

**A LECTURE ON THE PURSUIT OF
USEFUL KNOWLEDGE,
ADDRESSED TO THE
COMMERCIAL & LABORING
CLASSES**

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A lecture on the pursuit of useful knowledge, addressed to the commercial & laboring classes by
John Downes Owens

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USEFUL KNOWLEDGE,
ADDRESSED TO THE
COMMERCIAL & LABORING CLASSES.

DELIVERED

AT THE MECHANICS' INSTITUTION, KINGTON,

BY

JOHN DOWNES OWENS, ESQ. M. R. C. S.



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1841.

537.

TO
WILLIAM DOWNES, ESQUIRE,
TOWN CLERK OF LUDLOW,
AND
CORONER FOR THE SOUTHERN DIVISION OF THE COUNTY OF SALOP.

My DEAR UNCLE,

I have great pleasure in dedicating to you this humble attempt to promote the extension of useful knowledge. In yourself, is an admirable instance of that firmness and energy of character which leads to success—to none other could I more sincerely offer this tribute of esteem, having so long enjoyed your constant kindness and friendship. With best wishes for your health and happiness.

I remain, my dear Uncle,

Yours most truly,

JOHN D. OWENS.

Presteign, April 14th, 1841.

PREFACE.

The following pages, it is very much feared, present few claims upon the consideration of the discerning reader—beyond a sincere and ardent wish to create in the minds of the uneducated, a desire for useful knowledge. They were written during a few days—amidst continual interruptions by the professional duties of the writer, and without the least intention of placing them in the present shape before the public. The subject in abler hands would have been treated in a way more worthy of its great importance in forming the minds of the young—but it is hoped that feeble as its claims are presented in this instance; they may serve to render moral pleasures more inviting, and intelligence more dignified and desirous—to exhibit vicious gratification as most debasing—and ignorance and idleness as most worthless and contemptible.

It is only at the request of friends, whose judgment is perhaps too prone to commend, that the writer has presumed to publish sentiments which are entertained by every friend of popular education, and should he be successful enough to bring a single disciple into the service of virtuous and intellectual pursuits—he hopes to be forgiven the many errors and evident want of ability, which, otherwise, may have brought upon him deserved rebuke.

A LECTURE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

I cannot commence this lecture without soliciting from you, on behalf of my incompetency to treat the subject as it deserves, your kind indulgence on this occasion. I am very imperfectly qualified for the important task which you have allotted to me, and I regret that the interesting cause of popular instruction, will lose so much of its value and importance, from my advocacy and feeble illustration.

There are, I am sure, many gentlemen among your members, in every respect much better qualified than myself, to advocate popular education, and to present its claims to your attention in more engaging language and manner. Nevertheless, I anxiously wish success to your institution, and there is no person more ardently desires the diffusion of useful knowledge, and the spread among all classes, of practical information and good morals. I am also by family ties so intimately connected with this town, that, I believe, I shall be pardoned saying, that I present myself thus publicly this evening with more than ordinary pleasure, and with heart-felt gratification.

Useful knowledge is so valuable and important to persons employed in the arts, or mechanical pursuits, that the friends of progressive improvement have endeavoured to bestow its advantages on all classes of the community. With this view literary institutions have been founded throughout the country, where the most useful and entertaining branches of instruction have been popularly explained. Reading rooms have been formed, and debating societies established. All these means have had before them the extension of education to the working and commercial classes, and they have served to disseminate information, and to encourage self-culture. The very numerous and influential company I have the honor to address, is an instance of the interest which you take in the pursuit of knowledge, and of your anxiety to spread its advantages to all those who desire to participate in them. The humblest enquirers are now offered the means of improvement—they are invited to become students—rich and varied stores of intelligence solicit their attention and exertions, and a plentiful supply of sound instruction awaits their wants.

The pleasures of a studious and well-regulated life, independent of the profit which they bring, only require to be known, when every man who values knowledge or happiness, will endeavour to direct his attention and time to pursuits at once