

AN

ADDRESS

TO THE

SENIOR CLASS,

DELIVERED AT THE COMMENCEMENT

IN

CENTRE COLLEGE

SEPTEMBER 22d, 1831.

BY JOHN C. YOUNG,

President of Centre College.

DANVILLE, KY.

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1831.

DANVILLE, Sept. 28th, 1831.

REV. J. C. YOUNG, SIR—The Trustees of Centre College, highly approving the views expressed by you, at the close of the exercises of the late commencement, have charged the undersigned committee of their body, to request from you a copy of your address on that occasion for publication.

Respectfully your

ob't servants

D. G. COWAN.
JOHN GREEN.

To PRESIDENT YOUNG.

DANVILLE, Sept. 28th, 1831.

GENTLEMEN:—In compliance with the request of the Board of Trustees, I enclose you the copy of the address I delivered on the day of commencement. If you think it will serve the great cause we are endeavoring to advance, you can publish it; though, as it was not prepared with a view to publication, and as time does not permit me to make any important alterations, it must necessarily go forth with more imperfections than I could wish it to exhibit. In an address to Students on such an occasion, it might be expected that a man should touch more expressly and fully on some other topics, which we all believe to be of equal importance with the one here presented. But on all those other points I had recent opportunities of giving very copious instructions—and I thought it better on the present occasion, to discuss one subject largely than to touch upon many cursorily.

Yours respectfully,

JOHN C. YOUNG.

GENTLEMEN GRADUATES:

YOUR literary and scientific course may be considered as now fairly commenced. You have passed through its preparatory and difficult stages—you have won your way through those formidable elementary barriers, which enclose the regions of science, and render them forever inaccessible to the unenterprising and the indolent. Like Hannibal, when he stood at the foot of the surmounted Alps, and looked over the fair fields of Italy, on whose conquest he was then prepared to enter, you can feel, that behind you lies the mass of your difficulties, and before you, and within the reach of easy and pleasant exertion, lies the reward of your labors.

Still your hopes may be baffled, and your past efforts rendered comparatively profitless; for indolence and the thousand frivolous occupations of life, may seduce you to neglect your future opportunities of improvement, and thus to forego the advantages you have gained. I would therefore, on the eve of our final separation, embrace this last occasion of arraying before you some of the advantages of enlarged literary and scientific attainments, in the hope, that their contemplation may have some influence in strengthening the resolution, which, I trust, you have already formed, that your future course in life shall be one of intellectual advancement.

You too, who purpose still to remain with us, will find the consideration of this subject both profitable and pleasing. You are often inclined to think that you are marching on a steep and thorny road, and to feel discouraged when you look at the distance that still remains to be trodden. But look to the objects of your march, and the sight will cheer your minds, and stimulate you to activity and untiring exertion.

1st. Knowledge affords us high enjoyment in its very acquisition.

Our Creator has, kindly and wisely implanted in every one of us a kind of appetite for information; and the gratification of this intellectual appetite is attended with great delight. Of the existence of this instinctive feeling and its agreeable effects we are all conscious—when directed towards trifling and ephemeral objects, it is termed curiosity; when the great, the permanent, and the useful are its objects, it is called a thirst for knowledge. The design of our

Creator, in implanting this principle, seems to have been, to stimulate us to such a course as would enlarge our minds, and thus make us more capable of admiring and serving Him, and benefiting our fellow men. Now we find it to be a universal truth, that every principle, bodily or mental, furnishes us the greatest enjoyment, when directed towards the object it was intended to attain. Thus, hunger was implanted in us for the perpetuation of our life, health, and strength. And we accordingly find, that such an indulgence of the appetite as best contributes to this end, is followed by the highest and most permanent enjoyment of that pleasurable feeling, which our Creator has annexed, as an attendant upon its gratification. We would then conclude from analogy, that this instinctive and universal desire for knowing, would furnish us with the highest gratification, only when it was directed towards objects, an acquaintance with which would most expand our intellects, and render us most capable of honoring our Maker, and aiding our fellow men. And this conclusion is fully corroborated by an examination of facts. We see, indeed, that the great mass of mankind spend a large portion of their time, in learning the little incidents of the day—they continually seek after such items of intelligence, and take pleasure in them, even when the knowledge of them can in no way personally affect their own condition. But we see, that a far deeper and more abiding enjoyment, is received by those who spend an equal portion of their time, in learning and examining those great and permanent truths, which are the object of scientific investigation. The accidents, anecdotes, and crimes of the day, the fluctuations of party politics; the results of elections, the gossip of the neighborhood, a single year will usually cover in oblivion: while the principle, which gives them their transient interest with us, would enable us to delight in learning the universal and unchanging laws of nature, the events of great empires and the discoveries which have given note to the well-known names of Newton, Galileo, Copernicus, Bacon and Locke. Even if these different objects of knowledge furnished equal pleasure in their acquisition, there is a *permanency of interest* belonging to the one set, which would make them more valuable and worthy of our pursuit. But there is really more pleasure, *at the time of acquisition*, in learning great and important truths, than trifling and temporary incidents. The latter soon cloy the mind; for the former we always retain our relish. The latter are like the drunkard's draughts, the peculiar poignancy and pleasantness of which soon depart, though the craving for them continues—the former are like the beverage of nature, to which we always return with pleasure.

Perhaps a full exhibition of the nature and objects of the different branches of literature and science, would give us the most just appreciation of the pleasures derivable from their acquisition; as we would thus see their dignity, importance, and variety. But our lim.

its forbid an attempt at such an exhibition. I can do no more than barely direct your hasty glance to the objects of one or two of those branches, which peculiarly solicit your attention.

We are men, and to examine our own nature cannot but be interesting. The laws which govern us as intellectual, moral, and social beings, all invite and richly repay investigation—thus, we learn what we are, what we are to do, and what we are to be. Language, too, considered as the mere vehicle of thought, the instrument of communication between mind and mind, presents an attractive object for our examination. But when we read the language of the men of other days, to see their thoughts there depicted, we find a more deep and solemn pleasure—we thus hold converse with the mighty dead—we seem to hear the lofty speculations of those ancient sages, who walked, surrounded by their disciples, in the groves of Academus, and we dwell, in silence, on those undying strains, which were sung by poets of old, on the sunny plains of classic Greece. Every thing around us is comprehended within the range of the naturalist's investigation, from the insect too minute to be discovered by the naked eye, up to those celestial luminaries, whose bulk baffles our imaginations. Every piece of matter has its wonders, which the philosophic eye can study and admire. An examination of the organization of a plant or an insect, often opens to us a world of mysterious yet strangely wise contrivances, whose existence we never suspected. And such are the astonishing powers of nature, which Mathematics and Natural Philosophy reveal to us, that before we proceed far in our discoveries, we cease to esteem the boast of the old Syracusan so wild, when he exclaimed, "give me a place on which to rest my levers; and I could raise the world."

We ordinarily look upon the works of God in detached portions, and even then we admire them; but how much higher is our delight, when, amid all the complexity of the myriads of objects that compose our system, we can discover the uniformity and simplicity of those great principles, by which its Maker preserves it, and governs it, and brings order out of its apparent chaos. This pleasure can be communicated to no man by his fellow. It must arise, in every mind that ever enjoys it, from those views, which Science, acting as the handmaid of Religion, gradually unfolds to her votaries, as they advance, from point to point, in the investigation of God's wide, and varied, and wonderful system. When a man obtains such views, there is a mighty change wrought in his condition—he is like one, who has grown up and lived, for years in a deep and narrow glen, and has at length been taken up to the peak of some high mountain, from which he can behold "the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof."

It probably needs neither argument nor illustration, to prove to you, that there must be pleasure in attaining the knowledge of such

objects, as those to which I have just alluded. But I could tell you of many men who have tasted these pleasures, and have appreciated them so highly, as to prefer them to all the advantages of fortune, and all the enjoyments of distinction. Heyne, whose name was afterwards so celebrated for his classical attainments, was, for the first thirty two years of his course, oppressed with a series of misfortunes, and with poverty so distressing, as to have been, at times, indebted to the compassion of a maid servant, for the necessaries of life—yet such was his delight in knowledge, that though solicited by various and tempting offers, he preferred indigence and obscurity, to the relinquishment of his favorite pursuits. The famous Erasmus, when a student at Paris, and almost in rags, says in a letter to a friend, “as soon as I can get money, I will buy first Greek books, and then clothes.” The learned Winckelman was obliged, while a boy, to support, in a great measure, an aged Father, whom infirmities had rendered helpless. But this did not prevent his gratifying his strong aspirations after knowledge. He attended his instructors by day, and supported himself, and his Father, by singing at night through the streets. The discovery of a single new truth, sometimes produces a rapture, which well recompenses the labour of years. When Pythagoras discovered the remarkable relation between the squares of the sides of a right-angled triangle, he is said to have offered to the Gods an hundred oxen, as an expression of his gratitude for their disclosing to him the wonderful fact. When Newton was finishing the calculations, which satisfied him that he had discovered the universality of the law of gravitation, his agitation became so great, as he perceived every figure bringing him nearer to the desired result, that he was unable to continue the operation, and was obliged to ask a friend to conclude it for him.

The capability of delighting in such objects, exists, in a greater or less degree, in each of our minds, and is strengthened by cultivation. And, though we may never discover a truth which has hitherto evaded the search of other minds, still we can enjoy the next highest gratification, that of continually finding things new and unthought of by us. The late wonderful scholar, Dr. Alexander Murray, when but a boy, and almost entirely unassisted, made himself familiar with the French, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages, and read some of the principal authors in each of them, within about 18 months from the time, when, with a very scanty English education, all these languages were entirely unknown to him. Such was the effect of an ardent desire after knowledge. Difficulties to ordinary minds apparently insurmountable, he regarded as trifles, in his ardor to possess himself of unknown truths.

2ad. Scientific and literary attainments are not merely pleasant in their acquisition—they open to us numerous and unfailing sources of future enjoyment.

It is certainly a matter of moment, for a man so to train his mind, that he shall be able, wherever he is, to find objects of interest to which he can turn his attention. Now it is observable, that the more a man knows, the more likely he is to be interested in every new object: for he can, almost always, perceive in it something, which connects it with one or other of the objects of his past investigations and discoveries. The course, too, which a man has pursued, who has gained much knowledge, has taught him to find, in objects the most unimportant and common, something worthy of remark or investigation. Galileo accidentally observed the vibrations of a lamp suspended from the roof of the Cathedral at Pisa. From marking the fact that its oscillations, whether great or small, occupied the same length of time, he was led to the discovery of the principle on which the first accurate chronometers that had ever been used, were constructed. The mind of such training needs never be without occupation and amusement—it can as the great English Dramatist has expressed it,

“Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.”

It was said, I think, of Lord Mansfield, that he never could pick up even a Primer, without drawing from it something which he afterwards could turn to account. When Huber, the naturalist, was deprived of sight, he found a plentiful source of pleasure, in examining, by the eyes of another, whose observations were conducted under his direction, the nature and habits of that useful insect, the bee. He thus amused himself, and benefited mankind, by the most ingenious and original work ever written in that department of natural history. A man can carry his intellectual habits and acquisition with him, even into a dungeon, and by their aid, dispel its gloom. Boethius wrote his beautiful treatise, “*De Consolationibus philosophiæ*,” while lying under sentence of death in the tower of Pavia, and when he was denied all use of books. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote his learned history of the world, during his confinement in the tower of London, under a sentence of death, which was afterwards executed upon him.

3d. Another benefit of these pursuits we recommend is, that *they procure us the pleasure of many triumphs.*

We often meet with difficulties in our progress—we summon up our energies to the conflict—we master them—and then follow all the joys of victory. These are *bloodless triumphs*—they are gained at *no expense of life*—at *no expense even of the feelings of others*, for no competition with our fellow men is involved in the strife which precedes them. Yet, perhaps, few feelings are more gratifying than those we enjoy on such occasions. It is needless to illustrate this remark, by the recorded experience of celebrated adventurers in these pursuits, for every man who has engaged in literature or science, has himself, in a greater or less degree, often verifi-

ed its truth. And the simple reason why so little of this enjoyment is received by educated men, is that few of them exercise their minds enough to enable them to feel a pleasure in intellectual struggles, or make them willing to grapple with difficulties. They look upon study as a dull and cheerless, but necessary work, at which they cower, and from which they shrink, when they can possibly evade it. There is wanting that generous buoyancy and unconstrained activity, which distinguish the freeman, in his labours, from the slave, and which make the voluntary exertions of the one, so far more valuable than the compulsory drudging of the other.

4th. The increase of our acquisitions, and the well directed exercise of our powers, *will be accompanied by a corresponding elevation and enlargement of intellect*; As, under God, we can elevate or degrade our moral characters, so we can our intellectual.

The man who has, year after year, been gathering the spoils of wisdom, and concentrating and strengthening his energies in the investigation of truth, occupies a point in the scale of being, far different from that he would have held, had he stored his mind with trifles, and either reclined in indolence, or frittered away his powers in frivolous pursuits. It is said of that singular fish the polypus, that it speedily assumes the colour of the rock to which it attaches itself—and something like this is the case with the mind of man: it soon assimilates to the objects to which it is devoted—if they are mean, it becomes degraded; if they are elevated, it becomes dignified. The old Grecian critic long since remarked, that by converse with the truly great we can catch some portion of their qualities, and thus he tells us that Euripides, though naturally destitute of sublimity, by dwelling on the thoughts of Homer, imbibed a portion of his inspiration, and himself became sublime. No man can calculate, how much of his mental expansion and strength he owes to the nature of the authors he has read and admired, and the objects to which he has devoted his attention. One thing is certain, that many have raised themselves from the most humble spheres, and in spite of the most untoward circumstances, by perseveringly grasping after knowledge, and acquainting themselves with the inspiring thoughts of master minds. Thus Gifford raised himself, from the condition of a ragged cabin-boy to an intimacy and equality, with the most influential writers of his day. Thus Mestestatio, from a friendless boy singing verses through the streets, became one of the great ornaments of Italian literature. Thus the two Milners promoted themselves, from a weaver's bench to the highest eminence in the literary and religious world. Thus Epictetus, born a slave, became the pride of the Stoics, and the familiar friend of one of Rome's best Emperors. Thus two shepherd-boys of Scotland, Ferguson and Murray became distinguished instructors of mankind. The honours these men gained, and the stations to which they rose, were themselves no despicable rewards of exertion. But

these I regard as a far less valuable acquisition, than that increased intellectual elevation, of which their honors may be considered the external index. Now by diligent, systematic, and yet pleasant exertion, every man may, in like manner, acquire an elevation and expansion of intellect, far beyond that which he originally possessed.

5th. *Increased respectability* is another fruit of enlarged attainments.

We are ever to remember who has warned us against loving the praise of men, more than the praise of God; and should ever guard against a craving desire after human applause. But it is no unhallowed emotion, which prompts us to seek the approbation and respect of our fellow men; though like every natural feeling its excess is sinful, and productive of ill. It is then a legitimate argument in favour of any course, if it be found calculated to procure for us the pleasure, derivable from a consciousness of increased respectability. Riches may procure for a man the *show* of respect, but superior knowledge and moral excellence only will procure him its *reality*. Unless the odium of immorality depress him, as a man rises in intellectual accomplishments, he will rise in the good opinion of his fellow men. Humbleness of station will not then bring upon him contempt, poverty will not defraud him of his due. Kepler spent his life in indigence, but would often exclaim, that he would rather be the author of the works he had written, than possess the Dutchy of Saxony—alluding partly to the pleasure their composition had afforded him, and partly to the respect their production had gained him. Adrian, was the son of a barge-builder of Utrecht, and educated on charity at the University of Louvaine. He was too poor to buy candles to study by night; but spent his evenings reading in the church porches and at the corners of streets, where lamps were kept burning. By his unwearied diligence and consequent eminent acquirements, without first-rate talents, he rose to be preceptor to Charles the 5th, and was, by his influence, promoted to the Papal Chair. The extraordinary navigator, Captain Cook, entered a coal-vessel as a common sailor; and from this obscure station, he raised himself, by his persevering and scientific exertions, to the honours of Royal Academies, the confidence of a nation, and the admiration and gratitude of mankind. Terence was a slave, yet the haughty Consuls of Rome courted his society, and delighted to do him honor.

6th. *The enlargement of our knowledge increases our power of doing good.*

This is an advantage we derive from it, far superior to any to which we have yet alluded. For such power, considered merely in reference to the happiness it may procure to its possessor, is of inestimable value. Nothing but the joys of salvation, can surpass the delightful remembrance of the schemes we have devised or execu-

ted, for ameliorating the condition of our wretched fellow mortals. But self-gratification is not the object of a benevolent mind—it has a higher and nobler aim. It looks directly to the good of others, and desires power, that they may be made happy. Even if knowledge were of difficult attainment, if there were no pleasures in its acquisition, and if it promised no increase of enjoyments to its possessors, still it would be an object worthy of our eager and steady pursuit, if it communicated to us our greatest power of doing good: and that it is the most efficient instrument of usefulness, may be easily made apparent.

Riches and authority are two potent engines—but neither of them possesses the controuling and revolutionizing influence of knowledge. The greatest benefactors of mankind have not been found among the affluent and the noble, but among the learned. Henry the 8th, Francis the 1st, and Charles the 5th, all rich and mighty monarchs, effected no change in the character of Europe; while their cotemporaries Luther, Zuinglius, and Calvin, all humble individuals, with no power but that of intellect, and no support but that of truth, were under God, the instruments who gave a death-blow to superstition, and emancipated the human intellect from the slavery of ages. These men had fed on knowledge, until they had grown strong, and become fit champions to fight the battles of the God of Truth.

It has been a prevalent idea with some persons, that the attainments of the few are of no advantage to the many. They draw this as an inference from the fact, that the greatest pests of mankind have been well-informed and talented, selfish men; and, their doctrine would be correct, if no means could be found, for inspiring men with feelings of benevolence, which would controul their energies, and direct them right. As it is, never was there a more mistaken opinion. To refute it, we have but to point to the contrast between savage and civilized nations, and mark what has caused this difference of condition. Has it not, in every case, been the product of the efforts of a few enlightened minds, who have diffused more or less of knowledge, and its consequent advantages through the mass of their fellow citizens? How has society ever been improved, and comforts multiplied, through every class of the community, but by the discoveries of the scientific, disclosing the various powers of nature, which we may controul, and use in our service? Four centuries ago, England supported a population of 2,300,000—now she supports 11,600,000. Her territory now supports five times as many as it then did; and her common people now enjoy an amount of comfort and conveniences, greater than fell to the lot of her Nobles in former times: and this change in the condition of her *common people*, is the result of that improvement in roads, canals, manufactures, commerce, and all the arts of life, which has been produced by the gradual advancement of scientific

discovery. This advancement is still proceeding, with increasing rapidity, and efforts are making, by her educated and talented philanthropists, not merely to spread the *practical fruits of knowledge*, but to pour *knowledge itself*, through all her hamlets and cottages. Shall it then be said that the attainments of the few are of no advantage to the many? To whom do the people of England, of our own day, owe more than to the versatile and learned Henry Brougham, whose ardor in the pursuit of knowledge, is only equalled by his bold and steady advocacy of the people's rights, and his untiring efforts for their moral and intellectual improvement. Nor can any of us, while the steam-boat shall ply on our mighty waters, forget the obligations of our country to the scientific Fulton. Nor, as long as canals and rail-roads shall bind the distant parts of our land together, and scatter through all its extent the comforts, conveniences, and elegancies of life, can we cease to remember, with gratitude, the enlightened mind, which gave the first great impulse to our system of internal improvement. But why should I speak of *individuals*, when we are indebted to *every* improver of science, for each has contributed his portion, to procure for us that present advancement of society, of which we all are conscious, and in which we all rejoice.

To depreciate the benefits of science, it is sometimes said, that a greater number of important and useful discoveries, have been the result of accident, than of intentional and philosophical research. Admitting the assertion in all its latitude, which we might readily dispute, what does it prove, but that trifling circumstances have first suggested the trains of thought, by which philosophical minds have been led to the developement of wondrous truths? Where a great discovery has been the result of accident, let it be remarked, that, in almost every case, *the accident has happened to a man of enlarged attainments, and habits of close investigation*. The accidental sight of a suspended lamp, swinging from side to side, was the occasion of Galileo's inventing the pendulum as a measure of time. An apple falling on the head of Newton, gave rise to a train of thought, that issued in the developement of that great law of gravitation, which regulates the movements of the material universe. The water overflowing the sides of a bath, when he stepped into it, suggested to Archimedes the mode of determining the specific gravities of different bodies. But the swinging of a lamp, the falling of an apple, the overflowing of a bath, had been witnessed times without number; and yet no accurate chronometer, no cause of the planetary movements, no mode of ascertaining the comparative weights of different bodies, had ever been discovered, until the appearance of these inquirers into nature's operations. Occasions do not produce events—but enlarged minds can seize upon, and improve occasions; and had there been more of such minds in past ages, there would now have been thousands more of inventions, for securing the comfort and alleviating the woes of man.

Numberless useful inventions have, however, been the offspring of the intentional and diligent efforts of scientific men. They have perceived a human want or a human woe, and have applied their powers to the task of examining, whether the varied stores of nature could not furnish some remedy. And if time permitted, we might here notice the fruits of the labors of a Davy, a Rumford, a Rittenhouse, a Watts, a Franklin, and many others, whose benevolent efforts, and fortunate discoveries have conferred lasting benefits upon our race.

The present, too, is an age in which knowledge gives such power as it never before conferred. It is an age of mental communication, of intellectual awakening—and the man who possesses wisdom, can now bring it to bear upon millions of his fellow men. He can put his voice into the press, which like an immense whispering-gallery for the world, will convey the sound of his words to the ends of the earth. No man needs fear, that he may now labor in vain and spend his strength for naught, in treasuring up the elements of intellectual power. There is a voice abroad upon the earth, calling loudly for the exhibition of every species of knowledge. Such are the varied schemes in operation for the advancement of our race, such is the demand for men of varied and extensive attainments, to carry on these mighty movements, and such is the deficiency of qualified laborers, that no man possessed of moral power, can remain long uninvited to exert it in a sufficiently ample sphere. If any of us, fed upon knowledge, until his mind increased in size and strength, like the body of the fabled hundred-handed Briareus, he would soon find employment for all his energies.

Before I close, I would briefly canvass one or two of the objections, which are commonly advanced against such a course, as I am now recommending.

Success in life, it is sometimes urged, is often attained without any great acquirements, by exclusive devotedness to one particular employment. If success in life is considered synonymous with the acquisition of money, this objection possesses some force; but, if the amount of our enjoyment and the extent of our usefulness are to be considered, when we are calculating our success in life, the objection is weak; for it requires no proof to convince you, that the man whose knowledge is confined to the details of a single profession or pursuit, contracts his intellect, abridges his pleasures, and limits his usefulness. Besides, so close is the connection between all the sciences, and so strong the mutual light they reflect upon each other, so great the mutual aid they yield to each other, and so numerous the suggestions which the knowledge of one furnishes for the improvement of another, that it holds good, as a general rule, that no man excels in any one, who has not some acquaintance with many others. And the instances which might be adduced as departures from this rule, are scarcely ever so in reality. We can some

times, indeed, see a man who ranks well in his profession, who yet knows scarcely any thing else—but we do not reflect, how much abler he might have been, even in his own vocation, had he liberalised his mind, by devoting a portion of his time to other attainments. Certain it is, that the greatest lawyers, physicians, and divines have been men of general literature and science.

But, it is again objected, that our condition in the West does not render it important to acquire much learning. In a new country, a habit of activity and some practical knowledge, are of more value, it is said, than the richest stores of science. This is the most prevalent objection, existing among us, against a full and extensive pursuit of knowledge. Let us fairly examine it. It is based upon a truth which we all allow, that a practical turn of mind, such as early habits of business produce, is of more value, especially while the elements of society are yet working together and unsettled, than that speculative disposition, which is usually the result of long continued habits of thought, unaccompanied by action. But surely no man, in commencing life, should permit himself to agitate the question, which of two extreme courses he should choose, when all agree, that in the middle path alone, is success to be found. The most useful character, is that of the man who has grafted habits of business, on habits of close and accurate thought—who has gained vast stores of knowledge, and has also acquired the faculty of promptly bringing them to bear on the common concerns of life. No matter what may be the condition of society, this is the character which fits men for eminence and usefulness. This is the character you should aim at acquiring. If you look at the early history of our colonies, when they were all as young as our valley is now, you will find, that the men who wielded their energies, and developed their resources, were such as had received an education of the first order. Many of them were sent to the Universities of England, to acquire that knowledge, they afterwards turned to such good account. But, I have another remark to make upon this objection, which will show its utter worthlessness. It supposes, that the condition of our country will continue, for years, to be what it now is. In rowing across a stream a man must take into calculation the force of the current, and how far it will drift him in his course. So, wisdom teaches us to mark, and estimate the flow of events, that, in the voyage of life, we may know how to steer our barks aright. The man, who prepares himself for the condition of society which now exists among us, will, in less than twenty years, be drifted into a condition, far different from that in which he had prepared himself to be useful. Within the last forty years, the population of this valley has increased, from 100,000 to nearly 4,000,000. If it continue thus to increase, in forty years more, while a part of those, who are now preparing for usefulness will be still engaged in active life, it will amount to 28,000,000—about twice the sum of the

inhabitants of Great Britain. Even in twenty years more it will amount to about 10,000,000. There will then be contained, in this central basin, nearly as many inhabitants as are now dispersed over all our states. Will any one, then, dream, when such will be the astonishing change in a few years, of preparing himself for usefulness, only by such attainments, as would enable him to secure a creeping mediocrity, in a new, and rough, and thinly peopled country. If any one will foolishly shut his eyes to the future, and plod on in blind and uncalculating stupidity, he must, hereafter, bear the consequences of his folly, in the bitter feelings, which disappointed hopes and abridged usefulness will entail upon him.

The last objection I shall notice, is that urged by some, who have not commenced their literary pursuits, as early in life as many of their companions. While they acknowledge an enlarged course of study to be in general, highly desirable, they conceive themselves to be admonished, by their rapidly increasing years, to hurry half prepared into the business of life. If they tarry in preparation, they think their future career will not be long enough to enable them, with all their increased advantages, to compensate for the loss of time incurred in making their attainments. Let such remember, that one man will oftentimes do in a day, what another could not accomplish in a year: and that difference of power depends mainly on difference of training and attainment. The toil of a bungler's lifetime, is not worth a year's labor of "a workman who needeth not to be ashamed." Some men of peculiar minds, have done wonders, in professions for which they were not duly qualified. But it is certainly *presumption, in men of common minds*, to suppose that they can satisfactorily serve God and their fellow men, without those attainments, which others, fully their equals in talent, have acknowledged that *they* found necessary to their success. It should also be remembered, that many of those who, by a coincidence of circumstances, have been hurried, without due preparation, into the active scenes of life, have most deeply lamented their precipitancy, and have regretted the loss of those advantages they once underrated.

There are some circumstances, too, which I may mention, that should greatly abate the regret and despondency of those, who begin their acquaintance with literature and science late in life. Their anxiety to redeem the time they have lost in other pursuits, imparts to them a stimulus in study, which may itself be worth years to them. Their faculties, too, have acquired a vigor, which enables them to advance more rapidly than their younger compeers. They have also accumulated a considerable share of profitable knowledge, from the pursuits in which they have been engaged. And, lastly, it should be to them an encouraging fact, that a large number of the greatest benefactors of mankind have effected their chief amount of good, within a shorter space of time from the com-

mencement of their career, than the time which late beginners, in all human probability, will have to live, from the period of entering on their active duties, until the close of their earthly course. We could multiply instances in proof of this assertion—time will allow us only to exhibit a few. Sir Isaac Newton had completed most of his discoveries, before he reached his twenty-sixth year; and, after his forty-fifth year, he can scarcely be said to have done any thing to gain reputation, or to extend his usefulness. Pascal, the most illustrious, and perhaps the most useful man of his day, terminated his career, before he was forty, and during the latter half of his life, he suffered continually from severe disease. Sir William Jones, prodigious as was his learning, and great as were his labors, died before he was fifty. Zuinglius, the Swiss Reformer, rested from his labors, in his forty fourth year. Tindall, whom Fox calls England's Apostle, was put to death at the age of thirty-six. This was also the age at which President Davies closed his useful labors. Calvin before he was twenty-five, wrote his Institutes, a work which has had a greater influence on the world, than any theological production that has ever appeared. But it is needless to cite instances, when an extensive acquaintance with biography will teach every one, that the time of a man's continuance in his labors, affords no measure of his usefulness, which is always proportioned to his talents, attainments, zeal, and industry.

Let me, then, in conclusion, exhort you not to hurry into the active scenes of life. Qualify yourselves well, for you know not the place you may be called upon to occupy—and, whether, like Henry Martyn, it may be your lot to encounter the ingenuity and learning of Persian philosophers, or, like Oberlin, you may be placed in some retired village, you will find, that, wherever you are, knowledge will give you enjoyment, influence, and power to benefit your fellow men. Caius Gracchus retired for ten years, to prepare himself for carrying on those patriotic schemes his brother had commenced, and which had been frustrated by his untimely death. And remember that the experience of generations is embodied in the precept "*festina lente.*"