

**AMERICA AS A FIELD
FOR THE EXERTIONS OF
THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR**

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America as a field for the exertions of the Christian scholar by William Bross

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WILLIAM BROSS

**AMERICA AS A FIELD
FOR THE EXERTIONS OF
THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR**



*America as a Field for the Exertions of
the Christian Scholar.*

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE ALUMNI OF

WILLIAMS COLLEGE,

BY

HON. WILLIAM BROSS,

[OF THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF ILLINOIS,]

CLASS OF 1838,

At the Commencement, Tuesday Afternoon, July 31, 1866.

Song of the Old Church at Williamstown.

A POEM,

DELIVERED ON THE SAME OCCASION,

BY

REV. J. CLEMENT FRENCH,

OF BROOKLYN, N. Y.

CLASS OF 1853.

CHICAGO:

PRINTED AT THE TRIBUNE COMPANY'S BOOK AND JOB OFFICE.

1866.

To Lieut. Governor, WILLIAM BROSS, Chicago, Ill.

To Rev. J. C. FRENCH, Brooklyn, N. Y.

GENTLEMEN,

The undersigned, having listened with great pleasure to the Address and Poem, this day delivered before our Society of Alumni, respectfully request of you copies of the same for publication.

JONAS KING.
S. H. CALHOUN.
JAMES A. GARFIELD.
A. C. PAIGE.
C. F. SEDGWICK.
DAVID DUDLEY FIELD.
J. Z. GOODRICH.

JOSEPH WHITE.
JOHN L. T. PHILLIPS.
WILLIAM HYDE.
HENRY L. SABIN.
CALVIN DURFEE.
N. H. GRIFFIN.

WILLIAMS COLLEGE, July 31, 1866.

TO REV. DRS. JONAS KING and SIMEON H. CALHOUN, Major Gen. J. A. GARFIELD, HON. A. C. PAIGE, C. F. SEDGWICK, DAVID DUDLEY FIELD, and others:

GENTLEMEN,

We thank you for the compliment contained in your note of July 31st. Such a request from such a source, we do not feel at liberty to refuse, and, therefore, we most respectfully submit our manuscripts to your direction.

Very Truly, your Obedient Servants,

WM. BROSS.

CHICAGO, Ill., Aug 10, 1866.

J. CLEMENT FRENCH.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., Aug. 8, 1866.

Address.

Mr. President, Brethren Alumni,

Ladies and Gentlemen :



ANOTHER year has passed away, and again our *Alma Mater* bids her sons a cordial welcome to her time-honored festival. The occasion prompts to a review of duties performed and plans to be matured for future usefulness. It is our pride — in all respects a just and an honorable one — that Williams College was intimately and largely identified with the origin and the development of those great Christian movements, which, within the last fifty years, have planted the Gospel in every quarter of the globe, and which, it is believed, will expand and grow, till, by their life-giving power, they banish ignorance and vice and despotism from the face of the earth. Then shall "The kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ."

It may be well for the graduates, the students, and the friends of a college whose history is thus interwoven with the religious progress of the age, occasionally to examine its home field, and to discuss their duties with reference to that. The higher the standards of social and religious excellence rise here, the more overshadowing and powerful will their influence for good be upon other nations. The truth of this statement will not be disputed, and therefore, without further preface, I announce as the subject of this address —

AMERICA AS A FIELD FOR THE EXERTIONS OF THE
CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR.

And first, a few words as to what has been accomplished in the past. When, amid the blasts of December, 1620, the Pilgrim fathers landed upon Plymouth rock, they planted upon this continent the germs of a new principle. "Freedom to worship God" is the religious element of that principle, and the political is expressed in the Declaration of Independence, "Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," and under their combined influence, in less than two centuries and a half — a far shorter period than nation ever before matured in the world's history — America has taken rank as a first class power, and though among some

of our religious denominations the term bishop is still retained, practically we have "a church without a Bishop, and a state without a King." It was a cardinal maxim among the founders of our free institutions, that in order to keep the church free from superstition, bigotry and intolerance, the christian must be educated; and in the state, as no despotism is so remorseless and insatiable as that of a debased and vicious rabble, that the safety and the stability of society must rest upon the virtue of the people. Hence, they planted the church and the school house side by side, and he who assumes to be an American statesman, and would undervalue or ignore either of these in his principles or his practice is an empiric — a disgrace to the name and the fame of his country. It was the vital power of an intelligent Christianity that enabled our fathers to subdue the savage wilderness, on the borders of which they settled, and the more savage men who dwelt in that wilderness, and finally to wrest our independence from the British crown. Subsequently it addressed itself to developing the resources of our vast country, to establishing common and high schools, founding colleges and universities, and building churches in the new towns and cities that were rapidly growing up, as settlements pushed westward. So thoroughly did they do their work, and so effi-

cient has it been in moralizing the people, that as Greece, a mere speck upon the map of Europe, gave philosophy and literature and law to all succeeding ages, so will the little valleys of New England and the Middle States give religion and liberty and law to all this vast continent. To practice the passive virtues was also imposed upon them, for the christian spirit of the country had to bear as best it could the arrogance and the brutality of the "sum of all villainies," which had entrenched itself in the fairest portion of the land. Having feasted for three generations upon the toil of the submissive African, insolent by years of swaggering rule in the council halls of the nation, and reaching the climax of insane wickedness described in the adage "whom the gods will to destroy they first make mad," in 1861 the slave power grasped at the very life of the Republic. The christian patriotism of the land at once rushed to the rescue. During the ever varying struggle for the next four years, more than a million of men met the foe in mortal combat; and hundreds of thousands, upon the battle field, or starved in the dens of Libby, of Salisbury and of Andersonville, sacrificed their lives upon the altar of American freedom. When defeat came, as it often did, and thick darkness brooded over the land, the still small voice of Him "who holds the nations in the

hollow of his hand," whispered in the ear of the slumbering soldier at midnight, breathed around the family altars in thousands of Christian homes, and cheered the soul of the immortal Lincoln, saying, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." It is not superstition, but sanctified faith, to believe that that Spirit watched over the strife at Donelson and Vicksburg; fought with Farragut below New Orleans; drove back the rebellion on the bloody fields of Gettysburg; guided Grant and his heroes amid all the thunders of the Wilderness, and bore the flag of the nation in triumph above the clouds on Lookout Mountain. It was that Spirit, infusing courage and endurance and power into the patriotism of the land, that gave us the victory. To that we owe the proud consciousness that the foot of the slave pollutes not the soil of American freedom.

The venerable temporary chairman of the Baltimore Convention, that re-nominated Mr. Lincoln in 1864, enunciated the striking historical truth "that the only enduring, the only imperishable cement of all free institutions, has been the blood of traitors." The foundations of the Republic during the last four years were laid broad and deep in that cement, and the temple of the nation's glory, from foundation to cap-stone, is sacred to the mem-