

**AN ADDRESS DELIVERED
BEFORE THE ASSOCIATION
OF THE ALUMNI OF
HARVARD COLLEGE**

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An Address Delivered Before the Association of the Alumni of Harvard College by Robert C. Winthrop

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ROBERT C. WINTHROP

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THE ALUMNI OF HARVARD COLLEGE,

BY

ROBERT C. WINTHROP.

JULY 22, 1852

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HARVARD, "most reverend head, to whom I owe
All that I am in arts, all that I know;—
(How nothing's that!)—to whom my country owes
The great renown and name wherewith she goes:—
Many of thine this better could, than I,
But for their powers, accept my piety."⁹

At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Association of the Alumni
of Harvard College, held at Cambridge, 22d July, 1852.

Resolved, that the thanks of the Association be presented to the Hon.
ROBERT C. WINSTON, for his truly eloquent and appropriate Address,
delivered this day, at the request of the Association, and that he be requested
to furnish a copy of the same for the press.

True copy from the record. Attest,

NATHANIEL B. SHURTZEL, Secretary.

A D D R E S S .

In rising, Mr. President and Brethren, to perform the distinguished part in the services of this morning, which has been assigned me by your Executive Committee, it is a real relief to me to reflect, how little, after all, the success of this occasion will depend, on the character of the entertainment which may be afforded you, during the brief hour which I may be at liberty to occupy, by any thing of formal or ceremonious discourse.

It is not by words of wisdom or of dulness, it is not by arguments forcible or feeble, it is not by appeals animated or vapid, it is not by pathos or by bathos, that an occasion like this is to be made or marred.

The occasion itself is its own best and surest success. Certainly, it is its own best and most effective Orator. The presence of this vast concourse of the Sons of Harvard, drawn together by a common interest in the prosperity and welfare of their Alma Mater, and bound to each other by a common desire and a common determination to uphold and advance her ancient character and renown, is enough to make this occasion forever memorable in her annals, and to secure for it a better, a more brilliant, and a far more enduring

success, than any which could result from the most glowing display of individual eloquence.

And, indeed, what could any one attempt at such a moment but to give expression,—a faint and imperfect expression at the best,—to the sentiments and emotions which have already been awakened in all our hearts by the scene and the circumstances before us?—emotions and sentiments too deep and serious, I am persuaded, to be satisfied with any mere ambitious rhetoric or jubilant oratory.

We are assembled around the altars at which we were dedicated in our youth to the pursuit and attainment of a sound, liberal, Christian education, and from which we went forth in our early manhood to the duties and responsibilities of our respective professions and callings. We are here after many and various experiences of success and of failure, of joy and of sadness, of wealth and of want, in our subsequent career. We come, some of us, after but a brief trial of the stern realities of life, with the world all before us, and our relations to it still to be determined;—some of us in the middle stage of our earthly course, in the full enjoyment of whatever faculties we possess, and of whatever position we have acquired;—and some of us bending beneath the weight of years and of cares, with little more to hope or to fear for ourselves on this side the grave. How many thoughts are stirred within us all, as we look back, over a longer or a shorter interval, to the days when we first approached these Classic Halls! How many reflections crowd in upon each one of us, as to what we might have done, and what we did, *then*,—as to what

we might have been, and what we are, *now!* How many blighted hopes and disappointed expectations of others or of ourselves are revived in our remembrance! How many familiar forms of cherished friends, of beloved companions, of revered preceptors, long since parted from us, start up at our side, and seem almost to wait for our embrace!

“Rapt in celestial transport they,
 Yet hither oft a glance from high
 They send of tender sympathy
 To bless the place, where on their opening soul
 First the genuine ardor stole!”

And we, too, Brethren, are here “to bless the place” of our earliest and best opportunities. We come, one and all, to bear our united testimony to the value of this venerated Institution. We come to bring whatever laurels we have acquired, whatever treasures we have accumulated, to adorn its hallowed shrines. We come to pay fresh homage to the memory of our Fathers for having founded and reared it. We come to renew our tribute of gratitude to its earlier and its later Benefactors. We come to thank God for having prospered and blessed it. And we come, above all, to acknowledge our own personal indebtedness to it, and to make public recognition of the manifold obligations and responsibilities, to God and to man, which rest upon us all, by reason of the opportunities and advantages which we have here enjoyed.

We are here, I need not say, in no spirit of vain-glorious boastfulness or empty self-congratulation. We are here to arrogate nothing to ourselves in the way of distinction or privilege. We are here to set up no claim to peculiar consideration or honor on account