A plea for stability and permanence in institutions of learning : delivered before the trustees, officers and students of the Cleveland Medical College, February 26, 1845 / by Rev. George E. Pierce.

Pierce (G. E.)

A PLEA

FOR

STABILITY AND PERMANENCE

IN

INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING;

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

TRUSTEES, OFFICERS AND STUDENTS

OF THE

CLEVELAND MEDICAL COLLEGE,

FEBRUARY 26, 1845.

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A PLEA FOR STABILITY AND PERMANENCE

IN

INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING.

MANY of the higher and professional schools of antiquity were of brief continuance, enduring no longer than the lives of the distinguished teachers whose talents and learning gave them celebrity. During the most flourishing period of Greek and Roman literature, schools of a higher grade were exceedingly numerous, in which were taught Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Ethics, Law and Medicine, or, in general, the national language, the constitution of the state and the nature of man, with whatever of practical skill could render knowledge available in the business of life. These schools had for their accommodation a private dwelling, a grove, a garden, a portico, a temple, a theatre or some halls of the city, where the people were accustomed to hold their public assemblies. Hence, while they were efficient in accomplishing the ends of education, in preparing the leading men of the state for great achievements, and in aiding to give the world a literature and philosophy which have been admired in all ages, the schools themselves have, to a great extent, gone into oblivion, and modern curiosity remains ungratified in regard to their structure and discipline. If an exception is to be made in favor of some schools of permanent notoriety, it is because they were presided over by some philosopher of great celebrity, or were devoted to the maintenance of the system of doctrines of some distinguished philosophical sect, or were the objects of state or royal patronage, from whence they were provided with superior charms and accommodations, and rendered attractive as places of literary resort. The most distinguished schools

of antiquity were the Academy, the Lyceum and the Portico at Athens, the Athenæum at Rome, and the Museum at Alexandria. The Academy was the institution where Plato taught, and where the doctrines of the Academic sect were long maintained. It was situated in a public garden or grove in the suburbs of Athens, laid in beautiful walks, planted with olive and palm trees, and watered by a delightful stream; with scenery, rendered more grave and ornamental by the proximity of a highly adorned cemetery, in which were the statues, and temples, and sepulchres of the illustrious dead. The Lyceum was upon the banks of the Ilissus, which watered the opposite skirt of the city, in an enclosure dedicated to Apollo and decorated with fountains and groves and buildings, known as the favorite walk of Aristotle and his disciples, and frequented by learned men, given to retirement and study. The Portico was the resort of Zeno and his disciples of the stoic sect. These schools continued to be the resort of the Greek and Roman youth and men of learning for many centuries, and were influential in stamping an impress upon the affairs of men for many generations. In the later ages of Rome, the emperor Adrian built the Athenæum, a large amphitheatre, after the plan of the Grecian institutions, and it continued to be the most distinguished school at Rome till the time of the christian emperors. But the most celebrated school of antiquity, and that which most resembled a modern university, was the Museum at Alexandria. Alexander, in laying the foundations of the city, called by his name, determined to make it distinguished as the seat of empire, the centre of commerce, and the resort of learned men. Most of the city was built in a single year. And during the reign of the Ptolemies, by whom he was succeeded, it gained all the grandeur and magnificence, which his fond vision had anticipated. In the most beautiful part of the city, and near the great harbor, and in connection with the royal palaces and gardens, stood the Museum, a large and splendid edifice, where many scholars lived and ate together, supported by the royal bounty, pursued their studies, and instructed the hundreds of youth and men in pursuit of knowledge, who resorted thither from all parts of the civilized world. The library collected here, with great industry and at great expense, was the largest in the world; containing, at one time, about 700,000 volumes. The observatory was furnished with the best instruments of the age. This institution continued to enjoy uninterrupted prosperity, to con-

centrate and diffuse the lights of science for more than five hundred years; when, in the reign of Aurelian, it was destroyed by civil commotion. Alexandria, however, continued to be the seat of learning for a much longer period.

The Colleges, Universities and Professional schools of Modern Europe, have had a greater measure of stability and permanence, than the schools of antiquity. The feudal system, a privileged nobility, hereditary sovereignty, and a state religion, are causes which resist change, and foster those institutions by which they are upheld. The prevalence of Popery, also, with its orders of priesthood, its splendid and pompous ritual, its monastic establishments and its rich endowments, bestowed with the avowed purpose of extending its power and perpetuating an unchanged character, has had a powerful influence in giving permanence to such institutions of learning as it has originated and sustained. Of more than one hundred universities in Europe, about one half have existed from three to six centuries. The most ancient of these are those of Bologna, Paris, Cambridge and Oxford, which were founded not far from the close of the twelfth century.

Compared with those of other countries, it is a matter of course, that the institutions of learning in the United States, should be yet in their infancy. But though our land has not been long under the dominion of civilized society, and though our state and national governments are of but recent organization, our people have not been unmindful of the necessity of institutions for the higher degrees of classic and scientific attainment, and for the study of the learned professions. But hitherto the work has consisted chiefly in laying foundations, and providing for existing exigencies. while the expectation is that our institutions will pour their richest blessings on coming generations. In these circumstances, a heavy responsibility rests on those who lay their foundations, and originate the character and influence which they may be expected to possess in all future time. It is well known that the institutions of a people assume form and character from the characteristics of the people themselves. From the nature of our government, from our freedom in the exercise of political and religious opinions, from the newness of our country and the rapid development of its resources, it results that our people are thoughtful and intelligent, and ardent and active and enterprising, and, to a great extent, dissatisfied with any present attainment and eagerly pushing

forward to the realization of some anticipated good. These characteristics show their results in regard to our literary institutions. Colleges, and universities, and professional seminaries, are originated and spread through our country beyond the natural demand, or the power of sustaining them. The work of laying foundations is entered upon with zeal and activity, but without counting the cost, and, after years of toil and expenditure, discouragement ensues, and the work is suffered to languish, or perhaps is abandoned. It has come to this, that some men will not co-operate, except it be in some splendid scheme, which is to result in the building of a city, the endowment of a college, the renovation of society and the realization of an earthly paradise; and the more utopian the project, the more ready they are to part with their wealth to push it onward. But the day has gone, when an Alexandria can start into existence in the course of a few years; and it needs the wisdom, the wealth and the power of an Alexander for its accomplishment.

Our remarks have brought us to this position: *stability* and a *regard to permanence* should be made first requistes in originating and conducting our institutions of learning. Whatever may be said in regard to the institutions of Europe, their adherence to the forms and usages of a darker period, and their unwillingness to assume a position appropriate to an age of discovery and advancement, the danger in our country, is in the opposite direction. We are in danger of wasting our energies in transient efforts, and embarking our resources in reckless adventure, to result only in exhaustion and disappointment. Our ability is limited. We have not at our control the accumulated wealth of ages. We have not the resources of kings and conquerors. With most of our people their possessions are not the result of inheritance, but of their own care and industry. But they have a great work to perform, if they would provide the needful institutions of learning for our growing country, and they have nothing to waste on fruitless experiment. They need to build upon a sure basis and of tried material, and to cause every pillar and every wall, as it ascends, to bear the marks of steadfastness and durability. The lives of men are brief, and the influences which they, as individuals, are able to exert are transient; but the state endures, the church of God endures, truth endures, and the great fundamental principles of science and philosophy are enduring, and the institutions by which they are sus-

tained should be enduring. Weak and selfish men may be satisfied with institutions which will benefit themselves and their families, and which are adapted only to advance their own honor and influence during their life-time. But the wise and benevolent, the honored men, who take enlarged views and form liberal plans, and on whom our institutions of learning are chiefly to depend for encouragement and support, will not be satisfied to embark in enterprises of this kind with a view to mere transient results. They will desire to act for their country, and to provide institutions that will sustain its government and laws and prosperity while the nation shall endure. They will wish to be instrumental in enlightening the human mind, and relieving the wants and alleviating the sorrows of man, in coming generations. The worthy men who are devoting themselves to the infant institutions of our western country, and toiling to lay the foundations of collegiate and professional schools, are not sustained in their labors and sacrifices and self-denials by a regard merely to immediate and apparent results. They are prompted by higher and stronger motives. They look forward to the period when these institutions shall have acquired the strength and stability of mature age, and shall pour unnumbered blessings upon the millions of people by which our country shall then be inhabited. They regard the institutions of the older states. They look at our honored Yale, striking deep its roots and throwing up its branches with abundance of green leaves and rich fruits, after a growth of more than a hundred years. They admire its steadily increasing stability and energy for great and good results during the long administration of its present venerated head, and that of the no less venerable man by whom he was preceded. And they indulge the fond anticipation that the day will come—not that their eyes will behold it, but that it will arise to greet posterity—when the institutions which they now cherish, will be alike influential, in sending out their healing waters, their heavenly radiance, among mankind. These are the things that inspire hope, and prompt to patient endurance.

It is manifest then that among the causes which may be expected, to give stability and permanence to an institution of learning, it must, first of all, have an *important* and *permanent end* to accomplish. Why is an institution originated? Does it seek the advancement of some great and permanent interest, that will need an institution to promote it, through all the changes of coming years? Or has it for an object

some local or transient design, which may be accomplished and then go into oblivion, or which will fail to awaken interest when the circumstances that gave it birth shall have passed away? Whichever end may be aimed at, the institution may be expected to have a durability according to the design for which it was originated. A college or a university or a professional school, may be started for the sole purpose of benefiting a town, a village, or a city; or it may be sent off into some remote wilderness to enhance the value of property; or it may have for its end to sustain the interests and advance the sentiments of some political party; or it may have a sectarian character and devote itself to the propagation of some new forms of theological doctrines; or it may devote itself to the establishment of some new theory in medicine, or some vagary in morals or in the elements of social life; and as the interests and opinions which gave it birth shall die away, or prove themselves vain and fanciful, the institution also will be left to languish and die. The appropriate objects of an institution of learning are great and permanent, and are essentially the same in every age and nation. You may have for your object in laying the foundations and providing the endowments of a seat of learning, the establishment of truth and righteousness, the discovery and promulgation of the great and immutable principles of science, the subduing and invigorating of the human intellect, the imparting to the mind the richest treasures of knowledge, and superadding that dexterity and refinement and art which give to knowledge its power; you may have it for your object to provide an adequate number of learned men to fill the professions of Medicine, Law and Theology—the Physician, to apply the principles of the healing art to the frail tenement of life, to stand by the bed of distress, and arrest the progress of disease, and alleviate pain and ward off the hand of death—the Lawyer, to guard your property, enact your laws, and maintain the welfare of your country—the Theologian, to enlighten your ignorance, make plain the path of duty, soothe your sorrows, lead you gently to the gates of death, and aid your triumphant entrance into life and immortality. Let these be your objects, and let them be kept steadily in view, and you may rear an institution durable as the interests with which it is blended, and permanent as the nation whose welfare it upholds, and whose glory it adorns.

Another cause of the stability and permanence of an institution of

learning will be found, in the *selection of men* of talent and eloquence to *preside over the various departments of instruction* and faithfully execute the work that is assigned them. Success is chiefly dependent on the ability of the officers of instruction; and the board of trust have no more important and responsible duty than the selection of the men to whom they may commit the work of instruction. Knowledge is imparted when the impressions of one mind are conveyed to another. In the work of instruction, the Professor imparts the treasures of his own mind to those whom he instructs, and they receive an impress from the excellences or deformities by which his mind is characterized. The artist copies the best models and from them endeavors to form his own taste and perfect his own genius. The student copies his instructor, and after his character, talent and attainment expects to improve and perfect his own accomplishments. It is manifest, then, that the best specimens of mind and manner and attainment should be found in those who instruct in our seats of learning, and from whom the educated of the rising generation will take their impress. The learned nations of antiquity sought men the most distinguished for talent and attainment as the instructors of youth; and when the most distinguished philosophers gave their instructions, they were thronged by great numbers of admiring auditors. In the Colleges and Universities of Europe, it is the first principle to fill the chair of instruction with men of the most profound talent and learning; and it is supposed that the celebrity and perpetuity of an institution will depend on a firm adherence to this principle. The same principle must be regarded and will have its influence in the institutions of this country. An institution may appear to flourish for a time, when its faculty are made up by taking the available candidate; and partiality and party spirit may surround inferior abilities and attainments with a temporary popularity, and prevent the reputation of the establishment from sinking. But the institution that does not adopt and rigidly adhere to the principle of filling its professorships with the best men, will sooner or later find its limit and fail in the accomplishment of valuable results.

Again, *ample* and *valuable accommodations*, will have great influence in giving stability and permanence to an institution of learning. Let our colleges and professional schools have good buildings, extensive and valuable libraries, choice cabinets, ample apparatus, and other preparations which illustrate science and render it attractive, and

these institutions will not only become more valuable, but more stable, and more worthy of the permanent regard of an intelligent people. Associated action always becomes more interesting, more vigorous and more abiding, when a large amount of common property is subject to control, and is to be used for the common benefit. A family without a home, without a house, without household comforts and conveniences, without a garden or a homestead, has no common attraction, leads a wandering life, and is despised, when the pressure of necessity, which kept them together in the years of childhood, has ceased to be felt. Not so with a family of a large inheritance. The family mansion with its appurtenances, is the centre of attraction, perhaps for many generations, and the garden, the grove, the hill and the vale which have been the delights of childhood, are sought again and again, even in the years of manhood and old age, with the fondest recollections of youthful enjoyment. The religious society associated for the purpose of sustaining the worship of God and advancing the christian cause, has prospect of stability and permanence when it has provided a rich and tasteful and commodious house of worship, and has made the needful provisions to render its services comely and attractive. The sanctuary becomes the home of the soul, and the parents and the children and the children's children seek it with delight. When the state provides itself with rich and appropriate halls of legislation and seats of justice, and adorns its capital with institutions for the public good, the subjects of the government become patriotic, and the state gains strength and stability. The college or the professional school, in these respects, resembles the family, the parish, the state. And the young men who have enjoyed the benefits of an institution amply provided with accommodations and means of instruction, will remember it as their home, their sanctuary, as the state that ruled the waywardness of youth, and by a salutary discipline guided them to manliness and virtue. And along the progress of revolving years, the multitudes of those who have been sent out to discharge the duties and sustain the responsibilities of life, will return to tread again the halls of science, to greet an old instructor and companions in study, and enjoy again the familiar scenes of former years. It was not altogether the eloquence of Plato and Aristotle and their successors, that drew together the great multitudes who resorted to the Academy and the Lyceum through successive centuries. The beauties of architecture, of sculpture and painting,

the cool and refreshing groves and fountains and rivulets, scenery so well adapted to literary companionship, had their influence. And the princely halls of the Museum, and the Alexandrian library, and other attractions of a city renowned as the royal residence, and the literary and commercial centre of the civilized world, had their influence in perpetuating its fame as a place of resort for the learned, as well as the lectures of the learned men by whom instruction was imparted.

I am aware that the objection will arise, that the accommodations and conveniences of an institution of learning are expensive, and that, in a new country, there are not resources at control, to erect edifices, purchase libraries and provide apparatus, and that hence they must be dispensed with. It is just and right that the amount of resources should regulate expenditure, and that limited means should have a limited application, providing first, those things that are indispensable, and making such arrangements that additions and improvements may be made as future resources shall justify. But it is possible, if not certain, that we have not yet reached the measure of our ability, and that we are using an economy that is short-sighted, and that will sacrifice our best interests. It has been supposed that funds could be, in a great measure, dispensed with, and that institutions might become self-supporting. The worthy Dr. Nelson, founder of the Mission Institute at Quincy, Illinois, conceived the idea, that young men might be prepared for the ministry in the wilderness,—that they could cut down the trees with their own hands, build log cabins, as places of abode and study, and upon the cleared soil raise their own provisions, and, under his supervision and instruction, hear each other's recitations, and acquire a bodily and mental preparation for the ministry that could be secured in no other way. A little before his death, the worthy Doctor was enquired of in regard to the success of his enterprise. He found no fault with his system, but said he had made one mistake. And he had now made the discovery that, contrary to his former opinions, the pious young men of this country did not desire to preach the gospel, and this he assigned as the cause of his failure. Perhaps he would claim that he was not the author of the system, and that he had examples of high authority. It is said that Elijah, and the prophets whom he taught, had their lodgment in the caves of Carmel, and that Elisha, who succeeded him as a teacher, had a school, in which he

taught young prophets to preach, in Gilgal. And the young men complained that their accommodations were not sufficiently ample, and obtained leave to go to the banks of Jordan and cut timber for their enlargement; and the borrowed axe, that was lost and recovered by a miracle, was used by the manual-labor students of Elisha in preparing a place for their own residence. When the Son of Man taught his disciples, he had not where to lay his head; and the school of John, the Baptist, was in the wilderness, and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Such, however, were not wholly the customs of the age and country. The school of Gamaliel, in which Paul and Barnabas were educated, was located in the metropolis of Israel, and we may believe that this illustrious teacher, sprung from a distinguished family and for thirty years President of the Sanhedrim, had at his control the apartments of the temple, or other places of resort for the accommodation of the multitudes brought up at his feet. In some states of society, and in circumstances of deep poverty, it would be expedient to provide for instruction alone, and to dispense with all accommodations, except such as are necessary to sustain and preserve life. But such is not our state of society; such are not our circumstances. In some respects we are in a new country. In other respects we are in a country far advanced in wealth, and elevation, and refinement. We are upon a soil but recently occupied, and the foundations of our institutions were but recently laid. In other respects we are but the further development of a state of society that has been in rapid progress for more than two hundred years. Some of us were nurtured in the older states, and, with settled character and habits, have suffered a mere transfer to a different locality. Some of us were nurtured in families thus transferred, and are the descendants of a worthy ancestry. And we will never admit that a mere transfer, though it be to a fairer country, a richer soil and milder skies, is to be the cause of degeneracy. Let us, then, have institutions adapted to the advanced state of society in which we are. We are able to provide for our own wants. We can have, in our colleges and seminaries, able and learned professors. We can provide the necessary endowments. And when the case calls for it, in any of the departments of our institutions, we can erect neat and tasteful edifices, fitted to adorn our cities and villages. We can provide ample libraries, and apparatus, and other means by which instruction is facilitated. And the day may not be

distant, when we can connect, with our seats of science, gardens, and groves, and walks, and fountains, and make them the places of happy resort to all lovers of learning, taste and refinement.

I have only to add, that the *attachment* and *influence of the graduates* will give stability and permanence to an institution of learning. These are the products for which the institution was originated, and the evidence of its skillful workmanship; and as they go out from year to year, with minds well formed and capabilities enhanced, they are letters of commendation in behalf of their alma mater, that may be known and read of all men. They were brought together at an early age, when impressions were deep and lasting. They were brought under common influences, designed to fit them for the important stations which they were to occupy in society. They have a common stock of knowledge, common sentiments and attachments, and their sympathies and fond remembrances all cluster around the institution to which they were indebted for much of their advancement in life. It is a matter of course that they should desire its permanent welfare, and that they should avail themselves of the stations which they occupy, and the wealth which they are enabled to accumulate, to promote its advancement. The graduates of an institution constitute a sort of family or community, receiving annual accessions to the brotherhood, which is to be increased and perpetuated, notwithstanding the invasion of their ranks by death, through many generations. And whatever other relations they may sustain in life, their relation to the institution where they have received their intellectual and moral culture, and their obligations to it, are cheerfully acknowledged. Thus some institutions in our country have already, in their graduates, hundreds and thousands of worthy sons, proud of their parentage, ready to defend the fame, advance the usefulness and increase the patronage of their alma mater.

I have now brought to view some of the principles on which the Western Reserve College was founded, and by which those who have the care of its interests expect to be guided. In laying its foundations, they have had, from the beginning, regard to stability and permanence. They have sought the accomplishment of a great and permanent object, the advancement of the higher departments of education, and thereby the best interests of their country, the church and the world; and they have never been diverted from

their object by local jealousy, sectarian feeling or party interest. Their standard of education has been avowedly high, from the belief that nothing short of giving advantages equal to what are found in the best institutions of the land, would sustain the reputation of the college, meet the public demand or accomplish the end at which they were aiming; and in carrying out their object they have sought for professors, men of talent and attainment, adequate to the work to which they were called. They have aimed to provide, with all possible dispatch, adequate buildings, libraries and apparatus, and they expect that the growing number of their graduates will rally around their standard, cheer them on in their work, and sustain their enterprise in the progress of its future development.

The charter of the Western Reserve College was granted the 8th of February, 1826. Of course the college has passed the nineteenth anniversary of its chartered existence. The charter provides that the college shall be erected on a plan sufficiently extensive to afford instruction in the liberal arts and sciences, and that the trustees may, as their ability shall increase, and the interests of the community shall require, erect additional departments for the study of any or all of the liberal professions. There was no other thought then, than that one institution for collegiate and professional education, if there should be ability to erect it, would be adequate to the wants of the Western Reserve. The kings of England, who sent their subjects to plant colonies and christianize the savages of North America, granted charters without any exact regard to boundary, and sometimes made repeated conveyance of the same territory. Now if the legislature of Ohio, in their wisdom and benevolence, have laid charter upon charter, and have made double or triple conveyance of the same privilege, still it must be remembered that the trustees of the Western Reserve College, have the prior grants, are still in the field, and in a state of occupancy. And it has always been their design, as well as their privilege, to establish a college with professional departments. The Theological department, is coeval with the college. In October, 1834, when a counter movement was about to be made, they resolved and published: "That it has been, and still is the intention of this board, when the interests of the community shall require it, to establish a *Medical department* in connection with this college, and that correspondence be had on the subject with physicians on the Reserve." The result of this

correspondence, was a general expression of opinion in favor of the measure, though some physicians expressed doubt whether the time had then arrived for establishing the department. The trustees waited till they believed that the time had come, and that the interests of the community required its establishment. Its location in Cleveland was matter of convenience ; and as a department of the college they now contemplate it as having stability and permanence. They rejoice in having secured the services of able and experienced men in its professorships. They contemplate with satisfaction the numerous attendance, we think unprecedented considering the age of the department, on the courses of instruction that have been delivered. They rejoice in the zeal and liberality of the citizens of Cleveland, in raising funds by which the department is to be acco amodated with an ample and appropriate edifice, which may stand as an ornament to their city and a monument to their munificence. Let me say, my friends, we rejoice to find you co-operating with us in a great and good work. And when, in a few years, your city shall be accommodated, like some of the Atlantic cities, with communication to the interior by steam and railroad, Hudson and Cleveland will be brought in close proximity, and our institution will be one, worthy of your co-operation, a stable, well endowed college, with professional departments, a university, though not ambitious of the name, an institution adequate to the education of our sons in the higher departments of learning, an ornament to our state, and a worthy example of western improvement.

Before closing, we wish to give our parting salutations to the graduating class. Young Gentlemen : The board of trustees learn, with high satisfaction, the proficiency you have made in the studies of the honorable profession to which you have devoted your lives. We are happy to learn, that such has been your devotion to the science and knowledge of Medicine, under the direction of your private instructors, and in connection with the lectures of the Medical Faculty, that you have passed an examination highly creditable to yourselves, and that you have manifested such attainments as render you worthy of the honors of this institution, and give high hopes of your becoming ornaments to your profession. We rejoice in the testimony that your instructors have been able to give us in favor of your moral character and correct deportment ; and in regard to your observance of their requirements, and your gentlemanly conduct while in attendance up-

on their lectures, and in your intercourse with the worthy and hospitable people of this city. It is with satisfaction that we register your names among the alumni of the Western Reserve College, and reckon you among the first fruits of its Medical department. We are confident that, as you go out into the world and engage in the duties of your profession, you will cherish a grateful remembrance of the worthy men to whose instruction you have submitted yourselves, and will delight in the success of the enterprise to which they have devoted their talents and attainments. You will rejoice with them in the more ample accommodations with which the department is to be provided, in the rising walls of the new edifice and the ample libraries and cabinets with which it is to be filled, and more than all in the thronging multitudes that will crowd its halls and become eager listeners to the lessons of wisdom which we trust they may be long spared to impart. But I must check these anticipations.

Young gentlemen, the day of duty has come. Go to your respective fields of labor. Go, carrying all the treasures of wisdom you have been enabled to gather, and sustain, with all the abilities God has given you, the arduous duties of your profession. Go as the messengers of mercy to the scenes of sorrow and distress. Go to the bedsides of the sick and the languishing, to arrest disease and restore health. If your services are needed, go to the humble abodes of poverty and want, and apply the needful remedies without price, and look to Him who will not suffer a cup of cold water, rightly presented, to go unrewarded.