

THANKSGIVING DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BY

REVEREND W. C. MERRITT,

PRESIDENT OF OAHU COLLEGE

AT FORT STREET CHURCH, NOVEMBER 29, 1883.

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees of Oahu College, held December 13, 1883, it was moved by Rev. S. C. Damon, D. D., motion seconded by Rev. C. M. Hyde, D. D., that a copy of the sermon preached by Rev. W. C. Merritt at Fort Street Church on last Thanksgiving-Day be requested of him for publication. Motion carried.

N. B. EMERSON,
Secretary, *pro tem.*

ISAIAH xl: 3, 4, 5.- Hark, a crier ! In the wilderness prepare ye a way for Jehovah, make smooth in the desert a road for our God. Let every valley be exalted and every mountain and hill made low; and let the rugged be made a plain, and the ledges of rocks a valley. And the glory of Jehovah will be revealed; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it. (Delitzsch's Translation.)

In the cathedral of Limerick there hangs a peal of bells, which was manufactured for a convent in Italy by an enthusiast who fixed his home for many years near the convent cliff to enjoy their daily chimes. In some political convulsion the bells and their manufacturer were swept away to other lands. After a long interval, the course of his wanderings brought him to Ireland. On a calm and beautiful evening, as the vessel which bore him floated along the broad stream of the Shannon, he suddenly heard the bells peal forth from the cathedral tower. They were the long lost treasures of his memory. Home, happiness, friends, all early recollections were in their sound. Crossing his arms upon his breast he lay back in the boat, the tide of memories which swept over the sympathetic chords of his heart completely overpowering him.

Seven hours ago the church bells of New England began once more to ring out their glad peals, announcing that another Thanksgiving Day had come. From church to church, from village to

village, from city to city, from state to state they chime, until across the blue Pacific the peal reaches our ears, and stirs within us tender memories of former days.

Sons and daughters of New England, as the peal of this Thanksgiving Day bell comes to you in your Island home to-day, and startles into procession the pictures in the panorama of memory, and you stand once more in the presence of father and mother, brothers and sisters within the sacred precincts of childhood's home, mingling once again in the festivities of this day of days to the New England heart, do you not feel a quickening of the heart-beat, and a thrill of soul that tell you how deep and abiding are the influences of early life and association upon the man or the woman? We may fancy we have outgrown them; that they lie buried beneath the years of a long life; but an anniversary returns; a song or a melody is wafted on an evening breeze; the church bell tolls, and instantly the memories of childhood flash upon us out of the dead, forgotten past, as the lightning's blaze flashes from the midnight cloud; and dead voices speak again in tones that vibrate through the soul as does the voice of God. Upon the child mind, plastic as the clay to receive, retentive as the graven marble, are drawn the most enduring lines of life's picture. Under the spell of these thoughts I speak to you to-day. These open windows, these moving fans, yonder green, grassy hillsides, the songs of the birds tell us we are no longer in New England. We are away from the scenes and surroundings of the traditional Thanksgiving Day; I therefore take the liberty to break away from the traditional Thanksgiving sermon, and to speak earnest words upon themes which should be as dear to you as they can be to me.

I have chosen prophetic words for my text. In his vision the prophet hears the message of the coming of the King, proclaimed by the herald sent in advance. The King is no earthly potentate. He is none other than Jehovah. Jehovah comes! His way lies through the desert of sin, and just as nature has lifted upon the mountain ranges, heaved up precipitous, impassable ledges of rock,

hollowed out the valleys, and excavated the canyons and gorges that obstruct and defy the advance of the traveler; so has sinful human nature, by the mighty upheaving power of selfishness, and the terribly degrading, debasing power of sensuality, brought to pass a state of things in society similar to that which exists in the physical world.

The social inequalities separating certain classes of men in both Christian and non-Christian lands are as vast and as impassable as the most difficult mountain range to modern engineering. In olden times when the King journeyed the highway must be made. The edict would go forth: Level the mountains and fill up the valleys. But who are to do it? The citizens of the countries through which he passes. They are the ones summoned to this work. And Jehovah comes! The Divine fiat has gone forth, that in this world of sin a way for Jehovah must be prepared. Every mountain and hill must be made low, and every valley filled. These inequalities must be removed; there must be a leveling up and a leveling down. And it must be done before the King will come in His glory, and it must be done by men. To me it is a grand and inspiring thought that God has honored men by making them co-laborers with Himself in saving a lost world. He has given to every man his work, to each of you your especial work, to me mine. And I ask you to lift your eyes this morning and note the leveling processes at work in the world. Grand work, inspiring work is going on. The mountains of separation upheaved by the convulsions born of selfish ambition, and crystallized in social and political distinctions, are crumbling at the touch of Christian civilization. The same forces are filling up the social and moral valleys, where herd the masses of humanity dragged down by sensuality and vice. We are living, friends, in an era more truly characterized by the onward, upward progress of the race, than any other in the world's history. The grade of the King's highway has been fixed; the level to which the mountains must be cut down, and the valleys filled has been determined. It is this: -Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,

and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. And thou shalt *love* thy neighbor as thyself. Toward this Divine standard the world is hastening. Would you see the sign of its progress? Read it in the growth of international law among the great powers of the earth. Read it in the movement that makes arbitration rather than war to settle the disputes of nations. Read it in the fact that men, everywhere, are coming to stand more and more on the plane of common manhood, and their equality of rights is recognized as never before. Read it in the spread of Christian education and civilization. Visit the hospitals, the orphanages, the asylums found in Christian lands, everywhere, but only in Christian lands, and tell me:—Is not the day well nigh passed when “might makes right?” Is not the day of peace and righteousness and love fast dawning upon us? I do not, to-day, recount our local blessings and mercies, great as they are, and calling as they do for a full expression of our gratitude to God. I point to those signs indicating the approach of the day when Jehovah our King shall come, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and I would have your song of thanksgiving strike a loftier key than for personal blessings and mercies only, and incite you to a larger share in the hastening of Jehovah’s coming. For this I speak to-day, and my theme is:—The Leveling Power of Christian Education.

And first of all let me emphasize that qualifying adjective. The person of Jesus Christ is the central figure of this world’s history. He stands at the focus of *all* its history, nay, He is that focus. All its lines, previous to His coming, meet in Him. From Him diverge all the lines of subsequent history. He has laid the moulding hand of His truth upon the nations, and they are responding to its touch. There is no education to-day, that is worth the having, which has not upon it the stamp of Christianity; and I am persuaded that the value of all education is proportioned to the coloring it has received from the cross of Jesus Christ. Hume, and Mill, and Spencer, and Huxley derived their power from training received in Christian institutions. And nowhere has

education for the masses of the common people been dreamed of, except as it has sprung from the spirit and inspiration of Christianity. The culture of Greece and its literary products will *ever* be regarded as among the most remarkable developments of the world’s history. But Grecian culture did nothing for the masses, except to throw their ignorance and degradation into darker contrast by its brilliance. It increased and exaggerated the evils of class distinctions, exalting still higher the high, and degrading still more the low. Not so, Christian education. It reaches down after, takes hold of, and lifts up the struggling mass of degraded humanity. It recognizes the degradation of ignorance as one of the strongholds of sin and crime. It says to the son of the lowliest laborer, as truly as to the son of the King:—“Get wisdom, get understanding; the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”

In all I say then, I plead for Christian education as the highest and best type of education the world has ever seen. In a recent issue of one of our city papers, I find the following: “The calendar of the Waimea sessions shows an increase, in the Kingdom, of forgery and highway robbery. Both these facts are commented upon by His Honor, the Chief Justice, who especially noticed that young Hawaiians have a tendency to attack defenceless Chinamen, and commit robberies on the highway.” During my short stay here, I have seen repeated notices of crimes by the young. I am told that the criminal calendars of the Courts are everywhere lengthening. Friends, the significance of these facts cannot be mistaken, nor their importance exaggerated. Our population is small. As a consequence, the relative importance of the unit to the whole is largely increased because of its comparative influence. In a population of 78,000, at which I find ours estimated, each individual is one seventy-eight thousandth of the whole. In such a nation as the United States, with its 55,000,000 of inhabitants, the individual sinks into the insignificant fraction of one fifty-five millionth of the whole. The meaning of these fractions is that each individual in this Kingdom

exerts an influence upon this nation, which, when compared with the individual in the United States, may be represented by this proportion : 78,000:55,000,000::1:707.

It is a fact fraught with the most solemn responsibility, that each citizen of this Kingdom stands related to *its* well-being and to *its* future destiny, as do 707 citizens in the United States to *its* well-being and destiny. But if your responsibility is solemnly great, your opportunity, on the other hand, is morally grand. It would be a great trust to will, and act, and speak for 707 American citizens in all their daily life and work ; and one would feel the importance of every action, yes, of every word, aye of every thought. But even then that one would exert no more influence upon the whole American people, than do each of you now, day by day, in your island home upon the nation in which you dwell.

Hence the importance of individual character with us. It is an axiom of science that the character of the atom determines the character of a simple substance. It is a truism that the character of the individual will determine the character of the aggregate. What, then, can we do to give the boys and girls of these islands a high, true character? I answer:—Give them a Christian education. Teach them to think truly upon things true, things honorable, things just, things pure, things lovely, and in the place of highwaymen and forgers, you will have high-thinking, noble men. Pursue such a policy as shall compel every boy and girl to enter the ranks of educated men and women ; as shall give them something to think of beside lust and pleasure and their gratification, and experience, elsewhere, says, you will find the calendars of your courts shortening. Our Island Kingdom is so completely isolated from other nations and peoples that we receive but a comparatively slight impress, nationally, from without. The influences at work within, are, therefore, the more potent, and for us of these islands it is of the greatest possible import what is the character of the individual, what his standards of living.

The morality and religion of this grand old Bible ; its pure,

uplifting, ennobling truths need to be inculcated day by day, by precept and by practice, during the entire period of education. It is passing strange that *the Book, the Truth, the Spirit* that have given to the world its highest and purest type of enlightenment and civilization should now be denied a place in our schools. Its literature is the most ancient, the cleanest, the loftiest that any nation or people has given to the world. Its history is the most essential, the most comprehensive, the most reliable of any treatise of that period. Its morality is the purest, the most vital the world has ever known ; indeed, Christian Ethics, or Biblical Ethics is, to day, the Ethical standard of the civilized world.

Why, then, fear this Book of books? Why deny it a place in our common schools? God is in it. God works through it. God has blessed its use, and we need to be aroused to see and recognize the fact that it is the mighty instrument God has placed in our hands to level up humanity from the degradation of ignorance and sin, and enable it to walk on the high plains of an educated Christian manhood and womanhood. Save the next generation by saving the children of this. Insure their happiness and prosperity to the highest degree within your power, by fitting them now for a true life. Law, and courts, and officers, and prisoners will cost the less, as you educate the more and the more truly. Our citizenship is cosmopolitan and no race can be neglected with safety. Hawaiian, Chinese, Portuguese, American, German, English, all should be fitted for citizenship.

Again I note :—The Necessity for, and the Character of, a Higher Education. Says a recent writer :—“Educated men govern nations, and educated nations govern the world.” Among men, there are God-made as well as man-made distinctions. Men are not equal in either physical or intellectual endowments. Some may be qualified to rule ten cities, some only one. But whether a man be called to govern only himself or to govern a nation, he should have the privilege of making the most possible of himself. And to do that, opportunities for advanced study in special departments should be afforded him. The interest and well-being of a nation demand this.

Greece was a very small country, but for a time the tread of her soldiery shook the world, and her navy swept every sea. Athens was but a small division of Greece, but Athenian culture was the grace, and glory, and crown of Greece, and has compelled the homage of the world from that day to this. Shall the Hawaiian Kingdom be known among the nations as a Power, and pass into history with glory? The answer will depend upon the standards of your ambition. The number of inhabitants and the wealth they may accumulate will pass for far less than the character and culture of her people, and will be a less enduring monument. The wealth of Croesus is known to-day only by a proverb, and his influence is nothing. Homer, and Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle, and Æschylus are known, and studied, and honored, and will be, as long as history shall endure. If the standard of greatness for this people be commercial prosperity, and they be caught by the spirit of "mercantilism" now abroad, and bow in homage to it, you may write her history upon the sands of Waikiki, and her glory will be no more enduring than the gilding of the evening cloud.

Men need yet to learn that "the seen is temporal, the unseen is the eternal" and enduring, and that it is true in the national life as in the individual. Would you be known, would you be honored, would you be felt as a nation among the nations of the earth, erect and light the torch of Higher education, and inspire your sons and daughters by its light, and in time you may hope to be known by that, rather than by Kilauea, and the beams of its rays will be seen further than the glow of Mauna Loa. It seems to me that the necessity for Higher Christian Education here, is the necessity of life. "Life or death, blessing or cursing" are set before all nations at some time in their history, and they choose which they will have. I ask you, may it not be that that time is upon this people, and that the choice must be made soon? It is now recognized as a "great law of ethics which compasses all human action, that the abandonment of a lower end in obedience to a higher aim, is made the very condition of securing the lower one." Such choices are morally sublime, yet it is a sublimity that is possible to individuals and to nations.

And now, finally, as to the Character of this Higher Education. First, It must be higher. It must be genuine. It must command the respect of old and young. It must be more than a name. It must have a reality back of the name. To establish a High School, and call it a College will not do. There is wealth in abundance here to establish and endow a college which will honor the name. There is population sufficient to support and furnish students. Five of our students are at present studying both Latin and Greek. Seventeen of the first year students are beginning Latin. These are straws on the current, indicating the direction, it may be, of a setting tide.

But we must be what we profess to be, or we shall stultify ourselves and injure our cause.

Bear with me while I indicate in a few sentences what I call Higher Education and its aims.

I quote recent words from President Bateman, one of the foremost instructors of the Mississippi Valley.

"Many maintain that the object of education should be the acquisition of knowledge. We maintain that it should be to make thinkers. The mind that can think is more useful than one that knows facts, but cannot think quickly, clearly and correctly. Mental discipline is a power. The art of thinking is a power. A man may possess knowledge, i.e. know facts, but if he cannot use his knowledge it is not power. A dead fact is as worthless as any other dead thing. There are men who are filled with facts, who are yet weak in intellect and ciphers in the community. But facts are potential when there is a trained intellect to use them. And when so used, facts are mighty, glorious or terrible. Apart from such a use, regarded merely as facts, they are as dead as the whitening bones of the desert. Knowledge, *per se*, is not power. Mental discipline, the art of thinking, is power, and knowledge becomes a power only when wielded by men possessing the former. The best road to mental discipline is through mental training."

I ask you men of affairs,—Is not this sound sense and just as

sound reasoning? You are calling for trained men in your business to-day. What is a trained man? One who has a trained body, in which is a trained mind, each governed and guided by a trained heart. You want such men in your employ. These Islands need such men in every community. And to produce such men I know of no better, no more successful course of training than that the Christian College offers, with its curriculum of Latin, Greek, Mathematics, Sciences, Literature and Christian Philosophy.

Charles Frances Adams in his Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard last June, assailed this course of study, claiming that he had received very little if any practical benefit from the Greek and Latin of his College course,—and yet, he stood there, thirty years out of College, a successful business man, and to a degree a literary man, and both successful and literary because he had a trained mind, one able to draw distinctions, to make discriminations and to reason, and largely so because of the drill and discipline his mind had received in his College course. And so it is, all other things being equal, the College bred man occupies vantage ground in the race and battle of life above the man who has not received that training.

Friends, that thanksgiving which is the most acceptable in the sight of God is thanksgiving. The grandest, the most enduring work men can do in this world is to help their fellow-men towards the realization of this ideal.

The memories of this day carry you back to New England. Do you know where has been the hiding of her power? It lay in her systems of Education founded upon a living faith in God. Her sons were sent to their life's work with trained bodies, with trained minds and with trained hearts.

New England is but a little spot on this globe, but New England men, and New England ideas largely rule the world to-day. Write then upon *your* banners:—A Free Gospel and Universal Christian Education.