14

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE LAYING

OF THE

CORNER STONE

OF THE

University of Nashville,

ON THE 7TH OF APRIL, 1853.

BY JOHN A. M'EWEN, A. M.

NASHVILLE, TENN.
JOHN T. S. FALL, BOOK AND JOB PRINTER—COLLEGE STREET.
1853.

CORRESPONDENCE.

NASHVILLE, April 7, 1853.

JOHN A. M'EWEN, Esq.:

DEAR SIR—The Executive and Building Committee of the University of Nashville, beg leave to tender you their thanks for your eloquent and appropriate Oration, at the laying of the Corner-stone of the new University Buildings, and to request of you the manuscript for publication.

Most respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
ALEX. ALLISON,
Chairman Executive and Building Committee.

APRIL 7, 1853.

MAJOR ALEX. ALLISON:

DEAR SIR—Your note of this date, requesting the manuscript of an Address delivered by myself this morning, at the invitation of your Committee, is received. I herewith furnish you the manuscript, to be used as you think best.

Very respectfully,
JOHN A. M'EWEN.

ADDRESS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

SINCE the days of the Tabernacle and the Judæan Temple, the consecration of religious and public edifices has been practised by all nations. Whether the custom was borrowed from the Jewish Ritual, or finds its origin in the proprieties of Nature, it is immaterial to inquire. Its universality, did it rest upon nothing else, is a sufficient justification of its observance. It were interesting to send back the imagination far up the stream of Time, to picture the ceremonies, the pride and the prophecy, with which the priest hallowed the ancient temple or pyramid. Did he realize that these should survive the philosophy of Plato, or the line and the glory of Egyptian kings, and should record the virtue and refinement of a nation, when the very language of their dedication should cease to be spoken by her sons? The mute monuments of antiquity, more eloquent than the tablets of history, it was well that they be founded and finished with solemn ceremony, for they tell a story, that might else be buried with the Past, of the genius, the art and the religion of the period, whose creation they are.

In obedience to this precedent of history, or, perhaps, taking a step beyond it, we are met to lay the corner-stone of an edifice, whose certain and speedy completion we thus anticipate and hallow in advance. We raise it, however, fearless of the fate

that it shall speak one day the story of a race, that is to become extinct, but rather that it may transmit from generation to generation the virtue, in which it is conceived and founded. We dedicate it at once to the common Genius of Religion, of Science, of Patriotism, and of Liberty. A University, based on right principles, in its influence and tendency, must be promotive of all these. That the institution we are now about to revive will become the advocate of all these sacred and harmonious causes, is the ardent hope and expectation of every one, who brings his offering and his prayer to its altar. We are acting to-day not for the present alone, but for coming time. In tender recollection and gratitude for the benefits many of us have personally enjoyed, we desire to perpetuate them, that the sons of other days may have no lack of opportunity, of incentive to virtue, or of access to letters. Who can foresee but that we stand this day at the centre of influences, that shall stretch out their arms and describe a circle, that may, perchance, embrace the entire Union, if not the world?

The patriot and philanthropist cannot be an indifferent spectator of such an occasion. The erection of a University is an important event in the history of any community. The people of our goodly city have ever been the patrons of Letters. It is not in enthusiastic advocacy of the cause, that I attribute much of their prosperity and progress to this fact. Why is it that Nashville and Davidson County have steadily advanced in population, wealth and influence, while other portions of the State, not less happily located and possessed of greater facilities for commerce and foreign intercourse, have comparatively stagnated in all these respects? The City of Rocks, upon her queenly

but adamantine seat, must look elsewhere than to the advantages of nature for population and wealth. Whence, then, and how has she gathered them?— Seventy-four years ago, the soil, on which we stand, received to its virgin bosom the first grain of corn, that fell from the hand of the permanent settler.— The forest had scarcely felt the axe of the pioneer, and stretched forth its arms like so many giant watchmen, keeping their vigils over the primeval solitude. But the wand of the magician touched the land, and the haunt of the savage became the white man's home. It was not for the want of human life and human hands, that these fields were not sooner reclaimed from their luxuriant wildness. It was not that the human intellect did not preside over the scene, and assert the supremacy of man. But it was that that intellect had been dwarfed by the restraints of barbarism, and led man forth over his domain, more sullen in his mood than the game he sought for a scant subsistence. But the pioneer well knew what enterprise a cultivated mind threw into a brave arm. As early as 1785, Davidson Academy, the *grandmother* of the Nashville University, was founded, incorporated and endowed by the Legislature of North Carolina. The same institution, under one name and another, has presided over the destinies of the feeble settlement and now rising city, even to the present day. And now the works of genius, the evidences of taste and the marks of wealth surround us on every side. Step by step, as the ocean-wave seeks the shore, our beautiful city is extending her limits, as though she would grasp the barrier of the surrounding hills.— Within a circle, that the naked eye may easily comprehend, a population of twenty thousand are threading the mystery of life. The hammer, the

wheel and the engine unite in hoarse concert, and give proof of mechanical skill, while the steam-car rushes past with furious speed, bringing and dispensing all the elements of intelligence and wealth. I am not so hardy as to attribute all this to the existence of one or of many temples of learning. However these may enrich a place with classical associations, they cannot, unaided and alone, give it importance in the commercial world. But colleges and high schools greatly facilitate the development of countries and the growth of cities, by giving an enlightened direction and attaching a proper value to wealth, by bringing the spiritual power of science to the aid of the strong implements of mechanics, by disseminating an insensible knowledge of the capacity of creative mind, by giving an incentive, nay, sometimes, a very reality to public spirit, by throwing wholesome restraints around the morals and opening proper subjects for the contemplation and pursuit of a community. And not the least happy influence of such institutions has been that, which they have exerted upon the manners, the social condition and the public sentiment of our people. The church and the altar of charity, the asylum and the Benevolent Order, have sprung up side by side with the work-shop and the office.— These have been the offspring of cultivated taste, refined intellect and educated nature, which are greatly fostered and produced by the plastic touch of Letters. That the institution, whose revival we celebrate to-day, under the successive names of Davidson Academy, Cumberland College and Nashville University, has contributed largely to this result, no one can doubt, who has been a calm and fair observer of the progress I have thus briefly recounted. These influences we can trace, as they

emanate from it and run far back into the past; and now, gathering fresh vigor and redoubled warmth from this experience and from temporary sleep, we can imagine them going forth into the future, bearing sunshine and invincible power upon their glittering spears. What the University has been to our community in days gone by, we have a trustful confidence she will continue to be in years to come. Her sons and her friends will witness the uplifting of her head once more in pride and permanence, with a satisfaction, that finds its birth only in the breasts of generous men.

It were a task of interest, not unblent with melancholy, to recount the history of the University.—Dating its origin more than ten years previous to the birth of Tennessee herself, under the name of Davidson Academy, it has struggled for existence against every ill fortune, and seen not a few days of hopeful prosperity. Its first ambition was evidently to open but the vestibule of the temple of Letters to the village boy or the rustic youth. The primitive wants of the last century restricted themselves to but meagre intellectual acquirements, at least, but little more could be put to any practical use on the banks of the far-off Cumberland. It was not needed to rear any costly structure, or to introduce any text-books of foreign accents and authorship. The simple manners of those times were formed and controlled by common sense, rather than by the learning of the schools. The city we inhabit was then but a frontier settlement, and long continued to be a village of small and unambitious pretensions. The sturdy inhabitant little dreamed that he was founding the future metropolis of a flourishing State, and as little realized that his posterity would require the costly advantages of a collegiate education. While

in this chrysalis state, North Carolina endowed the institution with two hundred and forty acres of land, which begin with the Northern line of Broadway, and lie thence to the South, including the territory popularly known as the College grounds. It is not known to every one, but none should be ignorant, that Broadway, the only beautiful, creditable and convenient thoroughfare in the city, was conceived and dedicated to the public by the Trustees of Davidson Academy. As it shall assume, year by year, greater and still greater importance, draw to itself the brilliant display and earnest competition of the tradesman, and stretch out in the diversified beauty, the almost grandeur, of teeming life and the decorations of commerce, it will stand an honorable monument of the liberality and forethought of the men and times, that planned it.

In 1796, Tennessee joined the sisterhood of States, and took the Academy under her maternal care, by incorporating it under the name of Cumberland College. Willing as she was to adopt the institution, she yet left it to seek other sources of support than her own treasury. It is a fact, that will strike many with surprise, that Tennessee has never to this good day given one dollar to the oldest, most creditable and most useful literary institution within her borders. It is true, that it has been the recipient of large grants of land by virtue of the acts of North Carolina and of the National Congress, and under the compact with the University of the mother State. The proceeds of much of this property is now in the treasury of the institution, and constitutes the fund, with which the contemplated edifice is about to be erected. The idea is too general, that it has been immensely endowed, that the State has opened her coffers liberally for its support, and not

a few have caught up the suspicion, that its Trustees have too negligently managed its resources. They have, indeed, parted with much ground, that is now of untold value. But several facts must be remembered, in justification of their course—that the sale was made at a time, when great future enhancement could hardly have been anticipated, and when the daily wants of the University were pressing and imperative—that large tracts of land rarely grow in value while they remain in the hands of one proprietor, and that the sale of a portion of the College property has been the very means of enhancing what remains—and that such a disposition was absolutely demanded for the support of an institution, whose patronage was limited and whose destiny was cast at a time, when Letters were comparatively unappreciated. The question with the Trustees seems to have been between poverty and absolute death. When the usefulness of the College was taken into consideration, and the meagre supply of such institutions in the country, the question became disrobed of its difficulty. To the honor of the Trustees, however, be it said, that much of the present valuable possessions of the University arose out of their private speculations, when personal advantage was waived for the benefit of their corporation.

Cumberland College was opened for students in 1809, and continued, with varied success, till 1816, in which year it was suspended, for the want of available means. The Genius of Letters veiled its sorrowful face, a solemn silence sat down upon the vacant throne, and the oracle of earthly wisdom became inanimate and dumb. In 1824, its portals were once more thrown open, and the sunshine streamed through its mouldering corridors. From that date down to 1850, it maintained its existence

against the obstacles inseparable from Western colleges, and which have proved fatal to so many, against the rivalry of similar institutions elsewhere, and in spite of the malignity of open enemies and the deceptive counsel of false friends. During the entire period of its history, it has possessed but two Presidents, the latter* of whom still lives in his golden age, while the memories of his past usefulness flock about him as we imagine the birds of Paradise to have done around the sunset bower of Adam and his spouse, wooing them to gentle slumber with the cadence of their plaintive songs. To him the passing compliment will be allowed, that he possessed beyond most men—incomparably beyond all men ever known to your speaker—that highest faculty of the teacher, the power to inspire the youthful mind with a just appreciation of Truth, of the purposes and end of life. May his declining years be as full of bright prospects beyond, as he has made many a young life full of generous ambition and of an almost romantic love of the Beautiful and True!

The University numbers more than four hundred *Alumni*. To these she may point, in her maternal pride, and be satisfied. In vain will we search among similar catalogues for names more distinguished in all the honorable and lofty walks of life. Many have been already enrolled among the *Nomina Clara* of the Republic, while others are still struggling up the rugged path, with hearts of steel and intellects of fire. In what post of service and of honor have not stood these sons of this *Alma Mater?* The light of victory has glanced from their swords on the field where nations fight; the bench and the bar have borrowed dignity and authority from their wisdom and eloquence; the Senate has

* Rev. Philip Lindsley, D. D.

thrilled with the fire of their patriotism and oratory; the Cabinet has been swayed by their pure counsel; the foreign mission has commanded and esteemed their diplomatic talents; and the State of Tennessee has blushed with pride, never with shame, at the possession of so noble representatives of her spirit and fame. Thus to send forth four hundred missionaries to defend and promote the cause of Truth, Patriotism and Letters, many of whom have reflected honor upon the high mission, is a service, that deserves well of the Republic.

During the years 1849–50, an unfortunate combination of causes, internal, foreign and Providential, resulted in the second suspension of the institution. Amid this apparent shipwreck of its fortunes, its faithful friends clung to the charter, resolved that a better day should dawn upon its prospects. Among the circumstances, to which reference has been made, was an urgent demand for the best portion of the old *Campus*, for purposes of public convenience. There seemed to be a necessity for one or more extended streets—those great arteries of the city—to run directly and ruthlessly through the very heart of the ancient structure and its demesne. The Trustees were not blind to the fact, and they, therefore, submitted the more cheerfully to this necessity, that the dedication of these avenues would greatly enhance the property of their corporation. Another motive, scarcely less controlling, to-wit, the erection of an entirely new edifice, and an ambition to revive the University under superior auspices, reconciled the minds of its friends to the demolition of the old buildings. The first of these had borne the marks of almost half a century, and Time had left many a rude footprint upon its architectural beauty.

I will be pardoned for a brief allusion here to the emotions, with which every *Alumnus* must have witnessed the desecration of those classic grounds, about which still cluster so many tender and sacred associations of his youth. They were like what may readily be conceived to be the feelings of the strong but gentle man, who returns, after long and sad years of absence, to the spot, where, in memory, all the poetry of childhood will find its dwelling-place forever, and where every tree and grot and fountain is blended with the dear name of sister, or the dearer still of mother, but returns to find a sombre change upon "the spirit of the dream" and those scenes haunted but by the ghosts of departed beauty. As "the brave old oaks" toppled before the march of improvement, the manliest heart might scarce forbear the indulgence of womanly tears.—It was beneath their venerable shade, that ambitious hope wove its dreams of as brilliant plume as the birds, that caroled their loves in the branches of those "brave old oaks," and there the manly parting was endured, such as "presses the life from out young hearts." But those early scenes and this later grief alike are passed away. Let them slumber together in one ever-lighted sepulchre, in the memory of as many as have known and survived both.

The propriety of a new edifice was suggested by the spirit of improvement in college architecture.—Of late years, no subject has received more attention from the scientific, the public-spirited and the humane friends of the cause of Letters. New ideas have been conceived and pressed upon the world, in this branch of Mechanics, new appliances have been adopted and new conveniences invented, of which former ages were innocent even in their

dreams. In this country, it has generally been deemed sufficient to dedicate any substantial temple to the Genius of Literature, and not always has even an ample treasury been able to purchase the graces of Art. But where may we expect to find beautiful outline and classic architecture, if not in our institutions of learning? There is an evident propriety in so constructing them, as to cultivate the taste, to please the mind and to invite chaste and lofty contemplation. The mind is powerfully impressed by external circumstances, and it is a fact perhaps universally recognized, that men and nations borrow much of their character from the distinctive features of the fatherland, from the climate and physical condition of their homes and country. If there be any, however little, truth in this, it is apparent how important a matter it is, to make a fortunate selection of building sites for schools and colleges. In the discharge of this duty, I think that all must accord to the Board of Trustees the highest praise. Perhaps there is no inland city in the world, whose circumjacent country is more diversified and beautiful, than that of Nashville. Surrounded by a circle of equidistant hills, broken only by the Cumberland, that gently winds between, she sits in the centre of this sphere, giving and receiving beauty. Not the least lovely point of this wide, serene and enchanting landscape, is the site, on which the contemplated edifice is about to rear its graceful proportions. The influence of such scenes cannot fail to be happy on the mind and morals of ingenuous youth.

Let it not be supposed, that the trials and catastrophes, to which I have alluded, in the history of the University, are peculiar to itself. They are the common lot of similar institutions, especially in the

West. When we reflect, how many colleges, throughout the country, have opened their portals, to live but a brief and fitful existence, the wonder grows upon us, that the University so long resisted and survived the obstacles and misfortunes, by which its integrity was imperiled. Such disasters in the West are sufficiently accounted for by the misappreciation of Letters, the sparseness of population and consequent want of patronage, the want of faith in the permanent success of such institutions and the prevalent disposition to attach superior excellence to whatever is distant and foreign. The University has managed to rise repeatedly above the wave, that threatened as often to overwhelm it forever. When it seemed most hopeless and dead, then has it only been gathering its energies for fresh life and a new struggle. If its suspension or downfall indicate inherent weakness or the want of external aid, then does its repeated resuscitation demonstrate the demand for its active existence and the confidence of the public mind in its capacity for good.

That Nashville is a point well calculated to encourage and sustain such an institution, is obvious to every one well acquainted with the history of the city, its geographical position, its commercial importance and the taste and intelligence of its people. I do not speak of a University for Nashville alone, but for all that immense and populous country, that is more or less pervaded by its influence.—Not Tennessee only, but the great valley of the Mississippi has been sensible of the spiritual power, that must go forth from a central city fast rising to importance and which early assumed the office of a pioneer in the cause of Western education. Nashville is progressive in all its interests. It has

continually advanced, while many a town of equal advantages has stagnated in its youth, or gone back from the forward position it had dared to take. A recent impetus has been given to its improvement, and every energy seems to be awake and at work with tenfold vigor and activity. In the midst of this progress, and so intimately observant of it, the student cannot fail to be imbued with much of its spirit. His earliest ideas will be associated with whatever is strong, earnest and inspiring in social and physical improvement. He will catch something of the fire and bravery of the young city, as it presses hotly on in the career of importance and prosperity, and this will give a courage to his own heart, a hope to his own ambition and a vitality to all his study.—It is easy to imagine how contrary were the effect upon the young and ardent temperament, where all was dull and lifeless, where the very air was pulseless, where the genius of progress seemed to have neither vocation nor abiding-place, and where the plumes of Hope herself drooped as listlessly as the wing of the dead albatross.

But, independently of these intrinsic advantages, the geographical position of Nashville marks it out as the proper locality for such an institution. Mild in its climate and, ordinarily, healthy in all respects, it were safer for the Southern student to make it his temporary home, than trust to the rigors of a Northern latitude. It were a sad tale, to tell of the broken constitutions and early deaths, that have indubitably fastened upon Southern youth, from such a residence. The sentiments, too, of this region and that, the popular character and the public feeling, are so essentially diverse, that a Northern education too often disqualifies for a life in the South. It is the part of wisdom, to educate youth, if possible,

among the people, with whom their destinies are to be cast and won. Why should the ambitious young of the glorious South leave the land of genial skies and sunnier hearts, to seek the training of those hearts in a strange atmosphere and among a people more akin to us in blood than in thought? I would say nothing to foster political resentment toward our Northern brethren, or to create an independence, even in feeling, of that division of our common country. I would not, if I could, establish a separate literature, engender a suspicion of the honest friendship of the North, or press too far the idea that we are a different people. Nevertheless, I would educate Southern youth in Southern institutions, because I love the sunny South—its generous hearts, its hospitable homes, its simple manners and its chivalric soul—and its sons should be taught to love and emulate these and all of these.

When we observe the rapid development of Southern resources, the annual influx of population into the great Valley, and the mental activity likely to be awakened by these powerful facts, the conviction fixes itself upon us, that every facility should be afforded for the cultivation of native talent and inborn patriotism. It were impossible to calculate how many ambitious intellects have been shut out from the light of Science, by the untoward circumstance, that learning has had but few temples in the growing West, and that the expense of travel and absence from home were a price, that virtually excluded aspiring but indigent youth from the enjoyment of such advantages. It is true, that there are and have been colleges and high schools of varied merit and pretension throughout the country. But these are incompetent to supply the peculiar want, of which I am speaking. Southern youth demand

Universities, where every branch of science may be prosecuted to the fullest extent. Colleges and academies may meet the requirements of particular neighborhoods, but they can but poorly represent the spirit and civilization of an entire people, nor can they lift high enough the standard, to which that people should aspire. It is easy to content the general mind with the circumstances, that surround it. Academies, common schools and mediocre colleges will satisfy its aspiration, if nothing better be proposed. But elevation of the educational standard creates an appreciation of it, and raises the demand of the community to the height of the same excellence. The very erection of a University inspires a sense of the necessity for it. Therefore, in the present enterprise is found the twofold motive, to supply an existing demand, and to add intensity and universality to that, which already obtains. We desire to erect an institution, that shall be worthy to send out its influence over the entire South and West—so that these vast regions may henceforth be supplied, within themselves, with the best and highest advantages for intellectual culture—an institution, whose ambition will not be satisfied with the inculcation of ancient literature, however meritorious, or the abstract learning of the school-men, but which shall borrow its vitality from the practical spirit of the times, and arm its generous inmates for the battle of actual life. We want an institution with the usual faculties, that will prepare the student for whatever art, profession or pursuit. If the sources of information, to which I have had access, do not mislead me, the number of such in the Union is astonishingly limited. I have been unable to learn the names of more than five Universities, that embrace as many as three of the usual faculties or

departments. Harvard and Yale possess, each, their five faculties, while Transylvania and the Universities of Virginia and Louisiana, respectively, have three.* The Nashville University will recommence its operations upon an equality with three of these, having its Medical, its Law and its Academic Departments—with chartered but vacant chairs of Theology. There is even now but little doubt of the ample success of each one of these Faculties. Already has the Medical Department erected its edifice, and commended itself to the public confidence, by a success, that has astounded its most ardent admirers, and established a reputation, that places it in the foremost rank of competition. It has called to its aid those advantages of climate, geographical position and local energy, of which I have already had occasion to speak. When it was proposed to establish a Medical College in the city, the enterprise was regarded with distrust by many, who have not yet recovered from the astounding suddenness, with which the idea was conceived and consummated. While the University was in ruins, and men slept upon the thought, that it was, perchance, extinct forever, the Faculty of this new College, with an admirable knowledge of the necessity of the times, embarked their private means and professional prospects in the enterprise. As was anticipated by them, Southern youth flocked to the portals of the maiden College, and it has but recently closed its second term with one hundred and fifty young gentlemen of as fine appearance and ingenuous gifts, as usually reward the pride and affection of any *Alma Mater*. The University, therefore, will open with the superior advantage of a Medical

*Since the above was in type, I have learned that the University of Pennsylvania recently added a Law Faculty to its other Departments.

Department, that is no longer an experiment. Already is this School quietly spreading the fame of our city, and directing the attention of the country to Nashville, as a seat of Letters. The ability and rapid organization of the Academic and Law Departments will meet the expectation thus excited. The latter will be under the management of gentlemen, whose professional success and private worth justify the highest hopes of the enterprise. To the objects, tone and general spirit of all these Departments I shall have occasion to advert before I have done.

I see nothing, therefore, to prevent an institution at this point, properly organized and wisely conducted, becoming the great central Light of the South. The Universities of Virginia, Louisiana and Transylvania are obviously located too much upon the borders of the territory and civilization to be cultivated. All eyes are being fixed upon Nashville, as the centre of enterprise and influence. It is the capitol of a State fast rising in importance and public esteem. There is no aspiring youth, who would blush to receive his education or to form any part of his character and sentiments in the heart of Tennessee. Nashville would be blind to its own interest, did it not seize upon these indications of the public mind and make an effort commensurate with the opportunity and expectation. Its advanced step in the cause of popular education, in the establishment of a Free High School, would encourage the belief, that a proper estimate was placed upon the diffusion of knowledge. This domestic institution will tend much toward making the empire of Letters a Republic, if not a Democracy. It is a noble stride toward consummating the wishes of the advocates of universal education. And yet, if it stop there, it is but a stride, while a vast and weary

expanse lies between it and the *ultimatum* of educational progress. The elements of learning are disseminated, through the agency of primary and high schools, but why should the popular mind be led to the very entrance of the great temple of Science, and there denied admission to its deeper mysteries? Is it written in the constitution of the human mind, in the self-dependence of the social system, that the right to knowledge is universal and imperative? then, why impose limits and restrictions upon the enjoyment of that right, except such as necessity creates? Why open the common-schoolroom with the hand of charity, and allow the portals of the University to stand closed against it forever? The free school should be made the nursery of the University. The same sense of justice, that extends the lowest branches of education to all classes, should also afford the highest. It is a mistake, that rudimentary studies are sufficient for the common mind. The opportunity to pursue these at the public expense is an inestimable advantage, and is fast becoming one of the marked features of the times.—But such will not satisfy the requisition of the age. The time is not distant, when the truth will be recognized, that every free mind is entitled to the highest advantages of education. Its approach now seems dim and far away, but society may as well prepare and reconcile itself to the advent of that period. Very slowly is it coming on, but so reasonable and full of natural justice is the proposition, that it cannot fail to commend itself to the public mind, when the world shall have been prepared for its reception. It lies deep down in the bosom of eternal Truth, and will work its way to the sunlight, by the ever-active energies of that principle evolving the mysteries of life, society and nature. The

right to know and the desire to pursue knowledge have fastened themselves upon the human mind, and can no more be eradicated from it than any other laws of its being. Surrounded by a universe instinct with truth and awful by virtue of its very mystery, with a mind constituted to inquire into things beyond the ken of sense, who shall dare fetter the aspirations of man to revel in the element so congenial to his nature and throw off the cloud from a vision so capable of peering into the hidden, the spiritual, the almost divine? The loss of Paradise and the heritage Death were a price not too great for the fruit of knowledge. The daughters of Night were sufficient, aided by dire dragons, to secure the golden apples of the Libyan gardens, but not the fair company of angels nor these dread penalties could restrain the adventurous hand of man, when the immortal mind would know the secret, without which, immortality itself was deemed a curse. In the golden pathway of progress, there is a standpoint, where this native disposition of the mind will assert its claim, and there will not be despotism on the earth strong enough to withstand it. It is not of a Millennium or a still more fanciful Utopia, that I dream; nor do I foresee a period, when the knowledge of the wisest shall be perfect. But I dream of a time, when the temple of Knowledge shall be open to all alike, and every son of Adam shall be a Levite about its altar. I have a perfect faith in the good time coming, when every man shall have access to the intellectual repast. I find the justification of this faith in the nature of the mind itself, in the self-protective principle of society, in the now latent but eventually manifest and triumphant inspiration of Truth. That ultimate evolution of Truth regards all men alike, and rests upon the

sublime principle of justice, that birth or rank or adventitious circumstance can justify no distinction.

If it be admitted, that the masses should be educated, the same principle would accord to them the highest education. The justice, that advocates their cause at all, should be a liberal justice. I know that the world is not now prepared to adopt this truth; nor are all portions equally ready to receive it.—But there are communities where the first ray has struggled through incumbent clouds, the harbinger of a better day, the *avant courier* of a glorious sun. We are wont to regard France as revolutionary, unstable and heartless, and yet we may well learn a lesson of concern for popular educational rights from revolutionary, unstable and heartless France. Very many of the public libraries and private lecture rooms of Paris are thrown open by the hand of government, and the poorest Frenchman may sit down within them, without fee or ticket, to read or hear the masters of literature or science in his native tongue. It is not an uncommon spectacle to witness this crowding together of all ranks, in the halls of that polished city, drawn by the fascination of scientific experiment and instruction. And how strong is the argument for imitation by us of this example of the French kingdom and empire! The inseparable connexion between the intelligence and freedom of the people, is a recognized principle of our government. For the preservation of liberty, the universal diffusion of the highest attainments of science may not be necessary; but the more nearly this object is approached, the more fully will be realized the ideal of the Republic. The bare perpetuity of our institutions, though a triumph commensurate with the hopes of most men, is not enough to gratify the expectation inspired by the eventful

history and startling progress of the Republic. The impress of Divinity is upon our government, and no destiny is too great for its aspiration, no perfectibility, consistent with human nature, too elevated for its people.

No patriot can have observed without emotion the recent movement at Washington City, on the part of certain enlightened and influential gentlemen, to establish three National Universities, to be located, respectively, at Albany, Peoria and Knoxville. The object of this enterprise is, to establish institutions where men, who have mastered the text-books ordinarily thumbed in schools and colleges, may pursue the spirit of knowledge into its most remote and secret chambers. It is to elevate the intellect of the student beyond the clouds, that limit the ordinary horizon, into that serene and boundless universe, where contemplation is fetterless and everlasting, It is to marry our national glory to the gorgeous and undying splendors of Science. If consummated as undertaken, it will lead our nation into a new path, about which eternal sunshine lingers, and in which true honor, perpetuity and happiness lie. It is the dogma of a false and narrow policy, that the government has attained its highest ends, when it has managed its own immediate concerns, discharged its honest contracts, protected the national escutcheon, and that it may then leave the people, its natural subjects and children, to pursue personal happiness as best they may, and to purchase personal refinement and cultivation at the price in the market. What higher duty can a nation propose to itself, than to infuse into the popular mind a just appreciation of knowledge, with free access to its exhaustless treasury, or from what source can it expect a richer or more compensatory revenue? Very

sublime is the idea of a mighty government, reaching down its liberal hand from the height, on which it sits, to guide the thoughts and mould the virtue of the myriad intellects about its base.

The commonwealth of New York has not been insensible to this progress. In a spirit of maternal care for the thousands of youth in the growing capitol of that State, the corporation has provided its Common Schools, into whose sheltering bosom multitudes of all ranks and necessities daily flock. But the Common School, which stands open to every candidate and imposes no pecuniary barrier, is but the avenue and inlet to the Free Academy and University. The *penetralia* of the latter may be as freely reached by every one having made the requisite proficiency in the lower department. Thus, the Free Academy, which affords all the advantages and dispenses all the honors of the highest colleges, is within the ambition and reach of the poorest and most friend-forsaken youth of New York. Scholarship is the chief test-word, whose possession opens the door to every applicant. Such is the relative organization and dependence, whose establishment, at least, to a limited extent, I would urge between the Free School and the University of Nashville.—Very nobly has the corporation of the city discharged a large part of its duty. But something more, I humbly conceive, remains to be done. In imitation of the wise and liberal policy of New York, Nashville should provide stepping-stones to the University, by the establishment of such a number of scholarships—to be the objects of competition and the means of reward—as the public treasury will justify. In this way, an annual expense of ten or fifteen hundred dollars, to be provided by additional taxation, may very wisely be incurred. The city

would thus become the patron of the University, by having twenty-five or thirty representatives in its departments, each year.

There were, doubtless, other considerations than those already enumerated, to induce the reorganization of the University under new and different auspices. Literary men and institutions of learning are most wedded to old systems and the last to abandon ideas and customs, which antiquity has rendered familiar and venerable. Such is the truth with regard to all men, who do not partake of the practical spirit of the world, but grow grey in a sphere of dreams and theoretical truth. Hence it is, that most colleges and similar institutions are so much behind the progress of the times, and their graduates so poorly provided for the hot struggle of life. It was deemed that the University had partaken, to some extent, of this common fault, and that a new spirit, a fresh vitality, more consonant with the exigency of the age, was needed to be infused through its entire framework. It were difficult to describe the want or the requirement. It was, however, as if the genius of the Portico had sat down in the chair of modern Science, to teach her sons the mysteries of the universe. The institution will be revived in a different spirit. It will regard the intellect of youth as a laboratory of thought, and not merely as a receptacle of knowledge. It will gather its strength, its vitality, its wisdom, from the hard-won experience of the Present, and regard nothing with holy reverence, merely because it bears the sanction of antiquity. The education of modern times must prepare the student for the life and difficulties of modern times, or it amounts to no education at all. Of what avail were a perfect knowledge of the language of Plato, or of that, which

embodies the sublime philosophy of Tully, if the man know nothing more? I would not underrate the study of ancient language, but rather assign it its proper place. Heretofore, a knowledge of Latin and Greek has been regarded by many as paramount to all other learning. This has been made the very substratum of education, to which every thing else must conform. But the world is fast awaking to a realization of this absurdity.—These languages are valuable, but they should not absorb or overshadow every other acquisition.—They have their office in whatever system of education, but it is only a coordinate office, and not a supreme excellence or control. The reason why ancient language has heretofore occupied so inordinately the attention of scholars is obvious enough. For many ages, these tongues embalmed the best literature of the world. They were the language of the church, of the law, of the philosopher and the schoolman. And, to a still later day, the false idea prevailed, that their study was the best discipline for the youthful mind. But now, the English student finds the noblest literature, the loftiest eloquence and the richest poetry in his own vernacular —literature, eloquence and poetry, with which that of Attica and Rome has long ceased to be compared, except by the enthusiastic and antiquarian. Latin and Greek may be essential to a finished education, yet he is the worst educated man in the world, whose little store of knowledge consists solely or chiefly of this. Turn such a man loose upon he crowded pathway of life, an d, while he mumbles his musty idioms, the active and practical student of the world will trample every difficulty, win every great triumph and make his mark on passing events.

The University should strive to educate practical workers, not mere dreamers. Its duty is to society, not to abstract Letters; nor is there any conflict between these interests, when properly understood.—It sends forth its *Alumni* into the world, and not into the cloister. It should prepare its children for becoming men, and not for continuing boys all their lives. It should fit them with armor for life's battle, and not merely present them with the play-things of the imagination. Its studies, its discipline and its mode of instruction should be such, as contemplate life as a reality, requiring an earnest spirit, a patient will and a chastened ambition, as well as a cultivated taste and stored memory, for its solemn and momentous duties. Thus organized and conducted, the University will go hand in hand with the true progress and genuine enterprise of the day. Left to itself, the practical tendency of the times might lead to the neglect of much spiritual truth, that has lighted the world thus far in its rapid and progressive history. There is as much error in the one extreme as in the other. Wishing to avoid the abstract idealism of men of Letters, many have rushed into the opposite fault of making all things bend to the narrow and misconceived principles of utility. *In media via*, is the rule and place of safety. I would impress upon our people the necessity of uniting these extremes in one golden mean. We stand upon a new starting-point of enterprise. The stagnant wave, that has so long environed our inland city, has received a fresh impetus, its vast bosom is beginning to heave, and our influence and power are carried out by its every emotion. The shadows of a mighty city are fast peopling the vacant space about us. The progress of Nashville is no longer a dream of the imagination—the hope of

self-interest. It is clearly written in every sign we see, in every sound we hear. The signet of no mean destiny is on the brow of the young city. In achieving it, I would have her not mistake the means and appliances, by which it is to be most honorably attained and held. While others may boast of their teeming population, their overflowing treasuries, their graceful ships or burning cars, their fabrics woven of the fibres of every clime, let it be the glory of Nashville, that, though she may exult in all, that constitutes the physical magnificence of a metropolis, she takes an especial pride in witnessing the intelligence, the mental power and the capacity for elevated happiness, diffused and cherished by her seats of Letters, and, as she points to these institutions, raising here and there their chaste and classic forms, let her say, "THESE ARE MY JEWELS!"

The intellectual is fast asserting its supremacy over every other element of society and nature.—The advancement of knowledge is inseparable from social progress, and, as men become wiser and more intelligent, the physical yields more and more in their estimation to the mental and moral. The labors of the intellect are permanent and everlasting. They constitute those mountain-landmarks in the history of the race, whose proportions are as indestructible as they are magnificent, and which loom forth upon the horizon of the past, as so many monuments of the age, that gave them birth. The creations of wealth, the achievements of war and the discoveries of commerce may attach a nominal and empty glory to the fame of a people; but the ineffaceable marks of their civilization are to be sought in the ultimate source of these and of even higher indications—in the cultivation of Science and the distribution of its acquisitions. But there is an infinite

parallelism between intellectual and physical progress. They are active and reactive, capable of harmony and promotive of each other. Even theoretical and abstract truth has a disposition and tendency to practical application. The agency of Science in promoting the social state may not always be recognized and admitted, for so familiarized are men's minds with the common blessings of life, that they rarely stop to trace them to their source.—Notwithstanding this, Science is quietly making its triumphs, effecting its progress and approaching its eventual supremacy. The secrets of the universe are being rapidly evolved, and the human intellect has learned not only to dare, but to do, mighty things. What has it not dared? What has it not done? And yet, from every vantage-ground it attains, stretches out a still wider field of discovery, until its dim outlines are lost in the expanse of possibility. All has not been done. The dream of the philanthropist is not yet realized. We seem to live in a world, where the sun of Truth has just laid his rosy fingers on the portals of the day. As he mounts higher toward the zenith of his course, new beauty, new utility and new wonders spring about his footsteps. The world stands now on tiptoe, expectant of something—anything—great. Nothing would strike it with astonishment or excite it to inordinate wonder. The tide of civilization mounts higher and higher, and there is no power to say to it, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther." Its sweeping wave is fast covering the ancient landmarks of ignorance, and shall any quarter of society withhold its tributaries? Shall the great West, teeming with resources and sighing for development, be a tame and passive spectator of this progress? Shall she not rather contribute the fruits of her genius, the

energy of her young life, the inspiration of her vast but indefinite destiny? Is it not a field to awaken her ambition and to invite her enterprise? Were it not a proud satisfaction, could the poet write as truly of Science as he has of Empire, that Westward is the pathway of its star? Than this fact, what could attract to the West more attention, invest it with more power or clothe it with more honor? In aiding such a consummation, will lie the highest dignity of any State or community. It is a gratifying reflection, that the lists are open and free to all. I would give our own city an advanced position in this generous competition. Then will she rise to that topmost point of influence and honor, from which a future will stretch around, that gathers its glory from the arts of peace, from the light of science, from the elevated virtue of a community, from the influence of consecrated homes and altars, from the nameless considerations, that make up the prosperity of a people, from the history of a struggling but triumphant and onward experience, from the inspiring grandeur of a forward, inviting and limitless prospect.