

**ORATION, POEM AND SPEECHES,
DELIVERED AT THE GENERAL ALUMNI
MEETING HELD AT THE COLLEGE OF
CALIFORNIA, OAKLAND, CAL.,
TUESDAY, MAY 31ST, 1864**

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VARIOUS

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PREFACE.

THE following circular, issued by the Faculty of the College of California, will explain the origin of the Alumni Meeting whose proceedings are here published :

COLLEGE OF CALIFORNIA, Oakland, ———, 1864.

Dear Sir: The Faculty of the College of California invite your attendance at a general gathering of College Graduates, to be held at Oakland, May 31st, at 8 o'clock, P.M.

On the next day, the College is to send forth its first graduating class. It is thought that in lieu of the Alumni Meeting held by the older colleges, and which, from the nature of the case, we cannot yet have, there may be a large and interesting gathering of the Alumni of other colleges now resident in California. They cannot attend the annual gatherings of their own institutions. The College of California invites them to make here a second home, and to find among the representatives of all our American colleges a new and wider circle of fellowship. In this way many pleasant recollections will be revived; the educated men of this State will better appreciate the value of their fraternity; and the lovers of a "good time," like those of old college days, will be gratified by a superior literary entertainment.

The Faculty take pleasure in announcing that John H. Felton, Esq., has consented to deliver the Alumni Oration, and C. T. H. Palmer, Esq., to furnish a Poem. After these exercises, there will be a social repast with off-hand speaking.

In behalf of the Faculty,

SAMUEL H. WILEY,

Vice-President College of California.

The following gentlemen give their hearty approval to the foregoing invitation, and commend it to the attention of their fellow graduates :

Rev. Rev. W. L. KIP, D.D.,
Hon. OGDEN HOFFMAN,
Hon. O. L. SHAFTEE,
Hon. M. C. BLAKE,
Rev. W. C. ANDERSON, D.D.,
Rev. J. A. BENTON,
T. B. BIGELOW, Esq.,

S. L. CUTLER, Esq.,
EDWARD TOMPKINS, Esq.,
Rev. E. B. WALSWORTH,
J. W. WINANS, Esq.,
Rev. A. E. KITTEDGE,
Rev. GEO. MOOAR,
GEORGE TAIT, Esq.

The foregoing invitation was sent to nearly four hundred graduates, whose names were collected by diligent inquiry. The list was necessarily very imperfect. Additions will be made to it in time to come, and all who take an interest in it are invited to send such names as they can to the Secretary of the Faculty, giving the place and year of graduation. Address Prof. MARTIN KELLOGG. The list is open to all College Graduates on our Pacific Coast, including those from foreign Universities.

As the day approached, suitable notices were inserted in the papers. The S. F. & O. R. R. Co. consented to run an extra evening train for the accommodation of the San Franciscans.

At a meeting of the College Faculty, held June 2d, 1864, thanks were voted to the Orator and the Poet of the day, and copies of their productions were requested for publication. It was voted to print, also, the proceedings of the evening, which had been reported by a competent hand. The Secretary was directed to superintend the publication.

ALUMNI EXERCISES.

I. ORATION AND POEM.

THE afternoon exercises were held in the Presbyterian Church, which was crowded. As many as one hundred and fifty graduates were among the audience, besides a few invited guests. Those who did not stay in the evening, and lost the opportunity of responding to the roll-call, must not complain if their names are omitted.

The Hon. Edward Stanly, a member of the College Board of Trustees, presided. Prayer was offered by the Rev. J. A. Benton.

The oration was delivered by John B. Felton, Esq.; and the poem, by C. T. H. Palmer, Esq., was read by Hon. J. E. Benton.

ORATION.

BY JOHN B. FELTON, ESQ.

I have selected for a subject on which to address you to-day, the position of the educated man in California, his sphere of activity, and his duties.

What has the educated man been doing in California during the fifteen or sixteen years of its existence? Where shall we find the traces and workings of intellect cultivated by study and ripened by thought? No works of native art adorn our homes, no new truth discovered illustrates our progress in science, no California author instructs or amuses the world.

“The wisdom of a learned man,” says the Bible, “cometh by

opportunity of leisure, and he that hath little business shall become wise. How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plow and that glieth in the goad ; that driveth oxen and is occupied in their labors, and whose talk is of bullocks."

The opportunity of leisure which makes the learned man has indeed been small in California.

When the cry of "gold discovered" rang through the world like a tocsin, and summoned to this shore the discontented and adventurous, the enterprise of commerce and the daring of youth, the man of education gave way to the hardy laborer. Health, strength, buoyant spirits, strong nerves, patient courage, and fortitude were the great requisites in those filthy and crowded passenger ships ; in the wearying days when the sea was calm ; in the hours of danger and wreck when the waves swept the deck of the quivering vessel ; in the long night with the wet ground for a bed, while wind and rain laughed at the vain shelter of the canvas tent ; in the solitude of the ravine where fear saw in each intruder a thief or a murderer. How like the pictures of a kaleidoscope they blend into each other those scenes of wild revelry and despair ; of reckless squandering and starvation ; of unexampled prosperity and hopeless misery.

There is nothing in history which illustrates so forcibly the capacity of the American people to organize and govern as the quickness with which something like order and law sprang out of chaotic, heterogenous, and apparently unmixing elements thus brought together.

Men of every nation and character crowded to these shores. No laws, no political institutions existed to exact of them allegiance. No refining influences of home softened and subdued them. No old associations of childhood and common education bound them together. No craving for the respect of their neighbors held them in check. California was to them but a place of temporary exile, and the associate of to-day would be a stranger to-morrow, as he had been yesterday. To bring these men—hardy, bold, full of the spirit of adventure, goaded by every passion, stimulated by necessity, hardship, and privation, and freed from all restraint—into subjection to law, would have been an impossibility to any but the American colonist.

Whatever may be thought of American institutions as adapted

to old, well-established societies, it can hardly be doubted that, both from the relations which the American sustains to the law and those which the law sustains towards him, he is eminently fitted to organize society in a new country. Through all his life he is accustomed to form part either of the majority whose will is law, or the minority which points out the probable abuses of a law—fights against its passage with passion, and submits to it when passed with calm. The two great habits of analyzing laws and foretelling their consequences, and then yielding to them a passive obedience, have become a second nature with him. Then, too, the law leaves the American free and independent to act in almost all his business or family relations, and he is accustomed to appeal to its protection only on great and momentous occasions. In a new country the absence of law affects him but little, for he is wont to be a law unto himself.

If you compare the American with the citizen of that great country of France, so wonderful in all departments of manufacture, art, and science, you will see why it is that the American is so much at home in a new country. In France, the subject has had no hand in framing or making the law. A code adapted to every want of life regulates the minutest details of every relation. The Frenchman addresses himself to the law to punish every little injury. It regulates for him his business and family relations. It goes with him to the market, and woe to the butcher who sends him the wrong piece of beef; or the baker, who commits an error as to the number of ounces it takes to make a pound. It protects him in his self-respect, and orders taken down from the windows the image which distorts his features and attracts the laugh of the passer-by at his caricatured personal peculiarities. It escorts him home, and sees that the porter who lets him in does not scold him for being out so late. If his wife, tired of the conjugal domicile, seeks variety in absence, the requisite number of constables conduct her back to the loving arms of the spouse. Are his books badly kept, the paternal correction of the law reminds him how important in mercantile life are order and regularity. Has his son of twenty-two had the audacity to fall in love with penniless beauty, the law enforces the unromantic hard sense of the father, and the poor heart-broken lover heaps curses on the Romans and their leg-