

**NOT "A COLLEGE FETISH". AN ADDRESS
IN REPLY TO THE ADDRESS OF CHARLES
FRANCIS ADAMS, JR., DELIVERED
BEFORE THE HARVARD CHARTER OF THE
FRATERNITY OF THE PHI BETA KAPPA, AT
CAMBRIDGE, JUNE 28, 1883**

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Delivered before the Harvard Charter of the Fraternity of the Phi Beta Kappa, at Cambridge,
June 28, 1883 by D. H. Chamberlain

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D. H. CHAMBERLAIN

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Address of Charles Francis Adams, Jr.,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE HARVARD CHAPTER OF THE FRATERNITY
OF THE PHI BETA KAPPA,

AT CAMBRIDGE, JUNE 28, 1883.

BY

D. H. Chamberlain
D. H. CHAMBERLAIN.

WITH PORTIONS OF ARTICLES

BY

PROFESSORS ZELLER, FISHER, AND PEABODY.

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PREFACE.

The publication of the following address,—first delivered in the lecture course of the Yale Kent Club at New Haven, March 11, 1884, and repeated subsequently before the Amherst Chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa at Amherst College, May 2, 1884; at Phillips Academy, Andover, May 23, 1884; at Williston Seminary, Easthampton, May 10, 1884, and before the Phi Beta Kappa of the University of Vermont, at Burlington, June 24, 1884,—has been delayed by my engagement, before its full completion, to deliver it before the American Institute of Instruction at its annual session at Martha's Vineyard, the 9th inst. In now publishing it I have appended to it portions of three articles which have seemed to me to best present certain valuable views of the Greek question, out of all that has come to my notice since the delivery of Mr. Adams's address. The article by Prof. Zeller appeared in the *Deutsche Rundschau* for March, 1884; that by Prof. Peabody in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January, 1884, and that by Prof. Fisher in the *Princeton Review* for March, 1884.

I hope I shall not be suspected of offering my present contribution to this discussion as that of the "one man in ten thousand" whose voice Mr. Adams has not yet heard. On the contrary, I offer it simply as what my own studies have taught me—studies, I may add, never wholly pretermitted under any stress of adverse circumstances during more than twenty years of rather active life,—what I have seen with my own eyes and observed with my own senses, and nothing more. I do not present it as my individual "experience," like Mr. Adams. I confess I do not know so well as others, what the results of these studies have been on my own character and life. Nor do I value, as Mr. Adams seems to do, any man's own estimate or testimony as to himself upon this subject. I think that almost the only thing of value one can contribute to this discussion is those views and conclusions which one's study of the subject and observation of others may have impressed upon one.

For one thing, I have tried not to be dogmatic, but to give reasons for all my views, reasons which at least may be tested by other men's reason. It is a subject, however, on which I think the right

of one holding my views to be dogmatic, as the word is generally used, may be easily defended. For, in truth, to assert the value and superior utility of Greek studies is to repeat the voice of the wisest men of the last three centuries at least, including the present age. I fully agree with Mr. Higginson when in his charming essay, he says "there is no more possibility of arbitrary choice in languages than in stones; the best is the best."^{*}

Mr. Adams is at liberty to declare that he prefers the pearl to the diamond, or silver to gold, but the fact remains that the diamond and gold are the most precious of all gems or metals, and few feel called upon to prove their superiority.

The all-sufficing answer to the suggestions of Mr. Adams and President Eliot, in his recent *Century* article, of putting English or French or German on an equality with Greek and Latin, is that it is an attempt to treat things as equal which are not equal. Greek preceded English and French and German and is closely and inextricably intertwined with them, and leaving out of view its claims to superiority in all other respects, the fact of its priority in time remains, and if it is necessary to go back to the sources of anything in order to understand it, it is necessary to study and know Greek and Latin in order to know English or French or German. The question, then, really is not between Greek and English or French or German, but between English or French or German thoroughly studied and known and the same languages partly studied and partly known.

"Parallel courses," "modern equivalents," "early differentiation of studies," "options looking to future pursuits," "studies admissible with equal weight or rank," or whatever other catch-phrases may be used,—devices all which omit Greek,—are founded on a delusion as real and as unreasonable as would be a modern course in law which should omit Blackstone and Kent because contract and corporation law have enormously increased in importance in these days, and perchance the student's future practice may be mainly or exclusively in those branches. Surely we are fallen on evil days, when a man can say of Greek, with the applause of any part of an intelligent audience,— "It bears no immediate relation to any living speech or literature of value."

D. H. C.

New York, July 10, 1884.

^{*}A plea for Culture, *Atlantic Essays*, p. 10.

ADDRESS.

My present task is wholly self-suggested and self-imposed. It is simply an attempt to meet and controvert the arguments and opinions of the address of Mr. Charles Francis Adams, Jr., delivered in June last, before the Harvard Chapter of the Fraternity of the Phi Beta Kappa. I cannot say that I am called or moved by any sense of personal fitness or duty. The lines of my life lie, as they have lain, quite aside from the walks and ways of scholars. I can only say that the studies, reflections and experiences of my life have greatly interested me in this subject, and that I have some hope that what I may say will tend a little to more correct views and more intelligent opinions upon the matters which I shall try to discuss.

The address of Mr. Adams has naturally and deservedly attracted much attention. His public services and character, his position as one of the representatives of an illustrious family, the vigor and courage of his address, the confidence of his tone, the personal and family illustrations which enliven his arguments, have united to give freshness and force to this latest discussion of an old and well-worn theme.

I assume and believe that Mr. Adams was very much in earnest in this expression of his opinions and experiences. I shall certainly treat his discourse as a serious

discussion and honest statement of conclusions. Whatever criticisms may be made upon it, we ought, I think, to welcome it as a specimen of outspoken, vigorous opinions upon a theme of the very highest importance. If, as Mr. Adams thinks, nearly the whole cultivated world is still indulging in a most important feature of its higher education, in "fetish-worship"; in an absurd and unreasoning attachment to studies which are not suited to present wants, nor conducive to present success — which are not only a waste of time, but by their compulsory requirement are excluding better studies, it is the right and duty of any earnest man to challenge the claims of such studies; and the more securely they have become entrenched by custom and prescription, the greater is the duty of those who see or think they see their real hollowness and comparative worthlessness, to expose and denounce the pretensions and false claims by which they have been supported. It is not sacrilege, surely, to destroy a "fetish"! None of us, I presume, wish to continue to worship a "fetish." If, unhappily, we have been worshipping one, I am quite sure we should all welcome, as we ought to do, the voice that should expose, and the hand that should destroy even *our* "fetish." But old delusions retire slowly; "fetishes" even, long worshipped, will struggle for a little longer recognition, and so, inevitably and finally, Mr. Adams must expect that men will still ask, what *is* a "fetish"? and is that which in his address, at Cambridge, he describes and denounces as a "fetish," a *real* "fetish," after all? That is the serious question — a question which I think is always one of deep interest, worthy of the best consideration, the most unfettered discussion which any man can bring. If the study of Greek can be shown to be "fetish-worship," if it can be shown to

be less than the best use that can be made of the time of our youth, for their highest and best success — success in all its senses and forms — then let it cease, and let better implements of mental training take its place.

In the task which I set before me — the only task I attempt — of replying to Mr. Adams — it is necessary to observe his exact positions, so far as they are disclosed by this address. Much misapprehension exists on this point which ought to be at once corrected, and for which Mr. Adams is not responsible.

Let me quote Mr. Adams's words, which state his main demand and conclusion :

"The modernist asks," he says, "of the college, to change its requirements for admission only in this wise : Let it say to the student who presents himself, 'In what languages, besides Latin and English, those are required of all — in what other languages — Hebrew, Greek, German, French, Spanish or Italian, will you be examined?' If the student replies, 'In Greek,' so be it ; let him be examined in that alone ; and if, as now, he can stumble through a few lines of Xenophon or Homer, and render some simple English sentences into questionable Greek, let that suffice ; as respects languages, let him be pronounced fitted for a college course. If, however, instead of offering himself in the classic, he offers himself in the modern tongues, then, though no mercy be shown him, let him at least no longer be turned contemptuously away from the college doors ; but instead of the poor quarter-knowledge, ancient and modern, now required, let him be permitted to pass such an examination as will show that he has so mastered two languages besides his own, that he can go forward in his studies, using them as working tools."