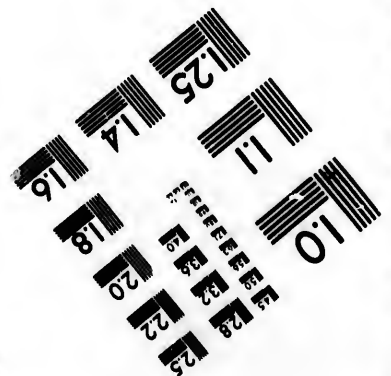
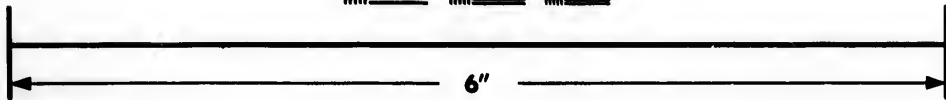
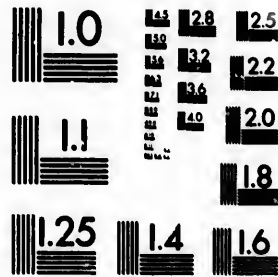


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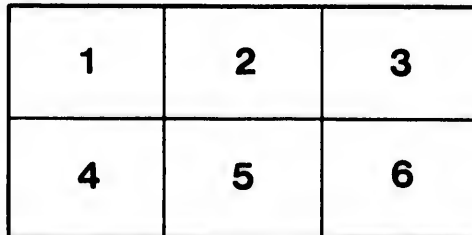
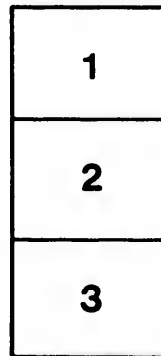
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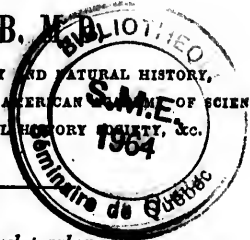
KING'S COLLEGE, FREDERICTON,

JUNE 26, 1856.

BY

J. ROBB, M.D.

PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY AND NATURAL HISTORY,
CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES,
OF THE BOSTON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY, &c.

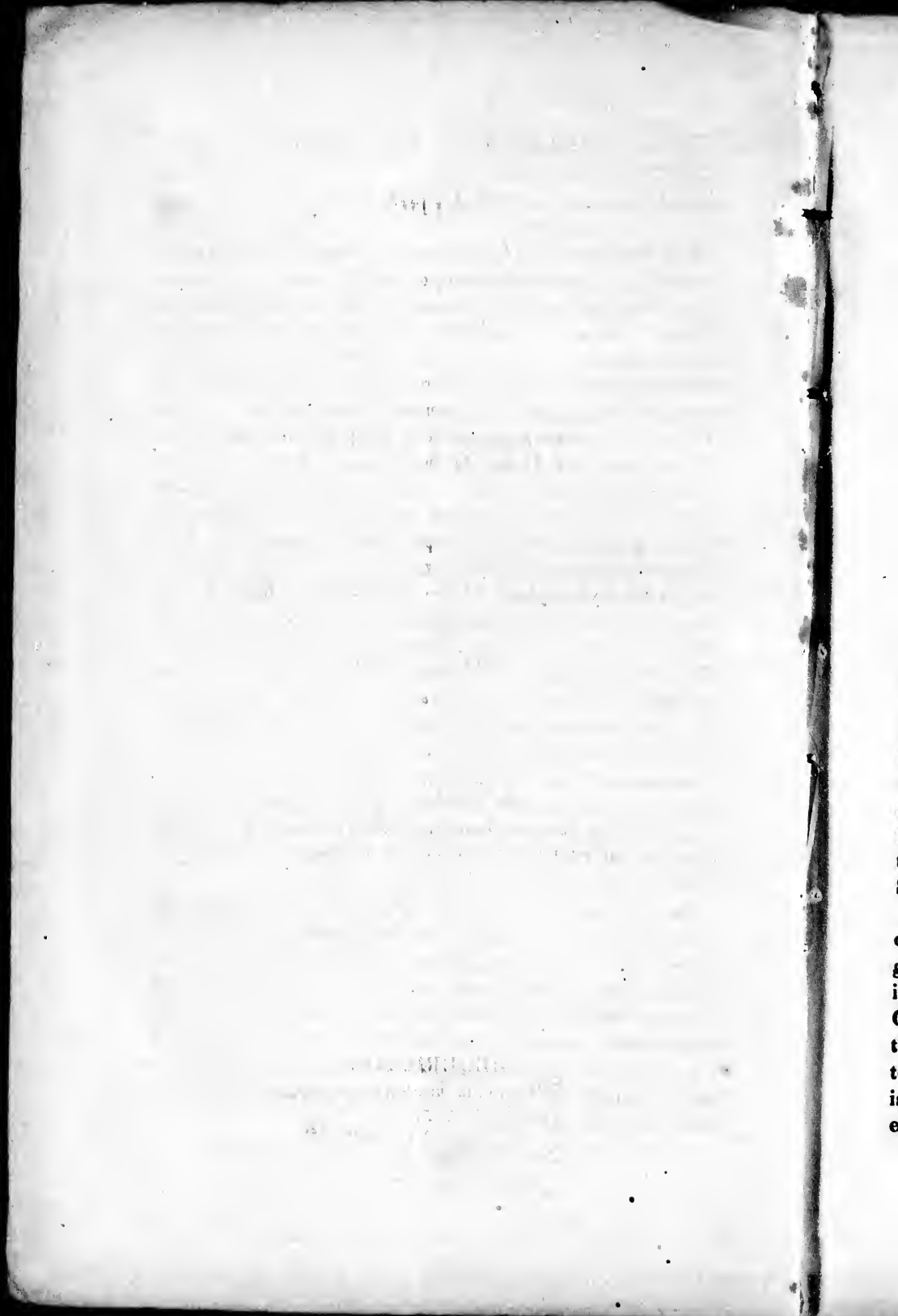


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ORATION.

THE Statutes of this College require that an Oration should be annually pronounced by one of the Professors, "in praise of the Founders and Benefactors of the Institution and its objects." In due rotation this office has devolved upon me, and, notwithstanding the apparent difficulty of such a task at the present time, I willingly address myself to it, and now call upon all who hear me to commemorate again, and ever regard with gratitude, those highminded and hopeful men who led the way in establishing Collegiate Institutions in New Brunswick, and familiarized the mind of a flourishing colony with the subject of an education higher and more liberal than that which is properly within the scope of the Common Schools or Grammar Schools of the country.

It seems unnecessary to urge the claims of general education in the free development of the mental faculties of man, upon the present occasion. Every living being, I conceive, has an inherent right to the best possible education and culture both of his intellectual and moral nature; and, thanks be to God! the means of securing these results are now widely disseminated throughout the civilized world.

The abstract right to education is now generally admitted everywhere, and means of practically attaining this object have been organized and established on public authority, and sometimes even at the public expense, in almost all well ordered States and Kingdoms.

This Education I firmly believe to be the best preservative of virtue among the people, the best practical security of governments, and the palladium of civil liberty. Therefore it is a wiser and more noble policy to endow Schools and Colleges, rather than to found jails and penitentiaries; to train the youth of a country in knowledge and in virtue, rather than to coerce and punish them for viciousness or crime. Ignorance is not the mother of devotion, but rather, the fruitful parent of error and of sin.

I have said that the necessity of making public provision for Education in the abstract, is admitted by almost ail ; but, there is a difference of opinion even among the wise and good men of many countries in regard to several matters of detail, in the system of public education. I may say, for instance, that it is still disputed whether religious education should be given in the same building and by the same teachers as secular education. It is also disputed as to how far education ought to be national and free, that is, chargeable on the general revenues of the country rather than upon the parents of the youths who are actually under instruction. Moreover, it is still undetermined how far public instruction should be carried within a given country, or in a given direction. The adjustment of these several questions will seriously occupy governments for a long time to come.

Passing over the first two of these moot points without remark at present, I shall venture a few observations concerning the last ; that is, more particularly as to how far public education should be carried here, and, in what specific direction.

The first stage of mental culture is comprehended under what we call a Parish School education ; the second is entitled a Grammar School course ; and the third and last we term a Collegiate course. Of each of the above there may be, with advantage, two or three lower gradations. Such grades as the above however, ought to be present in every well ordered public system for the instruction of youth. In many countries you may even have, in addition to the schools and colleges for general training, as above indicated, special or Industrial Schools and Colleges in which young men are to be trained in some specific art or business. The Industrial Schools of Germany, or the Agricultural Schools of Ireland, or Normal Schools generally, are good instances of the former, and Colleges for Law, Physic, or Divinity, are instances of the latter.

Parish Schools and Grammar Schools were established at a very early period in the history of this Province, and a semi-collegiate character was given to the Grammar School of York County no less than fifty six years ago : but a College could

hardly be said to have existed in New Brunswick before the year 1829; for, without an adequate endowment and organization the mere name can be of small consequence.

The recognition of the necessity for a College, shewn in the establishment of King's College here, was a great civil triumph; for, as Lord John Russell observed upon a recent occasion, the first great principle as regards the educational measures of a country is to make them complete; and the second is to maintain, and to encourage, and as far as possible to improve that which is good in existing systems.

It is not to be denied that the establishment of King's College was opposed by many good men in this country, who considered its establishment to be premature at that time, and there seems to be some reason to admit that they were not entirely wrong in their views of the question; but that question was discussed more than a quarter of a century ago, and ever since the period of that discussion, the country has increased greatly in population, in wealth, and in commercial character.

The objects of the founders were then declared, in the words of the Royal Charter, to be "the education of youth in the principles of the Christian religion, and for their instruction in the various branches of science and literature which are taught at the English Universities."

It would seem, at first sight, that these objects, if faithfully carried out, ought to have been generally acceptable to the loyal people of New Brunswick. I am constrained, however, to admit that the hopes of those enlightened men, who urged and secured the foundation of King's College, have not been so fully realized as might have been expected.

Of the combination of circumstances by which the success of the College has been marred, it is not necessary for me to speak at any length. It may be that the English Universities were not then the best models for New Brunswick; it may be that the Church of England had too prominent a part in the first Board of management, as some allege; it may be that the site of the Institution had been improperly selected, as others contend; it may be that the administration, or the discipline was not efficient; or that the teachers were in some

way less perfect than could be desired in the case ; it may be that the preparatory schools were too few, or too thinly attended, or that the collegiate system was not sufficiently identified and consolidated with them ; it may be that the subjects taught were not such as directly bore upon the business of the country, so that the people generally could not see their immediate applicability to the art of money getting ; it may be that even the sayings and doings of the Legislature from time to time rendered it unacceptable in the country. All these views of the cause of the difficulty may have come with different degrees of force to different minds, according to their peculiar point of view ; but still the fact remains, that while judges of high qualifications have admitted the courses to be well selected and reasonably well taught, at rates almost fabulously low, by men possessed of the required knowledge, and with ability to communicate it ;—notwithstanding these points in our favour, the fact, nevertheless, remains, that the amount of attendance is not considered to be sufficient, and the direct benefits of the College are asserted to be less obvious than they ought to be ;—notwithstanding all this, I repeat, I have ventured to take up the Encænia Oration for 1856 cheerfully, and to call upon you all once more to commemorate, at this season, the various early friends and founders of King's College, and to praise its objects.

Probably you will wonder why I have undertaken the task so cheerfully, and some may even wonder why I could have taken it up at all.

I have said it and done it because, in my heart, I believe that the men who thus realized the idea of a collegiate education for the young men of New Brunswick thought that they would enhance and elevate the character of this country by the same organization as had been found effectual for that object elsewhere. They knew that the full development of the faculties of the mind was the acknowledged means of progress in arts, in commerce, in morality, in civil liberty and in religious freedom. They knew that the mind of youth was the highest public trust, and their object was to secure for it, according to the best known forms of culture and discipline,

not a professional or one-sided education, but simply a more advanced and thorough training than before in religion, literature and general science.

If they did not wholly succeed, it was because they were no more than mortals; if they could not command success, they certainly deserved it.

I have already admitted that the plan of a Provincial University may have been somewhat prematurely propounded; I admit, moreover, that there are points of detail which have not had my own approval, and, that from my own point of view, sundry changes might have been earlier made with advantage; but still, I praise the founders for the establishment of the principle that a higher culture of the mind than is given in our public schools is due to the youth of this country, at public expense in a great measure, and on a common ground, free alike from party prejudices, and all sectarian bias and colouring whatever.

If a Government cannot, by the public education thus offered, sustain and enforce that spirit of union and pride of country among its children which flows from an inspiring sense of national individuality, dignity and completeness; if, I say, a country cannot afford to offer that higher and more generous culture, by which the characters and minds of its youth are to be moulded, then, its youth will cease to regard it as the country of their affections and their pride, the country in which and for which they would wish to spend their energies, the country which is to be the object of their patriotism.

Among the Romans it was a crime to despair of the republic, but in New Brunswick it is not considered treason to say that the country needs not a higher culture than a Grammar School can give. I myself have heard it publicly proclaimed that New Brunswick could not be benefited by Colleges, that Colleges could teach her young men nothing useful, and that she was not in a position to require such institutions.

Was this startling statement made because the speaker despaired of the Commons of New Brunswick being able to appreciate the advantages of the higher kinds of education? or, would he illiberally deny the brighter light of truth and

knowledge to the youthful minds of his countrymen? or, was it because he conceived that his own unaided progress in literature and science was to be the measure and exemplar of all progress here for the future? or, was it—as is most probable—that he merely misunderstood the nature and design of a College? If so, I shall attempt a few words of explanation.

A College, at the present day, is in my apprehension only a great public school, or institution under State inspection, for the sound discipline and culture of the mind of young men, and for their instruction, according to the idea of the time, in whatever is useful, or desirable, or profitable to be known. *Quot Collegia tot Academiae.* An University generally comprehends several Colleges or Seminaries of learning, and is duly authorized to certify that the education and standard of attainments of its graduates is worthy of the highest State sanctions.

Charlemagne, the first founder of an University in Europe, (that of Paris,) declared that its object was only to diffuse among his subjects generally some portion of education, and particularly among the Clergy and those designed for the sacred profession.

The departments or groups of subjects taught in Colleges and Universities have been very various. In early times, when religious belief and civil polity were comparatively unsettled and ill understood, the faculties (or associations of teachers) of Divinity and Law were added to those of Arts or Literature, and Philosophy. In later times, however, when the wonders and the capabilities of Nature require, and most reward investigation, special faculties of science, or of applied science, have been gradually incorporated into the University system.

There is, therefore, no necessary restriction in the nature and number of the faculties or departments in any College. Those forms of instruction which were considered best, for instance, in the days of Charlemagne or Alfred the Great, are not necessarily so at present. That subject, which is required at Paris or Oxford, may very evidently be unsuitable here. It may well be so; but, nevertheless, the scheme of a College

is sufficiently flexible to meet either view of the case ; only, let it be understood that whenever Colleges are founded at the public expense, the Government ought to propose and the Legislature ought to determine the various faculties which are most suitable to the circumstances of the country.

The great and leading idea of a College now a days is, after all, not the teaching of this or that branch of learning according to any one method in particular, but rather the continuation and extension of that culture of the mind and its exercise in common things, which is only begun in schools and academies, and with which it is proposed to occupy the young in that interval of their time between the age of, say 14 or 15 and the time of their introduction to the real business of life.

In North America generally, and in New Brunswick especially, young men will commonly be placed in business earlier than they would be in England ; our collegiate system, therefore, should rather approximate to the Scottish or the American than to the English one ; because, simply, the latter is calculated for a more advanced and a wealthier class of young men than the former. I hesitate not, however, to proclaim my own conviction, that it would be both unjust and unwise to deny to our citizens the power of thus in some way occupying the time of their children in the acquisition of mental power and useful knowledge, before launching them forth upon the wide waste of the ocean of life.

My argument is, that the general principle of collegiate education is correct in the abstract, and correct in its application to New Brunswick. I claim, as a citizen, that it is the interest and the duty of the Government of such a country as our own to provide for the efficient education of all such as can take advantage of the opportunities thus offered. I claim, as a parent, that my children be not compelled to leave the country or live uneducated, or ignorant beyond the matters taught in Grammar Schools. I claim it, not because I am rich, but because I am poor, or at all events, in order that my children, as well as others, may not have cause to regret the day on which their fathers settled here. As a parent, I claim for my own children—I claim for those of all—the privilege of

having their minds, their morals, and their manners, trained in a public school more liberal, and in a seminary more advanced than any one now existing—save within these walls—in this Province of New Brunswick. I claim, for the young men of the country, that they should not be deprived of their due training for that mighty race, which they have yet to run against all the world, and which is to be continued as long as they live in this world.

I would indeed, under present circumstances, consent to give up all the details of our collegiate system for revision by the wisest and best of our statesmen and experts; but, never should I consent to surrender the principle of the necessity of a fair public endowment for collegiate education in New Brunswick—a principle won for its citizens more than a quarter of a century ago by the founders of this College, and more urgently required now, as I conceive, than it ever could have been at any time heretofore: The principle which I advocate is not a dead but a living one;—living, elastic, and healthy;—as necessary for Fredericton as for Oxford;—as necessary for New Brunswick as for Great Britain or the United States;—good for the rich, better for the poor, invaluable for all!

Let it not be urged in reply that there are very many able men in the Legislature of this Province, or in the professions here who have never shown or felt the want of any such education as Colleges impart. Let it not be said that there are many of our commercial men who have prospered without such aids to self-culture!

These facts prove nothing, save that genius and good sense and industry will make their way against all obstacles. Moreover it may be affirmed that if such men had had greater advantages in their youth they would have gone farther in their respective careers. If the country had had the full and proper use of such advantages as I hint at, we should have had, in all probability, ten, or ten times ten such instances of capacity for public or private affairs for every one that we can point to at the present time. Occasional success without education can never go to prove that education is not of advan-

tage to the people at large. The object of public education is to develop such capacity as all may have had by divine permission, and, by cultivation to raise it to a higher average or standard. What I have claimed is, not that New Brunswick should go in advance of other countries in educational measures, but that she should merely try to equal them, and give her sons an opportunity of meeting their competitors in every field of action upon as favourable terms as possible.

It is of no use to allege in reply that "we do not want so much Latin and Greek"; for, there is no necessary measure of Latin and Greek implied in the design of a collegiate course in the abstract. Nor is it fair to say that "we require something more practical and business like;" for Colleges may be made as practical and business like as you desire any place of education to be.

It is of no use to tell me that you have no faith in College discipline for youth; seeing that there is no prescribed form of discipline for youth in Colleges; that is an affair of administration, and can always be modified. Nor will it do to say that you think three or four years after leaving School to be too long a period to hold back your children from the Battle of Life: for, although College authorities may and do from time to time prescribe the *minimum* of instruction for which they will grant their degrees, yet they do and should allow attendance to be given for any desired period; provided only that it be regularly given during the period so selected. It is of no use to say that you do not like residence in a College; for, residence is not now obligatory as it formerly was, although recommended on the ground of its convenience. Nor does it do to object that this or the other church, as such, has too much to say in the administration:—there is no creed or church preferred before others in the government of this country, at any rate; and, except by consent of the Legislature, no one sect can now have any pre-eminence in the College.—The appointment to membership and to every office in College may be made, and ought to be made on the ground of qualification, or fitness alone; the only rule in the case should be "the right men in the right place" as it has been recently expressed.

The details are of little consequence as far as my present argument is concerned: my whole concern is *that the principle of a College should be maintained, and that the advantages which such an institution is capable of rendering should be brought home to the largest possible number of the young men of the country.* He who is not liberal as regards the means and appliances of public education may call himself of the liberal party, if he pleases, but the result of his policy will ultimately be injurious to the liberties of the people. The veriest despot on the earth could desire no better security for his authority than the limitation and abridgment of the educational facilities within his empire. By what strange fatality has a liberal education come to be treated by some members of "the liberal party" as if it were a thing inconsistent with civil liberty and unfitted for the sons of freemen? Why should obstruction, or even destruction come to be the watch-words of their policy, rather than improvement and rational reform? Truly, such opinions and such policy would not be justified even by the supposed inefficiency of the College; and such traits are characteristic of a pretended zeal in the cause of the people, rather than of a sound and enlarged knowledge of their best interests. To borrow the appropriate language of the Report of the late College Commission:—"Religion, learning, patriotism, humanity, all forbid that a subject so vital to the well-being of the whole Province, so deeply involving the interests of all classes of the community, should be made the foot-ball of personal or political party differences, or be in the slightest degree prejudiced by party rivalry."

But, let us suppose that the principle of a collegiate education has been adopted for any given locality, the difficulty will still remain of determining such a scheme of instruction as is proper for it. In the case of New Brunswick, for instance, this involves many questions, upon which I do not propose now to enter. It is not required of me, nor in fact would it be becoming in me to interfere in such matters. It will be sufficient that I merely enunciate a few general principles which may be of use hereafter.

In every scheme of education, there ought to be a distinct

reference to the nature and development of the mind to be educated, as well as to the business of life. Now the chief faculties of the mind are said to be consciousness, perception, reasoning, imagination, and memory. Intellectual culture means cultivation of each of these faculties by appropriate objects and subjects of study—by appropriate exercises of the powers of observation and abstraction. In this way *mental power*, that is, a power of observing, thinking, speaking, writing, and acting well under all circumstances is acquired.

But this mental power is sought for, in order that it may be applied to the business of life, that is, to the care of the body or the soul, or the property of ourselves and others.

Mental power, therefore, is to be applied first, in strengthening the foundations of morality and religion; and second, in carrying on our proper art or business.

Now the subjects of morality and religion, it will be admitted, are of interest to all; their claims to consideration in any collegiate scheme, cannot be overlooked with impunity; and no system of national education would be tolerated, that was not founded upon christianity. But, as the arts of social life are many and various, the claims of interested parties to special instruction in these can rarely be economically and effectually attended to by the State; and, even when they are to be taught, I mean successfully taught, in Colleges, such professional teaching requires a preliminary discipline of the youthful mind, and the possession of a fair share of available mental power, and of knowledge.

Under these circumstances, therefore, a compromise is made; by virtue of which, the invigorating discipline of the mind is considered to be the primary business of Colleges in almost all countries; and, secondarily, the imparting to it of that kind of knowledge which is, locally, most appropriate and useful.

In a formal statement of the argument, such as the present, these two objects must be kept apart, although, in actual teaching they are almost always used in combination. One part of the collegiate course, therefore, regards merely the general training of the mind to the fullest use of its own innate powers and capabilities, upon any subject whatever; while the

other professes to impart special knowledge or methodical information concerning the things, phenomena, forces, properties, capabilities, and laws of the world without and the world within us—exact and solid knowledge both of nature and of art. Thus is youth to be trained for the business of manhood, and all life made a preparation for death!

The principles which we have thus laid down are not difficult of apprehension, as you perceive; but here again, it is in the proper application of those principles that the practical difficulty will be felt.

It was here, perhaps, that the founders of this College differed somewhat in their views from many of those who have recently discussed the subject of collegiate education in New Brunswick. The former gave, perhaps, a disproportionate preponderance to systematic mental discipline, while the popular feeling seems now to be chiefly in favour of useful knowledge, or, what has been termed mental furniture. The founders of this College do not seem to have considered that instruction was so essential as education, nor the materials of thought so important as the power of wielding them. Perhaps these good men somewhat exaggerated the importance of the disciplinal studies, or, at all events, they seem hardly to have made sufficient allowance for the difficulty which many minds have in appreciating mental power, apart from a special and useful knowledge of things, and for the disrelish which the general population of a young country like this, with its physical wants unsatisfied, and its natural resources undeveloped, with little leisure and less surplus capital or revenue, might be supposed to entertain for the disciplinal studies actually chosen in the case. These were, more particularly, the classical languages of antiquity, mathematics, logic, and mental philosophy. At a later period, other subjects were added; but the popular mind is slow to apprehend such matters, and popular prejudices are, in their nature, very durable, even when there are no demagogues to nurse and profit by them, as is too frequently the case.

In regard to the selection above mentioned, it is to be observed that the consent of mankind has placed, and still

places, the classics and mathematics in the first rank of disciplinary studies. In fact, this character must always belong to them, apart from any special knowledge therewith involved ; and nowhere, as is generally confessed, is their study to be omitted in a liberal course of education. But moreover, there are special applications of both of them to certain arts or professions which will always give them a direct and practical importance.

God made all things by number and measure and weight ; accordingly, geometry has been termed the key of the sciences, and most of the laws of nature are reducible to mathematical formulæ, expressive of their precise physical relations. The study of mathematics therefore, as every one knows, is essential in most arts for the business knowledge which it confers.

Again, although the sacred Scripture has been vouchsafed to man through the medium of the Greek and Hebrew languages, and although almost the whole of the wisdom of antiquity is consigned in tongues that are not spoken at the present day, it is commonly objected to the study of these, so called, dead languages, that the time so applied is thrown away, because all that is useful in them may be read in translations. Now, admitting that to be true, which, in my opinion, is granting too much, it is precisely in *the daily exercise of making translations* from these wonderful languages that their chief educational or disciplinary value consists. It is in making translations that so many faculties of the mind are called into play and strengthened ; not so much in learning the matter, as in observing, comparing and paraphrasing the thoughts and the vehicles of the thoughts of others. It is not, I say, in *reading* the translation, but in *making* the translation from the dead to the living languages that the value of their study consists. In this point of view, the study of language and the study of languages will always be most useful ; and, not only for the thoughts therein embodied, but for the dignity and fitness of their forms of expression, will the classics remain a permanent element in every scheme of collegiate education.

But while admitting the high claims of the classical languages in the case, the questions next come up, how much time is to

be devoted to the classics, and how far is their study to be carried? These are grave questions, and they do not admit of a very direct answer; for the amount of classical knowledge to be given should vary, I apprehend, according as it is to be of the nature of business-knowledge in future life or not; according to the social position of the student and other circumstances to which I need not now refer.

The study of modern languages is by some opposed to that of the ancient ones; but our principle may again be applied with advantage. Modern languages have a special or local or limited use. Latin and Greek are almost universal in their applications. Latin especially is the language of science. The most essential portions of the highest works of science are generally given in Latin, so that they may be read by all men. Nature, as it were, thus speaks in Latin.

Furthermore, we have the claims of science apparently conflicting with those of literature; the study of nature and of art placed in opposition to that of language. Now, where nature or art become the subjects of University education, the specific or the useful knowledge therein conveyed is said to preponderate over their disciplinal efficiency; that is, they are said to convey mental furniture rather than intellectual strength. Different minds will see this question in different lights. I for one, however, am disposed to claim a high place for physics and the natural sciences on various grounds.

By these sciences we are taught to read the hand-writing of God in his works, and to study the logic of creative wisdom. These sciences declare, or profess to declare, the laws by which the fabric of nature stands; by which God's universe is ordered; by which man lives in harmony with all created things; by which he can constrain the powers of nature to fulfil his own behests; and by which he can thus immeasurably exalt the resources and material prosperity of his country and his race.

The study of these sciences, viewed as the legitimate expressions of God's will and of God's work, seems to me to have an importance in every point of view second only to that of His holy word. In a more especial manner are they qua-

lified to be a discipline for the powers of observation, method and analysis—faculties of primary importance; and if, as the ancients supposed, the man who learns a new language becomes possessed of a new soul, so, he who acquires any one of the natural sciences becomes furnished with a new sense, by means of which he enters into nearer and higher relations with nature, and with the author of nature.

Therefore, in any systematic readjustments here, I would claim for the physical sciences an adequate recognition, as knowledge most valuable and applicable to an industrial use in after life—as most potent means and instruments of mental culture and of moral culture also—conferring self-power upon the student, strengthening the intellect, refining the taste, and invigorating the whole spiritual nature of man.

As the teaching of the Arts and Professions in this College has been alluded to elsewhere, I may be excused for referring very briefly to that subject, before coming to a close.

The arts are generally applied sciences, or they rest upon applications of science, and involve, by the nature of the case, an indoctrination in the general principles of science. To be taught effectually the arts must include practice with science: to be taught at all requires practical as well as scientific teachers.

If more than general culture is to be attempted, and if the funds for the purpose are sufficient, I should be glad to see, in addition to the sciences, some art or arts of general application taught in King's College; because, while the advantages of general mental culture and intellectual strength are slowly developing themselves in the progress and history of the country, the direct and immediate return of men well trained in the principles and practices of Agriculture, Engineering, Law, Commerce, Education, or Theology, would satisfy many who now fail to appreciate the true meaning and purpose of collegiate institutions in the country.

Oh! that some good and earnest, high minded man were here, with ability and power to carry out and complete the benevolent intentions of the founders and early friends of King's College,—one fitted to unite the spirit of antiquity with

that of modern life, and to marry the beautiful with the true,—one who could prescribe due moderation in the study of words as well as thoughts and things,—one who should enable us to consolidate and transmit the wisdom of Cicero, the philosophy of Aristotle, the poetry of Homer, and the eloquence of Demosthenes, in due admixture and combination with the science of Bacon, of Newton, of Humboldt, of Owen, and of Faraday ! Would that, through his care, these great men were thus to be enshrined for ever in the thoughts of our countrymen, as those of the masters and models of mankind,—men whose names are as watchwords, and whose writings are as lamps to enlighten the progress of humanity, and the march of civilization ! Would that through means of such an one, this College should be established in the good opinion and confidence of the people ! that it might flourish in perpetual youth, the *alma mater* to unborn generations of *alumni* of new truths, great thoughts, and holy aspirations—strengthening the intellect—maturing the judgment—ennobling and sanctifying the energies of all who, from time to time, shall seek to be initiated here in the sacred mysteries of philosophy—

divine philosophy !

Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,

But musical as is Apollo's lute !



