

**AN ADDRESS ON  
PRIMARY EDUCATION,  
JUNE 3, 1840**

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An Address on Primary Education, June 3, 1840 by M. Charles Paterson

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**M. CHARLES PATERSON**

**AN ADDRESS ON  
PRIMARY EDUCATION,  
JUNE 3, 1840**



*Wm. H. Hall, Esq.  
with the good feelings of the  
winter.*

AN  
ADDRESS  
ON  
**PRIMARY EDUCATION,**  
DELIVERED  
BY M. CHARLES PATERSON,  
BEFORE THE  
COLUMBIAN PEITHOLOGIAN SOCIETY,  
IN THE CHAPEL OF  
COLUMBIA COLLEGE,  
JUNE 3, 1940.

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Society, passed June, 1840.

## ADDRESS.

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I APPEAR before you, fellow members of the Peithologian Society, at your request, to address you upon the recurrence of your annual festival, agreeably to the usage of our Society for many years. I confess that I accepted the invitation with which you honored me without hesitation, and without regard to the ultimate duty which that acceptance would impose; for it was grateful to me again to revisit this well known spot—this familiar and daily resort of by-gone years—these quiet retreats of classic lore—to wander beneath the shade of these ancient trees, and to look back upon the pursuits, the rivalries, and the thousand reminiscences of my early youth. It is good for us at times to retreat from the bustling, selfish, sordid world, and go back to

that period when hope was high and every aspiration generous—when the heart was buoyant, and the bosom's lord sat lightly on its throne—to meditate on those too fleeting moments which were devoted to the acquisition of knowledge, to the unsophisticated pleasures and disinterested friendships of collegiate life, and on all the subtle promptings of an early and undefined ambition. It is, too, not altogether useless at such a moment, though it may be painful, to see what results the advantages of a sound and liberal education, the instructions of faithful and enlightened teachers, and the congenial society of those engaged in similar pursuits, may have produced in the history of our career—to what point our earlier aspirations may have carried us—to mark how far hope has been blighted, and the eagle eye of young ambition obscured and darkened, by the want of persevering application, the defects of judgment, or the greater defects of want of moral principle and firmness.

You have incurred, my friends, in your present position as members of this ancient seat of learning, a deep responsibility, to your-



selves, your families and your country—the profound obligation of availing yourselves to the utmost, during the short period of your residence on this foundation, of the able, sound and philosophical instruction which is daily offered to you. When you shall leave these halls, and a few years shall have left their impress upon your characters, this obligation, instead of diminishing, will, as time wears on, like the clayey figure in Frankenstein, enlarge and dilate in all its lineaments and proportions, till it strikes the heart with a deep and unavailing sorrow for opportunities neglected and immunities despised. I often look back, with a cordial reverence, to the memory of the instructors who once occupied the seats of those around me, and recall their untiring zeal, their kindness, patience and perseverance. Even now I hear from the shadowy recesses of the past the tremulous voice of the amiable and excellent Bowden. I evoke from their dread abodes the spectral forms of Wilson, and Kemp, and Harris, and contemplate the noble proportions of the late Provost of this College, John Mitchell Mason.

I may be allowed, as having received his counsel and instruction in my boyhood, and having been here one of his earliest pupils, a passing but feeble tribute to his memory. He was a man of original genius, and like many other original minds, possessed many striking peculiarities, which too often marred the effect of that genius, and subjected his efforts and his conduct to great misconstruction, and too often to an unjust and illiberal opposition. Endowed with an ardent temperament, a ripe and accomplished scholar, he was a learned theologian, a close observer of passing events, and a fearless commentator on their character and tendency: acquainted with many of the great men of his time, he was the intimate associate and compeer of Hamilton: a sincere christian from conviction, he bent the whole powers of his intellect to the exposition of the Scriptures, and particularly to the Gospels and the epistles of Paul. It was here his whole soul seemed to expand with congenial sympathy—and those who remember the lofty flights of his inspiring eloquence, or the soul-subduing accents of his melting pathos, will

not hesitate to assign him a permanent place on the record of talent, and enrol him among those who have worthily illustrated this College, and stamped themselves among the eminent individuals of the time. Thus much to an early friend. I trust you will accord this imperfect tribute to his memory, and that I may use, with a slight change, the words of old Anchises, as he penetrated the depths of time, saw the virtues and the fate of one of the noblest names in Roman story, and exclaimed, with pious fervor,

*Manibus date lilia plenis*

*Purpureos spargam flores, animam que sodalis*

*His saltem accumulem donis.*

But turning from the past, let me express to you the pleasure I derive from again finding myself with you, and renewing associations intimately connected with some of the most agreeable portions of my life. I look around me and find many, very many of those with whom I was connected in my ordinary attendance upon our Society, during the brief period which has since elapsed, gone down to the grave—their early promise blighted and their