

Address delivered by The Right Hon. The Earl of Carlisle, at the ceremony of his installation as The Lord Rector of Marischal College and University, Aberdeen, on Wednesday, 31st March, 1853.

Contributors

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Publication/Creation

Aberdeen : D. Wyllie, 1853.

Persistent URL

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ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

THE RIGHT HON.

THE EARL OF CARLISLE,

AT THE CEREMONY OF HIS INSTALLATION

AS

THE LORD RECTOR

OF

MARISCHAL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY,

ABERDEEN,

ON WEDNESDAY, 31ST MARCH, 1853.


ABERDEEN :

D. WYLLIE AND SON,

BOOKSELLERS TO THE QUEEN, THE PRINCE ALBERT,

THE DUCHESS OF KENT, AND ROYAL FAMILY.

MDCCCLIII.



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ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN,

The first accents which you must hear from my lips are those of gratitude—simple and deep. I presume, indeed, that they must form the accustomed preludes to every Address from a new Lord Rector, and they will be familiar to the echoes of the honoured walls within which it is now my privilege to meet you. They must have in turn proceeded from a long series of distinguished predecessors; for I know that, in the ancestral pedigree of my office, I should find very many names connected with the learning, the genius, the chivalry of Scotland, besides some which have shed lustre on the Empire at large. With the nobleman whom I immediately succeed—the Earl of Eglinton and Winton—I have not the advantage of more than a very slight personal acquaintance; but I believe there to be few who have found a more direct access to the hearts of men; and, in laying down his Vice-Regal, as well as his Rectorial

Sceptre, he will be able to retain, in his pleased remembrance, how the applauses of Ireland have ratified the affections of his own Scotland.

It must consequently result, that I should appreciate, in no common degree, the distinction that you have been pleased to confer upon me, and feel the whole weight of obligation that it imposes. You are far, indeed, from having exhausted the many high claims, in respect both of lineage and of merit, which your own division of our island might have continued to supply : as, however, the County of Aberdeen has given its present Prime Minister to the Empire, it is surely allowable that an Englishman should be taken as Rector of an University of Aberdeen—an office that, notwithstanding its honourable character, and illustrious precedents, I flatter myself is not equally difficult to fill. It can hardly, then, be made matter of reproach, that you should have thought fit to cast your eyes even as far as the “debateable land” which lines your ancient realm, and to summon thence an unworthy Borderer, to commit a raid upon the high places and choice honours of your Northern domain ; and certainly far beyond the limits within which the spear of my ancestor—Belted Will—ever carried apprehension, or sustained discomfiture, you have, in a spirit of generous

reaction, thrown open your lettered retreats and bowers of learning, to his peaceful, and, I trust, more docile, descendant.

As a stranger within your walls up to the present moment, I should feel it to be almost officious, and it would, at all events, be only to retrace ground which has been, on previous occasions, sufficiently occupied, if I should attempt to recapitulate the justly-celebrated names which, in almost every department of science and literature, have from time to time adorned, as they continue to adorn, this distinguished University. Such an eminent succession in the past, is in itself one of the surest guarantees against degeneracy in the future. I think it sufficient to remark that Aberdeen, as well as Rome, has had her line of Gregories; and I apprehend that it would admit of easy solution which of the two lines has conferred the most real and lasting benefit on mankind. Nor can I forget that, when the celebrated Scottish Historian and Philosopher of the last century—David Hume—the merits of whose diction ought never to make us forget that, while there is not a great deal of honesty in his history, there is still less of truth in his philosophy—when, in the zenith of his reputation and popularity, he employed his winning pen to sap the

foundations of immortal hope, I believe almost the first of the faithful voices that were raised to rebuke and to disarm him, proceeded—in accents, it is true, of courtesy and gentleness—from Dr. Campbell, of this University. Perhaps, too, you will just allow me to add that my attention has happened to have been recently directed to the writings of our English poet, Gray, and I find that it was proposed to confer upon him an Honorary Degree of this University, at the suggestion of one of its most conspicuous ornaments—Dr. Beattie. It is pleasant to be thus able to associate the authors of the “Elegy” and the “Minstrel.” It is pleasant, when coming from the cultivated lea, the fantastic beeches, the antique towers, of our level but not unpoetic England, to pass onwards to the more rugged haunts and sterner beauties, which give a colour to the noble lines written under the inspiration of the scenes around us,—

“Oh ! how canst thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields,
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields ;
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even,
All that the mountain’s sheltering bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of Heaven,—
Oh ! how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven ?”

Had it been for nothing else, it would be in my mind to have offered my thanks to you, for having brought me within the pale and influence of Academic life once more. I cannot pretend to having led a very eventful or stormy life, but I have mingled to a sufficient degree, at least, in the stir and strife of parties, politics, crowds, and cities ; and most refreshing it is, after all their hardening and roughening gusts have swept for a long time over the mature forehead, to be brought again even into momentary association with the serene quiet of College existence—the studies which engross without ruffling the mind, the day-dreams which stimulate without perverting the fancy, the friendships as yet without the taint of worldliness, the revered brow of learning, the sacred presence of ingenuous youth.

To wish perpetuity and progress to the pursuits and studies which have long distinguished this seat of liberal education and sound learning, would be not natural merely, but unavoidable indeed, even for a person in no way connected with the Institution. I trust that I should not have been wanting in any such aspiration, even before I had the honour of becoming your Lord Rector. With respect to proficiency in science generally, I feel absolved from obtruding any

remark ; first, because, unhappily for myself, I am not in any way qualified to enter upon such high matters,—

“ *Has Naturæ accedere partes ;*”—

and next, because I am of opinion that, in an eminently practical, and, as it may be termed, utilitarian age, there is comparatively little risk that those branches of instruction which have for their main purpose to wield the powers of Nature, or discipline the processes of thought for the service of life—to ascertain and apply truth will not be both ardently explored and steadily mastered. Unknown planets are tracked in the firmament, and unsuspected metals leap from the earth ; but, although such facts embody the essence of the sublimest poetry, it is to Geologists and Astronomers, and not to Homers and Shakespeares, that we look for their discovery.

If I linger for a moment longer on the claims of Classical Learning and Polite Literature to your tenacious regard, it is not merely because I might apprehend that the material spirit of the times would be disposed to cast a cold glance at them, but we also have perceived of late that in some of the most civilized portions of the globe, Religion herself has been stimulated to throw her awful frown upon them. I am much

gratified to see that an accomplished Professor of this University—Dr. Maclure—has very recently addressed you, in a most generous and enlightened strain, upon this very subject. I think, indeed, that a radical mistake, and indeed a grievous error, would be made, if we should resort to the writers of Heathen antiquity for the true motives of conduct—for our rule in life, or our hope in death. This would in truth be but seeking to draw the living waters of the Gospel from the perforated casks of Pagan Mythology—to borrow one of her own illustrations. But when we not only find in Classical Literature, especially among the writers of Greece, the laws of all taste, and the patterns of all excellence; when we not only derive from her historians, philosophers, and orators, examples, for all time, of the closest accuracy of thought, the most complete simplicity, energy, and majesty of diction, and from her violet-crowned Muses the perfect mastery over every mode of the lyre—I had rather refer to such images in the harmony of their own native tones,—

Χρύσεα φόρμιγξ, Ἀπόλλωνος
καὶ ἰοπλοκάμων
Σύνδικον Μοισᾶν κτέανον

but when, besides all these sources of what may

be esteemed as mere pleasure and delight, we proceed to infer that the Supreme Governor of the Universe must have deemed it good in his inscrutable councils to have furnished and arrayed all this wondrous development of human intellect and genius, as if with the purpose of proving how high they could soar—how low they must sink—without the accompaniment of his special Revelation; and then to have made this very language, thus fraught beforehand with all the treasures of this world's cunning, and adapted by the marvellous pliancy of its mechanism to the expression of all human thought, susceptible of a still higher destination in being the chief channel in communicating the simple and weighty terms of that Revelation to the world: just as also the Imperial power of Rome was the appointed instrument, first for opposing, then for exalting, and then for diffusing, the true Religion among mankind: when we further find every day new manuscripts unhoused from Thracian and Syrian monasteries, throwing new and unexpected lights, both upon the interpretation of the Sacred Text, and the History of the early Church, at once vindicating the truth of Scripture, and stripping the false pretensions and usurpation of man:—when the great German people, with its hosts of acute

critics and laborious scholars, are exercising their ingenuity upon all that has been discovered, and upon a great deal that has not;—I argue, both from this pervading and continuing correspondence between the Literature that has been termed Sacred, and been termed Profane, as well as from the general truth that the Author of the Universe is the source of all its beauty, and all its inspiration, that it can be no more our duty to leave the excellencies of Classical Literature unexplored and uncared for, than it would be for the tourist or painter to track the upward course of that fair stream which waters your town, and not let his enthusiasm thrill with a livelier pulse amid the ravines of Braemar, or his reverence kindle into a warmer glow under the crests of Lochnagar.

I wish, however, principally, within such short limit of time as still remains to me, instead of dilating further upon the character of those studies in these seats of learning, whether literary or scientific, which have already sufficiently commended themselves to the approval of mankind, to enter into somewhat more of immediate communication with the living mass of youth which I survey around me; and, as it is by their favour that I have been thus invested with the privilege to address, and even

to counsel them, I trust that they will pardon the endeavour to establish, during the short period allotted to our intercourse, the impressions of a more close, and real, and lasting sympathy between us.

It is, indeed, not without emotion that I am now looking upon you, a portion of the rising youth, and hope of Scotland—indeed, I may more fitly say, of our common country—of our common race of man. It is impossible for me, or for any one, to decipher what amount of promise there may be among the active forms and ingenuous countenances now gathered here, buoyant and ardent with all the energies of youth; it is quite possible that there may be among them the germs of the most splendid contributions to the service, or the delight of the world; and that even I, little worthy as I may be of such a function, may, at this moment, be addressing men destined, in the good Providence of God, to make their country greater, and their race happier, than they found it. But without anticipating more than any ordinary measure of the favours of Heaven, and the fortunes of man, without assuming that there are to issue from among you any prodigies of genius or virtue, still, to the most sober and least visionary apprehension, what is the spectacle

here presented? I see those who are to emerge from these walls as soon as the academical course has closed, and to enter upon the many paths of active life—some in all the busy calls of trade—some in the honourable competition of mercantile enterprise—some to administer or expound the laws of their country, and bring justice home to the poor man's dwelling—some in that holy profession of healing, which is entitled to the epithet, if for no other reason than that it was exalted by the practice of our Divine Master himself—some in the varied pursuits of science, art, and literature, among whom, perhaps, there will not be wanting those who will return to the well-remembered abode which they now inhabit here, and restore the full stream of their acquirements to its native well-head—some, above all, in your old honoured Scottish pulpits; (and here you will allow one who is a stranger in your country, and not an adherent to your Church, to speak without any reference to the later divisions which have prevailed within it;) but I never can speak of the history or the ministers of the Church of Scotland, without respect and gratitude for its steady consistency, in all her seasons of shade and sunshine, to both the simplicity and fervour of Gospel truth. When, however, I place the profession of a minister of

the Gospel high above all others, as I assuredly consider it to be in dignity, in privilege, in importance, I by no means intend to convey that it behoves every one to aim at making it his own ; on the contrary, I hold it to be the clear duty of a man to ascertain with as much sincerity of mind as he can bring to the momentous inquiry, what the calling in life is for which the apparent arrangements of Providence, and his own natural gifts, best adapt him ; and then, when he has made the decision, (I am of course speaking thus of the general run of cases, as there can scarcely be any universal or unbending law applicable to such matters,) to adhere to the course he has entered upon with the utmost stedfastness of purpose. This, it will be always fair for him to presume, is his allotted sphere—his appropriate theatre of action ; keeping within this, he appears warranted to hope for the blessing from above—departing from this, he seems to throw all on his own responsibility ; he is in danger of incurring the reproach of Reuben—

“ Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”

To exhort you, collectively, to diligence, to stimulate you to ardour, during these golden hours now put at your command for the undis-

turbed pursuit of your respective studies, while the dull surge of the outward world only booms in the distance, would be not only a very obvious task in itself, but one also I trust, for the most part, superfluous with reference to you. The desire for success in life is so general, and the ingredients of that success so palpable, that where these fail in suggesting and exciting the requisite exertion, the voice of the speaker can have little hope of being effective. Upon consulting and diving back into my own past experience, whether derived from observation of my fellows in the career of life, or still more consciously and painfully from the testimony of my own self-knowledge, I am inclined to think that the tendency against which we ought most to be on our guard, in School and College life in this country, and I doubt not in others, is the spirit of too decided emulation with one another, arising from the too eager desire of applause. I would be far from wishing to be understood as seeking to quench or supersede that powerful incentive to young and ardent dispositions; Providence has implanted it, and the whole constitution of the world in which we live teems with matter for its fuel and aliment; but like many of the best endowments of our race, it requires to be watched, guided, subor-

dinated. I perceive that my accomplished predecessor, the Earl of Eglinton, in his inaugural address, quoted one of those old Homeric lines which stir us like a war-trumpet, and it will furnish me with just the distinction which I want to establish—

Αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν, καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων :

“ Always excel, and tower above the rest.”

In the first section of this line, *αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν*, “ always excel,” the genius of Paganism and the genius of Christianity may take common ground, and impart a common lesson : “ Always excel.” To the soldier, when the storm sweeps down upon him—to the statesman, in the hottest strife of faction—to the ploughman, even on your granite hill-sides—to the physician or surgeon, by the couch of the sick or the maimed—to the clergyman, by the bed of the dying—duty has but one voice—“ Always excel.” But for the next half of the line, “ and tower above the rest,” there the genius of Paganism goes on, the genius of Christianity halts. To tower above the rest may be the result of your excellence, it cannot safely be its motive. Christianity here comes in with other motives, and with maxims which are at once immeasurably more humble, inconceivably more lofty. “ Charity seeketh

not her own." "In honour preferring one another." These, depend upon it, young friends, these are the rules to test your moral progress, to measure your heavenward growth.

Most sincere, indeed, is my wish for all of you that when, amid all the diverging paths and multifarious duties of your after lives, you look back upon the years that are now gliding too swiftly past you here, it may be to recognise in them the starting point from which you entered upon your several careers of eminence and distinction, enriched by the acquisitions with which you will have stored your own minds, and ennobled by the purposes of usefulness and philanthropy to which you will hereafter consecrate them; it should, however, be never left out of view, that eminence and distinction, in their very nature, cannot be the lot of all; they do not always follow upon endeavour, they do not invariably attend desert. But you may have learned better things from the mental and intellectual training of this place; you never could have learned them more effectively than from one of my most honoured predecessors in office—the learned and excellent Dr. Abercrombie—whose inaugural address from this chair is a perfect manual for the discipline of the mind and understanding, shewing most powerfully to

what a matter of science, and almost of certainty, it can be reduced ; and in how great a degree, if properly pursued and improved upon, it makes the mind its own supreme master and lawgiver. But most of all do I wish for you to look back on these sunny days of youth as the season of solemn resolve that you will put before you the one true ambition, and embrace the one paramount purpose of life—the ambition and the purpose to do the will of our God, and copy the character of his Christ.

