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Wilson Lee Spottswood. Carlile.

Deficiency of Literature.

be are ever inclined to be restless. House with truth has it been remarked that "the world is like a number or of persons in a fever". Man is never caterpied with his prospering may be as extensive as some vast empire, where hills are covered with living hords, and where valleys are evered with living hords, and where valleys are evered with living hords, and where valleys are evered with Meating flocks, which the shopard cannot number.

Some cannot eatisfy the mind. The soul of the men arch is ever sestless - ever anxious to extend farther und farther the limits of his empire, until he has cubdued ed some disaffected province, or brought under his government some wealthy isleland until his banner has wared in triumph over the battlements of some perfutures city, or some distant haughty hing has feet the force of his arms. Should be even extend his conquests over the world, compelling nation after nation to own him conqueror, and princes and potentales to do him reverence; yet like Alexander the Great he would usep for other worlds to conquer.

Jamo is alike unsatisfying. The experience of ages - the history of the world ought to convince as that the most extensive reputations cannot ratisfy the mind. The warrior after all his valuant deeds - his battles faught, and victories wind, goes down to the grave convinced of the fact

that he might have done something for his reputations which he has not achieved. The literary man, often charod by the light, which dreams from the tempte of fame (as the wearied traveller by the site of light on the imp ending cloud, never his mind with more than it accustomed reguer - calls into levely exercise all its powers. But he finds, on gaining the summet for which he so andoutly lenged, that he is disappointed in his expectations. He dies not appareouse that untentiment of mind for which he looked. He is still deserous to anse higher that he may gain new lawrels. And even at the hour of death, perhaps, he thinks of some latent discovery - come una. thempted theme. be must not be understood atterly to underen the love of literary fame. There is something askining in the sent of have, which cannot brook the idea of Jorgetfulness, but which exactes in him an ardent derive to live in the praise of his fellow men, and whom dead to be embalmed in their money. Whow the love of Jame is quided by the influence of truth, and restrained within , a hich God and reason derign that it should act, it can not be and owned. But this we assert that pleasure and catifaction, Jourded on leterary fame, as a basis, are as perishable as the tents which appear on the eving of and ensect. There are always circumstances which Lender This strictly true. The asperant for fame maybe stoped of his honours by a more successful vival. His thoughts

and sentiments may not be congenial with there of his fellow more, and may not produce the impressive, which then he designed they should. His mosts may be misfudged, either from the influence of profudice, or the spirit of the aga. Death may not him of his lawels. More may talk as they please, yet it is a fact that thoughts of death will intrude that feelings will seize the scholais mind, similar to there, which crossed the breast of the mightly Verxes, as he satin an emission and surveyed the thousands, that passed before him in gaudy array.

deterature is not pray against the disappointments of life. . Siw other cases so in this the efforts of the leterary man are ofton followed by disappointment. Take the case of Mi then. with a gonius extraordinary, with powers capable displaying the vast, illuminating the splandid, enfor cing the auful, darkening the glowny, and agrarating the dreadful", he close a thome upon which his imagination cultivated and refined might have unlimited reope, and his great inventire powers an opportunity to act freely. Late and early he wandered around the confiner of Ederche explored its immost recours - he examined all its beauties. In difficulties and blendness he laboured - and in the full nersy time he produced "Paradise lost" which is not the greatest of heroic prems only because it is not the first. What was the sesult of his labour? He was desappeented! -His mosts were neglected - his fame long obscured, and his poem tate received.

Literature is often, to some extent, a source of pleasure and eatisfaction. The winding up of the characters and scenes ga new is often attended with pleasent emotions. There is al pleasure in the conception of some great truth, some original thought, some noble image. Whon old age has settled on the head - whow the feelings, the feys and gay dreaming youth have fled forover, and life is but a winty waste, where not a flower blowns; when the outward source become dule and languid, and refuse to perform their ordinary offices; whom the mind has nothing before it, on which to ongage itsalloution, il must as a consequence turn enward upon itself. lender such circumstances the imagination of that individual, whose mind has been stored cultivated and stored with knowledge , can bransport him to other scenes and other days - himemory can draw from his well-felled mental store house Thomas on which to muse. Her can send in the feelds y thought - he can experience eatisfaction. But there is a time where leterature cannot produce this result the hour of Death!

In another kint of view do we observe the deficioney of literature, It is insufficient to form a suitable character for man. We may argue the truth of this from the fact that many very many of those, who have deeply drankat the well of science, have exhibited in their lives, convenation, and writings the most depraced characters. How numerous is that class of literary men, who from the pride of self-undorstanding, have refused to bend their lifty

mends to the comprehension of Christianity, but who haveshown themselves atterly innecent y any Knowledge of its plain and simple truther. Those are others, who, though comprehending its truther, have alsailed them in all the walks of life - who have diseninated far and wide their permicions principles: as that King on his throne, and the pearant in his cottage have fearfully drank of their poisonous drafts. Men of letters have entered the garden of Eden, already a wreck, and plucked with a stealthy hand the last-ling ering flower that bloomed on the cheer less waste. They have roled the timb of the only ray of light, that could penetrale its dark recesses. They have untlew on the green grave that death is an eternal eleep. Their only desire seem, to have been to cultivate the intellect, regard less of the moral poinciples and affections. To that while their minds have been like fruitful fields, their hearts have been like barrow waster. They have passed through life applanded for their talouts, but curred for their crimes. They have sunk into the grave - and the monument, which their talents and learning have reared, alone perpetuates their memory. But re collection thus suggested is not so desirable as that which birtue produces-it is not so lasting. when the oterms of life shall have ewept from its have the monument of the one the other shall stand firm and enshakers. Yes, when the name of a Byrow chall be forgotten, or obly remembored in connection with his onines - the name of a Howard - of a lostberforce - shall be recollected with pleasing emotions.

Commencement Oration of Wilson Lee Spottswood, Class of 1841
Transcribed by Tristan Deveney, May 2008
Edited by Sarah-Hazel Jennings, June 2008

Deficiency of Literature

We are ever inclined to be restless. Hence with truth has it been remarked that "the world is like a number of [one word illegible] in a fever." Man is never satisfied with his present attainments in wealth; though his possessions may be as extensive as some vast empire. Where hills are covering with lowing herds, and whose valleys are overspread with bleating flocks, which the shepard cannot number.

Power cannot satisfy the mind. The soul of the monarch is ever restless ever anxious to extend farther and farther the limit of his empire until he has subdued some disaffected province, or brought under his government some wealthy inleland – until his banner has waved in triumph over the battlements of some populous city, or some distant haughty king has felt the force of his arms. Should he even extend his conquests over the world, compelling nation after nation to own him conqueror, and prince and potentates to do him reverence; yet like Alexander the Great he would weep for other worlds to conquer.

Fame is alike unsatisfying. The experience of ages – the history of the world ought to convince as that the most extensive reputation cannot satisfy the mind. The warrior after all his valiant deeds – his battles fought, and victories won, goes down to the grave convinced of the fact

that he might have done something for his reputation which he has not achieved. The literary man, often [one word illegible – charred?] by the light, which streams from the temple of Fame as the wearied traveller by the sake of light on the impending land, moves his mind with more than its accustomed rigour – calls into lively exercise all its powers. But he finds on gaining the summit for which he so ardently longed, that he is disappointed in his expectations. He does not experience that contentment of mind for which he looked. He is still desirous to arise higher – that he may gain new laurels. And even at the hour of death, perhaps, he thinks of some latent discovery – some unattempted theme. He must not be understood utterly to condemn the love of literary fame. There is something aspiring in the soul of man, which cannot brook the idea of forgetfulness but which excites in him an ardent desire to live in the praise of his fellow men, and when dead to be embalmed in their memory. When the love of Fame is guided by the influence of truth, and restrain within the limits which god and reason design that it should act, it cannot be condemned. But this we assert that pleasure and satisfaction, founded on literary fame, as a basis, are as perishable as the tints which appear on the wing of an insect. There are always circumstances which render this strictly true. The aspirant for fame maybe striped of his honours by a more successful rival. His thoughts

sentiments may not be congenial with those of his fellow men, and may not produce the impressions which he designed they should. His merits may be misjudged, either from

the influence of prejudice, or the spirit of the age. Death may rob him of his laurels. Men may talk as they please, yet it is a fact that thoughts of death <u>will</u> intrude that feeling will seize the scholar's mind, similar to these, which crossed the heart of the mighty Xerxes, as he sat on an eminence and surveyed the thousands, that passed before him in gaudy array.

Literature is not proof against the disappointments of life. As in other cases so in this the efforts of the literary man are often followed by disappointment. Take the case of Milton. With a genius extraordinary, with powers capable of "displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and agravating the dreadful," he chose a theme upon which his imagination cultivated and refined might have unlimited scope, and his great inventive powers an opportunity to act freely. Late and early he wandered around the confines of Eden – he explored its inmost recesses – he examined all its beauties. In difficulties and blindness he laboured – and in the fullness of time he produced "Paradise Lost," which is not the greatest of heroic poems only because it is not the <u>first</u>: What was the result of his labour? He was disappointed! His merits were neglected – his fame long obscured, and his poem late recieved.

Literature is often to some extent, a <u>source</u> of pleasure and satisfaction. The winding up of the characters and scenes of a new is often attended with pleasant emotions. There is a pleasure in the conception of some great truth, some original thought, some noble image. When old age has settled over the head – when the feelings, the Joys and gay dreams of youth have fled forever, and life is but a wintry waste, where not a flower blooms; when the outward senses become dull and languid, and refuse to perform their ordinary offices; when the mind has nothing before it, on which to engage its attentions, it must as a consequence turn inward upon itself. Under such circumstances the imagination of that individual, whose mind has been stored cultivated and stored with knowledge can [one word illegible] him to other scenes and other days – his memory can draw from his well-filled mental storehouse themes on which to muse. He can revel in the fields of thought – he can experience satisfaction. But there is a time when literature <u>cannot</u> produce this result – the hour of Death!

In another point of view do we observe the deficiency of literature. It is insufficient to form a suitable character for man. We may argue the truth of this from the fact that many – very many of those, who have deeply drank at the well of science, have exhibited in their lives, conversations, and writings the most depraved characters. How numerous is that class of literary men, who from the pride of self-understanding have refused to bend their lofty

minds to the comprehension of Christianity, but who have shown themselves utterly <u>innocent</u> of any knowledge of its plain and simple truths. There are others, who, though comprehending its truths, have assailed them in all the walks of life – who have disseminated far and wide their pernicious principles: so that King on his throne, and the peasant in his cottage have fearfully drank of their poisonous drafts. Men of letters have entered the garden of Eden, already a wreck, and plucked with a stealthy hand the last-lingering flower that bloomed on the cheerless waste. They have robed the tomb of the

only ray of light, that could penetrate its dark recesses, They have written on the green grave that death is an eternal sleep. Their <u>only</u> desire seems to have been to cultivate the intellect, regardless of the moral principles and affections of the soul. So that while their minds have been like fruitful fields, their hearts have been like barren wastes. They have passed through life applauded for their talents, but cursed for their crimes. They have sunk into the grave – and the monument, which their talent and learning have reared, <u>alone</u> perpetuates their memory. But recollection <u>thus</u> suggested is not so desirable as that which <u>Virtue</u> produces – it is not so lasting. When the storms of life shall have swept from its base the monument of the one – the other shall stand <u>firm</u> and <u>unshaken</u>. Yes, when the name of a Byron shall be forgotten, or only remembered in connection with his crimes – the name of a Howard or a Wilberforce – shall be recollected with pleasing connections.