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ADDRESS

AND

POEM,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Columbia College Alumni Association,

AT

HOPE CHAPEL, OCTOBER 27, 1858.

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ADDRESS

BY

THEODORE SEDGWICK, A. M.,

BEFORE THE

Alumni Association of Columbia College,

OCTOBER 27, 1858.

ADDRESS.

Occasions like this are in many respects peculiar to this country. Indeed it is only in modern times that educated persons have met together on any considerable scale, for purely intellectual communion and instruction.

The great games of Greece were a combination of religious festival and popular amusement. The ruder Romans seem to have collected only for the drama, the sacred rites, or the fierce military sports which crowded their amphitheatres. The Floral Games and Courts of Love were the recreations of an opulent and luxurious aristocracy, that pressed poetry and literature, along with their other vassals, into base and menial service.

In more recent times, indeed, the immense development and spread of instruction has greatly changed the character of all intercourse, public no less than private, and now, for several centuries, learned and Royal Societies, Sorbonnes, Institutes, Academies, have, with more or less of pomp and parade, with more or less of kingly and oligarchical patronage, with more or less of devotion to some special branch of knowledge, collected educated and accomplished audiences.

But meetings precisely like this, where persons of various pursuits, of different creeds, political and religious, attracted by no specialty of learning, are drawn together

solely by the tie of a common education—occasions like this, I say, are, in their frequency, the friendly and fraternal feelings which they preserve and express, their simplicity and their purely intellectual character, almost entirely peculiar to this country.

And the topic which occupies hours like these must, from the nature of the case, almost ever be in some way connected with the theme, trite yet ever new, worn yet alway fresh—the great subject of Education.

Education—*Alma Mater*—second only to the mother! Identified and indeed almost identical with that blessed relation, the guide of our tottering and lisping childhood, the support of stern and struggling manhood, solace of illness, comforter of grief, irradiating with benign light even the shaded paths of age—it is Education who summons us here to-night, and it is on her interests that, for the few moments we are permitted to be together, our minds most naturally dwell.

You are well aware how much debate there has been as to the proper *curriculum* of academic teaching, as to the extent to which our early education should be carried, and the branches of which it should be composed—how much controversy there has even been as to the value of any collegiate education whatever. Into the details of that somewhat technical discussion I do not propose at length to enter. I wish rather to speak of Education in a more enlarged sense, as the guide, the teacher, the companion of our entire lives—the deity that sits by our cradle and accompanies us to the tomb, which hears the first feeble cry of infancy, and receives the last yet feebler sigh that carries the soul before its Creator—in the sense in which the term comprehends the right guidance and control of that unappeasable, passionate thirst for knowledge, which, if there were nothing else, would proclaim our divine origin and higher destiny.

I do not mean to speak of religious Education. I

fully agree with my reverend and distinguished friend, Dr. Hopkins, of Williamstown, that "nothing now on the earth, or that ever has been, can compare with Christianity in its *educating* power," but, for many reasons, I do not intend to touch upon this vast and grave theme. I confine myself to intellectual Education, as the phrase is generally used.

I have also rather in my view the public interests and results of Education: the private training of the mind is another wide topic, upon which I do not propose to enter. Education with us is admitted to be a matter of public interest and concern; let us therefore inquire what should be its relations to and its effect upon the character of our country.

Take a few steps backward in the history of that country. It is now two hundred and forty-nine years this autumn since Henry Hudson first got soundings inside of Sandy Hook. I say this autumn, for on the 4th September he entered the lower bay, nor did he leave these waters till the 4th of October;—European eyes thus first resting on this portion of America in its most brilliant and gorgeous estate.

Those who have made a western passage across the Atlantic in fine weather, and with favoring gales, know the striking change that comes over the hue of the heavens when about two-thirds of the long journey is achieved; how the cold gray sky of Northern Europe gives way, as we approach America, to a deep and yet deeper blue; how the firmament seems to lift itself up and up above the expanse of waters: how the air gains in freshness and clearness, until we step upon the western shore, beneath its brilliant sun and absolutely transparent atmosphere.

We all too, even before having the opportunity of comparing the old and new continents—we all are familiar with the gorgeous aspect of our autumnal world—the vivid

dyes of the forest, the deep color of the heavens, the bracing vigor of the air, the marvellous medium between the torrid heats of our fiery summers, and the arctic severity of our winter seasons.

Taking ourselves back then for two hundred and forty-nine autumns, we can somewhat realize the impression made by the first aspect of America on the senses long trained to observation of the hardy English mariner, who after two unsuccessful voyages in quest of a northern passage to Japan and China, turned apparently in despair from a third attempt, and steering southward from Nova Zembla, coasted the American shore from the capes of the Massachusetts Bay to the Headlands of the Chesapeake, and for the first time explored the shores of the mighty waters that bathe the spot on which we stand. What a succession of marvels and delights must that first voyage up the Hudson have been !

The daring navigator passed the low point of land where the struggling tides of the North and East Rivers then met, as they meet to-day, and standing on he saw the round bluff at the lower bank of the famed Spuyten Duyvil. Scarce had his eye rested on this inlet when he found himself beneath the lofty battlements of basalt, half hidden with verdure, that, like some ancient ivy-covered ruin, frown over against the natural terraces on which the lovely town of Yonkers at present stands. He stretched up Tappan Bay, where in our time the genius of commerce has waded half across the mighty river, her arms laden with the spoils of the West. He stood on beneath the bold bluff of the Hook Mountain, which to-day casts its evening shadows on the fair villages of Nyack and Tarrytown. He passed the gorge in the hills behind which the Rockland Lake, spring of greater health and luxury than the Bandusian fount, lay slumbering ; over against it on his starboard hand he left the long projecting point which now groans with the products of the vine. He stood

across Haverstraw. He entered the narrow channel pierced among the lofty hills which stretch up from the Stony Point illustrated by the reckless daring of Wayne. He stood on between the mountains which shut in the river with their sheer descents, and still on he sailed to where the Fishkill Heights fall off to the Plains of Dutchess, just opposite the beautiful slope on which Newburgh stands—he passed the mouth of the creek whose steep sides are now crowned with the heroic memories of Clinton and Montgomery—he passed unconsciously beneath the curious plateau to which West Point has given a world-known name—he saw the conical outline of Sugar Loaf, the lofty peak of Crow's Nest, the gloomy crest of the Thunder Mountain ; and as he emerged from beneath the hoary side of Butter Hill his wondering gaze rested on the blue Catskills. He passed the curiously-jutting rock which now hides the town of Poughkeepsie from the eyes of the southern traveller, and so stood on between the rich counties of Ulster, Columbia and Greene, and on and on, till, as he tells us, he nearly reached the forty-third parallel of latitude, for so perfect was the state of nature that he could mark his progress by no artificial landmarks.

Such were the sights that presented themselves to the eyes of that ancient mariner as, pacing his narrow deck beneath the bright September sun, or the clear autumnal moon, he pursued his northern course. Even to our sated eyes the panorama is one of brilliant beauty ; what must it have been to his new and eager gaze ? no wonder he tells us that " with its grass and flowers, and delicious smells and goodly trees, it was as pleasant a land as ever he had seen." But he tells us of nature alone, of the river full of fish, the tobacco and the maize, the Indian wheat, the pompions and the grapes, the natives clad in deer skins and mantles of feathers, exchanging their oysters, beans and venison, their otter and beaver skins

for knives and beads—every line of his record is of a virgin world, of a state of absolute nature.

The natural features have indeed little changed. Hudson might have murmured the lines of our Bryant :

> Cool shades and dews are round my way,
> And silence of the early day ;
> 'Mid the dark rocks that watch his bed
> Glitters the mighty Hudson spread,
> Unrippled, save by drops that fall
> From shrubs that fringe his mountain wall.

The blue of the Catskills still blends with the blue of the horizon. The shadows of the clouds still lie on the slopes of the mountains. The Buttermilk Fall still flows and dashes over its rocky bed, and the sheer mountains still descend to the river brink. But in all things else how great the metamorphosis ! No white sail then saluted the mariner's eyes—no shrill steamboat whistle pierced his ears—no car thundered along the river's edge—no clearing showed the agency of civilization—no fence-row marked the institution of property—no villas peeped out from amid the clusters of oaks, locusts, sycamores and chestnuts.

Marvellous, in truth, in every part of the globe, are the achievements of the two hundred and fifty years which have rolled away since Hudson's eyes first saw the river that bears his name. What other period of equal length can compare with it ? Two hundred and fifty years ! It is the period from Augustus to the Emperor Decius—from William the Conqueror to Edward III. It does not cover the Kingly epoch of Rome. What two hundred and fifty years, I say, is comparable to it in its achievements ? and, whether we regard the organization of government—the accumulation of property—the development of the arts of civilization—or any or all of the elements, symbols, or landmarks of progress, of all the achievements of this mighty cycle what equal those which have been wrought on the banks of the Hudson ?

If America be the most striking instance of the rapidity and intensity of human progress, certainly the great city whose feet are bathed in the waters of the Hudson River is at once the most perfect type of that progress, and the most complete representative of America. Boston still bears the impress of the Puritan—Philadelphia of the Quaker—Richmond of the Cavalier—New Orleans of the Gaul,—but New York, in both its virtues and its vices—its excellences and its defects—its immense material progress, its gayety and good humor, its active and eager intelligence, its intense energy, its vast treasures of wealth and knowledge, its presumptuous audacity, its reckless lawlessness, its organized disorder, is the very symbol and type of the country. New York is the quintessence of America.

Contemplate New York with a bold and honest eye—friendly enough to see her virtues—not too friendly to notice her defects—and acknowledge that she is the true symbol and representative of the country. The shores on which Hudson found nothing but Indian canoes are now crowded with the sails of every clime. The banks where the wild beast then roamed are now covered with the dwellings of a teeming population. Religion has her temples—Science her schools—Humanity her hospitals. The land groans beneath long lines of aqueducts, with which nor Claudian nor Marcian monument can compare. A press that has no equal for activity or intelligence, keeps the mind perpetually alive, and thought has found an agent fleet as itself in the magical telegraph. The munificence of an Astor and a Cooper is putting instruction within the reach of all, while the age of upholstery and silk damask has almost passed away, and, thanks to the taste and liberality of an Aspinwall and a Belmont, art is pluming its wings for a triumphant flight.

Nor look alone on the brilliant side of the view. With cool and sagacious eye contemplate its sad defects. Gloomy streets, filthy with mud and offal—police negligent and

ineffective—offices in the hands of speculators—politics a game of plunder—elections secured by bribery scarce disavowed—a press of reckless audacity and uncontrolled license—crime unpunished—little order—no discipline. Take in all the lights, and with them all the shadows of the picture, and who—looking at what we have done, and at what we have the ability to do, at the wealth, the intelligence, the concentrated power, the general morality of the great population which God has called together on this narrow island—who will hesitate to declare that the good is destined to triumph, and that here on the banks of this magnificent river are laid the foundations of an imperial city, which shall preserve and establish the rights of man ! which shall keep alive the altar-fires of learning and science ; from which again shall radiate the lights of knowledge and virtue, and where intelligent freedom and true equality shall be adorned by all the graces and luxuries of an elder civilization ?

Such *will* be the career of New York. Let neither the shadow nor the danger of any present evil blind us as to the character of the past, or make us timid as to the future. There may be changes fierce and rapid ; there may be vast alterations in the forms of government ; we may be called on to make exertions and sacrifices of which even our fathers did not dream. But that the interests of property, learning, science, and religion will not prosper on this spot, let no man fear.

Looking forward, then, with confident hope, to the course of the magnificent prosperity of New York, as the chiefest jewel in the crown of our republic, let us ask ourselves to-night what are the true relations of the educated American to his city and to his country ? How can each man assist in the great task of leading or accelerating, advancing or prolonging, this triumphant line of march ?

But first let us have a preliminary word as to the na-

ture of what our education—our early education—should be. It is very certain that in any real sense of the term, our instruction—the teaching of our lives, of our minds, of our hearts, of our morals—our true education only begins where it is often ignorantly thought or carelessly said to finish. When we emerge from the collegiate hall—when the laurel berry crowns our temples—when we put on the *toga virilis*, and step on the theatre of the world, then at that moment does the real education of our lives begin. All that goes before is little else than a judicious selection of tools.

What should those tools be ?

The liberal education of Greece, in a technical sense, that is, the education of youth, consisted of grammar, gymnastic exercises, and music, a knowledge of poetic literature, especially of Homer, familiarity with the philosophical systems of the age, and a certain amount of rhetorical accomplishment. These things composed the academic instruction of Grecian youth.

And when we consider the life of the Greek, so various and yet so intense—when we reflect that the orator of to-day might to-morrow be serving in the army, and the next day leading their navies to battle, thus calling for the highest development of their physical, as well as of their intellectual qualities—when we consider that in that age of limited intercourse foreign tongues were of little utility, that science had as yet not begun her career of discovery, and that the best part of their religion was comprised in their philosophy, it may safely be said that the Greek academic *curriculum* was a very comprehensive and sufficient introduction to the then great business of life.

How is it with us ? How does *our* Collegiate instruction, as generally planned, fit our youth for the world into which they are to enter ? The liberal education of our time chiefly, indeed practically, may be said altogether to consist of Latin, Greek, and Mathematics. For any thing else that is added is rather an accretion, an ex-

crescence, than an integral part of the collegiate course ; it is imperfectly pursued, and no proficiency in it, however great, can secure academic honors. The vigor of our academic instruction is expended on Latin, Greek, and Mathematics.

Looking, then, at what our *curriculum* comprises and what it omits, I think there can be no doubt that (regard being had to the different periods of the world) the Greek course of instruction was much more complete, much more scientific, much better suited to fit the youth for the world in which he was to live, than is ours.

Our early education, borrowed directly from the universities of Europe, and fashioned on their system, is that of the schoolmen of the middle ages. At the period of the revival of letters, when Latin and Greek were the language of students all over the world, when no modern tongue had taken form or consistence, when science, struggling in the fetters of magic and alchemy, had made no true discoveries,—in other words, when this system was framed, it was well fitted to the wants of the age that created it.

But consider how deplorably insufficient it is for the necessities and requirements of our time. Latin and Greek are now, except for a small class of students, of little positive practical value. They are, indeed, still invaluable as matter of intellectual discipline and enjoyment ; but the question which I wish to ask you is, do not the dead languages engross too large a share of the precious spring time of our youth ? Within the last four centuries, modern languages have sprung into existence, rich with untold treasures of poetry, eloquence and knowledge for those sufficiently educated to appreciate them, while patient and elaborate science has revealed a world of marvels which excite the curiosity, or affect the interest of almost every human being. But both modern languages and the natural sciences are treated by our schools and colleges as of the most secondary consideration. Not

that in all cases they are wholly ignored, but that the energy, the vigor, the ambition of the academic course is all concentrated on the dead languages and mathematics. These occupy the mind ; these carry off the honors ; so that practically the youth comes out of college with no available knowledge of any tongue but his own, and no knowledge whatever of the natural sciences.

On what theory can this arrangement be defended ? No one will, I think, suspect me of underrating the value of Latin and Greek. We have all derived too much pleasure, too much profit from classical studies ever to speak of them lightly or with indifference. Those who have endured the atrocities of the Empire with Tacitus, marched through Gaul with Cæsar, waged the Peloponnesian war with Thucydides—who have heard Cicero thunder against Catiline, or Demosthenes against Philip—who have half read, half sung, the odes of Horace, or kept time to the lofty verse of Virgil, will hardly be ready to renounce or to decry a part of their education which has contributed so much to the pleasure and delight of their intellectual existence. As a discipline these studies are most excellent ; as the link between us and the early civilization of the world, they are invaluable. But, *Sit modus in rebus*—

Let there be method in all our doings. If, as says the Hebrew Sage, there is a time for all things, youth is most certainly the chosen time for the acquisition of oral speech of whatever tongue. It is then that the organs of utterance have their greatest flexibility ; it is then that the organs of hearing have their greatest susceptibility ; with a little care and a proper system a child in the first fifteen years of its existence will acquire French and German, and, if desired, Spanish or Italian, as easily as it does English, and as permanently.

In our country, of all countries, is this most important. Large districts of it are peopled by emigrants of foreign

lands, who slowly acquire our tongue. Our commercial cities swarm with citizens of French, of Spanish, of German and Italian birth, so that, to the young man in any branch of business, there is scarcely any thing more useful, any thing more important, than a knowledge of modern languages. French and German, at least, may be said to be almost indispensable.

Our inattention and indifference to the natural sciences is still more striking. We are brought up in almost absolute ignorance of the wonders and mysteries of the external world. We are not merely not taught the laws which govern the phenomena daily taking place around us; we are not even taught how to observe those phenomena. The result is, that to us, from Dan to Beersheba, all is barren. We grow up in an ignorance of all practical things, disgraceful to the age, eminently practical, in which we live. We are ignorant of the stars above our heads, of the pebbles beneath our feet, of the commonest processes going on around us, of the chemistry of bread, of the chemistry of wine, the transformation of insects, the growth and nurture and habits of plants. We are left in almost total ignorance of the laws of our own being, of the laws which should regulate our diet, our exercise, or the ventilation of our habitations. We know *nothing* of the daily actings and doings of our great Mother, Nature.

In turning our backs on these branches of instruction, we not only lose so much positive knowledge, but we totally neglect the development of the great talent of observation—a talent which can only be fostered by a constant attention to the natural world—the talent which perhaps has more to do with success in life than any other, which lights up the eager eye of genius, which gives practical insight into the affairs of life, which enables us to learn more from a single page of the great Book of Nature than Alexandrian or Bodleian libraries can teach us.

When the Scotch lad wandered forth from the sand-

pits along the shores of Cromarty with his old grandfather, the buccaneer's oak-handled hammer in hand, when he learned from Uncle Sandy how the lobster casts his claws, and where to find the lump-fish, he was fostering that talent for observation that has made the stone mason famous, and inscribed the name of HUGH MILLER high on the roll of science.

For this species of knowledge, too, nothing is easier than to create a love in early youth. Youth is naturally observant. If the taste be guided and stimulated, if the young eye be not forever turned away from the pages of nature to the dull routine of type, the youth would always be naturally observant.

Geology, Chemistry, Mechanics, have for youth generally the most powerful attraction. The boy who will turn in disgust from Antigone or Algebra, will willingly devote hours to a pneumatic cistern, will spend days cheerfully with the plane and the lathe, will explore with delight the hill-side, hammer in hand. Thus will he, on the one hand, acquire positive knowledge, and on the other foster that taste for instruction which is the surest preventive against idleness, which, after religion, is the surest guard against vice.

As to mathematics, there can be no dispute about their value as a part of our education. The only question is as to the period at which their serious study should begin and the amount of time which they should occupy. Accomplished persons, versed in the science of education, have thought they should be commenced at a very early age, and steadily, if not exclusively, pursued. It seems to me that this plan is of more than doubtful merit. Mathematics belong to the domain of pure dry reason. How many young minds are disposed to give their attention to matters of pure dry reason? Franklin's experience appears to be pregnant with instruction on this point. At the age of seven or eight he began arithmetic, failed

to master it, and gave it up, half in disgust, half in despair. At fifteen he renewed the attack, met with no difficulty or resistance, and went on conquering and to conquer. This is the record of one of the most logical—if not one of the most mathematical—minds that ever existed.

It appears to me not very difficult to show, that one of the chief occupations of early youth should be the familiar acquisition of foreign tongues and the systematic development of the habit of observation.

Look again at what our education omits. The education of Greece carefully cultivated gymnastic exercises, carefully developed the physical attributes, and hence, undoubtedly, the wonderful manysidedness of that wonderful people. At the Olympic Games the great feature was the foot-course, the boxing-match, or the chariot-race. Their great men were orators, or lawyers, or soldiers, advocates, or generals, or admirals, just as the emergency required.

Nor was this owing merely to the early and simpler state of existence in which they lived. Of Rome, remarkable above all things for her genius for administration, the same thing is true. Crassus, the rival of Pompey and Cæsar, was eminent at the bar. Cæsar was the second orator of Rome. Cicero served under Sylla in the Marsian wars. Horace left his inglorious shield on the field of battle. The physical education of the Romans was at all times carefully developed. In the worst days of the empire, the emperors contended in the ring for the applause which always followed physical prowess ; and it is something in favor of even a wretch like Commodus, that he was proud of the appellation of the Roman Hercules.

Look again at the aristocracy of England. How carefully have they kept up their vigorous amusements, their hardy sports, their boating, their shooting, their hunting, their yachting ! How little have they permitted the luxuries of the town to enfeeble and corrupt their manly

rural pleasures! No one can fail to see how much this wise ordering of their lives has done to endear them to the hearts of their sturdy people.

How striking is the contrast with us among those that we sometimes call our better classes—among those who are our more educated classes! From the time that the boy, whose fortune it is to be educated, is immured in school till the period when he is again to be immured in the lawyer's office, the counting-room, the dissecting-room, and from that time again until he enters upon the profession of his life, no systematic attention whatever is paid to the subject of physical education. All the health—all the exercise that he gets, he gets by nature or by chance. No regular opportunity is provided for it—no authoritative encouragement is given to it, no stimulus, no prize; all the ambition, all the zeal, all the ardor of his young, ignorant, and unreflecting nature is concentrated on the vigil and the midnight lamp. Severe labor, long terms, short vacations, crowded rooms, late hours, bad air—what is the natural result?

What can be the result? Well has it been said that the mind perishes as the body dwindles. Not for the pale crowd of sickly dyspeptics whom our colleges annually turn out, are the great prizes of life. There have indeed been Pascals and Byrons and Channings who, despite frail and miserable health, have achieved immortal things, but these are only exceptions which prove a great general rule.

It is the man of robust and enduring constitution, of elastic nerve, of comprehensive digestion, who does the great work of life. It is Scott with his manly form. It is Brougham with his superhuman powers of physical endurance. It is Franklin at the age of seventy camping out on his way to arouse the Canadas, as our hardiest boys of twenty now camp out in the Adirondacks or on the Miramichi. It is Napoleon sleeping four hours, and on horseback twenty. It is Washington with his

splendid frame and physical strength. These are the men who make the names which the world will not let die. Miserable is the philosophy and the practice which fails to recognize the importance of the animal part of our complicated structure.

What is there in our system to raise or develop such men? How is it possible for them to be produced by it? I mean our system of *Education*. Among the classes which do not so much boast of their intellectual training, the physical man is indeed infinitely better cared for. If you seek among our people for bodily strength, look at the great turn-outs of our firemen. Look at our crack volunteer regiments exchanging national courtesies with our sister States.—Among them you shall indeed find that sturdy vigor, that bodily strength and agility, without which all mental culture is but a preparation for disappointment and mortification.

Nor let the educated classes flatter themselves, that if they permit the sceptre to fall from their slight and feeble hands, dominion will depart from among us. The Republic will not fail. Young and fresh blood will be supplied from the unenervated members of the commonwealth, and the prizes of life will be carried off by the young athletes fresh from the hill-sides, who, glowing with vigor of mind and body, will have no long or doubtful contest with their pale and feeble rivals of the city.

If those whom we call the educated classes desire to obtain the great benefits of education—if the wealthier classes wish to secure or retain the best benefits which wealth can give—if either desire to preserve or perpetuate their influence—let them cultivate the physical education of their children; let hardy sports, let vigorous games occupy their leisure hours; so shall they turn their backs on the debasing and effeminate pursuits in which they now too often waste their youth, in which they too often perish before our eyes.

Such are some of the modifications which would appear desirable in our present system of Education, if we are to produce a race fit to control this mighty continent. I do not think there can be any serious dissent from them. If our young men bounded into the arena, glowing with health and physical vigor, versed in the principal languages of men, familiar with the secrets of science—at least taught to observe, it cannot I think be seriously denied that they would be more fit to contend for the great prizes of life, than if they crawl on to the scene, the victims of languor and ill health, totally ignorant of science, ignorant of all spoken languages except their vernacular, and versed in Mathematics, Latin, and Greek alone.

"Olorus," said the ancient, "thy son's soul yearns after knowledge." So is it with the child of every age. They all crave instruction. The passion is the earliest in life. When the infant lifts his chubby hand to the light, and turns it round before his inquiring eye, his little mind is straining after knowledge; and from this moment, through all the pleasures and pursuits, contests and conquests of life, if the desire be properly developed and guided, it will be the master-passion of the mind. Fierce are the throbs of passion. The love of pleasure, the love of power, absorb us by turns; but there is no delight in its permanency, in its suceptibility of perpetual gratification, equal in the educated mind to the steady acquisition of knowledge, and the constant increase of power which comes with that knowledge.

Thus have I solicited your attention to some of the changes that might, I think, with advantage be wrought in the training of our youth. Let us now ask ourselves, How shall the power acquired be properly best directed?

"Man is not a man," said Aristotle, "unless he is a citizen." The doctrine or the feeling, thus expressed by the great philosopher, lay at the root of all the Grecian existence—was the source of all the Grecian greatness.

The Greek never forgot, never neglected his relations to his country; he never ceased to identify himself with the great body of his countrymen, to sympathize with their passions, to rejoice in their triumphs, to grieve with their mourning.

I ask you how far this can now be said of us, who have many more inducements to entertain similar feelings, and to pursue a similar course. The disregard by our educated classes of our public life, of our public duties, our reckless, scornful indifference to all public matters, is every day becoming more striking; the falling off, in other words, of our public spirit is every day more and more exciting general comment. It is fast becoming the most prominent feature of our condition. With the exception of those who make a trade of politics, of those who live on public life; with the exception of those who love to stimulate the popular passions, who love to rouse the great lion Demos in his lair; or who long for the poor and short-lived fame that waits on those who run after popularity, our more educated classes, as a general rule, sedulously withdraw themselves from all contact with the real working of the country. They shun the jury; they avoid the military organization; they shrink with real or well-affected contempt from all political gatherings.

The result of this state of things will be certain. The work must be done. If those whose training peculiarly fits them to take a part in the task, fear, dislike, or disdain the duty, it will fall to others to perform it. The march of the country will not be arrested. The standard of the nation will not fall to the ground; it will be caught up and carried onward by bolder, perhaps by ruder hands.

If this shall be the result, the classes endowed with education have only themselves to thank or to blame for it. They have not been driven from the field by revolution, or by despotism. They have abdicated their legitimate power; they have deliberately renounced the influ-

ence which education always has given, always will give ; and this abdication, this renunciation, can only be ascribed to the love of money or the love of ease. No doubt the public is not a lucrative service. No doubt public existence in any shape is laborious and painful; but are these sufficient excuses in a country like ours ?

It is easy to throw the blame on the age, or the land in which we live, on the violence of parties, popular ignorance, decline of morals and virtue ; but I believe all these excuses very false and very feeble. A country advancing with the giant steps of ours in the paths of prosperity and knowledge, where we are content to pass our lives, to make our fortunes, to hold property which we expect shortly to transmit to our children, is as well worthy our best public efforts as it is our best private virtues. Let us not flatter ourselves that we are too good for our country. "I cannot," says the heroic Milton, "praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race when that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat."

Nor let it be gloomily said, little good can come of a contrary course. Let it not be pretended that real public spirit or public virtue, abilities, knowledge, will fail to be appreciated by a community like ours. We have, it is true, passed through a rude age. A man whose genius seems only to have been developed by his physical misfortunes, has well typified it by the *axe*, the *saddle-bag*, and the *rifle*. It *is* the age of physical force, of rude daring, of bloody violence, as Indian exterminated, and Mexican subjugated, as forest cleared, canal dug, and mountain-pass explored, can abundantly tell. It *is* the age of the axe, the saddle-bag, and the rifle ! But these are clumsy tools. We are entering on another epoch, the age of precise, accurate knowledge, of careful education. Not by loud hurras, not by frenzied excitement, will the problems

of the next age be carried out ; not by furious partisans, or by boisterous stump-speakers. It will be led, fashioned, governed, controlled by education. I do not say that the task will be performed by what are termed educated men : it may be by what we call self-educated men ! It will be by self-educated men, if their rivals are ignorant of their advantages, or blind to their duty.

What indeed are self-educated men but the very types of our beloved America ? What is this country, if not self-educated ? What training had this great continent for the work of self-government ? What is self-government but self-education ? What indeed are self-educated men but men whose technical teaching begins a little later in life, and who, by dint of observation, of application, led on by ambition, fired by genius, make up for the early days spent at the plough or the anvil, or with the plane, and who again bring from the field, the shop, or the forge, that vigorous, physical development, which makes them the masters of all situations. If education feebly, timorously fails to vindicate her claims, these are the bold men who will not hesitate to enter the arena, and carry off the prize.

Seventy odd years ago, a Northumbrian cow-boy was earning two-pence a day in the fields near Newcastle. A few years later, a grit bare-legged laddie, quick-witted, full of fun and tricks, he was driving the gin-horse and birdnesting in the same neighborhood. At the age of *eighteen* he learned to read. Now his statues stand on the bridge over the river that flows through his native town, in Liverpool, in London ; and the name of George Stephenson is known wherever the rushing locomotive has borne the glad tidings of civilization.

But, on the other hand, let not education fear that, if true to herself, her children shall not receive their share of the influence—the prizes of life. Education complete and yet not presumptuous, cosmopolitan and yet Ameri-

can ; education fashioned, not according to the obsolete demands of the middle ages, but adapted to the wants of this, bold and free, yet accurate and careful, methodical, yet unslavish—this Education, whenever it asserts its position in the affairs of the country, will speedily find its claims recognized ; will find its place prepared, and the laurel crown awaiting it.

It is very obvious and very certain that if the educated man desires influence or control over the affairs of his time, he must be in harmony with the leading idea of his age, and his country. Every country that has achieved national greatness, has done it on some general plan ; has had, whether consciously or unconsciously, some great central national idea, which has fired, developed, fashioned, and led their great men.

In Rome, Imperial Rome, the grandest fabric of Government that the world has ever seen, the idea was military supremacy based on absolute discipline. For this they abjured their early freedom—for this they submitted to despotic power.

In modern France it is national splendor based on individual equality. They will have a strong and splendid central Government, though it costs a half a million armed men to sustain it—though freedom perishes. They will not bow to a hereditary Bourbon, though hedged in with all manner of constitutional restrictions, but they prostrate themselves at the foot of a Bonaparte, springing from the people, and crowned with the halo of Revolution. They have no elections, no press, no juries, no form or semblance of freedom ; but individual equality is almost as complete, in some respects more complete, than it is anywhere in the world. Equality is the ruling principle of the army, of the church, of society.

In England, for at least two centuries, the leading national idea has been freedom. Freedom, at all events, the English will have. Individual action unchecked by

governmental restraint or control—free press—popular elections—juries—militia ; and for this they are content to leave the land, the government, and the church in the hands of a small oligarchy ; for this they cling to the framework of a feudal system.

Different from all these is the leading idea of America ; combining the idea of France with the idea of England, but more intense than either. Absolute freedom and absolute equality—glittering generalities if you will, these are the ideas to which this country clings with its most tenacious grasp. We are content with a paltry, a shabby government, provided we are not interfered with. We hate the idea of a strong government, and prefer occasional mobs, and an imbecile administration of justice. We will not listen to the smallest notion of privilege; rather than that, we like to keep everybody electing everybody to office every six months. Distinction invites ostracism. It has so proved repeatedly in our political history. Freedom and equality reign triumphant in the popular breast. For these we are content to endure lynch law, the vulgarity and violence of our public bodies, feeble and shifting administration—we accept them, and accept them with our eyes open, accept them cheerfully, accept them as yet gladly; nor will our present system be materially modified, unless our people shall be satisfied that it does not really secure the ends for which it was devised : as yet, we entertain no doubt. We see the blessings of freedom and equality, we believe in them politically, believe in them religiously; we are satisfied that for us they are infinitely more abundant in blessings than in mischiefs. Nor do we over-prize them. So far as public life is concerned, what is there of human happiness not contained in those two magic words, rightly understood ? What is there of all the evils flowing from human government that these great medicaments, correctly applied, will not cure ? Freedom and equality!

vast is the ground they cover. Freedom from party violence and madness, freedom from public corruption, freedom from the rule of unscrupulous demagogues, and selfish oligarchies ; equal administration of justice, equal protection of private rights, equal enjoyment of the workings of government, equal toleration of all difference of religious opinion. These are but a few of the blessings that true freedom and equality bring in their train.

If then education seeks the prizes of the nation, it must be true to the national idea. It must be loyal to the great tenets of freedom and equality. It is only on condition of our being true to the popular affections, that we can touch the popular heart.

Now it is superfluous to inculcate these ideas. That shrewdest and most sagâcious of all observers who has ever visited us, De Tocqueville, said twenty-five years ago : "But beneath this artificial enthusiasm, and these obsequious attentions to the preponderating power, it is easy to perceive that the wealthy members of the community entertain a hearty distaste to the democratic institutions of their country. The populace is at once the object of their scorn and of their fears." How is it now ? There is often an *hiatus valde deflendus* between wealth and education. They are by no means correlative terms ; but kindred causes tend to operate in both cases. Both wealth and education, ill employed or ill understood, tend to seclude or segregate the possessor from the great mass of his countrymen. False, and narrow, and ignorant, whether it be theory or practice ! Few are the human beings so wonderfully constituted that they cannot receive from frequent contact with the mass of their fellows, far more than they can possibly give. Few are the minds which are not enlarged and invigorated by the sturdy teachings of freedom and equality. Not in the purple, not in the luxurious recesses of rich houses, not in the sequestered retreats of learning, are nurtured the men who control the destiny

of mankind. From the hill-top, from the plough, from the shop, from the forge, they come—familiar with their race, undaunted by opposition, hardy in mind and body, children of freedom ! nurslings of equality ! These are the Washingtons, the Franklins, the Millers, the Stephensons, who in the world of politics, of science, of mechanics, lead and direct the race.

Again, our education must be true to the nationality of our country. In many lands this would be a most superfluous injunction. In England or France it is as absurd to urge a man to be national as it would be to counsel him to speak his mother tongue. Here it is far otherwise. With infinite pain, and by slow degrees, has this nation been built up ; it is with infinite labor that the heterogeneous colonies, founded by different races of men, guided by the most opposite principles, pursuing the most different objects, have been gradually moulded into one common country. Look at the mode by which English, Dutch, Irish, French, German emigrants, Puritan and Catholic, Quaker and Cavalier, have been formed into one people, by which the constitutions of the philosophic Locke, and of the astute Penn, the aristocratic colonial organization of New York, and the democratic systems of the Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut have been moulded into one great Government. Look ! and wonder equally at the process and the result.

Conceived by the Stamp Act Congress of 1768, quickened into life by the immortal Declaration of 1776, the national spirit first really took birth in the great convention of 1787; since then it has been the task of all the truly great men of the Republic to develop and to increase it.

Nor has it been other than a difficult and a painful process. The centripetal and centrifugal forces are forever at war—local jealousies and individual ambitions are forever rife. Partisanship is ever awake, and corruption

never slumbers. But I believe that, despite local agitations and disturbances, the national feeling never was so strong, nor the affections of the people ever so truly loyal to the national standard as at this hour. Disappointed ambition is often soured, but the masses of our people look with indifference on the game for power. Upheld by strong and loyal hands, I believe the stars and stripes will, for long years yet to come, command the best affections, and arouse the loftiest passions of the nation.

And so should it be ; it is idle to speculate on the possibilities of a dim future. We are men of the present ; suffice it for us, that, as far as we can see, our happiness, our prosperity, our dignity, our all, public and private, depends on our national existence ; and that our highest interest, as well as duty, is to foster and consolidate the national spirit—the true national spirit—based on that fraternity which has been the dream of great minds through all ages ; based on moderation, wisdom, regard for the interests of all, deference ever for the prejudices and passions of all ; a true appreciation of the faults and foibles of our common humanity, and a wise conviction that, except by toleration and mutual concession, nothing great can be accomplished by any association of human effort.

Especially it is the duty of the educated men of the country to cultivate this temper. They have at their command the heroic language, and the lofty verse in which great popular ideas are embalmed and handed down from age to age. Theirs is the mastery of tradition and history ; theirs are the weapons of argument and rhetoric ; they control the press ; they speak at the bar ; they thunder from the popular tribune ; they have the ear of the country.

And on the other hand, what does not education owe to the nation ? From the nation, with its wealth and interchange of ideas, spring the great institutions of learning and science ; with the nation grow the arts of peace. When the nation shall perish, carrying with it, as it

must, our freedom and our equality, education will be the first to be overwhelmed in the catastrophe. "And when every stone is laid artfully together," says the great Republican whom I love to quote, "it cannot be united into a continuity, it can only be contiguous in this world : neither can every piece of the building be of one form ; nay, rather the perfection consists in this, that out of many moderate varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportionate, arises the goodly and the graceful symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure."

The most marked feature of the peculiar condition of this country, has been the extraordinary development of individual energy, and individual reliance. The American never fears to encounter a peril, to undertake a task. No real, genuine American, in his normal state, doubts his equal competency to head an army, to legislate for his country, to address an audience, or manage a locomotive. The consequence is, an amount of self-confidence and energy, to which no nation can show any approach. That confidence often degenerates into presumption ; that fools sometimes rush in where angels fear to tread, that above all the great principle of discipline has suffered from this, no one can deny. The centrifugal force is forever in the ascendency. It takes a great man or a great emergency to control the individualism of our people.

But the age of individual energy—of Boone, of St. Clair, of Austin—of the hardy settlers of the West, is fast passing away. Little will hereafter be accomplished but by discipline, by combination, by wise subjection to control, by organization. To inculcate this is the duty of education. If there is any thing which education practically knows, any thing which it should constantly teach more than any thing else, it is the extent to which men are dependent upon each other, the slow and regular steps by which knowledge advances, the loss of time and labor that

has been sustained by those self-taught men, who have not been able to learn what had been done before them ; the absolute necessity of co-operation to produce great results ; and with co-operation come inevitably order, submission, subjection and discipline. Discipline is the secret of the grand triumphs of Rome ; discipline is the key to the glories of England. If we are to maintain the greatness which God has thrust upon us, it must be by the cultivation of the virtue of discipline.

With this subject is connected that of the moderation of opinion. Discipline of conduct depends on discipline of the mind. Certainly the most marked feature of the present state of our country is the tendency to extravagance, and violence of opinion. In politics, or out of politics ; banks ; tariff ; slavery ; or British outrages ; temperance, or the rights of woman ; no matter what the question be, it is discussed with a rage, a fury that exceeds any thing outside of bedlam. Men rave like Eastern Fakirs—women rant like Delphic Pythonesses ; every question is made one of passion, fustian, bombast, and folly. The law of action and reaction governs our whole existence, intellectual as well as moral : these fever fits are always followed by their cold chills, and to-morrow you shall find us utterly uninterested in the subject that to-day you might suppose was bound to our heart-strings.

That this condition of the national mind is unwholesome and unfavorable to morals, to good government, to religion, to the stability of all our dearest interests, it is difficult to deny ; but if this state of things is to be checked or counteracted, it must be done by the educated classes. It is education alone, gentle and yet strong, that can lay its hand on the mane of the young lion of America ; that can say to the popular wave, Peace ! be still ! Certainly as yet our educated men, as a class, have not been in this respect up to their vocation. It is very manifest, that the most educated portions of the country are

those most susceptible to these wild frenzies of opinion. It is very certain, that among our educated men are those who are most addicted to stimulate the popular passions, to swell the outcry and urge on the extravaganza of the hour. Dearer to them is the huzza of the ignorant mob than the commendation of reason, or the approbation of wisdom.

Than this there can be no more unfavorable sight, none that bodes worse for our country. There can be no spectacle more painful than to see an educated man, false to his teachings and his privileges, abdicate the true power of his position ; mistaking clamor for fame, claptrap for eloquence, stage-trick for truth, fomenting the passions which he ought to control, following on at the heels of the crowd whom he ought to lead ; sure, sooner or later, to disappear and be lost in the ignoble herd. That man, be he politician, lecturer, minister or essayist, is, after all, nothing more than a demagogue. Demagogues—sycophants of the people, affliction and curse of free governments—who, from the days of Athens to our own, have been the parasites of Republican greatness—the precursors of its decline and fall !

Look at England : whatever opinions men may entertain of her system of government, or of society, no one can doubt her power. And it is equally evident that she has preserved that power by her wonderful moderation of opinion and of conduct. Her governing classes have had the amazing wisdom to know how and when to yield their dearest privileges.

But we need not go abroad for examples of moderation of language or of conduct, in men placed in prominent positions. If there be any two men, whose public virtue and wisdom are held up more than those of others to the American people, they are Washington and Franklin. Certainly no other two men have had an equal influence on the destinies of this country, And what is there in

the character of each of them more remarkable than their moderation of opinion and of conduct ? Theirs was not the moderation of timidity ; each risked his fortune, his reputation, his life, in a rebellious struggle against his lawful sovereign ; and yet contemplate the career of each—contemplate Franklin in all the diplomatic difficulties and mazes of his European life—consider Washington in the superhuman labors of the Revolutionary War, and of the formation of the Constitution ; and you will not find in either the expression of a violent, scarcely an extreme opinion.

To these great shades, to whom we pay such frequent lip-service, let us render a more honest, a truer homage. Let us imitate their moderation, their wisdom, their conciliatory spirit ; let us understand, and by our practice prove, that it is not necessary to be boisterous, fanatical, extreme, in order to be American—that one may be moderate, wise, just, and yet be true to the great principle of progress.

Cultivation of a true public spirit ! Freedom and Equality! Nationality! Discipline ! wise Moderation of Opinion ! these then are the true objects of our public intellectual training—these the aims to which our minds should aspire—these the mottoes that should be inscribed on the banner of our education.

And who will deny that, if these ideas are properly impressed upon the young and ardent intellect of this fresh and eager people—if these teachings are made part of the intellectual being of this active and energetic country, who will doubt or deny that we shall come up to the lofty fortunes which patriotism predicts for us ? If indeed our people, fired by honest public spirit, shall retain their love for regulated freedom and true equality ; if, submitting to the restraints of discipline, and trampling under foot excesses of opinion, they cling fast to the great central idea of Nationality; who will doubt or deny or regret our mani-

fest destiny ? who will fail to salute our progress with affectionate admiration ? who will not hail with delight the spread of our influence westward, southward, in every direction in which the active intelligence of America shall guide her indomitable energies ?

POEM

BY

JOHN MAC MULLEN, A. M.,

BEFORE

The Alumni Association

OF

COLUMBIA COLLEGE,

October 27, 1858.

NATHAN HALE:

A POEM,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Alumni Association of Columbia College,

OCTOBER 27, 1858.

BY JOHN MAC MULLEN, A.M.

Come all Alumni gather round ;
I tell of courage high ;
Of Nathan Hale, a college boy,
One not afraid to die.
His father a stout yeoman was ;
In Coventry his birth ;
And never shone the golden sun
On one of loftier worth.

'Twas leafy June when he was born ;
Dame Earth was in her best,
When his mother smiled, and the grave Deacon
His little boy caressed.
They little thought that he, so small
And tender, lying there,
Was of hero-mould ; had a head to plan,
And a heart could boldly dare.

He sported 'neath the maple-leaf,
And the oak-tree's sturdy bough,
Till his limbs grew long, and his bones grew strong;
And few could him follow.
To ride, to shoot, to speak the truth,
To wrestle, jump, and climb,
Such was the life his frame to knit,
His courage to sublime.

They thought to make him a man of God,
And the village pastor, he
Taught him the tongues of Greece and Rome
With their deeds of chivalry.
How Brutus the consul stern adjudged
His traitor sons to death:
How Curtius leaped in the yawning gulf
That closed ere they drew their breath:

How Decius stood on the blood-stained spear,
And doomed himself to die;
And how the Fabii fought and fell,
That house so great and high.
He read of Thermopylæ—sainted name—
And of proud Platæa's day,
And of him so prompt his Thebes to serve
In the highest or humblest way.

O ! heroes of old, so true and bold,
Undying and sacred band !
How many ye've taught who have valiantly fought
For Freedom and Fatherland !
Your spirit has breathed from the pages read
In every College hall,
Till their upturned thrones have crushed the bones
Of oppressors proud and tall.

And never a nobler youth hath read,
In these chronicles of old,
Of the steadfast men who honor loved
Far more than life or gold.
His fine eye flashed, and his red cheek glowed,
And his head was lifted high,
As he dreamed that he, in a noble cause,
Full gallantly might die.

He little thought that a few short years
Should see him calmly stand,
With an eye undimmed and a cheek unblenched
In the midst of a hostile band :
And that never bold Roman or gallant Greek,
In their proudest days, could say
More heroic words than his youthful lips
Gave forth on their dying day.

When he entered the halls of Mother Yale,
And trod beneath her elm,
He seemed some heaven-sent Mercury,
With winged feet and helm ;
For he was tall, well knit, and strong ;
No goodlier youth was seen :
And in after years men proudly showed
His leap on the College Green.

Many a maiden turned again
His graceful form to scan,
Where nature featly had conjoined
All that delights in man.
The sparkling eye, the noble brow,
The bearing frank and free,
The pleasant wit, the genial smile,
The inborn courtesy.

The priests of old from out their herds
The goodliest always chose ;
Upon fair Freedom's altar he
Was offered even as those ;
And of all the glorious martyrs bold
That for mankind have died,
None more unflinchingly stood up
In the bloom of manly pride.

To earn his bread like an honest man,
When his college days were o'er,
He took his seat at the teacher's desk
And taught what he learned before.
The path of knowledge still he smoothed,
And strewed it o'er with flowers ;
And all have said that 'neath his rule
Swift fled the happy hours.

'Twas thus two years in peace had passed,
Till war was on the gale.
The yeomen saw the gath'ring cloud,
But were not men to quail.
It burst at last on Lexington :
It burst in bloody rain :
And through the land the cry rang out,
"Our brethren have been slain !"

This war-cry to New London came,
Where Hale sat in his school.
Then straightway rose the hero up ;
Left copy-book and rule.
"I've passed among you pleasant days ;
But those pleasant days are o'er.
My country calls ; I leave my books,
And gird me up for war."

Lieutenant by Connecticut,
By Congress Captain made,
He girt fast to his slender waist
His bloodless battle-blade.
New London his first station was ;
But soon the eastern camp,
Before beleaguered Boston, heard
His and his comrades' tramp.

No carpet-knights were these young men ;
Their station was in front.
Of sorties from the penned-up foe
They often bore the brunt.
To Putnam's tent he often went ;
Spencer and Sullivan,
Lord Stirling, Greene, all loved him well
As officer and man.

When, Fabius-like, our Washington,
By firm and wise delay,
Had forced our hireling enemies
From Boston and her bay,
To our city here he quickly marched,
To face them once again :
For they had come with bristling fleet
Across the briny main.

The Asia, sixty-four gun ship,
In our East River lay.
A sloop was anchored 'neath her guns,
To us a wished-for prey :
For she was full of army stores,
While our men were in want ;
But she was girt with dangers round,
That stout hearts well might daunt.

Cool heads and ready hands must be
With those would cut her out ;
Yet Hale soon found in those around
Stout arms and hearts as stout.
They choose a light and handy boat,
And muffle well each oar,
Then wait the friendly veil of night
To reach the further shore.

" 'Tis dark enough now, men, and we
Are far enough above ;
Silent and steady make your strokes
Our well-manned barge to shove.
The moon goes down at midnight ; we
Must hug the other side
Until we reach the opposing point,
And there in patience bide."

All patiently they sit and watch
The moon go down the sky ;
And can, from far, the Asia's masts,
And frowning hull descry.
A single gun from that dark hull
Could sweep them all to death ;
But calm they eye her as she lies,
And wait their leader's breath.

The moon has touched the horizon's edge ;
And now her silver light
Gently withdraws and leaves them all
Involved in deepest night.
" This rising wind will serve our turn ;
The tide is strongest now ;
Quiet and quick the watchword is ;
We'll board her on the bow."

The Asia's watch, from her high deck,
Can nothing hear or see,
Save rushing wind or swashing wave
To windward or to lee ;
But the light bark speeds bravely on,
Until they dimly spy
The topmost rigging of the sloop
Against the darkening sky.

They reach her bow, make fast, and then,
Like leaping panthers, spring ;
Silent and swift they make their way ;
With hands and feet they cling.
The drowsy watch they gag and bind ;
Then pass them all below ;
Clap on the hatch ; the cable cut ;
And with the tide they go.

Then slowly, quietly, they hoist
Some sail for steerage way.
Hale takes the helm ; and steady steers,
Hoping the dawn of day.
It comes at last, that longed-for light,
From God's own blessed hand.
It gilds the sky ; it gilds the stream ;
And gilds the wished-for strand.

" Hurrah, we're safe ; the prize is won ;
Now up with every sail ;
And let her cleave the foaming waves,
Before the favoring gale.
We've blankets for our needy men,
And shoes to fence their feet,
And joyously, upon the wharves,
Our coming soon they'll greet."

The wharves are crowded ; thronging round
They eye the distant sail ;
And many a hope, and many a fear,
Weighs down the alternate scale ;
But, as she nearer comes, their hopes
Their many fears o'erwhelm.
They see, they know those on her deck,
And Hale is at the helm.

—" Hurrah for Hale."—Each manly throat
Rings out its heartfelt joy.
" Ha, ha ! John Bull but little thought
We'd thus his stores employ."
She nears the wharf ; down drop the sails ;
The sloop is quickly moored ;
Hale makes report ; his men march off ;
There floats the prize secured.

But soon, alas, our Hale grew sick,
And, as he lay along,
The British landed at Gravesend,
Ten thousand muskets strong.
Out there, upon Long Island's plains,
The hireling Hessians stood,
With the ranks of England's red-coat slaves
That shed our brethren's blood.

They turned our flank upon the left,
And gallant Sullivan,
'Twixt Clinton and De Heister's fire,
Lost many a daring man.
Discomfited and sad of heart,
Within their lines they lay ;
Till Washington across the stream
Safe drew them all away.

God sent to him a favoring wind,
And kindly shrouding fog,
That baffled Clinton's best bloodhounds :
His steps they could not dog.
But our great leader's mighty heart
With anguish deep was rent,
To think how many a freeman's head
Low down in death had bent.

Stirling and Sullivan were ta'en ;
Sore sick the gallant Greene ;
And many a once familiar face
Was nowhere to be seen.
There lay the foe across the stream,
But he'd no way to learn
What force they had, or how disposed,
That he might their blows return.

He called a council, and 'twas fixed
That some superior man
Must spy them out, and make report,
And all their works must plan.
To Colonel Knowlton 'twas assigned
To find the man they sought ;
He called his officers around,
And earnest with them wrought.

But each one, silent, hung his head,
Or turned him cold away.
To be a spy, though sore the need,
That part they could not play.
Hale had come late to council, and
Was pale from his sick bed,
But when he saw them all draw back
He lifted up his head.

" I'll undertake it," calm and clear,
From his young lips outbroke :
But all the council crowded round,
And each against it spoke.
For he was loved by all the corps,
Both officers and men,
They sorrowed o'er him sick, and joyed
To see his face again.

"Nay Hale, it cannot, must not be.
An officer a spy!
And if discovered, from a tree
Hung like a thief to die!
Let some one from the ranks go out,
Or some camp follower keen.
Your epaulettes, for all our sakes,
You should not thus demean."

—"Hold, comrades, hold.—Your words are vain.
I thank you for your love;
But there are higher, holier thoughts,
Such earthly thoughts above.
We are not here on gay parade,
Our epaulettes to show.
We fight for freedom, undismayed,
Against a powerful foe.

"Our General asks it. Would he ask
Dishonoring deed or wrong?
No! and his voice my country's is,
For her my heart is strong
To dare a felon's death, or aught
May help her at her need.
If we draw back how can we pray
Our God her cause to speed?

"Whate'er she needs as glorious is,
For me, as loftiest plume
That ever decked the warrior's meed,
Where guns and swords make room.
So good-bye, comrades; if I fall,
Some one will take my place;
And, soon or late, in peace or war,
Each man must end his race."

So spake this youthful heart and bold,
This patriot pure and high;
Nor did his manly deeds his words,
In any point, belie.
To head-quarters he was ordered, they
Were then at Murray Hill,
That he might clear instructions get,
And learn his General's will.

Long time talked they together there,
Two noblest among men;
But never, on this earth of ours,
From that time met again.
One died in honored age, and one
In his youthful bloom was slain,
With a heart as pure, and a soul as high,
As e'er felt joy or pain.

Hale took the guise of schoolmaster,
Wandering in search of work,
'Neath plain brown clothes and broad-brimmed hat
His purposes must lurk.
He crossed the Sound at Norwalk,
When all was still and dark,
And safely trod on hostile ground
Ere rising of the lark.

Through English, Hessians, Waldeckers,
He passed in safety on,
Striving their numbers all to note,
And all their works to con.
From Brooklyn he crossed over here,
And passed along our streets ;
Though every soldier was his foe,
Yet all he calmly meets.

A single instant could bring him
To gibbet and to rope ;
But, in College Latin, still he notes
All that's within his scope.
At length, the information gained,
Placed safe within his shoe,
He crossed again to Brooklyn,
And from their lines withdrew.

'Twas early morn when on the shore,
At Huntington, he stood.
He waited but the appointed boat
To bear him o'er the flood.
'Twas close by Jesse Fleet's. The leaves
Were fluttering on the trees;
The rippling waves, in changing curves,
Obeyed the wandering breeze.

His task was done; the risk was run;
His knowledge all secure.
He'd but to cross the Sound again,
And all would then be sure.
A boat comes round the point.—'Tis she,—
The bark to bear him o'er.
He stands to wait, in careless ease,
Her progress to the shore.

—Too late! too late! he sees his fault.—
The British uniform
Is in the boat; and near must float
Some ship where foes thick swarm.
He turns too late! the sheltering trees
He never more may gain.
"Stand or you die!"—He yields perforce,—
And in the boat is ta'en.

How bitter ! oh how bitter to
The young and sanguine heart !
When the cup is dashed to earth that he
Raised up with lips apart.
But Hale his sadly sinking heart
Has force enough to hide.
A patient prisoner calm he meets
Whatever may betide.

They reach the ship, the Halifax,
And, when on deck they stand,
The lounging idlers crowd around
To see who's come from land.
Quick from the crowd a renegade
Cries out "'Tis Nathan Hale !
—A rebel dog—I know him well."
Hale turned a moment pale.

The shadow of his coming fate
Fell on him as he stood ;
And, for a single instant, it
Congealed his youthful blood.
But no fell fate a brave man daunts.
And soon his manly pride
Fired his full eye, and flushed his cheek,
And spread his nostrils wide.

As if he scorned the traitor's blood,
That fought against his land,
And raised, midst hosts of hireling swords,
His parricidal brand.
This traitor his own cousin was ;
A wretch, who kindred ties
And patriot hopes, our holiest thoughts,
Could both alike despise.

The Captain lent unwilling ear
To charges such as these,
Against a youth of form and face
Each manly heart to please.
But when, within Hale's shoe, were found
The plans and notes he'd ta'en,
He sent him to the city here with
Ill-dissembled pain.

At two o'clock, on that same morn,
The demon fire had waked
The sleepers from their pleasant dreams,
And they with terror quaked.
For the roaring flames came leaping on
From Whitehall up each street,
House after house devouring, till
Our College Green they meet.

There stayed their waves. The changing wind
Their billows backward swept,
But five hundred homes were desolate,
And many a woman wept.
Such the sad scene that met Hale's eyes,
As from the boat he came,—
The clanging bells, the rolling smoke,
And the far flashing flame.

But close they guarded him, and led,
To where, on Murray Hill,
Sir William Howe's head-quarters were,
In Beekman's mansion still.
Its owner a true patriot was,
And to Æsopus fled.
They seized his house, and rang his halls
To the hated Briton's tread.

In the garden stood a greenhouse, and
They brought the captive there.
The place was shorn of all its flowers,
The tiled floor was bare.
Bound, but undaunted, waiting doom,
The youthful Captain stood.
Whate'er he felt, his manly front
Betrayed no changing mood.

Sir William Howe sat there to judge,
With officers beside,
Their captive clad in plain homespun,
And they in all their pride :
Yet that young man so plain arrayed,
In history's page shall live,
When their gewgaws and titles all
No lingering gleam shall give.

Short was his trial, sharp his doom—
At daybreak he must die.
And now's led forth to hold secure
Till dawning tints the sky.
Close guarded to his prison cell,
The doors upon him close,
And he is left to think all night,
Or seek disturbed repose.

Our College then a prison was,
And it may be that Hale
Was placed within its strong stone walls,
With many a prisoner pale.
Yes ! in those halls where we've oft read
Of the heroes true of old,
This youthful hero slept, perhaps,
Before his death-knell tolled.

Old College ! thou art gone,—and those
Sweet memories of youth
That clustered fondly round thee ;
Young friendship's bright-eyed truth ;
The genial hours we all have spent
Beneath those grand old trees,
That rose, like towers, from out the earth,
Huge palaces of leaves ;

That pleasant green that heard so oft
Youth's light and ringing laugh,
Ere we went on life's pilgrimage,
With sober scrip and staff ;
Those lecture-rooms, where smothered jokes
With learning we inwove ;
Those chambers underground, where wits
In tilt and tourney strove ;

The many spots more sacred made
By memories of the dead,
Those who untimely left our sides
To seek their lowly beds ;—
Are gone ! all gone ! and what is more,
The very earth's removed,
Where trod the springing footsteps oft
Of those we knew and loved.

Oh ! had it not been better, still
To leave, midst mammon's waste,
That one green spot, those strong old walls,
Where patriot prisoners paced !
I speak not of our private griefs,
But, in this age of ours,
We hurry on with heedless hand
To pluck both fruit and flowers,

Not thinking of those men of old
Who shivered and who bled,
That we might all go warmly clothed,
And with the best be fed.
Had our old College, the Provost,
The Sugar House been kept,
Where crowded patriots moaned, grew sick,
And then in silence slept :

No place more holy could have been
Than where they used to pine,
And no more touching monument
Could architect divine.
Amidst our city's wealth and pride
They should have sacred been,
As shrines where patriot pilgrims still
Some holy thoughts might glean.

Thus Hale must have thought, in his lonely cell,
Of the martyrs bright of old,
The long, long line that have shed their blood
More precious far than gold.
They that have striven to raise our race
From all that's low and vile,
And borne, unshrinking, chains and death,
Rough rope or blazing pile.

But tenderer thoughts came throbbing through
His warm and youthful heart,
Of home and friends, and her, from whom
'Twas death indeed to part.
How oft he'd watched her graceful form
On household cares intent !
How oft beside the spinning wheel
As, to and fro, she went !

And, when the wars were over, she
Had promised him to wed ;
Now,—he must die a felon's death,
And sleep in lonely bed.
He asked a Bible.—'Twas refused.
He sought a man of God,—
But Cunningham his jailer was ;
More brutal never trod.

With coarse, loud laugh he answered him,
With oath, and gibe, and jeer,
Ev'n when he asked for paper, but
To write to those most dear.
A young lieutenant of the guard
Could not this sight endure,
But, ere he left, saw paper given
To Hale in hand secure.

Thus he sate down to write that night
His farewell words to those,
So near, so dear, now dearer still
Since life was at its close.
His sisters one, his parents one,
His brothers, now afar,
Fair Alice one,—her lovely eyes
Those lines will sadly mar.

His task is done, the light is gone—
He sits there in the dark,
And tears will course adown his cheeks,
Since none are by to mark.
But one and twenty summers had
Strewn flowers along his path,
Respect, affection, friendship, love,
Yes ! all this bright life hath.

'Twas hard to leave them. Hard to die,
From every friend away,
A felon's death, midst flouting foes,
Who'd mock his senseless clay ;—
But soon his mind took loftier tone,
As he thought of duty done ;
And felt that the love of earth's best men
With his life he'd nobly won.

He knew his comrades would feel sad,
His friends forget him not ;
But he wondered if, in after years,
The same would be his lot ;
If we should win our freedom, and
Men histories should indite,
If they, in them, on any page,
His youthful name would write :

If the students of our colleges
Would ever hear that one,
A son of Yale, in Columbia slept,
To die with the rising sun.
Yes ! Hale ! across the gulf of years,
I'm standing here to-night
To tell them how you died for us,
And left this pleasant light.

Here, in the mightiest city that
  This broad, broad land can claim,
I'm telling old Columbia's sons
  Of you and of your fame.
God grant some hearts here in this throng
  With the sacred fire may burn
That lit your steps on glory's path
  That gilds your funeral urn !

Let them not wait occasion grand,
  But fill the present need.
As high your fame, a spy who died,
  As theirs that in battle bleed.
Let them Columbia's honored name
  With added fame increase,
And take their place midst that bright throng
  The patriots of peace.

But see ! the first gray streaks of dawn
  Come stealing o'er the sky :
Hale leaves his restless couch that he
  May dress himself to die.
They come,—he meets them with calm face,
  And walks with firmest tread ;
Upright his graceful, manly form,
  Uplifted is his head.

'Twas on a Sunday morning thus
They led him forth to die,
Saddening the quiet of the streets
With their death melody ;
But midst their flashing ranks
The pinioned prisoner paced
Proudly, as he a conqueror were,
And they his triumph graced.

In Chambers Street they halted ; and
The brutal Cunningham,
With negro Dick, his hangman foul,
Their cursed work began.
There was a graveyard to the north,
And from a branching tree
The fatal noose hangs ready
That's to set his spirit free.

Now, from his vest, young Hale takes out
The letters that he wrote,
To Cunningham he hands them there,
Who must their contents note.
But see ! he tears them up, and flings
Their fragments on the ground.
" The cursed rebels ne'er shall know
Such man's among them found."

'Twas a bitter pang that thrilled through Hale,
When he those fragments saw ;
But higher still did he lift his head,
And his curling lip up draw.
With cool contempt he gazed on him,
As turned the brute about,
And jeering called for his dying speech—
'Twas then those words broke out :

" My sole regret is that I've but
One life our land to give."
The furious brute laid hands on him,
That he might not longer live.

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'Tis done !—His manly form now swings
Between the earth and heaven.
The tender ties that bound him here
Thus rudely all are riven.

We know not where they buried him,
Belike beneath the tree ;
But patriot memories cluster there,
Where'er the spot may be.

Yes ! youthful martyr ! all our isle
To us more sacred's made,
Since on her breast thy manly form
In death's deep sleep was laid.

And still when comes September,
The month that saw thy death,
And the forest leaves begin to change
Beneath the frost-king's breath,
In cottage and in College hall,
Throughout our wide-spread land,
Let each faithful heart recall thy part
Amidst the patriot band.

Yes ! all our youths that manliest are,
And con the historic page,
Shall feel in turn thy patriot fire
To honor still their age.
Young maids, at twilight musing, sigh,
Soft-murmuring, and look grave,
As memory whispers them of one
So handsome and so brave.

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