An Address
Before the Literary Societies
of
The Furman University.
July 28, 1856.

By
J. J. Brantly.

Charleston:
James and Williams,
16 State-Street,
1856.
CORRESPONDENCE.

FURMAN UNIVERSITY, July 30th, 1856.

DEAR SIR:

We are directed by the Adelphian Society to request of you, for publication, a copy of the elegant and appropriate address, delivered before the literary societies of this University, on the 28th instant.

Hoping that you will comply with our request, we are, sir,

Your obedient servants,

J. O. A. GERRY,

D. C. ANDERSON,

W. R. BARON,

Rev. J. J. Brantly.

NEWBERRY, Oct. 16th, 1856.

GENTLEMEN:

I take pleasure in placing at your disposal the address which I had the honor of delivering before your societies in July last, and the publication of which you have requested.

Thanking you for the complimentary terms in which the request is made,

I remain, very respectfully, yours,

John J. Brantly.

Messrs. J. O. A. Gerry,

D. C. Anderson,

W. R. Baron.

Committee Adelphian Society, F. U.
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GENTLEMEN:

I avail myself of the opportunity with which your invitation has furnished me, to offer some considerations, with a view to excite and foster scholarly ambition.

My aim coincides with the objects and purposes of your societies; and if successful, though in a small degree, will so far at least serve the valuable ends for which they were organized.

I take it for granted, that nothing great or good can be accomplished by human effort, except through the impulsive power of some prevailing, energetic desire. Whatever we do to effect, we must resolve to do. In great enterprises nothing can be done in the absence of that impassioned vehemence of the soul, which is indispensably necessary to counteract all the tendencies of languor and indolence, and to stimulate resolution into effective movement. In no enterprise is this more necessary than in that which has for its object the attainment of excellence in letters and science. No man ever yet found himself suddenly and casually possessed of all the advantages of literature and science. The example is yet to be
produced, exhibiting the singular and astonishing fact of a *fortuitous* scholar. Of all the things that may be ascribed to chance, *this* is the least probable. Though many other things may be deemed fortuitous, *this* decidedly *cannot*. It has never yet happened to any man to plunge all at once into the fountain of knowledge, there to bathe and refresh his spirit with its unbought delights. The sacred fount is gained only by labor, intellectual labor, long continued, and painfully urged onward. Intellectual as well as political wealth is the product of labor. This is the commodity always demanded in exchange for learning, and it is one which never fails to produce a fair value. A passion for letters will in every case make diligent students; and such students cannot fail to be successful. They begin their course with a firm and decided purpose; they meet obstacles but to conquer them; they climb one height, not to rest there, but to give them an advantage in mounting the next; they obtain the mastery over one difficulty that they may meet the next with greater confidence; and thus effort invites effort, and one acquisition draws to itself another—in virtue of that great law of attraction between like things which pervades the moral and intellectual, no less than the physical universe, until they insensibly reach a station of eminence.

We are prepared then to perceive, that the passion of which I have spoken, as ruling the scholar, is that generous thirst for learning which leads to superiority.

1. In the objects of this passion there is a moral dignity by which it is consecrated and ennobled. By its free and lawful action, *mind*, that lofty element of our being, is released from the dark imprisonment of ignorance, and receives the liberty
for which it pants. Fast bound in the degrading service of vile passions, and brutal appetites, it remains, till knowledge comes and strikes off its fetters, and proclaims to the captive "the opening of the prison doors," and advances it to a place in the intellectual economy which belongs to it as a matter of right. A passion like this wages no war on the rights and happiness of mankind. The conquests which it seeks are far removed from scenes of violence, where the hands of brethren are raised against brethren, and where hate and rage, and deadly passion ply the weapons of battle and death. The superiority at which it aims is tempered with meekness and wisdom. It proposes to man the government of reason; offers him as allies in the contest he is to carry on against opposing passions, truth, science, mental illumination. No blood stains its victories; no ruined cities, no desolated countries, no red fields of slaughter are its trophies; but exalted and glorified humanity, peaceful arts, and all the achievements of genius—these are its far nobler attestations. To contest with others the palm of excellence in learning, is the same thing as to strive for pre-eminence in wisdom and virtue. It is the same thing as if a man should strive to become more strictly identified with his proper destiny than his neighbors; just as if he should be zealous to surpass them in honorable deeds; to go before them in examples of right conduct, and to be the first to win the applause of the wise and virtuous. The human character is sadly shamed by those strifes in which the main dispute is, who shall stand highest in power, who shall draw upon himself the greatest number of eyes, or boast the loudest applause of fame, or fill the largest space in the passing
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history of the day. Such disputes are seldom free from bloodshed, and are often made cruel and savage by the worst excesses of fierce contending passions. But for one to have more knowledge than another; to drink at the fountains of science deeper draughts, and thus to gain more abundant satisfaction than others for the noblest thirst that ever burnt in the human breast, is not an event that shall bring infamy after it; while it disturbs no one, it may well become the delight of all. A thirst for learning leads into those shining paths along which genius has left its foot-prints, beguiles the tediousness of study, and urges the diligence of the student into new and successive fields. To live and move amid the lights of intellect of all past ages, to become members of the great republic of mind, as existing and operating throughout the world, to hold high communion with the sages and benefactors of mankind, to trace out the wary and subtle investigations of reason, to be intelligent and happy ourselves, and to assist in making others so, are some of the objects of this passion. Are these worthy and considerable objects? Are there any other objects of human pursuit comparable to them? Withdraw them from the scope and drift of man's action, and you take away from his glory. You abandon him to influences that will cripple all that is good and great in him, and develop and strengthen all that is base and vile. Knowledge is that element in which the mind lives; deprived of this, it may not cease to exist, but its functions will cease; its ethereal spirit will lose its force and elasticity; and all that is lovely in it will disappear.

2. Learning greatly multiplies the sources of rational enjoy-
ment. This is another consideration which should stimulate our minds in the pursuit of it. I may refer to any or to all the branches of knowledge and literature for the proof of this position. The student of mathematics, who applies his mind with untiring energy to the abstruse principles of the exact sciences, who perceives and understands their various combinations and results, their beautiful application to the practical purposes of life, who by these means employs and disciplines his acuter faculties, cannot fail always to have at hand an occupation worthy of a reasonable spirit, and capable of yielding him a large amount of mental satisfaction. I feel a profound respect for him; I defer to him as one of the high productions of the Almighty, even when I see him seeking enjoyment in the dry abstractions of geometry. How much superior is he both in resources of happiness, and in sterling worth, to him who abandons himself to those fleeting pleasures, after which the giddy multitude are thronging in quest of happiness, and eagerly following the ever receding phantom. The reader of the ancient classics is never at a loss for the means of enjoyment. At one time, Greek and Roman poets enchant him with their songs; at another, their orators and historians fire his heart with generous patriotism; and again, their philosophers teach him to think and to reason. Such studies are tendering us their services in attaining the good which should be sought, and in avoiding the evil which should be shunned, in the most important concerns of life. The man whose soul has never felt the eloquence of the ancients, who has never mastered the elegancies of their incomparable forms of speech, who is a stranger to their literature, and the peculiar emotions it is
capable of inspiring, is at best a literary pauper. Whatever other means of pleasure he may possess, in this respect he suffers a privation which nothing can make good. To prove how mighty the influence of learning is in restraining unlawful pleasures, and in leading to the pursuit of such as are true and lawful, it will only be necessary to state a single case. Let any one who had been addicted to the pursuits of grovelling pleasures, be brought into circumstances favorable for the acquirement of a taste for those enjoyments which literature furnishes. "Let the mechanical arts no longer remain mechanical, but by the discovery of their astonishing forces and capabilities of application, become mental and intellectual employments in his hands. Let chemistry, containing the laws of matter, in every form of composition and analysis, teach him to look with a scientific eye to every object with which he is surrounded. Let astronomy reveal her stupendous wonders to his view, and engage his soul in the contemplation of her brilliant phenomena. Let history unroll her records, and cause to pass in review before him, the diversified scenery of generations and ages past, presenting in more prominent exhibition those striking epochs which have exerted an extensive and lasting influence on the destinies of mankind. Let poetry, chaste, pure and sublime, enchant him with the magic of her charms, and soothe him with the melody of her voice, tingeing every scene with colors of a brighter hue, and arraying the whole face of nature with beauties not its own. Let his various faculties be thus directed towards their appropriate objects, and flow forth in their respective channels of enjoyment—it is not indeed asserted that he
will be everything that he may and ought to be, but it may be affirmed that he will have in himself such resources; that he will have at all times at command such diversified means of refined and exquisite enjoyment, as will be sufficient to preserve him from any imaginary necessity of recurring to pleasures of a debasing or questionable character."

3. It is wholly impossible for any one to know the extent and range of his powers, except by means of literary cultivation. What we are, must remain in a good degree a secret to ourselves, until the tests of learning be applied to its development. Let these tests fail to be applied, and the mental element, how rich soever, will lie inactive and dormant, and will give forth nothing proportioned to the scale of excellence to which nature designed its advancement. The signal success of many educated minds has often been a matter of surprise to themselves. The masculine exercises and discipline of liberal studies and arts have imperceptibly wrought and moulded them into excellence; so that they have found themselves soaring, without knowing the gradations by which they have reached so great a height. Without having felt any of the disquietudes of jealous rivalry and competition, they have found themselves strangely enough in advance of others. Such are the wonders wrought by scientific and literary investigations. Can ambition exert itself in a nobler cause? Can it ever be in any case so wisely, so honorably, so religiously employed, as it is in adorning life, beautifying humanity, and giving expression and emphasis to the most exalted intimations of nature? It is in this employment that man becomes noble, dignified and happy. He rises to the level of himself; stands out erect in the exalted characteristics of
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humanity; asserts and proves his relationship with the skies, and makes good his claim to immortality.

4. Learning aids essentially in giving character to individuals. The conception of character in its most desirable sense, is derived from those persons whose intellectual faculties have been brought under proper discipline. In this acceptation, character is that assemblage of worthy and distinguishing attributes which every one should strive to possess. While it embodies what is good and valuable in the many, it is more prominently inherent in the one; and thus confers on that one peculiar and attractive marks. Although in one view it may be regarded as the result of constitution and natural disposition, yet it is made bold and effective by means of education. You will hence remark, that among the uneducated there is little of that which may be termed character. The elements of their nature are unformed and inharmonious; a chaos of discordant particulars; a mass of independent contingencies. They need to be systematized: concentration is necessary to give them vigor, and a right training of the reasoning faculty is necessary to give to that vigor a suitable direction. Only those who are addicted to the custom of thinking, and that too with effect, can ever attain character in its comprehensive and ennobling import.

5. To what but ambition of the kind of which I have been speaking, do we owe all the improvements in science and the arts, which are characterizing the age in which we live? And to what, except the operation of this principle, are we to trace the wonderful achievements of mind and genius in past times? Has the march of mind in these different periods been urged on by no impulse? Has no glory lit up the scenes towards which
it was tending? Has no attainable eminence been shining in
the distance? But for this passion, those brilliant discoveries in
philosophy which now instruct and delight us, would never have
been given to the world. The principles and truth which have
become the common property of the world have remained
untouched and unexplored. The diversified and widely extended
fields of science would have been unoccupied by a single
laborer; and one universal blank would fill the place of the
fair page of knowledge. One of the purest and most rational
passions that can agitate our bosoms with generous emotions,
is that our country shall have a name not only respectable, but
memorable. With its character and fortunes, we ourselves seem
to rise or fall; to be honored or neglected. In this respect we
determine a scale of eminence for our native land, just as we
decide upon the claims to distinction which other portions of
the world are in the habit of advancing. Whether it be the
traveller, or the historian, or the poet, who directs our attention
to any region of the earth, we associate with the memory of the
people who inhabit it, the names of the persons who have
impacted to it an unfading glory. It is owing to this circum-
stance that many ancient towns and cities which would have
gone down into the darkness of oblivion long ago, but for the
illustrious men to whom they gave birth, are now enrolled on
the imperishable records of fame; and are never mentioned, but
in connexion with the intellectual lights who filled their firma-
ment with a glory so intense, that it still continues to draw
towards it the admiring gaze of mankind. Small comparatively
as is our literary reputation abroad, how much less would it
have been, but for those master minds whose researches and
attainments in the science of government, in philosophy, literature and the liberal arts, have become the common property of the nation, and are accredited to it by the general consent of the world. Such minds have rescued the American name from reproach; have exerted a redeeming influence upon our character among foreigners; and have effectually and forever forbidden that it should be associated with the contempt, which the pride and arrogance of some in other countries would have fastened upon it. This state has been honored in times past, by many sons whom either by birth or adoption she was proud to call her own. They have made her not to be the least among the states of this union; they have advanced her to a position of commanding authority. Whilst they received her fostering care, and all the honors and rewards she had to bestow, they have bequeathed a splendid perpetuity to her name, and have left her in the possession of claims to a lofty name and rank in this confederacy, which none dispute. It is believed that many of her present sons will not fall behind those who have preceded them in the contributions they are making to her greatness and glory. We hail them as able coadjutors in the cause of science and learning. They are sustaining by their talents, virtues, and manly acquirements, the noble fabric which other hands have reared. To you, young gentlemen, this subject ought to be full of interest. Some of you are rapidly approaching a period of life which will call for the exercise of all your manly energies. You will soon leave these quiet retreats, and take your place among men; the halls of learning will soon be exchanged for the wide and busy scenes of active life, and the occupations of the student for the employments of the man. You are placed in
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circumstances which are to fit you for taking your place among men; and for doing the work of men. You are placed in circumstances which are intended to fit you for aiding your cotemporaries in handing down to posterity, the well earned reputation of your state. To carry you forward in such a work, it will be necessary for you to imbibe an ardent thirst for knowledge; you must apply yourselves ambitiously to study; ambitiously aim at excellence; ambitiously

"Climb

The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar;"

Determine that all difficulties shall be overcome, and that your own persevering diligence shall not be overcome. Beware of pleasure's alluring voice. Watch against the insidious approaches of indolence. Press into your service as much time as possible; enrich your understandings with knowledge, and your hearts with the ornaments of virtue.
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