Documents Online

**Title:** Farewell Address by John Wilson to His Students

**Date:** August 27, 1793

**Location:** I-BlackT-1954-3

**Contact:**

Archives & Special Collections
Waidner-Spahr Library
Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu
Seeing the time has now approached that I must leave you and cease to be your Teacher.

I have a few things by way of instruction rather than for the sake of declamation to communicate; may remain as the last evidence of my attachment to your future prosperity in which as small part as my own must necessarily depend.

The things I mean to treat of are principally confined to your Studies and moral conduct... And first with regard to your Studies. That you endeavour to retain and make further advances in the Branches of Literature in which you have just been initiated. You have just come to the point now cease till you have visited the temple itself. You have laid the foundation, let and when you say hereafter, that such were not able to finish. It is cause of sorrow, that after a year spent in acquiring useful knowledge, we should suffer it to slip from us when a small attention might save it. Instead of this, seek to make improvement, and particularly in your profession; whatever it may be, be zealous to excel. Some faults
of school learning and particularly the higher branches, you will not find immediately necessary in common life, and it may be prone to pursue them too far. It is not expected that a divine should be a lawyer, or a lawyer a physician or a physician an mechanic. The scholar indeed ought to know the general principles of all; but with his particular profession, everyone ought to be thoroughly acquainted. This is expected and it is all that ought to be expected.

Some parts of learning, particularly the knowledge of the dead languages, nothing essentially necessary in many employments in life, it has become even fashionable to deny. However plausible such arguments may be, nevertheless they are dangerous and founded on laziness and want of information. Adopts not this sentiment, much less turn advocates for such pernicious doctrine.

That men may be qualified to be useful and respectable in the world without the assistance of Greek and Latin, nobody will deny. That many who attempt to learn them make so...
little proficiency as not to be better, is too true; but that they ought to be excluded from a system of education, is yet to be proved.

Some of the most eminent men in every profession have been accurate scholars in the languages, and have besides understood their native language better than others. Yea, what is it that enables the writer of our day to combat so successfully this mode of education, but this very education which they have received? They ungratefully knew a art which caused themselves to rise. In fine, language is a science, the study of which improves the mind and is the study of human nature, which is ever truly important. But we trust, the precious facts that we have made acquainted with those languages will not turn their own weapons against themselves.

If you would wish to make any progress in useful acquirements, it to become eminent in your profession, above all acquire the habit of industry. This is almost every
is of all others, the most pernicious practice. I myself have tried it with most wretched success. Indeed, we may rest assured of the truth of Dr. Young’s remark: "Procrastination is the thief of time. Year after year it steals, till all is gone."—Though every experiment will teach us caution and every miscarriage will daily show, that attempts are not always crowned with success. As Dr. Johnson says, "The most specious state of action will, in time, be taught the necessity of methodical gradation and preparatory measures; and the most daring confidence be convinced that neither our understanding abilities can command events."—Nevertheless, diligence without order cannot always be victorious. Regular and fixed portions of your time ought constantly to be given up to the particular art or science you would wish to understand. Judicious method and constant adherence to it is most essentially necessary to an immediate attainment of whatever end we have in view.
But above all, we should always suffer
experience to correct the errors of theory.
Yet, beware of too frequent changes for new
objects without mature consideration;
always remembering the loss of time
which they generally create and the conso-
dation which they are too apt to occasion;
and as Hooker thought—"change even from
worse to better, is not always made with-
out inconvenience." Although
you may say, that you do not mean
to become illustrious among the catalogue
of authors, notwithstanding you ought to
be accurate and attentive.

The rapidity with which improvements
are advancing makes it highly necessary
for everyone to exert his best faculties,
not for the sake of eminence alone, but
to escape insignificance & contempt.

Nothing less than attention and regular
application will save you from degener
but these heightened by the powers of the
mind may render you illustrious.
Without them, we know you will remain dependent upon the natural faculties of the mind. But while we are speaking of diligence as being essentially necessary in studious and literary occupations, we recommend it as equally necessary in the more useful and low, as in those which have been honourably distinguished so that you must not think to profit away your time repeatably in one continued step nor and idleness; although you may relinquish your studies and resolve to engage in the more mechanical calling of life. Besides, an indolent and inactive life is one of the most wretched and unhappy you could possibly choose: it will insensibly precipitate you into innumerable vices and follies from which you will find it almost impossible to extricate yourself but from which you might have been preserved by diligently attending to some useful occupation.

But of all opinions, there is none more effectually mischievous than an opinion that every kind of knowledge requires a peculiar
The Constitution of the United States of America was adopted in 1787, and the Constitution of the Confederate States of America was adopted in 1861. The Constitution of the Confederate States of America was a response to the secession of eleven Southern states from the Union, and it was designed to provide a framework for the governance of the new nation. The Constitution of the Confederate States of America was a significant document in American history, and it played a role in the shaping of the nation that followed.
in this world must necessarily depend.
By long indulgence in young life, the passions
grow unmixed, unhealthily gain the mastery
over reason. Avoid all sudden gusts of
anger which is in fact a temporary madness;
avoid asullen and envious disposition;
but above all be careful to guard against the
most fatal of all passions jealousy, and
let reason and good sense guide your conduct
and point out the way to our truest and hap-
piest. Be courteous, affable and obliging
to all men. Bear with their infirmities,
be ever ready to advise and relieve the
talents and
miserable. Should superior advantages
fall to your share, suppress an elevation
of heart. Avoid an arrogant and contempt-
tuous deportment towards others, but let
all your endeavours unite to improve
their Knowledge and happiness by wise
let.
Let no overstrained complaisance take place
of truth and sincerity. Openness, simplicity of
behaviour will recommend you before all
the studied forms of address. Mankind ought
to find confidence in your conduct men,
otherwise you cannot maintain your character.
and influence among them.

However illusory part of learning may
under you among men, let these be for-
gotten that there are only secondary titles
in religion and morality, which alone can
attract the favour and protection of the
Deity. That you should act with such
spirit and firmness as characterise the
man of worth; that you should desist
and nobly resist the allurements of force
and the corrupting principles of aban-
donned liberties. This is your duty.—
This is your most indispensable
able duty. In vain shall we acquire
learning and the esteem of mankind, un-
less we learn to know ourselves.

Despicable indeed is that man, on
whom his parents and friends have
bestowed their choicest care; and whom
they have indeed made a scholar; but
whose viciousness and total neglect of moral
duty have insensibly him into almost every
Species of licentiousness. Far and light!
No ungratefully has he abused the fairest opportunities! — As some of you have had, or probably will have, better opportunities of knowing more than a great majority of mankind; evidence your superior knowledge by your superior conduct and let not chargeables with the faults of others, a stay through your influence. With affection, highly informed and minds highly improved, should you possibly escape the notice of men, and live all your days without infirmities, the satisfactory joys of a conscious integrity which a man of real rectitude and knowledge always finds in the contemplation of his own thoughts and the comforts which a well spent youth yields to old age are mighty and unspeakable and only to be known by real experience. These are the glorious rewards; these are
The noble compensations for the labour of youth, from growing pale in the study of nature and reason of things and in the investigation of truth. May this be the peculiar concern of each of you, may you acquit yourselves like men, and give your country cause "to hail you with due and most ardent wish of yours S.C. Mr. Wilson."

Southampton, Bucks County

August 27th Abnonomini 1743