

ADDRESS

OF

REV. JOHN C. YOUNG,

DELIVERED AT HIS

INAUGURATION AS PRESIDENT

OF

CENTRE COLLEGE.

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE TRUSTEES,
AND RESPECTED AUDITORS.

THE prosperity of every Literary Institution depends, mainly, on the capacity and faithfulness of its instructors, and the principles upon which it is conducted. Your judgment of our capacity and faithfulness must be formed upon information gained from other sources: but, for the principles on which we intend to conduct education, you may inquire of ourselves. And it is due to you, who are the patrons and guardians of this Institution, that we should develop our views on this subject, that you may form your own judgment of their correctness and probable success. This can perhaps best be done, by exhibiting our views of the OBJECT OF A COLLEGIATE EDUCATION, and the MEANS OF ITS ATTAINMENT.

The proper object of a collegiate education is, *to increase the future happiness and usefulness of the pupils.* This object commends itself so strongly to the common sense of every man, as the only proper one to be pursued in such a course, that any reasoning upon the subject might seem superfluous. But prominent and worthy as is this object, it has not always been recognised, either by parents and guardians, or by instructors and pupils. Many systems of education appear to be framed on the principle, that the ultimate and sole object of education is, *to increase the mental power of youth.* The intellect is considered as alone worthy of attention and cultivation. All that gives shape to the character and issue to the destiny of man is neglected. No provision is made for subduing passions, controlling appetites, fixing virtuous habits, instilling moral principles, and cultivating religious feelings. The prevalence of this principle and of the practice based upon it, has greatly retarded the improvement of mankind, and has converted into instruments of mischief and finally engulfed in misery, multitudes of promising geniuses, whose career, had it been otherwise commenced, might have led them to glory and immortality.

It seems strange that, with all the deep voices of warning that come to us from the past history, and present condition of man, any should continue to regard as the final object of education, *the simple investiture of human beings with power*—an attribute, which is as liable to become the source of misery, as of enjoyment to its possessor; and as liable to be used for the destruction of our fellow creatures, as for their benefit.

When we see the annals of the human race traced in characters of blood, and see them to be records of the deeds of men, whose powers have been developed, and whose minds have been stored by an education, the sole object of which was to make them mighty and ambitious, it should teach us the folly and danger of such a course—it should teach us to propose something higher and better as *our* object. The Clodiuses, the Catalines, the Philips, and the Napoleons of every age, have been men whose energies have been developed, strengthened, and directed, by an education, which taught them to consider power and self-aggrandizement as the great end of exertion. And whenever such is the object held before youth, in their course of training for future action—it may produce “mighty men and men of renown,” but, during their days, the earth will be full of violence and blood.

But it may be said, there are few who will maintain the principle, that the grand design of education is merely to increase intellectual power. Be it so, that few, in this day of moral light, *explicitly avow* such a sentiment—yet it is clear, that the *same conduct is often pursued, and the same effects are produced*, as if this sentiment were taught and made prominent. And it is a matter of small consequence, whether the effect of a lie be produced by the suppression of a truth, or the declaration of a falsehood. If it be observed by youth, that the whole desire and effort of instructors and parents is directed to their intellectual culture, and that their moral improvement is, entirely or in a great measure, neglected, it produces in them the belief, that intellectual greatness is the one thing needful, and that all things else are of comparatively little importance. What matters it whether this evil results from *oversight* or from *intention* on the part of instructors and parents—*the effect is produced*, and for its production they have themselves to blame. To this effect of the conduct of those whose opinions and actions they regard, add the influence, upon youth, of that natural desire for power and self-exaltation which dwells in every heart, and which, unless corrected and subdued by moral truth, makes man the object of his own idolatry—and you can then calculate what will be the bent of their desires, and their aim, as they are hastening on to that period, when their purposes will ripen into execution, and their power enable them to convert others into the instruments of their selfish designs. Can we calculate largely on either the personal happiness, or the public usefulness of those, who have been, from childhood, under the dominion of a spirit, implanted in them by nature, and fostered by education, which prompts them to covet and strive after power, for no end but to promote their own aggrandizement.

What, on the other hand, would be the effect, could we scatter through the length and breadth of the land men, who, while their minds were lib-

eralized, expanded, and strengthened by all the discipline of study, and all the resources of learning, had been ever led to consider power as valuable, only so far as it enabled them to promote their own virtuous and permanent enjoyment, and the welfare of their fellow men? We must all have observed that, in the present circumstances of mankind, (and perhaps this will always continue to be the fact,) the many are governed by the few, the ignorant by the wise, the unthinking by the thinking. We must have observed, too, that in every neighbourhood, there exist a few, who breathe into all around their own opinions—these govern the minds of their own little community, and lead them whithersoever they will: and these directors of public opinion, we find, are almost always *educated* men. Now if all this educated corps, who, scattered through the vast multitude, influence it to evil or to good, should systematically direct their energies aright, who can calculate the beneficial results? Those avalanches of error and prejudice, accumulated by the arts and efforts of the selfish and designing, and under which the better feelings of a whole community often lie buried, would melt and give way, under the influence of the beams of truth playing upon them from every cultivated mind. The tempests of political strife would be calmed. Those heavings and convulsions of society, which occasionally shake it to its foundation, and threaten its dissolution, would cease to exist and to terrify. We would see whole communities under a strong and hallowing influence, whose effects would be visible in the purity of their lives, and the increase of their enjoyments.

The day cannot be very far distant, when a description of the world as it would exist under such an influence, will be no longer a vision of the imagination, but a picture of the reality. And this glorious consummation will, under God, be effected by the universal prevalence of systems of education, *framed with a direct view to the moral* as well as the mental improvement of youth. For to every observer of man it must be evident, that more can be done to purify and bless our race, by education rightly conducted, than by any other human instrumentality. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Qualify a youth for the attainment of virtuous enjoyment and eminent usefulness—impress him with the belief, that these are the only worthy object of exertion, and you may calculate that, with the blessing of God upon your labors, he will be found, in after life, making these the object of his pursuit.

But what are the *means* by which youth, in a collegiate course, may be formed to future happiness and usefulness? The answer to this enquiry constitutes the

SECOND branch of our subject.

We shall exhibit, in the order of their importance, what we conceive to be these means.

1. We are to impress upon the minds of youth *the truths of religion*. The principles of piety lie at the foundation of those qualities which adorn and dignify the human character. A sense of obligation to God, a view of the glory of his character, a desire for his approbation, a love for the Redeemer, a regard to the retributions of eternity—these are the principles, which, if implanted, will correct all our evil feelings, and regulate all our conduct aright. *Sentiments of honor* are sometimes relied on as a substitute for the principles of religion, and inculcated in their room—but these are flimsy cords, by which to hold man in the path of rectitude. When passion, or appetite, or interest urges him to rise in the strength of his native depravity, he snaps them as easily as the Israelitish champion brake the withs of the Philistines. The code of honor was framed by *man*—the code of religion by *God*: the one must therefore be defective and often mischievous—the other perfect and ever salutary. The primary principle of honor is, *to regard solely the opinions of men, and regulate our actions to suit their judgments*—the primary principle of religion is, *to consider God as our observer and judge, and seek supremely for his approbation*.—What folly is it, then, for instructors to make such efforts as we often witness, to cultivate in the minds of youth those chivalrous feelings, whose influence is never to be relied upon, and is often pernicious, while they neglect to instil the more pure, sublime, and potent principles of religion.

✓ In a college, like ours, to which all denominations of christians may send their sons for instruction, no sectarian dogmas should be inculcated: those truths only should be taught which are common to all—those general and clearly revealed truths which will draw forth the affections towards God, and cause us to walk in his ways. But for making the youth acquainted with these truths, and making them feel their power, *every means should be used*. The Bible should be placed in the hands of all—it should be studied and recited. Besides, there should be a constant commixture of efficacious scriptural truth with the ordinary instructions in literature and science. An instructor has daily opportunities of aptly and unobtrusively interweaving sanctifying truth into all the studies he directs; for religion is not *a thing apart from life*—it connects itself with every science and every pursuit. And as the silent and almost imperceptible dew is, by its frequency and regularity, as efficacious as the copious showers, in imparting to the green fields their life, and freshness, and beauty; so these casual, and transient, but often recurring exhibitions of truth, are as profitable to the soul as more directly studied, and protracted appeals. ✓

But to ensure the efficacy of proper moral instruction, every thing should be removed which would counteract its influence. And this leads us to observe,

2. That, in their course of education, *youth are, as much as possible, to be protected from the example and allurements of vice.* There is in the human soul, as it now exists, a sympathy with evil which renders vice infectious. "Deliver us from evil," is the prayer our Divine Master has taught us to offer. And if we wish to save youth from the influence of evil we must preserve them from its *contact*: for not only are they liable, as others, to its influence, from the common depravity of our nature; but from their inexperience and thoughtlessness they are peculiarly exposed. Much, perhaps most, can be done to shield them from this danger, by the judicious location of Literary Institutions, in situations where there will be fewest exhibitions of gross vice, and fewest seductions to unlawful pleasures. Much, too, can be effected by the vigilance of instructors, in preventing the introduction of practices, which though not immoral in themselves, are ultimately productive of effects inimical to virtue. Much may also be effected by a prompt and decisive discipline, which will not tolerate the continuance, among his associates, even for a day, of one whose influence is baneful.

Next in importance to his removal from danger, comes, as a means of attaining the proper object of education,

3. *The evolution of a youth's faculties.* In the accomplishment of this task is displayed the highest skill of the able instructor. Many have sufficient acquaintance with literature and science to qualify them for teaching the young: but few possess that nice perception of the varieties of mind, and that delicate tact in its management, which enable them to discriminate in their treatment of different individuals, so as to suit their respective mental constitutions, and elicit their peculiar powers. Swift was, by his instructors, considered and treated as a dunce. Copernicus was nearly given over, by his preceptors, as incorrigibly stupid; and accident alone, without their assistance, first developed his genius. Some minds are defective in one faculty, and eminently gifted in another. An acute and judicious instructor ascertains the peculiar mental defects and excellencies of each individual committed to his charge, and while, as far as nature will permit, he remedies the former, he elicits and strengthens the latter. We often see a lad of genius droop, as though conscious of stupidity, because his memory is slow, and his dull preceptor has led him to believe that memory constitutes intellect. And again, we often see the youth who has, in his early course, been flattered with hopes of greatness, sink, when he mingles in the business of life, even below the ordinary level of his compeers, because he has solely cultivated and confided in that faculty which now no longer avails

him. Such mistakes would never occur, and such disastrous effects would never be witnessed were instructors always competent and faithful.

There is, often, in the management of education a radical defect—*pupils are not taught to think*. Man is a lazy animal—he will exert neither body nor mind, unless necessity be laid upon him. If a youth can procure thoughts manufactured to his hand, and his teacher is satisfied to receive these without requiring any thing further, he will never trouble himself with the labor of *originating*—he will be content to transfer from his text-book to his memory the fruits of others' labors. And thus we often see educated men whose minds are *the mere receptacles of other men's opinions*—who appear never to have waked up to the consciousness of the fact, that they possessed the power of discovering and developing truth for themselves. A good instructor will make it a great part of his business to induce his pupils to *observe, compare, combine, and judge for themselves*. By his mode of instruction he will *compel* them to this work. Their recitations will be so conducted that they *must* understand—they *must* incur the trouble of thought. The power they will thus acquire, will be of greater value than any amount of information which can be communicated to them within the walls of a college. Instead of having imparted to them a mere portion of another's wealth; they are thus led to a rich and inexhaustible mine of their own, from which they may continue to dig throughout life.

With this evolution of faculty should be connected,

4. *The formation of proper habits.* On the importance of forming such habits in youth, we need not dwell. The habits of early years perpetuate over us the dominion of ignorance and vice, or they fit us for usefulness on the earth, and glory in the heavens.

Out of many important habits, to the formation of which special attention should be directed, we will, at present, select and notice but two.

(1.) *A habit of industry.* It will astonish us, if we look around and examine accurately, to discover how great a portion of mankind are idlers. They do not, indeed, like the stupid savage, bask all day in the sun, and doze life away—but they waste it in a thousand *indolent occupations*—it is but a small part of their lives that they engage in work with the energy of men who appreciate the *value of time*. Now, if we expect to be eminent for usefulness, every day, every hour, in its rapid flight, must bear into eternity the record that we are *busy*. Even genius, without persevering industry, can achieve nothing great for the benefit of man; while the commonest intellect, if it be untiring in its exertions, will scatter blessings around it. Idleness, too, is the parent of vice—it not only wastes the energies, but often, ultimately, corrupts the heart. Youth then should be continually plied with business, that they may

learn the habit of *perpetual activity*. While they should be cheered and stimulated, and their labor, as much as possible, converted into a pleasure, every hour should bring with it its appropriate employment, from which there should be no room to shrink. Thus their minds would acquire, for after life, an elasticity under the pressure of labor, which would carry them easily and triumphantly through difficulties, under which common minds would faint and fail.

(2.) *A habit of close thought* is another which demands our cultivation. There are some men, who never do more than skim the surface of the subjects they pretend to examine—there are others, again, who never rest satisfied until they have sounded their depths. The one set are contented, like the careless passenger, to pick up the pebbles scattered on the shore of the great ocean of truth—the other, like the hardy diver, go down into its caverns, and bring up its precious pearls. Sir Isaac Newton once told a friend, who was complimenting him upon his genius and discoveries, that he owed all his acquisitions to a habit of close and patient thought, and that he knew of no difference between his and ordinary minds, except that he possessed the power of fixing his attention, for a long time, upon any subject which came before him. This power of mental concentration is gained by continued exertions. And we increase this power, just as the blasksmith increases the strength of his arm, by the habit of exerting it.—Youth, then, should be taught to consider superficiality of examination as a proof of imbecility. They should be taught to grapple closely with every subject presented before them, and never to let it go until they have fairly mastered it.

5. The last means to be used for accomplishing the purpose of education is, the communication of literary and scientific knowledge. The amount of information gained in college, is often considered the chief benefit derived from such institutions. But to this we cannot assent. Deficiency in information is more tolerable, than deficiency in religion, morals, good habits, or mental powers. You may make the mind a lumber-room, where vast stores of knowledge are packed away; and yet the man be useless and miserable. But furnish him with good principles, cultivated faculties, and correct habits—soon, his own observation and industry will, in some measure, compensate for his lack of information, and enable him, in any department of life, to excel. Still, though some other things, in education, may be of more importance, the knowledge a young man can gain at college, will be of great value. It forms a vantage ground, which he has gained, and from which he may, with ease, through his future life, make excursions into all the regions of literature and science. While we freely admit, that no bare collegiate course of instruction ever did, or ever can, make a man a *finished* scholar—still we know, that, if any one hopes ever to become *such* a scholar, he must

receive a course of this kind, and receive it under good instructors. A deep and strong foundation is not a complete edifice—but, without such foundation, no valuable building can ever be raised. The entrance to every department of science is full of difficulties—it requires labor on our part, and assistance from others, to enable us to overcome these threshold difficulties. Hence arises the necessity, that while we are free from the cares of life and the distractions of business, and can command the services of those competent to aid us, we should master the elements of all sciences, with which we wish to be acquainted in after life. And hence, too, the fact, that we find few, in after life, deeply skilled in languages, mathematics, political economy, criticism, natural philosophy, or mental science, who have not, in their youth, and under able instructors, received a thorough initiation into these various sciences.

If these views of the object of a collegiate education, and the means of its attainment, be correct, then it must, evidently, be a great mistake, to suppose that a collegiate education is valuable, only to such as intend entering one of the learned professions. A cultivated taste, an improved judgment, enlarged information, correct principles, habits of thought, an invigorated intellect, are advantages to the farmer and the merchant, as well as to the lawyer, the physician, and the divine. Men take a very narrow view of the advantages of classical, mathematical, and philosophical studies, when they consider them as valuable only to those who will use the knowledge derived from them in subsequent life. If this knowledge be never used, their studies have, already, served an important purpose—they have enlarged, elevated, and strengthened the mind—they have imparted to it closeness, energy, acuteness and taste. The scaffolding of a building serves an important end, though it may become useless and be knocked away, when the building is constructed.

Further, if our views be correct, instructors should possess extensive literary and scientific attainments. The student can only receive correct and valuable information from one whose stores are rich, and varied, and sound. He can only be started and impelled on a career of attainment, by one who has himself preceded him. Instructors should also possess, in a high degree, the capacity of selecting, combining, and communicating their knowledge. There are some men, whose minds are vast reservoirs of knowledge, without an outlet—they have no capacity for imparting information. There are other minds from which the stream of instruction flows deep, but turbid as the waters of the Nile. Such minds are of no value as instructors of youth. An able instructor must be simple, perspicuous, and capable of selecting from his funds topics, arguments, and illustrations, suited to the capacities and previous attainments of those he addresses.

Your present faculty do not flatter themselves that they possess, in any remarkable degree, those attainments and powers which qualify men for the business of instruction. One thing they know and can promise, that whatever powers and attainments they do possess, shall be faithfully and energetically employed in the discharge of the duties of their important trust. And they venture to promise, that the course of instruction they will here pursue, will be as extensive and as thorough as that pursued in the most reputable of our Eastern Institutions: They hope to lay, in the minds of those here committed to their charge, a foundation of knowledge, broad, and deep, and strong, on which they may hereafter, for themselves, raise a superstructure spacious, lofty, and beautiful.

To you, Young Gentlemen, students of this institution, we look for assistance in our work. Without your efforts we can do nothing—with them we can do every thing. You have heretofore been remarkable for docility, subordination, and kind feelings towards your instructors. We trust that these feelings and this conduct will continue. On our part, nothing shall be wanting—we are determined to *deserve* your confidence, and love, and obedience, by unwearied efforts to secure your best interests.

CENTRE COLLEGE.

The Trustees of Centre College deem the present a favourable opportunity for communicating to the public such information as will enable them to judge of the location, expenses, and course of instruction of their Institution.

The College is situated in the immediate vicinity of Danville, a quiet and retired village, where there are few temptations to seduce the young men from their studies, or allure them into vice. The town and surrounding country are remarkably healthy.—Danville is ten miles distant from the Harrodsburgh Springs—the favourite watering-place of persons from the South. The proximity of these springs affords to parents from that quarter of the country a favourable opportunity of occasionally seeing their sons who may be placed here for education.

The expenses of a student are small. Boarding of a superior kind can be procured in the Refectory at \$1.50 per week; and this charge includes the expense of washing and lodging. The price of tuition is, in the College Proper \$30, and in the Preparatory Department \$24 per annum. Wood and candles are cheap. So that \$103 per annum will cover all a student's expenses, exclusive of the cost of his books and clothing.

The course of study heretofore pursued, both in the Preparatory Department and the College Proper, will be altered and enlarged, so that it will be as thorough and extensive as the course pursued in the most respectable Institutions of the East. The study of the Hebrew Language will, hereafter, form a part of the regular course. Measures have also been taken, for speedily procuring all necessary additions to the College Apparatus.

An English Department is about to be added to the College; where such young men as do not wish to pursue classical studies may receive a full course of instruction in Mathematics and English Literature.

The Trustees would also state, that there is, connected with the College, an Education Farm, of 110 acres, on which beneficiaries having in view the Gospel Ministry, working 2 hours per day, are supported at an expense of only \$60 per annum, including tuition fees, &c.

By order.

D. G. COWAN, *Secretary*.

*President, 4 Professors,
2 teachers in Prepa-
ratory Department*