

**A DISCOURSE ON THE CHARACTER AND
PUBLIC SERVICES OF DEWITT CLINTON,
DELIVERED BEFORE
THE ASSOCIATION OF THE ALUMNI OF
COLUMBIA COLLEGE, AT THEIR
ANNIVERSARY, 6TH MAY, 1829**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649178858

A discourse on the character and public services of Dewitt Clinton, delivered before the Association of the alumni of Columbia college, at their anniversary, 6th May, 1829 by James Renwick

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JAMES RENWICK

**A DISCOURSE ON THE CHARACTER AND
PUBLIC SERVICES OF DEWITT CLINTON,
DELIVERED BEFORE
THE ASSOCIATION OF THE ALUMNI OF
COLUMBIA COLLEGE, AT THEIR
ANNIVERSARY, 6TH MAY, 1829**

A
DISCOURSE
ON THE
CHARACTER AND PUBLIC SERVICES
OF
DEWITT CLINTON,

DELIVERED
BEFORE THE ASSOCIATION OF THE ALUMNI OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE,
AT THEIR ANNIVERSARY, 6th MAY, 1829;

BY
JAMES RENWICK, M. A.
Professor of Natural Experimental Philosophy and Chemistry.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE ASSOCIATION.

NEW-YORK:
G. & C. & H. CARVILL.

1829.

often far estranged by the business of life, are yet happy to re-awaken the tender recollections of juvenile intimacy. Brother alumni, allow me to express the satisfaction I feel at seeing so many of my former associates, so many of my younger friends, so many, may I say it, of my affectionate pupils here assembled; while the venerable band of our elder brethren also appears to honour our celebration, undiminished in number since our last anniversary.

Such at least would have been my greeting, had this address been delivered a few hours sooner. But at this very moment, a train of mourners is conveying to the tomb of his ancestors, one of the few survivors of that venerable band,* the last of a name illustrious in the ancient annals of our province, but in whom the conscious dignity of high birth, was tempered and illustrated by polished manners, and the graces which a finished education can alone bestow.

Gratitude that we count numbers but little diminished, is a feeling too earnest to be controlled; and, indeed, the pleasure we experience in saluting those whom we find present, is not more intense than the anxiety with which we inquire for the fate of those whom we miss in this assembly. Have any of our number suffered in health or happiness since our last meeting? Has death called from the path of usefulness, the ripened growth of manly talent, or nipped the bud of youthful promise? If so, then before

* Frederick Phillips, Esq. of Philipstown.

we enter into the festivities of the day, is our tribute of mournful recollection, or of affectionate admiration due.

Of all the objects which an association such as ours can propose, none is more useful, none can be more interesting, than thus annually to commemorate the worth of the departed. Subjects of general and public interest are not indeed unsuited to the purposes of our meeting ; our institution has produced those who have filled with honour to themselves, and advantage to the country, the most exalted stations of public life, or have risen to the height of reputation in those professions emphatically called the learned. Such men it is to be hoped will still continue to issue from these halls ; and when they shall be called upon to address you, the scope of the institution admits—nay, their associates will expect, that they shall treat of subjects with which the business of their life has rendered them familiar. Instruction and eloquence have thus flowed from the discourses of my predecessors in the honourable appointment of orator of your anniversary. But to lament the untimely fate of youthful talent ; to rescue from oblivion the deeds of modest and unobtrusive usefulness ; to celebrate the praises of public benefactors ; are topics which seem to be exactly suited to the day and its associations. It cannot in truth be a day of unalloyed pleasure. If it recall to our recollection the happy period when young, ardent, and impetuous, we entered the arena of the more than Olympian contest, where not only bodies but minds struggle for the honours and rewards, which

fortune often bestows with no impartial hand; if it bring to mind the hopes, that thought no office too high, no wealth too enormous, no literary glories too lofty to be reached by our exertions. It also recalls the memory of the chilling of those youthful aspirations, the checking of those lofty hopes, and the gradual intrusion of the dark realities of life, into the picture coloured in rainbow tints by our youthful imaginations.

In a more especial manner does this celebration awaken the remembrance of those with whom we jointly received the instructions of the same teachers, but who have been snatched from the world before the expectations of their Alma Mater were realized; or of those of more advanced standing, who, although full of honours and glory, have been called from the fields of their usefulness, too soon for their friends and their country.

If such thoughts are excited by the very nature of our meeting, let them not be repressed. The value of the living friend is enhanced by the memory of him that it is dead; and we now hail with more of intense pleasure the few survivors of a numerous class, than we should some years since have greeted the whole. Here, as in all other cases, our sorrows tend to heighten our enjoyments; and the temperate conviviality of our banquet will be the better relished, that we have paid our just tribute of respect to those whose places know them no longer.

Such are the views with which I acceded to the request of your committee, to deliver before you on this occasion a

discourse in honour of one of our departed associates ; departed indeed before our last meeting, but at too short an interval to admit of his worth being then commemorated. Many of you there are, more competent than I to this task ; more learned, more eloquent, more in the habit of addressing a public assemblage ; many more intimate with the illustrious deceased, the close associates of his private life, the followers of his political fortunes. But why such a one was not selected, it became not me to inquire ; and the very sense I entertained of my own unfitness enhanced the compliment paid me, and precluded my declining what I feel as an honour of the most gratifying description. To be asked to address you ere so many of my seniors have performed that task, to be the first to whom an opportunity has been offered of fulfilling this interesting but mournful duty of our association, and more than all, to have such a theme assigned me, are favours for which I am far more indebted to your kindness than to my own merit.

It has then become my melancholy privilege, to be the organ to express your regrets at the loss of the most distinguished of our members, who, if he had lived long enough for glory and an enduring reputation, died in the pride of his strength, and the acme of his mental vigour. If, indeed, it be not only a matter of duty, but of feeling, that we shall commemorate our departed associates, rarely will occasions present themselves where the tribute is so appropriate or so justly due. No alumnus of this institu-

tion has ever filled a greater space in the eye of the public than the late Dewitt Clinton ; none has contributed more to the honour of his country, none so much to the prosperity of his native state ; while we of the younger order of graduates, whose acquaintance with our alma mater, even by tradition, hardly extends beyond the time of her change of name, look up to him as the first matriculated student of Columbia College.

What however render our expressions of respect most appropriate, his public acts and national services, make the task an arduous one. Every quarter of the Union has teemed with eulogies of our departed associate ; and it is hopeless to attempt to elicit new views of his character, or invent new expressions to emblazon his exalted worth. Nor would a simple biographical sketch possess either novelty or interest, were I to have recourse to such a mode of occupying your attention. The task of writing a memoir of the life of Clinton, has already been performed by one, who, by long personal intimacy, by constant observation of his character, and by the most industrious research, has done all that talent, affection, and zeal could perform.* To this duty he was called by the united voice, of the literary and scientific institution of which Clinton was so long the illustrious head ; of the fathers of our city, over whose deliberations Clinton had long presided ; and of the citizens at large, who mourned the loss of the most conspicuous of their number.

* David Hosack, M. D. F. R. S. whose memoir is already before the public.