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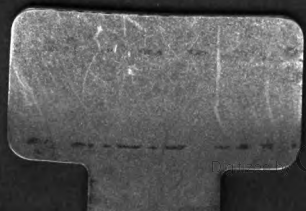
ADDRESS TO THE
LAWRENCEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL
AND FEMALE SEMINARY
LYCEUMS

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ADDRESS

TO THE

LAWRENCEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

AND

FEMALE SEMINARY

LYCEUMS,

DELIVERED AT THE CLOSE OF THE SUMMER TERM,

SEPTEMBER 26, 1836,

BY S. M. HAMILL,

TEACHER OF LANGUAGES.

PHILADELPHIA:
PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM S. MARTIEN,
S. E. CORNER GEORGE AND SEVENTH STREET.

1836.

Lawrenceville, N. J., Oct. 1, 1836.

DEAR SIR,

At a special meeting of the Lawrenceville High School and Female Seminary Lyceums, the following resolution was unanimously adopted :

" *Resolved*, That the thanks of the Lyceums of the Lawrenceville High School and Female Seminary are due, and be presented to, our respected and beloved teacher, Mr. S. M. Hamill, for his interesting, instructive, rich, and eloquent address; and that he be respectfully requested to furnish a copy for publication."

Your compliance with this resolution will be gratefully acknowledged by the Societies, and much oblige,

Your obedient servant,

A. H. PHILLIPS.

Mr. S. M. HAMILL.

Norristown, October 10, 1836.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE received your note, embodying the joint resolution adopted by the Lawrenceville High School and Female Seminary Lyceums, requesting, for publication, a copy of the address delivered before them on the 26th of September. It was written without the expectation that it would ever meet the public eye. But, as those for whom it was prepared desire its publication, and as a compliance with their request will oblige one so generally and highly esteemed as a Principal and thorough Instructor as yourself, a copy of it is herewith placed at their disposal.

Hoping that the greatest prosperity may attend our Lyceums, and the flourishing Institutions over which you have the honour to preside so efficiently, I remain, with much respect,

Your obedient servant,

S. M. HAMILL.

Rev. A. H. PHILLIPS.

ADDRESS.

Young Ladies and Gentlemen :

CALLED upon to address you on the present occasion, I cannot but congratulate you on the interesting circumstances under which you are assembled. You are about to close another academic year. Its rapid hours have almost fled. Its pleasures too are gone. Its duties and privileges and its opportunities of advancement have ceased. All that remains of them, is the relic, that I trust is found in every bosom—The secret satisfaction of their improvement. You are now about to descend, for a time, to the arena of early friendship. To enjoy the pleasures of home and the rich blessings of parental and fraternal affection. To meet the gladdening smile of a fond parent and the welcome salutation of kindred and friends. How cheering the prospect! How delightful the thought! But I dwell not upon it, for the reality will shortly be yours. We hope that your highest expectations of enjoyment for the approaching vacation may be realized, and that the coming session will behold you returning prepared to enter, with renewed vigour, on the duties assigned you. In your absence forget not the interests of our *Lyceums*, and we shall indulge the hope that on your return, our cabinets will be richly replenished.

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(RECAP)

To the members of these Lyceums, at whose request I appear before you, permit me more particularly to address my remarks. No one has been more gratified by the formation of these associations than your speaker. Your object, the cultivation of a taste for natural science, and the collection and preservation of specimens and subjects in natural history, is one of high importance, and commends itself to every cultivated mind—an object that is eliciting the attention of various classes of individuals in most portions of the country, and that is worthy the attention of the most exalted intellect. The principle on which you act in the prosecution of your design, is a good one; that of acquiring a taste for this science, and an acquaintance with it, by an examination of its subjects. For “knowledge acquired through the eye is the most accurate and most abiding, and always the most interesting.”

The Lyceum system, or system of mutual improvement and instruction, especially in Natural History, is exciting general interest, and its effects on the literary character of our whole country, are likely to be of the most salutary kind. The term Lyceum, was first applied to the school of Aristotle. Although those who listened to the lectures of this ancient philosopher did not particularly regard the subject of Natural History, yet he was fond of this branch of science, and was offered liberal rewards by Alexander the Great, whose instructor he was, for writing a work on the history of animals. Hence the propriety of your adopting the name, and of its application to associations of this kind. While we do not commend to you all the principles of the sage who

was the founder of the first Lyceum—yet, we shall be gratified to find the same spirit of emulation and thirst for knowledge, prevailing among you, which inspired the breasts of those who attended his instructions on the banks of the Illisus.

Every branch of literature should have its place in the course of an education. For the purpose of training the mind to habits of close thought, the Mathematics are important. To implant proper principles of right and wrong, correct views of the nature and importance of government; to draw nice distinctions and trace analogies, the study of moral and mental science is important. If you would be finished writers, and good judges of style, you must not neglect Belles Lettres. “Mere Grammar dresses language in the garb of the Quaker—Rhetoric in that of the Prince.” Nor need you suppose that I will pass over the ancient languages. These are considered the “Sine qua non” of a liberal education. And, aside from their importance, many of you will join me in saying, that it is a delightful task to range amid the classic grounds of Greece and Rome, and call their ancient worthies into life again. While these studies are justly placed in the foreground, the study of Nature should not be thrown too much into the shade; and to the votaries of science it must be gratifying to find it presenting so strongly its claims for a more prominent position. As we approach this subject, its importance rises before us. The task of dwelling upon it is a pleasing one; and the more so, as it best accords with the design of this address. Bear with me, then, while I briefly

present a few reasons why the study of Nature is important.

First—It promotes health, both mental and physical. The connexion between the mind and body are such, that the one cannot be materially affected, without affecting the other. If the mind be greatly depressed, the body will suffer in consequence of it. If the body be debilitated, the powers of the mind will be enfeebled. Hence, the importance of so arranging our pursuits, as not to weary the one, nor injure the other. On this point, Dr. Armstrong, who has written a poem on the preservation of health, remarks :

“ He chooses best, whose labour entertains,
His vacant fancy most. The toil you hate
Fatigues you soon, and scarce improves your limbs.”

Dr. Combe, too, in his physiology says, “The constitution of nature, whereby a mental impulse is required to excite muscular action, points to the propriety of teaching the young to examine the qualities and arrangements of external objects. The most pleasing and healthful exercise may be thus secured, and every step be made to add to useful knowledge and individual enjoyment.” “The Botanist,” continues he, “the Geologist, and the Natural Historian, experience pleasures in their walks, of which, from disuse of their eyes and observing powers, the multitude is deprived.” The learned are beginning to adopt this principle, and practice on it; and many, especially on the continent of Europe, are accustomed to spend their seasons of recreation and recess in philosophical rambles. As the importance of this subject is more duly appreciated, this custom will become

more general. You, yourselves, to a limited extent, have known the value of it. For, which of you have not enjoyed the rich pleasure of a walk in the open air, after several hours close confinement? How much has this pleasure been increased by the company of a cheerful companion? and still heightened by an observance of the beauties of nature, that were spread around you? Have you not returned from such a walk, refreshed and fitted to enter with new life on the duties before you? From the very character of most of your studies, you are obliged to shut yourselves up in "*that gloomy prison,*" the school house, or confine yourselves within the monastic walls of your room. But, the school house of the student of nature, is creation; the walls of his room, are the limits of the universe. He need not inhale the air, vitiated by the burning of the midnight lamp, or crawl to the fount of learning like the mere bookworm, almost deprived of life. The air he breathes is pure; the lamp by which he reads, is the brilliant orb of day; and the fount to which he runs, is nature in all her wide extent.

Look at the youth who is averse to the study of nature. He is wrapped up in Greek or Latin, or moral or exact science, or devoted to some ornamental branch. (Understand me not as discouraging close application; far from it; without this you never can be scholars.) From morning dawn to evening shade, and even to the silent hour of midnight, he ruminates among his books—but leaves the book of nature closed. Does he walk abroad for exercise? it is by compulsion, and alone. As his reluctant steps bear him away, his half phrenzied mind flies back and hovers over his table, nor rests until

it finds him there again. Does he ascend an eminence, and the most charming scenery present itself to his view? it has no charms for him. In the midst of beauty, he sees neither form nor comeliness. Does he walk beside the rolling stream? its graceful windings are not such to him. He enters the wood, and scarcely sees a rustling leaf. He walks beneath the ancient oak, lifting its branches high and spreading them abroad, but regards it not. Does the melody of the groves, or the richer music of the spheres salute his ear? it affects him not. His thoughts are all the while dwelling on Hesiod, or Horace, or Euclid, or Bonnycastle, or some unfinished ornament—he returns from his walk, worn out in mind and exhausted in frame. Even at the time, when wearied nature seeks repose in sleep, his mind is wildly roving abroad, seeking some Greek or Latin root, or tracing out some abstract truth. Thus, he passes day after day, and night after night. The intellect expands, but the man withers. The mind, kept continually on the stretch, like the drawn bow, loses its elasticity, and its energies are gone. While the sympathising frame becomes emaciated—the countenance pallid—the muscles unnerved, and the unhappy youth wastes away, and sinks to an early grave, the victim of a vitiated taste—of an improper education.

But turn and look at the youth who delights to dwell upon the works of nature. Having studied diligently during the appointed time; when his hours of recreation come he leaves his books. By the side of his teacher, or with his manual in his hand, he roams abroad; not by compulsion, or with a gloomy pace, but with a firm,

elastic, cheerful step, he treads along the way. He winds his course beside some rolling stream, or rambles through the fields or in the wood. Is he a Botanist? he culls his bunch of flowers. Is he more fond of Geology or Mineralogy? he collects his specimens. Or, does he rather choose to search some other section of this wide and interesting field, he gathers subjects there. He looks at nature in her works, and as he looks he reads "Sermons in stones, books in running brooks, and God in every thing." The music of the songster falls melodiously upon his ear. The spreading elm, the waving pine, are pleasing to his eye. The grove, the glen, the meadow—decked with a thousand beauteous tints—the purling stream, the rolling river, the hanging cliff, the mountain—rising in the distance—the landscape—stretching far away—all have a charm for him. And in the midst of these mingling beauties, this varied grandeur, he exclaims, with ecstasy, *How delightful to dwell upon the works of Nature!* When his hours of recreation have expired, he returns to his studies, his spirits cheered, his mind invigorated, and his frame strengthened. Thus the entire man, physical, mental, and moral, is benefitted. He comes through the ordeal of a protracted course, with a mind well stored, and a firm constitution. He lives to a good old age, as an ornament to society. His departure is matter of general regret. His memory a monument of wisdom.

Secondly—The study of Nature refines the feelings. On this point an excellent writer remarks: "For my part I want no better proof of a feeling and exquisitely sensible mind, even under a rude exterior, than may be

observed in a love of nature; particularly that which relates to the care of flowers." The latter part of this remark applies more especially to the fairer portion of my audience. I speak the sentiment of every ingenuous mind; nor do I flatter, when I say, that among them its effects, in this respect, have been more particularly manifest. The care of flowers seems to be their province. Rarely is it that you find a lady who has not some fondness for flowers, who cannot look with admiration on the superb beauty of the Dahlia, or take pleasure in rearing the Lilly or the Rose. Where this fondness exists to the greatest degree, there, as a general thing, you will notice the most delicate taste, the most refined sensibility. The authoress* of one of your class books remarks, that "the study of Botany seems peculiarly adapted to females." And adds an excellent reason, "because the objects of its investigation are beautiful and delicate." Its pursuits, too, lead to exercise in the open air, and conduce to health and cheerfulness. Go into any community where there is an excellent cabinet, and all are emulous of contributing to it, where the flower gardens are kept in neat order, and yards beautifully ornamented, and you will discover a degree of enterprise and refinement that you may seek for in vain where these are neglected.

Again—It improves the taste, and aids in forming style. What writings are those that have stood the test of time, and through successive ages have been handed down to us as the great landmarks of style? Are they not those that abound most in rich native

* Mrs. Lincoln.

images. Homer and Virgil were great admirers of nature, and apt in their descriptions. And while there remains a man to read the *Illiad* or the *Ænead*, they will be admired and held in estimation as the great models of Epic Poetry. The works of the Elder Pliny, the most celebrated Naturalist of antiquity, have been preserved to the present time, while unnumbered volumes of writings that attracted more attention on their first appearance, have been long since consigned to oblivion. Connected with the apparent temerity that caused the premature exit of this extraordinary man, there was manifested a degree of heroism and humanity that we seldom meet with in a heathen philosopher, and that may be justly attributed to his ecstatic love of nature. In the sacred volume, you meet with some of the most grand and awful imaginative expressions, and generally drawn from nature. Thus evincing, that the greatest attainments in style and figurative language, and a love of nature, are perfectly accordant with the highest tone of piety. The fine imagery of Telemachus, and the terse descriptions of Mrs. Sherwood and Hannah More, are chiefly admired because they are natural. What is it gives interest to the narratives of Irving, the writings of Paulding, or the epistles of Humphreys? You have the secret in the fact, that when you cease reading them, you are constrained to say, "How natural!" Catlin, too, whose fine imagination, undaunted ambition, and boundless curiosity, have already given him a high place in the temple of fame, and whose superior specimens of painting have feasted the eyes of multitudes, is also captivating in his style of

writing. And why? Because, when he wields the pen, and you read his letters, you seem to sit beside him, as he is borne on the billows of Huron, or sails down the lovely channel of the Ouisconsin, with all the charming scenery described immediately in view.

Thus might we continue to enumerate instances of popular style, and trace the secret of their popularity, and of their effects in improving the general taste to a love of nature. Suffice it to say, that all our best writers, when other fountains of figure fail them, turn to the exhaustless storehouse of nature, and drawing thence the finest imagery, roll their numbers forth in "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn."

The study of nature, also, elevates our views of the Great Author of Nature. This has been denied, and it has been supposed by many, that the study of nature leads to infidelity. In view of this, well might we exclaim with the poet :

" Oh, how unjust to Nature and himself,
Is thoughtless, inconsistent man."

The ground of this supposition, is the fact, that some noted infidels have been great Naturalists. While we admit this truth, we cannot concede the assumed inference, that infidelity is the legitimate effect of the study of nature. Properly pursued, such never can be its effects. "An undevout astronomer is mad." Nor is it less a truth, that he is mad, who cannot "rise through nature up to nature's God." Show me the man who, from some lofty spot, can look abroad, upon the vast page of nature, as it is spread out before him, and not

have his feelings of admiration for its Great Author enkindled, and I will point you to a misanthrope—to an individual who has approached as near to the character of a perfect Stoic, as the wildest phantom of the mind of Zeno could ever have imagined him to be. The true lover of nature, sees the Deity in all his works.

Every branch and blade and flower
Speaks his wisdom and his power.

The more minutely he examines the works of nature, the more is he struck with the design of her Great Architect. And does he, perchance, meet with that, the depth of which he cannot fathom, the end of which he cannot see? lost in wonder, he is led to admire, and adore, where he cannot comprehend. Does he traverse the globe, in search of some unknown species in any of her kingdoms? Does he dive into its bosom to find some new formation, or does he rise to scan the blue arched canopy of heaven, and bring to light some undiscovered world? in each attempt he is driven to the conclusion :

“ Across the earth, around the sky,
There’s not a spot, or deep or high,
Where the Creator hath not trod
And left the footsteps of a God.”

Tell me not, then, that the study of nature leads to infidelity. But, tell me, rather, that it leads to the most exalted conceptions of the matchless framer of the universe.

If such, my young friends, be the salutary effects of proper attention to this branch of science, you may infer its

importance. As opportunity affords, therefore, be diligent in your attention to it. Go on in the train of those who have gone before you, and as you prosecute the study of it, do it in such a way, that we may apply to each of you the language of Cowper, in relation to the believer :

“ He *looks* abroad into the varied field
Of *Nature*, and though poor, perhaps, compared
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains and the vallies his,
And the resplendent rivers ; his to enjoy,
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to Heaven *an unpretentious eye*,
And smiling say, *my Father made them all.*”

But, I must close. I am reminded by the strains that have just fallen from the lips of my young friend who preceded me, that with some* of you, young gentlemen, we shall meet no more in this capacity. The chord that has bound *instructor* and *pupil* together, must be severed. Suffer a word at parting. You are about to wend your way up the hill of science, under other guides—to seek the mead of praise where the laurels of literary honour glitter more. We regret that we must part with you. But as you have completed your course with us, it is but right that you should go. Such is the order of things. This world is rightly called a parting, changeful scene. Such it has ever been, and such will it be, until the last knell of expiring time has died away on the ear of immortality. When you leave us, leave

* A class who had finished their preparatory course.

not your habits of study—forget not the wholesome regulations under which you have thus far pursued your course. There is danger of this, sometimes, when exchanging the rigid but excellent discipline of the school-room, for the milder restraints of college, or the indulgence of home. Let not this be the case with you. Remember that the hopes of tender parents are centered upon you, and let them not be disappointed. Adopt the principle of one whose name is dear to every benevolent heart, and whose remains lie entombed in the coral bed of the ocean.—I mean the lamented S. J. Mills.—“Attempt great things, expect great things,” and you may yet hope to wield the Herculean power of a Webster, or exert the influence of a Morrison. *Onward* be your motto, and as you advance, let your diligence increase and your habits improve, and proportionally high will be your standing. In every thing commendable, let your aim be elevated, and after times will tell us of you; not the tale of sorrow, character lost, influence gone, prospects blighted, but news that will make us rejoice that we were ever permitted to be your instructors, and to aid in the formation of your characters. Our best wishes attend you. And while we commend you to the care of that Being, whose guardian eye always guides your destiny, we request that you will acknowledge him in all your ways, that he may direct your steps. To your valedictory we affectionately respond, Farewell.

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