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The Obligations of Educated Men.

An Address delivered to the Students at the close of the Examination at the Mount Allison Academy, by the Rev. JOHN ALLISON.

A WELL defined idea of obligation is essential to the proper performance of duty. Every age, condition and circumstance of life is invested with this attribute. The relation we sustain to the Creator, and the well being of society impose this; while the circumstances in which we are placed augment and vary our responsibilities. An important preliminary investigation is to ascertain what these obligations are, and the peculiar circumstances which invest them with a more imperative character with respect to educated men.

Learning, next to religion, imposes obligations so sacred that they cannot be violated with impunity. These arise in the first place from its very nature, the object of Education being, to furnish the mind with means and facilities for greater usefulness. In its application to Academical or Collegiate studies, it ought to be considered not so much an end, as a means to be employed for the accomplishment of a purpose higher than itself. Full many a youth is deluded with the idea that Education is the act of attaining an eminence, toilsome indeed in its ascent, but from which he can enjoy his own reveries, and look down with contempt on the vulgar herd who are not so highly favored as himself.

There are those who devote themselves to the pursuit of literature merely for the pleasure they thence derive; while others seek knowledge, that by its attainment they may be furnished with the means of augmenting their own influence, or of adding to their wealth. It is true that influence and wealth are very generally found associated with superior intelligence, and as the reward of application and industry they may not be undesirable, but it is sordid in the extreme to make education subservient only to the aggrandisement of self; it is degrading it from its high and holy office, it is making that which ought to be the instrument of the highest good to man, the menial drudgery of selfish passion. It is said that that prince of Kings, Alfred, wept when he found his want of learning prevented him from opening the treasures of the Latin tongue to his people. We know to what heights of self-sacrificing effort an enlightened philanthropy has been able to elevate the great benefactors of mankind, and over what obstacles it has borne them onward to their angelic achievements. This ambition to mitigate the woes, and augment the happiness of others, should pour all its generous impulses into the bosom of the student and become the sleepless monitor of his waking-working hours. The world has a right to expect from educated men an acquaintance with its wants,—and being furnished with the means of accelerating the march of improvement, and of mitigating the woes of our race, it should not be disappointed in this expectation.

A brilliant light now quenched in death, but one whose example and words will live for many years, wrote as follows: "Educated men are the natural sources and guides of popular opinion; and they are bound to stand forth boldly, to battle with prejudice, and breast the inundation of passion, though at some risk of being swept away by its fury."

The principles of the educated, active, influential men of every community generally become its public sentiment. This living embodiment and expression of reason, truth, and righteousness, acts upon the multitude with vastly more directness and efficiency than books of morals and religion; and as it constitutes the most effectual method for the formation and vigorous maintenance of a sound public sentiment, so it is chiefly

relied upon for that function. On this account it was that the laws of Athens held that citizen an enemy to the state who remained neutral in any important crisis or question of general interest. The Redeemer of the world has given to this equitable principle the sanction of religion, and it is only they who confess Him before men, whom He will confess before the angels in heaven.

The obligations of educated men arise also from the light which education casts upon mind itself. This mysterious part of our nature is comparatively unknown in its various capacities, and wondrous capabilities, to the illiterate man. He thinks, he feels, he acts, and thus demonstrates his own identity with his race; but of the laws of mental operations, the connexion between sensation and volition, and the springs which originate and vary human action, he knows comparatively nothing. He moves on the earth unconscious of the divinity which stirs within; but education withdraws the veil from this mysterious nature, and makes man acquainted with himself; he learns the laws of perception and association, he becomes conversant with the *media* of knowledge, and the astonishing faculties of mind unfold to his view. In witnessing its varying phenomena he becomes conscious of its power, and he no longer wonders with stupid admiration at the achievements of art, or the splendid triumphs of philosophy. He feels himself destined by the Creator for an exalted, a glorious existence. The hieroglyphics of nature appear intelligible to his view, and its varied stores manifest themselves as arranged for his use. The earth becomes a vast library of knowledge—the sea a mirror of instruction, and the heavens a magnificent scroll, on which he traces the handiwork of the Creator. The heathen poet considered man but little more than an elevated brute, and what has been considered his celebrated description of a human being is but the eulogy of an infidel:

Os homini sublime dedit, coelumque tueri
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere.

A Christian education gives a nobler view of man; it treats of his spiritual nature and enforces duty in view of the immortality of his existence. The education which fails to recognize the spiritual relations of man is a grand absurdity. He who has received a correct education, has learned that mind is something beyond the result of a mere skilful material organization; he has learned that it is a flame from heaven, purer than promethean fire, that vivifies and energizes the breathing form; that it is an immaterial essence, a being that quickens matter, and imparts life, sensation and motion to the intricate frame-work of our bodies; which wills when we act, attends when we perceive, looks into the past when we reflect, and not content with the present, soars with all its aims and all its hopes into the futurity that is forever dawning upon it. A creeping thing prepares for its perfection, and at length bursts from its silken tomb with newly developed form, appetites and nature, like a winged flower with brilliant and delicate pinions and rich in gems it gladly flutters in the light. The grub may tend to be a butterfly—but why should the worm just peeping from its clod aspire to anything beyond the clay on which it is destined to crawl and rot? And why should man look higher? Why? His spirit will not crawl; it travels along with the light into infinite space, and calculates on a life and a capacity commensurate with its desires; he is impelled by a belief, which seems essential to his rational existence, that this beautiful world is not altogether a delusive show; for he cannot think that the wondrous facts of creation teach him to look for the end of truth only in death; but he feels that in proportion as his intellect expands and expatiates in knowledge, does it aspire to immortality; and when most intimate with