

## Practical Education and Its Uses to the Government.

HON. JAMES WHITEHEAD AT THE OPENING OF THE UNIVERSITY.

Invited by your chancellor, whom until to-day I had never met, to be present at this opening and deliver an address before the faculty and students of the university, it occurred to me that he was not, perhaps, aware that an opportunity of acquiring an education such as this university affords was neither my privilege nor good fortune to enjoy. My opportunities were confined to the country school house in the district where I was raised, and where as farmer boys, battling for existence, we contended with the hardships and difficulties known to the children of the pioneer, who thirty-five years ago built his log cabin and endeavored to provide for the wants of his family amid the forests of Central Wisconsin.

As gradually but certainly the way appeared which made it possible for the boys of that generation, whose parents belonged to the laboring classes, to secure to themselves a higher education, our country became suddenly involved in one of the most stupendous conflicts that ever engaged the attention of mortal men. However deficient in others, one branch of education at least had not, in those days, been neglected. From prattling childhood, love of country and everything embodied in that one transcendent word, patriotism, had been instilled into the minds and hearts of the young and rising generation. From distant battlefields we heard the cry for help, and in common with others who yielded to its pleadings, I bade adieu to parents, friends, and home, and as a citizen soldier fighting the battles of my country, placed my life in peril for the old flag, and that, too, when but fifteen years of age. A privilege I esteemed it then, an honor I regard it now. Yet I was ambitious to acquire learning, but like thousands of other boys whose parents were poor, the only opportunity I could have had were the years spent in the army. What a sacrifice to those who were thirsting for draughts from the pure fountain of knowledge, and yet how willingly made, how freely given.

I mention this as a difficulty that does not confront the aspiring student of to-day; further as an explanation or reason (which may never have occurred to some of you) why many whose sun has scarcely passed its noon mark, have failed in securing to themselves an education that would compare even with that enjoyed by those now entering upon their university course.

As one who has never enjoyed the blessings of health, or the comforts and luxuries of wealth, witnessing the abuse of the one, the lavish and useless expenditure of the other, may speculate, and in his mind, picture the uses to which they might be applied, the blessings, if properly employed, they might bring to others, and their influence upon society and the world; so it may be possible for one deprived of the privileges and opportunities of higher education, to better estimate its worth, and the practical value in citizen life of a university course.

In order for me to bring more plainly before your understanding the thoughts I wish to present, I think it proper, in immediate connection with this subject, to examine the relation of the national government to the state and to the individual. Under the old idea, the relation of government to the industrial class was considered from a different standpoint from which it is viewed by the citizens of this American republic. They conceived the idea that "might made right."

As a result of such a doctrine, those whom chance or whose native ability once elevated to high position, resorted to

every method to continue in power. They formed what in our day would be called "a ring," and were not slow to lay claim to all privileges incident to such a theory. Among these might be enumerated the right to rule, the right to live in palaces and mansions, to be clothed in goodly apparel, to have their table furnished with the richest viands, their cellars filled with the choicest products of the vintage, and a purse so deep that even the fingers of extravagance would fail to find the bottom. That they might entrench themselves firmly in this usurpation of rights, they shamefully asserted that the king was such, by right divine, that he was anointed of the Lord, and those with whom he had surrounded his throne were sacred as well as himself.

It was, however, discovered that the education of the masses would disclose to them the true relation existing between the classes, would open their eyes to the fact that there was something fundamentally wrong with a system that compelled one man to labor and permitted another to enjoy the fruits of that labor. That it would bring with it that condition that would work their overthrow.

Education of the masses was therefore discouraged by the enactment of such laws relative thereto as virtually closed the doors of the institutions of learning to all but the children of the rich and powerful. They acted upon the theory that the general education of the common people unfitted them for their position and duties in life, and that to the higher classes alone was intellectual development a possible or desirable thing; a theory most abhorrent to that liberty and prosperity to which all men aspire and which, more than all others, has done more to retard the progress of civilization and oppress and curse the world.

It would be surprising to one who has been educated in free America to witness the fawning servility, the superstitious reverence with which the lowly-born regarded those whom they had come to believe stood higher than they in the order of created beings. It is almost beyond the conception of an American who inherits and drinks into his blood with his earliest nourishment the one great truth that all men are equal at birth, the degradation and the abasement in these "hewers of wood and drawers of water," of all those noble traits that serve to distinguish the man from the slave.

Think of it for a moment, the enormity of the offense thus perpetuated against the human race in the name of government? The unjust assumption of power with all its burdensome incidents and the inhuman conditions enforced for its perpetuation on the one hand, shock, as with the moral depravity of those who imposed them; and on the other with a view of the horrible depths to which mankind in the mass can be reduced.

But a new and better era was to dawn upon the world. An era in which all the old theories of government and class distinction were to be swept away. An era in which the fierce beating of the rays from the sun of intellect should melt the manacles with which the tyrant bound the slave, as the clear beams from days' bright star melts the icy bonds and frees the long imprisoned waters to go forth to gladden the earth with flower and fruit. The people were not utterly debased. As they toiled, they dreamed. They dreamed of freedom, of a government where each individual stood equal under the law, and where he who sowed the field should not only reap the harvest but enjoy its possession and use. Nor were all those who held authority untouched by the rank injustice of the system. Many good men and great were among them who sought to modify the evils and ameliorate the condition of those whose life was labor and night. A spark of hope was ever burning in the hearts passing onward through the