

"Demands of the Age on Colleges" Horace Mann Address (October 5, 1854)

On October 5th, 1854, exactly one year after the first opening of Antioch College, Horace Mann gave one of the more far reaching addresses of his career to the General Convention of the Christian Church. In

Demands of the Age On Colleges,

the College's first president places Antioch squarely at the forefront of an ever changing and (particularly at that time) rapidly expanding American civilization, and challenges its founders to ensure that Antioch College meet those demands. His introductory remarks, reprinted here approximately one year to the day that the alumni of Antioch College formally acquired the original campus, describe how far the College had come in its embryonic first year.

DEMANDS OF THE AGE ON COLLEGES

Mr. President and Gentlemen,

Having been requested by my too partial friends in this Convention to give you some account of Antioch College,

of the principles on which it is administered, and the objects at which it aims,

I do not feel at liberty to decline compliance. I understand that a committee has it in charge to make a report upon the material or financial condition of the College,

the health of its body, so to speak,

while I am requested to give some account of its spiritual condition,

the health of its Moral Sensorium, the seat of Mind and Heart.

Gentlemen, at your last General Convention, held at Marion, four years ago, you decreed the existence of Antioch College. By force of that decree, and by the blessing of God, that college now is and you have a right to know all that anybody can tell you concerning it. Our College is too young to allow me to speak of what it has done. It is just one year ago this day, since, with appropriate ceremonies, it was dedicated to the glory of God and the welfare of man ; and, by a singular coincidence, I am now called upon, precisely one year after having delivered its Dedicatory Address, to speak to you again,

of the past, historically ; of the future, I trust, prophetically.

Of an institution so recently called into being, you can not expect, as you walk through its halls, and your footfall wakes a reverberation along its galleries, to hear the echoes talk Latin and Greek, as is said to be the case with some of the old Universities of Europe. You can not expect, as you ascend its lofty towers, or peer into its crypts, to find any old Genius of the Mathematics sitting there and working out the deep problems which are hereafter to enlighten the world. We are too young for any such apparitions, real or fabulous.

To-day, then, is the first birthday of Antioch College. That Institution was opened under circumstances most embarrassing to Faculty and Students. I am about to impute no blame to any one; but I must give a glimpse of our early history. On coming to Antioch College, in

October last, we found nothing in readiness but our own hearts. The weather was cold, but there was not a fireplace nor a stove in the whole establishment.

We had only our love of the cause to keep us warm; but this, though very good in Morals, is very bad in Physiology. A room had been set apart for a library, but there was not a book in it, nor a shelf on which to put one. In vain for that had the art of printing been discovered. We had not a black-board, nor a school-chair, nor a school-desk for any student, nor any habitable school-room, or recitation-room. Our first examination, for the admission of about two hundred students, we were obliged to hold in our dining-hall. We cleared off the breakfast dishes from the tables in the morning, (for we conduct all our examinations for admission in writing,) and when noon came we had to clear away pen, ink and paper for dinner; and, after dinner, to clear away the dishes for examination again; so that, at first, over the dining-tables of our commons' hall, the cook and the professor held divided empire. I doubt whether the dining-tables of any college were ever promoted to such honor before; and, for one, I sincerely hope they may have borne that honor for the last time. The gastronomical and the classical digestion may well be kept rather more distinct. As a literary institution, we certainly have had one year of pioneer life; and our history shows that the scholar may have his perils and his exploits not less than the backwoodsman. In fine, if Adam and Eve had been brought into this world as prematurely as we were brought on to the premises of Antioch College, they must have been created about Wednesday night!

But now we have the nest-egg of a library, to which we hope additions will be duly laid; we have a dozen beautiful recitation-rooms; we have the finest school-room I have seen this side of the Alleghenies; we have nearly four hundred students, (a fact, I believe, unprecedented in so young an institution;) and notwithstanding our pursuit of knowledge under difficulties, I feel bound to say that my colleagues and their pupils have done a year's most earnest and profitable work.

"Forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit."

Perhaps it will be pleasing to remember even this one day.

-Virgil]

But, as was remarked before, we are as yet too young to show much in the way of performance. All that can reasonably be required of us is to tell you, not what we have done, but what we are striving and preparing to do.

HORACE MANN'papap'h5X2'h5X2'gd5X2'h5X2'h5X2

DEMANDS OF THE AGE ON COLLEGES

Antioch

Normal

Antioch

Microsoft Office Word

Library

DEMANDS OF THE AGE ON COLLEGES