

1864

ADDRESS.

G. Runney Wing.

Ladies, Gentlemen and Fellow Chamberlains :

The duty which devolves upon me to-night of presenting to the "Graduating Members of the Chamberlain Society" the diplomas, which their past honorable connection with that association, guarantees them, is one which I find fraught with heartfelt pleasure. I am pleased to be privileged thus to mingle once again with the students of that institution, all the memories of which are so genial and so grateful to my heart. And in an especial manner am I pleased to stand here to-night as the representative of those who wear the same snowy colors, and frequent the same dear old hall which were my own in the bright days of my College life. I am proud, gentlemen, to feel that through me our noble old society speaks to you to-night—applauds you for your steady adherence and strict attendance in the past—congratulates you upon your well-earned rewards of the present—and bids you an honest, hearty "God speed" for the future. And, although I have preceded you from the walls of your *Alma Mater* by but a few short years—although but a few brief milestones in your van, on the great thoroughfare of worldly experiment and experience, I am confident that you will understand the motives which prompt me to advance words of friendly counsel and monition, at this the threshold of your career as men of the world and citizens of the Republic. If in aught it may seem to savor of presumption, at least remember,

gentlemen, that it springs from sentiments of the highest regard for you as "Fellows" of the same society—of interest in you as Kentuckians and Americans—and of ambitious hope for the coming record of our country's history, upon many a page of which the names of some of you may be destined to shed luster and renown.

We live, my hearers, in stern times and amid stirring scenes, and likewise, strange to say, in the light of the fullest, freest, grandest civilization ever given by the centuries to mankind. There is an ancient legend which has struggled down to us through the thick mists of ages and the changing phases of empire, telling of the desperate endeavor of the sturdy sons of Coelus to scale the heights of "High Olympus" and meet the Deities themselves face to face and foot to foot, upon the very battlements of their lofty lodgement. And with all reverence be it said that in these "latter days" there is that parallel which goes far towards demonstrating to observation and reflection, that their vaulting aspiration was not so wholly arrogant and preposterous—not so utterly beyond all bounds of seeming possibility.

For the "sons of Science and Philosophy" in this century of ours have heaped the Ossa of persistent discovery upon the Pelion of previous knowledge until the developed, exalted, "thoroughbred" mind of man, assimilating itself continuously and unflinchingly to the greatness and grandeur of that source whence it came, as if gifted with celestial ken and inspiration, seems almost to have seized upon the very vitals of "Universal Truth." While Nature has opened her secret portals, Science has disclosed the Arcana of her mysteries.

Sciolism and ethical empiricism are entombed in the past. The swift, eager, far-soaring intelligence of man has annihilated distance and immensity, and astronomical skill has rendered determinate not only the revolutions and regulations of our own planetary system, but of every other within the sweep of telescopic intensity and human calculation. Deep into the recesses of the oldest strata,

geological research and reason have pressed their analyses, and the very mountain cliffs and ocean caverns have yielded their long-treasured secrets to the grappling grasp of that profound application, which, as it acknowledges no cessation, tolerates, likewise, no resistance. The shimmering glance of the lightning has been shorn of its terror, and fire, air, light and water are all but bridled menials to the use of man. Truth in its purity, and Knowledge in its perfection, are fast unveiling the radiance of their features to the Philosophers, and rigid unswerving scholars of the century.

In faith does it seem to be an age in which the nations should strike hands in the great work of human regeneration, and all-embracing enlightenment. It is a day for benevolence, brotherly forbearance, and broad-hearted philanthropy. It is a day for unison of purpose and co-ordination of effort. But how at variance are the Ideal and the Real. How widely different what "should be," and what actually exists. There is a dangerous spirit abroad over the world to-day. *Intolerance is the great feature of the period.* *Extremism* in politics, in religion, in the shades of social privacy, and the walks of public life, is the great "ology" of the day. "Spare not" is the world's fierce war-cry. "Down with all opposition," is the slogan of the nations. All, all float with the current. Scarce one hardy swimmer strives with stout arm and lusty stroke to stem the pitiless tide. Scarce one bold hand to tear the gag from the lips of wisdom, and to snap the corded bands wherewith Error and Intolerance have shackled the limbs of Reason. Men of all tongues and all climes can see no honesty in any sect save their own—no purity in any creed of another. Jaundiced dogmas and bigotry of doctrine have warped their sympathies and distorted their prejudices. Their religious faith is as exacting and aggressive as if there was no heaven, save for a particular church, and a Satan apiece especially provided for the edification of every unfortunate individual who does not chance to have been enfolded within the fold of that self-same one.

Their religious creed is the very Moloch of their idolatry, and human fallibility is voted a "dead letter" so far as it impinges their tenets and belief, and infringes and invalidates the certitude, cogency and conclusiveness of their principles.

Society itself has become but a vast Areopagus, and ostracises and "decapitates" its votaries with as little of compassion and as little of compunction as did ever Athenian Oligarchy or Tyrant of Syracuse. *This is the spot upon the brow of Beauty which effaces and dismantles the marble of its whiteness. This is the little spring far up the side of the mountain, wherein the hunter's heedless hand has cast the crushed adder, little recking that its exuding venom, mingling with the eager waters which go in sparkling haste to join the frolic of their brother rills, will carry poison and sudden death to the very lips of those near and dear to him, who drink from the broad stream which sweeps by their door, deep in the green valleys below. This it is which paralyzes the arms of the great in soul and pure in heart—renders nugatory the triumphs of scholarly skill, and congeals with its touch of winter the fervor of philanthropic zeal.*

"Moderation is derided as the virtue of cravens," and reason is stigmatized as the infirmity of weaklings. Temperance of opinion is anathematized and traduced, and the salt spray of public obloquy and outlawry blasts and deadens all the freshness and verdure, and vigor of the spirit of those who, in the great revolutions and grand battle-movements of human progress, *oppose radicalism in theory and violence in practice.* Parties are antipodal, and can no more bridge the gulf of their prejudices than the billows of the heaving sea. Yorkist and Lancastrian, Christian and Saracen, Roman and Jew were not more vindictive in their hate, and unsparing in their battlings than are antagonistic parties and rival creeds in their jealousies and intolerance to-day. The ghosts of the Inquisition are abroad on the breeze, and the shadows of Antioch and Seleucia fall athwart the signal civilization of our century.

Guelphs and Ghibelins no longer enforce their principles, and sustain the dominion of their views with their Italian swords, but the tongue of man is as scathing, and his vengeance as relentless, as was ever Damascus blade of steel or Venetian Victor's edict of condemnation.

Girondist and Jacobin, Fouquier Tinville and Couthon have long been "mouldering in the dust," but the red lights of those terrible days of prelude to the "French Regeneration" glow even now in the hearts of men, and glisten fiercely in the opprobrious sentiments of contending partisans. And, gentlemen, I utter it as an irrefutable truth that there is nothing more inimical to success—nothing more certainly subversive of prosperity, whether in public or in private life—in the experience of individuals or the history of nations—*nothing* which will sooner blast the fairest promises of the one or sap the deepest foundations of the other, *than this selfsame spirit of rancorous intolerance*. This is it to which I would call your attention. This is it against which I would have you marshal all the forces of your intelligence. This is it against which I would have you declare energetic and unending war, granting no "flags of truce," nor issuing anything in the shape of "Amnesty Proclamations." It is the most dangerous and inveterate foe to human peace, prosperity and progress, and against it you should enlist, not for "three years," or for ten years only, but for all the years of your lives.

You will meet it on every path, and confront it at every turn, and I abjure you never to lower lance, or unlace armor, until its every vestige shall have perished. It is a lamentable fact, but patent nevertheless to the understanding of every rational and observant thinker, that howsoever great has been the advancement and exaltation of human reason and intellect as an *aggregated whole*, there are to-day no names upon the scroll of the present comparable to some of those which may be found in the broad annals of the past.

The lyre of Orpheus is unstrung, and the rust is gather-

ing redly on the sword of Cœur de Leon. No *living* minstrel can wake the "tranced melodies" of the one—no *living* warrior can uphold the ponderous weight of the other. No monarch like Charlemagne—no Cavalier like Bayard—no Premier like Chatham—no bard like him of Stratford-on-Avon. Dead, yet they live by their examples. Their very tombs are temples, where Youth and Hope and Glowing Heart may bend and seek instruction, and in whose courts Truth and Virtue may spread their pearly altars. Who can lead the conquering armies of a Gustavus or a Napoleon? Where the statesman, whose eloquence can make the hearts of nations and of Senates thrill and tremble to the magic of his master-touch, as did he, whose tomb lies but a few years back of us—the citizen—"Sage of Ashland." Whither shall we turn for such genuine, generous, unselfish patriotism as stirred the soul of that calm, just, moderate, dispassionate hero, whom in that fitting and graceful tribute to his memory, from the pen of Alison, the historian has called "a Sylla without his crimes, and a Cromwell without his ambition"—our own inimitable Washington.

Sad thought, but true it is that there are few "giants" in *these* days, whose lips are music and whose hearts are fire. Lilliput seems to have been "riding a raid" and judging from appearances to have "subjugated" pretty much every portion of the habitable globe. But, gentlemen, let us hope that the devotion of the true patriot—the ardor of the warrior—the fidelity of the friend—the loyalty and truth of the man of honor—the skill and eloquence of the statesman—the *eminence and dignity of nations*, "*loyal yet free, obedient but independent*," are not in *their highest attainments and noblest perfection, but titles of the dead language of the past*. Into such a world as I have rapidly endeavored to outline and delineate *you* go forth to win or to lose, to make or to mar. With the richness and strength, and heat of the "new wine of youth" in your veins you hasten on to test the bitterness of its "pleasant places," and the "intolerance" of its thronging multitudes.

With the examples of the past before you, you seize upon the weapons of their warfare, and fill the vacancies made by their "passing away." And, gentlemen, heaven grant that your parts be fittingly performed. May no ashes of disappointment, no gall of regret await you, where you hope to gather only the garlands of success and quaff the elixir of content.

The need of the world to-day is for MEN, and you are now on your way to answer that necessity's demand. And when I speak of men, I refer to them as clearly and broadly contradistinguished from the paltry counterfeits, the petty shuttlecocks, the supple-kneed sycophants, the pert and pretentious coxcombs, the human nonentities, who are but the drones in this great world-hive of ours. I mean men of iron mould and dauntless purpose, who clutch not after baubles—who bow not at the venal shrine of a false and prostituted "Public Opinion"—men, whose souls are not intoxicated by shallow draughts from the beaker of success, and do not shrivel in the first heats of disappointment—men whose spirits rise as adversities thicken—acquire fresh courage and sterner resolve with each succeeding failure—confront new perils and difficulties, new foes and trials with unquailing front—men who gather to their hearts more of the light and essence of Heaven as the world glowers and glooms around them, and who, if need be, will, even in the hour of final disaster and utter overthrow, vindicate their titles to that immortality which moral heroism and inflexible adherence to the right and the truth have ever attached to the names and memories of their devotees. The age has had enough of tinsel—is sick of a surfeiting overdose of spurious heroes and wretched charlatans, and the pure gold, the refined gold, the gold without discount or alloy, must ring in the manhood of him who seeks and yearns to fulfil its mighty requisitions now.

Action, fearless, unselfish, discriminating action, which spurns the shackles of a gross conventionality, and scorns to follow in the same dead, dreary, beaten track, in whose

dust and glare, gainless millions have grovelled wearily on before, must be the test of this golden purity—the standard of this high manhood's trial.

Action is kingly. Action is divine. This it is which shrinks not from "bearding" the world at the very outset, and grappling with its "intolerance" and injustice, while yet the early dew and the morning breezes bathe and breathe upon Youthhood, with its fleckless brow and pulse of leaping flame. One such practical, active, working man, with soul to dare, mind to comprehend, and will to accomplish, is worth ten thousand theorists.

In the reeling shock of the conflict and the seething struggle of life, one fiery, dauntless, *acting* Rhoderick Dhu, whose heart speaks in his blade, and voice rings through his actual victories, is worth a host of the grim and grizzly Douglas, valorous though perchance he be, who, knowing the right, and holding too the remedy for evil in his thoughts, is yet too indolent, too proud, or too indifferent, to make one strenuous and mighty effort for the vindication of the one and the application of the other.

"We live in deeds, not years—in thoughts not breaths—

In feelings not in figures on a dial.

We should count time by heart-throbs. He lives the truest

Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

With no surer flow do the rivers seek the sea than does genuine manhood turn to high aims and objects, and thrill and quiver, as if stirred with hands of fire, to the passionate inspiration of lofty hopes and noble aspirations.

"Dear as remembered kisses after death,

And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned,

On lips that are for others,"

Are the Orient dreams and castled visions of hearts flushing with the impetuosity and brightness of young manhood.

No frost has fallen yet. No intolerant prejudice, no world-toned passion has blackened the first and shattered the last; and yet how many must be blackened, how many be shattered ere the end can come! Of the

myriad worlds that glitter in the blue above us, how many may rush flaming from their "high places," and never be missed from the hosts of their "throned brethren"! *How many of them are only stars; how few of them have names!* And of the untold millions of the human race, who have lived, and loved, and struggled, and endured on this earth of ours, how many have gone with "blackened dreams and shattered hopes" to dust and deep oblivion, how few have carved their names on the undying tablets of Historic Truth, and live by their deeds of strength—their works of worth, in the memory of nations—in the great heart of humanity. Into that "charmed circle" where Honor and Purity, Womanly Pride, and Manly Chivalry, and all that were brave, and great, and good, have left the record of their achievements, and the traces of their thought, not many have placed "the white flower of a blameless life." Few, few, indeed, have overstepped the narrow boundaries of nativity, and clime, and tongue, and bequeathed their lives as a common heritage to all mankind.

How many have been only men, how few of them have names! Look to the lessons of the Past, and learn wisdom. Drink from the deep fountains of experience, and you will find that only he who *lives for a purpose* receives their zest and refreshment in fullest degree.

You will find that justice and injustice, moderation and violence, conservatism and intolerance, have waged unceasing war almost from the time when the peals of the first morning stirred the fragrant softness and wildering stillness of the new-born earth. And you will find, likewise, that firmness and moderation have ever won the proudest triumphs and purest trophies in the end. You will discover that with no more perfect certainty do the recurrent waves wear away by ceaseless buffetings and gradual encroachment the granite of their rocky shores, than do persistent effort and unswerving perseverance, when sustained by calmness, probity and intelligence wear away the rough places in life. There is no genius

like the genius of labor. There is no reward like that of energy and system. "A little here and a little there" make up a lifetime.

Then, gentlemen, I repeat it—*live for a purpose*. Stainless integrity, punctilious honor, chaste and manly principle, must and will succeed. Panoplied in these you may go forth to the battle-shocks awaiting you, without fear and with impunity. Though the mighty mountain and the couchant lion block your pathway, neither the one shall retard nor the other restrain your unfaltering progress. Meet this monster, Intolerance, and let there be no peace until men can reason, and parties, and clans, and creeds, hold in respect and toleration the views and principles, and honesty of those who oppose them. *So will the spot on Beauty's brow be effaced; so will the waters of the mountain rivulet be purified.* So will nerve and zeal be given to the good and great, and the world make such onward strides towards universal amity and good faith as must in time parallel the progress-march of Intellect and Discovery. And, gentlemen, if any of you fail, at least let it be said of you "he fell with his harness on." Fall in the fore-front of some noble action, with face set hard against the confronting "intolerance" of the world.

"With no shame to remember, no wish to forget."

Fall in an upright, manly, righteous cause, before outnumbering odds, and let it be said of you in that spirit which thrills through the poet's words, as his hero meets his death :

"A warrior's weapon freed a warrior's soul."

But, gentlemen, as you seek to emulate the illustrious exemplars of the Past, and to wield the powers of your intellect and the sinews of your influence, with generous and devoted courage against the existing "intolerance of the age," do not forget that other and that higher destiny, which awaits those whose robes kiss the golden streets of the "celestial city." *While you seek to live as become patriots and humanitarians, prepare, likewise, to die as becomes men.*

“The flow

Of lifetime is by graduated scale,
 And nobler than the victories of Power,
 Or the untold wealth of Glory, there is writ
 A standard measuring its worth for Heaven.”

While you strive to leave your names in simple eloquence and genuine dignity as your best and noblest epitaphs—the synonyms of some rare and peerless virtue—likewise strive with simple trust and genuine earnestness, to secure that unfailing “Faith,” which, born in life, is garnered after death.

And with the glorious thought which prompted Bishop Edgeworth’s words when Louis XVI perished on the scaffold, amid that demon mob, athirst for gentle blood and famishing for royal slaughter: “Son of St. Louis, ascend to Heaven”—so may the benedictions of a redeemed Republic, a regenerated people, a nation free from the stigma of intolerant bitterness and unholy hate, one and the same *in practice, and principle and privilege*, as guaranteed by the *Constitution-compact* of our “Patriot sires” near three-score years ago, arise as fitting incense to your memories, and tribute to your deeds.