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"WESTWARD THE COURSE OF EMPIRE TAKES ITS WAY."

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LIBERALITY IN THOUGHT.

Oration by F. M. Ostrander, delivered at the Junior Exhibition, May 14th, 1875.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

There appear to be inherent qualities in the nature of man which predispose him to oppose all new theories.

Superstitious, he is often afraid to accept a new truth lest it might conflict with some revered principles, which he has no reason to defend, save that his forefathers adopted them.

Selfish, he will not endorse theories which he knows to be true, because they would interfere with his personal gratifications.

Stubborn, he will allow neither justice or reason to penetrate the crust of prejudice which early training has formed about his inner soul.

Placing infinite faith in the old maxim, "So many men, so many minds," he believes the majority of mankind to be in the right, and so lazily floats down the stream of life without making an effort to leave the common popular channel himself, but pulling back, and holding down those who would.

The result is, that no new truth has ever been established, without first fighting against this ignorant, superstitious, popular, anti-progressive multitude, which has often, shamefully often, crushed it entirely, only to allow it to rise again after the lapse of centuries if ever.

The noblest, wisest men that have ever lived, underwent the most horrid persecutions, and suffered the cruelest deaths, for the very truths which we are this day enjoying. The victims of a narrow-minded people who supposed that their popular theories were infallible.

To us it seems almost incredible, that such things ever could have taken place. Nevertheless they did, and are—no! they are not repeated to-day. We no longer kill men outright for uttering their doctrines, cowardly, we allow them to live physically, only that we may persecute them socially. In many respects we are just as narrow minded as we were two thousand years ago. Just as jealous of our pet theories; just as impatient at having them contradicted by these new fangled humbugs, as we term them. Now is this right? Is this the true way to engender progress? Is this justice to ourselves, or charity to mankind? But how are we to help it? By encouraging individuality and liberality of thought, which will result in broad-thinking men. Aye, but you say, "We are too liberal already; too many weak, worthless doctrines are being cast upon the public, deluding our young and weak-minded people from their proper duties, and thus proving a loathsome bane to society; there should be some measure taken to prevent these doctrines from being thus sown broad-cast among our young men." Aye, my friends, but these doctrines are here, and we must abide them. That many of them are dangerous, there is not a doubt; that many of them are partly false there is no doubt; but that they are wholly false there is a doubt; and in this case they must be sifted, thoroughly sifted; if there is a grain of truth in them, humanity demands it, and in the name of humanity it must be found. In handling the pitch we may be more or less defiled; but individual worth must give way when the good of mankind demands it. As the soldier may fall while battling for his country, so we may fall while battling for the truth. One favor we ask: Don't misinterpret the enemies' strength to us. Don't wall us in with false prejudices and narrow habits. Let us go to battle unhampered by harassing doubts and fears, and we pledge you, that truth shall stand forth stronger and brighter than ever before.

Ladies and Gentlemen, many of you are saying at this moment, "Young man, don't be too liberal for your own welfare."

This is impossible! We may be too narrow-minded for our own welfare, but we cannot be too liberal minded. Now that we have made this bold assertion, it remains for us to prove it.

In the first place, let us fully understand each other what is meant by liberal minded men.

The botanist chooses a flower which has all the parts a flower can have, and uses it as a typical flower by which he analyzes all others.

Let us assume the same privilege with our liberal mind. We will find one that is perfect, and use it as a typical mind by which we may compare all others.

We find that our typical mind has three parts; reason, justice and charity. Hence one who lays claim to a liberal mind must consent to discuss the most diverse subjects upon the neutral grounds of reason, justice and charity. Upon this basis let us proceed to analyze some of our so-called liberal minded men, and ascertain if we can, where they really belong in the category of mankind. First, we will take one who is popularly supposed to be the most liberal of all mankind, namely—the atheist. He denies the existence of God—ungraciously denies his Creator; He who gives him breath to utter the denial. He assures his brother that he has no soul, and is consequently no better than his dog. Is this charity? He walks out into the field by day, and beholds all nature smiling about him; his eye rests upon yon generous oak, the birds in it gladden his ears with the sweetest music; he looks over the fields, and beholds the school-children romping noisily home from school; at his feet, he beholds the flowers springing into existence; all about him is activity and life, from the tiny floweret at his feet, to yon grand old oak; the birds, the school-children, the singing birds, and all working in harmony. Yet he says: "There is no God." The sun descends behind the mountain tops; how he lights up the dark heavy clouds; how he caresses the flowers from those rugged hills, causing them to blush with pleasure; and how he seems to halt just for a moment on yonder mountain top, as if on purpose to kiss each school-child, each brook and lake, each great strong tree and trembling flower, a sweet good night, as he passes on to gladden life in another world. Is there no God? *Is this all chance?* Now all is still—so still; silently, one by one the stars appear, and soon the whole heavens are studded with brilliants. He sees them, he knows the movements which they make, their complicated systems, and with what precision they travel, and ascribes it all to chance.

"There is no God," he says. Since he disbelieves in the existence of God, he rejects the Bible, and would burn a book whose teachings are the very corner stone of civilization. In doing this would he not be doing a great injustice to the world? Have we not shown that the atheist, instead of being the broad, liberal minded man that we supposed him to be, is the very opposite, possessing a mind too little, cramped, conceited, to entertain a thought so grand as that which pertains to an infinite God? He is unwittingly the greatest enemy to true liberality of thought, in that he implies that it is that which it certainly is not. The mistake lies in the fact that we are liable to mistake extravagant assertions for liberal and great thoughts.

There are a great many young men, who being ashamed to think like other people, because they think that it shows a lack of better sense than the mediocrity possess, have come to the conclusion to become infidels and atheists. When remonstrated with, they will put on an air of great superiority and assert that they are liberal thinkers. You have all heard young men assert their infidelity, when they could not bring forth a single able, (much less to say original) argument to support their disbelief, and who could not repeat a dozen texts from the Bible, but who could repeat Draper's "Science and Religion" by rote, ending with, "Am not I liberal minded?" Do not chide or sneer at them, ladies and gentlemen, but *pity* them. They become sceptic through affectation and conceit. Patient study, and perfect impartiality should precede rational conviction, whether it end in faith or doubt; how many of these precocious young men are capable of standing such a test?

Concerning the infidel we have little to say. He doubts that the Bible is divinely inspired, and brings forth an army of reasons to sustain him. He may have reasons to cause him to doubt, but he is heartlessly unjust, when he would endeavor to throw down the foundation of all civilized society, and devoid of charity, for wishing to deprive the Christian of his dearest comfort. Thus, of the three requisites for a liberal mind, he has one, namely—reason; but wanting in justice and charity.

The Christian believes in a Supreme Being, and accepts the Bible as divine. The very nature of this work teaches him to be reasonable, just and charitable, and the true Christian should be so. But there are many who are true Christians, in the common acceptance of the term, who are the very opposite, being unreasonable, unjust, and uncharitable, all of which redounds to their own injury, for between their doctrine and that of the atheist there are hundreds of theories, all of which contain more or less truth, deserving and demanding impartial discussion. Why should they hesitate to discuss

means will be invented to make this matter a more prominent one, and to bring prosperity to this department of our literary apparatus.

There is yet another need that we have referred to in part before. That is the need still of a number of organizations for various purposes that unite pleasure and profit. We have formerly mentioned a Chess-Club as a desirable addition to our list of societies. We might add, as a possible organization, a Swimming-Club. And there are many other possible societies that would be very useful. All these organizations have to do with the social life of the students. They make college days fuller and more productive. They are worth having a good deal of trouble taken to establish them.

We might mention many other matters that will probably be more or less considered during the coming months. All of them must be met resolutely and earnestly. But if a tolerable spirit of unity prevails among the body of students we believe that the coming year will see much done to settle them. The students have in considering them the best wishes of the retiring Senior Class for success.

THE LICK DONATION.

The U[illegible] no reason to regret that change of[illegible] with the [illegible] part of Mr. Lick which created so g[illegible] sensation not long ago. In his new deed of trust, lately filed, he has given $700,000 to the University of California for the purpose of establishing an Astronomical Observatory. We are not at present aware whether this gift is made under any specified conditions as to the place or the character of the observatory. It is to be hoped that it is not. But at any rate the endowment cannot fail to be one of the greatest value to our State and to our Institution. It will incidentally be useful in enabling many to pursue the study of Higher Astronomy who would otherwise be prevented. But of course its great use, if it comes under proper management, will be to provide means for first-class astronomical observations in a part of the world where as yet no facilities for such undertakings exist. Thus it may come to play no unimportant part in the scientific and intellectual history of our State. Everyone feels satisfied with this new provision of the Lick Trust.

WE are glad to notice in Bulletin No. 3, Second Series, of the United States Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, quite a lengthy and able article from one of our University students, Franklin Rhoda of '73. This article is on the Topography of the San Juan country, (Colorado) We judge from its contents that *Foot Ball* is no longer Frank's specialty.

WE would call attention to the advertisement relating to the sale of Agricultural Lands in another column. This sale is one that will no doubt interest many, as the lands are very variously located, and it is probable that very different kinds of real estate can be secured. Applications must be addressed to James W. Shanklin, Land Agent for the sale of surveyed lands.

BUT TOO OFTEN.

Two little hands so dimpled,
Two pretty eyes so brown,
A little laughing fairy,
A woman's brightest crown.

Two little words so simple,
Lisped in the mother's ear;
Words with scarce a meaning,
Yet to her so fondly dear.

Two short years so happy,
Passed o'er the mother's head;
Then a long day of trouble,
In tears o'er a trundle bed.

One white stone in the church-yard
With purest lilies twined;
One sad heart by the fireside
To joy forever blind.

K.

THE TRAGIC AS CONCEIVED BY THE ANCIENTS AND THE MODERNS.

Tragedy among the ancients was always regarded as being something far above the range of common life. So common was this idea that the mistake has been made of supposing that this loftiness was the essence of Greek Tragedy, instead of that pathos which common sense teaches to be the true test of tragic effect. But the Greek mind did not err from the truth so far as this mistaken idea would suppose that they did. The fact that Tragedy was supposed by them to have a necessary connection with loftiness of expression is merely an indication of a peculiarity of thought which distinguishes ancient from modern times, the southern from the northern mind, but is no sign that any people of such taste as the Greeks, imagined loftiness of language of more value than pathos of idea. The real reason why the ancient tragedy was always founded upon certain notions of propriety, and had always for its plots the lives of persons of a high degree of distinction, and circumstances of great external appearance, seems to be this.

Happiness was with the Greek mind the natural state of affairs. They not only like other nations told of a golden age in the long past, but also saw realized about them many of the characteristics of that golden age. Their wants were few and easily satisfied. The happiest man, in the mind of the primitive Greek thinker, was such a one as Telon the Athenean, the character mentioned in that celebrated but unauthentic interview of Solon and Crœsus, namely, the man whose life was passed in domestic prosperity, and whose death was a noble one, coming at the moment of victory, and followed by the grateful memory of his countrymen and of posterity. Such a life as this was not altogether an ideal one at that time. A people whose minds had not yet been disturbed by perplexing questions, whose social relations were simple, whose surroundings were beautiful, could not fail of having such prosperity as this the rule, while misery would be to them the exception.

Now two consequences followed from these things. First, the moral nature of the nation was not very highly developed. For morality can never reach a very high pitch under circumstances of such a kind as to prevent faults from being swiftly and certainly followed by punishments occurring in the very order of nature. Secondly, happiness being the rule, and misfortune the exception, the former became connected in their minds with the common-place, and the latter with the remarkable. The first consequence mentioned prevented them from considering every evil event as the punishment for some moral failing, as the Hebrew people were in the habit of doing. It followed from this that they could find an artistic pleasure in the portrayal of the occurrence of untoward events, whereas had they believed all misfortune to be simply a deserved punishment for sin, tragedy as an art would have been impossible among them, as it was impossible among the Hebrews. Nevertheless the second consequence mentioned made them conceive of misfortune as in general the result of supernatural influence. If they did not think it simply a vengeance for personal crime, they conceived of it as the result of ancestral taint, or as the consequence of some individual error. And from this it of course followed that great misfortunes being thus conceived as the results of supernatural causes, they naturally would portray these misfortunes as coming upon great individuals, and in consequence of great events. So Tragedy was limited almost wholly to the ancient myths, and the *cothurnus* became the symbol for all matters relating to ancient heroes, and mighty kings, and wonderful occurrences, and lofty language.

But much of this has changed with time. We still look upon misfortunes as not necessarily the result of crime, and we still see a certain dignity in suffering of every kind, but we do not think that the dignity of tragic suffering results from the rarity of its occurrence, and we do not look upon its origin as being outside of the regular course of human events. Happiness has for us not so thoroughly a common-place character as it had for the Greeks. We distinguish two kinds of happiness, the superficial and lower kind, and the higher and ideal kind. The former indeed may be connected with comic effect, but the latter never can be. And so comedy with us is very much the same in character to be sure, but not so wide in its scope, as it was among the Greeks. But Tragedy is altered altogether.

Of course we take the Romantic form of Tragedy as the representative modern form. The so called Classic form has only been rendered tolerable by the fact that certain great geniuses have adopted it. Now this Romantic Tragedy is distinguished by the introduction of elements that the ancients would never have thought of allowing. But they are yet necessary to the expression of modern feeling. And the cause is what we have just indicated. Explain the matter as you will, the fact yet remains that the best modern art is in some form or other tragic, and that it conceives of the tragic not as an unlooked for and remarkable thing, but as a necessary element of human life. And so later centuries have come to view Tragedy in relation to the depth and the character of the mournfulness that it arouses, and not at all in relation to the elevation and dignity of the surroundings. The dignity of Tragedy has become a matter almost purely artistic. The artist has the power of putting things in any light he may choose, and he may make the commonest affairs seem great. This, a rule which ancient art rejected, has in modern art become the head of the corner, and tragic dignity has entirely subordinated itself to tragic pathos.

In both ancient and modern times therefore Tragedy has been founded on pathos. But in modern times pathos is a matter of real every-day life, and not the result of remarkable and terrible events alone. And so anything that has to do with arousing the emotions of sorrow, of disappointment, of longing, is for us tragic. The life of a beggar may be as pathetic as the fate of King Lear. We have come to feel that we are human, and that to be human is to suffer. And any human sorrow, we are resolved, shall not be alien from us. This is the true spirit of modern art, and this is at least one great point of difference between ancient and modern Tragedy.