

RALPH REGISTER AND NORTH CAROLINA GAZETTE.

"Ours are the plans of fair delightful peace, unharp'd by party rage, to live like brothers."

VOL. XXXIX. MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1838. NO. 46.

JOSEPH CALLES & SON, EDITORS AND PROPRIETORS.

TERMS. Sub-cription, three dollars per annum—one dollar in advance.

EXTRACTS FROM Mr. SHEPARD'S ADDRESS, Before the two Literary Societies of the University of North Carolina, on Commencement Day.

Gentlemen of the Philanthropic and Dialectic Societies: Upon this occasion, in renewing my acquaintance with you, as members of the two Literary Societies of the University...

The scenes of a College life leave perhaps a deeper and more agreeable impression upon our minds, than anything in previous or future years.

Within the College walls, the first aspirations after fame of the elastic and vigorous spirit of youth, are breathed forth, and whether they are mocked or realized, we revisit the place of their birth with feelings which, although of a melancholy nature, yet abound in pleasant recollections.

We linger with delight amidst groves consecrated to genius and to science, where Not a leaf but trembling teams With youthful visions and romantic dreams.

We are reminded at each step of some almost forgotten tale of youthful rivalry, or perhaps the remembrance rushes upon us, of some young friend suddenly arrested in his career of hope or anticipation.

As Students, you are familiar with these workings of the fancy; detached by your occupations from the cares and pursuits of life, you can exist for a time in the regions of the imagination; you can look beyond the indulgence of the appetites, for those pure and ethereal pleasures which emanate entirely from the mind...

Coming, Gentlemen, as I so recently have, from those pursuits, which are unfortunately now conducted in such a manner, as merely to excite the more selfish feelings of the human heart, it was with some reluctance and misgiving, that I accepted your invitation to deliver an address within these walls, sacred to the investigation of truth, and the production of beauty, the ultimate objects of Science and Literature.

to the study of the dead languages, is thrown away, or could be more valuably employed in the acquirement of some art or mystery, which more immediately conduces to the comfort or well-being of society.

If this assertion were strictly true, there would be an end of the discussion. In what consists the perfection of our species, is a very debatable question; the roaming and untutored savage firmly believes, that so long as the face of nature is opened to his wanderings, so long as he can unmolested pursue the deer upon the mountain top, or supply the few wants of a precarious existence...

What is Society? Is it the mere aggregation of individuals, where numbers alone constitute merit? Where the human species are to be enumerated like a drove of cattle, and the only question for the consideration of the Philosopher is, how many can the fruits of the earth be made to maintain? Or rather is it not the Corinthian Capital which should adorn the solid columns of sound existence?

It is a melancholy reflection, that in our country, near the middle of the nineteenth century, we should hear it asserted in any respectable quarter, that the study of Ancient Literature was a waste of time.

In our young and ambitious country, where we seem to think that we are, by instinct, all that man ever was, or ever can be, lingering doubts are yet studiously maintained upon this important subject by a few querulous disputants.

It is true, we have in the history of our country many bright examples of the triumph of unassisted intellect; rare, however, are the instances, and few are the minds which can rise superior to the disadvantages of fortune. On the contrary, what exalted mental excellence might not these individuals have reached, if they had been fully possessed with the rich stores of experience of those who had gone before them?

Our country is in its infancy: let us guard that infancy with great care and jealousy, lest it exhibit itself in the dress of age, without the formality and decorum of manhood, and without its vigour.

Infancy is prone to imitation; it is a law of nature which cannot be obviated. Let us then select for our models those works which by the concurrent testimony of all ages, have been acknowledged to be excellent. By imitation, I do not mean that slavish copying, which, at apish distance, affects the faults, more than the beauties of its author.

Among those persons who repudiate the study of the ancient languages, yet who do not consider Latin and Greek as absolutely a species of black art, a sort of magic, to be shunned by all well disposed people—are to be found many, who while they admit the necessity of some system of study, give a decided preference to the literature of England, as best adapted to our age, and of more immediate utility.

Were the merits of the two Literatures undoubtedly equal, the bare fact that one is the production of a living language upon which time has not fixed the stamp of fate, should make us pause in its selection.

Closely connected as we are in language, feelings and old associations with our parent stock, and unrivalled as her Literature undoubtedly is among the moderns, it is yet much to be regretted, that we import along with Manchester Cottons and Sheffield Cutlery, her literary dicta, which scarcely endure as long as the fashions she sends us.

Such is the despotic power exercised by British criticism over American Literature, that we are told by one of our most successful authors (Mr. Cooper,) who at the same time is the most national in his feelings, that our literary men hold their reputations at the mercy of the British press.

In the mean time, however, you may do much; you can rouse the youth of our country to noble exertions, by pointing out to them the monuments of antiquity, and stimulating their exertions to rival their fame, by telling them, as the French Soldiers were told amidst the sands of the desert, that from their lofty summits a thousand centuries are regarding their actions.

It requires, however, but a very superficial acquaintance with the ancients to appreciate their distinguishing traits. If the observation is correct, and I see no reason to doubt its truth, "nothing can please many and please long, but just representations of general nature," there can be no doubt of the superiority of the ancient over the modern School.

The distinction between the classic and the modern or romantic style of Literature, is as vast as the different aspects of that nature from which each one draws its stores, and which each attempts to describe.

When Homer brings his Gods upon the stage, they speak an intelligible language, they reason as mortals of a large growth; the romantic school introduces us to beings, whose end and object we cannot comprehend.

In Rome, the love of liberty was not confined to a few individuals who made politics a trade; it penetrated every grade of society, until it embraced the nation. The name of a Roman Citizen was the proudest, as well as the most respected title throughout the world; the intensity of the feeling was heightened to a passion; it absorbed all other considerations.

Apart from those examples of individual and great moral excellence, which continually attract our admiration in the earlier annals of the Roman Commonwealth, the study of the Greek and Latin languages is best calculated to eradicate a defect in our national taste, which threatens to become permanent among us.

I allude to that propensity among our literary men, as well as statesmen, for clothing the simplest ideas in such a multitude of words, that it requires great labour and perseverance to hunt out the grain of wheat amidst the mass of chaff. The study of that terseness and simple elegance of style, which may be said to be almost peculiar to the ancients, which makes the sound an echo to the sense, would do much to banish from among us that barren and voluminous taste "which evaporates in a folio the spirit that would scarcely suffice for an epigram."

Until the genius of Bacon had taught mankind, by the slow but sure process of inductive reasoning, to go abroad into the world and explore the mysteries of nature, the mind of man, trammelled by fancies and conceits, endeavored by a vain philosophy, which drew from its own resources alone, to account for all the operations of nature; hypothesis succeed hypothesis, paradox was piled upon paradox, until the intellect was inextricably confounded by its own interminable jargon.

which I cannot resist the temptation of a suitable opportunity, of making a few passing remarks. I allude to a system of popular education. It must be apparent to the most superficial observer, that the entire Southern Country is deplorably deficient in the means of disseminating education generally among the people.

And the vulgar errors and gross abuses of the old system of education, which were the result of a high state of civilization has been produced. It was its influence which rolled back the torrent of Gothic ignorance and barbarism, which, during the middle ages, covered the fairest portion of Europe, and at one time, threatened to envelop the world in darkness.

Be not discouraged by any difficulties; and do not for a moment permit yourselves to doubt whether our age or country should venture into the list of fair and honorable competition.

Until the genius of Bacon had taught mankind, by the slow but sure process of inductive reasoning, to go abroad into the world and explore the mysteries of nature, the mind of man, trammelled by fancies and conceits, endeavored by a vain philosophy, which drew from its own resources alone, to account for all the operations of nature; hypothesis succeed hypothesis, paradox was piled upon paradox, until the intellect was inextricably confounded by its own interminable jargon.

We are trying in this Country an extraordinary experiment in Government, an experiment which gives to numbers the entire and almost exclusive control over the lives, the property, and the well being of the community. Is it not then absurd to contend, that it is not the duty of the State to see that every citizen is qualified by education, to exercise these delicate and important trusts?

Is it not more absurd to expect order, sobriety of deportment, and all the virtues of a good citizen, where every wild passion; every vicious propensity, engendered by pride and fostered by ignorance, have been permitted to take root, and choke by their noxious exuberance, the few good seeds which a generous nature may have planted.

The neglect of general education, which prevails in the South, is not only a reproach to our legislation, but a gross abandonment of those principles of equality, we so strenuously profess; for it is a ridiculous mockery to talk of an equality between ignorance and knowledge.

At the close of the war of the Revolution, she, with other Southern States, with a liberality unequalled in history, surrendered to the General Government not only the most profitable sources of revenue, but an immense Western domain, for which she had so dearly paid.