

**INAUGURAL ADDRESS  
DELIVERED TO THE  
UNIVERSITY OF ST.  
ANDREWS, MARCH 19, 1869**

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Inaugural address delivered to the University of St. Andrews, March 19, 1869 by James Anthony Froude

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**JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE**

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DELIVERED TO THE

UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREW'S

MARCH 19, 1869.

BY

JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE, M.A.

RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY.



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## ADDRESS.

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MY FIRST DUTY, in the observations which I am about to address to you, is to make my personal acknowledgments on the occasion which has brought me to this place. When we begin our work in this world, we value most the approbation of those older than ourselves. To be regarded favourably by those who have obtained distinction bids us hope that we too, bye and bye, may come to be distinguished in turn. As we advance in life, we learn the limits of our abilities. Our expectations for the future shrink to modest dimensions. The question with us is no longer what we shall do, but what we have done. We call ourselves to account for the time and talents which we have used or misused, and then it is that the good opinion of those who are coming after us becomes so peculiarly agreeable. If we have been roughly handled by our contemporaries, it flatters our self-conceit to have interested another generation. If we feel that we have before long to pass away, we can dream of a second future for ourselves in the thoughts of those who are about to take their turn upon the stage.

Therefore it is that no recognition of efforts of mine which I have ever received has given me so much pleasure as this movement of yours in electing me your Rector ; an honour as spontaneously and generously bestowed by you as it was unlooked for, I may say undreamt of, by me.

Many years ago, when I was first studying the history of the Reformation in Scotland, I read a story of a slave in a French galley who was one morning bending wearily over his oar. The day was breaking, and, rising out of the grey waters, a line of cliffs was visible, and the white houses of a town and a church tower. The rower was a man unused to such service, worn with toil and watching, and likely, it was thought, to die. A companion touched him, pointed to the shore, and asked him if he knew it.

'Yes,' he answered, 'I know it well. I see the steeple of that place where God opened my mouth in public to his glory; and I know, how weak soever I now appear, I shall not depart out of this life till my tongue glorify his name in the same place.'

Gentlemen, that town was St. Andrew's, that galley slave was John Knox ; and we know that he came back and did 'glorify God' in this place and others to some purpose.

Well, if anybody had told me, when I was reading about this, that I also should one day come to St. Andrew's and be called on to address the University, I should have listened with more absolute incredulity than Knox's comrade listened to that prophecy.

Yet, inconceivable as it would then have seemed,



the unlikely has become fact. I am addressing the successors of that remote generation of students whom Knox, at the end of his life, 'called round him,' in the yard of this very College, 'and exhorted them,' as James Melville tells us, 'to know God and stand by the good cause, and use their time well.' It will be happy for me if I, too, can read a few words to you out of the same lesson-book; for to make us know our duty and do it, to make us upright in act and true in thought and word, is the aim of all instruction which deserves the name, the epitome of all purposes for which education exists. Duty changes, truth expands, one age cannot teach another either the details of its obligations or the matter of its knowledge, but the principle of obligation is everlasting. The consciousness of duty, whatever its origin, is to the moral nature of man what *life* is in the seed-cells of all organised creatures: the condition of its coherence, the elementary force in virtue of which it grows.

Every one admits this in words. Rather, it has become a cant now-a-days to make a parade of noble intentions. The application is the difficulty. When we pass beyond the verbal propositions our guides fail us, and we are left in practice to grope our way or guess it as we can. So far as our special occupations go, there is no uncertainty. Are we traders, mechanics, lawyers, doctors?—we know our work. Our duty is to do it as honestly and as well as we can. When we pass to our larger interests, to those which concern us as men—to what Knox meant 'by knowing God and standing by the good cause'—I suppose

there has been rarely a time in the history of the world when intelligent people have held more opposite opinions. The Scots to whom Knox was speaking understood him well enough. They had their Bibles as the rule of their lives. They had broken down the tyranny of a contemptible superstition. They were growing up into yeomen, farmers, artisans, traders, scholars, or ministers, each with the business of his life clearly marked out before him. Their duty was to walk uprightly by the light of the Ten Commandments, and to fight with soul and body against the high-born scoundrelism and spiritual sorcery which were combining to make them again into slaves.

I will read you a description of the leaders of the great party in Scotland against whom the Protestants and Knox were contending. I am not going to quote any fierce old Calvinist who will be set down as a bigot and a liar. My witness is M. Fontenay, brother of the secretary of Mary Stuart, who was residing here on Mary Stuart's business. The persons of whom he was speaking were the so-called Catholic Lords; and the occasion was in a letter to herself:—

'The Sirens,' wrote this M. Fontenay, 'which bewitch the lords of this country are money and power. If I preach to them of their duty to their Sovereign—if I talk to them of honour, of justice, of virtue, of the illustrious actions of their forefathers, and of the example which they should themselves bequeath to their posterity—they think me a fool. They can talk of these things themselves—talk as

well as the best philosophers in Europe. But, when it comes to action, they are like the Athenians, who knew what was good, but would not do it. The misfortune of Scotland is that the noble lords will not look beyond the points of their shoes. 'They care nothing for the future and less for the past.'

To free Scotland from the control of an unworthy aristocracy, to bid the dead virtues live again, and plant the eternal rules in the consciences of the people—this, as I understand it, was what Knox was working at, and it was comparatively a simple thing. It was simple, because the difficulty was not to know what to do, but how to do it. It required no special discernment to see into the fitness for government of lords like those described by Fontenay; or to see the difference as a rule of life between the New Testament and a creed that issued in Jesuitism and the massacre of St. Bartholomew. The truth was plain as the sun. The thing then wanted was *courage*; courage in common men to risk their skins, to venture the high probability that before the work was done they might have their throats cut, or see their houses burnt over their heads.

Times are changed; we are still surrounded by temptations, but they no longer appear in the shape of stake and gallows. They come rather as intellectual perplexities, on the largest and gravest questions which concern us as human creatures; perplexities with regard to which self-interest is perpetually tempting us to be false to our real convictions. The best that we can do for one another is to exchange