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AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

AMERICAN WHIG AND PHILOSOPHIC SOCIETIES

OF THE

COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY,

SEPTEMBER 27, 1836.

BY JOHN M. SCOTT, Esq.

Princeton:

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1836.

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE AMERICAN WHIG SOCIETY, AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING, SEPT. 28, 1836.

RESOLVED unanimously, That a Committee be appointed to present the thanks of this Society to JOHN M. SCOTT, Esq., for the able and eloquent Discourse pronounced by him on the 27th inst., and that he be requested to furnish a copy for publication.

Committee to communicate to Mr. Scott the above resolution :

WILLIAM C. ALEXANDER, Esq.
DR. J. HAMILTON WHITE,
MR. LOUIS PERRINE.

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE CLIOSOPHIC SOCIETY, AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING, SEPT. 28, 1836.

RESOLVED, That the thanks of the Cliosophic Society be presented to JOHN M. SCOTT, Esq., for the eloquent Discourse pronounced by him on the 27th inst., and that a Committee be appointed to request him to furnish the Society with a copy for publication.

Committee to communicate the above to Mr. Scott :

PROF. ALBERT B. DOD,
DR. GEORGE M. MACLEAN,
DAVID N. BOGART, Esq.

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE AMERICAN WHIG AND CLIOSOPHIC SOCIETIES:

WHIGS and CLIOS! My ancient friends, my former gallant adversaries. What thronging recollections, what tumultuous sensations press upon the mind and the heart of one who, reared among you, returns, after the lapse of long, long years, to be once more an actor in your stirring scenes—to behold, if not to participate in the strife of former days—an honourable strife never remitted—handed down from generation to generation—still struggling for the ascendancy—still grasping at the high prizes of literary labour and scholastic supremacy. There, too, I see the accustomed badges: the blue ribbon—the pink scarf; the banners under which you do battle. Emblems like those of the ancient circus of Constantine, of never-dying rivalry; but, unlike those, free from every stain which can dishonour or degrade. That blue ribbon! how often has my heart beat responsive to its successes: and the pink! how often have I beheld with dismay its proud march to victory. And now how infinite the pleasure to see them united under the common banner of our Alma Mater, in the annual celebration which upholds her fame, rallies her children around her, and while renewing their early affections, enlarges the sphere of her usefulness, and prolongs the period of her triumphs.

And the interior of your halls, Gentlemen, do they exhibit the same scenes as in ancient days? the same ardent cultiva-

tion of the muses? the same struggle for oratorical pre-eminence? the same ambitious climbing to the posts of honour and chairs of state? Have you factions among yourselves; some aspiring Junior, supported and upheld by his admirers, treading upon the tardy and lagging heels of the haughty Senior; while he is himself watched and elbowed and thwarted by some congenial spirit of his own standing? I doubt it not. The human heart is the same in all ages. Each generation inherits the feelings and repeats the actions of that which preceded it. As was the interior of your halls thirty years ago, such it doubtless is at present, and the same will it be to your sons and grandsons. Noble institutions are they; with their mysteries guarded with the jealousy of honourable secrecy; with their friendships strengthened and deepened by devotion to the badge of fellowship; with their generous rivalries among themselves, and their manly hostilities with each other: and fine schools too of preparation for the world, in which, on a larger scale, you are soon to play more extended parts, with feelings and passions more fully developed, but still the same, as those which now expand your bosoms. Few hereafter will be your excitements or your struggles, of which you may not trace a prototype in the history of the years of your collegiate life; and assuredly your character and conduct, and probably your fortunes in that world, will be closely analogous to the developments of these your early and your blissful days. It surprises those who have gone before you, to perceive how accurately the progress in life of their early companions had been shadowed forth by their course in the halls of the college and the recesses of the "society;" how slight the difference in character between the youth and the man; how closely connected final results, with causes originating or first developed on this classic soil. It is in truth the game, the stern game of life which you have already begun to play—under skies more bright, amid airs more genial, with spirits more buoyant than those which

will attend your future career. But still the game is the same; it is begun here; you have started in the race, and he who is laggard now, will have hereafter to stretch every fibre and muscle to overtake his more alert competitors. Such is the lesson of experience; such will be the confirmation of futurity.

The world then, Gentlemen, for which you are preparing—upon which you have already partially entered—into which a portion of you are about to make the irrevocable plunge—what do *you* think of its fairy prospects and bright temptations? What are your day dreams and waking visions of its pleasures, its perils, and its honours? In your young imaginations, young and therefore vigorous, you paint them all in the brilliant hues of the rainbow. Blessed with unimpaired health, with fresh and expanding minds, and with hearts upon which sin and suffering have not yet laid their heavy and palsyng hand, there is no effort too great for the grasp of your anticipation, no flight too high for the aspirations of your ambition. Glorious era of man's life! In our after joys there is none to be compared to its boundless elasticity of spirits; its sensations of almost physical immortality; its self-confidence, inspired by sound frames and teeming intellects, which makes us feel as if there were nothing too great to dare, too difficult to accomplish.

Nor shall it be my ungrateful task to repress your bright imaginings, to quench the ethereal fire of your early days. Rather would I bid you give it free scope, and teach you to cherish the generous flame, as the harbinger of an honourable and prosperous career, bringing distinction to yourselves and benefit to your country.

For such a career, in this our great republic, there is "ample room and verge enough" for each and all of you. The combined collegiate institutions of the union do not send forth annually more educated men than the country requires to fill the various departments of life, to which knowledge and talents are essential. Even for the purposes of legislation alone, the

necessities of the state exceed the limits of production. Reflect for a moment how many men are occupied in every year, in the six and twenty states of this union, in the great duty of constructing and cementing the social edifice by salutary laws; how great must be the annual supply to fill these posts with competent men; how far exceeding the graduates in the arts. And although it is not intended to imply that classical education is indispensable to the duties of a legislator, it will be readily admitted, and by none more readily than those who are deficient, that where other qualifications are equal, the possession of this will confer a superiority difficult of resistance. Of such an education the lessons of history constitute a part: teaching us the fate of man under the various forms of association which have been adopted by our race; most especially instructing us in the perils which beset republican government; forewarning us of the arts of the demagogue, and tracing clearly the progress from licentiousness to anarchy, and from anarchy to despotism. To exhibit these lessons to the attention, and to commend them to the consideration of our companions in the halls of legislation, eloquence lends her aid: imbibed from the fountains of antiquity; rendered pungent, polished, and efficient by familiarity with the great masters of the art in all ages; gathering lessons of wisdom from the statesmen of the land of our ancestors, and drinking deep inspirations of freedom from the impassioned oratory of our own revolutionary lore. How august, how impressive would be an assemblage of men thus instructed, thus trained; the moral sense quickened by the intellectual culture; the independence of the representative sustained by consciousness of personal worth; the only impulse to action, love of country; the only object, that country's good. To a body thus constituted of what consideration would be the interests of an individual separated from the interests of the nation; of what moment the elevation of a single citizen, unless identified with the lasting welfare of the people. Where among such men

could the fury of faction, or the subserviency of party, find a resting place? To which of them, would existing power dare to offer reward for abandonment of opinion; or ambition, prospective in its aim, hold out the incentive of future favour? Where among such men could timidity, fearful of denouncing the invasions of power, hide its dishonoured head; or flattery, feeding upon the wages of adulation, find congenial spirits to divide her shame? Our country *has* witnessed assemblages of men, whose moral grandeur the wildest imagination cannot surpass: and amid her various vicissitudes the eye of omniscience alone can tell, how soon her fortunes may again require the manly aid and self-devotion of another band of patriots.

Indeed, under a political organization like that of the United States, it is not possible that any lengthened period of inaction can occur—that many years can ever elapse consecutively, without presenting occasions demanding the exertion of the best talents of her sons. Republics are of necessity turbulent. It is a part of the price we pay for that blessing beyond all price—republican freedom. To despotisms belong calms; there one overruling mind thinks for all the nation, and regards the exercise of that faculty by others as treason against its own supremacy. To the atmosphere of republics political storms seem to be congenial. Among them intellect is in perpetual fermentation, teeming with Utopian schemes for the general good, or with less praiseworthy efforts for personal aggrandizement. The mass therefore, constantly agitated, is sometimes in danger of dissolution. Its elements may be irrevocably disunited, and the organization which wisdom has framed, and experience approved, may be jostled from its base, and in its fall overwhelm us with ruin. We are a restless people—always experimenting; as we suppose, improving, our models of government. Constitutions can scarcely be permitted to survive their framers, before they are placed in the crucible, fused,

and reproduced in an altered shape. The danger is, that some of the precious metal may be lost in the change, and its place be supplied with dross. Hence arises a feeling of doubt and uncertainty as to the stability of our institutions, and a general apprehensiveness of coming events, injurious to the relations of property, and diminishing the reputation of our republican model. The spirit of change is rife, even in the calm, majestic, well-poised, and firmly seated Pennsylvania. A state whose resources have developed into gigantic magnitude; whose population is as free as the "chartered libertine the air;" whose sons are hardy as the rocks of their mountains; whose wealth is agricultural and mineral, permanent as the foundations of the earth; whose existing constitution was framed by men, who have handed down to their children hereditary worth and names known and revered in every corner of the commonwealth. Even there, "organic change" is in contemplation; and the doctrine is averred from high and distinguished pens, that it is competent to a convention to "re-organize our entire system of social existence, terminating and proscribing what is deemed injurious, and establishing what is preferred; to restore the institution of slavery among us; to make a penal code as bloody as that of Draco; to withdraw the charters of the cities; to supersede a standing judiciary by a scheme of occasional arbitration and umpirage; to prohibit particular professions or trades; to permanently suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus, and take from us the trial by jury."

If this be the true theory, then is the whole structure of society subject to alteration, even to the form of the government itself. Nay, in the very heart of a democracy a new avenue is opened, by which *might* enter arbitrary and individual power. It is true that by the constitution of the United States the confederation is bound to guarantee to each state a republican form of government. But the theory is, that a convention may

undo all that former conventions have done. They may *release* a *guarantee* as readily as restore the institution of slavery, suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus, or destroy the right of trial by jury. And if they should declare that an elective executive for life, and an elective senate for life, and an elective house of representatives for life, would be a republican form of government, who, according to the theory, could gainsay the construction. In the language of the theory, "*what may a convention not do?*" To establish a law of primogeniture, handing down all the ancestor's property to the eldest son; to prohibit the direction of property after death, and leave it to the seizure of the first occupant; to declare a community of goods, making some central treasury the general depository of all production, and the distributor of individual shares; to transfer a proportion of the many acres of the industrious farmer, and add it to the smaller number of his less fortunate or industrious neighbour, would, under the theory, be acts of the simplest and easiest enactment. The erudite projects of Solon might be tried again, or an experiment made of the simpler constitutions of Lycurgus; and while coarse and humble fare supplied the appetite, bars of iron might form the convenient currency of the people. And when all was fitted upon the regenerate plan, and the vessel of state once more fairly launched, another convention might bring her again into dock, to try new experiments upon her trim, her equipments, or her model.

It is not proposed to examine the soundness or the imperfections of this theory. That is precisely the task to the execution of which your own powers are invoked. It is the production of an able pen; is elaborately and eloquently set forth; and has found many and able advocates to enter the lists with its no less able and talented opposers. Its existence, the indefinable consequences which may result from it, and its promulgation as a rule of action, are presented to your attention,

merely as an incident of the times; to forewarn you of the species of work in which you must be engaged when you leave the groves of your Alma Mater; and to instruct you in the necessity of making preparation here, which will fit you to grapple with men hereafter. *If* this theory be true and sound, it will not pillow its head upon the soil which gave it birth. Its march will be onward; and its influences felt, and its doctrines be wrought into action, from the northern extremity of Maine, to the southernmost cape of Florida; and from the Atlantic to—we should formerly have said the Rocky Mountains; but now, since the roving spirit of our countrymen has found in steam an agent almost equal to their locomotive propensities—we may say at once, to the Pacific Ocean.

Already has this spirit of change invaded another of the elder sisters of the confederacy. Ancient, hospitable, high-bred Maryland begins to question the wisdom of her past ways, and to exhibit symptoms of longing for untried paths. The mode which this spirit has there assumed of making known its wishes and accomplishing its purposes, is altogether curious, unprecedented, and worthy of being presented to your attention as a novel instance of those extraordinary political events so frequently occurring in our country, and requiring upon each occasion a new supply of talent, of sagacity, and of patriotism to guard and protect the public weal.

The chief executive officer of that commonwealth is elected by a joint ballot of its senate and house of delegates; and to him, aided by a council of appointment, chosen in the same manner, belongs the appointment of the chancellor, the judges, the attorney-general, the officers of the militia, and of all the civil officers of the government. The senate is created by the votes of a body of electors, previously chosen by the people; and of the electors four and twenty are required by the constitution to form a college competent to the choice of senators. Of the electors lately chosen, nineteen gentlemen have regarded

it as their duty to abstain from taking their seats in the college, and have, it is said, resigned their electoral office. The remaining electors are less in number than the constitutional quorum; and the framers of that constitution not having foreseen, have not provided for so extraordinary an emergency.

What then is the position of Maryland? It is a question agitated in every palace and in every cottage within her own boundaries, and to which the rest of the union lends an anxious and inquiring attention. Has she a government of any description, or is society there resolved into its original elements? Is, or is not, her legislative department destroyed? and has, or has not, the executive perished with it? If they have both expired, can the judiciary survive? If that remains, can uncommissioned sheriffs summon jurors or enforce sentences? Or is the existing governor and the existing senate to remain in power upon the principle that a *de facto* possession is to be treated as a legitimate possession? Is it in the power even of the people to apply a remedy by a change or modification of their constitution, in any other manner than that which is provided in the instrument itself, which prohibits all change except by a bill passed by one general assembly, submitted by publication to the people, and confirmed, after a new election of delegates, by the next succeeding assembly? And if a component part of this assembly is destroyed, and the machinery provided by the constitution cannot be brought into operation, and there is a dissolution of the government, does the state present any other attitude than that of a vast assemblage of men, without law to direct, or authority to control them? What becomes of property? Does, or does not, its tenure expire with the law and the government? Is, or is it not, a state of things in which every man must be his own protector, and depend upon his own hand to preserve his own head?

It is not for me, Gentlemen, to answer these questions, nor to express a sentiment upon these events. But they belong

to the history of the day; they rise up in apt illustration of the warning which bids you to prepare for life; not by yielding to the blandishments of pleasure, or the seductions of vice, but by a laborious, faithful and unremitting cultivation of all the faculties, physical and mental, bestowed upon you by your Creator.

That fine state of which we have been speaking has never been unrepresented here. Her most distinguished names are to be found on the rolls of old Nassau. Her sons are among you now; and some of them in a few brief hours will return to their honoured homes, to assume *their* stations as actors in the passing scene, to exert *their* portion of influence, and to bring the weight of *their* talents into the warfare of conflicting opinions. Such will be the lot of many whom I now address—participation in the dramas of regeneration or revolution.

There are other tasks in reserve for you of kindred, perhaps of more congenial quality. It is pleasanter, perhaps nobler, to be engaged in the work of original erection than in that of reconstruction; and there lies the great west, the mighty, the illimitable west, to be subdued, peopled, organized, formed into states, and brought into association with their elder brethren. Here is ample scope for the coolest efforts of political sagacity, or the wildest experiments of untried theory; and much of this great work must be performed before you shall have seen half a century of years. Europeans accuse us of being a boastful people; of habitual exaggeration of prospective greatness; and complain, as if it were a fault, that we persist in believing that our nation must ere long become one of the most mighty on earth, and throw into the shade their ancient glories, and bring discredit upon their worn out institutions. It may be, that our phrases are not culled with a nicety, and pronounced with a whispering gentleness, agreeable to the “ears polite” of transatlantic drawing-rooms. But it must be confessed that we do but follow nature’s own lead,

who, in this western hemisphere, is mighty in all her works. Nor can it well be expected of men, who traverse rivers two thousand miles in length, and scour plains of almost equal breadth, and find them all the inheritance of the free and the brave; who leave a wilderness to-day, and returning in a few short years find it built up with hamlets and towns and cities—that they should speak of the destinies of such a people in terms of sweet humility, or play the part of infant meekness, when the rough bristle of vigorous manhood is already upon the cheek. It is now past doubt, that be the throes and agonies and convulsions of our political existence what they may, Providence has decreed this hemisphere to be the seat of unnumbered human beings, great in arts, in arms, and in all that has heretofore illustrated the human race.

Where then are the bright intellects to be found which are to lead in all these mighty enterprises? Where, the improved and cultivated minds, to fill the halls of legislation, the benches of the judiciary, the executive chairs, the professional, and scientific posts? Can this vast demand for mind, mind, mind, be adequately met by the productive powers of all our universities and collegiate institutions? Did I not say rightly that there was room for each and all of you in the gallant struggle? Yes, young Gentlemen; and well do I know that her alumni will not permit old Nassau to be unrepresented in the assemblages of talent, or her ancient glories to sink into the darkness of oblivion.

You, whom I address, must play your parts; and I doubt not there are among you aspiring spirits which have already fixed their gaze upon some bright eminence, “where fame’s proud temple shines afar”—perhaps even upon the presidential chair. Has not that vision danced before your eyes? Has not that proud station terminated the vista of some long and ardent gaze into the shadowy prospects of futurity? You may put on the demure look of modest diffidence, and deny the

charge. But grant me your pardon if I am incredulous. The prize is too glittering to have escaped your eagle eyes; the aspiration too consonant to the saucy confidence of your young hearts, not to have arisen in some moment of lofty enthusiasm. And why should not this be the proud seat of some one of *you*? What is the quality, what are the services, which the American people require from an incumbent of that chair, which *you* may not possess and render? In this particular the position of our country has undergone a change. The fermentation of spirit which preceded the revolution, produced an extraordinary race of men; the whole intense ardour of whose intellects was concentrated upon the science of government and the political rights of man. Years of discussion, of profound inquiry, of able writing, of passionate declamation, preceded the outbursting of the storm. And when it came, those same men met and breasted it. And through its long protracted perils they quailed not, they wavered not. They periled their lives in the contest: and had they failed, ignominy would have followed their names, and a shameful death have been their portion. When success gilded their cause, and the triumph was accomplished, and a country was created, and a constitution formed, these men became sacred in the eyes of their countrymen; and headed by the father of that country, were charged with the duty and rewarded with the glory of presiding over its destinies. Then was exhibited to an admiring world a race, a dynasty of republican chief magistrates, taken from the school of the revolution which created that republic. And while these men continued on earth it would have been deemed sacrilege to have looked elsewhere. Nor was there an elsewhere to look to. All that was great, all that was noble, all that was intellectual in the land, had embarked in that contest, and been bred in that school. Hence, while the revolutionary race remained, that claim was admitted to be paramount, and the contests for ascendancy were among men

of that race. That race has passed away: they have descended into the tomb calmly, peaceably, most beautifully; leaving to posterity the splendid example of their well-spent lives, and a country, taken into their keeping, poor, oppressed, and trampled upon, and left by them in a position of dignity and strength, which might have rewarded centuries of patriotic labour. That race is gone, and who is to succeed them in the direction of our destinies? To what great crisis of our fortunes are we to look, as having endured long enough to create another race with claims equally paramount? The people of this republic are not ungrateful; and where distinguished service has been rendered, it has been signally and brilliantly rewarded. He who led our arms to glorious achievements in the second contest with our mother land, has received all that gratitude the most impassioned could bestow. Nor does *he* stand alone in *this* claim to his country's favour. But that was but a contest of arms, in which the pride of victory brought its own reward, and the penalty of defeat was but temporary eclipse. The whole contest was but an episode; a brilliant one, but still but an episode, in the great story of our nation. It produced—it could produce no race of men like those of the revolution.

To whom then are we too look for our future presidents? To a class of men, reared not amid the tempests of conflicting nations, but in periods of comparative calm; in the walks of civil life; in the halls of the national legislature; in the departments of the government: to men deeply versed in the knowledge of constitutional liberty; attached profoundly to our institutions; careful guardians upon the watch towers of freedom; fearless asserters of invaded rights; undaunted opposers of unauthorized power; jealous and watchful alike of foreign or domestic enemies; seeking the good of their country; forgetful of themselves. And *this* is a race already not few in number; and daily arising to excite our admiration and attract

our praise. Such men are now to be found in various sections of the union. The north, the west, the east, the south, can each point to distinguished citizens abundantly competent to preside at the helm, under whose guidance the state would be safe and prosperous. The same tuition which has brought them to the aid and ornament of their country, will reduplicate their numbers, till no one member of our great confederacy will be too poor to supply a choice. At this moment we behold the spectacle of four names offered to our acceptance. Each of which can boast an array of partizans and admirers sufficiently great to be in itself a reward for service, as well as an indication of worth.

It is probable that hereafter the existence of any one individual, standing out beyond his fellow citizens in such bold relief as to distance all competition, will be an event of very rare occurrence: that many if not all of the states will give their electoral votes to eminent individuals of their own soil or section of the union, and that the final choice will devolve upon the house of representatives. The consequences of such a course of policy have been the subject of discussion, and are sometimes presented in alarming colours. The election by the house of representatives is said to be adverse to the spirit of the constitution, and the exercise of the right dangerous to the integrity of the representative. The fraud and force of the Polish diet, has been held out as a beacon of alarm; and the possibility of an equal vote, and a government without a head, has been made to contribute its share of difficulty.

The objections do not appear to me to be sound; while there are many reasons to recommend the course.

It cannot truly be said to be adverse to the spirit of a constitution, which expressly provides this particular remedy for this particular emergency, in the original instrument; and adopts the same principle, with some difference in the details, in an amendment propounded as late as 1803; submitted to the

several states for their approval or rejection; by them deliberately examined and discussed, and finally by them approved and sanctioned. It was obvious to the original framers of that instrument, who were laying the foundations of an edifice intended to last for ages, and who were gifted with a political prescience of rare and wonderful extent and acuteness, that when the nation should count its millions by tens and by twenties, it would be a rare concatenation of events which should induce a majority to adjudge the palm of pre-eminence to one man. They provided therefore for the case of the failure of a majority in the electoral vote, and gave to the house of representatives the right to choose from among the five highest on the return. And when the high-wrought and long-pending contest in the house, between Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Burr, had attracted the attention of the nation to that clause in the constitution, and it was amended in relation to the manner of balloting for president and vice president, the feature we are discussing was retained, but the power of selection was restricted to the three highest on the electoral return, and from them it was decreed the president should be chosen.

The plan thus adopted originally, and perpetuated afterwards with improvements, seems to be in theory wise, and has encountered and successfully sustained the test of experiment. The nation has never been left without a chief; nor is there a rational probability of such an event. The state of party, that curse of republics, must be of extraordinary excitement, and faction must be of untameable ferocity, if no means can be found of uniting a majority of votes upon some one of the three distinguished candidates. The smaller states have a direct interest in preventing the plan itself from falling into disrepute, because it is to them like their equality in the senate, one means of preserving a due weight and importance in the confederacy; the vote being by states, and not by individual representatives. If the improbable contingency should arise, the case is provided

for and the constitution has pointed out the depository of the executive power so clearly, as to prevent the possibility of a serious abandonment of that department of the government. And as a last resource, there remains the machinery of a convention, to be called in the manner prescribed in that all-foreseeing instrument.

Of the integrity of the representative I should hope no just fear could well be entertained. That individuals *may* be corrupted is undoubtedly true, under all forms of government. But if such danger does exist, it would seem to be more palpable, and the engines of corruption more potent, when a chief is seated in the chair, who with the desire of perpetuating authority, possesses the means of present reward, than in the case of an uncertain succession. Nor must we forget that against the chance of corruption itself there exists at all times the fear, the deadly fear of the withering, blighting scorn of a whole nation of freemen, the dread of a name consigned like that of Arnold to the detestation of its contemporaries, and the everlasting contumely of posterity; the apprehensive horror of leaving to descendants an inheritance of ineffable shame and degradation.

That is not the source from which the loss of the liberties of our country is to be feared. Nor do I believe that it is to be dreaded from attachment, well or ill placed, to the person of any chief. The central poison cannot be strong enough to circulate through the arteries and veins of a republic so illimitable in extent. The boundaries of each state form a barrier to its extension. The rival names of every independent sovereignty stand up in hostility to the invader. The mountains and remote vallies, and wide plains of the land, are inaccessible fastnesses, where freedom would maintain positions unassailable. And the equal distribution of property, the absence of all right of primogeniture, is an institution which in itself stretches the arms of assured safety around the Genius of Liberty.

But one danger there does exist; one great, imminent, impending danger, rife at all times; rising up like a spectre to haunt and poison our prosperity, of which I pray you all to imbibe a holy fear, and against it at all times to lend the utmost efforts of your powers. It is the danger of disunion. More than once it has raised its venomous head, and breathed forth its sickening poisonous breath. Let that occur, and your republic is shattered, broken into atoms, scattered to the winds of heaven, a laughing stock to the despotisms of the world. Divide it where you will; be your boundaries geographical, or dictated by that most indefinable epithet—similarity of interest; let bays and rivers, or straight imaginary lines separate the broken pieces, accomplish it by peace, or obtain it by force; come it as it may, it utters in tones of deep dismay the knell of liberty.

Then—and in brief space of time—standing armies must cover the face of our land. Wars, instant, fierce, protracted, embittered by mutual recrimination, and sense of violated love and broken friendship, will be the first fruit of that great convulsion. “Splendid deeds of arms will be done; the exploits of the warrior will fill the song of the poet: the navies of the north, the yeoman infantry of the middle states, the careering cavalry of the broad plains of the west, the chivalry of the south, will win their victories and gain immortal honour. But alas! for the people: them will the tax gatherer oppress; their sons, the conscription carry away; their daughters, the splendour of arms dazzle and delude. In each rival state the successful soldier will be looked to as its proper and permanent head. And for our liberty, that will expire in a blaze of martial glory.”

This I believe is the real source of danger to the institutions of our country; a source never dried up; a danger always imminent. The hydra raises its fearful head upon every new excitement. Every statute of the general government, of real or supposed inequality of operation; every disappointment of

personal ambition, furnishes aliment to the fearful monster. And it cannot be concealed, that a separation of the states, which thirty years ago was never mentioned but with holy horror, is now familiarly discussed, and is often presented by sections and by persons labouring under real or imaginary griefs, as a feasible and desirable remedy. Let it once come, and from that instant it will be unnecessary to write the history of our land. It may thenceforward be read in the story of the Grecian republics, in the brilliant and painful tale of Italy's fair land.

Pardon, young men, the pertinacity of adherence to this unhappy theme. To you and your children it is of much deeper moment than to one whose glass of life has already parted with the greater portion of its sand. It is a question of fearful import, over which each individual among you may exercise in his respective sphere powerful influence. Look back to the graduates who have left this time-honoured institution: there is not a class among them which has not contributed largely to domestic legislatures, to executive offices, to the halls of congress. And so it will most unquestionably be with you. In twenty years from this day, those of you whom the decrees of providence shall then permit to be among the actors of this earth, will be found in every corner of our land, in the same positions of influence and of power. Would that I could implant inflexible fidelity to the union in your young hearts, as their first, their all-absorbing love; to be cherished with a constancy proof against every trial, to be borne with you through life, to be buried only in your graves.

Young Gentlemen, I have wandered into discussions which might seem appropriate to years more advanced than yours. And yet among us such is the natural theme, even to our younger brethren. The institutions of his country, the political questions of the passing day, the expanding fortunes of the nation, its ulterior fate, are habitually the first, the constant,

and the absorbing subjects of contemplation in the mind of every American. Among us, boys discuss, and young men are deeply versed in topics, which in other lands, and under other forms of government, are reserved for the mature, subdued, and cautious investigations of later life. With us, from the hoop and the ball, the race, and the merry shout of boyhood, it is but a single bound into the struggling arena of politics. He who at twenty-one finds himself called upon to deposit *his* ballot, and express *his* written will, and pass his sentence of approbation or disapproval upon the senators and representatives; who are to make the laws which he is to obey, and the presidents, and governors, and sheriffs, who are to carry them into execution; who feels that his single vote may be the point upon which would turn a nation's fate, learns quickly to appreciate the importance, and to discuss the bearings of topics, which elsewhere are regarded as mysteries too sacred for the heedlessness of youth. Hence it is, that in our land, him, whom the *law* declares to be a man, we look to as a man, in deed and practice, as well as in theory. Hence, too, results the propriety, the duty of so disciplining the intellect, and directing the studies of the American youth, that they may reach their majority, not unprepared to exercise with judgment, the right they will unquestionably claim with zeal. To the classics, which are to adorn his character; to the mathematics, which are to form and strengthen his reasoning faculties; to the sciences, which are to be tributary to his particular pursuits, should be added such knowledge of the constitution and laws of his country, of its past history and future prospects, as will fit him at once to take that initiatory step, which makes him a participator in its actual government.

This preparation forms part of your duty here. But not only this. You are now to lay the foundations broad and deep of that success which I trust will attend you in every course of life you may hereafter choose to adopt; and of that moral cha-

racter, of which the perfections or the blemishes will decide your fate for weal or for woe. What particular path or province in life you are to fill, cannot, even by yourselves, be conjectured with rational certainty. We have among us no hereditary castes, transmitting to the descendant the occupation of the ancestor. Each son of our free soil has "the world before him, where to choose his resting place, and providence his guide."

We have not even predilections to the paternal pursuit whatever that may be. The expanse of our territory, the entire freedom of action, the perpetual restlessness of enterprise, the hourly uprising of unanticipated events, and opening of new avenues, all peculiar to and characteristic of our country, beget corresponding uncertainty in the probable career of any individual. Hence it becomes your duty to yourselves to prepare by fit training for every position into which you may be thrown by these never-ending concussions. Not that you can here acquire the information peculiar and specially appropriate to the particular departments of active life; but you may, by faithful and industrious use of the opportunities given, so strengthen and enlarge the understanding, so train the habits, and so cultivate and improve the moral sense, that it may be competent to you hereafter to choose your walk, without restraint, and with every rational prospect of eventual prosperity. Be greedy therefore of intellectual gain; suffer nothing which is presented by your course of studies to elude your grasp. Be the acquisitions of knowledge what they may; however remote from any probable practical utility, be assured that the day of practical application will come. Store your minds industriously as you will, with facts, with theories, with science, with ornament, the uses of life will exhaust all your treasures. And it is mainly here the store house must be filled; you will never in after life command the same opportunity of continued acquisition. You will plunge when you go hence into the general

and turbulent struggle; the days of calm, quiet, uninterrupted study will be left behind you; preceptors to counsel and instruct will be yours no more; philosophical and mathematical apparatus will have disappeared from your view; literary honours inciting to emulation, will not remain to be bestowed; beloved companions, treading with equal step the same laborious paths, will no longer attend you; you part here and for ever with that serenity of mind, and freedom from care, so advantageous, if not essential, to mental cultivation. Impatient as you are to leave these scholastic walls, you will hereafter find, that in them you have left treasures which after exertion can scarcely recall or recover. And he who is most laborious, faithful, unremitting now, will have the least to regret in the stern world to which he is hastening.

If you live, one destiny there is common to you all. You will be husbands and parents. You will rear up, and leave behind you sons to inherit your name, and to participate in all the fair fame, or partake of the degradation, which to that name may attach. Domestic life in all its holiness and purity, or with its blighting miseries and foul dishonours, will be yours. If you wish *that* to be without stain, the education, moral and religious, commenced under the parental roof, must not be forgotten or discontinued here, nor your return to that shelter be embittered by the recollection of early sin.

Take hence an offering to your parents, to your country; minds expanded by diligent study; frames strengthened and invigorated by manly exercise; hearts pure and undefiled by the corruptions of dissipation; and you and they will have reason to rejoice in that sacrifice of feeling, and temporary disruptions of early ties, which consigned you to the care of our Alma Mater.