
University Sermon.

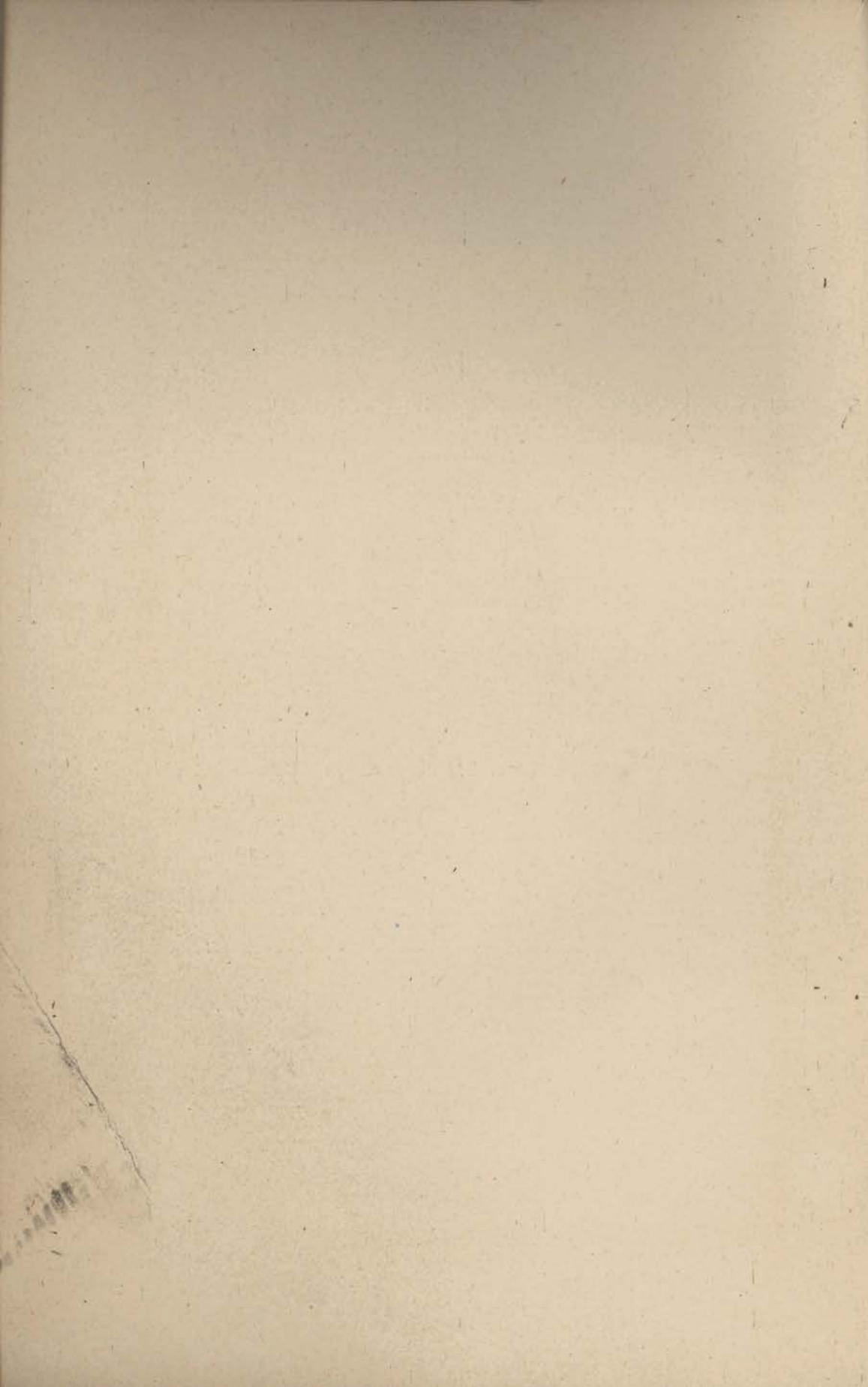
❖ MEMORIAL ❖

TO

HON. ASA PACKER,

Founder of the Lehigh University.

→ * JUNE 15, 1879. * ←





UNIVERSITY SERMON.

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HON. ASA PACKER,

FOUNDER OF THE LEHIGH UNIVERSITY,

JUNE 15TH, 1879.

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IN
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BY
THE REV. JOHN M. LEAVITT, D.D.,
PRESIDENT,
ON
UNIVERSITY SUNDAY,
1879.

SERMON.

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.—*St. Matt.* vii. 20.

Cause and effect are nowhere more visible than in the vegetable world. The fruit is an infallible token of the tree. No mortal eye can discern the constituents of those subtle and exquisite juices in their mysterious circulation, or follow the processes of their combinations and their distributions, but when the leaves put forth, and the blossoms brighten, and the autumn burdens become purple and golden in the sun, we have palpable proofs that can no longer be mistaken.

And our Saviour teaches in our text that between the man and his life there is a similar fixity of relation. The will is, indeed, ever free; the personality is preserved; the moral responsibility is never invaded; the nature bestowed by creation is neither disregarded nor overwhelmed in providence; always sacred in the soul is the fine and subtle play of its varied powers; behind all and above all is the sovereignty of a divine and eternal purpose; and yet it remains a universal law, that as a tree is known by its fruit, so individually, socially and religiously, every human being for this

world and for that beyond the grave, can be infallibly judged by his deeds.

I propose this morning to apply the practical test of our Saviour to the business enterprises, the educational schemes and the Christian character of the founder of our University.

I. *His business enterprises.*

Nearly sixty years since a youth, sprung from a substantial New England family, could have been seen crossing the Delaware and plodding his way probably along our beautiful river. The forests were yet dense in their primal gloom. Farms had been opened, but were rude and primitive in their culture. Only villages smiled over the valleys and adorned the hills. Indeed, the smoke of the wigwam and the war-cry of the savage had not long ceased. Not even a canal-boat toiled painfully through the waters. Bethlehem was a small Moravian town. This region of unsurpassed wealth and loveliness remained a land of *promise*.

Our youth had not much in the prospect to please his eye, excite his fancy, or animate his heart. See him, tall, strong, noble in feature and lofty in brow, with a bright glance and a brave soul, having in him all those native elements afterwards to be developed into such a kingly grandeur. He pushes his way among our mountains into the magnificent region of the Susquehanna. He joins himself to a relative to follow the trade of a carpenter. He works industriously, and even goes to our metropolis for improve-

ment. He marries wisely, suitably and happily. Even when dignified by a wife, he studies in a night-school. Afterwards he becomes a laborious and faithful, but by no means an enthusiastic or unusually successful, farmer. We find him at the age of twenty-eight in the village of Mauch Chunk, with his wife and two children, yet poor, and nothing to distinguish him from thousands of other sturdy and industrious young men. He becomes a captain on a canal, an owner and a builder of boats, a contractor in the erection of locks, and finally a merchant—shrewd, enterprising, indefatigable, successful.

Thus far we see in him no certain token of his coming greatness. Yet an ordinary man would have been satisfied with his achievement and settled down for life into a comfortable and respectable village magnate. Not so with our founder! He had a work in the world. His past was but an education for his future.

True men have one prime object of their lives
Which heaven helps on, and all below are steps
Like climbing stairs that circle round a tower
To gain its top and give us prospect wide.

Here we begin to separate the subject of our sketch from those personages who have no aspirations beyond the dull and monotonous respectabilities of a common career. This man, after all, has genius in him. He is slow of speech, but quick of soul. His mind, like his eye, has the fire of the eagle. To him belong the gift of foresight, the power to look beyond

the ordinary vision—the ability to see speedily and sharply, to mature slowly and wisely, to grasp large plans, to organize great enterprises and to execute energetically what he has elaborated deliberately.

At Mauch Chunk the mind of our founder received a new impulse and its true inspiration. See towering above the gorge of the flashing Lehigh the precipices of those lofty and mysterious mountains whose bosoms of rock contain secrets not yet disclosed! Hid beneath them the gigantic vegetable growths of centuries had flourished around the luxuriant margins of lakes and rivers to be afterwards buried and then burned by volcanic fires beneath the weight of the everlasting hills. The chemistries of cycles had prepared those exhaustless coal-fields. Deep below the rough mountains sleep undisturbed in their dark beds the fuels that are to warm homes, illuminate cities, propel manufactories, promote the navigation of oceans, advance the civilization of our race, and introduce a new era destined to bind our humanity into one vast universal fellowship.

Out beyond the openings of those blue bounding ranges, standing like silent sentinels over the landscape, are the multiplying indications of a busy land and a developing age. Fulton has made the steamboat an accomplished fact. Stephenson has demonstrated the power and the possibilities of the locomotive as the future agency of land transportation. Morse is experimenting to complete his telegraph.

New York and Philadelphia are expanding to gigantic proportions. The ocean is soon to be crossed by a steamship. Every branch of commerce and manufacture over the world has been stimulated into unprecedented activity. A new era has already commenced to be symbolized by the speed of the locomotive and the flash of the telegraph. The fuel is in those mountains, and the world beyond is ready for the fuel. Who shall bring the fuel to the world? That is the problem to be solved! Here we have the work. But where is the man? Who has the foresight, the patience, the energy, the determination, the heroism of sacrifice, the ability to plan and risk and triumph? Shall New York produce the man? Shall Philadelphia produce the man? Shall Ireland, or Scotland, or France, or Germany, or England, produce the man? Shall he come from cabin, or mansion, or mine, or workshop, or college? When? Where? How? Who? The land waits. The age is ripe. The hour has struck. Who is the man? Tell me his name! Asa Packer! By birth he is a Yankee. By adoption he is a Pennsylvanian. In every nerve of his soul and fibre of his body he is an American. More than all, he is a *man*—a man fitted among those mountains for his work, and soon to be called out from them before the world by the Almighty to do his work.

Our valley had been agitated by the question—Shall our coal be carried to market by the canal or by the railway? Plausible arguments were urged on both

sides. The rival advocates exhibited an energy of eloquence inspired by individual and social interests. Judge Packer had his attention early called to steam by a remarkable pamphlet, published in 1808 by Mr. Edwin Stevens, of Hoboken, advocating a railway from Lake Erie to the Hudson. His quick mind soon solved the question. Already New York had been brought towards him by the New Jersey Central Railway, completed to Easton, and Philadelphia had been brought towards him by the Belvidere Railway, finished to the same terminus. A canal from Mauch Chunk furnished transportation for the intervening forty-six miles. Indeed a railway charter had been obtained and a company organized. But the enterprise languished. Faith and zeal were wanting. Shall a prudent and successful merchant venture everything in so perilous an undertaking? Asa Packer embarked his whole future in the scheme. There was the crisis of his career. In that bold resolve was his magnificent fortune. His whole life had been flowering into this enterprise. He possessed the courage, the wisdom, the organizing power, the practical experience, the knowledge of men, the fortitude in defeat and the moderation in prosperity, the integrity that inspired confidence, and the magnetic influence kindling inextinguishable personal affection and devotion, and thus marking as a true leader in a work of toil, risk and time.

It is almost impossible to conceive in any character

a more beautiful harmony of proportion. Circumstances could have developed Asa Packer into a Washington. He was both gentle and inflexible, persuasive and commanding, in his sensibilities refined and delicate as a woman, and in his intellect and resolve clear and strong as a successful military leader; pliant as the limbs of a tree waving to the touch of the breeze, and sturdy as the trunk which defies the tempest.

The financial disasters of 1857 applied the final test to the fortunes of our founder. Many here vividly remember those times. They resembled the flood of our own Lehigh when the dams gave way and the tumultuous waters careering over banks, houses, villages, swept our valley in one wild, roaring, frightful path of ruin. Like the tried bridge whose arches resting on their strong piers looked complacently on the turbid and destroying river below, Judge Packer stood the strain. He emerged from the peril in the secure possession of his vast fortune as the just reward of long years of labor, directed by a masterly and triumphant wisdom.

In his business what, then, are the fruits of his life? Look around you! Behold this valley! In every part you see the impress of our founder. Villages created, towns stimulated, manufactories erected, agriculture expanded, all the interests of society animated and enlarged, and through its centre a railway connecting the coal regions with the great cities, and join-

ing the East to the West and the North to the South—the agency in amassing the most colossal private fortune in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania! Crowning the whole, a will disposing this estate with a grasp and a foresight admirable as the wisdom by which it was accumulated. Here, too, in this adamant document we see a vein of the kindliness of a strong nature. Like the chivalric impulse of an ancient knight after a victorious tournament, how beautiful the affection that prompted him to lay his crowning millions at the feet of her who had shared his toils and won his confidence! I know no more touching and exquisite tribute to the worth of woman.

Sturdy as a pine

Which has a thousand Alpine storms defied,

A gentleness his manly soul did twine,

As when o'er mountain-rocks curls forth in bloom the vine.

Having considered the business enterprises of our founder, let me now turn to

II. *His educational schemes.*

Character is a growth; it develops according to laws. In its history seldom occur convulsions and revolutions like volcanic catastrophes. Rather it resembles the gradual and regular accretions of the tree. Each mountain giant, whose sublime stature and luxuriant leafage are conspicuous over a region, once slept in its small seed, and towered by a slow and annual increase into its commanding majesty.

In a similar way developed his educational plans in the soul of our founder. He was not a man of whims

and changes. His apprehension was keen and quick as the electric flash, but he never began to execute his plans until they had been deliberately matured, and then his energy was like the sweep of one of his own locomotives. Embarked in an enterprise, he never took down his flag. His colors were often long mounting the mast. Once at the top, streaming in the light before the eyes of men, they floated through calm and storm until they were the visible tokens of victory.

Our University in its history resembles the character of our founder. We have no means of tracing its first unfoldings in his mind. He was a silent man, often leaving others laboriously to decipher his views. But we know that he was naturally humane and sympathetic. Beneath the ice and rock of a powerful nature glowed intense energies and affections. He had always a pleasant word and look for his neighbor and generous help for his friend. Genial kindness flowed out from him as beams from the sun. Never at any period of his life is it possible to conceive in him a churlish or niggardly spirit. He had the soul of a king, and from such a nature bloomed into existence the Lehigh University, towering over our valley like a stately tree to bless with its fruit and shadow.

After the financial storms of 1857, when his great fortune was secure, he began to revolve the plans of our Institution. Its style in the charter is ambiguous, and does not with certainty express the original pur-

pose of the founder. Possibly his early views were not clear even to himself, and passed gradually from dawn into sunlight. We know that from the beginning he resolved to link the University to the Church that it might derive from the union purity, enlargement and permanence. His intention was communicated to the Bishop of his Diocese in 1865, who was made *ex officio* President of the Board of Trustees. A gentleman of eminent literary reputation was called to the Presidency. Packer Hall soon rose on our mountain-side in almost unrivaled grace and beauty of proportion. Competent professors and instructors were elected, and the institution organized and commenced in the autumn of 1867. Its chief and controlling mission was technical instruction. But there was also a germ of a classical department afterwards enlarged by Judge Packer to our present Greek and Latin Professorship. He likewise added a Chair of Psychology and Christian Evidences, and by his vote and presence authorized and sanctioned the Law Lectures of our current year. Finally, the magnificence of his testamentary endowment demonstrates that he contemplated a FREE UNIVERSITY in all its parts and appointments as the crown of his long and noble life. His contributions to our institution have now reached the enormous sum of three and one-quarter millions, while his aggregate charities within fourteen years exceed *four millions*. Few men have ever been privileged to give so munificently.

Westminster Abbey contains the monuments of the

English kings. The proudest monarchs there repose in royal state. But diminutive and perhaps inexpensive the tomb of an Edward, or the chantry of a Henry, compared with the cost and the dimensions of the edifices which stand so strong and so enduring on the rocks of this mountain. Hallowed and patriotic sentiments are indeed nourished before the ashes of kings, and the stained windows, and the carved monuments, and the columned aisles, and the lofty arches elevate and ennoble, not only the British nation, but diffuse their sacred influences over our humanity itself. Yet even more beneficent is the power destined to go forth from yonder University Library, also a mausoleum of the affections, and from this grand Hall called after its illustrious founder. We have in the future years of our world visions of youth crowding here from different regions to be trained by science, literature, and religion to the noblest usefulness, and who shall shine like lights over the darkness of the nations. Imagination can scarcely conceive a sublimer monument to perpetuate the memory of a good and a great man.

Nor can I omit to mention that consummate wisdom which linked the Railway and the University in one fellowship of life. The one is the foundation and the other is the superstructure of a single edifice. Both sprang from the same soul. Both were fostered with the same affection. Both were secured by the thoughtful provisions of the same testament, and are left under the same monetary control. The president of the

railway, and the president of the university are virtually members of the same corporation. Superintendents and managers dwell under the same shadow as professors and instructors. Not a conductor, not a brakeman, not a flagman along the line of the railway who is not daily working for the university, and therefore a co-operator in that cause of education which is diffusing its blessings over our country and our world. This is the explanation of the protracted testamentary trust. "What God has joined together let no man put asunder!" We feel implicit confidence in the integrity, the ability, the experience, and the reverent affection of the gentlemen who have been selected for this vast responsibility by our wise founder, with whom they were so long and so intimately associated.

I remember to have seen two connubial trees rising over the roar and the rainbows of Glen Onoko united by a common limb, having a common circulation, and thus married into a common life. When we see them smiling above the sparkling cataract, may they be symbols to us of the railway and the university thus joined together by our founder, and flourishing together amid the rush and thunder of the ages to their noblest and loftiest development! The one will give strength and the other grace in a mutual excellence, and a mutual success.

Having thus reviewed the business enterprises and the educational schemes of our founder, I approach—

III. *His Christian Character.*

Here we have an element not yet considered. Our Christianity is a supernatural system. The original revelation was supernatural in its communication. Its attestations by miracles and by prophecy were supernatural. Our Divine Redeemer—its central object—is the great supernatural fact of the universe. The Holy Spirit, as the efficient agent in the diffusion of Christianity, is a supernatural force in the hearts of men. Its sacraments are the visible signs of a supernatural grace and its ministry claims a supernatural assistance. From the promise of Eden to the trumpet of judgment, and beyond, to the eternal perfection of glory in our Saviour, the whole system in its origin, its essence, its development, and its consummation is supernatural, while yet taking up into itself and controlling into harmony all the ordinary laws and powers of the universe.

Now our plain, shrewd, practical founder was an orthodox believer in this supernatural scheme. He received Christianity as crystallized into our Scriptural and Apostolic Church. He adhered to creeds, articles, offices, and liturgy. He embraced our Prayer Book in its unity and entirety. During nearly fifty years he was connected with our Church, usually was an officer, and for much of the long period was a constant and exemplary communicant. He knew little and cared nothing for the Radicalism, Ritualism, or Rationalism of our times. Certainly he was neither critic, scholar,

nor theologian. But his plain sense went direct to its mark. His profession meant belief, and his belief meant practice. Like the silent light giving bloom to the world, his faith had a vitalizing power. He grasped the truth of Christianity and the position of the Church, and showed his creed by his life. It was the invisible aroma of his piety that after all gave the charm to his career.

I remember at our first interview I repeated these dying words of one I loved and venerated—"Without Jesus, life would be a blank indeed." Then I recited the lines the departing Christian had spoken :

"A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall;
Thou art my strength and righteousness;
My Jesus and my all."

From the moment of that conversation, I believed that Judge Packer was a living Christian, and the testimonies of his Rector and his friends, and, more than all, of his actions, prove the impression to have been correct.

The tree cannot change itself. It has no power to revolutionize its juices, its leafage, its bloom, its fruitage. Given sun, soil, dew, rain, air, and the result is beyond any radical interference by ordinary natural agency. The omnipotence which made the tree alone can change the nature of the tree. And so the heart of man must feel the mighty influences of the Holy Ghost before the celestial graces can adorn a terres-

trial character. The image of our Saviour shining out from a human soul is a divine creation.

Our founder might have completed his railway, amassed his fortune, and even established this university from a merely selfish motive. Love of money or of power might have impelled in his business enterprises, and a passion for fame animated in his educational schemes. This institution is conceivable as a stupendous monument of pride; yet no man ever attributes to our founder any but a benevolent motive. His face was the mirror of his heart. You read there only a humane and exalted purpose. In the hard contests of life, in the battles with the bulls and bears of the exchange, in the sharp encounters with financial sharks, in the perilous struggles with rival railway kings, in all those keen controversies involving gigantic interests and princely estates, and where only foresight and courage avail, had he been low and selfish in his aims, you would have seen every year the hardness growing into his character, giving rigidity to the lines of his mouth and coldness to the gleam of his eye, while around him would have been the atmosphere of the iceberg. But gaze into his countenance for the proof of his character. How placid! How restful! How benevolent! How radiant with all genial affections and sympathies! You can almost imagine about it the traditional halo. What kindness breathes in the low tones of his musical voice! How delicate in sensibility! How exquisite in modesty! Gentle-

ness always softening the native sturdiness of the man! There is something in him grander than railway or university! It is *Christian character!* He knows that the iron and the stone forming the basis of his enterprises will not always endure. His gold will become dim. His locomotives will pass away. His library will pass away. This hall will pass away. All terrestrial things will pass away. Even the visible heavens will pass away. Only Jesus Christ is the "same yesterday, to-day and forever." Our founder had in him an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and everlasting.

What are the practical lessons to be learned from such a life? I will enumerate a few of the most striking and impressive.

I. *The career of our founder shows the power of original thought.*

Here is a man with the ordinary opportunities of a New England village school, who never had a moment's collegiate instruction, who possessed neither literary nor scientific culture, who never read the last book nor the last review, yet who was never awkward or embarrassed in look, gesture or speech, never guilty of a solecism, always courteous and dignified, and who, after the most signal success as a practical man of business, has accomplished more for learning and education than thousands who have devoted to these objects their entire lives. Why? Because he had the native ability to think truly and to plan largely.

He accomplished by the force of a strong mind results others achieve only by laborious discipline. Yet in the blaze of his success he has an unobtrusive sympathy for those less gifted, and an ardent wish to supply the advantages which had been wanting to himself.

II. *The career of our founder proves that honesty is consistent with the accumulation of the amplest fortune.*

He passed through the most corrupt period of our history as a republic. Bribery seemed poisoning the fountains of our national life. Mechanics, overseers, builders, contractors, architects were bribed. Clerks, merchants, bankers were bribed. Lawyers, doctors, chemists, analysts, witnesses were bribed. Officials were bribed. Legislators, judges, governors were bribed. It has been said that during the time of this corruption you could not place a timber in a house or even a nail in a coffin that on its passage had not, directly or indirectly, contracted the stain of a bribe. Above all, it was supposed that without the power of the bribe a railway was impossible. Yet during this dark period our founder in his enterprises was never liable to a suspicion. He emerged spotless from its clouds. While shrewd in a bargain, he was incapable of a mean advantage or a paltry trick. He demonstrated that in our American life the strictest honesty is compatible with the largest success.

III. *The career of our founder evinces that true nobility is in character.*

In the old world society is held together by the respect for ancestral kings, by the magnificence of courts, by the power and the pageantries of armies, and by the imposing architecture in the palaces of princes and the temples of religion. In our republic we have no such adventitious aids. Eye and ear and fancy are not invoked to increase reverence for official authority. Manhood must rest on itself. Our institutions exist in the characters of individual citizens. Hence such a career as that of our founder is part of our national treasure. In such a man all ranks are linked together by a common interest, and discordant social elements find their truest unity. The wealthy and the cultured are attracted to him by the estate he has accumulated, and the lowly and the ignorant are attracted to him by recollecting the way in which his estate was accumulated. Thus his early struggles and his later triumphs unite in him the opposite poles of society. Rich and poor gathered together around the coffin of our founder, and gazed on his benevolent and venerable face as a common possession.

He is at rest where he ought to be. Just above the scenes of his early toils and successes, above the sanctuary of the home he loved, above the hum of the village chosen for his residence, above the gleaming waters of the beautiful Lehigh—honored, admired, revered, we laid him in his mountain grave only to be waked from its repose by the peal of the trumpet of the eternal morning. His body is there; but

his spirit is in our midst. It will live in his railway enterprises. It will shape his educational schemes. It will linger amid these shades and halls. It will be felt in the corporate meeting and in the University board. It will survive in the hearts of his family and in the memories of his friends. It will leave its impress on the nation and the age. It will be our guide and our counselor. It will speak from this chapel and smile around this altar. About us it will be a perpetual presence, moulding our hearts into fellowship and our plans into unity. Not only his magnificent bequests are our treasures. We have something more precious. His *character* is the noblest legacy of ASA PACKER to the Lehigh University.



