

AN ADDRESS
DELIVERED AT THE
FIRST ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
FREE ACADEMY
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

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ADDRESS.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

Ladies and Gentlemen,—The deep interest, which, as citizens of New York, we all feel in this novel institution, renders unnecessary any apology for addressing you, on its first Anniversary, in relation to its interests and its prospects. I call it novel—but as a mere seminary of learning, it is by no means a novelty. The same sciences, here as elsewhere, are made the foundation of a thorough and well-balanced education, and the same literature and art, give to the useful the solid and the practical, the forms and grace of the agreeable and the beautiful, in intellectual and moral culture. But in some of its aspects, it is new. No incorporation—no board of trustees—no stereotype charter—no ancient statutes—no antiquated formularies—no secluded cloisters—nor yet any speculative scheme of untried inventions, crudities and novelties are a part of our system. Intolerance does not frown upon us, as we enter these halls; nor bigotry, with

sightless eye-balls, insist upon our following her guidance. Infidelity does not here sneer at any man's worship, nor irreligion trample on what any of us hold sacred. The pupils come to this building only for the purposes and during the hours of academic instruction. They reside with their families, and are thus constantly enjoying the sweet influences of home, and are under the affectionate care of parental responsibility. They worship the God of their fathers, at the altars where their families kneel, and they receive their religious instruction and their ecclesiastical care, from the sacred teachers whom they have been taught to love and revere.

Candidates for admission to the Academy, are subjected to no test of faith, or lineage, or nation. Influence cannot facilitate their admission, nor prejudice hinder it. They are required to be not less than twelve years of age—to have been at least one year in the common schools of the city—to pass a good examination in spelling, reading, writing, english grammar, geography, arithmetic, and the history of the United States. These limits were demanded by expediency, in the beginning, but sound policy as well as necessity, will soon require them to be restricted, in the matter of age, as well as of acquirement and of education in the schools. The means of further instruction exist in the schools, and the younger pupils should avail themselves of them.—The examinations for admission are conducted by the professors in ignorance of the name of the candidate and of the school from which he comes—are recorded and preserved—and by

a comparison of the whole, the result is determined, and a full certificate of it, is furnished to each of the successful candidates.

The studies pursued here are those of a thorough education in our highest colleges, as well as those more usually confined to high schools and academies. Pupils who desire it may be profoundly educated in a various scholarship and its practical applications, and those who prefer it receive only that partial education which shall fit them for some particular pursuit. On leaving the Institution, all are furnished with a proper testimonial of their actual progress in learning.

It is a public seminary, established by the government, for extending, freely, the advantages of the highest education to all—not to the poor alone, nor to the rich alone—but to all alike. It is but a characteristic function of our government—manifesting, preserving and inculcating that republican equality, and generous freedom, which experience has shown to be the strength as well as the beauty of our institutions. The body politic here acts. The People, at their annual elections choose their representatives for this purpose, as they choose their servants for other public duties, and these representatives, as an organized Board of Education—a sort of Academical Senate—appoint the professors, and establish the rules and regulations, from time to time, as the lights of experience, or the wants of progress, call for modifications and changes; and all the expenses of education are paid from the public treasury—as well for books, apparatus and stationery, as for the buildings and for the salaries of the instructors.

With the city for its founder, the public treasury for its endowment, the popular voice for its encouragement, and the popular sovereignty as its visitor, it should be what it is, the Free Academy—Free to all. A free fountain, where all may slake their thirst for intellectual and moral culture, in the pure and living waters of mere academic learning.

The results of our brief experience have met our highest hopes and removed all doubt as to the practicability, as well as the expediency, of establishing the institution. Every circumstance has been fortunate for its infant life, and has seemed to show that a kind Providence called it into being and has hitherto guided its steps. It was subjected to a popular vote in a heavily taxed community, and it was approved by more than five to one. It was fortunate in the Executive Committee that gave form and direction to its first measures—Robert Kelly, my immediate predecessor, Thomas Denny, Joseph S. Bosworth, Samuel A. Crapo, William T. Pinckney—in whom were combined liberal education, sound discretion, knowledge of the past, hope for the future, the strongest popular sympathies, the most abiding faith in progressive republican institutions, with great practical wisdom and the most conscientious devotion to their trust. It is fortunate in a well-situated and a well-constructed building, not without architectural beauty, yet simple, economical and permanent, an object of respect and pride to the pupils and to the citizens. It is fortunate, also, in a Faculty of professors, not only ripe and good scholars, in the departments of ancient learning

and thoroughly furnished in the wider range of modern science and its more diversified applications to practical pursuits, but apt to teach, sure of the confidence and affection of the pupils, and fully impressed with the dignity and importance of their task.

It was fortunate too for the Schools, as well as for the Academy, that such a course of examination was adopted as restricted the numbers, originally admitted, to comparatively few. For the Schools, because it sent back to them large numbers who had stood well, as bright and industrious scholars, but who lacked precise and certain knowledge, and who were compelled to report, that this is no place where all can come and take it easy—no place for guess work knowledge and negligent progress. For the Academy, because, if by a lax examination, it had opened with several hundred pupils, confusion would have been inevitable—a year might have passed in getting at something like imperfect order—little proficiency would have been made in study, and the institution might have stumbled along through a few years, and have finally gone down, leaving its brief history as a warning against all such efforts, and an insuperable obstacle to any further attempt to make higher education a part of a system of public instruction for the people. How much better it was to have fewer well-fitted students, and permit the professors, without anxiety or embarrassment, to establish its organization in such manner as to secure the confidence of all, and give that permanency, stability and excellence, which should cause all the machinery to move without uu-

necessary friction or jar. Then all who should afterwards come in, would easily partake of the same spirit and motion, and go on with the regular currents.

The practical effects of the institution are already felt. The community has received a new educational impulse. The high as well as the low, the rich as well as the poor, now seek, for their children, the first vacant seats in our too crowded schools, not only to obtain the excellent tuition which is given there, but also that they may be admitted here. The schools themselves are greatly improved,—a higher tone is given to their instruction, and a more careful finish to its details. This influence upon the schools is worth more than all the Free Academy costs. And when it is considered that the whole system, from the Primary School to the Free Academy, is but one system, and is kept up to its point of high excellence, the whole year, for less than nine dollars a pupil, in a city where the usual average expenses of such instruction, in private schools, have always been more than four times that amount, the expense, large as it may seem in the aggregate, is not worthy of consideration. If it had been proposed to secure the same result, by increased facilities and more instructors in the schools, the community would sanction the outlay; but it could not be done for three times the cost of this establishment, nor half so well done. If we had the books, the apparatus, the proper rooms, and the thorough scholars for teachers, in all the schools, that are necessary here, we could not get that acceleration and power, which come from homogeneity of instruc-

tion—from gregarious sympathy in a common atmosphere of learning and a common purpose of excellence.

Such, briefly, is the Free Academy, in principle and practice. It is but the proper complement to the system of Free Common Schools.

Many of us remember the opposition with which the introduction of Common Schools in this State was met. That opposition led to discussion, which but endeared the system to the people. None of us have forgotten the circumstances under which the system was extended to this city, and the fearful agitation, which almost maddened the community. That agitation only fortified the new order of things, and the schools are already a just object of pride, as well as of affection to the whole people. The change from expensive private schools, accessible to but few, and schools established and sustained by charity, to schools established and supported by the public will, at the public expense—the equal right of all—has demonstrated that the charity system is antagonistical to our institutions, and cannot thrive under them, while the present system is the proper growth of them, and partakes of the prosperity and growth of the community. So the few objections to the Free Academies will but exhibit the exceeding simplicity and transparency of the principles on which it is founded, and reveal its excellence. Their gentle friction will keep the chain bright which binds the institution to the inner heart of our people.

Those few who are opposed to the Free Academy, allege for cause—that its plan necessarily excludes

religious instruction—for pupils of all sects and creeds must have equal rights in an institution entirely sustained from the public treasury;—that in it the dead languages occupy time which ought to be devoted to more practical branches of study;—that it offers to a part of the children of the city a more costly education, at the public expense, than is provided for and freely offered to all;—that it gives this superior education to the most intellectual and cultivated youth—to the apt in study, the brilliant, the proficient;—whereas, if offered at all, it should be to the step-children of nature and of fortune—the outcast, the benighted, the brutalized, the homeless, the miserable;—that the cost of the institution would be better devoted to the providing homes and comforts for destitute and afflicted children from the lanes, courts and cellars—who are daily sinking deeper and deeper into the bottomless gulf of vagrancy, want, beggary, theft, prostitution, disease and death. Some object that the State has no right to tax one citizen to aid in educating the children of another; and others that the State has no right to educate those who are able to educate themselves.

The answer to all these objections is found in the great axiomatic principles which lie at the foundation of our governments, and whose most beneficial and most universal application we have not reached, although we have, by a constant and regular development, been coming nearer and nearer to it during the two hundred years since they were first planted here.

Those have been sometimes derided and sometimes

denounced who have spoken of the past, and predicted the future as the march of "our manifest destiny." The phrase has, nevertheless, its proper significance, for it means only that irresistible law of our progress, which a proper observation cannot fail to trace everywhere in our history.

The Puritans to New England, the Dutch to New York, the Quakers to Pennsylvania, the Catholics to Maryland, were all sent of God, on the same errand, to found this great nation, on principles of toleration, of liberty, of equality—a confederation of individuals and a confederation of States, with popular forms of government, established by the will of the people, acknowledging the right of the majority to govern and their duty to seek the greatest good of the greatest number. To that great result, the individuality, the peculiarity and the diversity of these different classes of settlers, were as necessary to the progressive strength of the nation, as their enterprize and their fortitude, in the same manner as individual and social diversity are necessary to the strength and to the well-balanced liberty of society. One hundred and fifty years brought, naturally, the change from monarchy to republicanism, and the adoption of the great truths of equality and the right and duty of the majority. Half that period, since, by a progress as natural, has brought more democratic institutions, which approach still more nearly to those fundamental principles. That progress has been inevitable, and two of its most characteristic reforms are, the acknowledging and practising the first duty of the State to provide for the

education of the people, and to abstain from meddling with the religious peculiarities of the people. Freedom demands them both, and popular power will secure them both, or our government is a fallacy.

Nor is there any irreligion in thus separating the educational institutions of the State from all direct connection with sectarian religion. We cannot too often nor too earnestly insist that true religion is our highest interest and our daily duty, and that to it all other things are subordinate in importance. But it is not, therefore, to be mixed up with everything. It is rather to be set apart as sacred—peculiar in its forms and ministrations, and averse to all baser mixture. It is voluntary and pure, or it does not exist. It looks directly and exclusively to its Almighty source, or it goes astray. In those matters of instruction which come nearest to the business and bosoms of the youth—their instruction in the useful, the ornamental, and the practical branches—in professional education, (except theology) in mechanical education, in musical education, in artistic education—as well the useful as the ornamental and the beautiful—we do not insist that sectarian religion shall be mingled with the lessons of our teachers. Then why may we not teach reading, writing, languages, mathematics, moral and intellectual philosophy and belles-lettres, in public schools, with careful discipline, under well-chosen instructors, for a few hours each day in a religious and moral community, not only without injury, but with positive benefit to the religious and moral culture of the pupils? Practically it is so. The whole experi-

ence of the world shows that the interests of education and religion both require that education should be, and that religion should not be, secularized.

In relation to the dead languages, it is true that many look forward to the time when such institutions as this shall take the place of the colleges and universities, and when that indispensable culture, that is obtained in no way so well as by the careful study of languages, shall be found in the study of the philosophy and literature of our own and other modern languages instead of the ancient and dead tongues of nations that have passed from the earth. I make no secret of my belief that such a revolution is inevitable and desirable, but I do not expect to live to see it. Nothing was more natural than that the dead languages should have taken so important a place in education, and they have taken root too strongly to be easily or quickly supplanted. Their relation to the sacred scriptures and the ancient Greek and Roman Churches, at one time occupying the whole ground of Christendom—their having been the vernacular tongues of nations who had carried literature, art, science and civilization to a point of intellectual excellence, nowhere else attained—that in them alone existed a national literature, pretending to excellence, while theirs was of the highest artistic perfection and solid worth—that they were dead, and, in form and substance, had a fixed and certain significancy, free from fluctuation—that their analysis could be made the basis of certain rules and their taste adopted as a standard—that they showed the Greek and Roman mind, and the great

necessary elements of language, with the same precision that Roman life and architecture were struck in the lava at Herculaneum and preserved in the ashes of Pompeii—that in them were embalmed the most glorious memories of the race—all this could not fail to bring them into the schools, when the schools were but for a few. They then easily became the medium of communication among the learned and none others, and thus a learned class was created, of the most exclusive aristocracy. The next step was writing in these languages, which gave to authors a most intelligent class of readers among the learned of all nations, and soon all the learning of the world was in those languages and accessible only to the learned. Thus a pupil could not be taught in the higher branches of learning, till he was master of the learned languages as they were then called. All technical language was soon derived from them, and Greek and Latin derivatives and arrangements were mixed with and formed a great part of the vernacular tongue which had not till then acquired the fixed character that made it the proper vehicle of cultivated thought and expression, while the languages of Southern Europe—then the centre of the highest civilization—were but dialects of the Greek or the Latin. No one can fail to see what a powerful footing they have thus acquired in the world. Nor is it surprising that they should, by almost universal consent, be now considered a necessary part of the education of those who are intended for the learned professions, including instructors in the higher seminaries and those who follow literature as a profession. Many

of these reasons have passed away, and though some of them still remain, it is not to be wondered at, that the active and acute modern progressive should insist, that, as it was the circumstances and wants of that now dead past, that directed its studies, so our studies should be adapted to our circumstances and the wants of our times—times in which commerce and international intercourse are bringing all nations together—in which no one dreams of thinking, or speaking or writing in any dead language, and the literature and science of the modern great nations, outvalues, a hundred fold, in interest and importance, the known literature and science of all antiquity—that the relation of vernacular language to individual as well as national character and progress, has been too much overlooked, and that, possibly much of the power of the poets and philosophers, the historians and orators of Greece and Rome, may be traced to the fact that they had no dead languages with which to corrupt and emasculate, and undervalue their own, and that their own tongues were the objects of their deepest study and their greatest pride. This is not the occasion to discuss the relative merits of the dead languages and the living, but it is proper at this time to vindicate the freedom of the Free Academy. Whatever may be thought of the expediency of studying the dead languages as we do, no one is here, compelled to do so, and I cannot hesitate to declare my conviction that this Institution would fail of its great purpose, and would be an institution of most questionable policy if those who should desire it were not permitted here,

to pursue, with the best aids, those branches of knowledge, which have been by a vast majority of thoroughly educated men, for many centuries, in Europe and America, considered not only an important, but a necessary part of a complete education, for the man of action and of thought, as well as for those who would multiply their resources for lives of elegant leisure. This institution should not be vulgarized and degraded to exclude those who must thus be driven elsewhere. If what is considered the proper education for scholars, for professional men, for men of wealth and leisure, must be excluded from this institution, then inequality and injustice, and an aristocratic tendency may be well charged against it. If we render necessary for a favored class, higher and better seminaries, they will exist and in some sort by our agency. If we say to the pupils in our schools, that there is a higher and a better class of institutions, more appropriate for others, but that this is good enough for them, then we inculcate upon the scholars not only their own inferiority, but that of the education which the public provides for them. Will you say to the community, that at the Free Academy, they are entitled to free education for the lower and middle classes, but that those who would shine in the dress circles of society, must go to the college and the university? Will the ends of public education be answered by declaring, if your son is to go to a counting room or a trade, you may send him to the Free Academy, where, in a short period they will give him French, Spanish and German, a few colloquial phrases in each, enough to make a bargain,

with book-keeping and the practical branches, and these are enough to make money, but if you intend him for a profession, or have a fortune to leave him,— if you would make him a cultivated gentleman, send him to college and teach him greek and latin and polite learning?

If public seminaries do not exclude the poor who cannot pay, they surely should not practically exclude the rich who do pay. If the poor may there get the education which is fit for them, on what pretence of right can we deny to the rich the facilities for getting that education which is fit for their wants, and when we have thus mingled all together, on the same footing of republican equality, in such a seminary, can we prevent the son of the plainest laboring man from contending with the sons of the wealthy for the distinctions and enjoyments which are found in communing with the great men of the classic ages, in being fed and invigorated by the great substance of their intellectual works, and at the same time delighted, refined and beautified by that exquisite artistic finish, and native charm, which cannot pass from one language to another by translation? We cannot do so without destroying the Institution in all its characteristic advantages, especially those to which the friends of educational reform look with the highest hope.

Let us insist that the practical and useful ought to triumph, but do not let us forget that our opinion, as to what is the practical and the useful, is by no means agreed to, by great numbers whose intelligence and experience ought to give their opinions great weight,

even with ourselves—and with others, do give them the weight of the highest authority. We do much by placing the modern and the ancient side by side in inevitable comparison.

Those of us who believe with the most confidence that there is a good time coming, when more thorough reforms and more rapid progress shall gladden the people, must be content to wait the order of nature. We may persuade, but we cannot compel the majority. The Jehus of treason and rebellion are sometimes anointed in the inner chamber of the divine wisdom, to make sudden and violent political changes, but social, educational and moral changes are not so brought in. The triumphs of the new practice over the old custom must be slow. Those who preach a new gospel, even when sent from God, must be content to teach daily in the synagogues of tradition and ancient usage, and when they have healed some blindness of the social state, they must offer for its cleansing those things which have been commanded by the lawgivers of a primitive antiquity, who also, in their turn, had to yield something to the people, for the hardness of their hearts. The time honored usage, the unconscious prejudice, the hereditary custom, the everywhere diffused public opinion, while they are attacked, must be treated with respect. They yield only to influences that enter silently, by absorption, and whose triumph is seen, not in their daily march, but is ascertained by the comparison of distant periods.

The objection that this Institution offers to a part of the children of the city a more costly education, at the

public expense, than is offered to all, is an evident fallacy. This is one of the Common Schools, free to all. It is but the highest step in a regular gradation—the last stage in the development of a complete system of public education. The Common Schools are so called because they are common to all, not because they are common in quality or low in order. From the primary schools, scattered all over the city, to this Free Academy, is an uninterrupted scale of instruction. In no one stage are all the pupils or all the branches introduced at once. In the primary schools are the largest numbers: as we rise in the scale of education, the numbers in the classes diminish, and the ability of the teachers increases. In the highest classes the numbers are comparatively small, and from them, in all the schools, such as desire it and are worthy, are advanced another step, and brought together in this one building, instead of remaining in many, and under these instructors, more fitted for the higher teaching of sound and elegant learning. The highest class is as free to all as the lowest, although all are not able to avail themselves of its advantages—in the same manner as a single school is free to all, though, for want of room, but few can be admitted, and as the offices and honors of the State are free to all, while comparatively few are worthy of them, and fewer still receive them. In the schools, in every stage, those and those only are admitted, who by nature and instruction are fitted to enter upon the appropriate studies of the appointed classes. The whole is regularly progressive, but always just, equal, and impartial; and,

if accidental or necessary limitations exclude some, it strengthens rather than impairs the free character of the system, as the existence of wholesome laws protects instead of destroying the liberty of the people. If there be a child in the city to whom the law does not freely offer a place in the Common Schools, let the objector point him out. If there be a pupil in the Common Schools whom the law excludes from all the advantages of this Academy, where is the unjust and unequal barrier? There is none.

The objection that the community has no right to give a superior education to the most intellectual and cultivated youth, but that the right, if it exist, should be exercised in favor of the brutalized and benighted, is so extraordinary as to excite a smile at its absurdity. It needs no serious answer. It is quite probable that none but the intellectual and the cultivated will ever reach the Free Academy or the highest classes in the schools, but there is no rule or law which excludes them—and the outcast and the benighted, the brutalized, the homeless, and the miserable there is no law to exclude them, which does not as effectually exclude the more fortunate and happy. No one can seriously suppose it necessary or desirable to establish a Free Academy to teach the higher branches of science and letters to none but the vicious and the brutalized, the tatterdemalions of the lanes and alleys, the thieves, beggars, and prostitutes of the bottomless gulf of perdition, for as soon as we should have them clothed and in their right mind, they would thereby be disqualified. The real objection is, not

that such are not admitted to the Free Academy, but it seems rather to be that the money which this Institution costs is not devoted to providing homes for them, and raising them from their degradation. "Why was this waste? It might have been sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor." But if we may not do a great good so long as there is some other good to do—if we may not push forward a comprehensive system of social reform, so long as there are brutalized and vicious poor to excite our sympathy, we may give up all the institutions that keep the rest of us from being brutalized and vicious. How many homes for the miserable we could buy with our churches and school houses! Legislatures and courts, what millions they cost, while the laws they pass are mostly a few private acts, and the causes they decide are between a few private individuals. The navy has fought hardly a dozen battles in half a century,—it has only protected the commerce of a few. The army protects only the scattered settlers on the frontiers. What deeds of charity we might do with the millions expended in keeping up these departments of government! But what a transparent fallacy is this, which looks upon the beneficial arrangements of social organization as having no value except in their direct application to individual cases. In that direct application they are usually salutary, but almost always unequal, and often unjust. It is in their moral force, in that indirect and silent effect upon the whole community, which is as invisible as it is universal, that their real value consists, and it is to that that the individual case only conduces.

Let us not forget the poor and the vicious, the brutalized and miserable! Send out on errands of kindness the agents of charity and mercy,—build hospitals, homes, houses of refuge and comfort, and go out to the highways and hedges, and compel the needy to come in. But do not hinder us in the great work of public education.—And is it in New York that we are upbraided with not caring for the step-children of nature and fortune, when hundreds of thousands of dollars are annually devoted to their care? The blind, to whom nature denies all those glorious enjoyments that reach us through the eye, what do we not do to teach them letters and art! The deaf and dumb, by nature shut out from the concord of sweet sounds, the music of nature and the voice of man, do not their poor dumb mouths thank Gotha t they are citizens of this generous State. And most of all, the poor lunatic and madman, in whose intellect the candle of the Lord has gone out, or gives but a flickering and uncertain light, what have we failed to do for them? This city alone paid last year more than a quarter of a million of dollars from the public treasury to provide homes and comforts for the poor, saying nothing of its princely institutions of private charity, and untold sums to prevent vagrancy, want, beggary, theft, and prostitution. Let her pay more, if necessary, but who will deny her the privilege of paying twenty thousand dollars for this noble Institution, in this proud city of our home. It cannot be that any sane mind can really wish to destroy this Institution, because its cost is not applied in individual charity to

the poor. The source of this objection is really the unjust and unfounded application to this Institution of certain trite and not entirely unfounded causes of complaint which are urged against colleges and universities; and others, equally trite but entirely unfounded, charges of injustice and inequality which are made by the unpatriotic against Common Schools. It does not seem to be always considered, as it should be, that the very purpose of Free Academies is to remove those very causes of complaint against the colleges, by a very thorough reform in the system of higher education, which shall make it more practical and useful. No Christian or civilized State has ever failed to assert or acknowledge not only the right but the duty of providing and fostering the education of the people, by means drawn from the citizens, in proportion to their property, without any regard to their individual educational wants; and the first great act of State in this behalf is often to endow colleges and universities, which are almost always found to precede a proper system of Common School Education. We often find excellent colleges and higher seminaries endowed by the government in States where the education of the whole people is entirely neglected. The State seems soonest to feel and readiest to acknowledge its duty to provide instruction in the higher branches. If the higher seminaries do their duty, we soon find that their proper fruit is a Common School system, provided by the State. This then is perfected and extended, and in the progress of its development, in the maturity of its growth, and

the perfection of its fruit, we shall find that the two will coalesce and unite, and, coming under the popular power, will make the highest education as well as the lowest the common right of all, under such circumstances as to meet the proper wants and tastes of all. To this point it has nowhere yet arrived—I hope, however, that we are here in sight of it, and that our example in pressing onward to it will mark the beginning of a new era in public education.

If the State must supply schools for the people, surely it must be schools which will give us the education that we need in our peculiar circumstances—schools that will fit us for what our institutions require us to do. All admit that, of necessity, the American citizen must be a man of all work, and fit for all work. That is his characteristic distinction from the people of all other nations. To fulfil all his duties, he must be thoroughly furnished to every good work, and he must expect to hear the calls of enterprize, of ambition, of quiet usefulness and of distinction, and he must be able to answer those calls. He steps from the workshop to official station—from the university to the counting-room or the manufactory,—from the plough and the anvil to the Senate House and back again,—and, all the time, all the people are expected to give an intelligent look to the foreign and domestic policy of the Republic, the making of her laws, the vindicating her honor, and contributing to her glory and strength, and annually, at least, to pass judgment upon her public functionaries. He is in fact, as he is in law, a portion of the sovereignty of the nation.

The child that is born to-day in the palace of civilization or in the hut of want and obscurity,—what will he be? In other countries there are probabilities. The one has a noble name and cultured lands, and shall live in ease, a hereditary legislator and ruler. The other shall be sent to the poor-house or made a beast of burden in subterranean mines, or grow up in ignorance, brutality, and crime. But here—the wisest of us may well hesitate before he can decide whose final lot of the two he would prefer. Here no one is surprised that a mill boy should achieve fame in his youth, and never pale his intellectual fires, even after he has left three score years and ten behind him. No one thinks it strange that a poor boy of foreign parentage, should against all obstacles, rise to the highest honors as a soldier and a statesman, wield this great nation at his will, and engrave his name indelibly on its history. A farmer's boy leaves the plough, and he soon stands alone, outshining all Greek and Roman fame, in the profoundness of his thought and the massive power of his eloquence. A wagon boy quits his team, and in middle life he has been Governor, Senator, Minister of State, and all along he has seen his rivals and his enemies as well as his friends, hang in admiration on his lips. I might take up the day in citing such familiar instances, from all the high places of merit and distinction, in private life and in public station, and all be within the memory of the youngest student of this Academy, and the last should be that of one of our own citizens, whose early life in the labors of the field and the toil of the workshop were

fitting him, unconsciously, to be the President of the United States. It is a law of our institutions which produces such results, and its relation to general education is evident.

That knowledge is power, loses none of its force when applied to the generally diffused knowledge of a well-educated community. The productive strength of the community is in the direct ratio of its knowledge and intellectual cultivation. A British writer recently says, with great truth and force, that the Hindoos are the oldest cotton manufacturers. The cotton grows at their doors, and labor is cheaper there than any where else. Yet the British manufacturer carries that cotton 13,000 miles, manufactures it at higher wages, carries the manufactured goods back 13,000 miles, and undersells the Hindoo at his own door,—the difference being in the practical producing power, that education and intelligence gives to a community. And the same writer adds, with great fairness, that there is no nation whose competition Great Britain fears so much as that of the United States, because the greater diffusion of education will bring that intelligence and power which must outstrip other nations. A more common-place, but not less forcible illustration is around us. It is, comparatively, a short period since this great State was inhabited only by numerous nations of Indians. They were not weak in intellect or slow in action. The hand of nature gave them a noble bearing. They had many high and beautiful characteristics. With more than Roman firmness, with more than Spartan

self-denial, and more than Lacedemonian bravery, they united an undying love of country and of liberty—and cunning, discretion, and caution which amounted almost to wisdom. They lived under organized governments, and they formed extensive and powerful confederacies, whose influence was felt, and whose power was courted even in the proud old monarchies of Europe. But they were destitute of education. Here was the home of their race. The land was full of the graves of their dead generations. Yet it was wilderness still, and all their values were represented by a few belts of wampum. Why? They had none of the productive power which knowledge gives to a community. They that are left of them now, stroll about—

“ Their blankets tied with yellow strings,”

peddling a few baskets and indian ornaments, along the great thoroughfares of educated man, and the forest glades, where, at the council fires of the nation, the wild eloquence of prophets and orators roused their associate braves to superhuman prowess, are now covered with the fields, the farms, the factories, the cities, the cultivation, the arts, the schools, and the untold wealth of three millions of people. Education makes the difference. Is it not worth, to the State, the money it costs?

Who can fail to see in the destiny of our institutions, as well as in their nature and history, that the education which the public should offer, to all alike, should be—not merely reading, writing, and cyphering, they are not education,—but that which cultivates

and invigorates the whole man, sharpens every faculty, strengthens all his powers, and multiplies his resources,—such diversified and thorough education as this Institution is intended to give. When we were of the age of these young gentlemen, the proud Old World beyond the deep, laughed at the vanity with which we spoke of our future. History has already recorded the progress, which has far outstripped the loudest boast of our most sanguine fathers, and the little band that stood up to their destiny, in 1776, and wrought out a revolution, predicted to fail by half the world, has become one of the greatest nations of the earth. Spanning across 17 degrees of latitude, and 60 degrees of longitude, it has become the nearest maritime neighbor of the oriental world and the islands of the Pacific. Providence has given to our teaching the great truths of republican liberty. Shall not every citizen be at least a silent practical teacher of our political creed? Our whole history is but an example of the safe conservatism which it gives to progress. Changes that have been resisted with all the power of eloquence, and all the discipline of party, have succeeded each other with all the rapidity and surprise of the shifting scenes of the theatre,—and the greatest surprise of all has been the salutary result of such changes, and the harmony with which all have acknowledged the wisdom of Providence in directing our destiny. What are to be the changes of the next 25 years? The human mind is not able to conceive them. Long before that time, this city will be the centre of the world, with daily mails to

every continent, and daily news from the ends of the earth. Proud republican cities on the Pacific shall send the influence of our principles over all the East. What American heart does not swell with delight in the hope that this nation will be one day known among all the nations, as the universally educated nation, and American Literature, American Art, American intelligence and cultivation, shall go wherever American Commerce shall carry our flag. Then shall the nations know the value of Freedom, as, in our noble vernacular tongue, she proclaims the increase of national glory, and wealth, and power, that come in the train of that intelligence, which is the necessary result of the constant mingling of educated minds with educated minds, in all the active and productive pursuits of actual labor, as well as of skill and mere intellectual effort. Avarice will then join with Ambition and Patriotism in celebrating the triumph of this experiment. It is with feelings that I cannot express, that I look upon the course which the cause of public education is taking. It is beginning its march through the nations. It is with pride that I see our own proud State and this noble city of our affection taking a position among the first, in a cause so full of hope to humanity. Here immigrants receive their first impressions. Here departing travelers take their last look. We are a city set on a hill. I rejoice that we cannot be hid, I exult that it is my lot to-day to address these words of congratulation to the first audience assembled to witness the first literary anniversary of this Free Academy. I seem to

see in it the beginning of a great movement, forward and upward, to that period, foreseen by the sacred prophets, when in their divine frenzy they were rapt into future times, and saw human society in the ultimate glory of its earthly destiny.

An interesting part of our duty to-day yet remains to be done. It is known to you that Mr. Duncan C. Pell, a merchant of this city, struck with the fitness of this Institution, as a part of a comprehensive system of public instruction, not only adapted to furnish the most solid education in the higher branches of learning, but also to act as a proper stimulus to the pupils, in the schools, has recorded his admiration by establishing a gold medal to be awarded annually, forever, to that pupil, who, during the year, has made the greatest proficiency, in his general studies.

Mr. Edwin Burr, a lawyer of this city, with a view to express his interest in the progress of public education, and to give force to his opinion, that exact science and its practical applications are the best foundation for careful scholarship and extensive usefulness, has also established a gold medal to be awarded for mathematical merit, annually, forever.

Mr. Pell and Mr. Burr have thus, in a manner worthy of their patriotism, done honor to the cause of progress, have opened a perpetual fountain of the purest satisfaction to themselves, and have mingled their names with the memories which will spring up and cluster round this Institution, and be cherished forever.

These medals are this year awarded for the first time, and have been awarded by the Trustees of the respective funds, according to the scale of merit which results from the comparison and combination of the daily records of proficiency, kept during the year by the professors.

It is my official duty now to deliver them. The medal established by Mr. Pell, has been awarded to John Hardy, and the medal established by Mr. Burr, has been awarded to Edwin S. Babcock.*

John Hardy and Edwin S. Babcock will step forward.

My young friends,

I am happy to meet you on this interesting occasion, and it is with feelings of the greatest pleasure that I present to you these medals, as rewards for that industry which has enabled you to deserve them, thus early in your academical course. It is to you a great honor to be the first to receive this distinction in the Academy. If you pursue the same course of industry and good conduct through life, your name may be always connected with this Institution, as among its brightest ornaments, and help to illustrate the new era, when

* John Hardy is the son of William Hardy, a respectable journeyman blacksmith, of this city, and before entering the Free Academy, he had received all his education in Public Schools No. 13 and No. 14.

Edwin S. Babcock is the son of Paul Babcock, a reputable and prosperous merchant of this city, and before entering the Free Academy, he had received his education in Public School No. 3. They both intend to avail themselves of all the advantages of a full course in this institution.

the means of thorough and accomplished education shall be freely offered by the popular will, to all the children of the Republic.

Mr. Pell and Mr. Burr have not founded these prizes in any narrow desire to reward some fortunate individual. They have sought to encourage a love of sound learning and a generous emulation in your studies, by adding to the incentives of manly hope the *certaminis gaudia*—the rapture of the friendly strife of youthful zeal for merited honor. The medals are intended by their founders to be perpetual incentives to new exertion and further progress, and constantly to remind you of your interest, as well as of your duty to yourselves and to your country. They bear on their face fit emblems of literature and science, that whenever you look upon them, you may be impressed with the elevated purpose of the donors.* On the reverse of each is engraved a drawing, by Professor Duggan, your teacher of that beautiful art. It is suggestive of the public character of this Institution, established and supported by the city and the State, and of those great characteristics which are at the same time, the cause and the effect of our progress and power. You see there the Arms of the State—Justice, and Liberty and Light are the means

* The drawings on the face of the medals were selected from those produced by the pupils during the past year. They are the productions of John Lovejoy, Thomas Logue and Edwin S. Babcock. By a happy but accidental coincidence, the drawing selected for the mathematical medal was the production of the fortunate pupil to whom it was awarded.

The trustees of the medals have determined to select the drawings annually from those of the pupils, if suitable ones are thus produced.

of her progress and the emblems of her glory—blended with the Arms of the City,—where industry and enterprize in commerce and manufactures, are fitly blazoned as the means of making the wilderness and the ocean productive. When you look at them, let your hearts always swell with affectionate devotion to New York, and with devout gratitude to God that your lot has been cast where a living faith in the great principles of republican equality, is manifested in a wise and beneficent government.

Most cordially I wish you God speed. Be an honor to morals, to religion and to learning, and you will more than repay Mr. Pell and Mr. Burr, and give to your instructors and the Free Academy their highest honor.

Young gentlemen of the Free Academy,

I cannot let this occasion pass without congratulating you all on the progress which you have made in learning, and the example which you have set, in this Institution, at its outset in usefulness. It is fortunate for the Academy and for your instructors, as well as for yourselves, that such elements are united in bringing forth the buds of the first fruits of that harvest which ages are here to gather in. Much is due to the careful and well-directed efforts of those instructors which it was the good fortune of the city to secure, and to that steady discipline—constant in its parental kindness, and unyielding in its impartiality and strictness—which seeks more to prevent than to punish, and more to encourage than to rebuke. But more still must be due to your own diligent application to

your studies. All these influences together, I am happy in believing have fully set the fashion of good conduct and hard study in the Academy.

You have shown a diversity of progress and attainments which is in some degree caused by that constitutional and characteristic difference which doubtless exists in your capacities. Far less, however, of the ultimate difference in the aggregate of intellectual power and personal success in learning, as well as in the enterprises of active life, depends on that difference, than is often supposed. One has more fitness for one thing than another. One has facility in one study, and one in another, and every one of us is superior to his fellow, in something; but we have, all of us, that which, with industry, will give us the strength we need to attain to enviable success; and the audience, I trust, will not be impatient, while I urge upon you the great truth, as important as it is true, that it is industry, diligence, application, that makes the great and the successful what they are, in all the undertakings of human effort. It is this which has given splendor to the names that shine through the darkness of antiquity, and to those which in later times have shed their radiance on a more enlightened world. The marble and the granite have inherent beauties—each a peculiar fitness to receive a polish, while they lie in the quarry—and in them are concealed all the forms of beauty, but the polish itself and the beautiful proportions of the statue—the grace of the Venus—the nobility of the Apollo, and the power of the Hercules—are given to them only by the intense thought and the

constant application of the sculptor, and the long and diligent use of his mallet and chisel.

The wisest of men has given us, in the sacred volume, this truth, often repeated and with a various application, "The hand of the diligent *maketh rich*"—"The hand of the diligent shall *bear rule*"—"Seest thou a man diligent in his ways, he shall *stand before kings*"—"The *soul* of the diligent shall be made fat." The same law for mind, body and estate! Industry, rightly applied, is the secret of success. I say rightly applied—for industry in small things—constancy in trifles, belittles instead of ennobling. The mind must not be pampered with luxuries, nor frittered away with frivolity. It must sharpen its appetite by manly exercises, and invigorate its powers by manly studies. It must be grasping for truths which are almost beyond its reach. Its amusement must be to hunt the boldest dogma down, with all the keenness of a sportsman. It must eat that which it taketh in hunting, and it will grow by what it feeds on. It is thus that desirable distinction has always been attained. The great and good of past ages—those of whom the race has most reason to be proud—those whose examples and whose fame are most familiar to us, are the most striking examples of it. History and Fame will show you the records of ancient greatness. It is there set down that Cicero, by an industry that never tired, acquired his stores of learning;—that it was by constant labor that the thunders of Grecian eloquence were taught to roll from lips, that stammered up to manhood, and Socrates, and Plato, and Archimedes, and such as

they. They were never idle. They are all described in the records of their glory as men of incredible industry, of singular diligence. And in more modern times it has not been otherwise. Think you that Newton came from the hand of his Creator a genius so much mightier than all who had gone before him, as the effects which he produced exceeded those of any other age? Did the abstractions of his infant mind predict that all, and more than all, that the ancients fabled of their Atlas would be true of him? What patient toil, what years of profound study, Bacon gave to the great system of inductive philosophy? Genius only held the light, while a chastized and persevering industry removed the rubbish of ages. It was a severe application that managed the lever that righted the world of philosophy. Do you believe that our own Franklin was formed by nature alone, to sport with the thunders and make the lightning the plaything of his leisure? He had learned that nature is to be subdued only by obeying her laws, and only by a careful study did he learn them, obey them, and make them his servants. Bacon will be remembered till there is no more need of philosophy, and Franklin and Newton will live, in the gratitude of the world, till the last lightnings shall have played through the heavens and they be rolled together as a scroll. And this enduring fame was the reward of lives of incredible laborious industry, in the pursuit of useful knowledge. I have instanced but these trite examples; as you advance in learning, you will see that the catalogue might be swelled with the names of hundreds

and hundreds more, whose laurels, gathered by their own hands, in the most various paths of learning, will grow greener and fresher with the lapse of ages.

You will indeed find also a few who seem indebted for their distinction to the force of genius alone. We gaze with wonder at their high, rapid, and brilliant courses, but we look in vain for the good they have done. What plans have they originated for increasing the happiness of man? What additions have they made to the treasures which industry has heaped up for us? What maturing influence have they exerted for the good of the world? So meteors have, in all ages, dashed across our horizon, with solar effulgence, whose paths we cannot trace, and the direction of whose impelling forces we cannot learn. We know of their existence only by the dazzling splendor of their course, not by the good they have done. They have scattered no blessings. Spring owes none of its budding loveliness to the warmth of their beams, and autumn forgets them, in her burst of gratitude for the rich and ripened clusters that a steadier sun and a less brilliant moon have poured into her lap.

Young gentlemen, you will not by these be diverted from that great law of your progress,—that it is only by high aims, by vigorous manly effort, and by laborious industry and trust in God that you can attain to useful eminence. You are to build up your own characters. You must work out your own destiny. You are conscious that your powers may be cultivated unequally. Further experience and reflection will show you that partial and unequal cultivation, makes but a

sort of deformity, and that man realizes his full intellectual and moral nature only when all its parts are properly carried up together. We have the full assurance of a man, only when we behold him 'noble in reason, infinite in faculties, in action like an angel, in apprehension like a God.' To reach your highest excellence, you have only to adopt in science, in literature, in art, in morals, in religion, in your whole progress, the simple motto of this proud State,—*Excelsior*—onward and upward, higher, higher, higher! You have already perceived that every step forward is into new pleasures. As you go on, this will be more strikingly true. As we toil up the mountain steeps, often new discouragements are found at every step,—the path becomes rugged and obscure, the flowers fail, the trees give place to scattered and stunted shrubs, the line of vegetation is passed at last, and sterility and cold are the final reward of the loftiest ascents. Not so with

"The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar."

Every new height surmounted, opens new pleasures. A wider horizon, a purer air, and a more perfect and far-reaching vision, reveal to you new beauties in a landscape, in which, from a fresh and novel present, you look back to the cherished spots of memory, and forward to the anticipations of hope. The brighter light, the more genial temperature, and the choicest fruits are the last; and at every step the right soul feels that it is less and less lower than the angels.