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A LECTURE,

Delivered to the Law Class of William and Mary College, June 17, 1839, being the last of a course of Lectures on the Philosophy of Government and Constitutional Law. By Judge Beverley Tucker.

I know not, gentlemen, whether a desire to recall some of the thoughts presented in the course of lectures which I am about to conclude, is suggested by a sense of duty to you or to myself. It may be due to both. Among you, I flatter myself, there are some whose partial friendship might dispose them to adopt my opinions with too much confidence. These, I am especially bound to guard against any evil consequences of a sentiment which so justly deserves my gratitude. On the other hand, it has been often my duty to present considerations favorable to opinions which my own mind does not decidedly adopt; and in the minds of those who reject them I may stand charg'd with errors from which I am free.

In the progress of these lectures, I have endeavored to guard against both of these evils. You will remember, that in the outset, I said, that I would not flatter you with a promise, that political truths which have eluded the investigations of the most candid and enlightened of all ages, should be laid open to you. These words were perhaps understood, at the moment, as the more common-place of modesty—real or affected. But they had a far deeper meaning. They were uttered under a conviction, which all subsequent investigation and reflection have but confirmed, that researches into the philosophy of government promise, at best, but an approximation to truth; and that, to him whose mind cannot be brought to rest content in doubt, they promise nothing at all. If there be any such among you, he will be sensible that he has derived no benefit from me. The only service I could have rendered such a one, would have been to effect such a change in the temper and disposition of his mind, as to prepare him to enter, an humble and teachable pupil, in the school of experience. If I have failed in this, I have failed in every thing. With such, I fear, I am particularly liable to misconstruction. To such, every suggestion calculated to throw a doubt on any cherished opinion, might seem like the avowal of the opposite opinion. In politics, as in religion, to him whose comfort requires an infallible guide, any doubt of his infallibility seems equivalent to a direct contradiction of all his doctrines. To the bigot, all others are bigots. To doubt, is bigotry. To hesitate—to pause and reflect, is bigotry. All who are not for him, are against him, and he against them.

Against this uncial temper—the parent of so much
error, so much faction, strife, contention, and bitterness of heart—my labors have been particularly directed. It is a temper that can serve no purpose but to make him who cherishes it the ready instrument of party, the easy tool of any who will repeat his creed, and stifle his ear with the plausible formulas which he habitually receives as compacts of political truth. At the same time he is ready to denounce all who will not repeat this creed and these formulas. Hence, men distinguished for that thoughtful sobriety of understanding which reflects patience and judges wisely, can have no place in his confidence. He has reduced the science of government to a system of maxims, and the man who hesitates to adopt any one of them, is set down in his mind as devoted to another system, the opposite of his in all things. Thus it is, that the discreet and conscientious are condemned by bigots and system masters of all parties; and thus it is, that the affairs of nations are given up to the blundering misuse of the rash and unscrupulous, while the men most competent to manage them are condemned to inaction and obscurity. Belonging to no party, they are charged with the sins and errors of all parties. Having the wisdom to perceive that they do not know every thing, they are set down by the confident and presumptuous as knowing nothing.

This is no enviable lot; yet I frankly confess to you, that the aim of all my instructions has been to dispose and qualify you to take your place among these. These are, after all, the salt of the earth. Were such men more common, mutual support might ensure them more respect, and their numbers might give them consequence and authority. To increase their number would be to render the state the most important service. Something like this is the object I have had in view. But you will see, gentlemen, that it is at your expense. I have not sought to enlist you in a forlorn hope, where you may have to sacrifice every thing in a strenuous effort to serve your country, it may be, in spite of yourself. But I have not sought to beguile you into a service so despicable. I have offered neither pay nor bounty; neither the emoluments of office, nor the applause of your contemporaries. I have not taught you to hope the countenance of any party, nor the favor of any leader. I have told you, as I tell you now, the naked and unvarnished truth, and admonished you in the outset, that if you wish to win your way to power and distinction by the arts of the demagogue and partizan, you should avoid this place.

I have been aware, that in a system of instruction adapted to these ideas, there can be nothing to make it popular. This, too, I have already told you. But it is not my business to study popularity, but truth. I am fully aware, that by him who is eager after knowledge, rash confidence is preferred as a guide before sober doubt; that to most men specious error is far more palatable than unseemly truth; and that the safest opinions are those which are most current.

Here, gentlemen, is one of the inconveniences that attends the study of political science. In physics, in mathematics, and even in morals, investigation is stimulated and encouraged by the honors which await him who discovers a new truth, or detects an established error. Such are the foundations of that fame which renders immortal the name of Bacon and Newton, and promises the same reward to the men whose researches, in our day, have penetrated so deeply into all the mysteries of Nature. With this honor in prospect, the philosopher addresses himself to his task as one who seeks for hidden treasure. If he fails, he can but die and be forgotten. But if he succeeds, he secures for himself a name among the benefactors of mankind.

For different is the lot of him who devotes himself to the investigation of political science. That which is immortality to others may be death to him. He follows after truth, as one who tracks an enemy that may turn and destroy him. He will do more to advance his fame by devising specious sophisms in defence of vulgar errors, than by the discovery of a new truth, which, being new, must clash with opinions consecrated by prejudice, and sanctioned by the authority of numbers.

Thus it is, that each country has its own political creed, which no man dares assail. So true is this, that, turn where you will, you will find the prevalent opinion of every people, favorable, in the main, to their own institutions. Abuses may indeed be perceived; but, for the most part, radical defects are mistakes for abuses. The spirit of revolution, too, sometimes suggests innovation and change; but, in the calm and healthy condition of every community, the beau ideal of a perfect government seems to each something not widely different from its own. The authority of numbers is no evidence that any of these is right; for, numbers decide one way in a republic, and another way in a monarchical. Precisely thus, at this moment, do the most enlightened men of the two most enlightened countries of the world differ from each other. Yet in each the authority of numbers supervises the researches of the political philosopher; and the love of fame, which is the incentive to all other investigations, does but awaken a more lively dread of the scourge with which public opinion stands prepared to punish the unlucky discoverer of any unpalatable truth.

You will see, gentlemen, that if, like most men, I have a zeal for my art, I take a poor way to recommend it. It might, perhaps, be thought that the ideas I have just suggested, are at the bottom of the doubling and undoubling character of your contemporaries. I have not taught you to hope the countenance of any party, nor the favor of any leader. I have told you, as I tell you now, the naked and unvarnished truth, and admonished you in the outset, that if you wish to win your way to power and distinction by the arts of the demagogue and partizan, you should avoid this place.

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he could not live to reap. Our country is not a thing of a day: and fame is immortal. And remember, gent-
leman, that they wrote speculations on government have purchased for them an interest in that immortal thing, are they whose respect for the opinions of their countrymen, did not deter them from correcting their errors and rebuking their prejudices. To those who may be disposed to accompany me in the study of politi-
cal science in this spirit, I am bound, in candor, to say, in the words of the Apostle, that "if in this life only we have hope, we are, of all men, the most miserable." Our doubts, if unreasonable, will only excite contempt; if well founded they will provoke the resentment of those whose rashness and errors they ridicule. How many venture into public service, with no qualification, save only a presumptuous ignorance, unconscious of those mysteries in the science of government, which the wisest explore in vain? Deprive such men of their ill-founded confidence, by opening their eyes to see the difficulties and dangers that beset the statesman's path, and you leave them nothing. And how can we hope the forgiveness of such, who deeming themselves wise are awakened from their delusion, but to find that they "are poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked?" No thing, in short, can be more unthankful than the task of him who would coach the eyes of such, as, being blind, yet fancy that they see.

I have not meant to intimate, gentleman, that every part of political science is alike involved in mystery and paradox. I have had no difficulty in teaching you, that the great principles which lie at the foundations of all free institutions, are unquestionably true. The primiti ve equality of man, and the right of each individual to live exempt from all human authority, to which he has not consented to submit, either by express compact, or by legitimate and fair implication, cannot be taught more unequivocally by any than they have been by myself. But, when we trace this primitive equality to the inequalities which grew out of it, and furnish the measure of its value—when we begin to inquire, on the one hand, how far regulations in derogation and curtailment of those advantages, which may be necessary to its preservation, we enter on a task which any man may well trem ble to undertake. To him who would degenerate here, the adjustment of the balance between those powers contending yet harmonious, on which the order of the planetary system depends, would seem an easy pro blem. The countless worlds, revolving, each in its ap pointed path, implicitly obey the law impressed on them at creation. Not so the moral universe, the world of will and passion. With those the Omniscient himself must ponders; tolerating much present evil for the sake of ultimate and greater good; yielding that he may conquer. When we say, that no man can confidently decide how far a people jealous of the right of self govern ment should voluntarily limit its exercise, we do but affirm that human institutions are subject to the necessity inhering in the nature of things, which is one of the conditions of the moral government of the uni verse. Step forth, philosopher! you who have discov ered the great enigma—you who have unencumbered how best to reconcile the present enjoyment of happy ness with its perpetuity; the present exercise of free dom with security against its tendencies to self destruc tion—step forth, and read a lesson to the Most High! He shall hear you gladly! He shall descend from the throne of his power, and, taking the place of the learner, shall meekly seat himself at your feet! For my part, while I see the nature of all earthly blessings; while I mark their liability to perish in the using; while I wit nes the hard servitude of those who yield themselves to the dominion of passion, I shall believe that none are capable of freedom, who are not disposed to put moral chains upon their own appetites, and who are not more inclined to listen to the counsels of the wise and good, than to the flattery of knaves. When, therefore, the question arises, "What does wisdom teach, and what are the proper and salutary restraints to be imposed?" I am not ashamed to be baffied by a difficulty which for six thousand years has taxed the resources of al mighty Power and almighty Wisdom. The discipline of life,—the hopes of heaven,—the terrors of hell,—all have been employed to this end, and its accomplishment is yet remote.

"He is a freeman whose the truth makes free;" and the truth that thus emancipates him, is that which teaches that there is no freedom for him, in whom there is not an abiding disposition to bring appetite and passion under the dominion of fixed laws, whose authority freedom must not dare to question. To him who is not content to be free on these terms, "chains under dark ness" is the appointed lot in this world, as in the next. To this the Word of God and the experience of all mankind alike bear witness. This is all that can be known with certainty. This is the truth, from which the wisest of ancient sages learned that he knew no
thing. Beyond this all is darkness. On the unspeakable mystery which lies buried in the depths of that impenetrable abyss of night, we can but muse and marvel at the presumption which pretends to have fastened it. But while the pride of human wisdom stands thus reluctantly, we find consolation in the thought, that the truth which thus baffles our researches, is of the number of "the hidden things that belong to God."" To him we leave it.

But it is not alone of the great fundamental principles common to all free governments, that I have ventured to speak with confidence. In the application of these principles to our own institutions, we have the aid of lights sufficiently clear to guide us to certain conclusions.

Thus, when we affirm, "that man has a right to live exempt from all human authority, to which he has not consented to submit, either by express compact, or by legitimate and fair implication," we perceive the necessity of showing the evidence of that consent, in virtue of which we ourselves are governed. Here we speak from the record, and we speak boldly. We find the charter which, more than two hundred years ago, constituted Virginia a body politic. We find the unanimous declaration of all the members of that body, solemnly proclaimed, sixty-three years ago, "that all power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people; that magistrates are their trustees and servants, and at all times amenable to them; and that, when government shall be found inadequate to their happiness and safety, a majority of the community hath an inalienable, unalienable and indefeasible right to reform, alter or abolish it, in such manner as shall be judged most conducive to the common welfare."

These propositions, thus affirmed by all whom it concerned, are true, because they have affirmed them, if for no other reason. They form the basis of the compact which they prefixed, and afford a clue to its interpretation. Guided by this, we arrive at the conclusion, that sovereignty, whether sleeping or awake, whether active or in repose, is in the people: that sovereignty cannot, therefore, be rightfully predicated of any government; and that where there is no people, there is no sovereignty.

Proceeding on these principles to analyze the structure of that great federal compact, which is the foundation of security, power, prosperity, and happiness to the people of these states, I have shown you the recorded evidence of its binding authority over you. I have laid before you the solemn act of Virginia, declaring "that assent and ratification of that instrument," and her mandate announcing to all whom it might concern that it is binding upon her people. I have thus endeavorfully to impress on your minds the conviction, that in giving your respect to the functionaries, and your obedience to the laws of the central government thereby established, you do but obey her; that you do this, because she has commanded it, and by no other authority; and that, should she ever think proper to revoke this mandate, her will, in that too, must be law to you. I have not presented those propositions as undisputed; but I have affirmed, that so long as we look to the record which alone witnesses of the obligation of the federal constitution; so long as we abide by the law and the testimony only, they can be rightfully or truly denied.

I have urged these thoughts the more strenuously, because on the clear and distinct recognition of these depends the preservation of our cherished Union. So long as the federal government is professedly a government of opinion, opinion will uphold it. But, let it claim to rule by force, and the question will presently arise, whether a free people can be governed by force. The answer to that question will be written in characters of blood; and that answer, whatever it may be, must be fatal to union. The decision, thus made, must be followed by a violent disruption of the bond, and a separation of the inhabitants of this continent into a microcosm of petty states, weak factions and contemptible despotism.

Of the truth, then, or the value of the fundamental principles common to all free governments, and of those which are peculiar to our own, I would not have you doubt. But for the means of giving security and efficacy to these, I must be content to leave you to the teachings of that school of observation and experience, into which you will pass from this. There it is, gentlemen, that honors are to be conferred, which a generous ambition well may covet. Of these, the pavement and the way which you receive at our hands, are but the types; and, trust me, that your success in winning these higher honors, depends much less on what you may have learned here, than on your disposition to improve the lessons being taught hitherto. Hence, I have rather studiously to establish this disposition in your minds, than to implant there even those most cherished opinions, which can never be eradicated from my own.

By a different course, I might but have led you to conclusions in which you might rest satisfied, forgetful of the arguments by which they had been deduced. You would thus only add yourselves to the number of those whose mouths are full of dogmas unsupported by reason, who, knowing nothing, claim to know every thing, and render their ignorance more conspicuous, disgusting and offensive, by misapplied presumption. Where certainty is attainable, it may be criminal to doubt. In matters of high moral or political duty, it is always so.

But on questions in which mere expediency is an important condition, experience is the only teacher. If I have at any time forestalled the lessons of that faithful and candid instructor, I have done you wrong; and I beseech you, in justice to yourselves, and to me, to endeavor to divest your minds of all impressions, which you do not feel yourselves prepared to vindicate by reason. I should premise myself more honor, from a pupil, who, dissenting from me, should be always found ready to give a reason for his faith, than from a hundred who might answer, by the book, every question in a political catechism of my own framing, giving no reason and no authority but mine for his answers.

My business has been to teach you to observe; to compare; to think; and he who, applying my lessons, arrives at results different from my own, will do me credit with the wise and candid, even in exposing my errors.

But I have prepared to myself a higher honor. When, instead of announcing an opinion, and enforcing it by argument, I lay before you the considerations that belong to both sides of any disputed question, or furnish your minds with thoughts and reflections susceptible of being variously applied by yourselves in the investigation of more than one truth, I establish for myself a
claim to some part of the credit of all you may discover or establish in the discussion which has been encouraged to sit down in conclusion hastily adopted, you must remember the arguments for and against it, or you remember nothing. Not having made up your minds how to decide a question, you cannot exert yourselves into the belief that you understand it. So long as it remains a subject of doubt with you, so long will you continue to meditate and reflect, and memory will tenaciously cling to every consideration, which, when first presented, seemed to throw light upon the subject. Your opinions thus formed, will be your own; yet, while you enjoy the pleasure of having arrived at truth by your own researches, you will perhaps be ready to attribute some of its savour to a wish to insinuate into your minds some doubt with you, so long will you continue my partialities or dislikings, if, at any time, I have fallen into this error, gentlemen, I beg you, in consideration of my inadvertence, to pardon a lapse which would admit of no other apology.

Sometimes, indeed, it has been my duty to express myself in a way, which, to the uncandid, might have appeared to some part of the credit of all you may discover of the truth. Why then, should I have introduced into those party leaders who claim to monopolize the confidence of the people, I presume it cannot be unknown to you, that in the production of any result I have sometimes discharged the duty of lending a hand to a conviction, in cases where it might be criminal to doubt. The idea that such convictions may, at any time, be prejudicial to your advancement or your usefulness in life, is one which I cannot contemplate without anxiety. Should this apprehension be realized, you will be too generous to blame me, but I shall find it hard not to blame myself. Yet even in that event, we shall both enjoy high consolation. The perception of truth is sweet; the love of truth is ennobling; and an uncalculating devotion to truth is honorable even in the eyes of its enemies.

In these thoughts you may perceive the reason, gentlemen, why I have carefully avoided any remarks which might influence your inclinations in favor of any of those party leaders who claim to monopolize the confidence of the people. I presume it cannot be unknown to you, that I am not remarkable for indifference to the political occurrences of the day. I am aware too, that I am unfortunately supposed to be much addicted to personal predilections in favor of distinguished men. In this particular I need not, at this day, tell you that I have been misunderstood. Such predilections I do not feel. Abilities are to me, in the cardinal maxim which I have lived, in the early life, from the hour I was consecrated to the use of all my faculties in the same way. In short, gentlemen, when, at any time, the history of our own country—the history of events happening in our own time, and under our own eyes, in which all that is done is the work of men whom we personally know and understand in all their relations—when this sure, authentic and ungarbled evidence discloses facts of which the political philosopher in other lands would be glad to avail himself, shall we alone deny the advantage of it? We may speak of Miltiades and Camillus, of Pericles and Caesar, of Alexander and Catiline—we come down to Elizabeth and Henry the 4th, to Cromwell and Bonaparte, to Chatham and Sulley—we may even cite the example of Washington, conscripted to the use of all the world by liberty and virtue—and we may speak of Arnold and of Burr, whom the hangman, Infamy, has delivered up for dissection: But must we necessarily stop there? If, at any time, the best means of explaining and illustrating an impor-
tant truth cannot be employed, but by naming those who are still upon the stage of life, must we forbear to use these means, lest we be suspected of finickety or mal
ligency? The necessity for doing this should indeed be always clear and strong: and you will bear me witness, that I have commonly done so with reluctance. Fortunately for me, gentlemen, (unfortunately for our coun
try,) it has happened that I could not perform my whole duty in this particular, without showing you that there is not one among those sworn defenders of the Constitu
tion, who stand most conspicuous as candidates for public favor, and public honor, at whose hands it has not received a wound. I have often indeed endeavored to give the history of the fact without naming the actor.
Yet I have, from time to time, had occasion to name them all, and though I have never attempted to excite your indignation, yet there is not one of them whom I have foreborne to censure. I have felt it to be right that I should censure them: for, one of the most impor
tant lessons you can learn is the danger of yielding yourselves up to the impulses of that confidence, so natu
ral to inexperienced and unguarded youth. "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of men." If you go into life prepared to pin your faith upon the sleeve of any leader, to follow the fortune and devote your
self to the service of any political aspirant, your conscience ought to acquit me of having failed to warn you against conduct so dangerous and so fatal. It does acquit me.
If such are the purposes which will accompany you into any station, to which your country may call you, the fault will not be mine. I have done what I could. With other powers I might have done more: and had I the eloquence which might inspire you with a just zeal for your country's rights, and a righteous in
agination against all who invade them, I am not sure that it would not have been my duty to lay aside all reserve; to strip off all concealment; to show the as
sasments of the Constitution "hacking each other's dag
gers in its sides;" expose its bleeding wounds, and "bid them speak for me."
You must not misunderstand, gentlemen, by withdraw
ning your attention from the fact, that he, who, in politi
cal life would act alone, must always act without effect.
His efforts must often be associated with those of men who do not fully possess his confidence, and to secure their cooperation, he must frequently tolerate, and sometimes support measures which his judgment con
demns. This is one of those hard conditions, "twin
born with greatness," which gives the successful aspi
rant so much cause to envy him, who, in the independ
ence of private life, chooses his company and regulates his conduct by the dictates of his own conscience.
In this, gentlemen, as in many other particulars, you will find that the ideas I have endeavored to inculcate, are not such as will qualify you to take an early and a prominent stand in the service of your country, or to win your way at once to the honors and emoluments of office. But if these be the objects to which you purpose to devote yourselves, nothing that I have said will stand in your way. The political adventurer is never at a loss to divest himself of any inconvenient opinions, which might retard his progress in the career of ambition. Besides, there are no imaginable opinions which it may not at some time suit him to adopt. The devoted adherent of Cromwell the Protector, would
have awkwardly paid his court, by echoing the senti
ments of Cromwell, the commander of the army of the Parliamet. So long as parties retain their names, their watchwords and their leaders, their principles may vary inde
finitely; and the very men who might now de
nomeno as criminal, any sentiment expressed in this dis
course, may, at a future day, take it as the watchword of their party.
But after all, gentlemen, the prize most worthy to toward the toils of him who gives himself to the service of his country, is one which does not depend on the capricious coincidence of public opinion with his fixed principles and convictions. The ostensible was the crownning glory of the life of Aristides. The exile of Camillus made him the saviour of his country: and the fame that lives and will live, when all the honors that contemporary approbation can bestow, shall be forgot
ten, is the need of that virtuous constancy, that alike defies the tyrant's power, and resists the unbridled passions of the multitude. The man of virtuous wis,
dom cannot be withheld from the service of his country. Condemned to retirement, his unambitious life affects a pledge of sincerity, which gives sanction and authority to his known opinions. The man of virtuous wisdom cannot be hid. His brightness shines through the cloud that would obscure him, and, gilded with his laurels, he
wears it as a glory. His fame is the gift of him, whose approbation is the only true honor. Without the 'van
tage ground of high station, he utters his voice, and it is heard by the listening ear that learns to catch his words. His post is the post of honor, whatever it be, and he occupies it without fear of change. Man con
ferr'd it not, and man cannot take it away. And above all, gentlemen, when that day shall come, which comes alike to all; when the warrior's wreath, and the states.
mans civic crown, alike shall wither at the touch of death, the garland that decks his tomb shall bloom in immortal freshness, watered by the pious tears of a grateful country, and guarded by the care of him to whom the memory of the just is precious.

ADDRESS ON CIVIL ENGINEERING.

On Tuesday, July 2d, Professor Millington com
pleted the course of instruction, which he gives on the subject of Civil Engineering in William and Mary Col
lege, by a public examination of his class, and conclu
ded with the following remarks, which are here pub
lished at the request of the class.

"Having closed this examination, my functions, as your teacher, cease for the present session, and we shall shortly have to part. I cannot, however, permit this event to take place, without some expression of my feelings on the occasion. After your experience, gentlemen, I need not tell you that the acquirement of knowledge is a dry and laborious occupation; and there is no doubt but that many (particularly among the juniors) who attend college, will look upon their instructors in the light of a set of tormentors, who are perpetually goading them onwards, in a rough and dis
agreeable path, to which they see no end; and even

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when the end at length appears, they observe no reward to recovered them for their toil.

Far different are the views of the instructors, and those who have been instructed. Their previous labors have put them in possession of the facts, that as the world advances in civilization, the sinewy arm of the savage warrior sinks into impotence before the armed mind of the enlightened man—that virtue and knowledge are the elements of power, by which men can not only make themselves happy, but promote the welfare and happiness of those around them; and by which, not only individuals, but whole nations are made to rise in power and general estimation.

Such feelings cannot but engender an enthusiastic spirit in the breasts of instructors to promote the advancement of their pupils, so long as they find their precepts take root, and are not scattered before the winds; and such, gentlemen, have been my feelings during the progress of the season now about to close; for I can, without flattery, state to you, that the conduct of my philosophical and engineer classes, and of the major part of my junior class, has been such as not only merits, but commands my admiration and approbation. They have convinced me, that they came to this place for the honorable purpose of improving themselves, that they might hereafter ornament their country; and this declaration, fortunately, does not depend upon my opinion alone, but upon the very excellent examinations they have gone through, in a manner so creditable to themselves, in the several departments of science in which they have embarked.

Still, gentlemen, you must keep in mind that the quantity and quality of instruction we can impart here, is not sufficient to make the perfect man. To some, perhaps, our course of instruction may appear long and minute; but those who duly view the subject, will find that it is a mere skimming over the surface, without attempting to fathom the depth. We may sow the seeds of a Bacon, a Newton, or a Locke, but it takes years for the plant to arrive at maturity. We may study the map, and become intimately acquainted with the rivers and the roads, and the relative bearings and distances of places, but we know nothing of their beauties and deformities or compensative advantages without much tedious travelling, and perhaps encountering many hardships. So, gentlemen, it is with a college. All the certificates of competency about to be delivered from this venerable institution to such of her alumni as have duly studied and made himself (to a certain extent) master of his subject; and he must also accomplish the first of these desiderata; but the second is difficult of attainment, because it seldom happens that a young engineer, without experience, is entrusted with

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the execution of a large work. Still, however, in a subordinate capacity, or while acting under a more experienced master, he will have many opportunities of evincing his proficiency and obtaining preferment. Independent of this, the genius of the young aspirant is free to digest new plans, and many of the most useful works both of this country and of Britain have originated in this way. The public mind is seldom excited to action until some object is brought before it, on which it can operate. And if a young engineer can suggest plans for the improvement of his country and is able to show his benefit and advantage, it seldom happens that they are brought forward in vain. They only require to be known that they may be adopted, and then to be acted on. The public mind is seldom excited to show their benefit and advantage, it seldom happens it can operate. And if a young engineer can suggest plans for the improvement of his country and is able to show every thing, both in measure and price, to their own advantage. But I have always found, that when they meet a man who understands his business, and who is firm in his resolution to do justice to them, and no more, they are submissive, and ever ready to yield to what is fair and right. It has been the practice with some engineers, to grind down their workmen to the lowest cost, and barely to allow them living profits, for the sole purpose of currying favor with their employers; but such conduct never fails to lead to neglect and insubordination, and as endless disputes and disagreements; and you must rest assured, on my own experience, that the only sure way to command the respect of the employer and workmen, is to observe the most strict and impartial justice between them.

The next difficulty in which the engineer is involved, arises from his great responsibility. He is frequently employed not only to design but to execute large and national concerns, in which vast capitals may be involved. His master or employer, from the nature of the concern, is seldom a single individual, but generally a board or committee, consisting of many persons, all of whom he has to conciliate and please. His original design, therefore, requires intense thought and consideration, for it is subject to the revision and amendment of all his employers, and the almost impossibility of pleasing every body is universally admitted.

It is therefore, necessary, that he shall be prepared with sound arguments to support every part of what he is about to execute, unless he sees good reason in the discussion of his plans for altering or amending any part of them. Firmness and decision of character will here prove of great value to him.

Another difficulty the engineer has to contend with, arises from the duplicity of his work. Men of all professions are liable to err; but it happens, fortunately for most of them, that unless their errors are very glaring, they are soon forgotten and fall into oblivion, and consequently do not leave an indelible stain on their professional reputation. Not so, however, with the engineer—his works are, in their very nature, permanent—and they are frequently large and open to public view—so that they become monuments which proclaim the skill or incompetency of their constructors to future generations, in language that cannot be disguised or misunderstood. Errors of construction, such as have just been alluded to, frequently arise from a desire on the part of the engineer to please his employer, (even at the risk of his own reputation,) a practice that every constructor should scrupulously avoid. His skill should be such as will enable him to determine the least quantity of material which he can use with safety for a given construction, and if he swerves at all from rule, it should be on the side of additional strength rather than of insufficiency. If he introduces more material than what is palpably necessary for the strength of his construction, he will be justly blamed for a lavish expenditure of his employer's money. The error is, however, frequently on the other side; because, with the view of currying public favor or that of his employer, or for bringing his work within the first estimated cost, he frequently economizes materials and labor to such an extent as to introduce insecurity; and should a failure occur in consequence, he is never thanked for his laudable endeavor to diminish expense; but is universally blamed for want of skill, and perhaps loses his professional reputation forever.

The last point to which I wish to call your attention, regards your treatment of and demeanor towards contractors and workmen, who may be employed under your directions. In this respect, the engineer has a very important and responsible duty to perform, for he is in almost all cases the arbiter or judge between the employer and the employed. In making contracts, or valuing work after it has been executed, it becomes his duty to regulate all prices in such manner that they may be fair and equitable between both parties, without favor or affection to either. Contractors, and those who have spent years upon public works, you will in general find to be cunning and over-reaching, and ever ready to convert every thing, both in measure and price, to their own advantage. But I have always found, that when they meet a man who understands his business, and who is firm in his resolution to do justice to them, and no more, they are submissive, and ever ready to yield to what is fair and right.
never fail to see promptly executed. Such conduct will not only gain you the good will and esteem of your workmen, but of your employers and the public at the same time.

I have trespassed longer on your time, in laying these hints before you, than I had at first intended, but shall now conclude.

To you, gentlemen, of the engineering class, and of all my classes, I now beg to tender my warm thanks for the kind attention I have met with from you all, during the past session, and to hope that the instructions I have endeavored to lay before you, may ripen into fruitful usefulness in your after lives. And as our relation of master and student here ceases, I wish you all health, happiness and prosperity, and trust that the friendship that has been engendered between us during our intercourse in the present session, may endure to the end of our lives, as I assure you it will do to the end of mine.

ADDRESS

Delivered before the Students of William and Mary College, on the 31st of July, 1839, by Professor Robert Saunders. Published at the request of the Students.

Gentlemen of William and Mary—

At the close of another college session, it becomes us to offer you a few words of farewell at parting, of congratulation at your success, and of cheering on your onward course. Thence, indeed, no more worthy cause of congratulation than the simple fact that you enjoy the privilege of education—that the mysteries of your own nature have been revealed to you—that the high endowments, the far-reaching aspirations, the vast capacities, which are the immortal heritage of man, are unveiled to your view, and put in action within you—that you are not of the mass who exist, and pass from existence, in unconsciousness of the hidden things of nature. Such being the magnificent results of intellectual cultivation, it would seem but necessary to place them in view of the youthful aspirant, to ensure untiring energy, and a sustained and sustaining ardor in their acquisition—and it would seem, by receiving as the reward of such additional effort, to excite it. This difficulty is, however, greatest on the threshold. Action is unpleasant only to the mind which is unused to it. Soon it becomes a habit—and finally, (such is the happy constitution of our intellectual nature,) what was once an irksome and a weary task, becomes the source of the purest and most exalted gratification—and the mind is gradually led to the highest state of cultivation of which it is susceptible, by receiving as the reward of each additional effort, a corresponding increment of pleasure.

The tumultuous amusements, the evanescent pleasures, and exciting employments of youth, may cause one to go unheeded the reckless workings of the untutored spirit; but age will come, to which these amusements will be as childish toys, on whose taste these pleasures will fail, and for whose strength these employments are too fervent; then, when the bright hues which floated in the atmosphere of life's morning, have faded away, and given place to the gray of its twilight, will the mild lustre of intellectual attainments beam with delightful radiance. Then can the cultivated mind look back upon itself, and find in its ample store a solace for that heartless want of sympathy with which the world is wont to regard old age. How blank and dreary, then, is the life of one who has neglected the opportunities of his youth—who, in the hey-day of enjoyment grasped the tinsel and the dust, and cast away or heeded not the pure gold. The mind of such a man, waste, uncultivated, and barren, compared with the same material glowing with magic tints and embodying the immortal conceptions of the painter. Can you, under the influence of these considerations, and with the lofty destiny of the intellect fully revealed to you, be satisfied with yourselves, if you press not on to the fulfillment that destiny? Can you consent to the degradation, after having been within your sight of the sacred flame, of having it again hidden from that mind look back upon itself, and find in its ample store a solace for that heartless want of sympathy with which the world is wont to regard old age. How blank and dreary, then, is the life of one who has neglected the opportunities of his youth—who, in the hey-day of enjoyment grasped the tinsel and the dust, and cast away or heeded not the pure gold. The mind of such a man, waste, uncultivated, and barren, compared with the same material glowing with magic tints and embodying the immortal conceptions of the painter. Can you, under the influence of these considerations, and with the lofty destiny of the intellect fully revealed to you, be satisfied with yourselves, if you press not on to the fulfillment that destiny? Can you consent to the degradation, after having been within your sight of the sacred flame, of having it again hidden from

Will you not rather hold fast what you have gained, and be able hereafter to say, with the Roman orator, "Quaeram adeo tributum temperatis curis, quantum

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within your own control, resolve, my young friends, to be known to your generation. Exert the energy which adorns a man; let pride sustain the exertion, and you must succeed.

"On reason build—such column of true majesty in man," is fraught with wisdom, short only of inspiration. But, alas! all this has been said "many a time and oft"—and with how little effect, we all know. What has been many times repeated, falls upon the ear like snow upon the water. The rich rewards of mental exertion have been too often set before youthful hearers, without effect, that it would seem as if language had lost its force; and yet, strange perversity of the human character! nothing is required of them but to appreciate themselves. Familiarity is the deadly foe of respect. It is our very familiarity with ourselves which prevents us from being great. Could men view themselves as they view others; free from the influence of narrow vanity on the one hand, and of want of self-confidence on the other, how many of those who die unknown, would fill the world with their name; and yet this requires but the will. This cannot be too often reiterated. That young men could but be persuaded of this; that some master spirit,—some one whose high privilege,—whose illustrious appanage it is to arouse and command the human intellect,—would but compel young men to look inward upon themselves; and would exhibit to them, as though a crystal, the noble capacities with which they are endowed, and the results which flow from their exercise!

May we not hope, however, my young friends, that the peculiarity of your situation, to which I have already alluded, will cause our counsels to be not altogether unheeded by you? that the evidences which are every day gathering around you, of the absolute necessity of exertion imposed upon you, will urge you to gird on your armor with a high and holy determination not to falter in the glorious cause?

If you are capable of forming this determination, in order that you may keep it inviolate, shun, as you would a pestilence, "improbis Sirena Decadis," the foul siren Sloth, and resist, with iron firmness, all her blanishments—for in her train marches every vice which degrades the soul. Let no portion of your time pass without improvement; stop the moments in their flight and extract from each all that it can bestow—for remember that the present only is your own; that time, like the fabled Tantalus, yields its treasures to those only who arrest its course, but, if unheeded, bears them on to the great ocean of the past. Remember too, that your sojourn here is but the commencement of your career—that you have here learned only to use the weapons with which you are to contend on the arena of the world, and that if you relax your exertion, not only will your weapons rust, but your hand will forget the familiar use of them.

To those of you, then, who have taken the high honors bestowed by our venerable institution, I would say—consider those honors as the champions in the olympic games regarded the voices of friends—cheering them to victory—and to those whose first efforts have received their appropriate rewards, I would liken those rewards to the trumpet-note, calling the combatants to the contest. To both, let the goal be your own honor and your country's good.

And now, my young friends, we must part. The allotted portion of instruction which it was at once our duty and our pleasure to bestow, has been accomplished. The intimate relation which has existed between us is at an end, and now it only remains for us to express to you as a body, our admiration of your conduct, which has rendered this relation (so often one of ennui and discord,) a relation of friendship and good feeling, and which has reduced college discipline to the grateful task of treating gentlemen as they deserve to be treated.

So long as the students of William and Mary sustain the character for talent, for industry and gentlemanly demeanor, which has distinguished them during the past session, and which has never been excelled, there will be no fear that our beloved and venerable alma mater will lose the lofty character she bears. And now, my young friends, on behalf of each one of us, I wish each one of you a happy meeting with your friends at home, and bid you an affectionate farewell.