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The Student's Dream.

The future is all uncertainty; and yet with what an anxious, earnest gaze we seek to look into its mysteries. We seek to tear aside the veil with which an all-wise God has concealed it and search out the events to follow in after life.

We would fain deprive an eternal King of his power and reveal the secrets of the vast, the ever known future. Now often we form our plans & cherish our hopes, till we expect their realization. 'Tis true some would prefer to call these hopes & fears, these speculations after wealth & fame, by some name more classical than dreams yet 'tis much the same. Every one is a dreamer.

The young & old have each full many a scheme while one looks forward to a life of joy & prosperity the other has passed it & thinks only of that land of rest of joy emending. Now often we fix our hopes form our plans & in imagination have the looked for prize: but ah! how often are these dreams without a reality, how sad the waking moments. There is no position in life more calculated to lead one to dote into the future than that of a student.

Like some way-worn traveller he plots his dreary way. Wearied with his dull monotonous course his soul seeks some higher enjoyment. He dreams bright happy dreams of after life.

His hopes, his fears are but so many waves, bursting upon the great sea of dreamy speculation that has swept over his soul. Bound, like Mazeppa to the wild horse of his imagination, he is borne on in his awful course dizzy with excitement, dazzled with the view, in his speed the rocks & gulfs are passed unheeded; he sees naught but eternal sunshine, amid the storms of life. All along his path the crags are hung with gorgeous tapestries of future bliss. Joy rises after joy to allure him on to death & disappointment. Hope the offspring of Imagination lends her aid, already happy beyond measure. He forms his plans. They are all success. He never dreams of other than the purest joys, the highest ends. As he thinks upon the examples of eminent statesmen, honored heroes, or laureled speakers, he is bewildered with the choice. He thinks he has the Geniuses to be ^{whichever} ~~either~~ he chooses. He feels confident that he could guide the ship of State amid the billows of adversity, though the wind might howl & breakers roar. When the storm had passed she guided by his will would ride triumphantly as a thing of life. Or should an occasion try his military prowess he could conquer any National Enemy in half the time Washington did, or climb more mountains & lose more soldiers than ever Napoleon was able to. But should his be an age of peace, should Heaven-sent prosperity smile upon the land; he could sway the multitude as by a magic wand. This is the Eloquence to win the fair in the field of

of beauty. They would shower upon him laurels more precious far than star-gemmed crowns.

But what becomes of that mighty weight of talent? What becomes of the hosts of Pitts & Burkes, Blays & Websters that our Colleges are yearly sending out upon the world? alas their dreams have had an end. A sad & mournful reality has come upon them. Their dreams were painted in brightest colors, joys eternal never dying: but ah! those colors faded ere the light was seen & all is gone save disappointments dusky hue, 'tis but the trace of vanished joys, of deadened hopes. While Reason slept, that mimic, Fancy rose, to lead them

"Mid earthly scenes forgotten & unknown

To live in ideal worlds & wander there alone"

Happy is he whose dreams are but the harbinger of future bliss. Happy is he whose ambition has led to dream of honors & distinction if when the great decision comes, he is not found amid the lowest in rank, raging & disconsolate.

Happy is he who depriving himself of the pleasures of "Dream-Life" lays in his youth the solid foundation of scholarship & character. Who delves & toils amid the sweat & dust of intellectual effort until the gems of knowledge are hoarded & his heart made strong for the conflicts of life. Dream-land is the land of deceptions & snares. Let the student beware of the Sirens that dwell there. Their voices may charm but the poison of asps is beneath their

Tongues. Life is real, Life is earnest & demands
something better than Dreams.

D. J. Griffith
July 9th 1837

Commencement Oration of Edwin L. Griffith, Class of 1857
Transcribed by Michael M. Geduldig, June 6, 2006
Edited by Don Sailer, November 2009

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Griffith, E. L. July 9, 1857