

AN ORATION

PRONOUNCED UPON THE OCCASION OF LAYING

THE

CORNER STONE

OF THE

NASHVILLE HIGH SCHOOL,

ON THE 19TH OF MAY, 1853.

BY W. K. BOWLING, M. D.

NASHVILLE, TENN:

J. T. S. FALL, PR—BEN FRANKLIN BOOK AND JOB OFFICE—COLLEGET.

1853.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

NASHVILLE, MAY 21ST, 1853.

DR. W. K. BOWLING—DEAR SIR:—

We, the members of the Building Committee of the "Nashville Grammar and High School," return our warmest thanks so you for the very able and eloquent Address, delivered by you on the occasion of laying the Corner Stone of the above Building, on the 17th inst., and knowing that the community desire to possess the Address, we request a copy of it for publication.

With great respect,
ALFRED HUME, *Cha'man*,
WM. STOCKELL,
WM. A. GLENN,
Building Committee.

NASHVILLE, MAY 21ST, 1853.

MESSRS. ALFRED HUME, WM. A. GLENN, and WM. STOCKELL,

GENTLEMEN:—I have this moment received your polite note of this morning. Your request of a copy of the Address I had the honor to deliver upon the occasion referred to I cheerfully comply with. I pray, Gentlemen, that others may overlook its faults and imperfections with that spirit of kindness which has marked your judgment.

Be pleased to receive my profound acknowledgements for the flattering terms in which you have conveyed your request, and believe me with high esteem and respect,

Your Ob't Serv't,
W. K. BOWLING.

AN ORATION.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

The history of prominent events upon which cities, states and empires were most dependent for whatever greatness they acquired is not without interest, especially to a people who esteem progress one of the chief ends of being. The most celebrated of ancient cities sought power in arms and learning, while commerce and manufacture are the elements upon which modern cities rely for greatness. Yet neither in the one nor the other could population be disregarded, in which at last is resident the only true element of greatness in any people. The term superiority as applied to nations or cities is understood numerically. Russia is greater than Spain, because Russia can boast more Russians than Spain can Spaniards. Not that one Russian is greater than one Spaniard, but a hundred Russians are greater than five Spaniards. So also of cities, as compared of different countries, or the same country. Cincinnati is greater than Louisville, and the latter is greater than Nashville—and alone for the reason we have assigned. Nashville is as old as either of them, yet she has only one-fourth of the population of Louisville and but one-eighth of that of Cincinnati. These differences could not have resulted from accident, and common sense and common philosophy must be invoked for a revelation of such causes as can satisfactorily explain them.

Our Northern friends account for all of their prosperity upon the ground that a certain institution, said to be peculiar, (though we confess we cannot so readily understand how that is peculiar which ex-

CORRESPONDENCE

Washington, May 21st, 1862.

Dr. W. L. Bowler - Dear Sir -

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 19th inst. in relation to the matter of the subscription for the purchase of the land on the north side of the city of Washington, and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration. I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
Wm. A. Rorer

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1214 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C.

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ists in some form every where,) does not exist there, while with equal readiness they account for all of our short-comings upon the ground that it *does* exist here. Well, admitting the force of this argument, it will at least fail in explaining why it is that the population of Louisville is quadruple that of Nashville. There can be no doubt that the chief, if not the only reason why Cincinnati is numerically greater than Louisville, is to be found in the fact that Cincinnati manufactured earlier than Louisville, and the reason why Louisville is greater than Nashville, exists in the fact that the former earlier invested her capital in manufacture. Manufacture invites population, and makes commerce which insures wealth, and what else is necessary for the greatness of any city? A city not great, but ardently desiring to be so, has but few things to consider, but they must be well considered. She must know that greatness will never be thrust upon her while she sleeps. As the Athenian Orator expressed his conception of the essence of eloquence by a third repetition of the same word, so I also would if I had but three words to express the prerequisites of city or state greatness repeat but the single word, PEOPLE. It is not the McDonoughs, the Girards, the O'Fallens, the Astors, the Lawrences, or even the Rothschilds who make cities, but the thousands. If then people at last are absolutely necessary to a great city, the first duty of a city ambitious of greatness is to offer rational incentives to the popular influx. These incentives are shelter, fuel, food and employment, all at reasonable prices. These and one other, greater than all will secure the object. This last is education for their children without money and without price.

Capital must be vested in shelter and manufac-

ture before any sane man will look for population. The rich planter in the neighborhood will scarcely abandon his farm to swell the population of any city. No city can hope from that source. To the man of cunning hand and determined will, whose muscles register the invoice of his earthly goods must cities look for prosperous greatness.

If we know any thing of the hopes and aspirations of this good city, she has recently entered the lists with her Southern sisters with a determination to become all which their wildest ambition can covet, and the chapter of her last two years' history may be quoted as an earnest of what she is capable.

A little more than a month ago there was deposited in the corner-stone of the new University buildings, a plate upon which was inscribed, among other chronicles of events pertaining to the history of this city the facts that the State Capitol was begun in 1845; that Railroads commenced here in 1848; Telegraph connections the same year; city lighted with Gas in 1850; and city Free Schools established in 1852. These are all great events in the history of any city, but here, as in Scripture, the last shall be first, for these without THIS crowning glory, in the estimation of the philanthropist and the philosopher were scarcely worth chronicling. What though we could point the attention of the stranger to that lofty structure on yonder's hill for whose base an entire acre will not suffice, and whose triumphant dome will proudly look down on the clouds, if it be but destined for the lordly representatives of serfs! And the gas light that rolls back the dark curtain of night, and makes the shops and thoroughfares at midnight mock the jocund day, what indeed was it in the absence of mental light? Unlike the light of the god of day, it lights not up the chambers of all.

It can alone afford to cheer the vision of those *at home*, who can strike its altars with the golden wand. From home 'tis true it will pencil the shadow of the wayfarer on the pavement gratis, for which poor boon let him be grateful.

The proud University itself the philanthropist will hold to be inferior to the object which this day calls us together. That will dispense light more gorgeous than any the chemist's magic skill can create, but its shrine can only be reached with a golden key. It is a fountain shut up and a book sealed to all who have not that talisman. The talented and gifted child of poverty may wander in sadness by its portals, and sigh in vain for a straggling ray of that light that makes all radiant within. He may watch the priests and the neophytes at their ingoings and outcomings, but the feast of reason and flow of soul are luxuries which he must only taste in dreams. The philanthropist turns with a shudder from the contemplation of so unnatural and unrepublican a spectacle to the more genial object of this day's ceremony. What is its object? Why have we assembled? What means this pageant?

Fellow Citizens: It is true we are but doing a great work which our fathers left undone. They having already achieved enough to perpetuate their memories, we owe them an additional debt of gratitude that they bequeathed to us this labor of love by which our memories in turn may be embalmed in the hearts of our descendants. It is a great work, so great indeed that we may fittingly upon this occasion devote some little time in the attempt to elucidate its object. The object of the undertaking is to secure a thorough education to high and low, rich and poor, without money and without price. It is an attempt, successful wherever tried, to elevate lit-

erary and scientific acquisition to the same level with religious instruction. Under the benign influence of our republican system in the very beginning *free* religious instruction was insured by the government failing to recognize any religion as national, and consequently to levy a tax for the support of any establishment. Religion unfettered by government, and left to her own pure resources attained its full stature of respect and usefulness, and the nation without a religion became the most religious nation upon the globe. It is to be regretted that the "voluntary system," as it has been called by which the church is sustained, could not likewise be made available in the support of the common school system by which all parties would be so greatly benefited. But this is impracticable in the present moral state of the world. Men will give for the support and maintenance of religion from moral suasion alone what experience proves the strong arm of law must coerce, even for the support of a government of their choice. A tax then is levied for the support of a government which recognizes every male individual 21 years of age as a voter, and therefore an element of sovereignty. The *right* to tax him to educate his children is derived from the consideration of the privilege of sovereignty which the government secures to his children. A privilege which cannot be exercised with safety to the rights of others without the aid of education. Education and popular sovereignty become identified in so far that the latter cannot be perpetuated when unassociated with the former. Popular education has therefore been found to be a favorite theme with the sages of our republican Institutions. They were not ignorant of the fact, and exhibited it to their countrymen in every phase of which it

was susceptible, and from every point of view that promised the reflection of a new ray of light, that the hope of perpetuating a republican government was based exclusively upon the virtue and intelligence of the masses. Whenever these become ignorant and corrupt the ambitious demagogue will seize upon the knowledge of the fact to use them as a lever of self elevation, that he may fatten upon the corruption by which he is surrounded, and finally lord it, like the nephew of a Napoleon over a people who had proved themselves by his elevation unfitted for the blessings of civil and religious liberty.

The object however of the institution whose birth here we have assembled to commemorate, is not circumscribed by the idea in which it had its origin. That idea unquestionably was to provide for the common education of those whose circumstances barred its attainment in any other way. The idea was *sylogized*, if I may use the illustration; As rational liberty and public virtue were based on public intelligence it followed that if the latter be wanting the former will cease to exist.

I say that there is no doubt but this train of reasoning suggested to our Republican forefathers the idea of common school education. There was, however an unpopular feature which no ingenuity could suppress, and which, however often thrust aside, would continue to re-appear as a prominent element of any plan which any mind could suggest. It was this, *that the very system seemed to grow out of a classification of the popular masses.* This very classification the wise framers of our government had avoided with a care which excited the admiration of the judicious everywhere, and it was that constitutional feature which gave to the national compact a force and vitality which disarmed and ostracised contem-

porary opposition and has subsequently continued to elevate it high beyond the reach of fanatics and maniacs wherever and for whatever purpose they arose to assail it. There was then to the popular mind a seeming antagonism between a constitutional freedom which tolerated no classes in the social fabric, and an educational system which seemed alone to recognize for its foundation a classification abhorrent to republican feeling. In this view of the subject we affirm, while we have never seen it any where so stated, is to be sought a key to the mystery of the slow progress of common school education; a system founded in consummate wisdom and whose object was unmixed benevolence. In the beginning the *name* was unfortunate, for while it is true that a "rose would smell as sweet by any other name," yet it is equally true that a bad name is fatal even to a good dog. "Free America," was a popular phrase, because it comprehended all the freemen of a great country, with its Washingtons, its Henrys, its Jeffersons, Hamiltons and Adamses, among the fathers, while their descendants had their Clays and Websters and Jacksons and Calhouns. But "free schools," in the popular mind, were not so comprehensive. They seemed to be destined for a *class*, like Hospitals, Asylums, and Almshouses, and their enemies were not slow in encouraging this idea by designating such institutions as "*pauper* schools," and those who attended them as *beneficiaries*. In a popular government whatever is unpopular the purely politic, embracing four-fifths of an entire population, always abandon to its fate, and for no other reason than because it is unpopular. In addition to this great first cause of opposition to the common school system, which I have pointed out, others arose in co-operation which greatly embarrassed and retarded its pro-

gress. Some religious sects preferred teaching their own people at their own expense to having them taught in schools where it was possible teachers of different religious sentiments might gain admission. They therefore objected, and, too, with some show of reason to the payment of a tax from which they had determined to derive no benefit. In some portions of the country this feeling and objection have done much to disturb the harmony of the system. In some counties of Kentucky this feeling has been disastrous to the progress of common schools.—Wherever the system is unpopular it is difficult to secure the agency of proper men to represent it, and the result is that incompetent teachers—often wandering vagabonds—are appointed. These ignoramuses serve still further to degrade and *unpopularize* the institution, and it, in consequence, becomes a theme for the jeers and gibes of the neighborhood wits. A thousand tricks are played upon the unfortunate Ichabod, who is finally chased out of the country.

In many States where the system has had time to vindicate itself by extensive usefulness it has secured a hold upon the popular mind not inferior to that of popular government itself, of which it is justly regarded as the chief corner-stone. But everywhere in its infancy it has had to struggle to overcome objections whose parallels have arisen in opposition to the progress of whatever was wisely intended for man's good from the time our common ancestor turned his back upon Eden to that when his west-wandering descendant laved his gold-soiled body together with the setting sun in the Pacific Ocean.

In process of time the rather objectionable term of "free schools" was superceded by that of "common

schools," which must certainly be regarded as a change without improvement. The term "common," besides its biblical use as interchangeable with "unclean," gave to the popular mind the idea that the institution contemplated but an A B C course for common folks. Nothing could be more unjust to its liberal and far-seeing founders, but its opposers to my knowledge have availed themselves of the term to manufacture odium with which to cripple and obstruct its progress. The term "common" was suggested as standing in opposition to "private" or *exclusive* instruction, and it would seem was very well calculated for the attainment of that object, but its friends have been disappointed in the result. More recently the term "public schools," has obtained which is certainly an improvement, but it is somewhat remarkable that a preference had not been given to the phrase "Popular Schools," in contradistinction to private or *unpopular* schools.

We have thought proper thus in a hurried and desultory manner to refer to the system at large and to touch upon such points as our own experience has shown to militate against its progress, for upon another theatre and under circumstances of far greater responsibility than now surround me, I have dared to defy the opposition from every quarter, in feeble efforts to secure to a sister State the innumerable blessings which flow from a liberal and well regulated system of Public Schools. I would rejoice that the system in our day should attain that excellence which I feel destiny has in store for it, when the great high school shall itself cease to be its crowning glory, and when the proud and far-famed aristocratic old Universities shall have new life and youthful energy infused into their tottering limbs by the example of their democratic allies, and rather

than be cast aside by the builders, aspire to become the capstone, and thus give a gorgeous finish and oneness to the great temple of public instruction. *This is their destiny!* With reference to our own city, which we all delight to love with an abandonment which her loveliness can alone inspire, and which welling up in pure and sparkling freshness from the hearts great depths must have utterance—is there one who would not praise as her chief ornament, could she boast it, a system of public instruction which begun in the quiet A B C ward school-house, received force and fire in the great high school, to be subdued and widened and deepened, yea finished in *truth* and not on *parchment* in the proud and time-honored old University, which now on yonder's classic hill sleeps in the hands of the builders to awake with the birds and blossoms of returning spring to newness of life and perchance an eternity of glory? Who would not that money and mind culture should cease to be associate ideas. Or not rejoice that the latter could go on developing—widening and expanding the heart—crowding out its vices and converting it into a great receptacle of high and exalted impulses long after the former was exhausted! When we reflect, as all must do who reflect at all, that the means squandered in fashionable vices, and wasted in tolerated dissipation, even by those of humble fortune, to say nothing of the chartered libertinism which absolute wealth confers, the expenses of which would support the army and navy—when we reflect that but a fraction of this worse than wasted wealth would suffice to keep the entire system of public instruction, from University to district school, in vigorous operation, thus securing the virtue, intelligence and happiness of an entire nation and quadrupling “the power that slumbers in a free-

man's arm," we may well be amazed that the aggregate morality of the whole country had not long since been concentrated in a great effort to achieve so glorious a consummation.

It has been well said that any system of Public Schools in the United States which should meet with general favor would naturally grow out of her republican institutions and consequently receive shape or form from them, and it seems clear that the greatest difficulties which have opposed themselves to the progress of the system have had their origin in a supposed or real want of adaptation to the kindred institutions upon which it was to be engrafted. The institutions of a pure republic originate in, and are dependent upon the WILL of the whole people, or, with reference to any one institution, a long existing majority of the whole, which represents it. The Common School system then, like other institutions of the republic, is solely dependent for existence upon the GOOD WILL of the people. Independent of that, it would not require the sagacity of a Jefferson to predict that it must go down, while with that to uphold its arms, legions of enemies could not overthrow it.

The friends, then, of the institution will continue to remodel it as experience from time to time suggests, so as to make it harmonize with our most popular republican institutions, that its life-breath, the good will of the public, shall be abundantly secured, and all of its functions kept in the most vigorous health. And this indeed has been the history of its progress in various States of this Union, until, in many of them, it has attained perhaps as great a degree of perfection as is compatible with institutions necessarily and essentially human.

THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, where most

perfect, like the American government, consists of a number of independent parts, and yet so associated as to constitute in union a homogeneous whole, as perfect in the independent organizations, and the whole organism, as are the institutions and government which fashioned it, or as perfect as the great public mind, made up of individual minds, that WILLED them all. The very reverse of this is true with regard to the money, private, or exclusive educational system of the United States. This has never sought harmony with the genius of our institutions, but in contravention of it has persisted in the maintenance of the lordly aristocracy which characterized it ages before the birth of our government. Fifty years hence its existence for so long a period in a government in which all things else had been forced to exhibit the republican impress, will be esteemed the most curious of all curious anomalies. A few words will not be out of place in stating the peculiarities of the American educational system, and comparing it with the exclusive system which descended to us from our British ancestors.

In the States where it has attained its greatest perfection it is made to consist of four independent organizations. 1. Primary schools; 2. Intermediate schools; 3. Grammar schools; 4. High schools. For the present the system is rounded off by the High School, but will unquestionably, in time, go a step farther and take in the Universities, until which, it will be imperfect. Of course all these are supported at the expense of the public and are open to all. The curriculum of studies in the last, or High School, embraces "Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, French and Spanish Languages, together with the Latin and Greek languages, and the branches of learning necessarily connected

with them." These various schools are independent of each other, and a student can begin in the High School, provided he is sufficiently advanced, who had never passed through any of inferior grade.

It only requires the bare statement of what is taught in the High School to show that it makes its friends and patrons independent of expensive seats of learning, for no one conversant with colleges and universities need to be told that the young man who finishes his education in the High School, where money can secure no favors, and where the threats of lordlings to blow up the establishment if *their* sons did not receive the highest honors would be ridiculed and despised—no one need be told that the *eleve* of the High School would be immeasurably superior in all the elements of scholarship to the diplomaed alumnus of the University. Such is the education which it now secures in other States, and which its friends are determined shall be secured here in the very beginning of its career. Of the old system, which our "forbears brought in ships frae yont the" Atlantic, we will speak in the language of one who has given to the subject long and patient thought. Says Mr. Barney of Cincinnati: "Our colleges and other higher seminaries of learning, strange as it may seem, were established, endowed and conducted not with any particular view of their adaptation to the republican system of which they were to form a part, but rigidly after the models of Oxford University and other European Institutions, which leaning upon the royal purse and basking in aristocratic smiles were no more fit to serve the interest of a republican nation than a belief in the divine right of kings was to produce republicans. The establishment of our highest grades of schools

on a basis peculiar to themselves, with but little relation to the wants of the masses, led to the adoption of that wretched system which is seen in private schools, academies, charity schools, denominational schools, and schools of all other kinds taken collectively. There is but little compactness or economy, or beauty, or efficiency about it. It is an image with a head of brass, thighs of iron, and feet of mud." Who that will observe this picture, though perhaps tinted with bitterness, will fail to observe that it is but too true to nature. There must surely be something radically wrong in our Universities and Colleges—something uncongenial to the spirit of our liberal institutions, or whence the cause of early decay in many?—decay ere yet even early manhood had firmly knit their joints, and while their founders, who had fondly dreamed of immortality at the laying of the corner stone, had lived to read, even without the aid of glasses, Ichabod! Ichabod!! written upon their portals. Turn your eyes whichever way you may on the map of the United States and the statistics of education show that the old system is passing rapidly away and that individual effort to supply the deficiency by the image with the head of brass and feet of mud is vexatious and unsatisfactory. Denominational schools so far from being imbued with the spirit which infuses life and animation into our free institutions, reverses its very essence, and must be regarded as but a temporary and miserable make-shift. As certain as our government lasts so certain will the American educational system obtain everywhere, and schools, academies, colleges, and universities, outside of that system, while they are gradually decaying around us and in our midst, will be pointed out to the curious traveller as departing evidences of our English line-

age. Henceforth not a dollar will be wrung from the treasury of any State of the Union for the endowment of Colleges and Universities save upon the condition that their blessings shall fall like the refreshing dews of Heaven alike upon all, the high and the low, the rich and the poor,—if any such social classification can be made to appear in a republic—and without money and without price. The old absurdity of a government taking the means of a whole population to endow Universities for the education alone of the moneyed few, is an obsolete idea. Such endowments henceforth will be faithfully restricted to the American system, that all may be benefitted where all contributed.

Michigan, one of the youngest and loveliest of the sisterhood of Republics—the Northern blonde with the golden hair and soft blue eye—the spirit-bride of Republican Education, has taken the initiative. The doors of her well endowed University are unlocked and the keys lost, while the latch-string, dangling invitingly on the out side, proclaims to all that heareth come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.

The old system is only useful where the new has not taken root, and the people of our city and State are most fortunate in having a University at the capitol, largely endowed, and therefore competent to supply their every educational want, while numerous flourishing institutions in almost every county in the State will secure the people against the possible evil of the overthrow of one system before the other is firmly rooted in her soil. It has been said of the South that her “peculiar institution” would exclude her from the benefits of the American system—that there was a sort of incompatibility between that in-

stitution and this system—and that they could not flourish upon the same soil. This is not true. The system will flourish wherever and whenever it is understood. In the South where the people have been made acquainted with it, and not disgusted with childish imitations, it has succeeded as well as it has in the North, and any one who has put himself to the trouble to comprehend it may predict with as much certainty as that the morrow's sun will rise, that this effort will succeed as well in Nashville as a similar one has in Boston. To doubt it is to doubt the common sense of the voters of the city. The Report of Mr. Barney, of Cincinnati, on the "American System of graded free schools," shows that in New-Orleans, after a total failure of the old system, the new has worked to admiration, even after a bad start, which made it in the beginning unpopular.—From the same source we learn that it has marched through Missouri with the tread of a mammoth, crushing the remnants of the old system at every step.

No State had been more liberal than Missouri in the expenditure of money to sustain the old regime. Thousands of dollars were annually voted from the public treasury to keep breath in the body of institutions founded by State munificence. Still consumption preyed upon their vitals and they fell before the giant march of progress. In Kentucky the young giant is growing up and waxing strong, while the attenuated limbs of the old system betray unmistakable evidences of numbered days. In Tennessee many years ago we made a bad start. The object contemplated, must have been contemptible. We know not what it was, but we are led to infer its character by the parsimony of the legislature which gave it existence. Still to my own knowledge

it has done much good, and when the people of the whole State shall learn, as they will, that the object of "free schools" is to supersede Academies and Colleges and to thoroughly educate every child in the State at a less cost than that for which 6 per cent. of the whole is only half educated, they will see that it shall be so energized as to ensure all the good of which it is capable. They will learn that it is but an incidental part of the system to educate those who are unable to pay for it. They will learn that it aims at nothing less than to confer a more finished and thorough education upon every one than any other plan is capable of conferring. Money is omitted in the plan because it is an element that works badly, and not because the plan presupposes its friends to have no money. If a man had a million and desired his son to be thoroughly educated, he would send him to a High School because there he would be certain to attain his object, for there the son could not plead his father's money as an excuse for his indolence. The High School is above his father's wealth, and independent of it. We knew a rich man's son to return from a great University where he had spent 4 years, as by law provided, and upon his father requesting him to read his Latin diploma to some friends whom he had invited on the occasion to be present to rejoice with him, the young man stumbled awfully at the first word, when he gave it up and acknowledged he could not read it.

It is said, and we know the saying to be true, that tall oaks from little acorns grow, and we learn from Mythology, which we do not know to be true, that individuals have sprung into the world full armed and ready for the discharge of their mission. The latter is the proper plan for the commencement of free schools.

Eugene of Savoy has recorded that those generals who have most astounded the world by their military achievements, were raised suddenly to command upon great theatres, and had not had their genius cramped and shrunken by the petty calculations and maneuvers of inferior officers. This truth was intended to be illustrated by the Arabian tale of the giant spirit, which having contracted itself to the smallest dimensions to enter the enchanted vessel found itself ever after incapable of expanding to its former gigantic proportions. A great writer insists that the great principles of literary criticism are far better understood by those who have never had their minds contracted to syllables, particles, nouns and pronouns, and few of us who remember the A B C pedagogue when we were children, have failed to observe him unchanged in after life—still plodding over some intricate “sum” a co-laborer had sent him from a distant neighborhood, to “cypher out,” or dilating upon the beauties of the nominative case independent, while his benevolent and satisfied countenance reflected with palmer plainness his internal conviction that his vast talents were buried, and that he ought to be President, or at least minister to “Cohongoronto.” It was but an attempt to elaborate the same idea when John Randolph in a speech in Congress thanked God that the great intellect of Andrew Jackson had never been contracted to the Procrustean beds of colleges, and thus levelled to that of the common herd, but escaping which it had had a fair chance to fill the limits fixed by Him who fashioned it.

The good will of the people must be secured by striking results. If we begin upon a little sneaking plan, we may be assured of the contempt of a lofty and chivalrous people, and the forfeiture of their

good will is to forfeit the enterprise. Many pretended, perhaps real, but certainly injudicious friends of the common school system of this city were anxious that our city authorities should begin the system at A B C, and work gradually through a-b ab, to baker, taking the acorn and the oak as a model. Nothing could have insured the ruin of the enterprise with more unerring certainty. The whole arrangement would have become a fruitful theme for ridicule; contempt would have followed, and disgrace brought up the rear. I should have trembled for the action of the board had I not seen the judicious and able report of our fellow citizen, Mr. Hume, to the Mayor and Aldermen, upon this subject. I saw at a glance that he understood the whole matter, and felt assured that his unanswerable arguments would influence the board to do precisely what they have done. They have begun at the right point. I should have rejoiced if they could have gone to sea with the whole fleet, from No. 1 to No. 4 inclusive. But as that was not convenient, and the time had come for the voyage it was profound wisdom to embark in a vessel every way seaworthy, capable of breasting the storm and armed for any conflict that the enemy might have in store for her. Her very length of beam and depth of hold give earnest of power and capacity, and friend and foe while yet she rides untried at anchor will agree that she will do. And she *will* do. The rest will follow in due season and complete the fleet. The Board, by ordering this magnificent structure, which, when complete will be capable of comfortably seating for study eight hundred students, I repeat, have exhibited that wisdom which cannot fail to excite the admiration of every lover of the system, who will not fail to foresee a summary consumma-

tion of his hopes. A school with 800 pupils in training in Mathematics, Philosophy and the Greek and Latin Languages, presided over by the best teachers, may well afford to aspire to a rivalry with the proudest Universities of the land. The primary, intermediate and grammar schools will require less expenditure, and their thorough organization may be confidently looked for in a reasonable time. So that during the next year no one doubts now that the entire system will be in efficient operation.

From the demonstrations in the beginning here, will it be regarded as enthusiasm to anticipate a rapid completion of a system of Public Schools as perfect in all its parts as that which has made Boston the admiration of the educational world. There, it is said, "so complete and symmetrical in structure are they that the human being receives his first rudimental instruction, and is then led along and upwards by gradations, as simple and beautiful as its own growth until it steps forth an American citizen complete." In my mind no earthly theme excites such felicity of emotion as free and perfect education, save that of our Governmental institutions, based as they are upon the immutable principles of justice and right, and amid which public schools are now being everywhere recognized as a cementing element. We envy not the churlish, selfish happiness of him who places his influence in opposition to their benign career, or who would thwart, if he had but the power the glorious consummation for which end unmixed and enlarged philanthropy has called them into being. Like the good news promulgated by a holy evangely it is designed for every one and for all. For the shoeless and hatless boy who threads our thoroughfares with his time-worn nether garments suspended by a twine, and for whom a single

law suffices for his wealth and his armature, to the curled and ruffled lordling in embryo, who with his pocket full of rocks scowls upon his little fellow citizen from the opposite pavement.

It is unjust in a republic as it is unwise not to provide the means of thorough instruction for her children. It is unjust so far as it withholds from them that light without which liberty is but licentiousness working out iniquity. It is unwise because where all are sovereign public law is but the reflection of public morals, and where the one or the other is steeped in corruption the government is swamped in its own rottenness.

Enemies to popular education in its broadest sense have contended that so far from being a rational basis for republican institutions, that the purest republics the world ever knew were in perfect and harmonious operation amid popular masses not a single degree removed from the brutality of barbarism, and the great Samuel Johnson has asserted that such composed the assemblies which Demosthenese electrified with his unearthly eloquence. But a greater than Johnson has arisen to disprove this assertion, and to show that the Athenian youths, while they had but few books, enjoyed perhaps to a greater extent than any people before or since, opportunities for acquiring from public speakers or lecturers minute information in every department of human knowledge. "Let us," says Macaulay, "transport ourselves in thought to that glorious city. Let us imagine that we are entering the gates in the time of its power and glory. A crowd is assembled round a portico. All are gazing with delight at the entablature, for Phidias is putting of the frieze. We turn into another street; a rapsodist is reciting there; men women and children are thronging around him;

the tears are running down their cheeks; their eyes are fixed; their very breath is still; for he is telling how Priam fell at the feet of Achilles, and kissed those hands—the terrible the murderous—which had slain so many of his sons. We enter the public place; there is a ring of youths all leaning forward with sparkling eyes, and gestures of expectation. Socrates is pitted against the famous Atheist from Ionia and has just brought him to a contradiction in terms. But we are interrupted. The herald is crying—Room for the Prytanes. The General Assembly is to meet. The people are swarming in on every side. Proclamation is made—‘Who wishes to speak?’ There is a shout and a clapping of hands: Pericles is mounting the stand. Then for a play of Sophocles; and away to sup with Aspacia. I know of no modern University which has so excellent a system of education.”

Such was Athens in the days of her republican glory. I had almost said an intellectual paradise. Compare Athens then, with any modern city of the United States now unblest with the graded school system, and we will see how immeasurably superior were the advantages of her masses for mind culture. Start an ignorant boy here in our own city through our thoroughfares, and to wherever he could gain admission where he might learn a few had collected together—let him travel for a week, and if he does not graduate in the calaboose on Saturday night, he will be a fortunate youth.

The problem is yet unsolved whether or not it is a legitimate consequence of the Christian religion, or a fungous growth which fattens upon its excessive vitality, that man and woman being in this world but probationary sojourners it matters but little what they are in mind or body as the time will come

when both shall be most gloriously fashioned. In another age of the world, and among those we choose to designate as heathens, man in the perfection of his moral and physical excellence was an object of adoration. Knowing no higher order of beings—expecting no resurrection—hoping for no post mortem change of individual configuration, they made most of the moral, intellectual and physical capabilities of man as he was. Is it to be wondered at that his high and noble attributes, sedulously developed and cultivated through many successive generations, should have attained an excellence of perfection bewildering to the consumptive probationer of the 19th century? I love to linger upon the Dorian specimens of my race, whose every muscle, in the perfection of its graceful swell and beauty of outline was a history of a thousand years of Olympic training. Never shall we behold, save in the life-poetry of divine sculpture the glory of which degenerated humanity is susceptible. Sculpture cannot exaggerate, for to pure genius is denied the power of creation. It can only copy—only imitate. The Apollo Belvidere is but a copy of nature. It is a faithful copy of a heathen man. Hear what Grace Greenwood, a christian woman, says as she gazed upon the marble. “In all his triumphant beauty the Apollo stands forth as a pure type of immortality—every inch a god. There is an Olympian spring in his foot which seems to spurn the earth—a secure disdain of death in the very curve of his nostrils—a sun-born light on his brow, while the absolute perfection of grace, the supernal majesty of the figure, now as in the old time seem to lift it above the human and the perishing into the region of the divine and the eternal.”

Great men in this and adjoining commonwealths

have devoted their talents to hogs, sheep, horses and cattle. Horse Olympiads, or the race course, where speed and endurance take the prize have their admirers, and cattle shows are not without interest, while in the sheep line, Tennessee has taken the premium of the world. Amid all these praiseworthy efforts to elevate the dignity of inferior animals let the humblest of his species stand forth, while he has yet lung-air for utterance, and gout and rheumatism are in abeyance only, an advocate for man, and plead that his title, though long unenforced has not expired by limitation, to those lofty developments of all his attributes heretofore achieved and enjoyed. If he is to be beautified hereafter, let him show his appreciation of it by essaying to achieve all that is manly here. There is no use in becoming crippled and deformed in this world, by courting its diseases, that we may heighten the contrast when we take on the loveliness of the next.

I love flowers and I love those who cultivate them. They are costly luxuries, and the man of true taste yields them his highest appreciation. But I would that our fair countrywomen would remember that God also has his flower garden, and his dafodils and geraniums are the widows and orphans. The expense of a single flower garden of roses and their adjuncts, would set half a hundred of God's flowers to clapping their hands with joy.

City fathers, those whom you represent may well be proud of the lofty public spirit which you have this day manifested. It is worthy of you and of them. You have not only this day laid the corner stone here of the great High School of the American system of free education but you have emphatically laid the corner stone of the future prosperity of the city. This day's proceedings will go forth on the

journeying winds throughout our broad republic. With the climate of Italy and the soil of the Nile, you are the center of the railroad world—the *punctum saliens* from whence its great lines diverge to the Northern and Southern periphery of the continent. You needed but a single element of greatness to ensure triumph, and that is now supplied. Eyes in the mud cabins of Ireland, the deep, dark cellars of England, the morasses of Holland, and the sterile regions of our own North will peruse every word of every line of this day's proceedings, and busy hearts will find a new happiness in preparatory plans of emigration to the promised land.

