

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT NEW HAVEN,
BEFORE THE PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY,

SEPTEMBER 13, 1831

BY JAMES KENT.

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ADDRESS

Mr. President, and Gentlemen,

It is fifty years since I had the honor to address a large and polished assembly from this place. In recalling that event, unimportant to others, but to me deeply interesting, I am reminded of my rapid transit from the morning to the evening of life; and as my health has been uniformly preserved, and my public duties such as I could safely and agreeably perform, I have, on my own account as well as on that of others, abundant cause of gratitude to God for his goodness.

The Phi Beta Kappa society, appertaining to Yale College, was instituted in November, 1780, and a number of my collegiate class (and of which number I had the honor to be one,) were chosen its original members. Here again recollections occur of no common force, and it would be difficult for any person, who had received his classical education at this seminary, and whose heart is capable of being swayed by the ordinary sympathies of our nature, not to partake in some degree of the inspiration of the time and place. These circumstances naturally led me to the train of reflections which I shall now respectfully submit, and they have arisen out of the historical associations that this day awakens. The annals of the state and of the college, contain a striking specimen, of the beneficial influence which the studies and discipline of such a literary institution, are calculated to have upon the morals and manners, the intelligence and public spirit of the community.¹

The establishment of Yale College formed an era of great moment in the history of the colony. The object was to diffuse the light of knowledge, and by a steady and permanent influence, to lead young men to the paths of wisdom and virtue. The scheme of a literary institution to be located in New Haven, was placed before the Legislature of the New Haven Colony in 1652; and again in 1660, by the Reverend John Davenport, who took a noble share in the effort, and this town made a liberal donation in aid of the measure.² Mr. Davenport was an Oxford graduate, and eminent, even among the eminent

¹ The material facts concerning Yale College were taken from President Clap's History of Yale College, published in 1760; and from the continuation of those brief annals, in the appendix to Doctor Holmes's Life of President Stiles. A few days previous to the delivery of this address, and after it was prepared, a new and large work appeared, entitled Annals of Yale College, by Ebenezer Baldwin, Esq. ; and that work gives a full account of the existing state of the College, and is written with judgment, fidelity, and proper feeling.

² Trumbull's Hist, of Conn. Vol. I. 30.5, Appen. No. 21 ; Duigkt's Travels, Vol. I. 200.

puritans of his time, as a scholar and a divine, and he was distinguished for the strictness of his discipline, and for the most active and intrepid performance of his duties.³ He observed that the college was intended for the education of youth in good literature, and to fit them for public services in church and commonwealth. The proposed plan of a college did not at that time succeed, and it was revived under more favorable auspices in 1698, and the effort resulted in the charter of 1701. The object, in 1698, was to found a seminary for the education of young men fitted for the work of the gospel ministry, and it was to be called the school of the church. But the charter was formed upon a broader foundation, and with more extensive views. It instituted "a collegiate school, wherein youth might be instructed in the arts and sciences, and fitted for public employment both in church and civil state ;" and at the first meeting of the college trustees, they felt and displayed the enlarged spirit of the instrument, and resolved that in the college should be taught " the liberal arts and languages." The ceremony of founding this college, by ten of the principal ministers of the gospel in the colony, and who were its first trustees, was simple and interesting. When assembled for the purpose, each person with a number of select and ponderous volumes in his arms, placed them on a table, and declared that he gave those books for the founding of a college in the colony. Those select treasures of knowledge answered the purpose of corner stones in the foundation of this fabric of science, and if the learning they contained should at this day be deemed uninteresting, or their style repulsive, yet, as the volumes were dedicated to the noblest of purposes, and on an altar of primeval simplicity, they became deserved objects of the respect and curiosity of a grateful posterity. One of these trustees, the Reverend Abraham Pierson, was an accomplished scholar, and the first rector of the college; and all of them appear to have been learned and pious men, distinguished for comprehensiveness of views, and energy of purpose. With what emotions of gratitude would those venerable men have contemplated the fruits of their zeal, if they could have anticipated, in prophetic vision, the future prosperity and renown of this institution. The college commenced its career with a little flock of less than a dozen scholars, and yet, from a temple of knowledge so retired in its origin, and so humble in its pretensions, there have issued near five thousand students, who have been crowned with academic honors. Those sons of science have been dispersed over every part of our country, and they have made useful and splendid discoveries in the mechanic arts, and sustained themselves with honor and credit in professional life, and in every department of public duty. They have illustrated the old, and illuminated the dark recesses of the new branches of science. They have equally adorned the history of their country by their genius in the arts of peace, and by their conduct and courage in the exigencies of war. Many of the departed alumni of this college have afforded signal aid and illustrious services, in laying the foundations, and raising the lofty structure of our national greatness.

The character and disposition of the first inhabitants of the colony, and the progress of their institutions and improvements, down to the beginning of this college, were closely connected with its future fortunes.

The interests of education had engaged the attention of the New England colonists from the earliest settlement of the country; and the system of common and grammar schools, and of academical and collegiate instruction, was interwoven with the primitive views and institutions of the Puritans. Every thing in their genius and disposition was favorable to the growth of freedom and learning, but with a tendency to stern regulations for the maintenance of civil and religious order. They were a grave

³ Mather's *Magnalia*, Vol. I. 292—301.

and thinking people, of much energy of character, and of lofty and determined purpose. Religion was with them a deep and powerful sentiment, and of absorbing interest. The first emigrants had studied the oracles of truth as a text book, and they were profoundly affected by the unqualified commands, the awful sanctions, and the sublime views, and animating hopes and consolations which accompanied the revelation of life and immortality. They were familiar with the rich treasures of human learning, and especially with the classical remains of the ancients. Their minds were strengthened and enlarged by observation and travel, and their zeal was inflamed and their views directed by the unconquerable spirit of civil and religious freedom. The persecutions which they suffered in England under the tyranny of the ecclesiastical tribunals, communicated a lasting impulse to their minds, and exasperated their temper. It rendered them intrepid enemies of popery and arbitrary power, and even hostile to episcopal worship and authority. They had become republicans in their political creed, and severe and intolerant in their religious principles. The avowed object of their emigration to New England, was to enjoy and propagate the reformed protectant faith, in the purity of its discipline and worship. They intended to found republics on the basis of Christianity, and to secure religious liberty under the auspices of a commonwealth. With this primary view they were early led to make strict provision for common school education, and the religious instruction of the people. But they established a severe and uncompromising discipline in church and state, and their jurisprudence, in criminal matters, was exceedingly harsh, and it would be intolerable at the present day. They extended their injunctions, and severe penal animadversion to numerous breaches of the moral law, not now deemed fitly within the cognizance of human laws.⁴

The first settlers of Connecticut came from Massachusetts in 1635, and they were men of property and education, and among the most pious, discreet and intelligent of the Puritans. In 1638, the Constitution of Connecticut was formed by a voluntary association of the free planters in Windsor, Hartford and Wethersfield, and it was the model of as pure and perfect a democracy as had ever before subsisted among civilized men. All the public authorities rested upon the basis of annual elections, exercised by ballot, by the whole body of the freemen. The tendency of universal suffrage to abuse, was checked by the provision for a previous nomination of candidates for office. The General Assembly was composed of deputies from the several towns, and the House consisted at first of only twelve members. But that small body of men gave evidence of vast compass of thought, and they were found adequate to the purposes of government, and thoroughly instructed in the knowledge of the provisions requisite for the security of the natural rights of mankind. Their first act was a declaratory bill of rights, in which it was ordained that no man should be deprived of his life, or honor, or good name, or personal liberty, or wife, or children, or goods, or estate, unless by authority of some express and duly published law of the Colony, and in default thereof by some plain rule of the word of God.⁵ The latter part of this provision undoubtedly left the rights of the people upon too vague a tenure, but it is to be considered in explanation of such a provision, that the word of God was at that time almost the sole object of their solicitude and studies, and that the principal design in planting themselves on the banks of the Connecticut, was to preserve the liberty and purity of the gospel. This latitudinary provision was not, in point of fact, resorted to, and the civil code soon became amply sufficient. And who can withhold from this first and feeble band of colonists, the unfeigned tribute of honor and gratitude, for turning their earliest attention, even in the midst of the wilderness and beyond the then confines of the civilized

⁴ Mather's *Magnalia*, Vol. I. 292—301.

⁵ Trumbull's *History*, I, 95-98. App. to Vol. I, No. 3.

world, to such a precise and lucid exposition of the principles of civil liberty? They were so fortunate as to enjoy the presence and guide of one man, who had been early initiated in English university learning, and proved to be one of those superior and decided characters, competent to give a permanent direction to human affairs. No sage of antiquity was superior to him in wisdom, moderation and firmness ; none equal to him in the grandeur of his moral character and the elevation of his devotion. This learned audience will have perceived that I allude to the Rev. Thomas Hooker, whom his distinguished biographer has termed the light of the Western churches and oracle of the Connecticut colony.⁶

The Colony of New Haven was established shortly after that of Connecticut. The founders of it were Theophilus Eaton, John Davenport, and other English emigrants, generally distinguished for talents, learning, piety, opulence and enterprise. The Rev. John Davenport preached his first sermon in 1638, under a large and spreading oak, near the spot where we are now assembled; and those illustrious pioneers prescribed a liberal outline and beautiful form to this city, and it has been filled up with equal taste and elegance by their descendants. The Constitution at first established at New Haven, like that at Hartford, was a pure democracy. The colonists being without any charter or regular commission from England, formed themselves by voluntary compact into a free commonwealth, and to secure the primary religious purpose of their emigration, they surpassed their brethren on the Connecticut in the severity of their zeal. They required as a test of admission to the privileges of freemen, that all burgesses entitled to vote and be voted for, be first enrolled as church members. The business of civil government in that age was deemed quite secondary to the interests of the visible church. The gathering of a congregation was the preliminary and the indispensable step to the organization of a town, for without a church there could be neither freemen nor magistrates.

In the same spirit, the first General Assembly of the Colony declared that the word of God should be the only rule for ordering the affairs of government.⁷ This rigid and intolerant spirit was less to have been expected, inasmuch as Governor Eaton had been greatly honored in Europe, in his civil employments and intercourse with mankind ; and New Haven was settled with commercial as well as with religious views. The Colony of New Haven, says Cotton Mather, was "constellated with many stars of the first magnitude, and under the conduct of as holy, and as prudent, and as genteel persons, as most that ever visited these nooks of America." It is probable that the early religious character of the colonists received an impression from the doctrine, discipline, and zeal of the renowned pastor of New Haven, whose object and effort, according to his biographer, was "to settle all matters, civil and sacred, by a stricter conformity to the word of God, than he had seen exemplified in any other part of the world."

But the judicious and happy consolidation of the governments of Connecticut and New Haven into one colony, under the charter of 1662, gradually led to more liberal and just views of the end and design of civil government. The Charter provided for a semi-annual General Assembly, and for a Governor, Deputy Governor and twelve assistants, to be annually elected. It was an instrument of

⁶ Cotton Mather's *Maznalia*, Vol. I, pp. 303-319. He is worthy of the title of the New England Plutarch, by reason of the facts and anecdotes on which he founds the characters of the leading Puritans, as well as by the vigor and coloring of many of his graphic sketches. The objection to his portraits is that he deals too much in the superlative degree, and praises too promiscuously without just discrimination, or marking the various shades of intellectual and moral character of the individuals whom he describes.

⁷ Trumbull's *History*, Vol. I, pp. 99-103, 136, 7, 283. Appendix, No. 4. *MazJialia*, Vol. I. p. 76.

extraordinary liberality, considering the source from which it came, and though a royal charter, it constituted Connecticut a complete republic in every thing but in name. The Colony continued, even down to the American revolution, to possess and exhibit all the essential attributes of a state entirely free and independent.

The General Assembly of Connecticut, in 1639, defined and established the privileges of their towns, and invested them with corporate and civil powers of a local nature. The settlement of New England in compact towns and villages was made in the first instance for safety against the incursions of the Indians, and for the accommodation of the inhabitants in respect to public worship and the maintenance of schools. In the abstract of the laws of New England, a hard code compiled by the Rev. John Cotton and printed in 1641, it was ordained that no man should set his dwelling house "above the distance of half a mile, or a mile at the farthest, from the meeting house of the congregation."⁸ The law it is said was never legally enforced, but the beautiful towns and villages which adorn every part of the country, and shed a bright and cheering moral aspect to its landscape, show the early and universal attachment to this policy. It was well adapted to promote order and facilitate intercourse, and appears to great advantage when placed in contrast with the sparse locations of planters in other parts of the country, where each individual resides in stately and unsocial seclusion on his own farm. This New England mode of settlement has had a strong and lasting influence on the manners and character of the inhabitants. It has contributed to render them lively, inquisitive, social, humane, orderly and religious. Associations for the noblest and most instructive purposes are easily formed and sustained. There is also in young minds, which are naturally sprightly and fond of romantic fiction, a charm in familiar and playful village associations, which softens the temper, civilizes the manners, and gives ardor and strength to the affections. The fictitious narrative, "the Woodman's Ballad," the song and the dance, the natural, if not the appropriate amusements of many a winter's evening in early life, spread the vision of enchantment over the mellowed recollections of such periods: over those

"Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of our youth, when every sport could please."

The equity of the first emigrants in their dealings with the natives of the country, is another circumstance that deserves a special and honorable notice. The Indians in Connecticut are supposed to have exceeded twenty thousand, when the state was first colonized;⁹ and the question as to Indian rights and titles, must have presented itself to our ancestors as one deserving of very grave consideration.

The Rev. Mr. Bulkley of Colchester in this state, upwards of a century ago, wrote an able essay¹⁰ to prove that the Indians had not by the law of nature any title to the soil, except so far as they had actually settled upon it, and subdued it by their labor; and he contended that the country not so occupied, was justly open to the civilized emigrants from Europe. This at the time was not an uncommon theory with the Puritans. Their projected emigration from England to Massachusetts, was

⁸ Hutchinson's State Papers, p. 168. 13

⁹ Trumbull's History, Vol. T, p. 27.

¹⁰ Massachusetts Historical Collections, Vol. IV, p. 159.

originally urged upon them while in England, on vague suggestions of a common right, as sons of Adam, to enter upon and cultivate the waste parts of this continent.¹¹

Even the learned Cotton Mather placed the general purchase of Indian titles upon the ground of civility, and he referred to King James's Patent for the better title, and that Patent was evidently founded on the same assumptions of right. It is happy for this country that the governments and settlers did not, in point of fact, rest their conduct upon these abstract speculations, however plausible they may be in appearance or difficult in discussion. They respected Indian rights and titles from motives of policy if not from a sense of justice, and with the exception of parts of the Pequot country, which was procured by conquest in war, the inhabitants of Connecticut, as well as of the other colonies, uniformly acquired their lands from the natives by fair purchase.¹²

When Indian rights and territories have been defined and acknowledged by the whites by treaty, or where the Indians have formed themselves into regular organized governments within prescribed limits, there would seem to be no question as to the superiority of their title. But so far as they have remained roving savages of the forest, it is not at all surprising that our ancestors should have not felt much respect for their loose and attenuated dominion over the soil of the country ; and that they should have deemed it to be unreasonable, and a perversion of the duties and design of the human race, to allow the Indians to retain this continent entirely to themselves, and to suffer it to remain, as hunting grounds, a savage and frightful desert. It is certainly not now any cause of regret that the red men of the forest have, in the course of Providence, been supplanted by a much nobler race of beings of European blood. The rapid conversion of the interminable forests of this continent into a cultivated, civilized and powerful empire, filled with men and wealth, and laws and learning, and liberty and religion, is the most wonderful and glorious event in the annals of mankind. The territory now comprising these United States owes its cultivation, and all the intellectual, moral and great physical achievements which have been performed upon its surface, to the white race of men. Wherever European Christians have spread themselves over this country, they have at once fulfilled their original destiny, which was to subdue the earth, and till the ground from whence they were taken. They have carried with them the institutions of private property and of marriage, the great foundation of all civilization and order. They have formed societies civil and religious, established governments, ordained laws, cultivated commerce, patronised science and the liberal arts, and carried to exalted heights the blessings of civil and religious freedom. Wherever they have penetrated into the interior of this continent, they have exhibited, as emblems of civilization, the implements of husbandry and the arts, the axe, the plough, the forge and the loom, and the still nobler marks of moral improvement, the school house, and the tall spire directing the heart to the skies.

We meet with the system of common schools, for teaching the elements of knowledge, in the earliest of 16 the colonial records. Strict and accurate provision was made by law for the support of schools in each town, and a grammar school in each county ; and even family instruction was placed under the vigilant supervision of the select men of the town. Several statute provisions for the better support of schools were made between the years 1650 and 1700.¹³ This system of free schools, sustained and enforced by law, has been attended with momentous results, and it has communicated to

¹¹ Hutchinson's State Papers, p. 27. Boston: 1769.

¹² Trumbull's History, Vol. I, passim. Dwight's Travels, Vol. X, p. 167.

¹³ Trumbull's History, Vol. I, p. 303. North American Review, N. S. Vol. VII, p. 380-382.

the people of this state, and to every other part of New England in which the system has prevailed, the blessings of order and security, to an extent never before surpassed in the annals of mankind.

The statute laws of Connecticut were printed in 1672, and reduced to a small and compact form fitted for family use, and it was provided by law that every family should have a copy of them.¹⁴ This was similar in the benevolence of the design to the provision of William Penn, that the laws of Pennsylvania should be printed and taught in the schools.¹⁵ The General Assembly of Connecticut, in 1683, recommended to the clergy of the Colony, to interrogate and instruct all the youth of their respective congregations, upon the Lord's day, in some orthodox catechism. This interesting fact naturally reminds us of the institution of Sunday schools, of which it may be considered as the forerunner, and which form such an important branch of the charitable foundations which distinguish the present age. The government always regarded the maintenance of public worship as essential to the well-being of society, and with that view provision was made by law, in the earliest periods of the Colony, for the support of the clergy and attendance on religious worship.¹⁶ Afterwards, in 1706, and with the same view, the estates and polls of the ministers of the Gospel were exempted from taxation. Nor were the clergy wanting in zealous and judicious efforts to render themselves worthy of the public respect and reverence, by preserving the learning, purity, discipline and faith of their fathers. At a general association of ministers as early as 1712, an elevated standard of qualifications for the sacred desk was recommended, with the laudable view of preserving in the churches a learned, as well as orthodox and pious ministry. It was, among other things, proposed that the candidates should give satisfactory evidence of their skill in the Hebrew, Greek and Latin tongues.¹⁷

Such was the policy, and such the institutions of the settlers of Connecticut, and which went to form and display their early national character. Their attention to public instruction, civil and religious, and their superintending and vigilant care of the morals and habits of the people, were doubtless the principal means, under Providence, of rendering the colony, in every period of its history, free, prosperous, and happy. It has been distinguished, above all other communities, for the orderly, respectful, and obliging deportment of the inhabitants ; for their intelligence, industry, and economy ; for the purity and solidity of their moral character ; for their religious profession and habits ; for the dignity of their magistracy, and for unexampled order and decorum in the administration of justice. The discretion and probity which have attended the election of their rulers, and the steadiness with which men in power, and, deserving of the trust, have been kept in power, even by means of annual elections, and in spite of the temptations to change which such elections present, is a singular fact in the history of civil society, and most honorable to the character of the state. If in our day there have been some innovations upon the principle, it was because party spirit is a sorceress, too imperious in her commands, or too tempting in her addresses, for frail mortals, at all times, to resist her. The people of this state appear to have preserved their original manners and character more entire than most Other people, and in a remarkable degree considering their enterprising and commercial disposition. Their young men have explored our infant settlements, and penetrated the western forests and solitudes ; they have traversed foreign lands, and visited the shores and islands of every sea, either in search of new abodes, or as the heralds of science and religion, or the messengers of business and commerce. But

¹⁴ Trumbull, Vol. I, p. 338.

¹⁵ Proud's History, Vol. I, p. 208.

¹⁶ Trumbull, Vol. I, p. 302.

¹⁷ Trumbull, Vol. I, p. 516.

notwithstanding their migratory spirit, the sons of Connecticut have never lost their native attachments ;—" their first, best country ever is at home." This is partly owing to the force of natural sentiment, but more especially, in their case, is it owing to the influence of early education, and to the pride, which local institutions of so simple and so efficient a character, naturally engenders. And who indeed can resist the feelings which consecrate the place where he was born, the ground where his ancestors sleep, the hills and haunts lightly trodden in the vehemence of youth, and above all where stand the classic halls, in which early friendships were formed, and the young mind was taught to expand and admire!

We have thus adverted to the history and institutions of the people of this state, existing at the time they had the good sense to found and endow this college. It was established upon the broad foundation of teaching young men the liberal arts and sciences, and of fitting them for the great duties of life. The founders and patrons of the college intended, by the discipline of a classical education, to give to their pupils the vigor of character, and the disposition of mind requisite to become accomplished men. They intended to awaken, stimulate, and expand the mental faculties, and render the students competent for the study of the learned professions; for practical usefulness in life ; and with habits of investigation fitted to examine the succession of momentous revolutions, political, moral, religious, and physical, which, in the course of ages, have agitated this globe.

The free and popular government, in the midst of which this college was placed, naturally reminded our ancestors of the absolute necessity of a large, and continual supply of well-educated men, of strong and manly minds, and of sound and steady principles, to meet and sustain the duties of active life, and the varying wants, and constant expansion of society. By those mental acquisitions, which are the appropriate result of the labor and discipline of the schools, men are rendered more competent to relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow. They are enabled to instruct the ignorant, reclaim the vicious, direct the misguided, and by their moral power, and intellectual sagacity, they are resorted to in times of difficulty and distress, as sage and sure guardians of the public welfare. In an age, in which the periodical press has become immensely powerful, whether for good or for evil ; and in a country in which the right of suffrage is almost universal, nothing can save us from the destructive effects of such tremendous agents, but the correctness and integrity of public opinion. That opinion is liable to be abused, deceived, and misled, and it requires the constant efforts of wise and good men, and the force of enlarged education, to enlighten the public judgment, and purify the public taste. The spirit of the age is at times favorable to just, temperate, and liberal improvement, but it is not an unerring spirit. It is ardent, restless, bold and presumptuous, and it is disposed to pay very little reverence to the precepts of philosophy, and the oracles of experience teaching by examples, and to make no allowance for the natural and inevitable infirmities of human nature. These observations have, perhaps, less application to this state than to any other, and they are far less applicable to this country than to Europe. But the subtleties of fraud, the delusions of prejudice, the allurements of ambition, the audacity of crime, and the selfishness and the recklessness of the passions are active every where, and potent in mischief. It is impossible to foresee, or prevent the sad results which a misguided zeal for innovation may lead to, when the propensities for it have broken loose from the restraints of authority, and are swept along by the subtle combination of a few highly gifted and ambitious spirits wielding the political press. The machinery which touches and agitates the passions, if not checked in the velocity of its career, by the counteracting forces of knowledge and virtue, will destroy the fairest monuments of

the industry, the arts, the commerce and the wealth of ages, and heave from their foundations, the best contrived fabrics of human policy.

The tendency of some modern theories of education is to depress the study of ancient languages and literature, and to raise up, in their stead, a more exclusive devotion to the exact sciences and mechanical philosophy. But this would be to prefer the study of the laws of matter, to the study of man as an intellectual, moral and accountable being. And when we duly consider how unspeakably important, and how intensely interesting is the knowledge of our race, of their history, their governments, their laws, their duties, their languages, and their final destiny, we shall not be disposed to undervalue literary pursuits, or to think lightly of the cultivation of the moral sciences, and the study of the rights and history of man as a member of civil society. Nothing contributes more to elevate and adorn the character of a nation, than the refinements of taste, the embellishments of the arts, the spirit of freedom, the love of justice, and the study and imitation of those exalted endowments and illustrious actions, of which history furnishes the examples, and which " give ardor to virtue, and confidence to truth."

But I wish not to be misunderstood. I entertain no narrow or hostile prejudice to a course of scientific education. Such a course is adapted to the wants and business of society, and this college has very wisely met on that subject the spirit of the times, and given a more extended and closer attention than formerly, to the various branches of the mathematics and of the physical sciences. No one can contemplate without astonishment and admiration, the splendid discoveries and improvements which have been made, even since the beginning of the present century, in astronomy, electricity, chemistry, mineralogy, geology and the mechanic arts; nor will he be destitute of a glow of gratitude for the skillful and triumphant application of those sciences to commercial, agricultural, manufacturing and domestic purposes. They have contributed in a wonderful degree to abridge labor, facilitate intercourse, accumulate products, enlarge commerce, multiply the comforts of life, and elevate the power and character of the nation. My only wish is that science and literature, may flourish in concert ; and the one is not to regard the other as a useless or dangerous rival. They are necessary helps to each other, and he who deals constantly in matters of fact, with strict method and patient induction, will find his whole moral constitution to stand greatly in need, from time to time, of the invigorating warmth and impulse of the creations of genius. The college was founded with the generous intention of teaching in due proportion literature and science, and this is all that we can wish or ought to contend for. If literature eloquently recommends and elegantly adorns science, the latter supplies that knowledge of the laws of the visible creation, and of those astonishing combinations by which it is directed, that imparts to literature its highest dignity. Science furnishes arguments and helps to ethics and to some parts of civil jurisprudence, and it supplies eloquence and poetry with much of that beautiful, affecting, and sublime imagery, which accompanies them in their most animated strains and loftiest effusions.

The acquisition of a new language is like the acquisition of a new mental power. During the process of acquiring it, all the faculties of the mind are awakened into action, and grow in strength and capacity; and this mental discipline pre-eminently accompanies the study of the ancient classics. The analysis of languages is of itself a matter of curious investigation. It tends to unfold the progress of the human intellect, the origin, migration and intermixture of nations, the affinity of languages, and the complicated combinations of thought and sound, by means of which language advances to maturity. During the time spent in the acquisition of the learned languages, the attention of the student is directed to the purest classical writers, and while he is becoming master of the tongue, he is at the same

time receiving his best and most lasting impressions of the general literature and beautiful productions of the ancients. The genius and spirit of the authors whom he recites are gradually imbibed. The student becomes more and more competent to discern and relish the refined laws of taste, and the precision and accuracy of philosophical deductions.

The ancient compositions are eminent for sound judgment and severe simplicity. No version can communicate a perfectly adequate idea of the fire, force and inspiration of the originals. We have indeed translations of the best Greek and Roman authors, but who reads them, except for matters of fact ? who is ever found poring over them, again and again, as models of composition, of good sense, of energy, of precision, of pathos, of eloquence, of matchless beauty ? If the study of the original languages of Greece and Rome, and a thorough knowledge of the ancient classics, be not made an indispensable test of academical or collegiate education, we may be assured that the best productions of antiquity will gradually sink into oblivion ; and the noblest efforts of the human understanding, and the most finished literary models of correct taste, over which genius and sensibility have hung with wonder and enthusiasm for so many ages, would soon cease to delight and instruct mankind.

The founders of this college I consider therefore as having acted most wisely, in making the study of the ancient languages, and with them a familiarity with the ancient classics, one of the professed objects of the institution. And I am happy in having it in my power to observe, that the faculty of this college and a committee of the corporation, have recently vindicated the use and value of these languages, as a branch of academical learning, by Reports which have exhausted the subject, and are masterly both in point of argument and style. Such vindications came from the proper source, and the character of classic learning ought never to be wounded by scholars, who owe their best skill and vigor to the literature which the Greek and Roman languages contain. A contrary conduct would be an ungrateful return for the teachings of the Grecian muses. Yet it is easy to perceive that the weapons which are sometimes most dextrously employed to explode the study of the ancient classics, have been polished by attic wit, and sharpened by the hand that once "tun'd the Ausonian Lyre."

Nor is there any reasonable ground for the suggestion that the classics are deleterious in their influence upon the formation of the mind and character, or that the study of them is injurious to the progress or relish of christian truth. No proposition can be more thoroughly refuted by universal experience. The most distinguished christian teachers have always been the most distinguished classical scholars, and the most zealous advocates for classical learning. The mythological machinery and enchanting fictions which pervade the poetical classics, have proved to be quite as harmless, if not entirely as interesting, as any of the legendary lore or romantic adventures, on which the muse of fiction has, in every age, seduced young minds and mature minds to dwell with rapture. It is in vain to condemn fictitious story, so long as we all remain bound to the glens, and lakes, and highlands of Scotland, by the spell of a mightier magician than iEschylus or Shakspeare. Classical literature is the established standard throughout Europe of high intellectual and liberal attainments. The leading Puritans of New England, and the great body of the protestant clergy every where, no less than the fathers of the primitive church, were scholars of the first order. Let us take as a sample from among ten thousand, the Reverend John Cotton, styled the father and glory of Boston. He was advanced in early life by reason of his great learning as a scholar, to a fellowship in the English university of Cambridge. His skill in the Hebrew, Greek and Latin languages, as well as intexual divinity, was unrivalled. His industry was extraordinary. He wrote and spoke Latin with ease, and with Ciceronian eloquence, and yet can any one doubt of his religious zeal ? He was distinguished as a strict and orthodox preacher, pre-eminent among his

contemporaries for the sanctity of his character and the fervor of his devotion. He died as he had lived, in the rapturous belief, that he was immediately to join in the joys and worship of the saints in glory.

With the objects, and amidst the people that I have thus described, Yale College commenced its career, and its subsequent progress demonstrates that it has more than fulfilled the expectations of its founders. It has been continually growing in strength and enlarging the public confidence, by the number and character of the pupils whom it has annually sent forth into the world. The general utility and profuse blessings of the institution, have rendered it equally the pride and honor of the State ; and I will only detain this indulgent audience by a rapid sketch of some prominent points and views in its history.

The public Commencement in 1718, soon after the college was established in this city, was conducted with a solemnity and spirit befitting the object and the occasion. The civil magistracy of the colony contributed its aid and influence. Governor Saltonstall, who had been called from the sacred ministry to the chair of State, delivered a Latin oration. He was an accomplished and liberal gentleman, and the effort that was then made to give character and popularity to this infant seminary, was highly patriotic, and worthy of all praise. The college was assisted from time to time by donations from individuals, who were prompted by a generous desire to promote the interests of learning. The college took its name from a sense of duty and gratitude to Governor Yale, who had been a munificent benefactor. He was a native of New-Haven, and emigrated early in life to England, the country of his ancestors, and where his family had resided on their Welch estates in feudal dignity for many generations. It was the destiny of Governor Yale to acquire honors and fortune in India, to be governor of Fort St. George, and to be placed at the head of the East India Company. But what are such vain and transitory titles to the glory of having his name emblazoned on the portals of this college ; of having it wafted by the sons of science to every region of the globe ; and of having it rendered as immortal as the institution which sustains it, and which will probably be as durable as the Republic of Letters.

Dean Berkeley, afterwards Bishop of Cloyne, made very liberal donations in lands and books to the college. He specially appropriated the rents and profits of a farm on Rhode Island, to the regular maintenance at college of the three best scholars in the Greek and Latin languages, for a portion of the time between the taking of the first and second degrees, and the surplus was to be distributed in Greek and Latin books among the best of the undergraduates in Latin composition. Bishop Berkeley was in many respects an extraordinary man. He devoted his talents, his pen, and his property to promote the best interests of mankind, and his name ought to be cherished and held in grateful remembrance by all the friends of this institution. He carried his ingenious and sometimes eccentric speculations into every department of knowledge, metaphysical, scientific and practical. His romantic and enterprising character, his learning and taste, accompanied by a disposition for extended and active benevolence, and recommended by the most engaging simplicity of heart and purpose, attracted the attention and engaged the affections of his contemporaries. His society was courted by the most celebrated wits and scholars of the Augustan age of Queen Anne, and he took an honorable share in their periodical publications. But some of his noblest efforts and most generous views were directed to schemes for the conversion of the Indians to Christianity, and the promotion of learning on this continent. He bestowed much time and zeal on the project of a college in the island of Bermuda for missionary and literary

purposes. This plan, as well as the author of it, was pronounced to be whimsical by the downright and sarcastic Doctor Douglass in his Historical and Political Summary;¹⁸

and he treats this excellent man with some degree of severity, and principally, I apprehend, because the bishop in his Treatise on Tar Water, had ventured without license to enter the precincts of the learned doctor's profession. We of this age have not much concern with the obsolete physics and metaphysics of that day, but the noble acts and moral worth of such a man will endure through all generations; and it was as flattering to this college as it was honorable to Bishop Berkeley, that the institution in its then infant state, should have attracted the notice of a stranger, and the patronage of a scholar of such various endowments and distinguished name. He has left us the grateful evidence on record, that he saw with a statesman's eye and poet's enthusiasm, that the Ball of Empire was taking a westward course : and that the fifth and last act in the great drama of human affairs, and Time's last and noblest offspring, were to be exhibited on this side of the Atlantic.

In 1719, the Rev. Mr. Cutler was chosen rector, and he was particularly eminent in Hebrew and Arabic learning, as well as accomplished in the various branches of literature and science, and in the dignity of his deportment and manners. After he had relinquished the trust, he received the highest literary honors from the English universities, to which his great learning very justly entitled him. His successor, the Reverend Mr. Williams was a most valuable man, and displayed his flexible genius and eminent capacity in distinct and quite opposite departments of public trust. While at the head of this college, he cherished a liberal and just taste for polite learning, and his classical knowledge was unquestionable, for he spoke Latin freely, and delivered orations in that tongue with accuracy and elegance. The accession of President Clap in 1739, formed an important era in the collegiate annals. He continued to preside, first as rector and then as president for twenty six years, and during his long and vigorous administration, the college rose rapidly in importance, and flourished to an eminent degree. The powers and privileges of the college were enlarged by a new legislative charter, and the laws were remodelled, and fresh ardor and discipline pervaded the institution. The graduates who were formed under President Clap, contributed largely to the catalogue of distinguished names in public trusts, and several of them stand conspicuous on the bright pages of our revolution.

President Clap was not eminent for classical learning, for so his pupil and afterwards his illustrious successor has observed, but he had a competent knowledge of the three learned languages. His distinguished skill and learning were displayed in mathematical studies and in natural philosophy. He excelled in a deep and accurate acquaintance with civil and ecclesiastical history, and in the science of theology. He was well versed in the knowledge of the governments and policy of nations, and what may be thought rather singular in a divine and general scholar, (though the acquisition is honorable and useful to either character,) he was well read in the civil and canon law, and in the municipal law of the land.¹⁹ This last fact was strikingly exemplified in a memorable case which occurred in the year 1763. It had been asserted in a memorial to the legislature of Connecticut, that the general assembly, by reason of their charter and donations, were the founders of the college, and had a right by the common law to appoint visitors. The president opposed this pretension in a counter memorial and argument drawn boldly, and with the confidence of a master, from his own mental resources. He grounded himself upon

¹⁸ Douglass's Summary, Vol I. p. 149.

¹⁹ Holmes's Life of President Stiles, Appendix, p. 393.

English authorities in the true style of a well-read lawyer, and successfully contended that the first trustees and donors, prior to the charter, were the founders and lawful visitors, and that the right of visitation passed to the trustees under the charter, and then resided in the president and fellows. An argument of such solidity reminds us of the powerful discussions in the celebrated case of Dartmouth College, in which the same doctrines were advanced and sustained by the decision of the supreme court of the United States.

The presiding magistrate in this, and in all other Institutions, naturally and justly attracts the largest share of public attention, for he holds the most prominent station, and one which draws to it the most weighty responsibility. But the Tutors, in every period of the College history, have been very efficient instructors, and though many of them may have been at the time "to Fortune and to Fame unknown," yet it is certain that the College has been much indebted for the elevation of the standard of moral sentiment, for the cultivation of correct taste, and for the formation of some of the most illustrious of its pupils, to the diligent, steady, painful and unobtrusive counsels and efforts of that meritorious class of teachers. The names of Fisk, Edwards, Lyman, Whittlesey, Stiles, Hillhouse, Baldwin, Mitchell,²⁰ Dwight and Goodrich may be selected from among others, (perhaps their equals) as having before our day, sustained in the character of Tutors, the duties of the College trust, with equal ability and dignity. And suffer me for a moment to bring to recollection from among this class of men, the Reverend Ebenezer Baldwin, of Danbury, for it is to that great and excellent man, that the individual who has now the honor to address you, stands indebted for the best part of his early classical instruction.

Mr. Baldwin was a Tutor in this College for the period of four years, and he settled as a minister in the first congregational church in Danbury, in the year 1770. He was a scholar and a gentleman, of the fairest and brightest hopes. He was accustomed to read daily a portion of the Hebrew Scriptures, and he was extensively acquainted with Greek and Roman Literature.

His style of preaching was simple, earnest, and forcible, with the most commanding, and the most graceful dignity of manner ; and if I can trust to my own memory, he was pursuing in the pulpit a steady, methodical, and comprehensive view, of the whole system of Christian Theology. His zeal for learning was ardent, and his acquisitions and reputation rapidly increasing, when he was doomed to fall prematurely in the flower of his age, and while engaged in his country's service. Though his career was painfully short, he had lived long enough to attract general notice and the highest respect, by his piety, his learning, his judgment, and his patriotism. Mr. Baldwin took an enlightened and active interest in the rise and early progress of the American Revolution. His Thanksgiving Sermon, in the autumn of 1775, was so excellent, so encouraging, and so appropriate, that it was called for and printed at the expense of a leading member of the Episcopal Church, and it now remains deposited among the documents of the New York Historical Society. In the impending and gloomy campaign of 1776, he was incessant in his efforts to cheer and animate his townsmen to join the militia, which were called out for the defence of New York. To give weight to his eloquent exhortations, he added that of his heroic example. He went voluntarily as a Chaplain to one of the militia regiments. His office was pacific, but he nevertheless

²⁰ Stephen Mix Mitchell, the tutor here alluded to, graduated in 1763, and was a Judge of the Superior Court of Connecticut in 1795 and Chief Justice in 1807. He continued in that office until 1814, and he is still living at the age of 87, in full possession of his faculties. This venerable and distinguished character, continues to interest all his friends by his cheerfulness, his conversational powers, and his exhaustless fund of ancient recollections.

arrayed himself in military armor. I was present when he firmly and cheerfully bid adieu to his devoted parishioners, and affectionate pupils. This was about the 1st of August, 1776, and what a 33 moment in the annals of this country ! There never was a period more awful and portentous. It was the very crisis of our destiny. No occasion could have afforded better proof, or a more unerring test of a patriot's zeal and magnanimous devotion. The defence of New York had then become desperate. An enemy's army of 30,000 men, well disciplined and well equipped, was in its vicinity ready to overwhelm it. General Washington in his letter to congress of the 3d of August, stated, that his army fell short of 18,000 men, and part of them were extremely sickly, and that the circumstances around him were melancholy and distressing. Mr. Baldwin was in the American camp, in the suburbs of New York, when the British army landed on Long Island, in the night of the 21st of August, and I heard his letter read at the time, containing the notice of that event, and of the awful thunder storm which accompanied it, and hung over the camp for hours, spreading terror and death, as if the physical as well as moral elements of destruction were involved in angry commotion. Defeats, retreats, and sickness disheartened and rapidly reduced and dispersed our little army, part of which had been miserably equipped and wasted by disease, even from the beginning of that terrible campaign. The thirteen or fourteen regiments of Connecticut militia, scantily filled in the first instance, soon became fatally reduced by sickness, insubordination, and impatience under the service ; and they were finally discharged on the 24th of September. Mr. Baldwin full a victim to the sickness that prevailed in the army, and he had only strength sufficient to reach home, where he died on the 1st of October, 1776, at the age of 32 ; honored by the 5 34 deepest sympathies of his own people, and with the public veneration and sorrow.

The successor to President Clap was the Reverend Doctor Daggett, who presided as head of the college for eleven years. He was a good classical scholar, and well read in Moral Philosophy, and in Theology, of which he was appointed the collegiate Professor. The proof of the sound state of instruction and discipline during his administration, sufficiently appears from the general character of the pupils, many of whom rose afterwards to great eminence in Literature, in professional trusts, and in the public councils of their country. There is one person still living in this city, whose education is to be referred to that period, and whose literary eminence will warrant a particular notice. For nearly half a century, " amidst obstacles and toils, disappointments and infirmities," he has nobly sustained his courage ; and by reason of his extraordinary skill and industry in the investigation of languages, he will transmit his name to the latest posterity. It will dwell on the tongues of infants, as soon as they have learned to lisp their earliest lessons. It will be stamped on our American Literature, and be carried with it over every part of this mighty continent. It will be honored by three hundred millions of people, for that is the number which, it is computed,²¹ will in some future age occupy the wide space of territory, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean, and from the Torrid to the Arctic Regions. The American Dictionary of the English Language, is a work of profound investigation, and does infinite honor to the philological learning and general literature of this country* Happy the man who can thus honorably identify his name with the existence of our vernacular tongue. There is no other way in which mortal man could more effectually secure immortality beneath the skies. Obelisks, arches and triumphal monuments, seem to be as transient as the bubble of military reputation. No work of art can withstand the incessant strokes of time* The unrivalled Parthenon, glowing in polished marble* and which, for more than two thousand years continued from the summit of the citadel of Athens, to cast its broad splendors across the plains below, and along the coasts and headlands of Attica, is now crumbling to

²¹ See Preface to Webster's Dictionary.

ruins, after being despoiled of its most exquisite materials by savage war and heartless man. Even the Pyramids of Egypt whose origin is hidden in the deepest recesses of antiquity, and which have always stood in awe-inspiring solitude and grandeur, are now annoyed by the depredations of curiosity,, and greatly corroded by the action of the elements, and gradually sinking under the encroaching sands of the desert. This Dictionary and the language which it embodies, will also perish; but it will not be with the gorgeous palaces. It will only go with the solemn temples and the great globe itself.

The period had arrived in the history of America, when the spirit of the revolution, began to be sensibly felt, and to exert that stirring and pervading influence, which awakens dormant genius, and calls all the higher and nobler faculties of the soul into action. In March, 1778, the Rev. Doct. Stiles accepted the office of president, and on the 8th day of July following, he was inducted into office. No appointment in the annals of this College, had raised a greater scholar to the chair, nor was any event of the kind, watched with deeper anxiety, or received with more entire satisfaction.

President Stiles was called to preside over the college, at the most difficult period in our history, and when the interests of learning felt the shock of war and invasion, and were obliged to yield for a season to the fury of the tempest. But he brought with him to the performance of his high trust, a mind in which dwelt conscious rectitude, and an unshaken confidence in the justice and success of the American cause, and in the beneficent Providence of God.

While he was discharging the duties of a tutor, Doct. Stiles had even then attracted the attention of the learned and the wise, by his active, intelligent, and manly zeal in literary and philosophical pursuits. He was exceedingly fond of the mathematics, and delighted in illustrations and experiments in natural philosophy. He made early and eminent attainments in classical literature, and wrote and spoke the Latin language with the beauty and elegance of a scholar of the Augustan age. His Latin orations, while a tutor, in honor of Governor Law, of Bishop Berkeley, and of Doctor Franklin, were spirited and eloquent productions, which reflected lustre on the institution to which he belonged. In the latter in particular, he dwelt with a fervor of eloquence which his genius and the theme equally inspired, on the splendid discoveries and experiments in electricity, of which Doctor Franklin was the author, and on the wonderful control of that tremendous agent in nature, by means of the metallic conductor.²² The oration was pronounced in the year 1755, in the presence of Doctor Franklin himself, who was styled the prince of philosophers, but he then fell far short of the full measure of his glory. Though he had snatched the lightning from the skies, he had not yet wrested the sceptre from tyrants.

Dr. Stiles was for some time engaged in the study of the law, and it was during that period that he directed his rapid and comprehensive mind to the subject of the Roman and the English common law; to the knowledge of the law of nature and nations, and to enlarged views of the governments, policy, and intercourse of mankind. This noblest of all secular studies, must have had a very beneficial influence on the future expansion of his mind, and have given him an insight into the practical principles of government, property, and jurisprudence, which constitute the foundation of all rational freedom. But he soon reassumed the duties of a preacher of the gospel, and it was to that profession that he was unshakingly devoted for the remainder of his life, and with a zeal and energy that naturally excite our

²² See an extract from this oration in the Life of President Stiles, by the Rev. Doct. Holmes, his son in law; a biographical work of much interest, and executed with judgment and taste, and with a filial reverence and devotion due to the dignity of the subject.

admiration, when we consider that he was at the same time a universal scholar, and bestowed extraordinary activity on various literary pursuits. His social disposition, and enterprising spirit of inquiry, led him to cultivate an epistolary correspondence, in Latin, with eminent scholars throughout the world, on topics connected with the history of mankind, and with an ultimate view to the more solid establishment of christian truth. His researches extended to the migration and colonization of nations, and to the historical, geographical and philological discoveries connected with the most ancient people. He sought very early from the Jesuits' college, in Mexico, and from learned men in Europe, information as to the discoveries on the north west coast of America. He interrogated the Greek clergy, in Syria, concerning the geography, governments, religion, rites, customs and literature of the tribes in the Holy Land, and Syria, and contiguous to the Caspian sea, and with the primary object of the further elucidation of the Jewish history. He addressed similar inquiries to Mr. Holwell and Sir William Jones respecting the Hindoos and the Jews in Eastern Asia ; and his questions were well calculated to surprize the foreign Literati to whom they were addressed, at the depth of the knowledge, and the ardor and acuteness of the research which his interrogatories implied.

This indefatigable scholar wrote and taught the Hebrew language with great facility. He learned the Syriac, and read the Scriptures equally in the Hebrew, Greek and Syriac tongues. He made considerable progress in the Arabic, Persic and Coptic Languages, and his knowledge in oriental Philology, History and Antiquities was very extraordinary, and most honorable to this country ; and especially when we consider that this humble minister of the gospel, ascended these lofty heights of scholarship before the American war, when intercourse was difficult, and stimulus feeble, and helps at a distance, and when he had to rely on his own unassisted exertions.

His favorite philosophical study was the sublime science of Astronomy. He compiled a quarto volume on the observations and calculations connected with the transit of Venus in 1769. He saw, as he himself informs us,²³ with incredible pleasure, with the greatest admiration, and with the most extatic joy, the planet Venus enter upon the sun's disk, at the very instant of time, predicted a hundred years before. This overwhelming fact, and the infinite grandeur and immensity of the stellary universe, into which he delighted to be borne on the wings of his imagination, affected him equally with profound humility and glowing devotion, when he came to reflect upon the unerring laws and harmony of the planetary system, and on the Almighty power and wisdom, which created and sustained those laws.

At the inauguration of President Stiles as head of the College, he delivered a Latin oration, at which I was present as the youngest of all his pupils. It was delivered with great animation, and contained a short but brilliant sketch of the entire circle of the arts and sciences ; and no single production of his pen exhibits so complete a specimen of the extent and variety of his mental accomplishments. While it was his earnest desire that the beloved sons of the muses might leave the institution enriched with erudition, and fitted by the discipline of their faculties to ascend to those high distinctions which our young republics were then opening to their view; he at the same time assured them that a college education was only passing the vestibule of the temple of knowledge, and that it would require ulterior and incessant diligence to attain the moral force, the practical usefulness, and the lasting honors of thorough and finished scholars. The war was then raging in our land with unrelenting fierceness, and it was extremely unfavorable to pacific and literary pursuits. Though the President took occasion to congratulate his audience on the re-organization of the College after a long dispersion, yet

²³ Oratio inauguralis, 1778.

the season of distress was not closed. The College was again dispersed in July, 1779, by a large detachment of British troops, under the command of Major General Tryon, which made a descent upon this city in mere wantonness, and without any just military object. Their virulence increased as they continued their depredations along the coast, and they destroyed the quiet and beautiful towns of Fairfield and Norwalk, and the village of Green's Farms, under circumstances of the most unmitigated barbarity.²⁴

The country was so unsettled and disturbed from 1776 to 1781, and the means of subsistence were so difficult, that the College was not open and in regular exercise more than half the usual time. But even the collegiate terms, broken and interrupted as they were, proved sufficient to give the students a taste for classical learning and philosophical science, and to teach them how to cultivate their own resources in the various pursuits and duties of life if President Stiles's zeal for civil and religious liberty was kindled at the altar of the English and New England Puritans, and it was animating and vivid. A more constant and devoted friend to the Revolution and independence of this country never existed. He had anticipated it as early as the year 1760, and his whole soul was enlisted in favor of every measure which led on gradually to the formation and establishment of the American Union. The frequent appeals which he was accustomed to make to the heads and hearts of his pupils, concerning the slippery paths of youth, the grave duties of life, the responsibilities of man, and the perils, and hopes, and honors, and destiny of our country, will never be forgotten by those who heard them ; and especially when he came to touch, as he often did, with " a master's hand and prophet's fire," on the bright vision of the future prosperity and splendor of the United States.

²⁴ I was at New Haven, and saw the British troops in the act of landing at West Haven, early on the morning of the 5th July, 1779. James Hillhouse, who graduated in 1773, and was in subsequent life a Senator in Congress from Connecticut, and Treasurer, and Commissioner of the State School Fund, and who still lives as venerable for his moral worth and goodness, as he has through life been admired for zealous, judicious, and disinterested public services, commanded on that day the 2d Company of the Governor's Foot Guards. By their prompt co-operation with the militia and volunteers (among whom may be included the former President Daggett, who fought, was wounded, taken prisoner, and maltreated,) the British troops were compelled to take a circuitous route of nine miles before they could enter and plunder the town. The next day I went from the country north of New Haven to Green's Farms, a village west of Fairfield, and slept under my father's roof. On Wednesday morning July 7th, the British fleet were anchored off Fairfield. I saw the British troops land there in the course of the day. That evening and the next morning they burnt the town and destroyed, among other property, a court house, two churches and eighty five dwelling houses. It is a little singular, that the destruction at the same time of the village of Green's Farms, should have been entirely overlooked by most of the contemporary writers. The Rev. Andrew Eliot of Fairfield in a letter which he wrote on the 15th of July, 1779, gives a very minute account of the destruction of Fairfield, and takes no notice of the burning of Green's Farms. (Mass. Hist. Collc. Vol. III. p. 103) So Doct Dwigfft in his Greenfield Hill, bestows a part of his poem to the event of the burning of Fairfield, and takes no notice any where in his notes, of the destruction of Green's Farms, though the latter village lay, as he says Fairfield did, "in full view." It is certain however, (and I was an eye witness to the fact,) that the British incendiaries, on the morning of the 8th of July, swept along over the village of Green's Farms, and destroyed all the houses for near a mile in succession ; and among others the house where I had slept on the Tuesday evening preceding, and the house of the Rev. Doct. Ripley, and the meeting house in which that excellent man used to preach. If he still lives, as I believe he does, he is among the oldest of the Connecticut clergy, for he graduated in the year 1763, and I beg leave to state that I have not lost for him, a particle of my early reverence. On Saturday evening, July 10th, I was in the vicinity of Norwalk, and was aroused the next morning by the cannonade and conflagration of that town, consisting of two churches and one hundred and twenty three houses, stores and mills. Among the houses destroyed, was that of my maternal grand parents, and in which I had lived for the greater part of the first eight years of my life. Even the humble school house was not spared, in which I had learned my earliest lessons, and been obliged often to tremble at the sight of the truant submitting to the stern but wholesome discipline of that day. It is no wonder if I should feel, even at this remote time, some emotions of indignation at the recollection of those transactions.

Towards the conclusion of his life, President Stiles wrote and published his History of three of the Judges of King Charles I., and this work contains proof that the author's devotion to civil and religious liberty carried him forward to some hasty conclusions ; in like manner as his fondness for antiquarian researches tended to lead his mind to credulous excesses. He dwells on trifling traditional details on a very unimportant inquiry, but the volume also contains a dissertation on republican polity, and his vindication of the resistance of the long Parliament to King Charles I., and of the judicial trial and condemnation of that monarch. Here he rises into a theme of the loftiest import, and discusses it with his usual boldness, fervor, acuteness and copiousness of erudition. He takes occasion to condemn all hereditary orders in government, as being incompatible with public virtue and security ; and he was of opinion that monarchy and aristocracy, with all their exclusive political appendages, were going fast into discredit and disuse, under the influence of more just and enlightened notions of the natural equality and liberties of mankind. In these opinions the President did no more than adopt and declare the principles of the most illustrious of the English Puritans under the Stuarts, and of many, at least, of the English Protestant Dissenters under the Brunswick line. His fundamental doctrine, that a nation may bring to trial and punishment delinquent kings, is undoubtedly true as an abstract proposition, though the right is difficult to define and dangerous in the application. This humble little volume was dedicated to the patrons of unpolluted liberty, civil and religious, throughout the world; and when we consider its subject, its republicanism, its spirit, its frankness, its piety, its style and its tact, we are almost led to believe that we are perusing the legacy of the last of the Puritans. He gives us also a conspectus or plan of an ideal commonwealth, and it is far superior to the schemes sketched by Harrington, or Milton, or Locke, or Hume, or to any other plan of a republic prior to the establishment of our own American constitutions. It is very much upon the model of some of the best of them, and though entire political equality and universal suffrage were the basis of his plan, he was fully aware of the dangerous propensities to which they might expose us, and therefore he checked the rapidity of his machine by a Legislature of two Houses chosen, the one for three and the other for six years, and by a single Executive chosen for seven years, and by an independent Judiciary. In addition to all these guards, he insisted on the necessity of a general diffusion of light and knowledge, and of the recognition of Christianity.

But my object is not to discuss the merits of President Stiles's Utopia, and I have only alluded to the subject as affording another signal proof of the fertility and boldness of his active mind. Take him for all in all, this extraordinary man was undoubtedly one of the purest and best gifted men of his age. In addition to his other eminent attainments he was clothed with humility, with tenderness of heart, with disinterested kindness, and with the most artless simplicity. He was distinguished for the dignity of his deportment, the politeness of his address and the urbanity of his manners. Though he was uncompromising in his belief and vindication of the great fundamental doctrines of the Protestant faith, he was nevertheless of a most charitable and catholic temper, resulting equally from the benevolence of his disposition and the spirit of the Gospel.

Upon the death of President Stiles, near the close of the last century, his place was supplied by the Rev. Doct. Dwight, who presided over the College for upwards of twenty years, with distinguished reputation. It would carry me beyond the limits assigned to this discourse, to dwell on the literary history of that great man. He most deservedly filled a large space in the public eye, by his talents, his learning, his imagination, his taste, his industry, his powers of conversation, his controlling eloquence, his ardent piety, his paternal manners, and the purity, simplicity and dignity of his character. He has done more than any other person to explain and recommend to the respect of mankind, the wisdom of

the institutions of New England, and the progress of her settlements, her geography, her history, her biography, and the intelligent, moral and religious character of her people. He has done more than any 45 other American Divine to "justify the ways of God to man" from the creation to the consummation of all things, by a system of Theology profoundly digested, and equally perfect in the grandeur of the plan, and in the unwearied skill and completeness of the execution.

But here I must drop the thread of this narration. My intention was not to pass the period of the last century, but to dwell principally on distant recollections. There is much pleasure in recalling to view the living picture of the sports and joys of youth, in its original freshness of coloring and intensity of action. There is a still higher delight in recounting the manly pursuits, the generous emulation, the exciting discoveries and the ingenuous attachments which gave life and vigor to the collegiate circle. But in my case, the vision is shaded and the charm dissolved, by the intrusion of one stern reality. The generation which I knew at college has passed away and given place to another. Star after star has fallen from its sphere. A few bright lights are still visible, but the constellation itself has become dim, and almost ceases to shed its radiance around me.²⁵ What severe lessons of mortality, such a retrospect

²⁵ Of my college class, which graduated in 1781, and consisted of twenty seven, there are twelve still living in good health, and eight of them attended this commencement. Of those eight persons, four had not until then, seen each other for fifty years. Of the students who were in college during the whole or some part of the period in which I was there, and who in after life attained distinguished public honors by their talents and learning, and are now dead, may be selected Joel Barlow, the author of the *Vision of Columbus*, and American Minister in Europe. Stephen Jacob, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Vermont. Josiah Meigs, President of the University of Georgia. Asker Miller, a Judge of the Superior Court of Connecticut. Noah Smith, a Judge of the Supreme Court of Vermont. Zephaniah Swift, author of a *Digest of the Laws of Connecticut*, and Chief Justice of that State. Uriah Tracy, Senator in Congress from Connecticut. Mason Fitch Cogswell, President of the Medical Society of Connecticut. Roger Griswold, Governor of the State of Connecticut. Daniel Farrand, a Judge of the Supreme Court of Vermont. Israel Smith, Governor of the State of Vermont. John Lovett, Member of Congress from New York. Samuel Austin, President of the University of Vermont. Josiah Masters, Member of Congress from New York. Jedediah Morse, author of the *American Geography*. George Bliss, a distinguished Jurist and first Judge of the County of Hampden in Massachusetts. Among the scholars embraced in the period I have mentioned, and still living, and who have been selected to high public trusts, or been pre-eminently distinguished for their literary productions, are the names of Ezekiel Gilbert, Member of Congress. Ebenezer Sage, Member of Congress. Noah Webster, author of the *American Dictionary*. Oliver Wolcott, Secretary of the Treasury of U. S. ; a Judge, and Governor of Connecticut. Jonathan Brace, Member of Congress. Elizur Goodrich, Member of Congress and Professor of Law. Jonathan Ogden Moseley, Member of Congress. Simeon Baldwin, Member of Congress and Judge of the Superior Court of Connecticut. Stephen Titus Hosmer, Chief Justice of the Sup. Court of Connecticut. Asher Robbins, Senator in Congress. Lewis Burr Sturges, Member of Congress. David Daggett, Senator in Congress, Judge of the Sup. Court of Connecticut, Professor of Law. Abiel Holmes, author of *American Annals*. John Cotton Smith, Member of Congress, Judge of the Sup. Court of Connecticut, Governor of that State, President of the Board of Foreign Missions. Ray Greene, Senator in Congress.

The college, and even the State and nation, have reason to be proud of such a roll of illustrious names. The individuals were nurtured amidst the excitements and tumult of the American war. There were other scholars educated within that period, who proved to be men of sound learning and sterling worth, without having attracted attention by their ardent ambition or proud elevation. They have been contented to pass down the stream of life in a gentle current, without noise or eclat. But in the various walks of private life, and in the discharge of the more quiet duties of professional employment, or as humble and devoted ministers of the gospel, they have been of great utility, and the source of inestimable blessings diffused around the sphere in which they have moved.

teaches ! What a startling rebuke to human pride ! How brief the drama ! How insignificant the honors, and " fiery chase of ambition," except as mental discipline for beings destined for immortality !

Within the last half century this college has partaken largely of the general impulse communicated to society. It has made rapid advances in the number of its pupils, in the elevation of the standard of admission, in the enlargement of the limits of collegiate learning, and in accommodating its course of instruction to the wants and wishes of the age, and to the methods and spirit of the sciences of the present day. The amount of graduates, since the commencement of this century, almost equals the number that received a collegiate degree during the whole course of that which preceded it. History, antiquities and political economy are now academically taught. Chemistry, mineralogy, and geology were utterly unknown, within college walls, half a century ago. They are now regarded as sciences of great practical utility, and, under the guidance of genius, erudition and taste, they are cultivated with enthusiastic ardor and astonishing success. The progress of science generally within the time of memory is almost incalculable, and it seems to leave in comparative insignificance, the accumulated knowledge of past ages. We can estimate the space that has been gained by the flood, by looking upon those neglected marks, — those old and stubborn intellectual monuments, which remained stationary, in proud solitude, while the current swept forward on its course. It is the tendency of the general diffusion of knowledge, and of the inquisitive, restless, and business character of the age, to elevate the importance of that mechanical philosophy and of those practical sciences, which gratify with the greatest celerity, and in the greatest abundance, our coarser wants and comforts. But we may rest assured that the efficacy and value of intellectual pursuits increases in a much greater proportion. Artificial distinctions and exclusive privileges are gradually losing their hold on society, by the operation of the knowledge and spirit of the times. The masses of free and enlightened human beings are constantly enlarging, and they all lie under the dominion of moral force, and are capable of being swayed by argument and eloquence flowing from intellects of superior cultivation. Knowledge and virtue are the rightful directors of human action, and they are a result of a liberal and vigorous system of public education.

It must be the wish of all the true sons of this venerable university, that it may fulfil its high purpose, and continue to flourish in health and vigor, with expanding views, and increasing lustre, down to the latest posterity.