

civil or Roman law, and its proficient found a ready access to the highest political offices in the state.

Among other causes that might be adverted to, as giving force and vivacity to the revival of literature, there was the memorable dispute about investitures, between the Imperial and Roman courts, which excited all the passions and prejudices of men, and called to the combat the literary champion; there was also the disputes between the clergy of the east and west, against the head of the church, the one vainly attempting to establish the dream of infallibility and absolute power, the other maintaining their rights with a firm and decent freedom; there was, moreover, the influence of commerce, which undesignedly excited the spirit of inquiry, and by the necessity of actual observation and research, furnished the knowledge most wanted in the infancy of learning. One can only refer to additional causes, such as the patronage of the great, to the establishment of universities, and the travels of scholars, who returned to their respective countries laden with accumulated observation and extensive knowledge. All these may be regarded as either principal or accessory causes which brought about that splendid though late revival of literature, which, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, broke in upon the darkness of the middle ages. It is impossible, in such a short and cursory view as I have attempted, to enter with nice discrimination into the various divisions of so vast a subject, or to show, otherwise than by the mere pointing of the finger, the actual state of literature and science during those centuries.—From that time till now, Europe has enjoyed the immense privileges which, under Divine Providence, the preceding causes have been labouring to bring forth. But privileges that are easily inherited are apt to be undervalued. How easy the approach now to the treasures of ancient as well as modern knowledge; how accessible every avenue to literature and useful truths. And yet, on the other hand, how general that vulgar quality of the human mind, which regards what is common as worthless? How miserable the estimation with which knowledge is regarded, where men consider it not worth the seeking? How wretchedly poor the sacrifice they would make, either to acquire science or

support the repute of it? But for the efforts of many gigantic minds that have struggled for light in days of darkness; but for the magnificent patronage of the noble and noble-minded, what a state had we been in? What a dry waste and wilderness had been the present history of man? The matter of astonishment is, that our reverence for literature and science should be so small, our devotedness to their interests so miserably cold and parsimonious. Whatever be the cause of it, this is certainly true, that an impartial observer of the paucity of the literary institutions, and small number of students in *this country*, might be excused, if not justified, in concluding, that it was our intention and design to become barbarians.—Where is the provision we have made for the contrary? Where is the enthusiasm that would even ask or call for such provision? We are, you may depend upon it, an unthinking and inferior race. Our passions, our prejudices and our ignorance, are suffering the destinies of a noble country to run awry in ways of darkness. Let us sink within our breasts the petty prejudices of our day and generation, sins we have contracted since the day we were born—let us look backward to the brilliant efforts of former times—let us set an example, though late, to the ignorant usurping crowds of the Western world and seek provision for the encouragement of literature and science, that schools and universities may be endowed with a view to that end.

On a former occasion, I submitted to you my views respecting the objects that might be attained and ought to be aimed at by this institute. If duly supported and encouraged it might supply a desideratum in modern society, a useful course of instruction apart from the higher qualifications necessary in the more important professions. Were this object accomplished, I should rest secure in the belief of this country's ultimate prosperity. We much need, as good men say, a revival in the midst of us—and that a speedy and powerful revival of the sense of our obligation to prosecute and to support the interests of literature and science, may take place, is surely an earnest desire of mine, and I trust is yours.