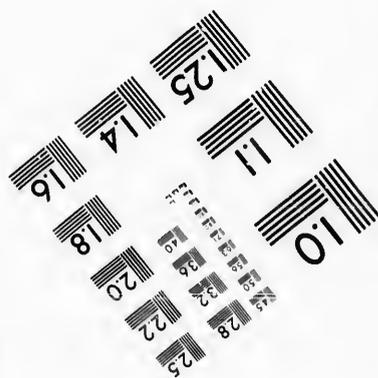
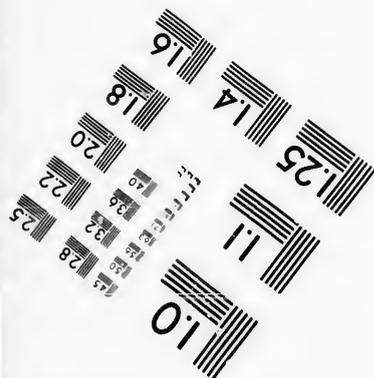
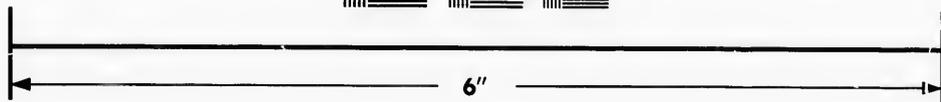
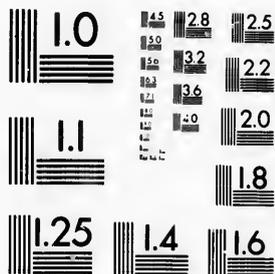


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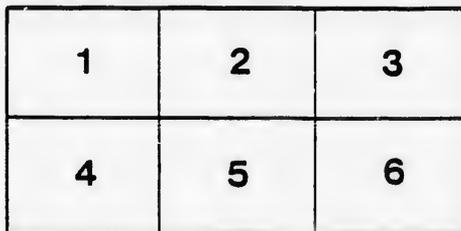
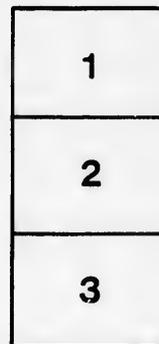
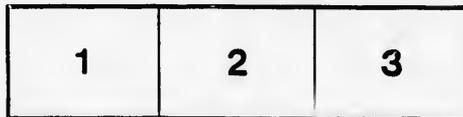
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Wm. Gen. Adamson

THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION,

TO WHICH IS ADDED

4

REFLECTIONS

ON

THE LIFE OF RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

CONTAINED IN

The Inaugural Address,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

SHERIDAN LITERARY SOCIETY,

OF TORONTO,

ON THE 12TH OF NOVEMBER, 1859.

Mit der Dummheit Kämpfen Götter selbst vergebens.
Schiller.

BY

LETABLERÈ JOHN LITTON, M.A.,

Vice-President.

PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY,
BY ROWSELL & ELLIS, TORONTO.

Price Sixpence Sterling—to be had at all Booksellers.

(EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE SOCIETY.)

On Saturday, November 12th, at seven o'clock, P.M., the members of "The Sheridan Literary Society," of Toronto, held their first meeting for the ensuing season of 1859, at the Temperance Hall, Temperance street. After the election of officers for the year, the following resolution was moved by D. A. Sampson, Esq., M.A., B.C.L., Barrister at Law, and seconded by Dr. O'Dea,

"That the chair be taken by Letablerè J. Litton, M.A., and that he, as Vice-President of the Society, do deliver the opening lecture," which resolution having passed *nem. con.*, the Chairman proceeded amid profound silence to address the Society as follows:

* * * * *

At the conclusion of the address, which was received with loud and long-continued applause, it was moved by T. Spencer, Esq., and seconded by D. A. Sampson, Esq.,

"That the Chairman do receive the thanks of this Society for his very able address, and that it be printed for the benefit of its members;" which resolution was unanimously adopted, and after the admission of some new members, the meeting broke up at half-past ten o'clock.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN—

The honour you have conferred upon me, in having placed me in the proud position which I occupy this evening, is one of which I shall ever retain a grateful remembrance; and although I feel I am unable to do justice to the task which your kindness has imposed upon me—though I freely yield the precedence to *some* of you in education, to *many* of you in position, to *all* of you in talent—yet, gentlemen, to not one amongst you, do I yield in lively interest in the future prospects of this Society, and in deep and heartfelt solicitude for its welfare. I come not here with the weapons of the orator in my hand, nor am I provided with the light-arms of the rhetorician. No armour have I to protect me, but your indulgence—no weapon shall I use but the appeal to your intelligence. I trust that the sincerity of my heart will make amends for the inadequacy of my power, for truly in my case it may be said, “*ex abundantia cordis os loquitur.*” Would you know, gentlemen, why we have been summoned together? Would you know what brings me here? My intention is to enlighten you on these points, and with your permission I shall arrange my discourse under two heads. In the first place, I shall endeavour to point out what are the objects—what the ends we have in view in meeting here this evening, for the purpose of forming, or rather re-forming, this Society; and in the second, I shall cast a cursory glance over the life and times of the great orator, writer and humourist, whose name we have adopted to adorn our Club; whose life presents to us, and to all thinking men, so many grave lessons “to follow the good,” and so many sad warnings “to avoid the evil,” and whose death was but another illustration of the truth of the saying of Guizot’s, that “The

happiness of man is even more uncertain than the destiny of states."*

We have assembled, gentlemen, to inaugurate the re-entrance into life of the "Sheridan Literary Society," which formerly flourished and rejoiced in its strength, but like learning in Europe during the middle ages, it had its decline—became enveloped in darkness, and subsequently languished and died—only, as we confidently hope, to emerge from that gloom, arrayed in more than its former brightness, and endued with a stronger and more enduring vitality. The object which we, in common with other Societies of this kind, have in view in meeting here together at certain stated periods is twofold. Firstly, to encourage literary research, and literary discussion, and thereby to increase that stock of knowledge which we may already have acquired; and secondly, to accustom ourselves to convey to others with that clearness which ever accompanies true eloquence, the results of our research, and thus to become adepts in the art of public speaking. Surely if we can even partially attain to either of these ends, our time will not have been misspent—our labour will not have been in vain. Bacon has taught us that "knowledge is power"—experience has proved to us that knowledge is pleasure. Would you ask me what it is that equalizes the social condition of man, and levels all the distinctions of birth, or of wealth? I answer, knowledge. Would you know what it is that gives to all of us, no matter what may be our political position, no matter what may be our worldly rank, no matter what our religious creed, the most universal and wide-spread enjoyment? I will tell you it is knowledge. Would you enquire what it is that elevates man's mind above the grovelling pursuits of mere animal pleasure, that tends to save man from the horrible degradation of sinking into the "mud-puddles" of sensual indulgence? (as Carlyle has it.†)—What is it that sobers him in prosperity, and consoles him in adversity, that arms him for the battle of life, and enables him to hew out for himself a road which

* Guizot's "Memoires pour servir à l'histoire de mon temps."

† Carlyle's "Frederick the Great."

“leads on to fortune,” to independence, to honour, to happiness, and mayhap to immortal fame? I assert it is knowledge. To use the words of an eloquent writer and a great orator: “Knowledge is like the mystic ladder in the patriarch’s dream; its base rests on the primeval earth, its crest is lost in the shadowy splendour of the empyrean, while the great authors who for traditionary ages have held the chain of science and philosophy, of poesy and erudition, are the angels ascending and descending the sacred scale, and maintaining, as it were, the communication between man and heaven.” * How noble and how apt is the simile! and how clearly does it demonstrate to us that it is our duty as well as our interest, to keep up by every means this communication; for when the great Creator of unnumbered worlds breathed into us the breath of life, and made us partakers of his own divine essence, by bestowing on us a soul, he not only implanted in our breast that thirst for knowledge which all men possess more or less, but he also supplied to us the means of satisfying that innate desire. Shall we then refuse to drink from those pure springs which the providence of God, and the intelligence of man, have alike provided for us? or shall we, forgetful of Danté’s words,—

Nessun maggior dolore che ricordarsi del tempo felice,
Nella miseria,†

by passing a youth of ignorance and idleness, prepare for ourselves an old age of useless regret and of unavailing remorse? It has been well said, “The youth of a nation are the trustees of posterity.” What important duties does this trust entail upon us? By it we are bound to use to the uttermost our humble efforts to raise higher and higher the standard of intellectual culture in this great country—to watch over the interests of learning, and to advance, as far as in us lies, the progress of education. I say “advance,” for in the acquisition of knowledge there is no middle course—no “*juste milieu*,” one must either go forward or go back—

* Right Hon. B. D’Israeli.

† No bitterer pang can mortal bosom know,
Than joy remembered in the midst of woe.

advance or recede—gaze upward, with the eye of his mind, or wander with downcast countenance through the beautiful regions of science with as little profit and as little pleasure to himself as is afforded to a blind man by the most gorgeous landscape of nature's scenery. Depend upon it, that a man who does not look up will assuredly look down; and that the spirit which dares not soar is destined to grovel; although we all cannot arrive at high renown or immortal fame, yet, we can each add something, no matter how little that something may be, to the store of learning, which has been transmitted to us by our ancestors, and which it is our duty to hand down in our turn to remote posterity. Let us not be cast down by the magnitude of the task, for great results have ever had small beginnings; and how the grain of mustard seed grew into the greatest of all trees, we all have read. Receive not as true the old-fashioned rhyme of Pope:

“A little learning's a dangerous thing;

“Drink deep, or touch not the Pyrean spring.”

For in these latter days, as Moliere has it, *nous avons changé tout cela.** Modern experience has taught us that men will not be content to remain wholly ignorant, because they cannot hope to be perfectly learned. The decree has gone forth, the spirit of knowledge has touched the multitude. *Totamque infusa per artus. Mens agitat molem et magno se corpore miscet.* On every side of him the traveller, in the “old country,” sees the evidence of this activity. On every side he beholds those means of intellectual development which a beloved country (like a tender mother) has provided for her sons. I allude not so much to the ancient and time-honoured seats of learning in England, as to those more modern ones which, in the form of “national schools,” “normal schools,” “public libraries,” the “people's lecture rooms,” and others too numerous to mention, which lie so thickly scattered through her large towns, and more particularly in those of her manufacturing districts. I have myself seen in one of these establishments at Liverpool, crowds of artisans and labourers congregated together, all with one accord drinking, as it

* Le medicin malgré lui.

were, from these fountains of knowledge. I have seen, gentlemen, the engine-driver, arrayed, as he was, in the black livery of toil, pore over the biographies of Watt, Brunel and Stephenson, whilst beside him might be observed the bluff honest sailor, now smiling as he perused the humorous pages of Marryat's novels, now blushing with pride as he read, for the first time, of some great deed which his ancestors had done under the leadership of a Drake or a Nelson; whilst not far off sat some pale mechanic in happy converse with Goldsmith or Dickens, Hugh Miller, or Dionysius Lardner, Edgeworth, or Gaskell, all doubtless thinking, with Lord Bacon, that "If the invention of ships was thought noble, which carrieth riches from place to place, and consociateth the most remote regions in participation of their fruits, how much more are letters to be magnified, which, as ships, pass over the vast seas of time, and make distant ages to participate of the wisdom, illumination, and invention the one of the other." From this pleasing view of the value of learning in the old country, let us turn to the aspect which presents to us in this great province; an aspect which will fill the mind of every Englishman with pride, and every true-hearted Canadian with peculiar pleasure. Should we not rejoice when we contemplate the rapid strides with which civilization has of late years advanced amongst us? Should we not feel thankful at the powerful interest which education has awakened in the minds of our governors, and of our fellow-colonists? Nearly half a million per annum is directly expended in the cultivation of the human mind in Canada, and we have but to look around us, to see the many nurseries of talent which our adopted country has generously laid out for us. Scarce had the foot-print of the mocassin been erased from the soil, ere rose up on its traces temples of education—monuments of civilization. Do we not behold the word "civilization" inscribed in glowing letters on the walls of our numerous "colleges," "normal schools," "grammar schools," "law courts," "chambers," and "literary society houses." Is not the word "civilization" graven in characters ineffaceable and imperishable on the beautiful front of

our new University, (at the opening of which it was my pride and my privilege to assist)? Scarce, gentlemen, had the war-whoop of the Indian died away on the distant breeze of the far west, ere was heard in the streets of our infant cities the still small voice of wisdom, calling to us and to all that thirst, "to come and buy wine and milk," and saying unto us, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not; hearken diligently unto me, and let your soul delight itself in fatness"—whilst our fathers took up the chorus, and ere long was heard through the length and breadth of the land, the great and glorious cry, Educate! Educate! They felt as we should feel, to use the words of one of the greatest writers of the age, that "More grand than empire is the domain won over human thought, and identified with the eternal progress of intellect and freedom,"* and more grand than conquest it is "to extend that empire of man over the material world."†

Gentlemen, much as we would advocate the claims of popular education on the one hand, we should not undervalue the advantages of a university training on the other; for this is an error into which too many have fallen at the present day. You will hear men ask, what is the value of a college course? to what practical purpose can the knowledge of the classics be applied? To reply in the words of one who dated his greatness from his university career; who, though not possessed of the fortuitous advantages which in England are conferred by noble birth, arrived at the highest political rank to which a subject can attain; whose genius, emerging from the obscure atmosphere of the cotton-mill, shone out resplendent in the more trying atmosphere of a British House of Commons; and who, in addition, had to overcome the disadvantages of an unpleasing air and an ungracious demeanor, and yet died ex-Prime Minister of England; I mean Sir Robert Peel. "I cannot (said he) dwell too much on the importance, to all who conspire to any conspicuous station in any department of public life, of classical acquirements; for they imbue

*Sir E. Bulwer Lytton.

† Lord Macaulay.

men's minds with a knowledge of the pure models of antiquity, and with a taste for their constant cultivation and study. Lord Holland, in his history of James II., dwells on Fox's great delight in studying the classics during his retirement from public life, and on his devotion of entire days to the perusal of Virgil and Euripides; and (adds he) Lord Grenville declared Pitt to be the best Greek scholar he had ever known." "Persons (says another great authority on this matter) ask what is the use of classical education? As well might they ask, what is the use of a relish for food, the smell of the rose, the sweetness of music, the contemplation of truth?" Hear also the opinion expressed so eloquently on this matter by one whose beautiful writings have afforded us all equal delight and instruction. Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, in an address delivered before the University of Edinburgh in 1854, said, "Whatever renown a university can confer abridges the road to subsequent success, interests our contemporaries in our career, and rears up a crowd eager to cheer us in our first maturer efforts to make a name. Whatever be our future profession and pursuits, however they may take us away from our scholastic closet and forbid any frequent return to the classic studies of our youth; still, he whose early steps have been led into that land of demigods and heroes, (Greece and Rome,) will find that its very air has enriched through life the flood of his thoughts, and that he quits the soil with a front which the Greek has directed toward the stars, and a step which imperial Rome has disciplined to the march that carried her eagles through the world."

Look, gentlemen, at those public men whose names will float with glorious distinctness down the stream of time, until that stream be lost in the boundless ocean of eternity, and you will find that they were all distinguished for classical acquirements; to the names of Pitt and Fox, already mentioned, we may add those of Lords Bacon and Mansfield, Ellenborough and Tenterden, Stowell, North, and Grenville; Burke and Windham, Canning and Grattan, Flood and Curran, and we may conclude the shining list with the more

modern names of Plunkett and Bush, Derby and Campbell, Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Gladstone. It is to aid each other in the contemplation of the lives of such mighty Dead and such mighty Living, that we of the Sheridan Club propose to meet at stated periods. It is to encourage each other to follow (though *magno intervallo*) in the steps of these great examples; to impart to each other our individual acquisitions, that we shall from time to time assemble in this hall; and although we may never approach their standard in literary lore, nor arrive at the pinnacle of fame to which they have attained; yet the study of the career of such men will discipline our minds, and materially aid us in the all important task of self-education; by such education, I mean not, gentlemen, the mere customary course which most of us have gone through at school and at college; by such education I understand not the parrot-like learning which is but too common in our day; but I mean a nobler thing; I mean a fair impersonation, which like philosophy in "Lucian's Dream," sits by us in our boyhood and woos us at our manhood, endeavouring to lead us from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge, from carnal pleasures to intellectual enjoyments, in fine, from materialism to spiritualism.

It now becomes my pleasing duty to lay before you, in as few words as possible, the other branch of the studies which will occupy our attention on the many occasions on which we hope to assemble under this roof during the ensuing season, I allude to the study and practice of "public speaking," one which, though much encouraged in most of the countries which compose the continent of Europe, has been, alas! but too much neglected in England and her colonies.

Whilst Italy boasts of her schools of oratory, of which a Cavour, a D'Azeglio, and a Gavazzi are the pupils; whilst the universities of France, in like manner, foster with protecting care that wondrous art, and possess those schools of rhetoric in which a Montalembert and a Theiers, a Victor Hugo and a Guizot, have all learned to debate. Amongst us practical Anglo-Saxons, the taste for eloquence has of late years visibly declined, and deeds rather than words are

looked for from our public servants. This to a certain extent proves our good sense, for were those frequent displays of turgid rhetoric which one is wont to hear in the legislative halls of the United States, and of other foreign nations, to take place in our House of Commons or Chambers of Assembly, the despatch of public business would be retarded, and the patience of our more practical listeners would be over-taxed. But, gentlemen, whilst we should avoid on the one hand the mere parade of fine words, we should on the other endeavour to get rid of that confusion of ideas which is but too visible in the addresses of unpractised speakers of the present day. For what is true eloquence? To reply in the words of a great authority—"It is the faculty of making oneself master of the minds of the listeners, guiding them by his mind, causing them to think as he thinks, and thus imparting to their wills the direction of his own."* How then can a man who is not master of his own thoughts, guide the thoughts of others? How can a speaker whose ideas are floating confusedly in his brain, and which, like the shipwrecked companions of Æneas, "*apparent rari nantes in gurgite vasto*;" how, I ask, can such an one give direction to the ideas of his audience, no matter how intelligent, no matter how indulgent that audience may be? It behoves us, therefore, who would succeed in gaining this influence, to guide ourselves by certain rules which can never be forgotten with safety, nor neglected with impunity. *Firstly*. We must thoroughly know what we want to speak about; we must become masters of our subject before-hand, and make it our own by study—by meditation and by concentration of thought, and by a careful perusal of those authorities which bear upon it: without such preparation our eloquence becomes just so much plain water, bearing along nought but empty words, and producing only disgust and nausea in the hearers—in fact we become mere word-spinners. Read the lives of the ancient orators, and you will learn that Demosthenes devoted years of solitary preparation to the composi-

* M. Bautain, Professor of Oratory at the Sorbonne.

tion of his orations, and that Cicero strengthened his powers by intense study. Glance over the biographies of the moderns and they will tell the same tale. To cite but two examples, it is well known that Sheridan passed days and weeks in preparing himself for his grand effort at the motion for the impeachment of Warren Hastings, and also for subsequent ones; and that Lord Brougham never made (as a young man) a speech which he had not previously written out in full. If then such men never trusted to the sudden inspiration of the moment; what are we that we should dare to do so? Forget not that a great speaker and thinker hath said, "Mere fine talkers, who boast of being able to speak on a minute's notice, ever get confused, and if they have the audacity not to break down, they continue to twaddle without understanding their own words, and drench their audience with inexhaustible volubility.*"

Secondly. We must endeavour to express ourselves with method, clearness and gracefulness; to attain this end, we should never begin a speech without having previously sketched our plan, first in our note-books, and then in our memory; no good general ever engaged in battle without having first prepared his plan of attack; no wise admiral ever ventured his vessel into seas unknown to him without frequent reference to the chart and the log. A discourse without a plan or a parent idea, is like a stream without a spring; a plant without a root; a body without a soul; and becomes full of empty phrases and effervescing nothings. Remember how Montesquieu hath said, "It is not enough to exhibit many things to the understanding, you must exhibit them in order," and also that a greater than he hath written "*Qui bene cepit facti dimidium habet.*"†

Thirdly. We must explore those works that bear upon our subject, and always do so *pencil in hand*, in order to mark the salient ideas in our progress, and, as it were, to extract the honey from those fair flowers which have been planted by the accumulated intellect of our progenitors.

* M. Bautain.

† He who hath begun a thing well, hath half completed it.

Some may object to this use of other men's ideas ; but when they learn that Molière imitated Plautus and Terence ; that La Fontaine borrowed largely from Æsop and Phædrus, perhaps they will be silent. In reading, too, let our motto be "*non multa sed multum*," remembering that we injure the mind, when we over-crowd it, as much as we injure the body when we over-feed it ; and that every thing which is destined to be durable, is of slow growth. Geology has demonstrated to us that this world of our's was not made in six days, but six "periods ;" history has proved that neither Egypt, Athens, nor Rome, were "built in a day." She has also shewn that it required a thousand years to form our glorious British Constitution (and long may it flourish). Experience teaches us, that it requires a hundred years to form the oak, half a century to form a good lawyer, a quarter of a century to make a general, and three generations to make a gentleman.

Do not suppose, my friends, that the rules which I have ventured to propose to your consideration can be observed without a certain amount of labour ; for "is not difficulty the very condition of success ?" and has it not been written, that "*Pater ipse colendi haud facilem esse viam voluit ?*" and what is genius but patience ? Believe me, however, if by the exercise of such patience and perseverance we can add to our stock of knowledge, and become adepts in the art of imparting that knowledge, we shall have been well repaid for this our conquest over difficulty, and amply rewarded for this our victory over indolence.

Gentlemen, I trust I may not be deemed tedious if, before I bring this somewhat lengthy address to a close, I should lay before you a short sketch of the life of that brilliant but unfortunate Irishman after whom our Society is named. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the second son of Mr. Thomas Sheridan, school-master, and afterwards manager of the Theatre Royal, Dublin, was born in that city, in the year 1751, and, like many of our great men, seems to have derived from his mother all his brilliancy of intellect, and, like some, to have given no evidence of that brilliancy during the days

of his boyhood. In 1772, aged twenty-one, he eloped with and married the beautiful and sweetly-singing Miss Linley, aged eighteen, on whose account he quarrelled with his father, who was averse to the marriage; and also fought two duels with one of her former admirers. In 1775, at the age of twenty-four, being pressed by circumstances, he entered the arena of literature, and wrote "The Rivals," which will afford delight to every admirer of real comedy as long as the English language shall endure. At the end of the same year, he produced "The Duenna," which Byron affirmed to be the best opera of the age. In 1776 he was proposed by Dr. Johnson and admitted into the Literary Club, and thus became one of that "coterie" which the quaint page of "Boswell's Life of Johnson" has rendered so famous. In 1777, at the age of twenty-six, he composed what Byron called the best comedy in the English language, namely, "The School for Scandal;" and in 1779, what the same great poet and satirist considered the very best farce then extant, namely, "The Critic." In this year, also, he became acquainted with Burke, Fox, and Windham; and the next, entered parliament as member for Stafford, and soon after made his first speech, every word of which, mark you, he first wrote out; "and," says his biographer, "like most of our great orators, he wrote out his speeches, and, *to the last*, spoke from notes." On shewing this maiden effort to a friend, whom he asked, "Was it considered successful?" and on this friend replying in the negative, Sheridan said, "The power is in me, and by God it shall come out." It was in the year 1786, in his thirty-fifth year, that, for five consecutive hours, before an astounded House of Commons, he thundered forth his grand oration against Warren Hastings, "whose impeachment," writes Moore, "afforded one of those precious opportunities, of which, if fortune but rarely offers them to genius, it is genius alone that can triumphantly avail itself." Of this speech Burke said, "It was the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument, and wit united, of which there was any record or tradition;" and Fox,

“That of all that he had ever heard, all that he had ever read, when compared with it, dwindled into nothing, and vanished like vapour before the sun;” and William Pitt, “That it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient or modern times, and possessed every thing that genius or art could furnish to agitate and control the human mind.” Mr. Logan (who was present at the delivery of it, and had determined before-hand to oppose the impeachment) thus described its effects upon him: “The first hour,” (said he,) “I called it mere declamation; the second, I said, this is wondrous eloquence; the third hour, Hastings is unjustifiable; the fourth, Hastings is an atrocious criminal; the fifth, Hastings is the greatest monster of iniquity ever heard of in the records of crime.” In fact, as Pitt said, “All parties were brought under the wand of the enchanter,” and, gentlemen, that enchanter was Brinsley Sheridan.

In 1788 he delivered his great speech at the trial of Warren Hastings, in Westminster Hall; which lasted four days, and is mentioned by Gibbon as “that display of genius which blazed for four successive days;” and on which occasion he exhibited a curious trait in his disposition, viz., that of wishing to appear to be an orator without preparation; for referring in his speech to certain minutes which the Chancellor desired to be produced, he sent Taylor, his clerk, for his bag, which he pretended to have mislaid, “in which,” said he, “these minutes were,” and meanwhile went on speaking. Fox, getting uneasy at the non-appearance of the bag, asked Taylor for an explanation, who whispered—“Lord bless you, the man neither has nor had any bag!” Yet with all this desire to affect inspiration, (so to speak,) it is well known that Sheridan passed many days and weeks in laborious preparation for this oration; in fact, he “worked,” (as he wrote in a private letter which has since come to light,) “until he had motes before his eyes.”

In 1792 Sheridan lost his wife by consumption, and from this date the star of his prosperity, which burst forth in such splendour, and was destined to set in such gloom, began

to wane. We find him now becoming involved in the meshes of those pecuniary embarrassments, which, by degrees, gathered like serpents round him, and finally crushed him; and also becoming addicted to that degrading intemperance which afterwards gained so complete a mastery over his energies.

It was about this time, not being what is vulgarly termed "flush of cash," that driving with an argumentative friend, (Mr. Richardson,) he engaged him in a dispute, for the express purpose of getting up a sham quarrel; and when the dispute waxed warm, he pulled the driver's string, and got out of the coach, saying to his companion, "that he could not submit to his language," *but leaving him to pay the fare.* It was about this time, too, that at the burning of Drury lane Theatre, (in which consisted his whole wealth,) when, to the surprise of a friend, he sat calmly in the Piazza Coffee House, discussing a bottle of sherry, whilst he gazed at the conflagration, he observed, in reply to the expression of that surprise, "Why should not a man enjoy his glass of wine at his own fireside?"

In 1795 he married again; and we find him in 1798 engaged in adapting to the English stage the beautiful German play of "The Stranger," and the next he produced Kotzebue's drama of "Pizarro," or "The Spaniards in Peru," to which he added much original matter. In 1801 he opposed, with all the force of his eloquence, the "Act of Union with Ireland," which Pitt purchased from that unhappy country at the price of her independence. In 1804 he became member for Westminster, thus throwing over-board his old friends at Stafford, who subsequently, in the hours of his adversity, acted by him in like manner.

In 1812 he delivered his last speech in Parliament, which was one in favour of "Catholic Emancipation," and which ended with these remarkable words: "If they were the last words I should ever utter in this House, I should say, Be just to Ireland, as you value your honour; be just to Ireland, as you value your own peace," proving (in common with many Irishmen) that he forgot not the beau-

teous land of his nativity, and that "*Cælum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt.*" His failure to be re-elected for Stafford, in 1812, completed his ruin, and from thence we find him, like some noble ship which has foundered on a lee shore, drifting, a hopeless wreck, on toward destruction. From this date the scene becomes gloomy and sad beyond description. Whilst pressing creditors and noisy duns beset his path like so many wasps and hornets, his genius became clouded, and his brain became fevered by his frequent *accès* of intemperance. In the year 1813 all his property (including a beautiful portrait of the wife of his youth, by Sir Joshua Reynolds) was brought to the hammer; and in 1815 we find his person arrested and confined for three days in a low sponging-house, from which when he was released and restored to his wife, he burst into violent weeping at the "indignity thus offered to him." A little later we find him writing, from that bed of sickness from which he was destined never to rise, a sad letter to Canning, asking the loan of £100; and there is extant another letter which, in May 1816, he wrote to the poet Rogers, (his house at the time being full of sheriffs' officers—who were fain to carry him off, dying as he was, rolled up in his blankets—to a sponging-house,) couched in these heart-rending terms, "I find £150 would remove all difficulty. I am absolutely undone and broken hearted. They (the bailiffs) are going to put the carpets out of the window and break into Mrs. Sheridan's room to take me. For God's sake let me see you." Subsequently, the officers of the law did actually arrest him in bed, and, but for the interposition of his physician, Dr. Bains, would have carried him off. At length death, "which knocketh alike at the hovel of the poor, and at the palaces of kings," released this mighty spirit from the trammels of the flesh, and released, it fled upward to stand before the throne of God, and to swell the ranks of those accusers who, like him, had been the miserable victims of the base and odious ingratitude of that worst of men, George IV., whose career was one big blot on the list of our kings, and whose

name is a deep disgrace, graven in loathsome characters, on the page of English history. Whilst, my friends, we contemplate with pride and admiration the genius, the eloquence, the wit of Sheridan, let us endeavour to avoid his errors—let us put not our trust in princes, or in any child of man—let us not confide in the aid of high birth or of wealthy relatives ; in influential friends, or in the fickle people, for all these will caress us in the day of our prosperity, and as they have ever done, will desert us in the night of our adversity—let us rather learn to depend only on ourselves and on our own labour. Let us beware lest by intemperance we cloud the intellect that God has given us, and thus cast down reason from her throne, and erase from our fronts the very stamp of immortality. Surely a great moral lesson is to be learned by such meditation as that in which we have been engaged, for in the words of the sweet Poet of the New World :

“ Lives of great men all remind us,
 We can make our lives sublime :
 And departing, leave behind us
 Footprints on the sands of time.

Footprints which, perhaps another,
 Wandering o'er life's solemn main—
 Some forelorn and shipwrecked brother
 Seeing, may take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing ;
 With a heart for any fate.
 Still achieving, still pursuing ;
 Learn to labour and to wait.”

I beg, gentlemen, again to thank you most sincerely for the kind indulgence which you have accorded to my dullness, and for the kind attention with which you have listened to my poor attempt to inaugurate, by this address, the Sheridan Club and Literary Society.

