

VI.

THE VALUE AND INFLUENCE OF LITERARY PURSUITS.

AN ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

EUMENEAN AND PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETIES

OF

DAVIDSON COLLEGE, N. C.,

ON

COMMENCEMENT DAY,

AUGUST 13TH, 1846.

BY GEORGE HOWE, D. D.,

Professor of Biblical Literature in the Theological Seminary at Columbia, S. C.

COLUMBIA, S. C.

PRINTED BY I. C. MORGAN.

1846

JSC
378.756
14838 o

CORRESPONDENCE.

~~~~~

EUMENEAN HALL, DAVIDSON COLLEGE, }  
August 14th, 1846. }

*Reverend Sir :*

At a meeting of the Eumenean Society, held on Friday, August 14th, the undersigned were appointed a Committee to tender you the thanks of that body, for the very able and interesting Address delivered before the two Literary Societies on Commencement day, and to request of you a copy of the same for publication.

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

With sentiments of the highest respect, we remain your obedient servants,

J. R. GILLESPIE, }  
R. H. JOHNSTON, } Committee.  
J. M. WALKER, }

To REV. GEORGE HOWE, D. D., Columbia, S. C.

—

*Gentlemen :*

Accept my thanks for the kind and flattering manner in which the Eumenean Society, and you, as their organ, have requested a copy of my Address for publication. At as early a period as is in my power, I will endeavor to comply with your wishes. I remain very respectfully yours,

GEO. HOWE.

J. R. GILLESPIE, R. H. JOHNSTON, J. M. WALKER, Committee.

## ORATION.

---

*Gentlemen of the Eumenean and Philanthropic Societies :*

The material universe is replete with beauty and grandeur. Viewed as a whole, or in its several parts, it attracts our attention, excites our wonder, and calls forth from the devout mind lofty adoration of its great Author. But the most interesting object of contemplation to man, is man himself. His physical frame and his immortal nature, his past history and future fortunes, his domestic state and civil relations, his individual character and his social condition, are all points of special interest. What he is capable of doing by himself, when viewed in the individuality of his own accountableness, and what he can do with the aid of his brethren, fellow-members of the same race, we are never weary of contemplating. 'I am a man,' says the Latin poet, 'and nothing which belongs to man is foreign to me.' The shoe latchet which he once wore, the sword he fought with, the stylus with which he wrote, and the monument, however rude, which he reared to commemorate his deeds, we pause, wherever we are, to consider : they are the relics of our busy toiling race, the slight memorials that survive of the corporeal forms which have crumbled to dust, of the immortal minds which have loved and hated, rejoiced and wept, sported and struggled, while we were reckoned among unborn generations.

There are seasons when men meet together for mutual encouragement and counsel. There are assemblies and conventions for purposes civil, philanthropic, and religious. The agriculturist and me-

chanic, the politician and the tradesman, the advocate of temperance and the friend of the church—that divinely appointed means to renovate the world—have their stated periods when they combine their individual experience and wisdom, and provoke each other to a laudable emulation in their respective pursuits.

The scholar's main labors are performed in secret. In the retired seclusion of his own study, does he delve in those mines of thought, which are opened to him in the writings of others, or offered in the works of his Creator. Or if his pursuits in natural science carry him abroad over the face of the globe, if he traverses the plains, climbs the cliffs, and roams the forests of his own land in search of stone, beast, bird, or flower, if he ascends the glaciers of Alps, Andes, or Ararat, or the awful brow of Sinai, or peers into the crater of Etna or Kairuea, his studies are yet solitary, for his mind must act by itself and for itself. Yet learning and science are poor and barren pursuits, if not made subservient to the good of others, nor can our interest in them be retained, nor our highest improvement secured, without communicating them to our fellow men, and being cheered on by their interest and approbation.

How well these advantages were attained in the most cultivated nation of antiquity, the Olympic and Pythian games of Greece can testify. Her poets, historians, orators and philosophers met together, the fashion, the wealth, and the learning of Greece were assembled to hear them, and the theatres, which were the places of recitation, were thronged by attentive listeners from early dawn till the declining sun.

Where shall we find this stimulus to effort,—where these literary re-unions, so pleasant, so festive, so improving, so pure? Shall we not, on these occasions, when we gather around our institutions of learning, and come from our farms. from the busy mart, from

the debates of the forum, from the walks of the physician, or the teachings of the pulpit, to the groves of Academus, to the home of the Muses? Around these sacred abodes of learning we ought to hover. In fostering and encouraging them, we stimulate and improve ourselves. We diffuse the influence of learning among our youth. We bless with its mild radiance the land that gave us birth. We associate ourselves with the cultivated mind that has gone before. We join the immense army of those who have found in learning their solace, their weapon of power, and their crown of glory. Bright train of illustrious men, who have studied and toiled before us! in whatever clime you have lived, we hail you with joy and gratitude; we bow in homage at your feet. We come this day to consider your example, and to encourage our own hearts by a review of your labors, your self-denial, your attainments, and your success.

What more appropriate theme could I propose to you, than the claims which Literature has to the consideration of all men, especially of those who are its professed votaries? Yet let us not deceive ourselves in our scholastic pride, and claim, as we often do, for our department of labor, exclusive praise for strength and culture of mind. There may be little intellectual effort in shaping a shoe, or in constructing a carriage wheel. But I never trod the proud deck of a ship, nor looked at the clanking machinery of a steamboat, nor witnessed the powerful rush of a railroad car, nor even saw the complicated processes of a manufactory of woolen or cotton cloth, without feeling that there are other men of mind than scholars, and other works of mind than poems, histories, orations and dramas. And when we have stood gazing at some almost breathing statue, or some splendid painting; or have walked through some Grecian colonnade, or the sounding aisles of some Gothic pile, we have been obliged

to admit that there can be taste, cultivation, and noble conceptions in other walks than those of learning. That the graces of proportion can be manifested, that the cold marble and the inanimate canvas can kindle in the soul the tender or lofty emotions, and that hard granite, porphyry, or free stone, wrought and disposed by the art of man, can fill the mind with ideas of beauty, grandeur, and majesty : or, rising in the lofty sharp arch, and vaulted cloister, lift the thought with the eye till it pierces into the third heaven, and expatiates among the celestial scenes which revelation discloses. Painting, statuary, and architecture have their truths to teach, as well as science and literature. And thought and culture may also be associated with the hard and athletic frame of the workman as well as with the more delicate and attenuated form of the scholar.

So far from undervaluing the intellectual excellence which is found in other departments of industry, it is rather incumbent upon us to defend the propriety, value, and dignity of our own pursuits.

For how common it is for the scholar to be derided, and because he possesses no knowledge of the business of the world, because he cannot plow a field, make a crop, break a horse, build a house, nor drive a bargain, to infer that he is a useless cipher, that he is but a plodding book worm, that much learning hath made him mad, that his life of study is a life of indolence, chosen because he disliked labor, that like a sponge he absorbs without imparting, and that while he is supported by the labors of others, he adds nothing to the well-being of the State.

How false and unworthy is this view, is attested by many facts. The private labors of Galileo, Kepler, Laplace, and Newton, are of daily utility to the world. Without these, commerce could not spread her wings, and steer her adventurous course over the treacherous deep. The private studies of Watt, and Fulton,

of Sir Humphrey Davy, and Benjamin Franklin, of Sir Richard Arkwright, Eli Whitney, and Morse, have added to society the wealth which it would have required many millions of ordinary men by the usual methods to produce. They have covered us with the most comfortable and luxurious clothing at the lowest price, they transport us and our products to the greatest distances in the briefest possible time, and convey the messages we wish to send, from one end of a continent to another, with the lightning's flash. Any one of these men, by his discoveries and inventions, has produced results as to the increase of wealth and comfort in the world, equal to the united labors of millions of ordinary men. Civilized society could better spare from the earth the whole population of Africa, New Holland, and America, (her European settlers excepted,) than she could spare these few men and their inventions. It is by their labors stimulating and aiding the general industry of the world, that any plain farmer around us has more comforts and luxuries in his humble dwelling, than were enjoyed by the gentry and barons of England 300 years ago.\*

But it may be objected that these examples are taken rather from the pursuits of science than of literature; that some of those whom we have mentioned were far removed from the rank of scholars; that the scientific man investigates the laws of nature, and suggests, if he does not himself construct those machines and engines, which supersede the labor of the hands and improve the condition of men,—that the same cannot be said of the man of letters, whose labors manifest themselves in no product of skill, which require no corporeal matter on which to act, which exert their influence alone through thought and language, and are embodied only in written and oral speech.

We claim, respecting these men, that those who

---

\* See Hallam's Middle Ages, Chap. IX. p. 2.

were farthest from pursuits merely literary, had yet, by their habits, passed from the class of workmen into that of students; and we trust it will be apparent, before we have finished, that those labors too which may, strictly speaking, be termed the labors of the learned, are entitled to all the praise which has been conferred upon them, and that the scholar's efforts are essential to the prosperity and true glory of every State, and lead, rather than follow, the discoveries of science, and the more polished arts of life.

Can any deny that language is the noblest gift of God to man, and that its skilful use is a weapon of power to him who can so employ it, and enables him to exert a mighty influence on society? What so delights and instructs you as the books you read? What so moves you to action as the persuasive reasonings of eloquence? What loss to the world, were the varied literature which adorns it to be destroyed, and the voice of eloquence which resounds in the Senate house, pleads at the bar, or warns from the pulpit, to be hushed in silence,—were the song of the poet to cease, the muse of history to take her flight from earth, and the calm reasonings of philosophy to be heard no more!

Yet the nations who have originated all the literature in existence are few in number. Not more than eight or nine of the many that have covered our earth can claim a historic interest in this department, and these are confined to a belt of the globe in the northern hemisphere, not more than 20 or 30 degrees in width. And what is more, all that is now available is the product of the white or Caucasian race of men, who, if not constitutionally fitted for these employments beyond the rest of our race, have yet been chosen by Providence as the great instruments of human advancement, and been thus led to those developments of mind.

Of all the historic nations, Egypt is the earliest. Her pyramids and catacombs, the repositories of her dead, are speaking monuments of the cultivation and greatness of her living men. She chose to write her history on stone and not on parchment, and there it stands in sculptured relief on her eternal pyramids, obelisks, and temples. Yet her written language, though probably what all written language in its earlier stages once was, is an enigma. Her departed priests, the hierophants of her mysteries, have descended to the catacombs, where their mummy bodies still lie, and have taken the key with them. Yet the sculptured monuments of Memphis and Thebes exhibit to us with astonishing perfection the traces of Egyptian life, so that we more perfectly know how these Egyptians lived 3000 years ago, how they performed the various agricultural and mechanic arts, and conducted the details of domestic life, than we do of any other *ancient* nation, and even of many that are modern.\* The forms of their furniture, and the methods pursued in their various employments, teach their high civilization at a period when the history of Europe, including Greece, had not commenced, and long before Carthage, Rome and Athens were known. And the recorded fact that they gave philosophy to Greece, and through the great law-giver of the Jews imparted their own learning to that nation, shows that they have exerted a mighty influence upon the intellectual state, as we know they did upon the political and economical condition of the ancient world. Whatever impulse is once given to the mind, is transmitted from generation to generation in the race of scholars; the direction given to it is in some measure preserved; and it is not impossible that even *our* minds and char-

---

\* See Wilkinson's Manners and Customs of the ancient Egyptians, Roscellini "I monumenti dell' Egitto, &c., Description de l'Egypte pendant l'expédition l'armee Francaise.

acters may be in some small and unknown degree influenced by what Egypt has done and thought thirty centuries ago.

But when we pass from these to the ancient people of God, we find a literature indeed, and one of exalted and sacred character. We find it too existing in its highest perfection in its earliest examples. Job lived one thousand years before Homer and Hesiod, the earliest of the Grecian poets, and Moses wrote more than 1000 years before Herodotus, the father of Grecian history. Yet where do we find more historic simplicity, skill, and beauty, than in the writings of Moses; more warmth, sublimity, pathos and keen invective, than in the book of Job? Infinitely beneath the finer passages of this noble poem, are the highest wrought productions of the Grecian muse, or any other that has since sung. And whether you listen to the wailings of David's or Jeremiah's harp, or hearken to the loftier and more august march of Isaiah and Habakkuk, or follow Ezekiel, Daniel, or John into the regions of Apocalyptic vision, or whether you open your mind to the more than Demosthenian eloquence of Paul, you perceive intellectual excellence which can be found no where else. The sad lament of Orpheus over Eurydice, or of Andromache at her parting with Hector, the tenderest portions of Virgil and Homer, bear no comparison with the lament of David over Saul and Jonathan, or his sad complaint over Absalom his son; nor does the sublime description of Homer, who makes Olympus shake at the nod of Jove, bear to be mentioned with the divine theophanies of the Hebrew prophets, or the august representation of the Judge upon his throne in Revelation, before whose face the heavens and the earth fled away. All this sacred literature of the Old Testament and the New, though embalmed in three languages, the Hebrew, the Chaldee, and the Greek, is classed by us under

the head of Jewish literature, because the same Hebraistic spirit, the same traces of Jewish mind, reign through all.

Can any one contemplate the effect these writings have produced upon the world, the changes they have occasioned in domestic life and civil society, and can any one look forward to the exceeding changes yet to follow, and not appreciate the power of literature? Shall we be blamed for bringing forward those which are divine and inspired writings, to illustrate the effect of productions which emanate from man alone? Shall we be told that these are the words of God, and cannot therefore show what the words of man can do? We admit the fact. But God put honor upon the pen of the learned, when he employed it to communicate his will. When he chose not the sword of the conqueror, when he used not the weapons of Joshua, the spear of Saul, the bow of David, and the prowess of Samson, to establish that religion which is to triumph over every other, but employed rather the pen of the prophet, and the tongue of the teaching priest, and the fiery apostle. He chose those instruments most adapted in themselves to affect the mind, most suited to enlighten the understanding, and to bend the will; and then superadded the efficient influences of the Holy Ghost, to make all these irresistibly effectual in them that are saved.

But all the influence which this sacred literature has had as addressing the natural reason of men, and changing in this way the face of society, goes far in illustrating the power of those considerations which are addressed through the medium of language to the mind of man.

I might revert to the influence which another branch of the family of Shem, the Arabians, exerted from the 9th to the 14th century, when Christian scholars resorted to the Arabico-Moorish schools of Spain, and

at Cordova, Seville, and Tolédo, obtained a knowledge of science, Astronomy, Mathematics, Medicine, Chemistry, and Botany, which could not be acquired at that period in the Christian schools of Europe. But the brightest and most cheerful spot in all the realms of learning, which has not been irradiated by the light of heavenly inspiration, is found in the almost enchanted land of Greece. Wide as her fame has spread, and mighty as were her undertakings, and her success, and large as is the place she fills in our memory of the past, her entire territorial limits, including the isles of Greece, did not exceed one-half the limits of North Carolina. The land of Homer, of Hesiod, Euripides, Herodotus, Thucydides, Demosthenes, Alexander, Pericles, Aristotle, and Plato, in territorial extent was less than half the State in which we are now assembled.\* Yet what an influence did she exert, and what sway do her departed scholars yet possess over the civilized world! The classic mind of Greece, her classic song, her classic beauty, her profound philosophy; the blind bard of Scio; the Doric majesty of Hesiod; the tragic muse of Euripides and Sophocles; the burning lyre of Sappho; the rich and full pen of Plato; the chaste historic muse of Herodotus, and the terse Thucydides, and the smooth Xenophon; and the severe and logical Aristotle;—how

---

\* Attica, for example, the abode of elegance and refinement, extended in length not more than 45 miles, or a day's journey, from one extreme point to the other. And Elis, the sacred land, was 54 miles in length by half this distance in breadth. Yet it, as well as Athens and Delphi, contained 3,000 statues exquisitely wrought of gods and heroes. Among them was the colossal image of the Olympian Jove, the master-piece of Phidias, occupying a magnificent temple, and reaching, though the Thunderer was represented in a sitting posture, the height of not less than 60 feet. And this holy land of the Greeks was enriched with the costly gifts of cities, provinces and kings. The counties and districts of our States are therefore equal in size with these tribes of Greece, whose renown is wide as the world. The land which was so studied with noble edifices and so filled with works of art,

"Where each old poetic mountain  
Inspiration breathed around,"

must have attained a cultivation which few spots on earth have ever exhibited. Pliny Hist. Nat. XXXIV., 17. Heeren's Politics of Ancient Greece.

have they aroused, quickened, moulded, strengthened, chastened, adorned, beautified, and polished the intellectual character of following ages! How many a son of the Muses has been called forth to poetic effort by Homer, and how far more widely and permanently has Aristotle, the preceptor of Alexander, ruled the world through his writings, than Alexander of Macedon did by his sword!

Greece has furnished us with our most beautiful models in architecture, statuary and the arts, with the most beautiful forms for the vessels which adorn our tables and the vases made for ornament or use. She has spread her refinement over the whole of our social life.

The Roman literature, though it has not the simplicity, versatility, and beauty of the Greek, is still polished, stately, and magnificent. It has an authority, gravity, dignity, solidity, and sobriety, arising out of the moral courage, calmness, and lofty pride of the old Roman. We have all been delighted with the sublimity and pathos of Virgil, with the courtly wit of Horace, and the keen sarcasm of Juvenal, with the Asiatic eloquence of Cicero, and the historic excellence of Livy and Tacitus. But independent of the models this language affords us, it contains many monuments of value to the lawyer, in its ancient Jurisprudence, and having been the language of learning among all European scholars for a length of time, it possesses treasures of knowledge, not only in general literature and science, but more especially in theology, in which, out of England, it has been, until comparatively a few years, almost the universal language of scholars.

Nor should we, in a complete view of letters, pass over the vernacular literature of modern nations; the sweetness of the Italian language, and the immortal names of Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso. Dante,

imaginative, bold, terrific, and sublime, Petrarch and Ariosto, fanciful, but polished and graceful. Tasso, passionate and sentimental, with a host of writers who, in the various departments of learning, have in some, though an inferior degree, perpetuated the fame of ancient Italy.

The majesty of the Spanish, illustrated in the vigorous Lope de Vega, the romantic Calderon, the inimitable Cervantes; the ease, point, and elegance of the French, in Corneille, Racine, Moliere, Fenelon, Pascal, and Bossuet; the copious, flexible, and powerful German, with its host of writers, its noble and gigantic Luther leading the van, and the moderns of a different spirit following in the rear, all having their individual excellences, and their individual or national defects. The names of Klopstock, Lessing, Winkelman, Goethe, Herder, Wieland, and Schiller, with many others, suggest themselves as illustrations of the fertility and copiousness of the German mind.

And in our own English learning, what a noble array of talent in all departments might we not adduce! The time-honored names of Bacon, Locke, Newton, of Milton and Shakspeare, of Addison, Johnson and Burke, with others of our own day, bring before us, as scholars, so many proud recollections and anticipations, as time and language fail us in expressing.

If the French have pursued to a greater length the physical sciences, and the Germans have excelled us in philologic and critical research, in no other departments are we outdone, but in Philosophy, in Poetry, in History, and the various walks of professional learning, we have wrought out a most extensive and rich literature, which for practical value can be equalled by no other nation under heaven, ancient or modern.

As we have said before, all this array of learning and talent which this rapid sketch has brought before

you, is the work of a few historic nations living in those latitudes with which ours in America correspond: and of that Caucasian race of men, of whom the Anglo-Saxons, for enterprise and energy, are the noblest examples. Other races of men have delved the soil, hunted the wild beast, cultivated successfully the imitative arts, or been renowned for martial valor and extensive conquests, but none other like this has won such noble trophies of intellectual prowess, or left, wherever they have gone, such useful inventions, and such noble monuments of literature and the arts. In the increasing taste for literature in all these nations, we see their general civilization advancing. What was once exclusively confined to a few lettered men, has now become the recreation of the many. Every where are the writings of our scholars diffused, and what was accomplished by public recitations in ancient Greece, is now obtained by the untiring press. By the time almost that our orators in the national legislature have resumed their seats, their last words are in type; in a few moments more to be on their way to the most distant corners of the land. Our travellers, as they move with electric rapidity over land and sea, have their hands filled and their minds employed with the newest publications of our popular writers, furnished at a price which brings them within the reach of all. Not only our scholars, but our more intelligent merchants and artisans, beguile the weary hours of their journeyings as Cicero and Atticus would have done of old, with some interesting author. In Germany the number of books annually printed has nearly trebled since 1815. A similar increase has been observed in most European countries, but in no land more than in our own. The former amusements of men in the various walks of life, are superseded. The theatres are almost forsaken by the more refined part of society, and games of

chance or skill, and the pleasures of the wine-cup happily exchanged to a great extent for the recreation which books afford.\*

It were indeed to be desired that this were more common than it is among our people; but every year, in proportion as education is diffused, and carried beyond mere elementary knowledge, will this state of society rapidly advance.

To this class of literary men, you, gentlemen of the Societies, appropriately belong. It is to be presumed that with the advantages of education with which you have been favored, Literature will at least be your amusement and study, if not your immediate employment, as producers yourselves, of that material of which it consists. It is true, of the hundreds of thousands who have thronged the schools of Europe and America, there have been but few who have produced works which have lived when they were dead. But the influence of intellectual labor is, for all this, never lost. The intelligent teacher, divine, or advocate, who has never written aught he has thought worthy to be published to the world, has yet influenced a multitude of other minds, and the wave of this influence shall widen continually, and be perpetuated in the generations to come. It is thus that the character of a people is made up by the united influences which have been transmitted through previous generations. This general influence you will at least exert; and there is no reason why you should not aspire to emulate those scholars who have gone before you, and leave behind you works of genius, which shall be the admiration of ages.

God has given us a noble ancestry, whose virtues should stimulate us to imitate them. The founders of

---

\* See Brande's Dictionary of Science, Art and Literature.

the American republics surpassed in excellence of character the founders of every other nation. They were not uncivilized barbarians like the Pelasgi and Hellenes of Greece, but they brought hither the civilization of Europe and the Christian religion in its purity. One of their earliest acts was the establishment of colleges for the education of the rising race.

And how wonderful is our progress in extent, population and commerce! Since the year in which, as some of you are now doing, I bade farewell to the College to whose care I am indebted for this early portion of my education, our population has risen from 10 to 20,000,000, our settlements have reached the Pacific, and our cannon thunder in what was at that time the heart of the revolutionary monarchy set up by Iturbide, after Mexico had thrown off the Spanish rule. There has been an equal progress in science and in literature, as in commerce, manufactures and population. Our men of science and our authors are increasing in number, and (but that there is some diversion in favor of a false and extravagant style and a transcendental Philosophy,) are increasing also in general excellence. There is no reason why the highest perfection may not be reached by the scholars of America. It is said nature has thrown away the mould in which Shakspeare and Milton were cast. But there may be other poets to arise among us equally great. Others, who shall equal the immortal bard of Avon—others, who shall pass

The flaming bounds of space and time;  
The living throne, the sapphire blaze,  
Where angels tremble as they gaze,—

like the Homer of England, who beheld these glorious mysteries,

But blasted with excess of light,  
Closed his eyes in endless night.

And those walks of literature and science in which other nations excel, may here reach a higher emi-

nence. There are here all the elements of greatness, every thing which has made Greece and Egypt famous, England and France, Italy, Spain and Germany, if we are but true to ourselves and the destiny to which Providence points us.

Let me exhort you then, young gentlemen, in the first place as scholars, to set before you high and noble examples. Let the bright train of worthies, who have cultivated the noble natures which God has given them, stimulate to effort. *Nil sine magno labore Deus mortalibus dedit.* Nerve yourselves, then, for the strife where so many have won the prize; and among the many, choose for yourselves models with which to compare the efforts of your own genius, that you may be stimulated and corrected by them.

Lay the foundation of your characters, as scholars, in a deep and thorough acquaintance with the ancient wisdom. Be it your effort to ground yourselves in a knowledge of the classic tongues, and in an acquaintance with the style, genius, and writings of their best authors. The simple beauty of the Greeks, the stately majesty of the Latins of the Augustan age, the accuracy of their expressions, and the finish of their compositions, in which alone perhaps the moderns have failed to reach them, will be of inestimable advantage to your own style of thinking and expression, giving selection to your thoughts, purity, elevation, and richness to your diction. And let it be ever borne in mind, that the Latin is especially necessary to a literary and professional man, for the stores of knowledge which it will open to him and lay tributary at his feet.

The ancients by some have been decried, and it has been maintained that equal advantage in style and all things else worthy of our attention, may be obtained by studying the master-pieces of the moderns. And we must admit that signal advantages are so obtained, and that in extent and variety of knowledge the mod-

ern authors are greatly to be preferred. But in vain may we look for a profound acquaintance with our own tongue without the study of these, and in vain may we seek precision, purity, and variety of style, by any other process than this. Plato did indeed inscribe over the gates of the Academy, Οὐδεις ἀγεωμετρητὸς εἰσεστω, "None but a proficient in Geometry can enter here," while he excluded Homer from his ideal republic. But while we would agree with Plato as to the great importance to all the professions of an adequate acquaintance with mathematical studies, we would say, that but for Homer, Plato would not have been Plato; he never could have been called the Homer of the Philosophers.

It is here that the European chiefly excel the American scholars; in their superior acquaintance with the classical writers of antiquity, in the deeper and more extensive knowledge they gain of the writings of those leaders in taste and the arts.

We need a more enthusiastic devotion to the classic authors in our country, for the honor of American scholarship.

Let me beseech you, then, young gentlemen, to leave no efforts untried to be proficient here, wherever else you may be deficient.

But, my young friends, there is another element of true and permanent literature, without which it must continually be superseded, of which the majority of these heathen writers, and indeed the great burden of the modern authors, are destitute. I mean the moral and religious element. The writer and scholar entirely deficient here, must eventually be superseded and his name be forgotten. Voltaire fifty years ago reigned as king over the whole empire of learning. He gave laws to nearly the whole of literary Europe, and spake with authority to many even on these shores. His literature was various, his productions

numerous and popular. But they lacked the moral element, and they have passed away. His name is no more honored, nor his memory revered even in France, which adored him. The professor, who a short time since quoted his authority to a Parisian audience, was hissed in indignation. And Byron, the gloomy powerful genius who so filled men's minds and mouths a quarter of a century ago, is doomed to lose his hold upon the heart of men, because he lacked this conservative element of Literature and of society itself. So the Allwise Ruler has determined that the memory of the wicked shall rot. And in proportion as Christianity is diffused through the world, and rises supreme over other forms of religious belief, will this moral element be the more demanded by society. The day is coming when the immoral and licentious in literature will condemn it, for the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters the sea.

And indeed while commending to you the classic authors, without a knowledge of whom no man can be reckoned a scholar, I can but warn you that the moral and religious principles they inculcate are for the most part unworthy and degrading. Horace, Ovid, and Juvenal, though to be esteemed for their elegance, wit, or sweetness of expression, are coarse, indelicate or licentious. And Homer, the most applauded of all the ancient poets, has doubtless contributed, in no small degree, to nurture that spirit of war which has pervaded all modern nations. There were indeed noble characters among the ancient heathen. The life of Socrates no one can read without emotion.

“Tutor of Athens! He in every street  
Dealt priceless treasure: goodness his delight,  
Wisdom his wealth, and glory his reward!”\*

And none can fail of being affected with the sublimity of his death scene, and to wonder at the calmness

---

\* Thompson's Liberty, Part II.

and composure with which he drank the fatal hemlock.

The character of Brutus, too, looks forth in prominence from the Roman history.

“Look thou abroad through nature, to the range  
Of planets, suns, and adamantine spheres,  
Wheeling unshaken through the void immense,  
And speak, O man, does this capacious scene,  
With half that kindling majesty, dilate  
Thy strong conception, as when Brutus rose  
Refulgent from the stroke of Cesar’s fate,  
Amid the crowd of patriots! and his arm  
Aloft extending, like eternal Jove,  
When guilt brings down the thunder, called aloud  
On Tully’s name, and shook his crimson steel,  
And bade the father of his country hail!  
For lo! the tyrant prostrate in the dust,  
And Rome again is free.”\*

And who can read unmoved the language of the same Brutus, on the eve of the great battle at Philippi, which extinguished all hope of freedom, when he addressed his friend, alluding to that suicidal act by which he perished, “We shall either be victorious, or remove beyond the power of those that are so. We shall deliver our country, or ourselves by death.”

But even their examples are of questionable virtue, and the great body of ancient literature breathes no emotions which Christianity can approve.

As to the polite learning of the moderns, it omits wholly to speak of Christianity. It suppresses altogether the pure and elevated doctrines of the gospel. It appeals to no higher principles than paganism. It is a sublimated heathenism, its mythology left off. It speaks of Jesus as it does of Confucius, and allows itself as little to be affected by the holy and divine life of the one, as by the cold and heartless principles of the other.

All this literature has been produced in a sinful, godless world, and partakes of the character of its authors and its patrons. Shall I therefore bid you shun

---

\* Akenside, Pleas. of the Imagination, B. 1, v. 387-400.

it? Nay, I cannot. The sun that shines upon you, the rain that descends, and the atmosphere which encircles you, may injure your bodies, and plant within them the seeds of disease. Yet must you live among these elements, and often be exposed to them, to your harm. So must the scholar live among these monuments of genius. So must he breathe their literary spirit, and kindle his torch at their ever shining splendor. He must incur the peril to reap the good.\*

But let him be aware of the danger, let him counteract it by studying the book of inspiration, where he shall find a purer, because a heavenly morality, a richer, because a divine beauty: A sublimity, which is not of earth, an authority, with which no ancient wisdom can compare, examples before which those of Socrates, Brutus and Lucretia fade away in dim eclipse. For however much it may promote the spirit of freedom on which our institutions rest, to catch its inspiration from the Grecian and Roman learning, it will best promote it surely, to learn it from that noblest of Roman citizens, the Christian freeman, Paul.

He is a freeman whom the truth makes free,  
 And all are slaves beside. \* \* \* \* \*  
 When we are pure, as God is pure,  
 Then we are free. Then liberty, like day,  
 Breaks on the soul, and by a flash from Heaven  
 Fires all the faculties with glorious joy.†

---

\* In the language of Milton, he must betake himself especially to

“the olive grove of Academe  
 Plato's retirement, where the attic bird  
 Trills her thick warbled notes the summer long;  
 Where Illissus rolls  
 His whispering stream: within the walls then view  
 The schools of ancient sages; his who bred  
 Great Alexander to subdue the world,  
 Lyceum there, and painted stoa next. \* \* \*  
 Thence to the famous orators repair,  
 Those ancient, whose resistless eloquence  
 Wielded at will that fierce democratic  
 Shook the Arsenal, and fulminated over Greece,  
 To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne.”

[*Paradise Regained*, B. IV.

The race of toiling scholars ever since have labored in this forge, have sharpened their wits on this anvil.

† Task, B. V.

It is refreshing to see, when the Bible is driven by the voice of authority from common schools, colleges rising like this, patronized by the people of God, and in some measure under ecclesiastical supervision. It is carrying out the plans of our fathers. It is giving a guaranty, at least, that here, far away from the corruption of the city, learning and religion shall go hand in hand, and that in the midst of a people who honor God, there shall be an institution for the rearing of their youth, where heathenism shall be spoiled of its learning and refinement, and they shall be made tributary to the inculcation of a sound morality, and the promotion of true religion. Honored men who have founded this institution! and ye who have stood by it in the dark hours of its struggles and adversity! be encouraged to persevere. A kind Providence watches vigilantly over your rising Seminary, and will provide for its future advancement. Do but be faithful to the trust committed to you, set your standard of Education high, and imbue your youth with virtue and piety, and you are obliged to succeed.

The day will come, and may be not far remote, when your College shall obtain a commanding eminence, from which it may wield a powerful influence in favor of learning and truth.

Whether aware of it or not, you have fallen upon a heaven appointed method of providing for the religious and moral training of your youth, while you discipline their minds and store them with human learning. The tribe of Levi was dispersed in Israel of old, and their 48 Levitical cities were so many seats of learning to God's chosen people. The schools of the prophets and the scribes, and the schools of the primitive church at Alexandria, Caesarea, Ephesus, Smyrna, and elsewhere, to the principal of which tradition gives an apostolic origin, are additional evi-

dences that it is by a divine appointment that the church should take under her own supervision the education of her youth. And it may yet prove that the Teacher in the Christian Church, who is acknowledged in all European Confessions of Faith of the Presbyterian denomination to be a permanent officer *of the Church*, and was so regarded by the reformers, is really as much of Divine appointment as the Pastor, and that as the synagogue and school were connected in the Jewish church, so the church and school should be in the Christian. The Universities of Scotland were once under the immediate supervision of the church, and were annually visited and examined by a commission from their ecclesiastical bodies; they were, in their inception, and through a long period of their history, institutions ecclesiastical rather than civil. And in our own country, the earliest and best universities and colleges were founded by religious men for religious purposes, and were filled by officers who were pious in heart, and who were pledged to teach the youth the doctrines and duties of Christianity. The Hebrew Bible was for years read at morning prayers, and the Greek Testament at evening prayers, by students and teachers at Harvard and Yale, in the days of our fathers, and I am not unwilling to see the custom again introduced, and our youth led daily to the well-spring of all sacred knowledge, the inspired scriptures in the Greek and Hebrew tongues.\*

There might then be some hope that our young men would be truly learned, and that with this learning they would imbibe a respect and reverence for the book of God, the earliest portions of which were written more than 3000 years ago, and more than 600 years before the earliest authors of Greece; which, like the gnarled oak, breasting the storms of a thousand winters, has stood the shock of revolution, and

---

\* See on the preceding the Author's little book on Theological Education.

the attacks and scorn of men ; which has survived every empire and dynasty but the last, and is itself one day to be the law-book of the world, the rule of duty between man and man, and nation and nation. Pursue then the path you have chosen, and heaven shall add its smiles upon your enterprise. Over these hills and valleys, among these mountains and rivers, there shall live a noble and virtuous population, sanctified by a religion such as old Greece and Rome knew nothing of, guided by oracles far different from those of the old oak of Dodona and the priestess of Delphi, and softened, refined, and ennobled by a Literature which shall throw into the shade that which spread its loved charms through Cicero's retreat at Tusculum, over the sweet vales of Attica, or resounded in Ionian melody through the Greek cities of the Lesser Asia. For that which the bard of Mantua unknowingly sung, must yet be fulfilled :

“ *Ultima cumaci venit jam carminis aetas ;  
Magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo,  
Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna ;  
Jam nova progenies coelo demittitur alto.*”

Or, as our Christian poet has more beautifully expressed it, with heartfelt anticipation of the blissful season, of the morning heralded by so many prophets ;  
The time shall come when

One song employs all nations : and all cry  
“ Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us !”  
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks  
Shout to each other, and the mountain tops  
From distant mountains catch the flying joy :  
Till nation after nation taught the strain,  
Earth rolls the rapturous hosannah round.