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INAUGURAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

LORD NEAVES

AT HIS INSTALLATION

AS RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

ON 13TH FEBRUARY 1873



WILLIAM BLACKWOOD & SONS
45 GEORGE STREET, EDINBURGH: 37 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

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ADDRESS.

THE first and most pleasing duty which I have to perform at this time is to thank the University and the Electors for the honour they have done me in calling upon me to occupy this chair. To be thus chosen to fill a high office in the most ancient, and by no means the least distinguished, of our Scottish Universities, must be gratifying to the feelings of any one to whom learning and literature are dear, and might be a just cause of some pride and self-satisfaction, if I were not conscious that the choice is in a great measure due to considerations independent of personal merit, arising from my position and from my possible services being more accessible than those of the much more eminent and accomplished men whose names were at the same time submitted for your consideration. I shall only on this subject now express my earnest wish and firm resolution to spare no pains, and to leave no exertion untried, to maintain and promote the reputation, usefulness, and welfare of the University.

I trust, and indeed believe, that I speak the sentiments of all here present, when I state my full con-

currence with the views lately announced and so ably advocated by your Parliamentary representative, that our Universities should continue to be maintained in their full efficiency as schools of instruction, as well as in their character of examining and degree-conferring institutions. I could add nothing either of force or of authority to the arguments which Dr Lyon Playfair has advanced on that important question; and I shall merely add the expression of my confident hope that no change in this respect will be attempted, in opposition to what I believe to be the unanimous feeling of Scotland.

The benefits derived from the assemblage in one place of a variety of learned men to teach what they know, and of a number of earnest students eager to acquire whatever they can learn in each other's company, in the different branches of a liberal education, are too obvious and have too often been promulgated to need illustration from me at this time. The proverb holds here, as in other operations of social influence,—“As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” Even the fading embers of a fire will gather strength and be kindled into a flame by mutual contact, when they would grow cold and lifeless if insulated from each other. The specialties of one man supplement or rectify the peculiarities of his neighbour; the very faults of those thus associated tend to act as a mutual check, and they all learn a degree of sympathy and tolerance for diversities of opinion and of pursuit, to

which the solitary student never attains. Add to this that the *esprit de corps*, which prompts fellow-students to maintain the honour and credit of their Alma Mater, is always a high and a salutary motive to exertion.

If any country is peculiarly indebted to its Universities for its position and prosperity, I think it is our own.

Let us look at the state of Scotland as it was at the beginning of the 15th century.

The Scottish nation, from the earliest period of its authentic history, was divided into two very different races—a Teutonic or low German population on the east and south, and a congeries of Celtic tribes on the north and west. I say nothing of the relative powers of these respective nationalities in respect of mental or intellectual capacity. Probably the combination of their differing characteristics was necessary to complete the best pattern that the nation, as a whole, was destined to exhibit. But I suppose it will be generally allowed that in the Saxon mind intellect predominated over the other powers, as imagination did in the Gael. But in one important quality, having reference to social organisation, there was a very clear preponderance on the Saxon side—I mean the aptitude for observing order and constituting civil Government. The Celtic race, amidst many generous impulses and kindly affections, have shown, among ourselves at least, a certain antipathy to any extensive cohesion of component parts, and have evinced a tendency to subdivide themselves into small septs,

which have too often been found at deadly feud with each other, though, unlike what has been said of their Irish kinsmen, they generally combined together against the common foe. The defects to which I have referred form a serious impediment to the advance of civilisation, and the consequence in Scotland was, that for several centuries the national unity and prosperity were disturbed by the disunions and disorders of the Celtic mountaineers.

The Saxon population, on the other hand, without being deficient in military qualities when these were needed, arranged themselves readily into Burghs and Cities, established among them forms of municipal government such as were derived from traditions of Roman organisation, and on the east coast of Scotland availed themselves of their free and extensive, though stormy, seaboard, to become mariners and merchants, and to engage in a prosperous and profitable trade with the seaports of France and the ports around the North Sea, from which the most beneficial commercial and social results were to be expected.

In the south of Scotland the inhabitants were by nature as highly gifted with mental energy and powerful intellect as any of their countrymen; but unfortunately along the whole English frontier the frequent and irritating wars that had occurred, and the national bitterness that had been infused into these contests, by arrogant pretensions on one or both sides, proved fatal to the pursuits of industry and cultivation, and thus an extent of agricultural and

pastoral country, that might have been a region of peace and plenty, was given up to incessant aggressions and retaliations of plunder and bloodshed that proved fatal to the arts and habits of civilised life.

This state of things was in the fullest development of its injurious tendencies in the beginning of the 15th century, when the devastation and disturbance of the eastern border were brought to a height by the battle of Homildon Hill in 1402.

A few years afterwards a scene was enacted in the north of Scotland of the most portentous and threatening description. This was exhibited in the invasion of the district of Moray and Aberdeen by the hordes of Celtic Katerans who acknowledged the supremacy of Donald of the Isles, and who threatened to overrun and devastate the peaceful and prosperous tract of lowland and maritime country on our east coast. These invaders, though not decisively defeated at the memorable battle of Harlaw in 1411, were yet by the results of that combat impeded in their further progress, and the flourishing city of Aberdeen was thus preserved from all the horrors that can befall a rich town sacked by ruthless and insatiable barbarians.

The geography of this condition of things led to the discouraging consequence, that at the beginning of the 15th century the civilised part of Scotland was in truth confined to a sort of irregular triangle, of which Aberdeen was the apex on the north, while Edinburgh and Glasgow were the two extremities at

the base. To the south lay a lovely and fertile territory that was little better than a debatable land; while the north and west districts were surrendered to highland or island tribes, equally unwilling and unable to be governed by law or order.

In such circumstances it was clear that the future welfare of Scotland depended upon the question whether the influential men of this special and limited district could be trained and disciplined so as to be able amidst all disturbing causes to govern and legislate for the country at large, and thus maintain and advance its independence and prosperity. This was the problem to be worked out, and earnestly did the great and good men of that age set themselves to a task, which they prosecuted with a degree of ability and success that entitle them to the highest praise and to our permanent gratitude.

I need not say that Churchmen must have been the chief agents in accomplishing this great work, and they had the sagacity to see that the establishment of native Universities was the most likely means of attaining their end. Scotland was not without learning, but it had to seek its education abroad; and it was a great matter that neither its learned men nor its students should be driven to the remedy of even a temporary expatriation, in the prosecution of the liberal pursuits to which they wished to devote themselves. The 15th century came in this way to see the establishment, within Scotland, of three Universities,—that of St Andrews, in 1411, the very year of the battle

of Harlaw; Glasgow, in 1450; and King's College of Aberdeen, in 1494. There was thus erected along the line of civilisation that I before indicated, a chain of what may be called forts or garrisons of learning, from which its protecting and elevating influence might be diffused around, and placed within easy reach of those who were most likely to wish for, and to profit by its benefits.

It will be found, I think, that during that important and critical century the great thinkers of Scotland, and its best legislators, were intent on the prosecution of an object to which in our own day, and in different circumstances, we have been turning our attention. I mean, the establishment, as far as feasible, of a *compulsory education*. But there was this difference in the aspect in which that question then presented itself. The prominent object nowadays is rather to compel the poor to educate their children; the object then was directly or indirectly to compel the rich to be educated. But in noticing this distinction, I would earnestly deprecate the idea that the system then pursued was the result of any feeling of favouritism for the rich as compared with the poor. It arose, it is clear, from the best and wisest principles of patriotism and social prudence.

I do not hesitate, indeed, to say that in almost any country or state of society the education of rich young men is of at least equal importance to that of the poor. Both classes have their temptations as well as their needs. But, generally speaking, poverty, like

adversity, is a school in itself; and if a poor lad has common honesty, he will at least be preserved from many deviations from other virtues. He can't be idle—he can't be slothful—he can't be luxurious: he will be trained in the discipline that nature establishes—by those motives and checks which the poets tell us were introduced by Jupiter under his iron reign, “*curis acuens mortalia corda.*” But the rich man's son, with his bed made for him by his predecessors, with no natural motive for exertion—with the power to be idle with impunity, and to be as expensive as he chooses, he it is that more especially needs education to furnish him with moral motives—intellectual enjoyments—spiritual aspirations, to incite him to what is good and preserve him from what is evil. He has infinitely more and greater temptations and seductions; he has infinitely fewer and less restraints than the poor man; and if he is selfish or voluptuous, what endless mischief he may diffuse by the influence of his example or encouragement! How many of his poorer associates may he ruin! How many hearts and homes may he render wretched by carrying his evil principles and influence into them! An ill-educated, or even an uneducated, young man of station and wealth may become one of the greatest curses of society, and the general prevalence of that defect throughout a nation may of itself seal its doom.

These considerations were peculiarly appropriate for Scotland in the 15th century, though the form in which the evil would operate might have its own

peculiarities. The government of Scotland was aristocratic. That was a necessity of its nature, arising from the history of its development out of the Teutonic elements that resulted in Feudalism. The Crown was weak in any condition of things, but special circumstances, including the captivity of James I., gave peculiar power to the Scottish barons. And if these men and their sons were to be brought up merely as uncivilised tyrants, or ruthless leaders of a military following, the prospects of the country were indeed sad. It was essential, if Scotland was in any respect to prosper, that the rising generation of the Scottish nobility and better landholders should possess as much knowledge as would teach them to reverence learning, and as much law as would fit them to do justice to their dependants under the extensive jurisdictions which were intrusted to their care; and further, it was essential that they and the larger freeholders should be qualified to do their duty in Parliament by providing such enactments as would best remedy existing evils, and best provide for the welfare of all classes.

The Act of Parliament passed in 1494, in the fifth Parliament of James IV., c. 54, has been often referred to; but I think it cannot be sufficiently dwelt upon as revealing the spirit which was then seeking to develop itself; nor has it always been noticed that the benefits sought to be derived from it were not partial or one-sided, but were designed for the advantage of the whole community, rich and poor, high and low.

“That all Barronnes and Free-holders that ar of substance put their eldest Sonnes and Aires to the Schules.

“*Item.* It is statute and ordained throw all the Realme, that all Barronnes and Free-holders, that ar of substance, put their eldest Sonnes and Aires to the Schules, fra they be sex or nine zeires of age, and till remaine at the Grammar Schules, quhill they be competentlie founded and have perfite Latine. And thereafter to remaine three zeirs at the Schules of Art and Jure. Swa that they may have knowledge and understanding of the Lawes. Throw the quhilks justice may remaine universally throw all the Realme. Swa that they that ar Schireffes or Judges Ordinares, under the Kingis Hienesse, may have knowledge to doe justice, that the puir people sulde have na neede to seek our Sovereine Lordis principal Auditour, for ilk small injurie: And quhat Baronne or Free-holder of substance, that haldis not his Sonne at the Schules as said is, havand na lauchful essoinzie, bot failzies herein, fra knowledge may be gotten thereof, he sall pay to the King, the summe of twentie pound.”

I cannot help noticing that this admirable Act was passed in the very year in which King's College of Aberdeen was founded by the excellent Bishop Elphinstone.

Nothing can better show the humane and wise spirit which, in the midst of many human errors, was at work in the Scottish Parliament during this century, than the remarkable law passed in the very middle of it, during the reign of James II., being the Act 1449, chapter 18, that “The byer of Landes suld keepe the tackes set before the bying.” It is worth while to take some special notice of this Act, although its nature and history must be well known to many who now hear me.

According to strict rules of law, the contract of

location or lease is merely a personal agreement between the contracting parties, so that the lessee of lands has no real or proprietary right to keep possession of them in competition with a true right of property. It follows, therefore, that if the original lessor sells the lands, the buyer who thus becomes proprietor can immediately oust the lessee or tenant, who has no other remedy but a personal claim of reparation against the lessor. This state of things, where it prevailed, led necessarily to much hardship and to great uncertainty in the position of the tenants of land, who could not rely with any confidence on the continuance of their possessions. Some of the Continental nations accordingly saw cause to relax this rule, and to give to tenants a fixity of tenure which they would not otherwise have enjoyed; and this more equitable and beneficial law was embodied by the Scottish Parliament in the Act of 1449 which I have mentioned, which may be considered as the Palladium of Scottish tenancy, and the main basis of Scottish Agriculture, by the encouragement and protection which it gave to leases, when they were granted, as the law required, on equitable terms.

There is little doubt that the progress of Scotland, both in learning and general prosperity, would have advanced more rapidly than it did in the 16th century if it had not been for that event, the most disastrous in Scottish history, by which James IV. perished on the field of Flodden, in the flower of his

age. Such a contingency was not beyond the reach of probability, from foregone indications; for in 1498 the Spanish envoy, Pedro de Ayala, in writing to his master and mistress with an account of James's character and accomplishments, states as one of his faults, "He loves war so much that I fear the peace with England will not last long;" and he explains at the same time that he is courageous, "even more so than a king should be. I have seen him often undertake most dangerous things in the last wars. On such occasions he does not take the least care of himself. He does not think it right to begin any war-like undertaking without being himself the first in danger."

It is, however, a strong proof of the courage and well-organised position of Scotland at that time, that no invasion of the kingdom was attempted, and under all her disasters and disadvantages, the Scottish nation advanced in learning and liberality of thought; and the Universities, while instrumental in promoting learning in all its forms, were themselves, though of Popish origin, not slow to contribute their part, in due time, to the great Reformation of religion which was effected in the middle of the 16th century. The progress of legislation in Scotland during the succeeding period until the Union was in many respects most satisfactory, and many enlightened laws were passed on the most important matters, which showed advanced views on social subjects.

It would be unpardonable here to omit stating that, while the Grammar-schools and Universities of Scotland were designed, both to meet the demands of the Church and to qualify the sons of barons and freeholders for discharging their public and political duties, provision was also made for enabling the humbler members of society to cultivate and employ any talent and taste which they might exhibit for the pursuits of learning. Helps were given them by which they might rise from an obscure position to a respectable and even a high eminence in the learned world, somewhat in the way in which we see 'salmon-ladders' now placed in rivers to enable the fish to ascend the steepest fall and reach the ground to which they are aspiring; and it has always been the characteristic of Scotland that the son of the humblest peasant has the means of attaining a thorough education, and of commanding all the advantages which education can give, provided he has the ability and perseverance to avail himself of the aids thus afforded.

Whether this state of things is to continue, or whether there may not now be a gulf that is practically impassable between our lower and higher schools, is a question involved in some uncertainty, but which deeply concerns the future character and welfare of the Scottish people, and which I trust will in some way or other be solved, so as to maintain the same fusion of ranks, and the same facilities that have

hitherto existed for low-born genius and merit to rise to their due level.

To descant upon the studies which ought to be pursued at a University would, in me, be both needless and officious. You are better aware of them than I can be. I shall only recall to your recollection a few general views which it is important to keep in mind.

You do not come here to study insulated facts or particular details. It is said that "knowledge is power," and perhaps all knowledge is some kind of power to somebody or other. But it is not all knowledge that you are here in pursuit of. It would do you little or no good that you knew all the streets in Constantinople, though there might be somebody on the spot, some water-carrier, for instance, to whom it would be useful. A Welsh friend of mine used to attach great interest to the inquiry whether there were more Smiths or Joneses in the London directory, for in his view the one or the other state of things showed the preponderance of the Saxon or Celtic element in the metropolitan population. But it is not with such matters that you have here to deal: you are in search of general principles, and universal truths. Above all, it is your business, and that of your instructors, to develop the powers of your mind, so that no important faculty shall remain uncultivated, and that no essential and salutary feeling shall remain unexercised. This kind of training, if it does not make you learned men now, will enable you to

become so hereafter, if that is your destination; or it will give you keys that will open the door to the practice of any liberal profession which you may choose, and to the discharge of any public or social duty to which you may be called. If in this place you learn the art of learning whatever may claim your attention in after-life, you will not have studied here in vain.

There is no purpose, perhaps, which the lessons of a *Studium generale* can better serve than that of enabling us to distinguish and compare the different processes by which we arrive at truth.

Beyond all doubt, the mathematical sciences involve in their propositions the most absolute, and, as some think, the only complete certainty to which we can attain. They depend upon no contingency, no hypothesis. Everything rests on a solid abstract basis, from the axioms with which we begin, to the most intricate and complicated results into which these are developed; while the mind, as it proceeds by degrees from a point to a line, from a line to a surface, and from a surface to a solid, or while it follows out the marvellous relations that lie hid in the intersection or revolution of lines or surfaces, becomes aware of a beauty and symmetry of the most attractive kind, and of which the charm is greatly enhanced when we see the same principles carried out in the operations of mechanism whether in nature or in art, up to the sublimest movements of the heavenly bodies themselves. No mind can be

thoroughly educated that is not well imbued with the power and excellence of these forms of truth.

But I think it also clear that the study of the mathematical sciences alone would constitute an imperfect education, and would not serve as a safe or sufficient guide in the conduct of life. Life is not a mathematical process, and its course is not dependent upon demonstrations. Apart from those instinctive and sublime beliefs which seem to be impressed upon us, without proofs, by the very exercise of our mental powers, probabilities seem, after all, to be the utmost that we can attain to, and if these are very strong—which they may be to an indefinite degree—they are amply sufficient to regulate our conduct. Logic itself, whether inductive or deductive, is not equivalent to strict demonstration. Inductive logic leaves always the possibility of some exceptional case having been kept out of view, and deductive logic is ever dependent on the truth of its premises. Yet these processes of reasoning are all that our nature requires for practical certitude, and we shall fall into grievous errors if we seek for strict demonstration where that is not attainable in the nature of things.

Accompanying and assisting all our other studies, the great and vital subject of Language must ever hold a paramount place. For language, in so far as it is rational language, and not merely the instinctive utterance of a feeling or a want, is one of the great characteristics of mankind, and is not only the exponent but the instrument of thought. No justifi-

cation is therefore necessary of the immense importance always attached to it, whether in the higher or in the lower forms of education.

Without dwelling on a subject so well known, I shall state, in a few words, the conclusions to which I think we are here led, both by experience and by reflection.

Generally speaking, no one language can be thoroughly understood without the study of more than one. A plurality of languages must be studied and compared before we can arrive at the essence of language, in its general character, and perfect conception.

The only plausible argument that I have heard against this view, is that the Greeks were masters of their own admirable tongue—and yet, generally speaking, were unacquainted with any other. We must here, however, attend to the consideration that the Greeks were about the most acute people that ever lived, though they were not very sound philologists. Yet I have sometimes been led to suspect that the variety and character of their dialects were such as to make them almost equivalent to a diversity of languages. Those dialects were not provincial or vulgar corruptions of a classical standard, but each of them was an independent form of speech, pure and perfect, according to its own laws and principles.

The differences of date and place, too, to which their great authors belonged, were such as to produce a multiplicity of idioms that might serve instead of a difference of national languages, such as we in our

time are familiar with. Homer, Herodotus, Pindar, Aristophanes, could scarcely be studied and compared together, without illustrating those principles which reveal to us the unity of essence hid in all languages, though not exhibiting a uniformity of aspect.

I must own, indeed, that I cannot find clear proofs of any such views of comparative philology; even in the strange medley presented by Plato's *Cratylus*. We know, however, how anxious the Greeks were to preserve a true Hellenismos, free from barbarisms, solecisms, and *γλωσσαι*, and at the same time that Homer was a constant study and a common school-book among them. As to this last matter, you may remember the Greek epigram, thus translated:—

A thriving Doctor sent his boy to school
To gain some grammar, should he prove no fool;
But took him soon away, with little warning,
On finding out the lesson he was learning:
How great Pelides' wrath, in Homer's rhyme,
Sent many souls to Hades ere their time.
"No need, for *that*, my boy should hither come:
That lesson he can better learn at home;
For I myself now, in that very way,
Send many souls to Hades every day."

I cannot doubt that the model languages, which we ought to study along with our own, are the classical. Greek and Latin seem every way the best companions in studying our native English. Not that we are to write English like Greek and Latin, but that we are to seek out in those ancient tongues the excellences which they possess, and en-

deavour to reproduce the same effects in that form which our mother tongue is capable of accomplishing, according to its own character and genius; while at the same time we may try in it to find peculiar resources and charms, of which the older languages were destitute.

I do not say that substitutes might not be found for Greek and Latin in other languages. I daresay a student might, by the study of Sanskrit alone, make himself a subtle and philosophical grammarian; though I may have my suspicion that the ideas he acquired would be too artificial, and that he might be led too far into the regions of theory and fancy. But whether we look to the character of our minds, or to the history of our institutions and civilisation, I think it clear that Greek and Latin are the springs from which our scholars must derive their inspiration. Greek men and Greek books are our masters in philosophy: Roman legislation and Roman institutions are the models on which our laws and government have been mainly moulded; and both of these languages have attained to the utmost perfection in poetry, history, and eloquence.

In like manner I have little doubt that the study of some modern languages might, if necessary, go far to serve certain purposes instead of Greek and Latin. For instance, if we were carefully to study the best French writers of prose, and the worst German writers of prose, we might arrive at a tolerable perception of good and bad writing by seeing both the

guides that we should follow and the beacons that we should avoid. Yet no one would seriously say that any modern language could show us the refinement, the grace, the strength and the majesty, which belong to the best Greek and Roman authors.

It is an inestimable advantage attending the study of those languages, that while we analyse the noble and beautiful forms into which their diction is cast, we have the opportunity at the same time of studying the wisdom and the beauty of thought with which their works abound, and the force of character which their great men display. It may safely, I think, be asserted, that whatever shortcomings or faults are here and there visible, the highest ideal of a wise or great man, according to the Greek or Roman standard, needs only the rectifying and elevating influence of Christian principles to form a pattern of humanity such as we may safely strive to emulate.

The tone of Greek and Roman literature, so far from becoming obsolete in its application, seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate to the wants of the present day. The taste for beauty, which is so important an element in human nature, has little provision made for its cultivation at our Universities except in the province of literature. It were most desirable that our students should learn more than they can now do, to appreciate the graces of form, colour, and movement, which are to be found both in nature and art. But whether from want of susceptibility from our being engrossed with weightier studies, or from

that *res angusta* which is sometimes a spur and sometimes an impediment, there is little or no means of learning here the sources or the tests of excellence in any of the fine arts, and it is only lately that even in the English Universities an attempt has been made to supply that want by the distinguished man whom you, some time ago, elected unavailingly to the office which I have the honour to hold. It is in literature alone that the sense of beauty can be elicited and cultivated in these academic seats; and no better models of excellence or canons of criticism could anywhere be found for the formation of taste in the youthful mind than those which the classics supply.

I think, further, that the general spirit of Greek and Roman literature is much wanted at the present time, as a counterpoise to the commercial or financial tendencies of the age. I am far from depreciating the value of wealth; and, certainly, there are few temporal gifts of more importance to virtue and to happiness, than pecuniary independence. Burns, himself, with all the moderation of his views, and with all his sincere praise of "honest poverty," proclaimed, and in the end of his life too sadly missed, what he terms "the glorious privilege—of being *independent*." And David Hume, a great philosopher in many things, and especially in this, showed his unvarying estimate of the essential importance to every man, and in particular to a literary man, of a sufficient competence, and for many years practised the utmost frugality to attain this object.

To some men, however, whether by accident or by merit, opportunities have lately been given of amassing fortunes, far exceeding in amount anything known or dreamt of in this country before. I must, at the same time, say that this has been done, almost without exception, in a manner more legitimate and honourable, more free from corrupt or sordid dealings, than the annals of commercial prosperity could at any former period exhibit. I must add, too, that the use made of that wealth by our millionaires has generally been as honourable as its mode of acquisition. Still, there is a risk that the worship of wealth may become too prevalent among us; and there is, and always will be, a large class in the community who are debarred from the possession of much money, and who, from their peculiar position, are even poorer than many who have less means. Men who, by taste or circumstances, are led to devote themselves to scholarship or pure science, are destined, in general, to possess a limited share of this world's goods; and it needs all the dignity, and all the enjoyments, which literature and philosophy can supply, to enable them to carry an erect front, and to command the respect which their high attainments and beneficial influence entitle them to demand. These men, who, with their families, instead of tasting the resources of luxury, must be content with "plain living and high thinking," such as their predecessors in the same path have nobly practised, will find in classical literature the

sympathy and support of which they stand in need. With all our appreciation of the merit of men who have acquired fortunes by their industry or talent, we must still abide by that undoubted truth, proclaimed so unequivocally in ancient literature:—

"Non possidentem multa vocaveris
Rectè beatum; rectius occupat
Nomen beati, qui Deorum
Muneribus sapienter uti,
Duramque callet pauperiem pati."

It is well for scholars and men of learning to feel this consolation; and it will be wise in those who are their superiors in wealth or rank to acknowledge its truth also, and to recognise the fact that there are, in a well-constituted society, many aristocracies, and that one of these consists of the men whose genius and accomplishments can delight and enlighten their fellow-creatures, though they may not pave the way to riches or to grandeur.

Your future destinies in life will be various; and as to some of them I am little competent to give you advice or assistance. I cannot be your guide in science or in philosophy. But, reviewing the relative importance of University studies, I will venture to indicate those that I consider the most practically useful in the walks of actual life with which I am best acquainted. I do not hesitate to say, that the acquirements which are most conducive to success, and which seem indeed to be indispensable to it, are these two—a thorough command of language, and a mastery of Logic—particularly of Deductive Logic.

Of this last attainment I think the importance and uses are often underrated. The fact is, that, like the Bourgeois Gentilhomme, we are constantly practising logic without knowing it. We may do it inartificially; we may do it inaccurately and illogically; but we are always chopping logic, as if for our daily food. The relation of universals to particulars, which is the essence of logic, can never be forgotten by a reasoning animal like man, and the very use of language brings it into perpetual exercise. Almost all thinking consists in this, that we get hold of some general truth, and then applying it to a particular example, we arrive at a definite conclusion. It has been said by some writers, that Deductive Logic implies Inductive, and that Induction must precede Deduction. But that is not so in actual life. Our *major propositions*—that is, our general truths or maxims—are not always derived from Induction. Comparatively speaking, this is true of only a small proportion of them. Induction may be the nobler art, but it is more rarely put in exercise. Many men, and especially young men, do not think much about extending their views from particular facts to general truths. They get their general truths from other sources, independently of any Inductive process of their own. All the great practical truths and precepts of religion are dictated to us in their full-grown generality, and are received as absolutely binding by religious men without any process of Induction. “Thou shalt do no murder:” “Thou shalt not steal:” “Thou shalt not covet:”

these are *major* propositions, which descended to us from Heaven direct, and which leave us nothing to do but to apply the general prohibition to individual cases as they arise. We see this familiarly illustrated in our usual forms of criminal process, which are conducted commonly on the plan of a Syllogism. Thus, murder is a crime that ought to be punished. You, the accused, have done an act which is murder: therefore you ought to be punished. In like manner the precepts in the Sermon on the Mount, which, unlike most of the Old Testament commandments, are not prohibitory merely, but positive and active, these are binding on the Christian conscience, as the dictates of infallible Authority. The enactments of human legislation are binding on the subjects who owe allegiance to the legislator, and are expressed in the form of general propositions, which come to be applied to individual cases. All maxims that are received upon high personal credit, or from popular opinion or ancient tradition, are *major* propositions, which may indeed be tested or examined, but which for the most part are taken for granted, and not inquired into. The sayings of the Seven Sages of Greece were of this description. The Proverbs even of the vulgar pass current, and those of wise men, of course, have all the greater weight from the reputation of their authors. “Wise saws and modern instances” are an exercise of the logical faculties in daily use. “All men are mortal,” is a *major* proposition, which may or might have

been got from Induction, but which for ages has been received as indisputable by myriads that never witnessed death. It might be difficult, perhaps, to impress it on the little child so beautifully described by Wordsworth, in his poem of "We are Seven," who could nowise be got to believe that the "two that in the churchyard lie, my sister and my brother," were not to be counted in the number of the family. But a few years soon enable the youngest and the strongest among us to adopt the general belief; though, indeed, a satirical poet would persuade us that the general maxim does not meet with an unqualified acceptance; for he tells us that "All men think all men mortal—but *themselves*." Again, "Honesty is the best policy," does not strike a very high tone in morals, but it is generally received on credit by most men; though, to be sure, there is the story of a man who could give his word for the truth of it, "as he had tried it both ways." That, indeed, was an example of the discovery of a general truth by induction. But I hope it is not the ordinary way by which that truth has been arrived at.

It has been said that Deductive Logic makes no new discovery, and in a certain sense that is true. The conclusion is in reality wrapt up in the premises, and the logical process merely unfolds and discloses it; but in that sense it *discovers* what had before been covered and kept out of sight.

These processes of deduction are the result of our natural tendencies, and are not of an artificial kind.

But we are apt in our haste to jump to wrong conclusions, without sufficiently attending to the steps by which we ought to have proceeded.

The use of Logic as an art is that we are thereby compelled to sift and analyse the general and special propositions with which we have to deal, so as to see that there is no error or mistake anywhere, no equivocation or ambiguity in the essential words used, and thus to become sure that the precise *species facti* falls under the larger proposition on which the proof mainly depends. When by accurate definition and careful discrimination we have secured these requisites, our conclusion is inevitable if our premises are true. Not that these operations are to be thrust upon the notice of our hearers. Here, as elsewhere, *ars est celare artem*. But they will be of infinite value to our own minds, particularly by teaching us to acquire the power of analytical clearness. I may wind up these observations by saying, that *theoretical* wisdom seems to consist in our knowing as many as possible of the important maxims or major propositions that have been discovered in the world's history; and *practical* wisdom, in the skill with which we apply these to the individual situations and emergencies which we encounter in the conduct of life.

The acquisition of a complete mastery of language is the other important requisite to which I referred. This subject is one intimately connected with University studies, and at the same time has bear-

ings upon practical life of the most important kind. It is a duty which ought to be felt by all men of high education, and more particularly by those destined for the liberal professions, to acquire and cultivate the power of expressing their thoughts in clear and unambiguous language. It is needless to tell you how great a part has been played by the power of language in the affairs of life, and even in the events of public history; though it is probable that mere eloquence has not now the influence which it once wielded. It is desirable that our style, whether of writing or of speaking, should be correct, should be elegant, should be forcible. But the quality necessary above all others is that it should be clear. It may seem superfluous to announce a precept upon this matter, but its enforcement is urgently needed, as the neglect of it is lamentably prevalent; and the evil consequences of that neglect are almost incalculably great.

It has long been seen that a large proportion of the disputes that exist in philosophy and theology proceed from a want of agreement among men as to the language they employ. But the mischief is not confined to matters of theoretical controversy. The contracts that we enter into are vitiated by the same fault, and hence a fertile field of strife and dispute is opened up. Still worse effects are produced by the obscure or ambiguous language in which men's wills or the settlements of their property are expressed; and it cannot be doubted that from this cause innumerable cases

have occurred where parties have been cruelly deprived of rights intended by testators to be conferred on them, not only where deceased persons had made their own wills, which no one should ever do, but where those deeds have been framed by others, whose profession it was to express clearly what they were employed to reduce to writing.

Nor is this great evil confined to private rights; our legislation is tainted with the same tendency to a fearful extent. Scarcely an Act of Parliament is passed, that is not found, as soon as it comes into operation, to abound with obscurities and ambiguities, which it is scarcely possible to clear up, or which are only interpreted by means of expensive and dilatory proceedings, and at the risk of rendering ridiculous both the law and the Legislature. If we were to discount the lawsuits and disappointments of fair expectations that have arisen from obscure and ambiguous clauses in deeds and documents, and especially in wills and statutes, our law reports would be reduced to a much smaller bulk than they now exhibit; and there would be far less heart-burning and resentment against the administration of Justice.

It is an alarming fact, that this neglect or violation of the duty of clear expression seems lately to have been carried into the region of diplomacy. It has almost been openly avowed, as to some late negotiations, that language was made use of in treaties that was purposely chosen as being ambiguous, in order to bring about an apparent agreement on contro-

verted matters where there was no real unity of intention. Language, it has been said, was for this purpose used that was "less accurate" than it should have been; which plainly implies that the true difficulty to be solved was not fairly faced, but that the dispute was adjourned to a future day, when the treaty should come to be carried into execution. I trust that there is some mistake as to this matter, and I am certain that such an intention cannot have been general among our negotiators. It cannot be doubted that such a mode of proceeding is vicious and unsound. It may have been sometimes resorted to by opposing attorneys, who wanted to patch up the semblance of an agreement anyhow, and who had no objection to a subsequent litigation as to the meaning of the equivocal language adopted. But the device is unworthy of a great nation. It is disingenuous in itself, and it is not a safe or prudent practice, for it is a general rule that all ambiguous language is to be construed against the party who proposes the use of it; and indeed it is quite fair that any one who propounds ambiguous language in a contract, in order to gain the assent of the other contracting party, shall be held to that construction of his words which is most favourable to the opponent whom he has thus attempted to influence.

The art of speaking or writing clearly is not one that can be acquired without great care and pains. It presupposes much previous thought and meditation, and constant circumspection as to the weight, bearing,

and arrangement of the words employed. The foundation of it is to be laid in *clear thinking*; for it is hopeless to expect unambiguous expression if our ideas are hazy or confused. Next after clear thinking comes *plain speaking*, which implies the exclusion of all vague or doubtful phrases, and the selection of those words and expressions which are the most precise and proper to convey to others what we think ourselves.

It has been said by some eminent satirists of human nature that language was intended to conceal our thoughts. I should prefer to adopt another view that has been suggested—namely, that language has a threefold use: first, to *express* our thoughts; second, to *conceal* our thoughts; and third, to conceal the fact that we have *no* thoughts; and I am inclined to think that the last of these uses is as often put in exercise as either of the others. This mode of employing language is a very old invention; it was the great resource of the ancient oracles, who, when consulted as to a future event, contrived generally to disguise their ignorance by using language that would accommodate itself to either result.

"Aio te, Æacida, Romanos vincere posse."

"Æacidas the Romans will subdue."

This response shows some ingenuity in evading the tendency of the Latin language to distinguish the nominative from the accusative case, for by the form of the sentence in the use of "Aio," both the subject and the object are made accusatives. Such

prophets belonged to that class of "juggling fiends" whom Macbeth denounces:—

"That palter with us in a double sense;
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope."

The *rationale* of their power of deception seems to have been this, that credulous and sanguine men are apt to believe any indistinct utterances, in the sense most agreeable to their own wishes, according to the proverb, "As the fool thinks the bell clinks," and it is only after the event that they discover the original ambiguity. This concealment of the absence of thought or knowledge is often, I have no doubt, involuntary rather than intentional. Many men do not know or do not realise the inaccuracy or imperfection of their own ideas on certain subjects, and this mistake is specially apt to befall those who have by nature a great command of fluent language. I was once asked by a lady why a mutual friend had not succeeded at the bar, considering that he possessed such fluency of speech. My answer was, that that was the very reason of his want of success. He was able to speak to any extent, upon any subject, whether he understood it or not; and that fault, when found out, was fatal to him. Every man, therefore, that has in this sense the "gift of the gab" ought to be specially on his guard, so as to be sure that he thoroughly knows what he means on any matter on which he has to speak or write, and that he is not the dupe of his own facility or fertility of expression. An abundance of

words is apt to run into mere circumlocution, which goes round about the subject but never fairly grapples with it. A superfluity of foliage conceals not only any fruit that the tree may have, but even the fact that it has no fruit at all.

As a requisite of plain speaking, it is further necessary, in regard to matters which require plain expression, that there should be as little use as possible of metaphorical language. Figures of speech are out of place when we are dealing with business. Butler's hero, Hudibras, had this vicious tendency among others; for besides his disposition to a Babylonish dialect, natural to his school of metaphysical divinity, it is said that

"For rhetoric, he could not ope
His mouth but out there flew a *trope*."

Nothing is more effective than the judicious use of metaphorical illustration when the matter in hand is already well defined and unmistakably understood, and when all that is wanted is to enforce, or add incentives to adopt, what is sought to be advocated. But the first thing is to lay down and explain precisely the true matter at issue; and there is no other way but "plain speaking," by which the speaker or the hearer can be certain that they know what they are about. Some languages, such as the Persian, at least as employed by certain writers, seem incapable of saying anything in a plain way. But this Asiatic eloquence is not suitable to the genius of the English language or of the English people.

When a Persian Story-teller, like the author of the 'Lights of Canopus,' wishes to tell that some one prosecuted his object with energy and success, he would say, "He put the foot of determination into the stirrup of despatch, and spurred on the steed of his resolution to the goal of accomplishment." Wishing to praise the utility of Silence, that Fabulist says: "As long as the door of the casket of speech is fastened with the bolt of silence, and the seal of taciturnity is placed on the lid of the repertory of discourse, all the sweet herbs in the garden of life grow safely, and the young tree of existence yields all the fruit of security and enjoyment; but when the rose-bud of eloquence unfolds its smiles, and the nightingale of oratory begins to warble, one cannot be safe," &c. Sometimes such frippery, though silly and ridiculous, is intelligible enough. But when the writer comes to abstruser matters, he wraps up the *kernel* of his meaning in the *husks* of his verbosity, so that no one can find out what he is after.

We are told that we are probably on the eve of a system of codification as to our laws. If this be so, it will be of the utmost importance that the task should be performed with the greatest care and skill in reference to the important considerations of which I have now been treating. Otherwise, the publication of a Code will be the signal for an endless series of litigations as to the true meaning of our new laws. It is fortunate that we now have at the head of the law a man of first-rate talents, accomplishments, and learning in

his profession, whose name is well known in this place, and whose services, I trust, in one position or another, will long be available to his country. The skill and accuracy of one so able and conscientious, aided by the co-operation of other distinguished jurists, may save us from the evils to which crude or hasty legislation in this matter would inevitably expose us.

I ought, in conclusion, to add, that whatever skill you may possess in language or logic, or anything else, it will avail you little, even for secular success, if you are not animated and guided by high moral principles, based upon the Christian Scriptures, and illustrated and enforced by the best ethical teachers of ancient and modern times.

These, gentlemen, are the somewhat desultory observations that have occurred to me to address to you at this time. They have been put together during the limited leisure allowed by an official life, and they savour perhaps too much of professional tendencies. They need, therefore, all the indulgence that you can give them. I shall rejoice if now or at any future time they are of any service to you in your career of study, or at your entrance into the world; and thanking you for the kindness with which you have listened to me, I have now to bid you farewell for the present, and to wish you health and strength to carry on your studies, and every success that can attend the prosecution of them.

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