AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Association of the Alumni

OF

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE,

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND,

AT THE ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT, AUGUST 6TH., 1856.

By the Rev. Russell Trevett, D.D.

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ROBERT F. BONSALL, PRINTER,
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CORRESPONDENCE.

ANNAPOLIS, *August 9th*, 1856.

For REV. DR. TREVETT, Professor, &c., &c.

Rev. and dear Sir:

It affords the Committee, of which I am the organ, much gratification to execute the "*Resolution*" of the *Alumni of St. John's College*, by presenting you with their thanks, for your able and learned ADDRESS, delivered, at the late COMMENCEMENT, in the *College Hall;*—and by requesting of you, in their behalf, a copy thereof for publication.

The Committee sincerely hope this gratification of theirs will be enhanced by your compliance with this request; and thus extend to their absent brethren, and to the public generally, the pleasure and instruction its perusal will impart.

With great respect, I am,

Your obd't serv't,

A. RANDALL, FOR
N. BREWER, JR.,
J. G. CHAPMAN,
and himself.

NORTH SALEM, Westchester Co., N. Y.,
August 13th, 1856.

Dear Sir:

I received your letter forwarded to this place. I am much obliged to my brethren of the ALUMNI for their favorable opinion of my *Address*—and to you, and the other members of the Committee, for your expression of the same—and will not set up my judgment against theirs, in regard to publication. I have given directions that the copy used at COMMENCEMENT should be placed in your hands; and must conclude, by subscribing myself,

Yours, with great respect,

RUSSELL TREVETT.

ADDRESS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

It is my privilege to address you this day in connection with the first commencement of this venerable College under its reorganized institution. I have had but little difficulty in selecting a theme suited to the occasion, for duty and inclination unite in the choice of one, to which I would respectfully ask the attention of this audience for a few moments. I appear before you as the incumbent of the chair of instruction in the ancient classical languages of Greece and Rome. For ages these have formed a very prominent part in every course of education professing to be liberal. The title, Professor of Humanity, or of the Humanities, indicates the high place of old assigned to this department; yet now it is frequently and emphatically denied that Latin and Greek should be made indispensable to the attainment of collegiate degrees. The utility of the study, it is often asserted, is by no means equal to the time, and labor, and expense required. There is an increasing disposition to make the classics an optional branch; and even where this is not done, they are crowded into so narrow a compass, to make room for other more popular studies, that it may be doubted whether the full benefits of classical training can be acquired. Other branches of learning and science are not refused their due claims, and the reason is very plain:—their advantages every one can, in some degree, appreciate. All understand how it may be a valuable acquisition to be able to speak or to read the French, or the German, or the Spanish. All interested in agriculture, or the arts or manufactures, can recognize in some measure, however small, the bearing of chemistry and natural philosophy upon their advancement. Mathematical science, as the basis

of those great mechanical laws which have given birth to the railroad, the steamboat, the electric telegraph, and many more of the numberless conveniences and improvements of modern civilization, vindicates its own claims. The philosophy of mind, and the principles of political economy and kindred sciences, are generally, perhaps universally, acknowledged to be proper subjects for youthful study. But why spend so much time upon the languages of nations long since dead and passed away? Why perplex the young student with the difficulties and niceties of authors who lived, the latest of them, well nigh two thousand years ago? Could not the many years devoted to the ancient classics be more profitably spent in pursuits of a more immediate and direct utility? Now we assert that the usefulness of the study of the Greek and Latin is to the full as great as that of any other whatsoever; and we know that in this assertion we will be borne out by the judgment of all competent to decide upon the question; and by competent we mean, not simply those who have in their own case found the benefits of the study, (though these are of course the most competent,) but all who will avail themselves of the only mode of arriving at the truth in questions of this kind—the process of induction from a sufficient array of facts, gathered from no one age or country, but from all ages and all countries. The utility, then, of classical study is as great, we repeat, as that of any other, but it is not so direct and tangible. It cannot be made so clear to the senses. The classical student can neither run a base line upon the ground, nor navigate a ship, nor be a more practical farmer or merchant, in consequence of his Greek and Latin. This is most freely admitted, and if it be an objection, it is one that we confess must stand. I mean no disrespect to any branch of science or learning, I allow the full claims of each, I appreciate the importance of each. But as no one is attacked, so no one needs defence, save the one I have the honor, most unworthily, to represent. And let me say, too, that in appearance I am vindicating the proper claims of one branch, but in reality I am asserting those of all. For in defending the classics, I am at the same time standing up for literary as contra-distinguished from scientific culture.

The modern languages may be learnt without any knowledge of the ancient. This is very true. But the modern languages will never be so well and so thoroughly understood as in connection with those from which they sprung. The philosophy of mind or morals can never be pursued to any extent without adverting to the great Grecian masters. To interpret and enter into the spirit of Plato and Aristotle, is still the aim of Sir William Hamilton and Benjamin Cousin, who stand confessedly at the head of the intellectual philosophers of our day, and this is manifestly impossible without a knowledge of Greek. The ancient classics then represent the whole literary side of liberal education. But, strange as it may seem, in showing the utility of these studies, I am doing a favor to the cause of science, both natural and mathematical. For, account for it as we may, it is absolutely certain that such science never has flourished, and, therefore, we have good reason for saying it never will flourish, divorced from literary cultivation. The impulse given to the Grecian mind, in the first place, by letters, originated the earliest efforts in a scientific direction, and with the decay of Hellenic literature, Hellenic science degenerated also in an equal degree.

Again, Roman literature preceded Roman scientific investigation, and with the decline of taste in art and poetry, the human mind lost its interest in scientific pursuits.

The revival of letters, three centuries since, stimulated activity in every department of thought—science soon felt the impulse, and investigations were entered upon, in a mode which the splendid results of our day prove to be the correct one. The secrets of nature have been unlocked and brought out with a rapidity beyond all precedent, and those who have penetrated the farthest into science, of whatever kind, have been those most deeply imbued with the literary spirit, and have turned with the most delight to classical pursuits. Lord Bacon, whose clear and lofty mind laid down the true principles on which alone science can be successfully cultivated, with a precision and a force unknown before, was deeply imbued with ancient erudition, and uses it with remarkable effect. Sir Isaac Newton turned from his deep searchings into the mysteries of nature, to investigate learned and recondite questions of chronology and history.

His great rival, Leibnitz, and Sir John Herschell, the chief of living English astronomers, exercise their minds in the composition of Latin verse. Now the rationale of these and like facts is obvious. It is the trained mind only that takes pleasure in research, and the thoroughly trained mind is disciplined on both sides, the literary and the scientific. Men inquire and investigate because they love to do so; because, by habit, their minds have come to take the most exquisite pleasure in it; because such occupation has become a second nature, a necessity of their being. Truth and beauty have for them an inexpressible charm. If made by their past habits fond of science, they are likewise made fond of literature by the same process. Let not then science forget her debt to literature, lest, peradventure, strong as she now seems, she may suffer loss. Her very nomenclature, in every department, is almost exclusively Greek, reminding her how much she owed in the past and how much she still needs the help of the noblest tongue ever spoken by mortals.

There is a mutual necessity between them: literature cannot do anything without science; science can do nothing without literature; and in education both are necessary to the full development of the mental powers. That will be a one-sided education which is, exclusively, either scientific or literary. What is education? Is it the passive reception of facts in nature or in history? Is it the loading of the memory with the occurrences of the past, or with isolated and unclassified phenomena of nature? Is it merely the learning of what others have done, or is it, as the very word *education* itself imports, a leading out of the mind—an evolution of what is contained therein—a strengthening of the intellectual faculties? If it be the latter, as we presume all will allow, then mere difficulty is no argument against the usefulness of a study in developing and strengthening the mind, provided the difficulty be of a sort which the youthful intellect can grapple with. Now this is the case most eminently with the study of the classical tongues. They present difficulties to be overcome, precisely such as the young can master by application and effort. The general structure of modern languages is alike in their most marked characteristics. In acquiring a new one

the memory is taxed to retain unfamiliar words or idioms, but this is all. There is hardly a call for the exercise of any other faculty; no new principles of language are presented. There is no very essential difference in the mode of expressing thought among modern nations, for they are all very nearly upon the same level in point of civilization and religion. But in Greek and Latin the whole phenomena of language vary extremely from what the youth has been accustomed to. The simple fact that they express modifications of an idea by terminations, and not as we do, by the position of words or by auxiliary particles, teaches many important lessons as to language and as to thought itself.

The object of education is to invigorate the mind, by training it to habits of attention and discrimination. The one thing in which Sir Isaac Newton said that he excelled all other men was, the power of patient attention—the faculty of concentrating his mental energy upon the one thing before him, to the exclusion of extraneous matter. Now every Greek or Latin sentence is a lesson in this habit of attention. The words do not flow in that logical order to which the vernacular accustoms a student. He must carefully pick out and group those which belong together. He must accurately observe the terminations, or other signs, which fix the precise meaning. He thus learns to apply himself and to distinguish things which differ. In poring over the text of a classical author, he is acquiring power which he may afterwards apply in any direction he pleases; and though he may never be able to peruse a classical author with ease and pleasure; nay, though he may forget the words as if he had never learnt them, and the page of Virgil or of Homer become to him as a sealed book, still the power of attention and discrimination which he has attained is not lost, and he has gained much to his own consciousness, and still more of which he is not conscious; and the sentiments impressed upon the mind, through the medium of the ancient tongue, will, from the very difficulty with which they were spelled out and deciphered, be far more lasting than they can be where the pages are devoured with the rail-way speed with which we peruse productions in our own English; and this is no small advantage, where the

facilities of the modern press are temptations to every reader to skim over volumes without thinking upon a page. Even the careless and unstudious must carry off more ideas conveyed through the slow process of reading Latin and Greek than in any other way.

All the modern languages, even including the difficult German, could be learned in a less space of time than the classic tongues, and to a much better end, for we learn to use the former for practical purposes in actual conversation, whereas, the most that is expected in the latter is, that they should be read without extraordinary difficulty. So says the objector; but the argument banishes into thin air if the training of the mind be sought, and not the mere filling of the memory with words and phrases. Difficulty, as we have seen, is no valid reason against the study, nor will length of time be one either; for that must necessarily be a slow process which enables the mind to think for itself, to look directly and solely at the object before it, without being harassed or distracted. Education is a slow process, and if it be otherwise, the mind will have a hot-house growth, and not a true and healthy development. To stimulate the operations of nature is a dangerous thing. That tree will last the longest, and be most strong and vigorous, which has been allowed its full time of mature development; so is it with the human mind. There is no royal road to true knowledge; there is no short-cut or bye-path, by which the intellect of a child can suddenly pass into the intellect of a man; there is nothing ultimately gained by attempting to anticipate what can only be the results of riper years. If too many studies are crowded into the few years of youth, the consequence must be that none of them will be properly learned. Education is no longer a discipline in attention. The multiplicity of subjects tends to confusion, and the power of attention, instead of being invigorated, is weakened, and the whole end and aim of all training are entirely lost. The student who would be really well disciplined, must be bold enough to remain in ignorance of a great many branches of knowledge; some of them very popular withal. The experience of ages teaches the truth of the proverb, "*multum non multa,*" much, not many things.

The classification of knowledge is into two kinds, one of things permanent, and the second of things flowing or progressive. The grand principles of mathematical or logical science, for instance, are fixed; they admit neither of increase nor of diminution. The sole improvement of which they are susceptible, is the mode and order in which they shall be presented to the mind. This mode may become clearer and clearer, and therefore better and better adapted to the purposes of education, but the principles themselves are the same in all time. Legendre may improve upon Euclid in the method of his geometry, but Euclid had the same geometrical truths, two thousand years ago, as the French author of our own generation. The second class of sciences, that of things flowing, is constantly undergoing change and modification. Geology, chemistry and mineralogy, for instance, rest upon experiment. They are all in their infancy, and are altered and changed, and modified constantly, as new phenomena add to the facts from which their principles are to be deduced. They do not remain the same for ten years together, but change in their theory and their nomenclature as fast as the geography of our new States. Now both these sorts of knowledge are parts of education, but those subjects which are fixed and permanent are meant chiefly to educe and invigorate the powers of the mind, while those changing from day to day are intended principally to add to our stock of facts. We say *chiefly*, for the fixed branches of knowledge do add to the number of facts, and the changing ones do invigorate the mental faculties; but the main end of each is as we have stated before. Now the classics belong to the first division—to those which are fixed. Time can do nothing more than improve the mode in which the advantages of classical culture can be attained. No discovery of ancient manuscripts can very much modify our knowledge of antiquity. How it shall be most aptly interwoven with our modern life, is the constant aim. How we shall comprehend it the better, is the sole end of the scholar's desires. Modern tongues, on the contrary, are in a course of continual flux and change. The French of this present time is very different from the classic French of the age of Louis XIV, as even a foreigner can perceive.

Our own English changes from day to day, as the most superficial observer can scarcely fail to notice; but the ancient tongues have ceased to be used, and can receive no addition; hence they can be handled, and examined, and commented upon, in a way quite out of the question in a modern language; for it would be hard in the latter to distinguish between the present living use, and the past practice of its writers. The finished scholar, it is true, could do so, but the young student could not. If there be then any special value for intellectual discipline in the learning of a language, that advantage will be found in the highest degree in the study of the ancient classic tongues. By universal acknowledgment Greek is the most perfect of utterances ever used by man, so nearly faultless as to be the model of language; shades of thought, in no other expressed, are brought out in it, with the utmost force and clearness. Its power of compounding new words to meet every new emergency is so great, that every science still derives from it most, if not all, of its technical terms; and so wonderful is its pliancy, that the same language which expressed the feelings and thoughts of the earliest of all poets, three thousand years ago, is essentially the same in which the subjects of King Otho, at this very moment, are expressing themselves on every subject of interest, whether it be in philosophy, or in commerce, or in the arts. It has been said, and said with truth, that in no other language could mental science have been formed save in the Greek, for in no other could the phenomena of mind have been presented so as to be at once proposed and explained in the very statement. A Plato, or an Aristotle, is inconceivable, without that precision of expression which is to be found only in the wonderful speech of their country.

Language is a creation—a clothing of a new world of thought with its own proper covering. Like every creation, it is a mystery. We must assume its existence, because with our mental constitution we cannot conceive of a state of things without it. We cannot go behind it and try to imagine ourselves deprived of its life-giving presence, any more than we can go behind any other creation or mystery. It is so because it is so—because its divine Author so willed. Men could not

have originated it for themselves, but must have received it as a gift direct from the Father of Lights. It is a world of itself, and needs no other world to give it life, and beauty, and form. Like all divine gifts, it is purest the more nearly we reach its source. It is heaven-descended, and speaks most strongly in its primitive form of its origin. Of this the Greek bears a more lively impress than any later tongue. There is no language, it has been said, in which the atheist or the confounder of moral right and wrong can speak five minutes without being betrayed into a contradiction. So strongly has God impressed upon the organ of speech the eternal truths and principles on which rest all the hopes of man, all the order of society, all which elevates our life above that of brutes that perish and are gone forever. Now these noble characteristics are found in the rudest and most uncouth dialects spoken by barbarians, such as our North American Indians. How much more are they in the Greek, the noblest and most perfect of all languages? Its very diction gave its writers an advantage which no modern skill or genius, from the comparative imperfection of its instruments, can entirely counterbalance. There is no thinking apart from language, at least we cannot conceive of such. The study of language is the study of the human mind; but to study language it is manifestly best to take the most perfect, and this, we repeat, is the Greek. All words are full of poetry and history, and to the investigator present charms of a peculiar character. Dr. Johnson, in one of his fits of gloomy melancholy, defined a lexicographer to be a harmless drudge; but Passow could speak of his labor in compiling a Greek dictionary as a revelling in an ocean of pleasure, and look down, as from an elevation, upon all other pursuits as less ennobling and less happy. Now Passow is nearer the truth than Johnson, for in tracing the origin of words, and the logical order of their signification, there is a vast deal of instruction which repays, in abundant measure, the excessive labor of compilation. The facts and phenomena of natural science, or of astronomy, are very astonishing, and calculated to make the most salutary impressions upon the contemplative mind; but the facts of language are as wonderful, if attention were only directed to them. The history of a word, says Coleridge, is the history of

a campaign. To take only one example, and that not the most striking, but the most convenient; Sir Walter Scott, in his Ivanhoe, shews how those homely words *beef and ox, mutton and sheep, veal and calf, pork and hog*, contain the very pith and essence of all English history—the subjugation of one race of men by another, and the terrible oppressions which followed. Whilst in the field, animals are known by the terms of the Anglo Saxon vocabulary of the serf; when transferred to the table, they are translated into the higher and more refined dialect of the master. Here, in a familiar example, may be seen how much instruction can be found in the history of words. But the origin of very many that we use is to be traced, either directly or indirectly, to the languages of Greece and Rome; and this origin we can thoroughly understand only from a knowledge of those tongues themselves. An etymological vocabulary can not at all answer the purpose, though such a paradox we have seen more than once asserted.

Our holy religion rests not upon words. The humble christian, who can barely spell out the words of his translated Bible, has all that is needful for his salvation in the next world or his happiness in this, and yet the educated man will feel impelled to more than this. What a proof of the power of christianity, that it could take such a word as *humility*, with its degraded meaning, and elevate it to the dignity of a heaven-born grace, or could transfer such a word as *talents*, from its common physical sense, to its present moral use and signification. The *ipsissima verba* of inspiration have a power which no translation can approach, not even that matchless one which is our birthright. The Bible, and the Bible alone of all books that were ever written, is susceptible of translation without essential injury to its spirit. Thus it proves its heaven-born origin, and shows that it is meant for every tribe, and tongue, and nation, of the whole earth. But the theologian who contents himself with the use of any mere version, is unworthy his high calling and can never be other than a superficial sciolist. Nothing save this knowledge can keep him above a blind and servile dependence upon commentators, and give him the power of using their interpretations judiciously and with profit. All looking forward to the ministry

should recognize the advantage, if not the indispensable necessity, of an acquaintance with the Greek, in which the New Testament was written, and the Latin, which is still preeminently the language of theology. And in its degree this is true of medicine and of law. Hippocrates is the father of medical science, and we are told by those who understand that subject best, that his descriptions of the progress and cure of disease are most graphic and most true, and that the accumulated discoveries of many generations have not destroyed his scientific value; and it is Galen, a Latin writer, who stands second, and only second, to the great father of the healing art. The body of law, too, rests upon a Roman and a Greek foundation. In the common law of England and the United States, it has deflected in a different direction from the continental or civil law of modern Europe; yet both alike, the civil and the common law, find their origin in the institutions, usages and laws of Rome, republican or imperial. It was the study of this code which gave the wide and capacious grasp of principles which so eminently distinguishes the decisions of Lord Mansfield. The same study made the writings of our own Kent and Story to be of authority in Westminster Hall, as well as in the Capitol. The Emperor Justinian compiled the civil code in Greek, and the bulk of civil law is in a Latin dress.

But, let it be most freely granted that no science and no profession is absolutely dependent upon the Latin or the Greek. Let it be confessed that the modern tongues contain an abundance of writings in theology, in medicine, and in law, more perspicuous, more full, and more thorough, than the ancient. A man can do his duty in a parish, can be successful in the treatment of disease, can be a fair practising lawyer, without the ability to read any save his mother tongue. It is equally true that he can know nothing of the history of either profession without classical aid. It is said that many curious secrets are locked up in the works of the ancients which the moderns have not rediscovered. These secrets can only be brought to light by those who unite a competent knowledge of science to a knowledge of the ancient tongues. The progress of the human mind has always been built on

what has gone before. We cannot be independent of the tongue, or of the history, of the Cæsars and the Scipios, or of Pericles and Alexander. The Latin, in particular, still exercises an imperial power. It is the fashion to call it a dead language, and so far as the United States is concerned it is so, but in Europe it is even now the living organ of communication between the learned of different countries, and, in a very good degree, between the professor and the pupil in the lecture room.

The Greek language is, in itself, incomparably the more valuable of the two, but the Latin tongue bridges over the intercourse between the ancient and the modern world. Its own literature is borrowed almost entirely from the Greek, and is the means through which the Greek has been carried on to modern times. It was the only tongue in which, for more than a thousand years, any work of learning or of thought was written in western Europe. Greek words have entered our own vernacular English, as they were altered and modified in their Roman channel. Modern literature sprang up in imitation of Horace, and Virgil, and Cicero, rather than of Homer, and Æschylus, and Plato. Hence the Latin is more practically valuable, and is properly studied, to some extent, by those who have no time for its great half-parent and rival. But Greek represents a wider, a higher and more original vein of thought.

From Homer to the taking of Constantinople, only four hundred years ago, Greek was written in such comparative purity, that it is easier to read both extremes than for us now to read Chaucer and Gower. That is, it flourished for twenty-five hundred years, or twice the period of the Latin, even including the barbarous jargon of the middle ages, and four times the duration of the Italian, the oldest of modern tongues. From the Euphrates to the western extremity of Austria it was the current language spoken, and understood more generally than French is now on the European continent. In Italy, nay even in Rome and Marseilles, it was the language of fashion and refinement, so much so, that the Roman ladies, according to the satirist, could no more converse in their own tongue, than the denizens of the northern courts, in the last

generation, could use the vulgar dialects of those around them. Time has destroyed much more than it has spared, but a range of thought and feeling, unequalled anywhere else, opens upon us in the Greek authors yet left. History, philosophy, oratory and poetry have each their writers, many of whom have never been equalled—most of them never surpassed. We will be most unlike our fathers if we tie our thoughts to the eighty years of our national existence, though they be equal to any five hundred on the page of history. Nor could we, if we would, confine ourself even to the boundless continent on which Providence has cast our lot. There is no divorce of the past from the present without exceeding injury. The French Revolution, in mad folly, tried to cut loose from all preceding ages, and look at the result in its never ending, still beginning, turmoil and anarchy, and confusion, which postpone, from generation to generation, the faint hopes of a rational and well established freedom.

Our own Revolution was in nothing more pointedly distinguished from the abortive attempts of other nations, than in the tenacity with which it held on to the past, innovating only slightly, and where the most imperious necessity required. The whole body of the common law and of the English institutions of our forefathers, was retained, except that which gave a prerogative to king and parliament. And, especially, our inherited system of education was retained. Our colleges continued to be modelled on the time honored universities and public schools of the mother country.

The course of training which the experience of centuries had proved to be the best adapted to the development of the Anglo Saxon, was still that by which American youth were to be fitted to their high function of citizen sovereigns. The great men of our heroic era had none of that silly pride, which finds neither wisdom nor honesty in the past. Classic antiquity still continued to be the store-house, wherein are laid up treasures of inestimable value, such as the youthful student can find no where else. So far from those noble remains being diminished in their importance, they are really worth more in a republic than under a monarchy.

The history of Greece and Rome, is the history of republics

free and independent. Those examples of high-toned virtue and undaunted, tireless energy, which are the common places of the world, were most of them examples of republican virtue. They were the deeds of men who owned no master upon the earth save their country. The narrative of the rise of Grecian freedom, of its defence against the countless hosts of barbarian aggression, of its palmy day in that wonderful fifth century before Christ, when one long lifetime could have seen the first great models of every form of literature, of science, and of art; the story of its corruption, through empire and long continued prosperity, till liberty became a prey to demagoguism and unhallowed ambition;—all this is especially and most pre-eminently a lesson fraught with instruction to us Americans of these United States, by the grace of God, free and independent. And so of Roman history. Its teaching is for us more truly than for any trans-atlantic people. If we understand well the causes which led to the fall of those ancient institutions, which so long and so successfully guarded freedom in her early day, if we know why they degenerated into military tyrannies, we are armed, as by nothing else we can be, against the dangers which may threaten our choicest gifts. And we will have the more power to assist in handing down to posterity our present blessings.

But to know this history so as to apply its lessons aright, is to be imbued with its spirit. It is not simply to read it in modern compilations and abridgments, for at best these can only give the skeleton, devoid of life and beauty. The spirit is to be sought, and found, and appreciated, in the classic writers themselves.

The study of a few of the original narratives gives more penetrating and more real insight into the truth, than the perusal of a hundred volumes of modern compendiums. So much circles around single words and phrases, that what some ignorantly and disparagingly call the mere study of words, proves to be the study of deep and abiding principles. It is not simply the amount of facts directly conveyed upon the page of Cæsar, or of Xenophon, that constitutes the chief value of their study. The most ordinary terms have an importance irrespective of the author in whom they are found. They

bring us into contact with a people of another race, another time, another religion, and another language.

If the mind is enlarged by travel, if narrow prejudices are worn off by intercourse with intelligent and enlightened foreigners, how much more will they be exchanged for enlarged and liberal views by contact with powerful minds of ages long gone by, who stood at the head and beginning of that stream which has safely brought to us all our blessings. The human mind is the same under every variety of circumstance and situation. So closely interlinked is ancient and modern life that in studying the one we are truly studying the other.

The greatest master of modern warfare, no less a person than the Emperor Napoleon, asserted, that the campaigns of Alexander the Great, of Hannibal and of Cæsar, were the most worthy of the attention of a student of military science, though all three flourished before the invention of gun-powder, and in point of political experience, we, of this nineteenth century, are no more than upon a level with the Statesmen of the age of Alexander. It is a common, but for all that a very great mistake, to suppose, that mere lapse of time must necessarily confer political knowledge.

Four thousand years have taught the Asiatic absolutely nothing. Precisely the same oppressive and unjust systems now control the inhabitants of that fair continent, as in the earliest dawn of history. No defects have been removed, or in any perceptible degree ameliorated. Even now, in Europe and America united, it would be hard to collect as much as we are sure was contained in that lost treatise of Aristotle, wherein one hundred and fifty-three of the most diverse republics of antiquity were compared. In them, no doubt, every variety of race, of national position, and of government, was presented. Mere extent of surface does not constitute history. Russia and China occupy a large physical space, but intellectually and morally they are of little account; while within the limits of Greece, hardly equal to this good State of Maryland, deeds were done in every sphere of human exertion, which bear most closely upon the improvement of mankind in every age. We Americans, to day, have a deeper interest in Marathon and Salamis than in any events since, save in those of which

our own continent was the theatre. Could it be conceived possible, that if the Persian invasion under Xerxes had proved successful, there would have been no history for us. A flood of barbarism would have swept over the world. The whole destiny of man would have been essentially different, had those events not taken place. The Athenian warrior fought not only for himself, and for his city and for Greece, but for all the world. An Alfred or a Washington could not have been, had not a Miltiades and a Themistocles preceded. That history is most falsely styled ancient; it is modern in its interest, undying and ever fresh in its effects. And it is told with a charm to be found in no other. Herodotus has never been equalled in the power of telling a story with simplicity and effect. Fox said it was harder to be an historian than to be an orator or a poet. And the multitudinous events of later times, can never be pictured with that unity of interest which characterizes the ancient writers.

But translations it is said will answer all ends.

Translation is a hard matter, even from a modern tongue, as the fact, that of great authors, we find almost invariably more than one version, each of them acknowledged to be imperfect. Even the French classics, nearly as that tongue is allied to our own in spirit and in form, cannot be rendered so that the reader of the original will not miss many beauties. It is an axiom that translation is an attempt to represent in a second tongue what already exists in the first. If literal, it becomes stiff and awkward and without spirit; if free, ideas will be foisted in, not conceived of by the original author. It starts with the assumption that much will inevitably be lost. Poetry depends especially on the beauty of form, and cannot be conveyed in any garb save its own. Dante and Goethe have been repeatedly translated, yet not so as to convey any idea of their characteristic excellencies. What is true of modern poets is superabundantly true of the ancient. Homer has been rendered a thousand times, and yet is without a translator, and will be so to the end of time; nameless beauties on every page elude all who do not read the original. Pope's translation, as it is by courtesy styled, is an exquisite poem; but it is not, in any sense of the word, Homer. It is an English production of the

eighteenth century, but is no representative of the Greek bard who sang three thousand years ago. Poetry, in no tongue, can be transferred to another, and least of all from the most perfect and most ancient, into our modern dialects. A single word or epithet paints a picture, which no skill can transfer from the original canvass. Even the careless student often sees and feels this, though it be hard to give the reason to another. But have we not enough, and more than enough, in our own language? Why go to foreign ones? No one can surpass me in the heartfelt appreciation of our noble English literature. I have enjoyed those magnificent conceptions of Milton, which, in his own expressive words, are a "seven-fold chorus of harmonies." I have lingered upon the glorious page of Hooker, and admired the wonderful depth and vigorous sense of Bacon. I have felt the enchantment of Addison and Irving. And I know that no other literature, ancient or modern, can boast of its myriad-minded Shakspeare. But he can appreciate these excellencies best, who has compared them with the great masters from whom all literature has sprung. No one stands so near to Shakspeare and Milton as Homer, and Homer has qualities peculiarly his own, to which even these do not approach.

I know it will be said, that some of the most accomplished masters of our native speech have known no Latin. Shakspeare and Burns will be cited among the highest names of literature, and Dr. Franklin and Gen. Washington will occur to us Americans as wielding a most clear, and vigorous, and idiomatic English, with little or no classical learning. Now, not to insist on what however is most true, that genius is the exception and not the rule, or, as it is sometimes expressed, that genius is bound by no rules, not to say that we are upholding that mode of education which experience shows is the best for the mass of every day minds, we deny, as to Shakspeare, that he was as destitute of classical culture as has been carelessly stated. "The small Latin and less Greek," of which his friend Ben Jonson speaks, may have been no Greek at all, though it is not probable; but it contained, at least, enough Latin to consult out-of-the-way sources of information for the material of his plays. Burns, the poet, had no Latin himself, but

he had what was next door to it. He studied and imitated those English writers who had formed themselves on classic models, and that with a care which not one student in a million could practise, unless from classic training. The same may be said of Dr. Franklin, and with the addition that, quite late in life, he acquired the Latin, (of which his translation of Cicero's De Senectute is an evidence,) and in founding the University of Pennsylvania recommended ancient studies in the most emphatic terms. And the presumption is, that Washington moulded his wonderfully idiomatic style by the careful imitation of the best English writers, themselves formed on ancient models.

At any rate, Washington and Franklin are almost exceptions among the heroes of our Revolution. The earl of Chatham was so struck by the political papers set forth by the authority of our first Continental Congress, that he pronounced it the equal of any body of whom he had ever heard or read. Now the largest portion of them were classically educated, and at a time when that much abused term meant something more than at present. Some of the most conspicuous were eminent for their attainments in ancient literature, as, for example, President Jefferson. And is there no loss in our present lack of such training among our public men? The acerbity of political controversy, has often been softened on the floor of the British Parliament by a happy classical allusion. Present differences are forgotten, and the minds of all are carried back to school-boy days, to Eton or Harrow, or Rugby or Winchester. It is well that there should be some common ground, amid the diversity of pursuits and wide difference of opinion. The love of the classics is this common ground on which all can meet and be united. Fox, and Burke and Canning, besides the more recent instances of Sir Robert Peel and Gladstone, recurred to the classics as their chief solace and relaxation from the harrassing labor of public life. The late Marquis of Wellesby closed a long career, filled up with responsible toil, in the writing of Latin verse, and chose Eton, the home of his youth, as his burying place. Pitt came from the university at the early age of twenty-three, with no other than a classical training, so much decried among us, and became the prime

minister of England, and upheld the helm of state, through one of the periods of greatest agitation to his country.

We can point to no such proofs of the value of this sort of education among ourselves, solely because the classics are seldom or never so far pursued as to make their study a pleasure. We teach our students, most imperfectly, to read particular books, but give them scarcely a superficial acquaintance with the languages themselves; our young men are hurried on so rapidly, that they know next to nothing of the beauties of the country they are carried over. Nothing, (I can speak from painful experience,) nothing can be more disheartening, than just as students are on the eve of appreciating their studies, to have them taken off, and their thoughts turned into another channel; the fruits of labor on the part of both pupil and teacher are thus lost. Here it is where reform is needed, in the thoroughness and efficiency of our means of education. Fifty or seventy years ago, the universal curriculum of a preparatory and under-graduate course was from eight to nine years, and this was a period of *bona fide* preparation. Those who did not reach it were thrown back and delayed, and then too the branches of studies were only some two or three, now the course is seven, and in many cases five, or even four years. But so much wiser is the rising generation, that in half the time, more than double the number of studies is expected to be mastered. It seems as if the object of our present system was to give a surface training, and hence, of course, we have no other than mere surface men;—men that have not been disciplined to think at all, because their minds have been distracted by a parrot-like repetition of mere outside formulæ. Thoroughness is the only way to create interest, and thoroughness should be the end and aim of all engaged in the work of education.

I have most imperfectly presented a few hints on a wide and extensive subject, and it only remains for me to thank you for your kind and patient attention.