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EDUCATION.

174

AN ADDRESS

TO THE PATRONS AND STUDENTS

OF THE

Virginia Collegiate Institute,

At the close of the Scholastic year ending June 30th, 1857,

BY N. B. WEBSTER,

PRESIDENT OF THE INSTITUTE.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

*"Multa rogare; rogata tenere; retenta docere;
Hæc tria discipulum faciunt superare magistrum."*

PORTSMOUTH, VA.

PRINTED AT THE DAILY TRANSCRIPT OFFICE.

1857.

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AN ADDRESS

TO THE FATHERS AND MOTHERS OF

THE COLLEGE JUNIORS



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AN ADDRESS

BY

TO THE YARROW AND STUDENTS

John College Institute

BY W. B. WEBSTER

President of the Institute

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST

FRENCHVILLE, VA.

PRINTED AT THE DAILY TRANSCRIPT OFFICE

1887.

ADDRESS.

ESTEEMED PUPILS AND FELLOW CITIZENS :—

Assembled as you are, in attendance upon the closing exercises of this session of the Collegiate Institute, and in view of the fact that very many of your number expect to engage in the arduous and responsible duties of teaching, I ask your attention to a few thoughts on the subject of the EDUCATION.

I shall give my children a good education if it takes every cent I am worth, is a saying not unfamiliar to the ears of school-teachers. Benevolent parent—kind, devoted parent! what a pity alas! that money—potent money, which procures houses and lands; friends and servants—power and place—food and raiment—witnesses and voters—which has even bought statesmen—judges—generals—kings and congressmen—by which

Conscience, truth and honesty are made

To rise and fall, like other wares of trade,

cannot purchase a *good education* for his son, though it may procure *fashionable accomplishments* for his daughter.

What is Education? The word is almost a synonym for the Saxon term *bringing up*. Education, says Webster, “comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline, which is intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and form the manners and habits of youth, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations.” From its very nature, the business and responsibility of education devolves on parents to a much greater extent, than can be committed to teachers.

The Metaphysician Kant, declares the object of education to be the development in each individual, of all the "perfection of which he is susceptible." Such development money can no more procure, than it can that physical growth whereby man can add a cubit to his stature.

The immortal author of *Paradise Lost*, himself a teacher, calls that a complete and generous education, which fits a person "to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously, all the offices both of public and private life—of peace and war."

Such are the aims of education, yet what numbers pass through our academic and collegiate institutions totally unfitted for the active and practical duties of life. The Professor of engineering in the United States Military Academy at West Point, informs us that military writers estimate that not more than one ball out of ten thousand attains its mark. We are surprised at such waste of ammunition in war, but is there not a corresponding waste of labor and energy in the education of youth? Is one man in ten thousand or one woman in twenty thousand so educated as to attain the mark of the highest physical, mental and moral perfection of which he or she is susceptible?

One object of education is to fit men for usefulness in life, and success in business or professional pursuits, and hence the importance of learning in youth those things that will in the end be of practicable utility. It is not the *matter* taught, however, that contributes to the truly practical end, as much as the *manner or method* of teaching.

Mental philosophy must constitute the basis of all valuable methods of mental development. Mind becomes aware of the existence and properties of matter, by means of the perceptive faculties. To facilitate the acquirement of knowledge then, as many objects as possible should be presented to the scholar's notice. Cabinets of minerals, fossils, shells, curiosities of nature and art, and apparatus to illustrate properties of matter otherwise hidden from his senses, should aid in storing the mind with truths for future use. Much

of our knowledge is based on testimony but the more the pupil can get at first hands, the better.

Yet *this* is not education. We do not endorse the sentiment of Mr. Gradgrind, "In this life we want nothing but Facts," and yet we do want the facts, as material with which to build.

Aside from perception, consciousness, original suggestion, abstraction and memory, we have—*children have*—another faculty called *reason*, by which we can employ what we already know, in the acquisition of other and more extended knowledge. It is in the development of this reason—the exercise in this mental gymnasium, that the teacher has an opportunity to manifest his skill, and prove his fitness for his vocation. An illustrative example of what I would call the true method of teaching, is found in the writings of Plato, as quoted by Dr. Whewell, where he shows Socrates' mode of eliciting latent knowledge.

EXTRACT FROM THE "MENO" OF PLATO.

S. Tell me, boy, do you know that this figure is a square?—B. Yes, I know.

S. Because all these four lines are equal? (its sides.)—B. Yes.

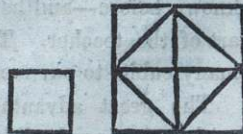
S. And also these other two lines are equal, which are drawn down the middle? (the diagonals.)—B. Yes.

S. May there be a square greater or less than this?—B. Yes.

S. May there be a square twice as great as this?—B. Yes.

S. How long must one side be, that the square may be twice as great?—B. Twice as long as the side of the first square.

You see, Socrates says, I tell nothing. I only ask him questions. And now he thinks he has answered right. But I must revive his recollection, that he may see his error.—So you say that the square on a double line will be double of the first square? You know I mean a square, not a figure that is long one way and narrow the other; but as broad as it is long, like this square, only twice as large. Now let us fit to one end of the first square, a second square which is equal to it. And let us fit two other squares of the same size to the sides of those two squares. Then we have a new square, have we not?—B. Yes.



S. And how many times is it greater than the first square?—B. Four times greater.

S. Well: but how long must the line be that the square upon it may be twice as great as the first square?—B. I do not know.

Now, says Socrates, mark, that out of this not knowing, he will come to know, by seeing with me, just as he comes to know when I question him without my telling him anything. You will see that I do not give him my opinion, I only get at his.—If we draw a line across this first square, from corner to corner, (the diagonal,) it cuts it into two equal parts, does it not?—B. Yes.

S. And if in this square, which is made up of the four squares, we draw the four diagonals, so as to cut off the four outside corners, each of these diagonals will cut one of the squares into two halves?—B. Yes.

S. And these four diagonals will be equal, and will make a new square?—B. Yes.

S. And this square is made up of the four inside halves of the four squares, is it not?—B. It is.

S. But the first square is made up of two such halves, is it not?—B. Yes.

S. And how much is four times greater than twice?—B. The double of it.

S. Then how many times is the new square greater than the first square?—B. It is the double of it.

S. Then you have got a square which is the double of the original square?—B. Yes.

S. Namely, the square upon the diagonal of the original square?—B. Yes.

You see, Socrates says, he was really possessed of all his knowledge before. Those who do not know, have still in their minds a latent knowledge.

The boy's thoughts were so directed by the sage as to lead him even where nothing was told him, to know what was unknown before—and herein consists as I conceive the highest art of the teacher. Truly by *taking thought* we can add many cubits to our mental stature.

The great advantage of Colburn's and other mental arithmetics is referrible to this principle so happily illustrated by Socrates. Give a child who can read, a good mental arithmetic, and you give him better facilities for acquiring a thorough, clear, and practical knowledge of mathematics,

than he can obtain in some of our academies or even colleges.

It was because the soul contains the principles of truth—that Socrates argued its immortality, for to him it was evident as it is to us that truth is eternal—or as Bryant has so beautifully written,

The eternal years of God are hers.

In teaching the natural sciences a somewhat different course must be pursued, yet here, to explain the unknown by its resemblance to the known is perhaps the most efficient method of instruction.

Combination of *analysis* and *synthesis*, says Sir William Hamilton, is the most perfect condition of knowledge.

It is a great error to suppose that person the *best educated*, who has acquired the greatest amount of information, and no examination short of the *life and character* of the scholar, is a fair test of his educational training. In the words of that eminent educator, David P. Page, "Eternity alone can display the immeasurable, inconceivable usefulness of one devoted teacher." The good and learned Thomas Arnold of Rugby, used to say, "it is not knowledge but the means of gaining knowledge, that I have to teach." This eminent educational reformer sought to make his pupils good men as well as good scholars, and probably no teacher since the time of Flaccus Albinus Alcuinus, not even the renowned and benevolent Pestalozzi, has accomplished greater good, both in methods of instruction and school management, than the master of Rugby.

The teacher is a pilot, employed by the parent or guardian to conduct his charge to some desired haven. If the employer reposes not full confidence in the ability and fidelity of the guide, he should never seek his services. Like the pilot, the faithful teacher becomes more competent to discharge the duties of his calling, every time he has occasion to pass over his oft frequented course. Bishop Sanderson declared he had learned much from his masters—more from his equals, but most of all from his pupils. *Crescit eundo*

should be said of every teacher, for what he imparts, like the quality of mercy, "blesses him that gives and him that takes."

Like the traveler in Lapland who almost frozen, found a man benumbed and expiring in the snow, forgetful of his own condition exerted himself actively in the resuscitation of his fellow man, and soon felt the reviving effects of the exercise in his own person, and literally warmed himself in the effort to warm a stranger, so the teacher is taught by teaching. *Qui docet is discit* is true of every true teacher.

The Prussian proverb that whatever you would have appear in a nation's life should be put in its schools, is but another expression of the sentiment of Washington, in reference to the endowment of an institution in America, which should remove the necessity of sending young men abroad for a collegiate education. The pages of history present numerous instances of the force of early training, in shaping the destiny of individuals and nations. The historian of Germany has to record that the bad education which Frederick the Great received, left many a noble germ within him neglected, and had the royal pupil of Fenelon lived to be King of the French, their sad revolution might have been avoided. Charles B. Huntington, now in a New York penitentiary for forgery, used to forge his father's name to excuses for truant absences, to read compositions not his own, and to deceive his teacher in every possible manner—another proof of Milton's line, that,

Childhood shows the man,

As morning shows the day.

Examined by a microscope, the bud exhibits the future flower, and the lineaments of the butterfly are discovered in the caterpillar even before its metamorphosis into a chrysalis. It is asserted that an injury inflicted on the chrysalis, produces a defect in the future fly.

The most trifling incidents often lead to the greatest results. The slightest movement or agitation of air among

the Alpine peaks may disengage the fearful avalanche, and hardy huntsmen with iron pointed poles, pursue their game,

“Mute, less the air convulsed by sound
Rend from above, the frozen mass.”

“Arrows in the hand of a giant” require skilful management. The tender, pliant plant must be carefully guarded to form a symmetrical tree.

“A pebble in a streamlet scant,
Has turned the course of many a river :
A dew drop on the infant plant,
Has warped the giant oak forever.”

When Philip II, of Spain, was a youth, his distinguished father, the emperor Charles V, wrote to him, giving advice which some of the *young sovereigns* of our republic may hear with profit. Charles who understood the frank and open character of one of the instructors of Philip, wrote thus to his son. “If he deals plainly with you, it is for the love he bears you. If he were to flatter you and be only solicitous of ministering to your wishes he would be like all the rest of the world, and you would have no one near you to tell you the truth; and a worse thing cannot happen to any man young or old, but most of all to the young, from their want of experience to discern truth from error.”

Theophrastus the Lesbian Sage, the divine speaker, the peripatetic teacher of two thousand scholars, was the pupil of the renowned Aristotle, who was himself the favorite scholar of the Athenian Plato, and was called by his distinguished master, the “mind of the school.” Plato was a pupil of Socrates, who had Anaxagoras the friend of Pericles for his first preceptor in philosophy, and Anaximenes is said to have been the instructor of Anaxagoras. Anaximander of Miletus, who first taught philosophy in a public school—first delineated the divisions of land and water on an artificial globe—invented the sun dial—first made calculation of the size and distance of the heavenly bodies, and is even reported to have predicted an earthquake, was the teacher of Anaximenes;

and Thales one of the seven wise men of Greece, who first predicted a solar eclipse, and divided the year into 365 days, was the master of Anaximander. Thus during nearly four hundred years, including the period of Grecian glory, we trace the royal succession of teachers and pupils, whose modest instructions have exerted a more potent influence for good, even to the present day, than the mightiest kings and conquerors have ever been able to accomplish.

History seldom presents a great and good man who has not had a great and good teacher, or mother who has discharged the duties of instructor, although in some instances a Seneca has had a Nero for a pupil.

The Virginia Collegiate Institute has its history, which will not fail to interest those who have chosen to prepare themselves for the duties and responsibilities of life, within its walls.

In 1840, at the request of several gentlemen of Portsmouth, among whom was the late Dr. William Collins, Capt. Alden Partridge, formerly at the head of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, and then President of the Norwich University, established the Virginia Literary, Scientific and Military Academy, on the 7th of September of that year. Two distinguished graduates of the University, Johnson Shedd and Major Simeon Wheeler, were appointed instructors. In a few weeks the necessity of another teacher was felt, and Capt. Partridge requested your humble servant who now addresses you, and who was then a tutor in the University, to join the pioneers of the new enterprize. The school was conducted until the close of the year 1840, in the room under the Odd Fellows Lodge, the teachers having given bonds that no *political doctrines* should be taught.

The Cadets were uniformed, and regularly drilled in military tactics, and although the "drum's discordant sound" disturbed the quiet of certain Van Winkles, who talked loudly of the *presentment* of the "Soger boys" as a nuisance, the little band boldly advanced, in military order, and by

their improved bearing, and gentlemanly deportment at all times and places, "wrung a reluctant tribute" from those who had predicted the dire result of such an education.

Thus was established, it is believed, the *first private military school in Virginia*, which with few intermissions has been continued to the present time, and now has a *corps* called the *Institute Cadets*, too well known to our citizens, to require a word of comment.*

In December 1840, the numbers had so increased as to require the spacious building and grounds of the Portsmouth Academy, which were rented for 1841, for three hundred and fifty dollars. Ten scholars also, selected from the different religious denominations, were educated without charge. The Trustees of the Academy at this time were Captain Arthur Emmerson, Dr. Joseph Schoolfield, Capt. Richard Carney, Dr. William Collins, Gen. John Hodges, Capt. John Thompson, John A. Chandler, Esq., Col. M. Cooke, Dr. Robert Butt, Dr. Arthur R. Smith and Holt Wilson, Esq. Ten of those eminent and excellent citizens are no more.

*Early in the Spring of 1841, the following notice of the *first parade* of Cadets in this section of the country, appeared in the "Old Dominion."

"Portsmouth Military Academy." "The Cadets at this highly popular Institution made their first public parade, since procuring their muskets, on Saturday last. They marched through the principal streets of the town, and won the most flattering encomiums for their soldier-like appearance and correct discipline."

The "*Republican and Times*" of July 28th, 1841, contained the following: "In the last twelve months an Institution has sprung up among us, which, if rightly fostered, will confer the most extensive benefits on the people of lower Virginia and North Carolina—particularly on the rising generation. We allude to the Military Academy established here under the auspices of Capt. Partridge, who, though not directly connected with it at present, has obtained for it the services of three young gentlemen of ability and education, amply qualified for the enterprise. *The plan of instruction was novel and first not generally relied upon. The lapse of a few months, however, proved its efficacy. Few schools have been more successful.*"

Such was the testimony of an able writer, certainly not prejudiced in its favor.

"The Cadets of the Military Academy, with their Instructors, all in uniform," attended the ceremonies in commemoration of the decease of President Harrison on the 14th of April, 1841.

In 1841, the following appeared in a Norfolk paper. "In the present relaxed state of parental and domestic discipline and restraint in regard to the rising generation, if any argument were needed to prove the advantage of the introduction of a portion at least of Military subordination and system into our Schools, it may be found in the improvement and well regulated deportment of the Cadets of that interesting establishment, the "Military School at Portsmouth," which we are pleased to find is daily gaining upon the favorable consideration of the community in which it is located. We much regret that the system has not been added to the valuable course of instruction adopted by the talented and able gentlemen to whom the destinies of our Academy have been committed."

Dr. Arthur R. Smith alone survives of the Trustees of Portsmouth Academy in 1840.

Of those who have been teachers in this Institution, I will mention the names of Johnson Shedd, who died in Portsmouth, February 1842. O. A. Buck, since deceased. William Lee, who died at the Sandwich Islands where he was Chief Justice for many years, and who in 1854, visited the United States as Minister Plenipotentiary of that Government. Also, Hon. W. W. H. Davis, late Secretary of State in New Mexico. Major A. J. Dorn, now Indian Agent, and Colonel Simeon Wheeler of Alabama.

Since the present organization of the Collegiate Institute, the following gentlemen have been connected with it as instructors—S. A. Whitney, F. S. Haywood, F. E. Martindale, James Giles, M. Pierre Geay, R. W. Millard, P. P. Haywood, Wm. M. Pierce, H. E. Stanton, C. Lee, F. B. Marchy, J. H. Gayle, C. T. Phillips, C. B. Denson and T. H. Williams.

We have not the time to trace the history of the school in detail from its beginning to its suspension at the close of the year 1845, owing to the sale of the Academy building by act of legislature, nor from its re-opening in 1850, on the premises where it is now located, but we will attempt to sketch the career of some of its alumni. It is known that more than fifty of our students have engaged successfully in the business of teaching, thus giving us some claim to the name of Normal School, as applied to the training of instructors. About thirty have graduated in medicine, and among them are many who stand high in their profession. The bar is well represented by those who were once members of this Academy. This district has a senator, this county a delegate to the assembly, and this town a mayor, from the ranks of the Portsmouth Cadets. The major and adjutant, as well as a large proportion of company officers of the Portsmouth Battalion, were once privates in our miniature battalion. The army the navy, and the coast survey, have

efficient officers, who once marched shoulder to shoulder through the streets of Portsmouth, and heard the encouraging criticism of "how well the little fellows drill," from the gazing crowd.

Civil engineers are constructing rail-roads, and mechanical engineers are guiding our steamships, whose education has been obtained at the Collegiate Institute. Mechanics, merchants and farmers, whose number can be counted by hundreds have occupied *our* recitation seats and solved problems at *our* blackboards.

Few, comparatively, have been prepared here for other institutions of learning, as the scholastic course of most—in fact all of whom we have just spoken—has been completed with us, but those who have entered the University of Virginia, the Military Institute, and other colleges of this and neighboring states, have taken high and creditable positions in their classes.

The tree planted in 1840 has produced abundant fruits—they are well known in this and other communities, and by them we are willing that our Institute shall be judged.

Cornelia had her jewels, the illustrious Gracechi, and when the teacher sees his pupils engaged in honorable and useful pursuits, his heart leaps within him, and he rejoices at their success, for they are his jewels. When George III, astonished those who heard his first speech, by his clear and elegant delivery, has oratorical tutor Quin, exclaimed in ecstasy, "I taught that boy." The monument of Sir Christopher Wren, is the noble St. Paul's of which he was the architect, but more lasting than of brass or marble is theirs,

"Who write
Upon a people's living, throbbing heart."

For one, I confess the "fond desire" of living in the memory of my pupils, and the lofty ambition that in the midst of a free, industrious and virtuous people, it may be said of me "si monumentum requiris, circumspecte."

My Beloved Scholars—

We have entered on the last *hour* of another scholastic

year of the Collegiate Institute, and you are assembled to hear a parting word from him to whom, though the partiality of your parents or guardians your mental, and to a great extent your moral and physical training, has been entrusted.

That harp has been struck,

“Whose tones—whose living tones,
Are left forever in the strings.”

Vibrations have been impressed on

“That wave, that circling ever, only breaks
In all its grandeur on the eternal shore.”

Many of your number will now leave the quiet of the school, for the busy scenes of active life, and your parts in the great drama will soon be called, on that stage where “men and women are merely players.”

Have you “while life as opening buds is sweet,” remembered like good father William, that “youth would not last,” and made preparation to “act *well* your part?” Can you review your brief career, and say as did a distinguished statesman, in reference to the revolutionary history of his State, “the past, at least, is secure?” But “*creta an carbone notandum*” whether to be marked with *chalk* or *charcoal*, the *past* is *past*, the future is before you.

Does every post of usefulness, honor and emolument, seem occupied? Have you already sought for places and situations, and learned that there are no vacancies? *Now*, indeed, you most need that Roman virtue—*perseverance*, which “keeps honor bright.” Remember that the occupant of the presidential chair for 1900 is now a boy, and that the destinies of our cherished country will ere then be in the hands of those who are now young men.

Press on! The way will open before you! The sands of time are waiting the impression of your footsteps—fix high your aim in life—seek to be good and useful if you would be truly great, and never forget the reply of the gallant Col. Miller, when asked if he could take a battery at Lundy’s Lane, and silence its fearefully destructive fire—“I’ll try.”

Say this *earnestly* and *honestly*, and *his* success will be *yours*.

I repeat to you the stirring lines, addressed by the gifted Miss Davidson to Capt. Partridge's soldier scholars, when they visited Plattsburg in 1824.

"Pass on! for the bright torch of glory is beaming;
Go wreath round your brows the green laurels of fame,
Around you a halo, is brilliantly streaming,
And history lingers to write down each name.
Yes! ye are the pillars of liberty's throne:
When around you the banner of glory shall wave,
America proudly shall call you her own;
And freedom and honor shall pause o'er each grave."

Although but one third of a century has passed, the "reverend chronicler" has recorded the names of many of that then youthful corps.

It affords me a gratification that words cannot express, to know that your correct and gentlemanly deportment, and persevering industry in your studies, has given an *earnest* of a bright and glorious future. *We only*, can rightly know the happy and harmonious relations that have existed between teacher and pupil, and I shall be rejoiced to think, that the schoolroom has been made as *profitable* to you, as it has been rendered *pleasant* by you. "Sweet will be the memory of the past," and like the music of Carril, "pleasant as the shower which falls on the sunny field." But your paths will now diverge, far from these pleasant places—the centripetal attractions of scientific and literary culture, will no longer draw your willing footsteps hither. The counting room, the workshop, the farm, will call you abroad. The office of the advocate—the college of medicine—the camp of the civil engineer—the sometimes "noisy mansion" of the school master—the halls of the university, will decimate our classes.

Two years ago one of your number thus addressed you—

"Comrades in arms! before the sun
In setting grandeur leaves yon sky,
And night the broad expanse hath won,
With all her glittering worlds on high,

We part—the toils of school all o'er,
 To seek delight in wood and wave.
 Those past glad days may come no more—
 That past—our hearts may often crave.
 But some perchance may not again
 With pleasure tread the halls we prize,
 Where linked in one fraternal chain,
 We bound ourselves in friendship's ties.
 'To such, farewell, and may the Power
 That dwells on high, protect each form,
 And so through life, each light-winged hour,
 May make you meet for calm or storm.
 For like your glittering bayonets' sheen,
 Gleams man's escutcheon, fair and pure,
 But *that*, unlike the steel, I ween,
 A breath may tarnish ever-more.
 Then watch with care—with anxious care—
 In eager strife, for smiles of fame,
 That virtue's modest crown you wear,
 Your country's good your noble aim."

We part, and the laws of probabilities forbid the *hope*, even, that we shall ever meet again as now, we're met.—May God grant, that when life's feverish dream is o'er, we may all be found prepared for admission to the blissful mansions of that "house not made with hands," and worthy disciples of the Great Teacher of righteousness.

It was a pleasant thought for absent ones to gaze on the same star—to look at the same moon, and feel that though far apart, "the same heavens were indeed over their heads." Let us fix our eyes upon a common object of regard—let us direct our actions by the same golden rule—let us strive to imitate the same perfect character. What more worthy object of love and adoration can we find than the Creator and Upholder of the universe—what surer guide than the revelation of His will, and what more perfect pattern, than His sinless Son!

As we part, then, to ride the stormy sea of life, do let us fix the wandering eye on that star—that CENTRAL SUN of the moral universe—*The Star of Bethlehem*.

