

An Address, Delivered by the

Rev. W. M. Daily, D. D.

Upon His Installation As President of the Indiana University, August 2, 1854

Here, in these academic groves, we meet for a literary festival. You come to enjoy the classic associations of the hour, and, by your presence and your smiles, to say "God speed" to the cause of liberal learning. Your speaker comes to assume the responsibilities of the high trust committed to his care in the eloquent and impressive charge, just delivered by our worthy Executive. To him, therefore, this hour is one of far more than ordinary interest. The magnitude of the trust, so vividly brought before the mind, would make any man, not wholly insensible, tremble, and he could only be sustained by the hope of being able to discharge its duties with fidelity, and to meet the responsibilities connected with it, in such a way as to show himself in some good degree worthy of the confidence reposed by the honorable Board of Trustees.

Long established custom has made it obligatory upon me, in assuming this trust, to deliver an address on some subject appropriate to the occasion.

An adventurer in Central America, after climbing over range after range of volcanic hills, rising one above another, at length stood upon the dividing summit, from which he could see both oceans at once. On the one hand he beheld the blue Atlantic with its storms and its islands of tropical beauty, while on the other lay the dark heaving Pacific, rolling away to those elysian climes, where the dreams of the west have palced the paradise of earth. So, after the struggles of ages, man has reached a lofty eminence,—an almost sky-piercing pinnacle—which commands a view of the ancient and modern world at the same time. On the one hand are the fairy isles of the ancient civilization, science and literature; on the other, is, another part of the ocean of eternity, on which may be traced the courses of richly freighted argosies, ploughing their way towards a destiny known only to that God whose eye can pierce the clouds and darkness which rest upon the

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We, of the present generation, have reached this lofty eminence in arts, science, civilization and religion; still we should not forget that we have a rich inheritance in the past. Rob us of this inheritance, and we are left in abject penury both in literature and science. It is true, we can see a little farther than those who have gone before us, but it is only because we stand upon a mental pyramid which has been reared up for us by the labors of countless generations. Now, instead of looking down with scorn, as some are wont to do, upon the mighty achievements of our predecessors, it should be our ambition to carry this pyramid still farther towards heaven, and not make ourselves little, in the contemplation of our own greatness.

There is rife among us, at this day, what may, appropriately, be styled an anti-historical philosophy, which we can but regard as being at once "the root and the offspring" of a shallow scepticism. The disciples of this school would have us look upon the whole past as an inextricable maze of the weakest self-delusions, or a kind of wholesale jugglery. They are unwilling to undergo the labor, if indeed they have the mental capacity for so doing, of separating the pure bullion of truth from the alloy of error and delusion; hence, they hastily consign the whole to the tomb of exploded chimeras'. According to their philosophy, nature is a machine, life the motion of particles, and history a tissue of folly, selfishness and priestcraft. Every great nature full of fiery earnestness about matters with which they happen to have no sympathy, or for which they have no capacity, is denounced as a hypocrite, an imposter, or a fanatic. And every lofty manifestation of the better part of man's nature in ages gone by, is sneered at as an outburst of silly enthusiasm, or a trick of selfish ambition.

All this contempt for the past, under the specious pretext of progress, I

regard as literary, moral and political desolation. To exclude God and his Providence from the history of the past, is not only to sap the foundation of religion, but to bring into doubt almost everything which exalts and embellishes the nature of man. And in relation to civil affairs, contempt for the past is an error to which American Society is peculiarly exposed, and, therefore, the duty of combating it, is especially enjoined upon every American Scholar. We are in little or no danger of falling into the opposite extreme, as is the case in some parts of Europe. Toryism can never take deep root in American soil; hence it would be idle in us to aim our blows at a mere imaginary foe, while there is a real tendency, threatening the very extinction of all reverence for the learning and civilization of the past, with all the ennobling emotions allied to such reverence. That groveling demagogueism which is every ready to sap the very foundations of our learning and civilization, by fostering this tendency, should be regarded as a moral pestilence, more to be dreaded than the greatest physical calamities.

We have met with a popular sycophancy which would fain make us believe that all learning of **utility**, political wisdom, and the great principles of liberty, are, like **potatoes** and **tobacco**, indigenous to American soil. And some of these Goths and Vandals have gone so far as absurdly to contend for what they are pleased to call an "**American Education**." By which they mean, an education that shall effectually cut us off from all connection with the past, and forever cancel all our obligations to the wisdom and learning of the old world. Most suicidal policy! No nation ever did, or ever will become learned, polished, or great by such a process. There are nations of the earth where they have still some remnants of old abuses to demolish; but ours is not the task to destroy, but to build up. We have nothing to spare from the rich lore of the past: in it we have a priceless inheritance.

In speaking of the progressive development of man's destinies upon earth, we would borrow a figure from the Scandinavian Poetry, and represent is as a mighty tree. Now, you may, nay, even should prune off all the surplus branches and remove all injurious excrescences, but you should never forget that the most beautiful flowers of modern civilization and learning, and the richest fruits which have ripened in the sunshine of modern science, have drawn their vital sap from the broad and buried roots of antiquity, which has been carried up through a mighty trunk, the growth of ages.

To the barbarian, you may apply Plato's definition of man, "a two-legged animal without feathers." Barbarianism is unmitigated animalism, a sort of slumber from which man never awakes until some stimulus is applied. He seems to be subject to a moral gravitation that weighs him down to the "vile dust from which he sprang." Everything which ennobles and exalts him, is in opposition to this gravitation. It is true he has eagle wings, yet he is ever prone to fold them at his side, and content himself with feeding upon the mere garbage of earth. It certainly requires either external, or divine culture, to raise his eyes heavenward and plume his pinions for the mountain top, and the upper skies. However, the very moment he is thoroughly aroused from his moral and mental stupidity, by the appliances of religion and learning, and thus rendered sensible of the advantages of civilization, the internal change in his nature manifests itself in a thousand forms of external improvement, and the definition of Plato will no longer apply. He now rises above mere animalism, and seeks the lofty embellishments of his nature.

Still, nothing that we know of the primitive seats of the human race, gives the least countenance to the theory that barbarism was the primeval state of man. It is rather the state into which he falls, from a total neglect of external culture, and a rejection of Divine teachings. The theory of a gradual rise of man,

from the stupidity of barbarism into civilization and refinement, is almost as absurd as the old Egyptian notion that men originally grew like mushrooms from the mud of the Nile, or the more modern infidel notion, that they were **monkeys**, and have gradually ascended to the grade of men, which means that we are a race of monkeys, slightly modified. We do not marvel that infidels, who reject the light of revealed truth, as well as the light of history, should ascribe the origin of man to some monstrous absurdity, such as an unnatural excitation of material bodies, or, that they should look for **their progenitors among monkeys**, or brutes; as there is certainly something congruous and seemly, in their fixing the origin of man, in the same state to which they are sure to conduct him by their boasted philosophy. Man may fall from his primeval state into barbarism, and from this state he can only be raised by the stimulus of external or Divine culture—in a word, by **Education**.

From our mount of observation, we may trace the streams of art and knowledge, through Greece, Asia Minor, and Phoenicia to the valleys of the Nile and the plains of Chaldea. Here the lights of profane history go out, and without the Hebrew Scriptures, we would be left in utter darkness. The traveler in the silent deserts of Upper Egypt, in the "marble wilderness of Syria," the jungles of India, and the cyclopean ruins of Greece and Italy, is often startled at the time-defying relics of an almost unparalleled civilization, which belonged to those mighty ages, of which all that is known is comprised in a few chapters of Genesis. What is known, therefore, must bear a small proportion to what has forever perished, if ever chronicled.

When we trace the streams of population towards their sources, they invariably lead to the banks of the Euphrates; so that we may fairly infer that the country lying between the Euphrates and the Indus, was the primitive seat of our race. And in all probability the Ark rested upon one of the lofty summits of

the Indian Caucasus, parts of that mighty chain, extending from the frontier of China, to the Black Sea, This forms the northern boundary of that region which was the cradle of Art, Religion, Science, and civilization--that great zone of light, which gleaming westward, across Europe and America, will soon have encircled the globe.

The foundations of the modern world, with all her civilization and refinement, were laid by a few small tribes around the Mediterranean. These were the Hebrews, the Greeks, and the Romans. To the Hebrews was allotted the custody of moral and religious truth; to the Greeks, the empire of reason and imagination; to the iron Romans, the power of arms, by which, with their own civil institutions, and the arts, literature and religion of the other two nations, they laid a deep and broad foundation for what we call the Christian civilization. Upon this foundation, the free Germanic nations, have built the modern world. Hence, we can no more dispense with the learning of the past than the edifice can dispense with the foundation.

The influence of the Greek Language and Literature, upon the destinies of man, cannot well be over-rated. Athens is still endeared to us as the **Alma Mater** of the literary world. The Greeks followed the Romans arms to the ends of the earth. Wherever the eagle perched, there the master-pieces of Grecian genius soon found an entrance; to awaken the powers of the mind, or to stimulate a generous emulation. Erasmus said, in presenting a copy of the Greek Testament to a friend, "If you would drink deep of the well-springs of wisdom, apply to the Greek. The Latins have only shallow rivulets: the Greeks copious rivers, running over sands of gold. Read Plato; he wrote on marble with a diamond; but above all read the New Testament, 'Tis the key to the kingdom of heaven'".

Intellectually, the Greeks were the masters of the Romans, though politically their subjects. It was the emulation of the fine Grecian models, that caused the

Latin Literature to make its rapid advances. Though it never reached the perfection of its prototype, it ranks next to Christianity itself as an element of modern civilization.

In the development of the Divine plan, link after link, in a continuous chain, for the education and elevation of mankind, the introduction of Christianity,—the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ—forms the culminating point, the summit level of the line of communication opened between earth and heaven. It sheds light upon the past, and pours its healing streams through the desolate wastes of humanity, causing the moral desert "to rejoice and blossom as the rose." In its origin, it was quiet and unobtrusive. Not until it came in contact with the upper crust of custom, prejudices, and old institutions, hardened by time into stone, did it begin to shake the world. It steadily gained ground, however, in its onward course, overthrowing the proud temples and altars of Paganism, until even the eagle of imperial Rome, veiled his eye of fire before the Cross of Jesus.

In our very rapid survey of the past, we can only pass from one mountain top to another, and take a mere summary glance, at the almost boundless regions of Philosophy and Literature, leaving for those of more leisure or learning, to explore the richer valleys.

The progress of **Language**, and that of **Intellect** are so nearly concurrent, that the one may generally be taken as the measure of the other. **Language** has been called "the vesture of thought;" more properly, it might be called "**the body of which thought is the soul.**" They generally grow together, and exercise a reciprocal influence. If we carefully watch the process of thought in our own minds, we will find that **we think in words**. Indeed we cannot carry on a train of thought, without words. It is often said, that such a man has good ideas, but has not words to express them. We would reverse this statement, and say,

the man does not think clearly on any given subject, because he has not words to fix the fugitive thought in his memory, until the whole matter has passed under review. Poverty of language is usually connected with poverty of intellect; and the connection is so intimate, that it is difficult to say, in any given case, which is the **cause**, and which the **effect**. But to enrich the language of men, is, certainly, to enlarge the range of their ideas. And here, again, we see our obligation to the past. Modern literature was under no necessity of inventing a language. The iron Romans not only imposed their laws, but also their language upon all conquered provinces. Everywhere the Latin language became the language of civil and ecclesiastical proceedings, of learned men, and of the most cultivated classes of society.

The **English Language** was introduced into the island of Great Britain in the year 450 by two rude tribes--the Angles and Saxons--from Hanover in Germany,--and their combination produced the Anglo-Saxons. The lineal elements of the English Language, are, the Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Gothic, and Classic. The Anglo-Saxon is the base, and consisted at first of but **one thousand**, or **fifteen hundred** words;--an exceedingly meager language. But it has gone on absorbing the other elements, until it has swelled into a language of more than **eighty thousand words**, including its scientific terms. After the conquest of Great Britain, by William the Conqueror, the classic element, composed of Latin and Greek, began to be introduced; but this element has been incorporated principally since the Revival of Literature, and the Reformation. Each lineal element of the language has its practical value, and appropriate scope of thought. Hence, the English Language should be studied by its lineal elements. Our literature is founded upon the literature of the past; hence, to absolve ourselves from all allegiance to the literature of the ancients, is to sweep away the very foundations of modern learning.