

At the conclusion of the ceremony of laureating the above named graduates the Principal delivered to them the following words of counsel:—

GENTLEMEN,—I congratulate you on having attained to the dignity of membership of the Convocation of Queen's University. The friends of some of you, perhaps, consider that your education is now finished. You, I trust, know that it is only begun. All that the University has done for you has been to give you the spirit of students, and methods of study. Your claim to be regarded as men of culture is that you have gained a scientific knowledge of your ignorance. That is much—unspeakably more than decades of cram could give to you. At so important an epoch in your lives as this you will gladly receive a few words of counsel from me, suited to your position as members of our fraternity of graduates, and to the spirit in which you should henceforth pursue your studies and live your lives. Each of you has probably learned already, to some extent, that to know himself he must know God, and that according to his knowledge of God is his theory of the Universe. To be assured that you stand on firm ground here is your first necessity. All roads lead to Rome. All subjects lead up to Theology. Very few of you intend to study the special science of Theology, but every thinking man must be a Theologian. He must have a theory with regard to the great questions that lie at the root of all thought and all interests. And his scheme of the Universe must be true to all the facts of the Universe so far as he knows them. This at his peril. Having got your *credo*, you will find that it has got you. It will dominate your whole life. Let this be the test to whether you believe or whether you are only highly educated parrots. According to your moral earnestness you will necessarily commend to others that which is highest truth to you. Agnostics beseech us to abandon the Christian hope for their dogged 'don't know' with assured confidence that a blank is more precious than a prize. One of them has declared that Christianity must eventually be stamped out like the cattle plague. Religion is pernicious, and religion is infectious; therefore the good of society demands that it be crushed out. I do not wonder at this intensity. No one will wonder at it who has read history and understands human nature. Even Pessimists press their message of despair on men as if it were a veritable gospel. Give us truth is the cry of the soul. And what men believe to be truth they will urge upon others, some wisely, others unwisely. No matter what your profession, you will preach to your fellows by voice or pen or life. Not from the pulpit chiefly have the most far reaching voices sounded forth to this generation, bidding men walk in the paths of faith and hope, or bidding them abandon the old gospel for the gospel of dirt. Statesmen from Bunsen to Gladstone, poets from Wordsworth to Tennyson, men of science from Faraday to Tait, literary men from Carlyle to George Macdonald, philosophers like James Martineau and Max Muller, these and a thousand others have been preaching sermons all the more influential that they are based on life rather than on texts. In searching for sure ground on which to stand, have regard to the spirit of the ages rather than to the spirit of the age. We are the children of this age and must be in sympathy with it; not in bondage to it, for we are the heirs of all the ages. The fashion of the day is tyrannous, but you prove your strength by resisting the tyrant. Correct the one-sidedness of the present by the other-sidedness of the past. Respect facts rather than the glittering generalizations of any writer. Respect the verdict of history rather than the paradox of the historian. When, for example, Buckle classes Scotland and Spain together, as the two most priest-ridden countries in Europe, ask why the outcome of the riding was so different in the two cases, and you will conclude that brambles and fig trees are not the same, and that it serves no useful purpose

to classify them as if they were. As to what the spirit of our age is men may differ widely. Their judgment will differ according to the induction they make. May we not venture to say that this age is above everything else critical? We hear of the modern criticism, of its achievements and claims in every department. Undoubtedly criticism has its value, but if this be the chief characteristic of our age, it cannot take the highest place, and it is all the more incumbent on us not to be its captives, but its masters. Merely destructive criticism is especially worth little. What, though the critic should prove that an ancient book in its present form is not the production of the man to whom it has been traditionally assigned, or that the ancient simple stories we regarded as history are myths, only pictorially and not literally true. We thank him for his service, but do not rate it as anything very wonderful. We have neither gained nor lost much. The critic has certainly not destroyed the great facts that the book or story bears witness unto, nor the spiritual truth which may even now "be ministering to our highest development." The facts existed prior to the writings that picture them, and the truth lives still. Judging, as men in earnest always will, from this point of view, from living facts rather than dead manuscripts, the vehemence with which the question as to the authenticity of classical and biblical books has been disputed in Germany, is indeed odd enough. Of course I do not mean to imply that modern criticism is mainly destructive. On the whole, it is reverent in tone and its aim is constructive. Niebuhr did not abolish the myths of Greek and Roman History. He interpreted them as expressing larger historical movements than our fathers had learned from the simple stories. And in the same spirit Ewald seeks to construct early Hebrew History. But the importance of this historical criticism has been greatly overrated. I have a good deal of sympathy with the remark of Goethe about its value. "Till lately," he says, "the world believed in the heroism of Lucretia, of a Mucius Scevola, and suffered itself by this belief to be warmed and inspired. But now comes your historical criticism and says that those persons never lived, but are to be regarded as fables and fictions, divined by the great mind of the Romans. What are we to do with so pitiful a truth? If the Romans were great enough to invent such stories, we should at least be great enough to believe them." Criticism is valuable. It has its legitimate field and its legitimate claims. Whether we accept its results or not, we must not interfere with its work. But aim at being something more than critics. Do something, and in order that you may do, believe. All the past ages teach us the importance of this. Rejoice in the triumphs of the present as much as you like, cherish heroic hopes with regard to the future, but be well assured, as Goethe again says, that "let mental culture go on advancing, let the natural sciences go on gaining in depth and breadth, and the human mind expand as it may, it will never go beyond the elevation and moral culture of Christianity as it glistens and shines forth in the gospel." Take your stand on the person of Christ and the supreme fact revealed by Him of the Fatherhood of God. The more you trust it, the more convincingly it will shine. Depend upon it, that fact is much grander and more life-giving, while it is not one whit more anthropomorphic than Strauss's *Universum*. Again, in your future studies, you can now afford to give your strength to some special department, and in taking up this speciality—whatever it may be—never be satisfied unless you get to sources. That is a much shorter method than taking things at second or third hand, and until you have followed it you have no right to consider yourself a scholar, or entitled to speak above your breath. On account of the excellence of the training given in the German gymnasia the Universities are able to set their students at independent work to a far greater extent than is possible in Britain