

Thomas R. Dew's Address before the Students of the College of William and Mary (1836)

Gentlemen: In obedience to the customs of our institution, I proceed to address you on the present occasion; and I do it, I assure you, with feelings of no ordinary character. When I reflect upon the antiquity and reputation of this venerable institution,-upon the numerous alumni who have been sent forth from its halls, so many of whom have graced the walks of private life, or risen into the high places of our government, and shed around them the benign influence of their talents and statesmanship,-when I reflect upon the long line of efficient and distinguished men who have preceded me in this office, and upon the character and virtues of him who was my predecessor, I cannot but feel a weight of responsibility which excites in me a deep and painful solicitude. For eight years it was my pleasure to be associated with him whose place I have been called to fill. His learning, his piety, his conscientiousness in the discharge of his duties, however onerous, will long be remembered by all who knew him well; and the regret manifested in the countenances of the citizens of our town when he bade them an affectionate farewell, marks conclusively the deep impression which his virtues and usefulness had made upon their hearts, and the loss which our society has sustained by the departure from among us of one, who, with his amiable family, constituted so interesting a portion of our social circle. Again, then, let me say, I enter upon the duties of my station with deep and painful solicitude, sustained alone by the consciousness, that I shall yield to none who have gone before me in this office, in zeal, fidelity, and love for our venerated Alma Mater.

I shall not on the present, occasion, endeavor to present to your view an exposition of the general advantages resulting from education; the limits which I have prescribed to myself in this address, together with the necessity of introducing other topics, will, of course, prevent me from such an effort. Nor is it necessary;-your presence in this hall-your determination to subscribe to our laws, and to obey the requisitions of our statutes, prove that you have already comprehended the inestimable benefits of education, and have come up here to pursue your collegiate career.

As it is probable there may be students in every department of our college, and each one may be anxious to know something of our entire system previous to the selection which he may make of the courses of study for his attendance I will, in the first place, give you some information as to our general plan. Our plan embraces a course of general study, which may be pursued to great advantage by all having the time and means, no matter what may be their professions in after life. Besides this course of general study, it embraces the subject of law, and aims at accomplishing the student in one of the learned professions.

Let me then commence with the subject of the classics. In this school we have a preparatory department, in which the student may acquire that elementary instruction requisite for the successful study of the higher classics. As but few of you, however, will, in all probability, wish to enter this school, I shall confine the remarks which I have to make on this subject to the higher classical studies. In one department of this higher school, the attention of the student will be confined to the following authors: Horace, Cicero de Oratore, Terence, Juvenal, Livy and

Tacitus, in Latin—and to Xenophon's *Anabasis*, Aeschylus, Herodotus, Euripides, Sophocles, Thucydides, and Homer in Greek.

He will be required to read them with facility—to construe them—to explain their meaning—to master portions of history which may be referred to, and to acquire a thorough and intimate acquaintance with the whole philosophy of the Latin and Greek Grammars. In this school it is expected that the classic student shall complete his knowledge of the ancient languages. I would therefore recommend it to all who may have the time and inclination to pursue such studies, or whose profession in after life may demand deep classical learning.

The knowledge of the ancient languages is far more important to us than that of any other, save our own. At the time that the barbarians from the north and east broke up the Roman Empire, and engrafted the feudal system on its fragments, whence the nations of modern Europe have arisen, the Latin and Greek languages were the two great languages of the civilized portion of the ancient world. It is necessary to study them in order that we may be enabled to understand their transition into the modern languages; the latter are derivations from the former. It has been well observed that there is not a single nation from the north to the south of Europe, from the shores of the Baltic to the plains of Italy, whose literature is not imbedded in the very elements of classical learning, and this remark applies particularly to the literature of England. But again, in order that you may understand well the classical authors put into your hands, it is necessary that you should become acquainted with the manners, customs, institutions and religion of the ancient world. Great and mighty changes have taken place in the condition of man since the fall of the vast fabric of the Roman Empire. The whole interior economy of nations has been changed. The complex system of polytheism, with its thousands of forms, and ceremonies, and sacred mysteries, has all been overthrown, and the beautiful and simple religion of the meek and humble Saviour of the world traced, as with the pencil of light, upon the sacred page, and revealed even unto babes, has been established in its stead. The great and salutary change alone has stamped a new character upon the age in which we live. How vast the difference between a Priest of Jupiter and a Minister of the Gospel! How great the difference between the Eleusinian mysteries of the Polytheist and the communion service of the Christian! In order then that you may be enabled to read the classic authors to advantage, and apply with skill the lessons which you may draw from the page of ancient history, it is necessary that you should study the laws, customs, institutions, religion, and polity of Greece and Rome. For this reason, there has been recently attached to our classical department, a school of Roman and Grecian Antiquities, and Heathen Mythology, in which you will be enabled to derive full and complete information on all these topics.

The degree in the classical department has been placed upon a high footing. It is necessary that the candidate for this honor should not only be a proficient in the studies just mentioned, but that he should obtain a certificate of qualification on the junior, mathematical, rhetorical, and historical courses. With this additional information, our classic graduate goes into the world not a mere Latin and Greek scholar, but an elegant classic. This course of study has been devised principally for the benefit of that large and respectable class of students who propose to follow the profession of teaching. To all students of this description, I would recommend the attainment

of this degree—a degree which will at once give its owner a high standing in our community, and be a most ample certificate of his merits and qualifications.

Besides the degree in the classical school, there are three others of a high order given in our institution; these are the degrees of A. B., B. L., and A. M. With regard to the first, you will find in our laws a detail of the courses of study necessary to its attainment. These courses you will find full well selected, bearing an advantageous comparison with similar courses in any other college of our Union. They embrace the four great departments of mathematics, physics, morals and politics. These studies I would recommend to all who may follow in after life. Independently of the pleasure which each of them imparts to the mind of the zealous student, there is a utility arising from them far beyond the conception of ordinary minds—a utility which springs both from the enlargement of the understanding by the salutary exercise which they afford to it, and from the light which they respectively cast on each other. One of the most beautiful and interesting facts in relation to literature, is, that all its departments are connected and associated with each other; the study of one perfects the mind in the comprehension of another. The acquisition of a new idea sometimes revolutionizes the little republic of the mind, and gives a new cast to all our thoughts. Hence the division of labor in science is not productive of the same advantage as in physics, but we should always extend the range of our studies in proportion to the enlargement of mind and the facilities for acquiring information, no matter what may be our profession or occupation hereafter.

If the time or means of the student, however, should constrain him to limit his course of studies whilst here, then it would be certainly proper that he should make a selection of those subjects which may have the closest and most intimate connection with the profession which he may follow, or the station in life which he may expect to fill. His own judgment will readily inform him of the selection which should be made, taking care always, according to the requisition of our statutes, to enter a sufficient number of classes to afford him full occupation. Every young man should task himself fully, lest want of employment, while here, should induce idle habits. For the peculiar advantages of each course of studies, I must refer you to the introductory lectures of the Professors, all of which will be open to your attendance, and will give you much more complete information on each department than I could possibly impart, even if not confined within the limits of an opening address.

The degree in law is of a professional character, and consequently we can generally expect that those alone will aim at its attainment who propose to follow the profession of the law. This profession, in all countries, but particularly in our own, is one of elevated standing, of superior learning, and, I may add, of great moral and political power. The habits of his profession ensure the lawyer, in every country, an honorable station among statesmen, and the foremost rank in deliberative councils. Law, said Dr. Johnson, is the science in which the greatest powers of the understanding are applied to the greatest number of facts. The common law of England, with the great modifications which it has undergone in our own country from the operations of our government and republican institutions, will form the principal text to which your attention will be directed in this department. “This law,” it has well been said, “is not the product of the wisdom of some one man, or society of men, in any one age; but of the wisdom, counsel,

experience and observation of many ages of wise and observing men." It is, emphatically, "the gathered wisdom of a thousand years." And you, gentlemen, who propose to accomplish its study, must devote yourselves to it with unremitting ardor. You must not study the mere statutes and prescriptions of the law alone, but you must examine, with the eye of philosophy, the whole foundation on which the great superstructure is raised. It is necessary that you should examine the principles of sciences of government; that you should look into the wants of nature; examine the beautiful structure of the human mind, with all our feelings, principles, propensities and instincts. In fine, you must, in the language of one who has risen to the highest eminence in his profession, "Drink in the lessons and spirit of philosophy. Not that philosophy described by Milton, as 'A perpetual feast of nectared sweets where no crude surfeit reigns;' but that philosophy which is conversant with men's business and interests, With the policy and welfare of nations; that philosophy which dwells not in vain imaginations and platonic dreams, but which stoops to life, and enlarges the boundaries of human happiness; that philosophy which sits by us in the closet, cheers us by the fireside, walks with us in the fields and highways, kneels with us at the altars, and lights up the enduring flame of patriotism."

Deep and extensive knowledge is, above all things, requisite for the success of him who aspires to an elevated stand in this honorable profession. Well, then, have the officers of our institution ordained that the degree in this department shall not be conferred for a mere knowledge of laws. The candidate for this honor must have studied, beside the municipal law, the subject of government and national law, together with some exposition of our own system of government, all of which subjects are taught by the Law Professor. He must, moreover, have obtained the Baccalaureate honor in this, or some other institution, or if not, must have attended a full course of lectures in some one of the scientific departments of this institution. With the collateral information thus obtained the graduate in law will go forth, not a mere lawyer, equipped only with the forms and technicalities of his profession, but with a mind deeply imbued by the principles of science and the spirit of philosophy. With a mind thus furnished every hour of study in his profession becomes efficient, and moves him forward with ease a rapidity in his career enabling him to encounter all the difficulties and obstacles which beset him on his way. For a full exposition of the courses of study in the law department, I must refer you to the introductory lecture of the Professor, which will impart all the information which you may desire on this subject.

Before speaking of our Master's degree, I will say a few words on the school of civil engineering, lately established by the visitors in this institution. The United States of North America present at this moment one of the most sublime spectacles which has ever been offered to the eye of the philanthropist-the spectacle of a people few in numbers at first-rapidly increasing and spreading over one of the fairest quarters of the world; building up institutions, the admiration of the age in which we live; and rearing up, by the mere development of internal resources, a fabric of greatness and empire, unparalleled in the annals of history. The original heterogeneous interests of the different portions of our Union are made to harmonize more and more, from day to day, by the magic influence of internal improvement. The canal and the rail road, the steam boat and steam car, constitute in fact the great and characteristic powers of the age in which we live. Throughout our extensive territory, covering so many degrees of latitude and longitude,

embracing every climate and yielding every production, nature calls on art to aid her. Although we have already executed works of improvement within the limits of our system of republics, which rival in splendor and grandeur the boasted monuments of Egypt, Rome or China, and far surpass them in usefulness and profit, yet the work is still in a state of incipiency—a boundless field is opening to the enterprise of individuals and states. In the peculiar phraseology of a favorite science, there at this moment exists a vast demand for internal improvements. From one side to the other of our immense territory, turnpikes, rail roads and canals are constructing every where; the engineer is abroad in the land, almost annihilating by his skill, time and space. Yet his labors are not commensurate with the demand. There is, at this time, scarcely any profession in our country which rewards its successful follower more highly and certainly than that of civil engineering. The visitors of our institution have therefore very wisely attached a school of this description to our college, placing it under the direction of an individual who combines, most happily, profound scientific knowledge with great practical skill—an individual who for years zealously and successfully pursued the business of engineering in another country, until called off by other employments. I would therefore warmly recommend this school to all who are anxious to follow this profession, as soon as their attainments will enable them to join it with advantage.

In the supplemental laws, published since the last session of our board of visitors, you will find a detail of the studies requisite for the attainment of the degree of A.M. This is the highest honor in our institution which can be won by the student during his collegiate career. It will require generally two years additional study after obtaining the Bachelor's degree; few of you, consequently, can be expected to aim at its attainment. Those however who shall have an opportunity will find themselves amply rewarded by the advantages which may be derived from it. In this course, all the studies which are pursued in the first portion of your collegiate career, are extended and amplified. In the first portion of your studies, you master the great principles of science; in the latter, you enter more fully into your subjects, and begin the great work of applying your principles to facts. He who shall have the good fortune to obtain this degree, will have amassed a fund of knowledge which will enable him to grace and ornament any of the walks of life into which he may choose to enter. His mind will have been trained in the most important of all arts—that of acquiring knowledge and generalizing facts. He will almost necessarily have attained the great desideratum of literary men love of study and the power of discrimination. So that in his case there will be afterwards no waste of labor and time, no useless expenditure of frivolous and unprofitable thought. To a mind thus trained, all nature furnishes lessons of instruction and philosophy, from her least to her greatest operations—from the falling of an apple, to the complex movements of worlds innumerable, all is harmony, concord and Wisdom. Such a mind can draw the lesson of philosophy alike from the prattle of the innocent babe, or the deeply studied conversation of a Bacon or a Newton.

I have thus, gentlemen, endeavored briefly to present an expose of the several departments of study in our college. I have given you the bill of fare, and we hope that you may make your sections with judgment, and spring from relations of universal existence the hand throughout afterwards prosecute your studies with energy and perseverance. By the late degree arrangement of the visitors in regard to the Master's degree, our scientific courses are as extensive as at any

other institution in this country and one of them, the moral and political, is believed to be more extensive than in any other institution in this sive than any other institution known to us. And this will lead me to say a few words on policy of our board of visitors in establishing so extensive a course.

Many persons are under the impression that moral and political studies need not be prosecuted at college-that the physical and mathematical sciences are the most important subjects, and should be studied to their exclusion. This opinion seems to be based upon the popular notion that moral and political subjects may be comprehended without the assistance of a teacher, may consequently be prosecuted to most advantage when the student has finished his career and entered upon the great theatre of life. This impression is certainly erroneous and highly pernicious; and in justification of the system which we have adopted in our own college I must employ a few moments in attempting to explain its thorough fallacy. I have no hesitation in affirming that moral and political studies are the most important of all. These subjects are of universal application; they concern every member of the human family. We cannot escape their influence or connection, no matter what may be our destiny through life. The great *high-ways*, and the little *by-ways*, of our existence, if I may be allowed the expression, alike pass through the regions of morals and politics. From the village gossip who tells the tale of her neighbor's equivocal conduct, and significantly hints that it was no better than it ought to be, to him who watches the movements of empires and penetrates the secret designs of statesmen, all are concerned in these universally applicable subjects. It is a matter of very little practical consequence to us what may be the opinions of our neighbor in mathematics or physics-whether he believes two sides of a triangle may be less than the third, or that the earth is the centre of our system, and that the sun, moon and stars revolve around it. We may laugh at him once or twice during the year for his ignorance wound none of our sensibilities and run counter to none of our interests. But the moment opinions clash upon the subjects of morals and politics, that moment the case is altered. The opinions of my neighbor are no longer indifferent to me. If he has notions of morality under which he is constantly condemning my course of life, or a system of politics entirely at war with mine, then does the collision become indeed a serious one. It was a matter of very little moment to Castile that King Alphonso should believe the solar system miserably defective in its arrangements, and that he could suggest some most important improvements in it. But the case was seriously altered when he believed that he was responsible to God alone, and not to his subjects, in the administration of his government, and that his wisdom was sufficient to make and unmake the laws of his country. The fact is, morals, politics and religion are the great concerns of human nature. They spring from the relations of universal existence throughout the human family-relations from whose influence none of us can possibly escape. But it is said that even if these subjects be of such universal application, they may easily be acquired in after life when we have appeared as actors upon the great stage of the world. Then it is affirmed we may begin the study of morals and politics to most advantage, when theory and experiment may go hand in hand- when we may correct the visions of an over-wrought imagination by the plain and palpable realities that exist around us. This opinion is certainly erroneous. The period of youth is the proper time to commence these studies. You have come up here, gentlemen, with mind and feelings not yet hackneyed in the beaten walks of a business life. You are now enlisted in no mere party warfare. Your hopes have not yet been damped by disappointment, nor your energies

been the student has finished his collegiate career and entered deadened by adversity. All your affections and sympathies are warm and generous. Your hearts and heads have not been besieged by cold, inveterate selfishness, or perverted by unreasonable and noxious prejudices. You have as yet set up no false idols in the temple of the mind. *Addicti jurare in verba nullius magistri.* You stand committed to the cause of truth and justice alone. Under such circumstances you are in the best possible condition for the reception of pure and virtuous principles. Now is the time to imbibe the great lessons of morality and to study the general and elementary doctrines of government and politics. A little time hence you will have entered upon the bustling, busy theatre of the world. Your private interests and party prejudices will then rise up at every step to cloud your minds and pervert your judgments. Your moral and political researches will no longer be conducted with a single eye to truth and justice, but the demon of party will too probably exert an irresistible control over the little republics of the mind and heart.

There are no sciences which require the same full, free, and generous exercises of the feelings of the heart, as morals and politics. In the fixed sciences, it is a matter of very little concern to us what the character of the fact may be; all aim at is mere truth. We do not care whether a triangle should have two, three, four or five right angles; all we are in search of, is the mere fact, the real truth. Whilst we are conducting the inquiry, all the passions and active feelings of our nature are laid to rest, and the intellect is left alone and unbiased to move directly to its results. But when we have reached the region of morals and politics, then do we find that all the passions, propensities and principles of our nature are brought into full play. The whole human being, as he has been made by our Creator, becomes the important subject of our researches, and we can never arrive at just conclusions without due consideration of all the forces which are in action. And this is one reason why these are really the most difficult of all sciences.

Hence, gentlemen, the wisest and greatest statesmen have been generally found among those how have directed their minds at an early period of their lives to morals and politics. Such men become deeply imbued with the great principles of those sciences in their youth. They are early taught to worship at the shrine of truth, while the ardent feeling of devoted patriotism banishes from the mind all narrow considerations of selfishness and shield it against the intolerable prejudices of party spirit. A mind thus early and correctly impressed with the great elementary principles of morals and politics, will ever be well balanced and considerate in its conclusions, and rarely surprised into hasty and rash decisions. In looking to the speeches which emanate from our deliberative bodies I have often been struck with the exemplification which they afford of the truth of this remark.

There is nothing in which our speakers are more defective than in comprehension of view. They seem too often to seize but one single point of a subject; and although they may move with a giant's strength in that direction, yet the mind remains unsatisfied. One of the principal causes of this defect is the want of a proper moral and political education in early life. They have not received elementary instruction sufficient to give the proper impulse to the mind. They are capable of taking but one view of a subject and that is dictated by local and partial interests, or by too intense a consideration of but one set of circumstances. Such politicians, however brilliant they may be in mere detail, are incapable of taking the length, breadth and depth of a great

subject; they lack scope and comprehension of idea, and cannot dive down to the bottom-where truth is always found. Such men may be efficient instruments when directed by the genius and the skill of the great politician, but are totally incapable of taking the lead in difficult times, because incapable of forming the conception of great plans and the means by which they are to be executed.

Of all the states in the Union, I may perhaps affirm without fear of contradiction, that Virginia has produced the greatest number of able and profound statesmen and of eloquent and efficient debaters. And to this fact, no doubt, has been owing principally that preponderating influence which she has so happily exerted in by-gone times upon the destiny of our confederacy. One great reason of the superiority of our orators and statesmen, is the fact that the mind of the Virginia youth has always been easily directed to the study of politics and morals. Our whole state hitherto has been one great political nursery, and I hesitate not to affirm that our old and venerable Alma Mater has had a powerful agency in the achievement of this result. The law, political and moral departments of this college have always been upon a high and respectable footing, and moral and political subjects have here always received a due consideration. Hence it is that old William and Mary can boast of so astonishing a number of distinguishing statesmen in proportion to her alumni-statesmen with whom she might boldly challenge any other institution in this country, or even in the world- statemen who, whilst they have woven the chaplet of her glory and engraved her name on the page of our country's history, have illustrated by their eloquence and statesmanship the national legislature and federal government, and carried their pervasive influence into the councils of every state in our wide-spread confederacy. So that we may well say of our Alma Mater in view of these brilliant results, in the language of the Trojan wanderers,

Quis jam locus,

Quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?

It is surely then a subject for congratulation, rather than censure, that the governors of our institution, whilst they have enlarged the course of studies in every department, have been particularly attentive to morals and politics, and have prescribed such a course on those subjects as will, I am in hopes, insure advantages never before enjoyed in this institution. The great mass of high intellect in all countries, must be employed in morals and politics, and no mind can have received its greatest enlargement, or be fully prepared for a faithful discharge of the great duties of life, without their study. This applies forcibly to our own country, but particularly to the slave-holding portion of it, and will lead me to make a few remarks on the inducements which should urge you, gentlemen, as Americans and Virginians, to make, whilst here, the greatest possible proficiency in all your studies.

The establishment of our federative system of government has justly been considered as the commencement of a new era in the history of nations. It is emphatically the great experiment of the age in which we live; to it the eyes of all are directed, and upon its issue must cause of liberty and republican institutions throughout the world, mainly depend. The great and distinguishing characteristics of our system is, that the sovereignty resides in the people- that they constitute the

source of all political power, and the only check on the misconduct of rulers. Where such a system prevails, all must depend on the general intelligence and virtue of the mass. If the mainspring of our system is the sovereignty of the people, then it does follow that the people must be enlightened. In the language of the great author of the Declaration of Independence, "power is always stealing from the many to the few;" and nothing can prevent the gradual decay and final loss of our liberties, but unceasing vigilance on the part of the people. We must ever be upon the watch-tower, ready to give the alarm not only when the citadel of our liberties is openly and violently attacked by the arm of bold and ruthless usurpation, but when we behold those secret and artful approaches to despotism, which gradually undermine the fabric of our institutions, and give no signs of coming mischief, until we are involved in irremediable ruin.

Every man throughout our wide-spread republic, must take his share of responsibility in the result of the great experiment which is now going forward. There is no privileged class here to rule by the right divine. Far different is our case from the despotisms of the ancient world, or the monarchies of the modern. Sovereignty resided formerly at Babylon, at Thebes, at Persepolis. Now we find it at Paris, Vienna, and London. But in our own more happy country, it pervades our territory like the very air we breathe, reaching the farthest, and binding the most distant together. Politics here is the business of every man, no matter how humble his condition may be. We have it in commission to instruct the world in the science and the art of government. We must, if we succeed, exhibit the extraordinary phenomenon of a well-educated, virtuous, intelligent people, "free without licentiousness-religious without a religious establishment-obedient to laws administered by citizen magistrates, without the show of official lictors or fasces, and without the aid of mercenary legions or janissaries." As a nation, a glorious charge has devolved upon us. Our condition prescribes to each one the salutary law of Solon, that there shall be no neutrals here. Each one must play his part in the great political drama; and you, gentlemen, who have assembled here for the purpose of receiving a liberal education, must recollect that fortunate circumstances have placed you among the privileged few. Every motive of honor, of patriotism, and a laudable ambition, should stimulate to the utmost exertion. Neglect not the precious opportunity which is afforded you. The five talents are entrusted to your care; beware lest you bury or throw them away. This is the most important era of your life-the very seed time of your existence; success now may insure you success hereafter.

The age in which you live, and the circumstances by which you are surrounded, as inhabitants of the south, create a special demand for your utmost exertions. The times are indeed interesting and momentous. We seem to have arrived at one of those great periods in the history of man, when fearful and important changes are threatened in the destiny of the world. In the prophetic language of the boldest of philosophers, we may perhaps with truth affirm, that "the crisis of revolutions is at hand." Never were the opinions of the world more unsettled and more clashing than at this moment. Monarchists and democrats, conservatives and radicals, whigs and tories, agrarians and aristocrats, slaveholders and non-slaveholders, are all now in the great field of contention. What will be the result of this awful conflict, none can say. England's most eloquent and learned divine tells us, that there now sits and unnatural scowl on the aspect of the population- a resolved sturdiness in their attitude and gait; and whether we look to the profane recklessness of their habits, or to the deep and settled hatred which rankles in their hearts, we

cannot but read in these moral characteristics the omens of some great and impending overthrow. The whole continent of Europe is agitated by the conflicts of opinions and principles; and we are far, very far from the calm and quiet condition which betokens the undoubted safety of the republic.

When the times are so interesting and exciting; when clouds are lowering above the political horizon, portending fearful storms; when the lapse of time is every day disclosing great and startling events, can you, gentlemen, fold your arms in inglorious indolence-throw away the opportunity that is now offered you-fail to prepare for the important part which should devolve on, you, and add yourselves to the great mass of the unambitious, illiterate citizens, who have been in all ages and all countries the blind instruments with which despotism has achieved its results. I hope-yes, I know, that at this moment a worthier and a nobler impulse actuates every one of you. And you must recollect too, that you are generally members of that portion of our confederacy whose domestic institutions have been called in question by the meddling spirit of the age. You are slaveholders or the sons of slaveholders, and as such your duties and responsibilities are greatly increased. He who governs and directs the action of others, needs especially intelligence and virtue. Prepare yourselves, then, for this important relation, so as to be able to discharge its duties with humanity and wisdom. Then can we exhibit to the world the most convincing evidence of the justice of our cause; then may we stand up with boldness and confidence against the frowns of the world; and if the demon of fanaticism shall at last array its thousands of deluded victims against us, threatening to involve us in universal ruin by the overthrow of our institutions, we may rally under our principles undivided and undismayed- firm and resolute as the Spartan band at Thermopylae; and such a spirit, guided by the intelligence which should be possessed by slaveholders, will ever insure the triumph of our cause. I will not dwell longer at present on the high motives which should urge you to exertion; but let me call your attention to some of the evils and temptations which will beset you in your collegiate career, and against which I must now warn you to be on your guard.

There are many persons opposed to a college education, because it is supposed to subject the youth to strong temptations, and in the end, to lead many into dissipation and vice, who might otherwise pass through life moral and correct citizens. I will not say that temptation does not exist here-that evil may not arise to some from their connection with college. But I do affirm unhesitatingly, that there is no better preparation for the great world into which you are soon to enter, than a proper discharge of your duties in the little one with which you are now about to connect yourselves. The individual who passes through a college life with honor and credit to himself, resisting the little temptations which beset him, has already been tried and tested, and his virtue is of a much more stem and genuine character than that of him who has never gone forth from the paternal roof, and consequently never been disciplined in the school of his equals. You may rest assured that every one of you who shall pass safely through this ordeal, will be a better and a more useful citizen, because of the very temptations which you may have triumphantly resisted whilst here.

Let me then call on each of you to guard against all excesses which may lure you from the path of your duties-remember that one transgression tempts to another, until the individual becomes

hardened and reckless in his course. Beware of the very beginnings of vice; a little indulgence at first, believed even to be harmless, may lead to melancholy ruin in the end. Never forget the great purpose for which your parents have sent you here, and never permit, for a moment, any circumstances to divert you from it. Be firm, be determined in your course; listen not to the Syren voice of pleasure and dissipation, but acquire at once that manliness and resolution which will enable you to say NO! when pressed to do wrong; and you may rest assured that you will meet with your recompense not only in after life, but here, even whilst you are students. I may claim to have some experience in this matter. I have been myself a student in this college, and for some years past have been connected with it, and have been no inattentive observer of passing events; and it gives me pleasure to assure you, that the economical, moral, and diligent students have always been the most popular, and the most highly esteemed by their companions. Are there any honors to be conferred?— those are the gentlemen to receive them. Are there any distinguished duties to perform?— those are the individuals invited to discharge them. It is their names which are sounded with praise by their fellow-students, wherever they go in society; and their reputation survives and is cherished, while those who have spent their time in idleness and dissipation are forgotten; or if remembered, remembered to be condemned.

It too often happens that the youth at college imagines that he has rights and interests to defend adverse of those of his instructors. This false impression is pregnant with the most mischievous consequences. It arrays the student against the professor, introduces disorder and idleness into the institution, and consequently of irreparable injury to himself, and of pain and mortification to his friends and relatives. Now, gentlemen, I beg you to reflect a moment on the absurdity of this opinion. Where can there be any hostility of interest between your instructors and yourselves? Is it not our interest, as well as yours, that you should be diligent in your studies, correct and moral in your deportment? Does not the student, who makes the greatest proficiency in his studies, earn the greatest honor for himself, while he reflects the greatest renown upon the college? and I can assure you that we feel proud indeed when we behold those who have received our instruction gracing and adorning the spheres in which they move. Where, then, is the hostility of interest? There is none; the belief is vain and idle. The right for which the student is induced to contend, is often nothing more than the right to do wrong, the exercise of which always proves more destructive to himself than detrimental to us. If the student would only take a correct view of this subject, there would be nothing more endearing and harmonious than the relation of professor and pupil. The complexion of his whole future life may depend upon his acquirements and conduct whilst here. It is our duty, and it is his interest, that we should guard and restrain when he would run into excess. It has been my fortune to meet with several in the world who have spent their collegiate lives in reckless dissipation and idleness. I have beheld them while reaping the bitter fruits of their conduct; have heard their confessions of deep regret, and seen them shed the tear of heartfelt repentance; and I have not met with one who did not wish that he could run his race again, that he might avoid the errors of his youth.

But, independently of the motives of interest which should operate on you, there are others, of an elevated character, which must ever stimulate the generous and the virtuous. The friends and relatives, who dwell around the enchanted spot of your nativity and boyhood, and seem associated with your very existence, are looking with interest to your career whilst here, and

calling upon you for exertion during this eventful period of your lives. But, most of all, should the painful solicitude, which is felt for your welfare by those beloved beings who have guided you along the path of infancy urge you onwards. Never forget the joy with which you may recompense your kind indulgent parents by your assiduity and success while here; nor the sorrow and mortification which you may occasion by your idleness and misconduct. You have, indeed, the happiness of the authors of your existence in your hands, and generous heart will recoil from the infliction of sorrow. And let me urge you to keep up a frequent and unreserved correspondence with your families; reveal, frankly all that occurs concerning yourselves, and never neglect the mandate of a father, or spurn the advice of a mother. Perhaps I could not give you better counsel, than to beg you never to forget the example of Marmontel. When you are about to perform a questionable act, let each one pause, and ask himself, "what would my mother say if she knew what I am about to do?"

After having made these general remarks, I must call your attention, particularly, to several vices which the Faculty will be bound to take every means within their power effectually to suppress. These are, extravagance, drinking and gambling. The visitors at the last meeting of the convocation were so much impressed with the belief of the great injury which the extravagant habits of southern students have done to the cause of literature, that they passed a regulation requiring the Faculty to obtain, if possible, from each merchant in town, a pledge, that he would, in no case, extend credit to the students unless upon application from the parent or guardian, made known through the President, or some one of the Faculty. I am most happy to say, that every merchant in town has given the pledge with a willingness and promptness which reflect the greatest credit on the mercantile portion of our city, and mark, conclusively a generous disregard of all selfish considerations, when arrayed against the permanent interests of the town and college. In justice to the merchants, I must state to you, that they have subscribed to this pledge with no motives of hostility towards any of your number, or from any dissatisfaction at the conduct of any one of you. Their act has been the result of the most praiseworthy motives.

You may suppose, gentlemen, that the conduct of the Visitors and Faculty in this matter has been unwarrantable, and unnecessarily strict; but a moment's reflection will convince you of your error. This regulation has been made after the maturest consideration of the subject, and past experience not only justified, but absolutely demanded such a step. I know of no one thing more loudly and more universally complained of in all our southern institutions the unreasonable and absurd extravagance of many of the students who attend them. This evil, in some cases, has been enormous, and I have known many parents to be so much discontented with the conduct of their sons in this respect, as to cut short their education, and to become so disgusted with a college life as to resolve never more to subject a son to the same temptation. Now, the principal cause of this lavish expenditure of money has been facility with which credit has been obtained. The facility of obtaining credit has ruined even many a cautious man, by the temptations which have been thrown in his way, and the consequent inducements which have been offered to him to run into debt. During the ardent and too often thoughtless period of youth, experience has shown that this privilege becomes too dangerous to be trusted to the individual. He adds expense to expense—proceeds from one extravagance to another, until he becomes perfectly reckless in his career. Prices, of course, will be enhanced in proportion to the risk which the creditor runs.

Those who are honest are made to pay for those who are not. And thus many a student, before he has had a pausing season for reflection, finds an aggregate of items arrayed against him, which draws down the displeasure of his parent, or materially embarrasses his own little property.

The resolution of the Board of Visitors is intended, if possible, to eradicate this evil. The student's expenses now must be known to his parents and guardians, or they must give their express consent to his obtaining credit. If he shall be still extravagant, the responsibility must rest with him and his parents; we shall have done our duty. But we hope, most sincerely, that you will keep in view both your own and the college interests in this particular. Strict economy on the part of the student at college is a great virtue. Let each one remember that the money which he spends here has not been wrung from his brow, but from that of another. Liberality with that which is mine may be generous, but with that which is another's, is often selfish and culpable. I beg you to reflect upon the consequences of extravagance while here: it leads the student into idle, dissipated habits, and defeats the great purposes for which he has entered our institution; it blights his future prospects, and draws down upon him the displeasure of his parents. But, above all, gentlemen, let me bid you remember that which must always move the generous heart of youth. Your extravagance here extends beyond yourselves; it may reach your innocent brothers and sisters--your parents may become disgusted, or their resources may be contracted, and a Bacon or a Newton may be made to follow the plough, because the thoughtless, prodigal son has gone before them. And this may it be affirmed, but too truly, that ever increase of collegiate expense necessarily inflicts an injury on the great cause of science and education. There may be those whose ample resources may place them far above the necessity of strict economy. To them I would say, that it is selfish, or thoughtless at least, to indulge, before those with whom they must associate in a style of expenditure which they cannot imitate without ruin to themselves and their parents. Liberality, under such circumstances, ceases to be generous--it becomes a species of selfish ostentation, which reflects no credit on him who displays it, and does great injury to his associates. To every one of you, then let me recommend rigid economy, and you may be sure of reaping your reward in more steady habits, increased diligence, and a more perfect preparation for the great theatre of life on which you expect to enter.

Upon the subject of drinking and gambling, I shall say but a few words; the melancholy consequences of these vices are known to all--how the one stupifies and benumbs the faculties of the mind and the body, while the other reaches the citadel of the heart, and generates a train of the blackest vices which human nature is heir to. Let me beg you to beware of these vices, which have plunged so many families into distress and mourning, and have generated so large a portion of the misery of the world. Take care how far you indulge, lest your ruin come before you are aware of it. Our laws are severe against these vices, and experience has convinced us that we must rigidly execute them. But I hope the propriety of your course here will furnish us with no occasion for the enforcement of our laws.

In conclusion upon this subject, I will say to you, that if the students of William and Mary shall bind themselves, during their residence at college, not to spend more than a certain amount of pocket money, which should be moderate--not to taste ardent spirits any where, nor wine, or any other intoxicating liquor, except in private families, and not to touch a card, or play for money at

any game of hazard, and shall strictly conform to these resolutions-then you will indeed have formed a temperance society, of which you may be justly proud-one that will do the greatest honor to yourselves, establish the reputation of our college, and set an example to the world whose benefit may extend throughout our country and the students of '36 and '37 will long be remembered in the College of William and May. How far superior will such a reputation as this be to that short-lived notoriety purchased by extravagance and dissipation, and terminating too often in mortification and ruin. The case of the student is a very peculiar one; if he can pass through his short career at college, with all due diligence and propriety, he will have achieved for himself a great result. Full success in his studies during the few brief months that he remains within our college walls, may accomplish more for his future standing, and future happiness, than many years of hard toil and labor in after life, without the advantages which he might have reaped whilst here. It is for this reason that a society of the kind which I have just recommended must succeed here, if it can succeed any where. For you have only to adhere to your temperance vow for a few months, and the benefit is attained. But whether you shall form such a society as this or not, let every one of you endeavor, whilst here, to be economical, temperate and diligent; and such as persevere in this course, whatever may be said to the contrary, are most respected and honored by their fellow-students, make the greatest proficiency in their studies, and turn out at last the most valuable and distinguished members of society.

There are many other subjects to which I would wish to call your attention; but the limits which I have prescribed myself in this address, compel me to be brief. Our laws forbid your entry into taverns, and likewise all drinking parties and suppers among yourselves. Experience has shown these things to be ruinous to the students, and highly pernicious to the interests of the institution. You are to respect the college premises-not to deface or injure the college buildings. Each one of you is to be responsible for the injury done to his room, and to pay for all the injury which he may do to the buildings-always bearing in recollection that you come here not to exercise your knives, but your heads.

I would advise you particularly to be punctual in your attendance on divine service every Sabbath, and to be respectful and attentive whilst in church. He who disturbs a religious congregation, not only manifests a censurable disregard of religion, but exhibits an unfeeling heart, and is guilty of conduct which is not gentlemanly. An enlightened pulpit is not only the source of religious instruction, but of morality and civilization; and a truly pious clergyman merits the respect, love, and gratitude of the world, for he is one of the greatest of its benefactors. Be always respectful in your conversation towards religion, not only from regard to the feelings of others, but for the sake of your own reputation. Avowed infidelity is now considered by the enlightened portion of the world as a reflection both on the head and heart. The Atheist has long since been overthrown by the light of nature and Deist by that of revelation. The Infidel and the Christian have fought the battle, and the latter has won the victory. The Humes and Voltaires have been vanquished from the field, and the Bacons, Lockes, and Newtons have given in their adhesion. The argument is closed forever, and he who now obtrudes on the social circle his infidel notions, manifests the arrogance of a literary coxcomb, or that want of refinement which distinguishes the polished gentleman. If there be among you any ministers of the gospel, or professors of religion studying with a view to the ministry, to them we cheerfully open our

lecture-rooms, free of all expense, and shall consider ourselves as highly recompensed, if the instruction which we may communicate shall be made instrumental in promoting virtue and true religion.

A copy of our laws will be placed in the hands of each one of you: read and respect them. On the part of the Faculty, with which I have the honor to be connected, I have to state that the discipline of the college must and will be enforced. The oath of office, the reputation of the institution, your own welfare and success, all demand vigilance and promptness on our part. From your instructors you will always receive kind, affectionate, and parental treatment, and you may well believe it will ever be painful to us to animadvert on your conduct, or to inflict the penalties required by our laws. Nothing but a high sense of duty could lead us to proceed against those for whom the bare relation which subsists between us must generate feelings of the kindest character. The professor, who is kind to the student, and attentive to his interests, while he nerves himself upon all occasions to a discharge of his duty, is always his greatest benefactor; and the student will acknowledge it as soon as he has left the college walls.

Be diligent, be perseveringly attentive to your studies, and you have the antidote against all the evils and temptations to which college life is incident. And let me advise you, particularly in your evening rambles and social gatherings, to direct your thoughts and conversation to subjects of importance, particularly to the subject of your lectures. Enlightened, intelligent conversation is a source of great mental improvement; it brings mind into conflict with mind, sharpens the faculties, gives increased relish for study, and greatly enlarges the stock of information by an interchange of ideas. It is for this reason that a few intelligent men in a county will be found quickly to raise its intellectual level; and a few inquiring, successful students in a college, will in like manner quickly inspire the whole number with ardor and devotion to study. Hence the fact which the statistics of all long established colleges will prove, that great men are not sent out from their Walls one by one, from year to year, in regular succession, but they come at longer intervals, and always in little platoons. Thus are we convinced of the interesting fact, that genius is rarely solitary- it delights in company. The example and conversation of the successful student arouse and stimulate his companions, and leave them along with himself to his distinction.

Let me advise you by all means to discard at once that absurd notion, which has made an illiterate man of many a vain student- that genius delights not in labor. Very different is the fact; love of study, and unshaken perseverance in the pursuit of its object, is the true characteristic of genius every where. The men of genius who have built up the great systems of philosophy, and laid the foundation of civilization, have all been laborious students, as well as deep thinkers; they have been the true working-men of the world. Such men were Socrates and Plato, Demosthenes and Cicero, of antiquity, and such have been the Luthers, the Bacons, and Newtons of modern times, and such all men are compelled to be, who possess a laudable ambition for distinction and usefulness. In the language of Doctor Johnson we may assert, that "all the performances of human art, at which we look with praise and wonder, are the results of perseverance. It is by this that the quarry becomes a pyramid, and that distant countries are united by canals. It is therefore of the utmost importance that those who have any intention of deviating from the beaten track of life, and of acquiring a reputation superior to names hourly swept away by time among the refuse

of fame, should add to their reason and their spirit the power of persisting in their purposes, acquire the art of sapping what they cannot batter, and the habit of vanquishing obstinate resistance by obstinate attacks.”

There is even a great deal of labor requisite on your part to place yourselves on the Intellectual level of the age in which you live. In the beautiful language of one of the ablest writers of our country, we can truly say, "it is not with us as it was in former times, when science belonged to solitary studies, or philosophical ease or antiquarian curiosity. It has escaped from the closet, and become an habitual accompaniment of every department of life. It accosts us equally in the high ways and byways. We meet it in the idle walk, and in crowded street; in the very atmosphere we breathe, in the earth we tread on, in the ocean we traverse, and on the rivers we navigate. It visits the workshop of the mechanic, the laboratory of the apothecary, the chambers of the engraver, the vats of the dyer, the noisy haunts of the spinning-jenny, and the noiseless retreats of the bleachery. It crosses our paths in the long-winding canal, in the busy rail-road, in the flying steamboat, and in the gay and gallant merchant-ship, wafting its products to every climate. It enters our houses, sits down at our firesides, lights up our conversations and revels at our banquets. One is almost tempted to say that the whole world seems in a blaze, and that the professors in science, and the dealers in the arts surround us by their magical circles, and compel us to remain captives in the spells of their witchcraft.” And can you consent to waste your time in inglorious repose and idleness, while the whole world is blazing with philosophy? No gentlemen, you cannot. Arouse all your energies, waken up your faculties, enter on your career like the combatant at the Olympic Games, resolved to win the prize, and in advance I tell you, the victory will be yours.

You are here placed amid scenes which may well excite a noble and a laudable ambition, and make the bosom of the patriot throb. You tread on classic soil—a soil connected with associations which carry the imagination back to bygone days, and fix it on the noble achievements of philanthropists, heroes, statesmen, and sages. There is every thing here to excite generous aspirations. On the one side of you is the almost hallowed island where our hardy forefathers made the first lodgment of civilization on our portion of the western world, in face of the wilderness and the savage foe. On another side, not far removed, is the spot where the father of his country wound up the drama of the revolution, by that great and signal victory which gave us peace, and ensured us so important a station among the nations of the earth. You will assemble daily in these classic halls, which have witnessed the collegiate labors of some of the greatest and noblest men who have ever lived in the tide of time; men who have raised up their country's glory, and gone down to their graves covered with the laurels which their genius and their virtues won. Fronting this building, at the other end of our street, and in full view, stand the interesting remains of the Old Capitol of Virginia, which every true Virginian must gaze on with mingled emotions of pride and pleasure—a building in which the chivalry and talent of our state were assembled during the dark days of the revolution, when Wythe, Pendleton, and Jefferson displayed their wisdom in council, and Lee, Mason and the matchless Henry poured forth those strains of sublime eloquence which animated and cheered the drooping spirit of the land, and warmed the heart and braced up the nerve of the patriot. Looking on such scenes as these—contemplating the great minds that have been nursed in our institution, and the intellectual Titans

who have won their trophies on this interesting theatre, can you fail to be inspired with a noble ambition?- an ambition to imitate those mighty men who have gone before you, and whom the genius of the place in silent eloquence summons to your recollection. The author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire tells us, that he first caught the inspiration which gave rise to his great work, While gazing from the modern capitol of Rome on the ruins that lie scattered over the vallies and the seven hills. May we not hope then that many of you will catch a similar inspiration amid the interesting objects which surround you while breathing, in this old and hospitable city, a political atmosphere that still retains all the ardor and patriotism of former days? Again then, gentlemen, I call on you for perseverance and unremitting exertion; and in view of all the circumstances which surround and stimulate you while here, may I not say to you, in conclusion, that your friends, your parents, your instructors, expect every one to do his duty.