

**GROUNDS OF AN APPEAL
 TO THE STATE FOR AID TO
 CORNELL UNIVERSITY**

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Grounds of an appeal to the state for aid to Cornell University by Jacob Gould Schurman

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GROUNDS

OF

AN APPEAL TO THE STATE

FOR AID TO

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

BEING THE ADDRESS DELIVERED ON FRIDAY, THE ELEVENTH OF
NOVEMBER, 1892, UPON HIS INAUGURATION AS PRESIDENT

BY

JACOB GOULD SCHURMAN, LL.D.

ITHACA, N. Y.

PUBLISHED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

1892

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File by



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INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

MR. CHAIRMAN :

The institution which has summoned us to this day's ceremonial is almost if not quite the youngest member of the still too small fraternity of great American universities. The oldest sister has already celebrated the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of her birth. The present year is the twenty-fifth since the opening of Cornell University. For our years, the oldest American colleges show decades; and beside the venerable antiquity of their European models we are but of yesterday. We can make no pretense to the dignity of age, or to hereditary influence, or to sacred tradition, or to that subdued and statuesque beauty of countenance which is born of the travail of many generations. It may, however, be suspected that the modern scholar, who nourishes his spirit on the rich legacies of remote generations, is, in consequence of a natural association of ideas, under constant temptation unduly to exalt the past and to admire what is old simply because it is old. This, however, was not the habit of that wonderful people who were the authors, and who continue to be the unapproachable models, of scholarship and liberal culture. Youth was the ideal aspiration, the dearest yearning, of the Greeks, from the time their litera-

ture opened with the story of the youthful Achilles till their national history closed with the conquests of the youthful Alexander. Cornell, I admit, has not the stately splendor of those Old World seats of learning which thrill and almost pain the unaccustomed sense of the American traveler. But if Cornell lacks the transfiguring beauty of age she wears the fresh glory of a vigorous prime. Hers is the portion of youth—of youth with its lofty faith, its unquenchable hope, its superabounding energy, its tingling sense of activity,—of youth that counts not itself to have attained, that lives not on the fading record of the past, but on the promise of all the unrevealed and splendid future. To have lived is good; but it is better to feel the pulses now throbbing with the untamed strength of fresh and unexhausted life.

THE FEDERAL LAND GRANT OF 1862.

In tracing the origin of Cornell University we go back to the year 1862. The date stands a poor chance of recognition just now with the Columbian Exposition before us and a surfeit of national centennials behind. Yet that year marks the fulfillment of the moral and intellectual promise of the nation's glorious youth. The Declaration of Independence, the noblest expression ever given to the rights of man, remained a mere form of words till Lincoln announced in 1862 the Declaration of Emancipation. In the terrible years which followed the message was re-written in blood; but through Lincoln's first draft, which is now among the treasures of our own state library, the nation was purged of the foul stain of slavery and

consecrated forever to freedom. The enslavement of man is a survival of barbarism; civilization, by the potency of science, makes a thrall of nature herself. The genius of Lincoln rose to the height of the great occasion. With one hand he smote the fetters of the slave, and with the other he joined in a splendid effort to subjugate nature. On the second of July, 1862, while the announcement of emancipation was still on his desk, he signed the act of congress, donating public lands for the establishment of colleges of agriculture and mechanic arts. This act had been introduced into congress by the Hon. Justin S. Morrill, who after the lapse of a generation, still adorns the senate and whose name will live with later generations among the noblest and wisest of our statesmen. The famous Ordinance of 1787 for the government of the Northwest territory had declared it to be the duty of the nation to support education, and it reserved public lands for the maintenance of schools and colleges. Speaking generally, there were set aside in each new state thereafter one or more townships for higher education, and in each township one section for common school education. It was the spirit of this wise national policy which begot the Morrill Land Grant. The greatest educational measure since the passage of the Ordinance, it is a splendid embodiment of the nation's long-cherished ideal of public instruction as the contemporaneous announcement of Emancipation was the perfect fulfillment of our oldest charter of personal liberty.

The Morrill act provided for a donation of public land to the several states, each state to receive thirty

thousand acres for each senator and representative it sent to congress. States not containing within their own borders public land subject to sale at private entry received land scrip instead. But this land scrip the recipient states were not allowed to locate within the limits of any other state or of any territory of the United States. The act laconically directed "said scrip to be sold by said states." The proceeds of the sale, whether of land or scrip, in each state were to form a perpetual fund, the capital of which should remain forever undiminished or, if diminished or lost, should be replaced by the state. This fund being invested in safe stocks yielding not less than five per cent. upon their par value, the interest was to be inviolably appropriated by each state to the endowment and support of at least one college for promoting "the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life." The leading object of the college was declared to be the teaching of "such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts," but "other scientific and classical studies" might be embraced in the curriculum and the subject of "military tactics" was specifically prescribed.

ITS DEMANDS ON THE STATES.

Such are the principal features of the college land grant act. It is the only congressional measure dealing with education which applies to every state in the Union. And it must be pronounced worthy of this unique distinction whether we consider the terms of the act itself or the far-reaching and splendid re-

sults it has produced in the educational life and work of the last quarter of a century. It created thirty-three colleges and infused new life into half as many more. And these institutions, which the liberality of the nation animated, have become the objects of the munificence of individuals and of the bounty of the states. A careful estimate shows that the donation of congress has been doubled by the grateful offerings of its beneficiaries. The states have tenderly cared for the seed planted by the Union. And this was obviously the intention of congress. Indeed the Morrill act, though national in origin, is in the scope of its provisions and in the mode of its administration less a system of national than of state education. The state pays out of its own treasury the taxes and other expenses incident to holding and selling the land and the cost of managing and investing the proceeds. The state is under obligation to maintain the capital of the fund forever undiminished. The state has supervision and control of the teaching, which is to be "in such manner as the legislatures of the states may respectively prescribe." And the state has one other duty—or shall I say privilege—which though not mentioned in set terms is clearly implied, and which has been performed by nearly all the states in the Union. I mean the duty of making appropriations in aid of the college founded on the land grant. And congress specifically invites and even compels such co-operation by forbidding the use of any portion of the congressional grant, or of the interest thereon, for the purchase, erection, or repair of any building or build-