

An oration, pronounced at Middlebury, before the associated alumni of the college, on the evening of commencement, August 16th, 1826 / by Beriah Green.

Contributors

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AN

ORATION,

PRONOUNCED AT MIDDLEBURY,

BEFORE THE

ASSOCIATED ALUMNI OF THE COLLEGE,

ON THE

EVENING OF COMMENCEMENT,

AUGUST 16th, 1826.

BY BERIAH GREEN.

Published by Request.

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ORATION.



MR. PRESIDENT AND FELLOW ALUMNI,

You expected this evening to have listened to the words of an older member* of this fraternity. But the brother, who should have occupied this place, I regret to say, discovered at a late hour, that it would be quite impracticable for him to be present on this occasion. Permit me to mingle my sympathy with yours in your disappointment; and to hope, that your kindness and candour will make it needless for me to attempt any further apology for suggesting a few plain thoughts, which beneath the pressure of professional duties, I have been enabled to prepare.

That class of men, who devote themselves to literary and scientific pursuits, or to the avocations of professional life, expect to exert an influ-

* Rev. Mr. Henshaw, Baltimore.

ence on the mass of community around them, through *the agency of mind*. Thoughts, and arguments, and motives are the instruments, by which they hope to bring about their purposes—to accomplish their designs. By exhibiting their own reflections to the view of others; by transfusing their own spirit into others' bosoms, they hope to impress upon them their own image—to bring them to think, and feel, and act in accordance with themselves. Their usefulness, then, if they aim to be useful, must depend upon the weight and richness of the thought, they are enabled to exhibit—the strength, impressiveness, and efficacy of the motives, they are enabled to enforce. In other words, it must depend upon the skill, activity and energy, with which they are enabled to employ their minds. To such men, it must be a question of the deepest interest; *what is the mental discipline—what the habits of study, which are adapted to form a vigorous intellect—to produce powerful and efficient intellectual efforts?*

In opposition to discipline and study, I am aware, that not a few profess to rely upon the efforts of *unaided genius*. Why, they are ready to demand, would you throw around an intelligence, which is 'near akin' to celestial spirits, factitious embarrassments? Let her alone. She will strike

out her own course without the aid of rules; she will go forth with a firm and rapid step in quest of her chosen objects, regardless alike of those who would cheer her by their smiles, and of those who would depress her by their frowns. She scorns the assistance of education—she despises the midnight lamp. Go, teach the young eagle, who is proudly perched upon the mountain cliff, to lift his pinions to the stars; but let genius wing his way to the heavens, unincumbered with useless guides and officious helpers.

What some men, and often those who are loudest in its praise, mean by genius, I am utterly unable to conceive. The attributes, which according to their description, enter into the combination of its character, I have never seen embodied and exemplified in real life. Some of the men, whom they point out as gifted with its inspiration, I have seen. But for little else have they been distinguished besides idleness, prodigality, and energy in mischief. The intellectual efforts, they are capable of putting forth, they never condescend to make. Doubtless their minds labour under some sublime and mighty project, which if they were elevated to their own proper sphere—to some higher region—they might find it in their hearts to execute!

Utopian writers might find it easy to describe the evanescent thing, at whose shadowy form I have just ventured to direct a glance. Let those, who will, amuse themselves with the creatures of wild romance; our business is with the sober realities of life. And here it may be proper to observe, that a *peculiar aptness for some department of literature, or science, or art*, is sometimes known under the name of genius. A child rises up, and like Pope, breathes forth the lispings of infancy in numbers; another seizes the pencil, and the green landscape smiles beneath his hand; while a third, like Pascall, employs his earliest thoughts upon the proportions and relations of pure quantities. Such persons, it is supposed, live, and move, and act under the inspiration of genius. They are guided by the hand of Nature. Now what is it—for such inquiries are sometimes urged on the friends of education—to attempt to controul *their* thoughts and regulate *their* movements? What is it but to impose laws on Nature, from whose touch they receive their peculiar bias? And what is this better than a species of presumption and impiety?—But I hope, I shall not be thought profane, if I venture to suggest, that *this aptness*, whatever it may be, may owe its origin to a humbler agency than divine inspiration. May

not the attention of a man of genius, when a child, have been arrested by some striking, but perhaps forgotten, occurrence, and directed to the object, which he has since pursued with such distinguished ardour and success? May not this object from that hour, have engrossed his thoughts and absorbed his feelings? May it not have urged upon him an irresistible demand for all his powers and acquisitions—his highest efforts and best energies? And would not a mind of ordinary powers, when thus consecrated to a single object, put on the aspect, and perform the wonders, of genius?—A child in passing through the street, sees the statuary at his work. He stops to gaze and admire. The artist is giving the last touches to the lips of a Venus. The child is thrilled with astonishment. He lifts up his eyes and looks upon the artist, and is awed, as in the presence of creative skill. He marks the marble, and starts, as he seems to see it spring into life. He surveys the instruments and agencies, by which, from a rude block, it has been wrought into the most beautiful human form, that ever attracted his observation. He slowly retires to muse on the wonders he had seen. The images of the artist and the statue follow him. They retire with him to rest; they occupy his dreams; they absorb his waking

thoughts. At length his bosom begins to swell and throb with the resolution himself to be an artist. His first essays are rude. But whatever of skill and ingenuity he possesses, are devoted to his chosen object. From one attainment he rises to another; and finally stands up a Phidias or a Bacon.—In some instances, the occurrence, which gave the mind a direction towards its favourite object, is clearly ascertained; in others, it is beyond the reach of discovery. But is it not a fair presumption, that in every case, genius owes its origin to some such agency?

But however this question may be decided, I am unable to perceive why a peculiar aptness for one intellectual pursuit should be alleged as a reason for neglecting every other.—If genius be left to pursue his own course unguided and unrestrained, is there no danger, that his steps will be errattick—that he will lose himself amidst the solemn gloom and tangled thickets of the forest? Is there no danger that the mind will lose its symmetry and proportion—will assume an unnatural form and put on a distorted aspect? Is not that an unhappy agency, which would reduce the intellect to one capacity? Thus abused, it certainly could not be a vigorous intellect; an intellect fitted to produce powerful and happy efforts. No matter

what that capacity may be, which has absorbed the mind. Whatever it may be, the beauty of the mind is marred, its symmetry destroyed, its strength is wasted.—Genius, when this term is employed to describe a peculiar aptness for some intellectual pursuit, must be chastized and controlled; must be subjected to a thorough discipline, in order to the existence of sound intellectual character.

The term genius, in some connections, signifies *distinguished vigour of intellect and largeness of capacity*.—I need not spend a moment, to show, that a mind thus happily constituted—thus richly gifted, impressively invites the aid of discipline—the hand of cultivation. With this aid and beneath this hand, its powers will be rapidly developed and matured—will be prepared to make distinguished efforts—deeply and indelibly to impress its image on every intelligence within the sphere of its action. It is very true, that in this case, as in every other, the discipline should be adapted to the character of the mind;—should involve enlarged views and be conducted on liberal principles;—should be fitted to meet the demands and gratify the aspirations of the high-born spirit, which is to be nurtured, and educated, and trained up, for the elevated sphere, in which it is destined to move.

But the great mass of men—of those men, who are devoted to intellectual pursuits, have little *personal* interest in the question, whether genius, as such, is aided or impeded in its proper course by the hand of cultivation. For this statement a reason plain and obvious may be given: The great mass of those, who are devoted to intellectual pursuits lay no claim to those peculiarities of mind, whatever they may be, which constitute genius. By the capacities, with which they are gifted, they are enabled to recal the scenes, through which they have passed—the occurrences, which have fallen beneath their notice; to think, reflect, and reason; to summon to their view the pictures of the fancy—the visions of imagination. But in strength of mind, or in any peculiar aptness for some intellectual pursuit, they claim no preeminence above their fellow men. These men need, and it is a necessity which they are not, generally, slow to feel, or backward to acknowledge, the aid of discipline—the benefits of education.

On the subject of intellectual cultivation, the circumstances and relations of the human mind should by no means be forgotten. Men are not pure intelligences. A thousand embarrassments are thrown around the human intellect. It is mysteriously connected with the house of clay, which it

makes its habitation. It is deeply affected by the various accidents, which befall its fragile tenement. It is often depressed—it is sometimes overwhelmed and ruined by the calamities to which the body is exposed.—And then, in conversing with surrounding objects—in collecting materials for thought and reflection, it is obliged to employ the agency of the corporeal senses. The faculties of the body, it must be content to use in exerting an influence—in making an impression, upon other intelligences.—No discipline, then, can be happily adapted to develop and cultivate its powers, which overlooks its connection with the body. The neglect or mismanagement of this, may exceedingly retard, if not wholly obstruct, the progress of mind in the course of improvement—may throw a load upon it, which it shall be utterly unable to sustain.

I knew a student, who refused to employ the proper means for sustaining and regulating that subtle property of human nature, which is commonly denominated the *animal spirits*. The effects of his folly were soon visible. His spirits ebbed. He breathed a troubled atmosphere. Darkness enveloped him. A thousand spectres haunted him, and muttered in his ears the language of despair. His intellect was chilled and

depressed. His vision was obscured. He could not think, and reason, and reflect. One only impression was fastened on his mind, which awakened keen anguish in his bosom—an impression, that the nameless horrors of madness awaited him.

When the spirits are depressed, the mind often labours under an insufferable burden. It cannot act with vigour and decision.

—————“The sun grows pale;
 A mournful visionary light o’erspreads
 The cheerful face of nature: earth becomes
 A dreary desert, and heaven frowns above.
 Then various shapes of curst illusion rise;
 Whate’er the wretched fears, creating Fear
 Forms out of nothing; and with monsters teems
 Unknown in hell. The prostrate soul beneath
 A load of huge imagination heaves;
 And all the horrors, that the murderer feels,
 With anxious flutterings wake the guiltless breast.”

The connection between the mind and the animal spirits, or any other part of our physical structure, I shall not attempt to explain. I shall not undertake to trace and illustrate the influence of corporeal accidents on intellectual vigour and activity. A subject so subtle and mysterious—whose various bearings and relations are obscured by so much, that is dark and cloudy, I am unable to apprehend—much more to explain. I shall not be required to attempt the task. The obvious *fact*

will be admitted, that such a connection exists between the body and the mind, that the energy and activity of the one are deeply affected by the condition of the other. It will not then be denied, that the discipline, which is fitted to develope, and strengthen, and mature the intellectual powers, must involve a wakeful care of the body—a provision, as far as possible, against the untoward influences and hurtful accidents, to which it is exposed. Nothing will be neglected, which may contribute to health, cheerfulness, and the government of the passions. It is high time the importance of this subject were seen and felt. Too many minds have already been depressed by the agency of bad corporeal habits. The excessive indulgence of the appetites, and the neglect of manly, systematick exercise, are working unutterable and irreparable mischiefs among those, who have devoted themselves to intellectual pursuits. The sickly aspect and feeble movements of many of our students and professional men, ought not to be imputed to the severity of their mental labours, but to a strange and cherished aversion to regularity of habits and muscular exertion. Would they observe the rules of strict temperance; would they, according to some well regulated system, engage in athletick exercise, their intellectual movements might be marked by vigour and efficiency.

But the intellect is not only intimately connected with the physical structure: it is also connected with the *moral affections*. And however subtle and mysterious this connection may be, it will hardly be denied, that it has a strong bearing on the operations of the mind. It certainly depends upon the direction and object of the moral affections, whether in one, and an important department of its exercises, the intellect shall be conversant with subjects, which are fitted to expand, enrich, and refine it, or with those, which must degrade, contract, and pollute it.—Fastened on the ever-blessed God, these affections will elevate the intellect to Heaven, to gather the richest materials for sublime thought and reflection. The mind will develop its powers and perform its operations, beneath a pure atmosphere and a genial sun. It will inhale vigour and gather strength in every movement.—In other words, a heart consecrate to the Author of our being, and the Redeemer of our spirits, will bring the most sublime and ennobling objects before the eye of the mind. These objects it will present under an aspect so attractive, as to make them the subject of frequent and attentive observation—of deep and delightful reflection. A damper it will put upon the fires of passion, which often wither, if they do

not consume, the energies of the mind. Thus employed, the intellectual powers can scarcely fail to be happily unfolded—to be greatly invigorated.

But if the affections are fastened on low and sordid objects, the intellect must sink with them. It will be constrained to gather up its materials for thought and reflection, amid the rubbish of a ruined world. An atmosphere, cold and troubled, will surround it. The objects, with which it will be constrained to converse, will degrade and pollute it; will obscure its vision, enfeeble its powers, and limit its sphere of operation.—Who has not seen the noble mind, agitated with passion—stained with guilt—impeded in its movements and obstructed in its progress by vicious propensities, cherished without remorse and indulged without restraint? And who has not seen a mind of ordinary powers, borne upward by the spirit of christian piety, until the objects, with which it conversed—on which it employed its thoughts, impressed upon it their own image of sublimity and grandeur?

Any system of mental discipline, which overlooks the connection between intellect and heart—which makes no account of the influence of the moral affections on the mind, labours under a radical defect. If the heart be neglected, the in-

telleet must suffer. When will this truth be felt, in all its importance, by the men, to whom the education of our youth is entrusted? When will decided, well-directed efforts be generally made, in our schools and colleges, to fasten christian truth upon the mind—to lift the thoughts to Heaven—to impress upon the soul the image of the Son of God? When that time fully arrives, a new era will be marked in the history of mind. Its operations will be distinguished for decision, and vigour, and effect.

The mind, we are told, always thinks. Be it so. It will not be denied, that it often thinks to very little purpose—that its thoughts are of very little value.—Whatever arrests the attention, awakens thought. Object after object strikes the mind, and becomes the subject of reflection. The undisciplined intellect gives itself up to the various agencies, which happen to act upon it. It scarcely makes an election among the subjects of thought, that invite its attention. From one thing, as on a rapid tide, it is hastily borne onward to other. Nothing is examined. A glance is directed to the objects, which various accidental agencies successively bring up to view, under the aspect, in which they happen to pass before the eye. But the importance of these objects is not weighed;

none of them is examined in its various bearings and relations; under the multiplied aspects, which it may be made to exhibit. A strong hand is not put forth, to seize the mind in its vagrant course and bind it to some single topick, till that topick is thoroughly investigated and distinctly understood. Every thing is seen at a distance. In one word, the thoughts move on without connection or design, as they are awakened by the objects, which one after another strike the mind. Now, some external object arrests the attention, and gives play for a moment to the intellectual powers; and now, the recollection of past events occupies the thoughts; and now, the untutored imagination bears the mind aloft, where nought exists but the visions of wild fancy.

A sound intellectual character, it is obvious, cannot be secured,—vigorous intellectual efforts cannot be made, unless the vagrant habits of the mind be broken up; unless it be formed to direct its powers to some specified, selected subject, on which it may expend its energies in intense study—in deep reflection—in a thorough investigation. It must be formed, to come near an object—to examine it in its various aspects and relations—to estimate its importance and ascertain its uses. It must be formed to hold up this object to the

view of others in its own proper shape and complexion—carefully to describe its form and exactly to point out its features—to pour a clear discriminative light on those nicer shades and finer colours, without which the design could not commend itself to the eye of the accurate observer. In other words, an influence must be exerted on the mind, which may control and regulate the understanding—invigorate the memory—chastise the imagination.

What agency, I venture to demand, is better fitted to form the intellect—to break up its habits of vagrant thought, than the study of the *exact sciences*? Here, not a step can be taken, until the ground is carefully surveyed—thoroughly explored. The attention must be directed to a single object—must be fixed upon it. That object must be steadily contemplated—must be strictly scrutinized—it must be “looked upon and handled”—until its form, and features, and complexion—its nature, bearings, and relations, are clearly seen, are distinctly understood, are fully comprehended. Beginning with axioms and definitions, the mind will advance with careful, cautious step from first principles to those, which are remote and comprehensive—from one truth to another, till statements involving complex thoughts and abstruse ideas are

apprehended, digested, illustrated. By this discipline, the intellect will be brought to bear upon a single point—to expend its energies in liberating a given subject from the needless embarrassments, which may be thrown around it; in examining it with a steady, keen, discriminating look; in holding it up to the view of others in all its length, and breadth, and importance.—And then, to give exercise to the ingenuity and judgment; to impart edge and point to the intellect; to refine and chastise the fancy, what better means can be employed, than the study of the Latin and Greek classicks? A single paragraph will often give full play to all the intellectual powers the scholar may possess. To understand the exact import of a passage—to lay hold of the naked thought, which lies concealed in the text before him; to catch the spirit of his author, and to transfuse the meaning of a foreign, dead language into his own living tongue, not unfrequently will require all the soundness of judgment, the keenness of discernment, the niceness of discrimination, to which he can lay claim.—At length the attention of the mind may profitably be directed to its own structure. Its powers and properties; the influences to which it is exposed, and the laws by which it is controlled, will furnish valuable materials for deep reflection and intense study. And

then, the condition of man, as a social being, connected with the community around him by multiplied ties; his circumstances, duties, and prospects, as a moral agent, hastening to the bar of God, will afford topics, on which the intellectual powers may be employed in the progress of mental discipline to the best advantage—to the highest purpose. And whatever agency, in the course of education, throws the mind back upon itself—wrests away the helps, upon which it had been accustomed to depend—and constrains it to rely upon its own resources, will have a powerful tendency to impart to it a manly tone—decision, vigour, independence.

The proper design and genuine tendency of the mental discipline, which is afforded in our colleges, I am persuaded, are not generally understood. Hence, the benefits of a publick education are often held in light estimation—are utterly refused or faintly sought, even by men, who professedly give themselves up to intellectual pursuits.—When a youth determines to devote himself to one of the learned professions, he begins to inquire into the nature and extent of the acquisitions, which are requisite to qualify him to act with reputation in the sphere, in which he hopes to move. The necessity and importance of a publick education are

urged on his attention. He examines the course of studies, to be pursued at college. The bearing of this course upon the profession, he has chosen, he is unable to perceive. What has he to do with triangles, and parallelograms, and circles? What to him are the doctrines of ratio and proportion? Why should he occupy his mind with the axioms and definitions of the exact sciences—why expend his strength upon the reasonings and illustrations of natural philosophy?—The refinements of classical learning may be adapted to the taste—may subserve the interests, of the *mere scholar*: But what benefit can he hope to derive from the intricacies and peculiarities of a dead language? He regards the time, expended, the cost, incurred—the exertions, made, and the self-denial, practised, within the walls of the college, as a needless and oppressive demand, defended and urged home upon him, by the pride, and caprice, and pedantry of the rulers of the learned world. Such a demand, he is prepared to resist. And it would be cause for little wonder, if, in reliance on his maturity of judgment and precocity of genius, he should “climb up” to his chosen profession, in “another” and a shorter “way;” or pass through the university without making vigorous efforts to secure the benefits, which were brought within his

reach. In either case, it is almost certain, that at every step of his course through life, he will sadly betray his want of mental discipline—of intellectual cultivation.

The grand *design* of a publick education is, to form and invigorate—to enrich and refine, the intellect. And this is its happy *tendency*—it is its *effect* in the case of every devoted and successful student. He does not place himself within the walls of the college, to study the principles of his future profession; but to train up his mind to habits of correct and useful thought—to learn to reflect and reason—to *acquire the art of study*. This is his object. From this, he never turns away his eye, nor withdraws his hand. Once secured, he has no fears, that he shall be unable to make those acquisitions, whatever they may be, which his future profession may require. And this object must be secured by some agency or other, or the movements of the intellect in any of the learned professions, will be marked by feebleness, and indecision, and inefficiency. Until, then, a better course of mental discipline be struck out and adopted, than is pursued in our colleges, let no friend to intellectual improvement lift his hand, to tear away the pillars, which support them.

It cannot be denied, that men have risen up at

different times and in different places, who without the advantages of a publick education, have done honour to the cause of literature and science—have been distinguished for their activity, respectability, and usefulness in the learned professions. Warmed with a generous enthusiasm—gifted with strong minds and large capacities, they have resolutely gone forward with a firm and rapid step in an elevated course of intellectual improvement, acquisition, and exertion. They have been able in some instances to hold communion on equal terms with the master-spirits of their day. These men I honour. I love to mark their bright course, and trace their elevated path. Though they never walked on the banks of the Ilissus, they nobly scorn to be the foes of the Lyceum.—Very different are the sentiments and character—very different the influence and designs of certain philosophers, who, with no small parade of advertisement and profession, propose to make their followers learned without the toil, and expense, and self-denial of intense and protracted study. These men seem to think it a very little matter, by a single effort, to pour into the youthful bosom the riches of literature and science. By a path, at once direct, and short, and smooth, they lead their disciples to the temple of science, and give them an

elevated place among the favoured sons of Apollo—among those, who were content by years of patient toil and self-denial, to gain the eminence, to which they aspired. But how is this achievement made? The short answer is at hand, and can easily be given. By a few plain tracts and familiar lectures, they impress upon the memory some of the obvious conclusions and striking results of science, without fastening upon the mind its principles, and facts, and illustrations. The elements of knowledge are neglected. The fountains of literature are passed by, untasted. The fundamental principles of education are nothing to them. Their disciples go forth and exhibit themselves, as ample proofs and living illustrations of the utter inutility of collegial labours; as the “first fruits” of an abridged and improved course of mental discipline.—Alas, they have not discernment to perceive what is clearly visible to others, that they have acquired nothing of learning but its terms and its pretensions; that they have not been enriched with its gifts, nor elevated with its refinements; that they are strangers to its sweet influences and peculiar powers. Let not the temple of science be committed to the keeping of such pretenders. They will extinguish its fires, and break down its altars. If the cause of learning

must be exposed to a hostile hand, it has less to fear from the iron ranks of the Goths and Vandals, than from the concealed weapons of foes in disguise.

It is a great mistake, into which many seem to fall, that the kind of studies, pursued in college, are unworthy of any further regard, when a publick education is completed. It is no very uncommon thing for devoted and successful scholars, to retire from the shades of the Academy, engage in the duties of active life, and well nigh lose their interest in the pursuits, to which they are deeply indebted for their intellectual vigour and improvement. They sometimes even forget the rudiments of the languages, in which the ancient classicks were written!—It may be said, I know, in their vindication, that the duties of an active profession, leave them little time or strength, to expend on the classick page—little time to study the principles of natural science, and apply them to the various classes of the works of God, which are scattered in wild profusion around them.—It will not be denied, that the demands of active life, which are urged on the attention of men, engaged in the learned professions, are very numerous—sometimes vexatious—often oppressive. Nor should these demands, whatever they may be, be

neglected—be made to give place to literary labours. May the day never dawn upon our country, when her professional men shall dwindle away into mere scholars, who shall spend their days and their nights in the awful stillness and deep retirement of the temple of science!

Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis
Tempus eget.

—But do the obstacles, which the duties of active life throw in their way, imperatively forbid them to devote so much time to classical learning and scientific research, as is requisite to maintain the vigour and acuteness of the intellect? Dissolved by the love of ease and excessive fondness for the pleasures of social life, some men perhaps would venture to affirm all this! But can it be affirmed in simplicity and truth by *any*, who have examined the question in the light of experience and observation? Where are the individuals, who, according to some well regulated system, have broken up their time into distinctly marked portions, and have assigned to each portion its appropriate engagement, and yet have been unable, occasionally, to devote an hour to literature and science? Men might easily be named, who beneath the pressure of professional engagements, exceedingly multiplied and uncommonly severe,

have always cherished a deep and lively interest in collegial studies—have been equally distinguished for their scholarship and active usefulness. Such a man was *Henry Martyn*. He was no more remarkable for the ardour of his piety, the warmth of his religious zeal, and the energy with which he prosecuted his appropriate work, than for the generous enthusiasm in the cause of literature and science, which warmed his bosom. The occasional efforts in this cause, which he was enabled to make, wrought his mind to a keener edge and imparted to its powers a higher tone; and were thus made subservient to the sublime and holy work, to which he was supremely and most cordially devoted. The same happy influence would be exerted on the minds of professional men, generally, if they would with equal zeal employ the same powerful agency. They could scarcely fail to be distinguished for intellectual vigour and acuteness—to exert an influence, which should be widely extended and deeply felt.

Men of letters cannot exert a healthful and decided influence on the community around them, without mental labour and expense. They must maintain habits of study. Nothing sooner withers and droops under the influence of neglect, than the intellect. The polish it may have derived

from the hand of cultivation, is easily destroyed.— From the University, the diligent and successful student retires, to mingle in the scenes of active life. His ears are stunned with the din of business—he is covered with the dust of toil. His professional engagements—his temporal necessities—or the accumulation of wealth, engross his thoughts and drink up his spirits. His books are thrown aside. When plenty smiles upon him—when his professional reputation is elevated and established, he intends again to be a *student*—again to apply himself to such mental labour, as is fitted to invigorate and refine his intellectual powers. But when, if ever, the expected time arrives, he is disconcerted with the discovery, that his mind has escaped his control; that a most unhappy change has been wrought in his taste; that he is no longer able to collect his scattered thoughts, direct them to any single point, and bring them to act upon it with energy and success. He makes a few heartlest efforts, and in despair of seeing it accomplished, relinquishes altogether his design. But let it not be thought, that this design, long neglected and now abandoned, has only a slight and remote bearing on his interests—his influence—his usefulness. A laborious and devoted student he need not be, to amass

wealth; to secure the puff of popular applause. Stupidity itself often attracts the admiring gaze, and awakens the loud shout, of the multitude—often rakes together a huge heap of golden straws. It is not a mark of magnanimity to aspire for such cheap and sordid acquisitions; it is no proof of merit to obtain them. The influence and usefulness of the man of letters, must be estimated by a very different standard. His stature must be measured by the weight of thought, which he exhibits; by the impressiveness of the motives, which he presents; by the image of himself, which he is able to fasten on other intellects. And in vain will he hope to make a deep impression on the community around him, unless his mind acts with vigour and decision. But what if through long neglect, he have suffered his intellect to gather rust? What if he have broken its edge and blunted its point? His every movement will evince, that he is shorn of his strength—that his “glory has departed.” *He*, who thinks to secure and maintain a decided influence on mankind, by the agency of mind, while he refuses to devote himself to study, habitual and intense, will be left to mourn over withered hopes and blasted expectations.

But it is possible for us to dream, that we are

engaged in intellectual labour, while we are only amusing ourselves with books. Mere reading is not *study*. It may contribute nothing to intellectual vigour or acuteness; may fail to enrich or refine the mind. A thousand undefined images may float in quick succession before the eyes, while nothing is clearly seen—nothing, distinctly apprehended. No valuable materials may be gathered up, and assigned to distinct, appropriate classes, which the mind may reduce to form, and send abroad to subserve its designs—to accomplish its purposes.—Every hour, which the student spends—every page he peruses, should be made to contribute something to the strength, acquisitions, or polish of his mind. The proper object of reading is, to furnish materials for thought and reflection. These materials the mind must make its own—must subject to its subtle workings; it must incorporate them with its very nature; it must reduce them to wholesome aliment, on which it may live and grow—may augment its strength and increase its stature.

The great men, who at different times have risen up, and by the variety and affluence of their intellectual attainments—by the energy and efficiency of their intellectual movements, have shed a lustre on the age, in which they lived, and have

been the glory of the spot, which gave them birth, have, in general, been men of cultivated minds and studious habits. They have found no time, to waste in idle revery—have had no strength, to throw away in useless labours. They have not given themselves up to the mercy of accidental agencies—to the control of capricious feeling. They have struck out a *system of operation*, adapted to their character, pursuits, and designs, and on this, they have habitually acted—to this they have rigidly adhered. The object of their pursuit has stood forth, revealed to their view, in all its reality and importance—in all, that is attractive in its influence, and all, that is sublime in its aspect. Their hearts have gone forth and fastened on this object, in all the strength of ardent attachment. It has engrossed their thoughts, absorbed their feelings—called forth their mightiest efforts. Nor have they turned aside from its pursuit, till they have overtaken it, laid their hands upon it—pressed it to their throbbing bosoms.—It were an easy task, to sustain the statements I have made, by referring to the history of men, who have done distinguished honour to the cause of literature and science; who have shed the clearest, brightest lustre on the several learned professions. But why should this task, easy as it is, be attempted?

Already have multiplied illustrious names, deeply inscribed upon your memories, been suggested to your minds. I need only say, that unless the spirit, which they breathed, be fondly cherished—unless the rugged path, which they trod, be pursued, the achievements for which they were distinguished, cannot be made.

The men, who are devoted to intellectual pursuits—who are engaged in the learned professions, in this country, dwell among a people, who are distinguished for their inquisitiveness of disposition—for their general intelligence, and active enterprize. They dwell among a people, who are not broken up into fragments and thrown into separate masses, by various casts and artificial distinctions. The exercise of sympathy—the interchange of thought and feeling, are not confined within narrow limits. Their range is wide—their field is extensive. Here, mind may act upon mind—here, spirit may commune with spirit, without the obstruction of factitious barriers—free from all restrictions save those, which may be imposed by limited opportunities, diversified tastes and various pursuits. Can the intellect demand a finer field, to put forth its energies—to exert its powers—to scatter far and wide its accumulated treasures? What prodigious and beneficent ef-

fects, might they not expect to see produced, if our scholars and professional men would bring each a well disciplined mind and a well cultivated heart, to act upon the mass of community around them—would in their own appropriate spheres, pour into that susceptible mass a strong infusion of intelligence and virtue! They might almost wield it at their will—might almost reduce it to the form, and give it the features, and animate with the spirit, they chose to impart. O, who can lift up his eyes, and look abroad upon the field, which our beloved country lays open before that class of her favoured sons, who are devoted to intellectual and professional pursuits, without burning with intense desire, to see them go forth to explore and cultivate that field, with a tone of feeling, a decision of purpose, and an energy of action, worthy of their privileges, obligations, and prospects? Break, illustrious morning, on our land, when the sway of intellect, formed, and refined, and enriched by the hand of cultivation—chastised, and directed, and controlled by the spirit of christian piety, shall be universally felt and joyfully acknowledged!

The object, my fellow-alumni, of your association is interesting in its aspect, and beneficent in its tendency: It can scarcely fail, if prosecuted with the wisdom and decision it demands, happily

to subserve your usefulness and happiness. From your distracting cares and your exhausting labours—from whatever is rugged in the paths, you tread, and whatever is chilling in the atmosphere, you breathe, you are drawn together by a common impulse to this consecrated spot. It is yours, to cheer each other with the greetings of friendship—to awaken whatever is grateful in past associations, and to revive whatever is delightful in past recollections. It is yours, to urge home on each other's bosoms, powerful motives, to pursue with an ardour, which knows no abatement, and a strenuousness, which knows no relaxation, the paths of usefulness, that are variously appropriate to your respective characters. You cannot sit down together, in the shades of the Academy, without feeling, that you are connected with each other, not merely by the formalities of your association, but by those peculiar ties, which unite in one the different members of the same literary family. The character, the circumstances, the prospects of every member of this association, you cannot help regarding with lively, tender interest.—Often have you tasted the bitterness of regret, while you traced the course of those wretched brethren, who have gone forth from these hallowed shades, and tamely given themselves up to the

dreams of sloth, the charms of pleasure, the seductions of vice. Often have you been ready to drench them in your tears, while you entreated them to break away from their chains, and devote themselves to the interests of a needy world. The intellectual affluence, the moral worth, the benign and powerful influence of others, you have often marked with delight and exultation. Where is the man, who can look upon the elevated character, the bright course, and distinguished usefulness of a fellow-alumnus, without feeling the force of fresh incitements, to attempt something, worthy of the relation, which makes them brethren?—But the sentiments of fraternal friendship, you cannot indulge, without remembering *her, the alma mater*, by whose smiles, in the course of your education, your hearts were cheered—by whose well administered assistance, your hands were strengthened. And if I do not mistake her aspect, she still smiles upon you. Her eye beams with maternal kindness; and the sweetest words, like Heaven's dews, drop from her lips. Would that I were worthy to be her humble organ;—then would I pour her wisdom on your ears!

Within the walls of *Middlebury College*, you will permit me to remind you, a most interesting and valuable portion of your life was spent.

Here, the largest benefits—the richest advantages, were brought within your reach—were urged on your acceptance. Here, kind, unwearied, and efficient efforts were employed to promote your best interests and highest happiness. And of the agencies, which were here exerted for your benefit, you cannot fail to cherish lively and grateful recollections. And, indeed, it may well be presumed, that these recollections, refreshed by the scenes in which you have this day mingled, and by the circumstances, in which you are now assembled, are deeply wrought into the very texture of your souls.

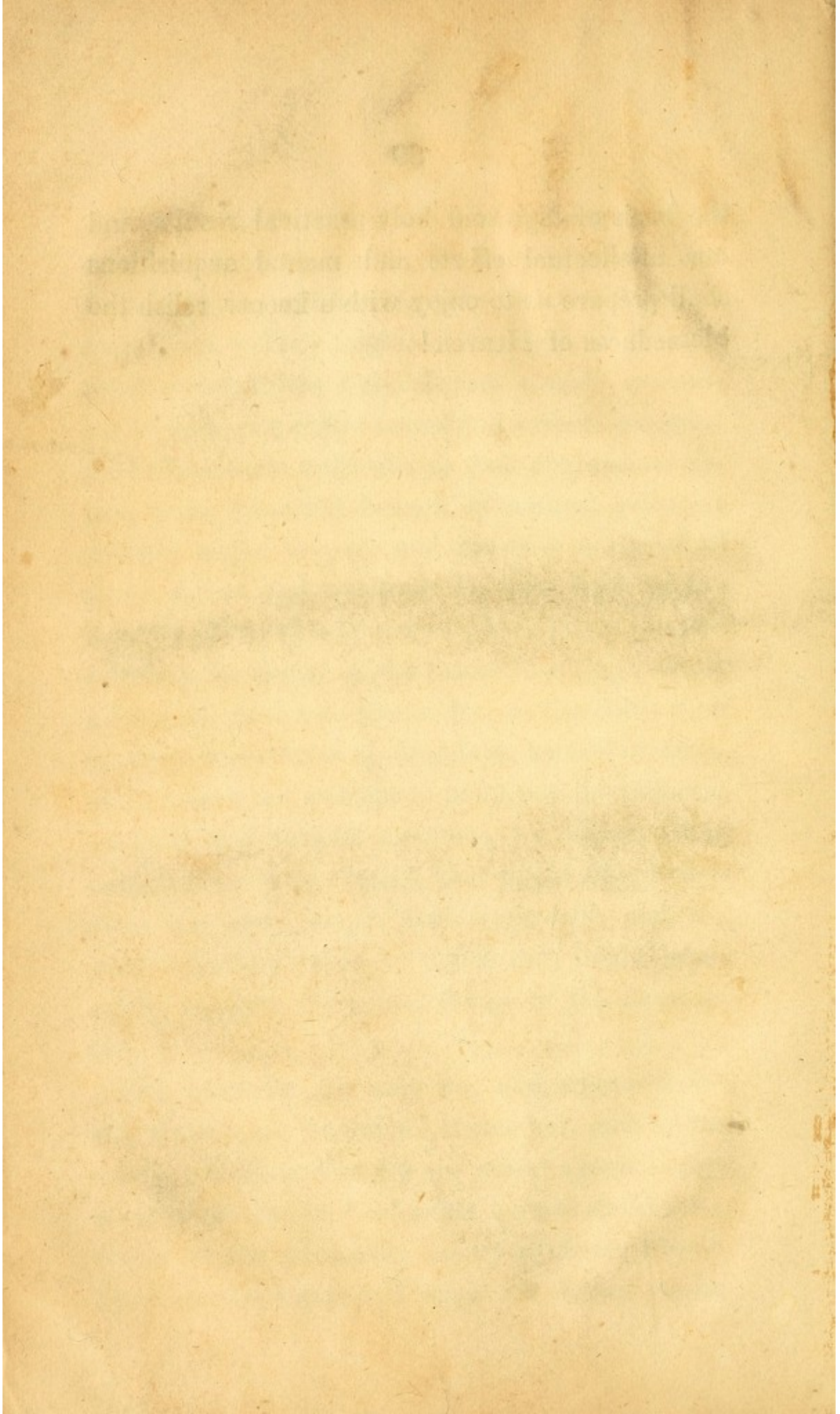
I need not remind you to what agency any college must be indebted, for an elevated character and an established reputation. The large acquisitions—the active and extended usefulness of its alumni, must be its glory and its boast. Without these, what are princely funds, and splendid establishments; what are numerous professors and multiplied students; what are private munificence and legislative patronage? With these, surrounded with the *mountains of Vermont*—without legislative smiles—with scanty means and a limited sphere of operation, it may diffuse far and wide, an influence equally powerful and benign.—It is for the alumni of Middlebury College, under God, to determine, whether this institution shall main-

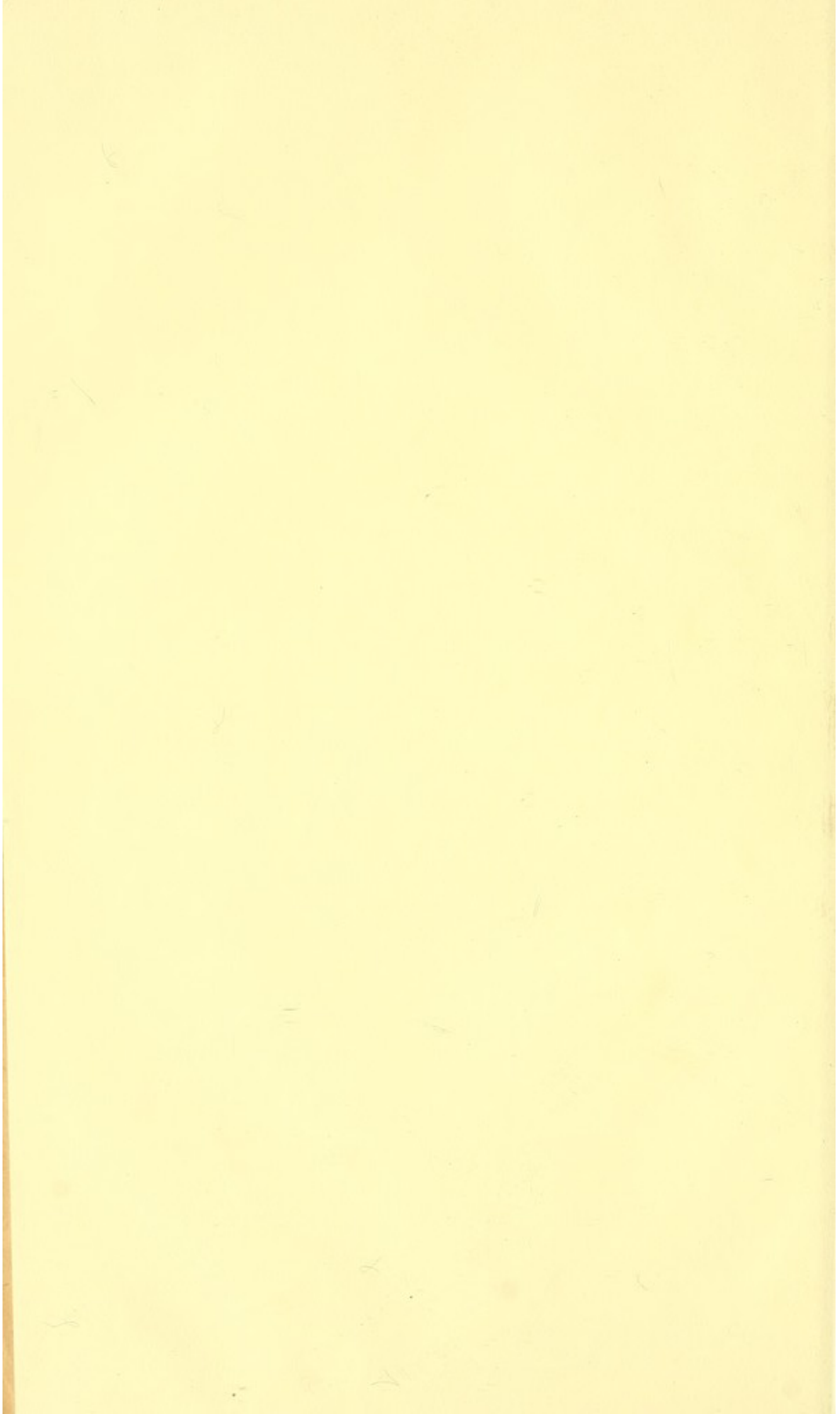
tain its present elevated character. Nothing can tarnish its glory, while they cling to its interests. And to its interests surely they *will* cling. By the brightness of their course, in their respective and appropriate spheres, they will shed a lustre on its character; by their liberal and efficient patronage, they will promote its various interests, and extend and perpetuate its usefulness. And what they do, they must do without delay. It cannot be long before the darkness of the grave will envelope them. The tombs of a Hulburd and an Allen; of a Haynes; of a Parsons, a Fiske, and a Larned, loudly admonish them, that neither talents, nor acquisitions, nor active and extended usefulness, can interpose a shield between their bosoms and the shafts of death. While life is theirs, then, let them put forth such efforts, as may testify in their behalf when dead, that they were the fast friends and cordial supporters of the cause of sound learning and true religion. Such an effort even now they might easily make—I shall be pardoned for throwing out the suggestion—by increasing the means of instruction in this college—by adding to the catalogue of its officers another professor, who might be a living monument—a striking illustration, of their heart-felt attachment and sincere devotedness, to its interests.

The members of this association have the fairest claim upon each other for encouragement and assistance, in their literary labours and scientific researches.—They might, if they judged it best, resolve themselves into different classes, according to their respective tastes and various pursuits. One class might cultivate, as their appropriate object, some specified branch of natural science; another might prepare and preserve a record of those events and occurrences, now fresh in the memory of our older citizens, which might happily subserve the design of the future historian; while a third might devote themselves to the cultivation of some department of literature, sacred or secular. I need not attempt to point out the different methods and various agencies, by which, when thus resolved into classes, they might afford each other the most ample encouragement, and the most important aid;—by which they might powerfully promote the grand design of this association.

But wherever we may be, and whatever we may do, we are bound to remember, and to remind each other, that we are moral agents, hastening to the bar of God—that we are sinful men, who need the redeeming mercy of Jesus Christ. These truths, impressed upon our hearts—made

the basis of high and holy practical results, and our intellectual efforts and mental acquisitions shall prepare us to enjoy with a keener relish the blessedness of Heaven!







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