

ORATION

DELIVERED AT

THE ENCÆNIA

IN

KING'S COLLEGE, FREDERICTON,

JUNE 28, 1849,

BY

JAMES ROBB, M. D.

PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

“Appeal frankly and honestly to the reason and to the good will of mankind, and mankind will answer you accordingly.”—BUNSEN.

Published by request of the College Council.

FREDERICTON :

JOHN SIMPSON, PRINTER TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

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TO
THE HONORABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND
THE LORD BISHOP OF FREDERICTON,
PRESIDENT OF KING'S COLLEGE,
&c. &c. &c.

THIS
COMMEMORATIVE ORATION,

AS A SMALL MARK OF GREAT RESPECT,

IS INSCRIBED

BY
THE AUTHOR.

ORATION.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR LORDSHIP, AND GENTLEMEN,

ENCÆNIA were Festivals or Public Acts established by the Classic Nations of antiquity, in commemoration of the foundation of Cities and the like : The word is of Greek origin, and was used in much the same sense as the English word Festival or *Anniversary*.

In every point of view the opening of a great Provincial Institution like this of King's College, is worthy of an encæonial celebration.

The solemn opening of the College, and the inauguration of His Excellency Sir Howard Douglas, as Chancellor, actually took place on the 1st of January, 1829, and was spoken of as beyond all question one of the most imposing and impressive ceremonies ever witnessed in New Brunswick.

By Statute, however, the last Thursday in June, being the last day of Trinity Term, has been fixed upon as the most proper day whereon the Public Academical Act should be held.

By the same authority it has been likewise ordained that an Oration shall be then delivered by one of the Professors, in praise of the Founders and Benefactors of the Institution, and of its objects.

It may be well imagined that it is a difficult thing for me, in the twentieth year of the existence of the College, and under all the circumstances of the case, to say anything new or striking upon these points ; and for the necessity under which I am placed, I pray your kind consideration ; and the more, as the concluding days of Term, during which the necessity has arisen, are always those on which there is, on other accounts, most to occupy and harass the minds of those who are engaged in instruction here.

The affection of gratitude for benefits received is one of the best sentiments or tendencies of human nature, and we cannot be too often reminded of it ; we have, collectively, much to be grateful for,—and as individuals, each one of us has especial cause of gratitude and thankfulness. This affection is best cultivated by acts and habits ; and the praise of benefactors, as a form or act of gratitude, becomes a duty or obligation upon us all, not only as rendering good will for good will, but as moulding our own minds to do good offices, as we have received them ourselves : it seems indeed to be a law of our nature that by the praise and earnest contemplation of what is praiseworthy, we learn to do and teach others to do that which we praise. Acts of duty well observed generate, express and confirm all our virtues.

The public praise of benefactors necessarily implies times and places duly appointed for such ceremonies, and I propose in the present instance, to consider—*first*, for what praise and gratitude are this day required ; *second*, from whom this grateful praise is required ; and *third*, to whom this tribute is to be paid.

1st. For what, then, is our praise this day especially required ? To this I would reply, that not only were the objects contemplated by the founders of this Institution praiseworthy, but also the means which they adopted to carry out their philanthropic objects and intentions.

The object of the establishment of this College, as declared in the Charter, was “ the Education of Youth in the principles of the Christian Religion, and for their instruction in the various branches of Science and Literature which are taught in other English Universities,” and also in the hope of preparing the rising generation to tread in the footsteps of their fathers, and enabling them to contend with the foremost in the cause of Loyalty, and a steady attachment to the British Constitution. What then has been our motto here ? “ RELIGION, SCIENCE, LITERATURE, LOYALTY.” Are not these heart-stirring sounds ? Can nobler objects be proposed to the Youth of New Brunswick ? Can they find more appropriate watchwords to direct them in their life-long contest with the world, the flesh, and the devil ?

Such then are the objects which the provident founders of this College proposed to encourage when they first determined to raise these walls. Secure of them already themselves, they wished nothing better than that their sons and their sons' sons should have the like opportunities which they had had of attaining unto them in their youth.

The Province, in fact, had arrived at such a state of advancement that some great recognition of these principles—some public establishment for the furtherance of these objects—seemed to be required.

In olden time the Province now called New Brunswick had been merely a hunting ground for Indians, and a shelter for the wild beasts of the forest; next it had become a station for French fishermen, and fur traders; after the final conquest of Acadia and New France, in 1759, a few hardy farmers from New England settled here; lastly, in 1783 there came a numerous band of Anglo-Saxon men—men who, in the old Colonies which they left, had been long distinguished for their devotion to Religion, Loyalty, and Literature—when these men, the Loyalists, had come and provided for their most pressing wants, then did they set about the important concerns of Education, and endeavour to secure to their descendants the same privileges and advantages which they themselves had enjoyed and appreciated in their youth.

As early as 1788 a Grammar School was founded in Fredericton, which twelve years later was converted into a College, with a Provincial Charter; not until 1829, however, did the circumstances of the Country seem to warrant the more perfect establishment of a College by Royal Charter, and with all the rights and privileges of an University, so that the Graduates have and may have all the Academical honors belonging to their respective Degrees, which they could derive from any similar Institution in Her Majesty's Dominions.

The design of this Institution was then declared to be—

- 1st. To give a general training in sound learning and science; and
- 2d. To give a special training for the Church.

With men of ordinary minds, and under ordinary circumstances, a special or professional Education is always regarded as the most useful and advisable object, and one, the want of which will be most complained of in Institutions of this kind. I am not prepared to shew that a special School would not have succeeded better here than the one which was actually established, but you will surely grant that a Grammar School is but an indifferent terminus for the Educational system of any Country. Shall it be said that at the age of 13 or 14 years the young men of New Brunswick, alone of all others, are fitted to enter upon the business of life? Shall it be said that all classic learning is to end in Virgil or Xenophon—that the Mathematics are concluded in simple equations—or that, as yet, there had been found no key to the glorious plan of nature?

The strength of a man's mind mainly depends upon the training which it receives in early youth, and that of course ought to be of a gradually increasing difficulty. Where then could more refined, more complex, more manly studies be found than those which are here actually taught, as the ground-work of all liberal education, and the training for every profession.

Those who have conscientiously followed such a course, are better than all others qualified to declare their importance, while those who have not done so, are in fact, thereby, put out of Court. The advocate of exclusively professional courses only in Colleges, will rarely, if ever, be found among those who have sailed on the great ocean of truth, but rather among those who have caught a glimpse of it from a distance.

The two questions then which are most often put as against the design of this College, are—

1st. What is to be done with the young men after spending so much money upon their education?

2d. Why should general training be given mainly, and little or no professional education?

To the first, I would reply, that if the minds of the young men of the country are not to be thus trained, they will remain not a

mere vacant waste, but a field for ugly and noxious weeds. Knowing nothing beyond the pleasures of sense, they will sink therein and never know that there are pleasures much keener, much more exciting, and much more lasting, than any which can attach to mere carnal gratification.

To those again who would form an idea of the difference between a professional education and the liberal preliminaries which have been chiefly intended to be given here, I would reply in the words of another :—

Put the case, says he, of a boy of a weakly constitution and effeminate habits, and suppose that family connections and interest make it seem desirable that he should enter the army, and that he is committed to the care of some one, an old soldier if you like, who professes to prepare him for his military career.

At the end of four or five years, when he ought to obtain his Commission, his father may think it right to inquire into his fitness for his profession.

“ Have you studied tactics ?” No Sir.

“ Have you studied gunnery ?” No Sir.

“ Are you perfect in the last instructions issued by the Horse Guards for the manœuvres of cavalry ?” I have never seen them Sir.

“ Have you learnt the broad sword exercise ?” No.

“ Can you put a Company through their drill ?” No.

“ Have you practised platoon firing ?” No.

“ Can you even fix a bayonet on a musket ?” I have never tried, Sir.

After such an examination, we may suppose the father expostulating indignantly with the veteran under whose care his son has been left ; the latter might reply :—“ Sir, when you entrusted your son to my care he was weak and sickly—he had little appetite, and

was fastidious in his eating—he could bear no exposure to the weather—he could not walk two miles without fatigue—he was incapable of any severe exercise—he was unwilling and indeed unable to join in the athletic sports of boys of his age. Now, he is in perfect health, and wants and wishes for no indulgence—he can make a hearty dinner on any wholesome food, or go without it—he will get wet through and care nothing about it—he can walk 12 or 15 miles a day—he can ride—he can skate—he can swim—he can play a game of cricket and enjoy it—though he has not learnt the broad sword exercise, he fences well—though he has never handled a soldier's musket, he is an excellent shot with a fowling piece—he has a firm foot, a quick eye, and a steady hand—he is a very pretty draughtsman—he is eager to enter his profession, and take my word for it, Sir, he will make a brave and active officer.”

‘There will, I conceive, probably always be a difficulty in organizing special courses for the professions here, at least of courses to qualify for their immediate practice.

In Divinity there are too many different, I had almost said discordant, views abroad, for all parties to be likely to agree on any plan for teaching systematic Theology.

The pure classic study of the Civil Law, no doubt would be an admirable addition to the training of every Lawyer, but as the majority of New Brunswick Barristers are only Attornies, they might not be brought to see the direct bearing of such a course upon their future interests and practice.

‘To qualify in Medicine again, a large Hospital and Dissecting Room would be required, and these I imagine, are not likely to be soon found in Fredericton.

Agriculture in theory and in practice, it appears to me, might have been taught here, and probably the original plan of the Institution ought to have been so modified as to have included that important branch of knowledge. When there are both Schools and Colleges for aiding the young land holders of New Brunswick in their efforts to subdue and ameliorate the ruggedness of nature ;

when, in fact, they shall have been trained therein to join theory with practice, and practice with theory—when they shall have been thereby enabled to appreciate and make use of all the helps which thoughtful men have devised to aid them in their toil, then indeed may we admit that there is a sure ground of prosperity for the country—then indeed, will the public education of this country have taken that practical direction which, in my humble judgment, it might have advantageously taken at a much earlier period in its history.

Another objection has been raised, viz : That the plan of the Institution, though good, was entertained too soon. It may have been proper to urge this point at first, but surely, it is wrong to do so now ; having early become the subject of sectarian discussion, the popularity and usefulness of the College were thereby hindered and compromised ; but now, when the most popular objections have just been removed, it would surely be imprudent and unwise to bring forward any thing of that kind, until, at least, there has been a fair trial of the “new and improved plan.” We have a right to demand that, in my opinion, upon the principle of fair play alone.

The country and the times have of late been rather “out of joint,” and it is not to be wondered at, if Institutions for the higher kind of education should have shared alike in the general depression ; there is already, however, good ground to conclude that the number of Students in attendance here, during the next Academical year, will be very largely increased.

The design of the founders, as you will have observed, is to have them trained up as christians and gentlemen.

But how was their plan to be carried out ? Looking at it as it has developed itself, we see : First, a preliminary Training School under the daily charge of four accomplished Teachers, and subject to the monthly review and controul of Examiners, men of learning and trust. For the Collegiate School, prizes or rewards have been liberally provided ; and whether the object of the pupils was to surpass the other so as to gain a prize, or whether it was simply to improve themselves, I can give my humble testimony to the

fact, that they, this year (and always) exhibited fully as much proficiency, and in as many subjects, as is ever looked for in Scotch or English Grammar Schools.

From this and from the other County Grammar Schools, young men are now attracted by Scholarships of the value of £15 a year, which have been recently established by order of College Council, and which Scholarships are tenable for three years after matriculation here. Thus, by the College scheme there is a bounty or premium of £45 offered every three years or oftener, to every County in the Province, provided only, that the local Schools can educate young men sufficiently to enable them to pass our entrance examination. This was an act of wise liberality, and no doubt the fruits of it will soon be visible.*

There are besides six or seven other Scholarships, valued at £25 sterling, established here by the Venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. These are necessarily restricted to parties who propose to take Orders in the Church of England, and are very properly under the direction of His Lordship the Bishop of the Diocese.

The fees of the classes here have been actually fixed as low as 5s. per term, and board within the College can be had for 12s. 6d. per week ; so that I think I am justified in saying that the expense of education here, is probably as low as it is any where else in the world.

Once a year a gold medal, value £10, is offered for the best composition on such subject as the Chancellor for the time being may be pleased to name ; and in the several classes, prizes of considerable value are generally bestowed upon the willing and working students. There has also been formed within the College a very valuable Library, which already contains many of the best works in Divinity, Literature and Science—to these there is almost unlimited access, and from them the Student will get such glimpses of the extent and variety of the labours of his predecessors, that there is

* Since the above was written another Scholarship of £25 yearly value, and for matriculated Students only, has been founded by the Council,

no great risk of his afterwards giving way to an overweening conceit of his own powers and attainments.

The Museum is not large, but it contains enough to gratify the lover of nature, and to fix or renew his perceptions of method, and of the distinguishing characters of natural objects.

The Apparatus Room of the College contains most of the instruments required to illustrate the principles of Physical Science ; and as the crowning head and ornament of all, there has lately been added, at an expense of nearly £500, a most magnificent Telescope, whereby, not only some of the most difficult principles in Mechanics, Optics and Astronomy may be illustrated, but which I trust will soon be applied to the methodical observation and measurement of the heavenly bodies themselves. This instrument, no doubt, is much finer than any one in British North America ; and those discoveries which have immortalized the names of Gallileo and Newton, were all made with Telescopes of much smaller power than that which is now actually in this College. As nothing tends more certainly to fix in the young mind the principles of science, and to stimulate their progress, than the use and application of good instruments, let us hope that even here, we may ere long be able to find a Newton or a Leverrier.

The subordination of all persons and things to the sober discipline and practice of the Established Church of England, the daily Lecture, and the daily Chapel Service, are also parts of our system here. Every hour has its bell, and every bell its duty. Four instructors are assiduous at their posts to enforce discipline—to display to the young inquirers all the magnificence of the scheme of Revelation—all the profound wisdom of classical antiquity—all the strength and the refinement of language in its noblest developments—all the powers and the subtleties of number—all the beauty, the variety, the perfection of design, and the providential harmony displayed in the material works of creation.

The Institution moreover has great natural advantages. Its position is a central one in the Province. Its site is remarkably healthy and pleasant—its sloping lawns—its shady woods—its

retirement from the business of the town—combine to render this spot congenial to learning and quiet meditation ; a pleasant spot wherein youthful friends may enjoy themselves together ; and a pleasant spot to revisit in the after time, when, alas ! the heart is less susceptible of friendship, and when the passions and sordid interests are more engaged than as here, at present, the heart, the intellect, and the imagination. With Gray, may not one then exclaim—

Ah ! happy hills, ah ! pleasing shade !
 Ah ! fields beloved in vain !
 Where once in careless youth I strayed,
 A stranger yet to pain !
 I feel the gales that from ye blow
 A momentary bliss below ;
 As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
 My weary soul they seem to sooth,
 And, redolent of joy and youth,
 To breathe a second spring.

Such then is the design of this Institution, and such are the means by which, in the wisdom of its founders and directors, the design was to be carried out. These are the objects *for which* our grateful praise is required.

Let us next inquire *from whom* praise and gratitude are due. First : We, as *instructors*, have much cause to be grateful. By our connection with this institution we have assured to us a useful and honourable occupation—in directing and disciplining the minds of those who may hereafter be, and allow me to say so—who ought hereafter to be the leading men of this rising Colony—we thus secure also the favour and good wishes of those who are the best and wisest, and have their country's interests most at heart. We have moreover abundant opportunities of teaching ourselves while teaching others.

Our holidays it is true do not come often, and the cares of duty do but seldom leave us ; but when they do, I warrant you that none can enjoy the respite more than those who are in charge of public instruction.

Second : The Pupils and Students have great cause of gratitude. Not only has a great and complex scheme been devised and carried

out in detail for their especial benefit, but it is still continually tended, thought on, and made the subject of anxious discussion, by men otherwise much occupied by public and private affairs. Of what intense thought—of what earnest meditation and prayer—of what glowing enthusiasm—yea, of what warmth of contention, has not this Institution been the subject, and all to secure the interests of the youth of New Brunswick. Surely they at least ought to be grateful for so much anxious care for their welfare—they ought to be grateful that such benefits as above hinted at have been at length placed within their reach, and that they are freely invited to partake of them at such an easy rate. They ought to be grateful even for the restraints under which the Academical discipline places them, knowing that obedience in such matters, fosters and encourages a habit of dutiful obedience to *all* constituted authorities, “whether they be present or absent, whether they be secular or spiritual, whether they be in earth or in heaven.”

Third : The public ought to be grateful ; they are the parents or friends of those who come here for instruction, or if not, they may soon be interested in their public or private career. The friends and supporters of this College, it is true, have experienced much abuse from time to time, and from various quarters ; but what, save a sense of public duty or of religious duty could have urged these men to stand by an Institution from which they reaped nothing but contumely ? Much has been said ignorantly, some, I dare say, has been said maliciously or wantonly ; but it would be well to reflect, that if those who desired the destruction of this College had attained their object, all chance of a liberal education in New Brunswick would have been extinguished for half a century to come or more. What would have been more likely to lower the credit of a Colony in England or elsewhere, than to have had it said that there a College was established on a broad and liberal basis, and at a great expenditure of public money, and that afterwards the people would not take advantage of such an Institution to raise themselves in the scale of civilization. It would be as much as saying—we are a poor ignorant people, and we love our ignorance ! We have seen the sun, but we hate its light ; darkness is more congenial to us.

Let us next inquire *to whom* the tribute of grateful praise is due.

1st. In the first place it is manifestly due to Almighty God, who hath put it into the hearts of men to devise and establish such a seminary of learning in the land. “The *channel* was human but the source was divine.” “It is a good thing to sing praises unto our God: yea a joyful and a pleasant thing it is to be thankful.”

2nd. To the Founders and Benefactors of the Institution and its objects.

To Governor Carleton, our first Governor, the merit of the original idea of a College in this place probably is due.

Lieutenant Governor Smyth also was much occupied with the details of its plan, and by him the old College of New Brunswick was brought into operation in 1820 under a Provincial Charter. By him also the design was formed of getting a new or Royal Charter, but death cut him off in the midst of his good work; and Sir Howard Douglas, by his enthusiastic zeal in the cause of education, and unwearied perseverance, was enabled not only to secure a Royal Charter from his late gracious Majesty King George IV., but also a liberal endowment from the Legislature for it, and for Grammar Schools in various Counties, as preparatory places of instruction for a Collegiate education.

His Excellency was also pleased to give from his own funds the sum of £100 towards the purchase of a gold Medal, to be called the Douglas Gold Medal, to be awarded as a prize for English compositions. To this the Legislature added enough to found a Silver Medal, to be called also the Douglas Silver Medal, to be awarded for the best first class pupil in the Collegiate School.

At his inauguration as Chancellor, on 1st January, 1829, he appointed Chief Justice Saunders, Judge Chipman, Judge Botsford, Mr. Speaker Simonds, Mr. Attorney General Peters, Mr. Solicitor General Parker, and Mr. Secretary Odell, to be Members of the first Council, and confided to them the task of framing Statutes and working out the Charter.

Since that time the College has been directly governed by them and their successors, the Legislature also occasionally acting a powerful and controlling influence.

Opinions have differed in the course of events no doubt, but I am willing to believe that all have acted to the best of their judgment under the circumstances.

In the recent foundation of County Scholarships, in the purchase of our magnificent Telescope, and in the Grant of £100 a year for Books to the Library, the present Council have endeavoured to keep up the reputation of the College. Let us hope that they may soon see their hopes fulfilled and their cares rewarded. To the successive Chancellors and Legislatures since 1829, their proper meed of thankfulness is also due.

In conclusion, let us all inquire for a moment what is our duty under the present circumstances.

We have enumerated some of the more obvious advantages of the establishment to the instructors, the pupils, and the public generally.—How are they employing their advantages? Are the Teachers what they wish to seem? Are the Students sensible of the care and expense which has been lavished upon the Institution chiefly for their sakes? Are they constantly emulous of distinction in Religion, Loyalty, Literature and Science? Are they living always as gentlemen on whom the eye of the public, yea, and the All-Seeing Eye is constantly directed? Are the public never censuring ignorantly, nor withholding when due, their favour and countenance in return for the benefit which the Institution confers, or is capable of conferring on the Province? I mean the benefits of a good, sound, virtuous and useful education.

If these questions can be answered satisfactorily by the several parties; then with God be the event! Come weal, come woe, we must abide the issue of the case. Be the College prosperous or unprosperous, such as it is, it is our especial scene of trial. We cannot command success; at the best, we can only deserve it. When human endeavours have been well and properly applied to

the great end of education, they cannot fail, I believe, to be attended with that, without which, no human effort availeth.

To re-echo the heartfelt wish of the first Chancellor,—“ Firm may this Institution ever stand and flourish—firm in the liberal Constitution and Royal Foundation on which it has been endowed, enlarging and extending its material form, and all its capacities, to do good and meet the increasing demands of a rising, prosperous and intellectual people ; and may it ever maintain a high and distinguished reputation as a place of sound learning and useful knowledge ! ”
