill, over which a plain marble slab, with a short inscription, is placed.

The extent of the influence exerted by this one man over the literature and religion of this region, cannot be calculated. As the stream which fertilizes a large district, is small

in its origin, but goes on continually increasing until it becomes a mighty river ; so the influence of the Rev. William Graham did not cease when he died, but has gone on increasing, by means of his disciples, who have been scattered far and wide over the West and the South.

A debt of gratitude is due to him which cannot easily be repaid. Instead of a monument of marble,—which has been richly deserved—an ample memoir of his life, with a particular history of this College in its various vicissitudes and conditions, and of some of its principal Alumni, educated under the tuition of Mr. Graham, would be a suitable tribute to his memory. And this work would seem to devolve naturally on some member of the Faculty. That it may be speedily undertaken, and faithfully executed, would no doubt be the ardent wish of every Alumnus present.

I wish also to preserve from oblivion the memory of the first Tutor in this institution, after it was incorporated, Dr. James Priestley; a man of lively genius, and extraordinary attainments in some departments of literature. Mr. Priestley was the son of a poor, but very pious man in this county. Mr. Graham having, in catechising the youth of his charge, noticed the readiness and accuracy with which this boy answered all the questions proposed to him, obtained the consent of his parents to take him into his own family, that he might give him a liberal education. The boy being endowed with a most retentive memory and a vivid imagination, soon became a distinguished scholar, and a tutor in the Academy. His memory was so extraordinary, that in hearing his pupils, he had no occasion to take a book into his hands. His principal attention was directed to Greek literature, in the accurate knowledge of which he greatly excelled. He sometimes entertained his pupils by spouting with astonishing vehemence, the orations of Demosthenes, in Greek. Mr. Priestley devoted his whole life to the promotion of classical literature. The principal theatre of his labours was Georgetown, (District of Columbia) Annapolis, and Baltimore, in the State of Maryland. In each

of the forementioned places he established and superintended schools of a high grade of excellence.

His fame as a teacher of youth having spread extensively, he was selected as the first President of the Cumberland University, at Nashville, Tennessee. Here he spent the last years of his life ; and though all were impressed with a high idea of his extraordinary learning, and his high qualifications as a classical teacher ; yet he did not succeed well in organizing and arranging an infant College. He was indeed a very eccentric, though a very amiable man ; and married a woman as eccentric as himself. Among the peculiar opinions which he fondly cherished, one was, that our future felicity would depend very much upon the degree of intellectual culture bestowed on the mind, as well as on its moral improvement ; an opinion which has been ingeniously maintained by a writer in one of our popular periodicals, recently.

Dr. Priestley possessed an enthusiastic ardour in favor of education which I have never seen surpassed ; and he succeeded in inspiring his pupils with something of the same. From him the speaker derived the first impulse in his literary course, and, therefore, he feels a pleasure in having this opportunity of paying a deserved tribute to the memory of a teacher, who was an ornament to this institution, in its earliest days.

In conclusion I would remark, that I feel myself this day, placed in solemn circumstances. Of all those who were connected with this institution when I entered it, and for some years afterwards, whether as trustees, teachers, or students, there is not one remaining upon earth but myself. And very soon some other person who addresses the Alumni of Washington College, may say the same in regard to those who now hear me. Time rolls swiftly on, and will soon bear on its rapid current, the youngest and strongest among us, to the ocean of eternity. Let us all then, make it our chief care and study to prepare for an event, which none can escape. While we are permitted to live, may we be found diligent-

ly fulfilling the duties of our respective stations, in society ; endeavoring by all the means in our power to promote the welfare of our fellow creatures. Liberal learning is calculated to raise men not only above the gross pursuits of sensuality, but also to elevate them above the sordid pursuits of selfishness. Let us endeavor so to act, that on a retrospect of our lives, our conduct may meet with the approbation of our own consciences, and with the approbation of our God !

Having now finished what I wished to communicate, at this time, I must, my beloved friends, take a solemn and lasting farewell of you all ; never again expecting to see the faces of most of you in the flesh. May Heaven's richest blessings attend you !