

AN ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

BELLES LETTRES SOCIETY

OF

OAKLAND COLLEGE.

DELIVERED MARCH 30, 1841,

BY J. L. MATHEWSON, ESQ.

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NATCHEZ, MI.:

PRINTED AT THE DAILY FREE TRADER OFFICE,  
Opposite the Agricultural Bank.

.....  
1841.

BELLES LETTRES HALL, }  
March 30, 1841. }

J. L. MATHEWSON, Esq.

Dear Sir:—The undersigned were appointed a committee in behalf of the Belles Lettres Society of Oakland College, to return you the thanks of the Society for your eloquent address delivered before its members this day, and request that you will favor us with a copy of the same for publication.

Yours respectfully,

L. M. DAY, }  
H. HUFF, } Committee.

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NATCHEZ, April 3d, 1841.

GENTLEMEN:—Yours of the 30th ult. is received, requesting for publication a copy of the address, which I had the honor to deliver before the Belles Lettres Society of Oakland College, on that day. With sincere thanks for the indulgent manner in which it was received, I place the address at your disposal; and with assurances of my regard for yourselves individually, I am

Yours respectfully,

J. L. MATHEWSON.

L. M. DAY, }  
H. HUFF, } Committee.



March 30, 1841

J. L. Matherston, Esq.

Your letter of the 20th inst. is received, re-  
questing for publication a copy of the address which I had  
the honor to deliver before the Hellenic Society of  
Oxford College on that day. With sincere thanks for  
the indulgent notice in which it was received, I place  
the address at your disposal; and with assurances of my  
regard for yourself individually, I am

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## ADDRESS.

### GENTLEMEN:

I do not appear before you, upon this occasion, as one whose age or experience would justify him, either in advising or instructing you. Had I thought that such was your expectation, the pleasing task of addressing you would willingly have been yielded to a more accomplished and matured mind. But it would be more agreeable to my intentions, if you would consider me as one, who, like yourselves, is endeavoring to prepare himself for usefulness in life, and whose situation will enable him to sympathize with you in your hopes and fears for the future; your dreams of coming good, and your anticipations of the manner in which you will perform your parts in the great drama of life. How bright those dreams! How sanguine those hopes! How uncontrolled those anticipations! The friends who love you have come together upon this joyous occasion, to encourage you; your own hearts, swelling with high and honorable resolves, inspire you; and I, though a stranger in these walls, would raise my voice to



urge you on, that your lives may be as useful, and their ends as glorious, as ever was pictured out in the dreams of young and generous ambition.

To all of us this is truly an interesting occasion. The fathers of your lives—the mothers of your love—the friends of your youth, have come to meet you: to smile with encouragement upon those whose labors are not yet ended here, and to bless with their best wishes those, who, in a few days, will go forth to commence their voyage over life's stormy ocean. Let me, then, add my mite to this feast of the mind—this banquet of the heart, as one, who, a little before you, having launched his bark upon that wide ocean, and taken a cursory view of the acts, the duties, and the responsibilities of his fellow voyagers, would tell you of what he has gleaned; and I shall be happy that my labor has not been in vain, if any profit shall arise from the little I have garnered up, and will spread before you.

The thought which weighs heaviest, (or ought to) upon the mind of the youth, when he bids adieu to the walls of his college, and enters the busy haunts of men, is, what part he shall perform, and how he shall be useful to his fellow beings throughout the revolving years of life. And upon the view he takes of that important subject, depends his destiny. The great Creator has blessed every man with some powers of mind, by the proper exercise of which the possessor may make himself a useful man, and an honored citizen; and perhaps the reason why so many men are unregarded and unknown, is, not that they are deficient in capacity for doing any thing, but because they misconceive their capabilities, and employ them in a manner which nature never intended. The minds of all men are not equal in capacity, any more than the soil

which they cultivate, is equal in richness. There are deserts in the intellectual, as well as in the natural world, where only stunted shrubs can vegetate, but it never was intended by the great Creator that even these should be useless.

The question then, of the most vital importance to every young man, in setting out in life, is "*In what sphere can I be most useful?*" And he must form correct ideas of the duties which are incumbent upon him as a man, and the responsibility which will rest upon him as a citizen, before he can choose the course which he can run most advantageously to himself—most beneficial to those who live around him—most honorable to the institutions of "his own, his native land." And not only must he consider well the part that he *would* perform—but that which he can *best* perform—in which he can best exercise those capabilities with which the Creator has endowed him. Should he aspire to the sacred desk, he must examine with the most scrutinizing eye, his fitness for that holy office, for awful is the responsibility of those who break unto their fellow worms of earth the bread of eternal life. Should he dream of wearing the laurel, which crowns the successful Statesman, he should know full well the ground upon which he dares to tread; for the hand that would direct the helm of State, should never tremble, though the lightning's flash be terrific, and the thunder's awful roll be deafening: his voice must be more threatening than the howl of the tempest—more soothing than a summer evening's zephyr—for often upon that hand and upon that voice may hang the destiny of unborn millions.

The hearts of many of you, young gentlemen, are eloquent with the thoughts which ambition whispers of



the course you shall run. Bright hopes for your future success you have enkindled in the hearts of those who have come to encourage you. Parents and friends who will be present at your setting out, will paint for you a future brilliant with success, and exuberant with happiness. The learned and honored men, who have long toiled with you for what you know, feel confident that this young and rising institution will never regret the honors it will confer upon you. And your country! I think that you will all agree with me, when I say, that much is expected of those who are about to leave the halls where they have been instructed—to forsake the haunts of their boyhood, and lay aside the pleasures of their youth, to assume the duties, the cares and responsibilities of men and of citizens. I speak not alone of the hopes and fears for our future lives, which may agitate the bosom of our own beloved country, but I speak too, of the rightful expectations which the world at large may entertain of us, striking as we will, for good or for evil, upon its fortunes through the country of which we are all component parts. We, humble though our pretensions, form part of a link of the great chain which connects events, and which binds generation to generation; and as such, we exert an influence over those who shall come after us. We either hand down to them a heritage of glory, or make them inheritors of an estate, ruined by prodigality and neglect. We are to live, not only for our own comfort and aggrandizement, but for the glory of the generation we succeed, and the social, moral and political greatness of generations to come. The spirits of our fathers urge us onward in the great work they begun, that future millions may rise up and call us blessed. Yes, much is expected of us. The gray haired sire, who has toiled in sunshine and in storm through the long years of life to collect the

competency which makes him comfortable and to form the character which makes him honored, is not moved with more anxious care concerning the conduct and capability of those who are to inherit that fortune and perpetuate or disregard that reputation, than the people of one generation are concerning the moral and mental character of those who are to be the inheritors of the treasures they have amassed and the greatness they have acquired. They gaze with the most careful solicitude and scrutinize with the most anxious forebodings into the conduct of those who are to wear their jewels,—who are to improve or trample upon the advantages they may have been blessed with, and the good they would confer upon the succeeding generations of men—those upon whom depends the result of the labors, the hopes and the fears of anxious and arduous lives—those upon whose conduct hang the good of the learning they have garnered up—the welfare of the religion they have loved and the destiny of the institutions of a land they have adored. It is this feeling animating the bosom of the father which prompts him so to school him, who is to wear his name, that he may transmit, not only unsullied, but with increased value and brilliancy, the character he bears among the sons of men. It is this feeling which induces the fond mother so to rear the fair girl, who is the inheritrix of her charms and her virtues, that she may give life to those who will regard with more than filial pride the beloved source of their being. Need we then doubt, that we, all of us, are objects of the most intense solicitude to those whom we shall so soon, aye, and even now, are shoving off the stage of action? Intense solicitude! For they cannot withhold from us our bright inheritance, nor stay with their feeble arm of flesh, the coming wave which is to bury them forever in the great ocean of time.



We have but to unfold the records of departed time to learn the vital influence which one age exerts upon another. Its pages are not chronicles of a long and uninterrupted chain of glorious events, but they are marked by eras, some greater and more brilliant than others, which stand out in the great picture of the past—which arrest immediately the attention, and which give character to the time they mark and the nation whose glory produced them. They gleam like so many light-houses upon the great shore of time, to direct and instruct those who are endeavoring to navigate the wide ocean of life. An age of glory is often succeeded by an age of shame. And history informs us that those dark spots upon her pages are created as often by the dazzling, though erring deeds of those who have illumined the story of their time, as by the incapacity and weakness of those who succeeded them. The Agamemnon of his age, Louis the fourteenth of France, has, by his chivalrous deeds, made his name memorable in the annals of that devoted land, yet the very course which he pursued to make himself and his reign illustrious, increased, if it did not create, the spirit of a revolution which afterwards deluged that country in blood and brought to the scaffold an inheritor of his name and crown. I have not the time, even were it necessary, to cite other examples which prove to us undeniably, that the greatest circumspection—the most unyielding virtue, must characterize the age which would benefit succeeding generations. Love for the memory of their fathers—love for the advantages they bequeathed—love for the religion which blessed them—love for the institutions of the land of their birth.

We are the inheritors of as rich and substantial advantages as ever blessed a people, and upon us, just rising up to occupy the places which our fathers have left, or are

leaving, depends whether or not they have lived and toiled in vain. How fearful that responsibility! The prosperity not only of our own country, but the great cause of human rights, and of human liberty, rests upon the shoulders of the generation which is now coming on, and should the burthen not be supported, but be permitted to sink through inability and weakness, it will drag down with it the moral and political greatness of millions who live, and the hopes of myriads who are yet to come.

If we can possibly form any idea of a glorious future, from the transactions of the past, certainly, the events of the last fifty years will justify us in saying that the nineteenth century will influence more the moral, social and political condition of the world, than any age which has preceded it. This is, emphatically, the age of the press, and if a wide and general diffusion of knowledge can have any effect in improving the condition of men, the world now has an opportunity of witnessing the performance of the great experiment. The store-house of learning is no longer kept for the pleasure or aggrandizement of a favored few. The press has scattered far and wide among the children of men its priceless treasures and its choicest gems. The rich and the poor—the professional man and the mechanic, may wander side by side in the rich stores of learning, and alike, may freely gather whatever will adorn, exalt, or ennoble them.

The obstacles which have hitherto been insurmountable to men whose minds aspired to amuse or instruct their fellow men, have been removed, and obscurity and poverty keep not down those who feel the divinity within them. The patronage of rank and fortune is no longer indispensable to enable the aspirant after "that life which has no grave," to realize his brightest dreams of bliss. The



splendor of high birth—the glitter of fashion and the influence of wealth, though they may lend the lustre of a name renowned, is now seldom sought for by the proud child of genius, to introduce him to that world in whose memory he hopes he shall live forever. But he who would now be known greater than his fathers were, enters the lists in his own good name, and should he be successful, the sear frosts of an humble birth will not wither the laurel which will be placed upon his brow, nor the tattered garb of poverty dim the splendor of that mantle of distinction with which he will be robed.

The temple of fame is thrown wide open and thousands there are who endeavor to enter it. This very facility for becoming known, induces thousands to spread their productions before the public gaze, who under other circumstances, would perhaps have remained forever in hopeless obscurity. And it has been considered by some, as an objection to this facility for imparting knowledge, that the superabundance of writing in the present age, consisting, as it necessarily must, of a heterogenous mass, will dim the brilliancy of its literary and scientific greatness. That it will give birth to a species of writing, which, like the butterfly, will only engage the attention by its frail beauty, and like it, will die with the season, and be forever forgotten, we will cheerfully grant; but even the most uncandid are compelled to acknowledge that it will also call from every quarter, men whose productions will live through all future time. But a few struggled successfully for a name in the most brilliant ages of English literature, and their names will be ever memorable. If they contended successfully, with the great hindrances which they must have had to encounter, what in this age, when those hindrances have in a great measure been removed, what can prevent the production of a

literature which in its general character will at least equal, if not surpass that of any age of the world. Think of that poem which alone of all that the genius of man has produced can stand comparison with the great Iliad of Homer, Paradise lost, being sold for a sum, which could now scarcely purchase an ordinary article for a review. And think too, of Sir Walter Scott, at an advanced age, endeavoring to cancel a debt of upwards of five hundred thousand dollars with the productions of that pen which held the world entranced in admiration and wonder. It is true, this age has not produced its Shakspeare or its Milton; but such men come not often. They appear only as the brilliant comet, which after a long interval of years, comes to adorn the heavens with the grandeur of its movements and the surpassing lustre of its light. But even should we not rival some of the immortal names of other times, we can certainly contend with any other era for the diffusion of that which has been written in this or in preceding times.

The facility for imparting knowledge, engenders a spirit of enquiry and a thirst for improvement, which cannot but be most beneficial in its consequences. The greatest genius that has ever lived has not been able to exhaust the great store-house of learning; and if he, the great and good unraveller of Nature's mysteries—the immortal Newton—if he felt, when his labors were about to end here on earth, that he had been but as a child sporting with pebbles on the shore, when the great ocean of truth lay unexplored before him—if he felt that so much remained undiscovered by the genius of man, how great an encouragement is it for the learned and the great who have succeeded him, to toil for those discoveries which will ennoble them and enlighten the world! And with the facilities which they possess, what can hinder



them from progressing in their operations? The great spirit of enquiry urges them onward in their search after truth, and often, like the fortunate Indian, the very things they lay hold of to aid them onward in their pursuit, will reveal to them that its roots are buried in a mine of surpassing richness.

This is not an age in which it can be expected that literary or scientific men can attain the dazzling reputation which has crowned the labors of those of past ages. The equality of information being greater than it has ever been before, there is no field where genius would battle for glory, but that immediately it will find a thousand competitors who will boldly contend for the laurel. Throughout the civilized world every department of knowledge is filled with men who are endeavoring to explore whatever has remained undiscovered by those who have hitherto sought after truth, and the consequence must inevitably be that though the glory which has hitherto clustered around the head of one, will be divided among a number, yet it will cause a wider diffusion of the knowledge which has been gained and be made more subservient to the social happiness of the world. Take, for example, the subject of meteorology, which is at present engaging the attention of the learned, and in which our own Espy has made such valuable discoveries. How many theories are there upon that one subject, scarcely two of which agree, and how many men are there sanguine with success who are struggling for the honor of having discovered the true secret. And so it is with nearly all scientific subjects, and from the fact that so many are so nobly engaged, will the sciences be brought to a greater state of perfection—the competition which has been created will cause a scrutiny, before which theories which are not built upon the rock of truth must and will fall—and knowledge will not only

be more generally diffused, but that information which is disseminated, will be more exalted—more conducive to the wide spreading of those noble qualities which will raise man from the level of the brute nearer to the glory and greatness of the God who created him.

How incalculable is the influence which this diffusion of useful knowledge, and its adaptation to the conveniences of life, will and does exert in improving the political system—in ameliorating the social state, and in developing the mind and the faculties of man. And who will deny that that influence is destined to effect a revolution the grandest in its design and the greatest in its consequences which ever shook the earth. In our contemplation of the result, we are almost constrained to believe that the restoration of that golden age of which the old poets sang with rapture is rapidly approaching. No fabled heroes, gifted with the endowments of a god, shall find in it a theatre for their daring exploits—and no imagined land, bright with all that makes earth beautiful, shall unfold its scenery to the enraptured gaze. But the nations of the earth shall behold man, unadorned and unennobled by any clothing of the imagination, restored to his inalienable birth-right. It may be but the dream of enthusiasm—it may be but idle speculation; but certainly popular education, teaching men their rights and their power, will point them to the places which the God of nature intended them to occupy—for it is the angel spirit, which will divide the opposing waters and lead the children of men through triumphantly to the unrestrained enjoyment of social happiness and political freedom.

Turn over the pages of the past, and do not its chronicles inform us that the awe which surrounded kings melted away before the enlightenment of the people, as the vapory



clouds disappear at the rising of the sun. Ignorance and tyranny—knowledge and freedom, have always gone hand in hand, and the experience of other days tells us how tamely an ignorant people will submit to the chains, the oppressions of despots, and it tells us too, that man might as well attempt to calm with his frail voice the troubled ocean, as endeavor to still by threats and stripes the convulsions of a people who know their rights. An enlightened people cannot be enslaved, and whenever knowledge, in its wide diffusion, penetrates into the darkness which has enveloped a nation for ages, it reveals to their astonished gaze the corruption, the venality and injustice which surround those who, reason and justice teach them, should be their benefactors.

We must believe that the time is approaching which is to be renowned, not for the conquests of kings, or the glory and power of kingdoms, but for the deferential homage which will be paid to the power of individual man. This is to be the result of a wide and general diffusion of useful knowledge—unfolding before the astonished gaze of men the secret of their existence—the high purposes for which they were created—the relative positions which they should occupy to one another—and the love of liberty and virtue which should give character to their lives.

The spirit of internationality, which pervades the civilized world, unfolding to nations oceans apart, the minutest transactions of their different governments—the rapidity with which that information travels, drawing them to an almost immediate proximity—the noble and energetic character of those nations which are free, and the unnumbered advantages they possess for their advancement in power, happiness and glory, influencing those

less favored—is destined to make a great change in the social and political condition of the world.

I am well aware that there are many who believe that the people can be too much enlightened for their happiness and security—that a too intimate acquaintance with their rights will engender a restless and a revolutionary spirit. You will agree with me that it is unnecessary to argue against such a position. History informs us that a superficial knowledge of their rights is the most dangerous to any people, and points us to one of the bloodiest pictures in the book of time as a memorable example—the French revolution. Had the people been more enlightened—had the film been taken from their eyes, so that they could have seen the substance and not the shadow of what they were so ardently seeking—then much blood and misery had been prevented—then one of the loveliest and noblest of her sex would perhaps have lived to witness that scene of happiness and glory which she dreamed would be the lot of her own dear country—and spared the shame of a cruel death—spared the misery which produced that heart-rending exclamation, “Oh, liberty! what crimes are committed in thy name.”

The influence which nations exercise over one another—the free and almost unconstrained association which now exists between them, have already changed in a great measure, the social and political aspect of the world. Uncivilized and half civilized nations are every day abolishing customs which have long been their peculiar characteristics, and introducing the improvements and habits of more enlightened people. The most absolute despots, whose will has hitherto been the only law, are submitting their power and the happiness of their subjects



to the restraint and certainty of written constitutions, and endeavoring to bless the land over which they rule with the cultivation of those arts which increase the luxuries and conveniences of life. Even the austere pilgrims, who seek the tomb of their adored prophet, are now conveyed by steam boats upon the Red Sea to the shrine of him who has promised to reward such love for his memory with an enjoyment of all the glories of the Mohammedan paradise.

The press is the great pioneer in this work of reformation, and wherever it has been introduced, wonderful have been the changes which have been wrought by its powerful influence. Yes, the spirit of the press, like Peter the Hermit, is entering the nations of the earth, astonishing princes by the great and enlightening truths which it inculcates, and exhorting the people with the most persuasive eloquence to rescue from unholy hands the only shrine, save that of God's, before which man should bow. And how astonishing are the effects of that unequalled eloquence! Millions, with throbbing hearts, are every year flocking to the standard of that truth which teaches "the weary and heavy laden," that the divine right of those earthly monarchs, who have enchained their liberties, exists but in the deluded dreams of their imaginations—and that those rights which they would enjoy, like the waters of salvation, are unprescribed, save by their own will, and are as unalienable as their heritage of heaven. Which teaches them that,

" 'Tis their own weakness gasping, or the shows  
Of outward strength, that builds up tyranny,  
And makes it look so glorious."

Already are the young nations of our own continent seeking the priceless blessings of liberty, though their pathway to them be through fire and through blood. Already are they raising their voices in gratitude for those joys which a free government can alone bestow, and which the people of the whole earth, sooner or later, must and will possess. That great revolution has but begun, but as sure as the revolving years roll round, will its great designs be accomplished, for in all the blood, and toil, and tribulation which it will have to encounter, will the religion of Christ

“Stand beside it like an angel;” and through all their suffering, will the nations of the earth hail to our own land, as the Magi blessed the star, which led them on to him “whose yoke was easy, and whose burthen light.”

This then is the age which is to be renowned for the great advancement made in all that constitutes civilization—improvement in the political system—the amelioration of the social state, and the development of the mind and the faculties of man. This, young gentlemen, is to be our inheritance, and upon the manner in which we conduct ourselves depends whether the age in which we shall play our parts shall be received with the curses or blessings of succeeding generations.

No nation has been more abundantly blessed with the great advantages resulting from the progress of the spirit of improvement, than that of which we are all citizens. Over its fortunes has it thrown the glow of enchantment, so rapid have been its creations, so brilliant their success. Within the short space of half a century have we sprung



from the cradle to a vigorous manhood, whose virtue, whose power and whose daring have elicited even from envy the tribute of admiration. But although much has been done in placing our beloved country in that enviable situation, yet much must be done if we would retain it. Every day is the circle of our future labors rapidly enlarging. It widens with the emigration which is daily converting our western forests into flourishing towns and blooming fields. It is enlarged by the increasing enterprise, industry and wealth of the whole people. In advancing the interest of our own country, we further the cause of civilization and of human liberty throughout the world. The brighter the glory of our own land, the more illumined will be the path upon which other nations would stride to the favors we enjoy. The motives which incite us to action are of a nature unlike those of a differently constituted form of government. It has been beautifully observed, that "that spirit of liberty which strikes the chain off the captive, binds the freeman to his brother." Yes, in the great cause in which we all labor, we have an unity of interest, which endears us one to another. We toil not for others alone, but for ourselves. The laurels which we may gain will deck, not the brows of unsympathising and unenergetic rulers, but will bloom upon those who won them. Every step we each may take in the advancement of the glory of our country—increases our own fame—advances the glory of one another. And in a government like ours, none of us can say that we will take no part or interest in its affairs, but be idle spectators of the toil and strife of others, for we must assist, or we will be to those who do labor for the public good as a dead body chained to a living one, overpowering its senses and encumbering its energies. We have all our part to perform, for it is one of the greatest responsibility. The

situation which every man, however humble, or however exalted he may be, occupies in the public eye, though it be calculated to call forth the noblest and most disinterested feelings of our nature, yet often engenders feelings of an entirely different character. Love of self will often stifle all love of country, and our form of government, though the most beneficent, may be made the most perilous to those whom it would bless, for corruption may transform the rod of office into a dangerous serpent.

Perhaps there has been no period in our history which was more critical to the safety and prosperity of our institutions than that in which we shall so soon be called to act our part. The pillars which support the temple of our liberty have already tottered, and there are, now, men who would strike off its noblest and richest ornaments to enrich themselves. It may appear unbecoming in one of my age thus to speak, but I hold it to be my right, in warning you of the evils which you will have to encounter, to denounce corruption whenever it appears flagrant, and vice whenever it becomes disgusting. Misguided men, professing to be governed by the holiest motives, and forgetting in the heat of their fanaticism those rights, to secure which our Union was formed, are now agitating a question—no, not a question—but principles, which, like the dragon's teeth sown by Cadmus, wherever they are scattered in this southern land, will breed armed men. But this is not all. There was a time when the greatest of those daring souls who perilled all for liberty, would not advance their high claims to stations, which would have made their poverty more tolerable, and realized their dreams of earthly glory—but preferred remaining obscure and penniless, than beg as a favor what they might have almost demanded as a right. But that time has passed



away, and where you will now find one, who, like Cincinnatus, will have to be requested to accept the dignity of station, you will find hundreds who, like Cæsar, would dare to snatch the honor. I speak not particularly of either of the great political parties which have been struggling for the ascendancy, but I speak of the unworthy motives which incite members of all parties. This corruption is the bane of our republic, and if what has been termed the only tyrant in a free government, public opinion, will not crush it, it will be our destruction.

The young men, who are about to enter upon the discharge of their duties as citizens, want not examples of incorruptible integrity and unyielding virtue. They need not go back to the classic days of Greece and Rome to find food for their admiration of nobleness in man. Such men, whose like the world never saw, have lived and died in our land, and though the places which hold their remains are almost unmarked and even forgotten, yet their names shall live forever more. The fame of such men as Franklin, and Henry, and Washington, are as bright an inheritance of glory as need fall to the lot of any people. And shall we ever forget them? It is said that it was from the fortified tomb of the Emperor Adrian, that Rienzi and Arnold successfully defied the enemies of liberty and of Rome. If, like them, we take our bold stand upon the graves of our fathers, no power on earth, either from among us or from without, can wrench from us our invaluable heritage. We must be true to their memory, if we would preserve the blessings they bequeathed us. We must revere them, as Coriolanus loved the being who gave him birth, that their spirits hovering o'er us, may check us if we raise our arms for evil. *And we must be true to ourselves.* We must remember that upon the

intelligence and virtue of the people depends the safety of our institutions, and for the wide diffusion of that intelligence, and for the preservation of that virtue must we toil, if we would transmit with increased value the blessings we have inherited to those who shall come after us. We should so live that when we are called away, we can hail with joy and not with sorrow, those who shall come to take our places.

When the great Peter of Russia felt the approach of that enemy of his race, which cannot be conquered by mortal arms, or be awed by the majesty of human genius, he feared not to die. His eyes were fixed upon a vision ineffable in its lustre. He saw the cities which he had built, peopled with millions of happy beings; the institutions he had founded, crowded with industrious youths; the arts he had introduced, shedding their lustre upon the whole country, all raising high among the nations of the earth the land which he had found a wilderness, and the people whom he had found uncivilized; yes, elevating the land of his birth from darkness into light, and raising millions of his race from the deepest degradation to a situation in which they could better appreciate the goodness and magnify the glory of their great Creator. These noble deeds, like the holy angels in the Patriarch's dream, crowded the ladder upon which he hoped to climb to heaven, and elated by the vision, he exclaimed, "God will forgive the errors of my past life for the good I have done my country." I would argue against the convictions of my own mind and the instructions of the reverend men who have taught you, did I contend that the greatness of any man's deeds can dispense with that sincere repentance which alone can secure the forgiveness of our Maker. But with an assurance of that forgiveness, how sublime a con-



solation is it, not only to a king, but to any man, to have the bitterness of death removed by the reflection that his life has been useful, and that the deeds which he has performed will advance the interests of millions of his race, and redound to the glory of the land of his birth. May such, young gentlemen, be the usefulness of your lives that your latter ends may be solaced by a reflection so cheering, and brightened by a consolation so glorious.

When the great Peter of Russia felt the approach of that enemy of his race, which cannot be denoted by mortal arms, or be awed by the majesty of human genius, he turned not to die. His eyes were fixed upon a vision ineffable in its nature. He saw the father which he had built, peopled with millions of happy beings; the institutions he had founded, crowded with industrious youths; the arts he had introduced, shedding their lustre upon the whole country, all raising high among the nations of the earth the land which he had found a wilderness, and the people whom he had found uncivilized; yes, elevating the land of his birth from darkness into light, and raising millions of his race from the deepest degradation to a situation in which they could better appreciate the goodness and magnify the glory of their great Creator. These noble deeds, like the holy angels in the Patriarch's dream, crowded the ladder upon which he hoped to climb to heaven, and aided by the vision, he exclaimed, "God will forgive the errors of my past life for the good I have done my country." "I would argue against the convictions of my own mind and the instructions of the reverend men who have taught you, did I contend that the greatness of any man's deeds can dispense with that sincere repentance which alone can secure the forgiveness of our Maker. But with an assurance of that forgiveness, how sublime a con-