

BACCALAUREATE

ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT THE FIRST COMMENCEMENT

OF

LAFAYETTE COLLEGE,

SEPTEMBER 22, 1836.

By the Rev. George Junkin, D. D.

President of the College.

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LAFAYETTE COLLEGE, SEPTEMBER 22d, 1836.

TO THE REV. GEORGE JUNKIN, D. D.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

The undersigned most respectfully solicit for publication, a copy of your able and eloquent Baccalaureate Address, delivered this morning.

Yours with sentiments of the highest respect,

N. B. SMITHERS, D. MOORE, GEO. W. KIDD, JAMES B. RAMSEY.	}	GRADUATES
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LAFAYETTE COLLEGE, SEPTEMBER 23d, 1836.

Messrs. N. B. Smithers, D. Moore, Geo. W. Kidd, J. B. Ramsey.

Young Gentlemen,

More to gratify the feelings of the heart, which, under the excitement of yesterday, prompted your request of a copy of my address for publication, than to do obeisance to your understandings, I comply with your request and herewith transmit the copy. The sentiments are such as you may find almost any where; they may, I trust they will, in this form, become a memorial of tender recollections, and therefore profitable.

As ever, your sincere friend,

GEORGE JUNKIN.

YOUNG GENTLEMEN :

SOLEMN and interesting is the position you this moment occupy ! Lifted up, by the favour of a gracious Providence and your own untiring exertions, to this first grade of literary distinction, you stand upon an eminence, which overlooks the great majority of your friends, fellow-citizens and fellow-students. On such an occasion what can be more appropriate and profitable than a retrospect of the past and a vista of the future ? And this especially in view of the important consideration, that the stream of time, with its thousand irresistible influences, still presses you onward, so that you cannot, if you would, enjoy more than a temporary respite and relaxation from effort.

Allow me then for a moment, to turn your eye downward upon the path, by following which you have gained thus far on the steep ascent and placed your feet on this first platform. How short the distance passed over ! and how brief the span of time !! How different were both in prospect ! Far in the distance and high in the elevation you looked forward and upward, and longed for this time and laboured for this event. *Now*, just beneath your feet and almost within reach of your hand, behold the humble school where first you tasted the pleasures of budding intellect and conceived the idea of its future culture. How true the poets vision !

“ *Time*, in advance, behind him hides his wings,

“ And seems to creep, decrepit with his age ;

“ Behold him, when past by ; what then is seen,

“ But his broad pinions, swifter than the winds ?”

Thus admonished, you will agree with me in the correctness of another remark, suggested by the visions of retrospection : viz. that your positive advances, however small, are all the result of a *legitimate* exercise of your respective faculties. In other words, that both knowledge, and the enlargement of capacity for its attainment, have been secured only by laborious and *upright* action. You can perceive, in the path you have pursued, many windings, that brought you very little, if any, nearer to the object of your desires. You will be able also, I trust, to detect the se-

cret causes of these fruitless labours, in the misguided impulses of youthful passions ; and to trace all their evils to the too imperfect dominance of pure moral principle. Many a branch in your path has been found to deviate so far from the right line, as to reveal the necessity of its abandonment or of the relinquishment of your main design. These you have wisely forsaken and turned back into the straight path of true science. Your erection of the proper beacon, at each deceptive branch might be as much a work of benevolence as of wisdom. Your heart doubtless pities many a fellow traveller, who set out with you in the same journey, but whom you now perceive to be led entirely aside and constrained to abandon the hope of ever arriving at the object of your mutual desire. Were it not kind in you to bid the panting throng below, to temper the ardour of youth and the impetuosity of genius, with the modesty of virtue and the calm steadfastness of piety ? Will you not add yours to the testimony of all that have ever passed over the same ground, that the legitimate exercise of our mental faculties, secures the only permanent gains ? If so, you are prepared to announce as the result of your brief experience, what you have always been here taught theoretically and practically, that *sound education is the formation of good habits.*

Every step you have taken in the path of science may be viewed as matter of profit in three different respects. It is a positive enlargement of power. Itself a result, when viewed as an ultimate good, is to be esteemed for its own sake. But it is moreover the basis of future action. The merchant's profits become capital & immediately productive. Thus as knowledge is power, every increasement, as an effect, is valuable ; but doubly so as a cause leading to still more distant results.

But besides the direct and positive gain, and the subsidiary profits, there is yet another still more important : the creation or strengthening of *habit*. Now habit, as an acquisition, is the result of repeated action. It is a law of our being—ultimate, as far as yet discovered—that frequency of action in the same way, produces facility, removes difficulties and renders success more certain. The proverb : *man is a creature of habit* contains a most important truth. Yet if unconnected with another, no man will ever rightly weigh the magnitude of its importance. Little of its value will either the educator or the educated be able to estimate, until both learn, that, *habit is a creature of man*. You perceive at once that subserviency to habit may be either bondage or freedom ; misery or happiness ; a curse or a blessing ; just according to the character of the master. If he be holy and upright, then his service is freedom for his bonds are love and his

sceptre peace. But if the master be unrighteous and corrupt, submission is degradation—obedience is misery.

Now look back, I pray you, and see whether the two maxims—"man is a creature of habit" and "habit is a creature of man," have not operated a controlling influence over those, who, in this Institution, have assisted you in educating yourselves. Have not the sum total of their efforts, and your own, been directed to the creation of those habits, physical, moral and intellectual, which hereafter are to govern you? Whether this be true, and to what extent successful, and what the character of that success, are enquiries of deep and thrilling interest to yourselves and your friends, to this Institution, to your country, to the church and its ever living Head. Thus your eye is directed to the vista of futurity.

Ordinarily, no period in a young man's life is of equal importance with that, in which he bids farewell to the Halls of general science, that he may concentrate the powers of his mind upon the particular subjects to which his future life is devoted. Various circumstances combine to create this peculiar interest. He must break up, at least as to direct and immediate exercise, the social intimacies of the Academy and College. Generally, he must part from the companions of his literary toil and throw himself into new associations, where new friendships are to attract the heart, and new pursuits to engross the understanding. Changes great and enduring become necessary in both the moral and intellectual man. *Now* the decision must be proclaimed, if not made, as to his future course. The vista opens that he may contemplate his future self in the distance, and take the measures necessary to transform the prophetic visions of fancy, into the substantial realities of history. The important question of a profession must be settled.

On this, allow me to present the single general remark—obvious indeed to all—that, as all our faculties were created for their appropriate exercises, it hence becomes the duty of every man to devote himself to that particular profession, in which, all things considered, there is the highest probability, his labours may most conduce to the interests of human happiness and the Divine glory. This, I doubt not, will be the rule of your procedure, in the selection of your respective fields of future labour.

In the decision of this question, something moreover, is due to the fond feelings of friendship, which have thrown around you hitherto the arm of protection; and which will still continue to follow you, with all that affection can dictate and love execute. These feelings, whose intensity often mocks the power of lan-

guage, you will doubtless consider it your duty, as it will prove your honour, most respectfully to consult and even to reverence. With what emotions a fond father, or a lone widowed mother, may contemplate the literary distinction and professional choice of a beloved, especially of an only son, is not for you to surmise, nor even for me to conjecture. I rest happy in the assurance, that by none of you will these be treated with unbecoming disrespect; and yet at the same time, that whilst every proper token of regard will be paid to the counsels of affection and experience, each of you will feel that the decision must be his own. No friend, however dear, can stand between you and your responsibility in this thing: Experience and love will give their counsels: they may delay your decision—perhaps they ought: but they cannot destroy your accountability. That is *your own*.

“To this Institution” the present hour is one of no ordinary interest. You, Gentlemen, are the first ripe fruits gathered, after a laborious seed time, from a toilsome harvest. Fruits, indeed, from the same fields have been collected, immature, untimely figs, shaken off by various unpropitious blasts. and plants too, and some of vigorous growth and approaching maturity, have been transplanted into other soils and there fully matured, have dropped there fruit into other laps and done us honour. But you have the honour of standing forth before the world, the first ripe fruits of Lafayette: planted and nurtured in her own soil: reared by her own hand. It is natural, it is right, that men should judge of the tree by its fruits. They *will* do so; and hence our deep anxiety, that the habits of the past should run into the future—that the season of relaxation should be short and the twang of its thong, tell of a bow that has lost nothing of its elasticity; of an arm that still retains its vigour.

Rightly to appreciate the stake we have in your future course, it may be proper to direct your attention to two of the special difficulties with which we have to contend. In 1832, when this Institution went into operation, there was no college open within the entire bounds of eastern Pennsylvania, the state of Delaware and the Eastern shore of Maryland. Now there are six: hence active and efficient competition.

Another circumstance still more important is a prejudice which has long existed, and has recently obtained plausible ground, in the measures of certain manual labour Institutions in other states, against the possibility of producing prime scholars, in connexion with physical labour. To present successful opposition to this prejudice, it is indispensable, that our graduates take a respectable, yea a high stand among the professional men of their day. Thus

you perceive what important interests hang upon the issues of this hour: how much your *alma mater* depends upon the efficient aid of her sons. Let her in due time realize the fond hopes she has a right to entertain; so shall her first born rise up and call her blessed; so shall you place yourselves at the head of a long line of worthies who shall proceed hence to bless the most free and happy land the sun ever beheld.

Literature, you are aware, is a monopoly, and like all other monopolies requires its appropriate checks and balances to prevent its degenerating into an aristocracy. All educated men must have influence proportional to their knowledge and integrity. Hence in degraded states of society, education has had its enemies, for that very reason. But the cure for the evil does not lie in ignorance. He who opposes liberal education under the apprehension that he thereby diminishes the influence of a certain class, has forgotten the first lesson of republicanism, viz. that virtue and intelligence constitute its basis. On the contrary the multiplication of literary men;—and especially if they have formed other habits of friendly alliance with the labouring population—proportionally diminishes this dangerous tendency. It is only in states where the power of literature is in few hands, as in ancient Athens, that an aristocracy of letters can exist. Let this class approach a moiety, and the danger ceases. Hence for your country's welfare, we would that the habits you have formed, of viewing manual labour as honourable, should go with you through life; thus you become so many cords binding the extremes of society together. Let your conduct tell your fellow-citizens every where, that you esteem literary pursuits more honourable than manual labour, only because they enable you to contribute more efficiently to the public good.

In conclusion, let me remind you, that in no department of human pursuit, does there open a more inviting field for the exercise of benevolent feeling and sanctified intellect, than in the Christian Church. This great society, organized by the Redeemer of the world for its reformation, is now conducting with new and increasing energy its warfare against all the interests of immorality, sin and oppression. It is destined to revolutionize the entire globe by *moral means alone*. Its war is aggressive; its success certain. The visions of prophecy and the signs of the times conspire to force upon us the belief, that the grand crisis is approaching—that the day is at hand for the mustering of the hosts for the final conflict. Your ears, my dear young friends, may hear the thunders of that last battle—your eyes perhaps may see the bloodless banner of Immanuel wave in triumph over a world, redeemed, regenerated, disenthralled.

Why should not that banner wave over your own heads? Why
should not your hands labour in the achievement of that victory?
Why should not your tongues swell the thunders of that triumph?
Go then,

“ To Calvary’s mount let your genius repair,
“ And lay all your talents devotedly there;—
“ The fire of your muse, be it fire from above,
“ And the soul of your song the sweet story of love.
“ Your science and learning, Oh bring ! as is meet ;
“ Your bright meed of honour, go, lay at his feet—
“ Your garlands of glory triumphantly fling,
“ O’er the thorn woven crown of your crucified King.”