

Ex 19
Pymouth College Oct 14th 1859.

My dear Sir:

Be not angry at the frolic cap! Let it compose you to be told that whatever propriety there may be in its use, belongs to my end of the correspondence, not to yours.

If I could have the pleasure of conversing with you an hour, or were to prepare a formal report, I think I could succeed in expressing my views as to the best conduct of the Dept. of Rhetoric. But as it is I have several bounds - your patience, among others - and I have taken the frolic cap not with deliberate malicious intent to be tedious, but that I may not be embarrassed by thinking I have got to the end of my sheet as soon as I have fairly begun.

My idea of a College course is that it should afford a liberal education - not a special or professional one, nor in any way one-sided. It cannot be a finished education, but should be, I think, a general outline of a symmetrical development, ^{involving} ~~giving~~ such acquaintance with all the departments of knowledge + culture - proportionate to their several values - as shall give some insight into the principles + powers by which thought passes into life - together with such practice + exercise in each of the great fields of study that the student may experience himself a little in all.

Accordingly I look upon the Dept. of Rhet. as (in the first place) with the other departments an invigorating + developing power in the College course - not as a department of literary criticism merely - cold + negative, but running far deeper than that. Instead of turning the attention to manner only, + thereby diverting it from the thought which is the life, it should rather deal with the thought, helping to cast it into shape + to utter it worthily + thus giving growth + grace + vigor to the mind.

But in a second + higher view, I regard this Dept. as embracing more than is strictly included in the term Rhetoric - especially in the sense severally given to it - as eloquence

gentle disengagement of another tendril, if need be, from the embracing of an unworthy or rotten thing. Nurture first, I insist, let a man come out, even if thereby some egotism must needs be developed - till we see what manner of plant he is: then, when he can bear it without bleeding to death, nip, prune, check, by degrees till you begin to see the glorious form growing out before you into the shape & symmetry God meant for it - lifted up from the earth, & from blind & baffled endeavor - shooting straight up in the vigor of its own nature, to daylight & to heaven. Let a professor enter with mind & heart in this way into his work, and he will find no "drudgery". For me at any rate, if such duties as these be drudgeries then I do drudgery without knowing it.

I always felt when I first knew the inside life of college - not very long ago - that there was a radical defect in the position & conduct of the Dept. of Rhet. Not that I did not appreciate & reverence & love the men who labored in it; but that I felt for myself that I was never ~~reached~~ reached - that I was still working alone, instinctively & blindly; which surely might not be the case. So this view of mine has not been taken from books, nor drawn out as a fine theory, but has grown out of what I have known & seen & felt, & still feel & see & know. I have endeavored to the best of my abilities, under peculiarly discouraging circumstances, to improve upon the former state of things. The former system embraced a recitation of some four weeks in the sophomore year, in a treatise on Rhetoric which begins by telling the youthful student that the indispensable requisites for a good writer are "extensive knowledge - discipline of mind - habits of patient reflection - Method - Power of amplification". Qualifications which every boy knows he cannot lay claim to, or hope for with reason, till after long years. In my opinion this is beginning at the wrong end of the matter. Besides trying to supply the needed encouragement & stimulus by way of familiar lectures, I have crowded in (under protest) a recitation in Whately's Rhet. for a thorough & invigorating study of the principles of Rhetoric, though I believe that privilege is not to be granted me another year. Then on the old plan these

gentle disengagement of another tendril, if need be, from the embracing of an unworthy or rotten thing. Nurture first. I insist - let a man come out, even if thereby some egoisms must needs be developed. Till we see what manner of plant he is: then, when he can bear it without bleeding to death, nip, prune, check, by degrees till you begin to see the glorious form growing out before you into the shape & symmetry God meant for it - lifted up from the earth, & from blind & baffled endeavor - shooting straight up in the vigor of its own nature, to daylight & to heaven. Let a professor enter with mind & heart in this way into his work, and he will find no "drudgery". For me at any rate, if such duties as these be drudgeries then I do drudgery without knowing it.

I always felt when I first knew the inside life of college - not very long ago - that there was a radical defect in the position & conduct of the Dept. of Rhet. Not that I did not appreciate & reverence & love the men who labored in it; but that I felt for myself that I was never ~~reached~~ reached - that I was still working alone, instinctively & blindly; which surely ought not to be the case. So this view of mine has not been taken from books, nor drawn out as a fine theory, but has grown out of what I have known & seen & felt, & still feel & see & know. I have endeavored to the best of my abilities, under peculiarly discouraging circumstances, to improve upon the former state of things. The former system embraced a recitation of some four weeks in the sophomore year, in a treatise on Rhetoric which begins by telling the youthful student that the indispensable requisites for a good writer are "extensive knowledge - discipline of mind - habits of patient reflection - Method - Power of amplification." Qualifications which every boy knows he cannot lay claim to, or hope for with reason, till after long years. In my opinion this is beginning at the wrong end of the matter. Besides trying to supply the needed encouragement & stimulus by way of familiar lectures, I have crowded in (under protest) a recitation in Whately's Rhet. for a thorough & invigorating study of the principles of Rhetoric, though I believe that privilege ought to be granted me another year. Then on the old plan there

were themes written, faithfully corrected, returned, & burned. With-
out changing materially the face of things - for that would not
do - I have virtually superseded that course by adopting a
regular system of rewriting; for the sake of "getting it" into
students' minds (& heart too; for he has one) & also for the sake
of securing the practical use & application of the criticisms
& suggestions. I enclose a scheme of this for the Junior year.
You will see that it brings every man in the class directly in
contact with me during a fortnight of every term - all that
time he is coming in occasionally for conversation & I keep the
run of his thoughts & know the shape of his mind, till he gets
his theme fully rewritten, & thus has actually carried a
point once for all, & is ready to make new advancement.
In order to give as much reality & life to the rewriting sys-
tem as possible, I have the rewritten themes in the third
term prepared with reference to speaking; thus returning
to the old practice of "original declamations", which is a
valuable exercise.

Then again in the Senior year we are just starting
a course in "English Literature" - to use a comprehensive
term. In this I have first an introductory course of lectures
embracing a historical & philological view of the language
its origin, progress & affiliations, and taking up the earli-
est monuments of the Anglo-Saxon literature one by one
following down the several periods both with respect to the
language & its authors. When we come down to Chaucer's
time we take up the study of his "Canterbury Tales" as the
earliest English, students can easily master, & then pass-
ing from him to the other great authors & orators of our
language. You will bear with me if I tell you how
I propose to pursue this course in one point. Whenever
any important matter comes up in our course, such as allu-
sion to manners & customs now obsolete - points of literary
criticism & historical research - old legends & traditions &c
I shall assign the particular examination of the topics to the
class individually - with references to the materials & sources
of information, & appoint an essay to be prepared by the indi-
vidual & read before the class: thus combining the general in-
struction of the class, with the particular advantage of each



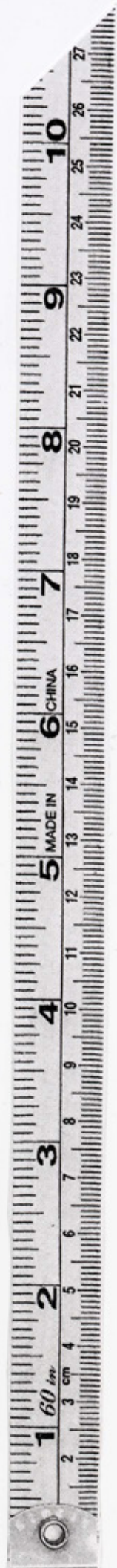
one's preparing a carefully measured & written historical or literary essay. In this way I hope to supply in some measure our lack of direct instruction & guidance in history. This course is extra & voluntary, but thus far it has been fully & regularly attended by the class.

In connection with this I have a special class in the study of pure Anglo-Saxon. Considering that this also is extra besides the general course, & that the time we give is taken only out of "dignity" days as they are called, I think it worthy of notice that so many attend the exercises of this class.

Let me say moreover that I am preparing also several lectures on various topics belonging strictly to Rhetoric - such as "The nature, sphere, & office of Rhetoric" - "Truthfulness, as an element in Style" - "The Laws of Mental Growth" - "The Logic of Expression". These I propose to deliver to the Junior class in the Summer Term.

You will see that my plan involves three-fold the labor of the old system. Indeed I have the old system, with all that I have described in addition. Certainly one would not volunteer to do so much work as this unless he saw some good resulting from it. I see the good, & though no one else should recognize & appreciate it, I have a sufficient reward in the consciousness of fulfilling my duties with fidelity & zeal. I have been beset for two or three years past to take the department of Modern Languages, but so long as I feel the responsibility upon me of carrying out this system I have entered upon, I shall allow myself neither to be seduced nor driven from my place.

I have written to you freely & fully, as to a friend. I have no right to presume very much on that title, but the interest you expressed while here, was something very different from the coldness which I usually experience, & therefore you are punished with



this array of fools caps. There are other things which
I have hardly refrained from saying, but you do
not know me well enough yet for me to venture
them, + I do not know that they would be of
any moment. I have already written more,
+ more freely, than I meant to do, but here
you have my views + intentions at great
length; + at the end, + above all, the
great respect + esteem of

Yours truly
J. L. Chamberlain.

To Phenix Cleaveland Esq
Westport
Conn.



Bowdoin College Oct 14 1859

My dear Sir,

Be not angry at the fools cap! Let it compose you to be told that whatever propriety there may be in its use, belongs to my end of the correspondence, not to yours. If I could have the pleasure of conversing with you an hour or more to prepare a formal report, I think I could succeed in expressing my views as to the best conduct of the Dept. of Rhetoric. But as it is I have several bounds – your patience, among others – and I have taken the fool's cap not with deliberate malicious intent to be tedious, but that I may not be embarrassed by thinking I have got to the end of my sheet as soon as I have fairly begun.

My idea of a College course is that it should afford a liberal education – not a special or professional one, not in any way one-sided. It cannot be a finished education, but should be, I think, a general outline of a symmetrical development, involving such acquaintance with all the departments of knowledge and culture – proportionate to their several values – as shall give some insight into the principles and powers by which thought passes into life – together with such practice and exercise in each of the great fields of study that the student may experience himself a little in all.

Accordingly I look upon the Dept. of Rhet. as (in the first place) with the other departments as invigorating and developing power in the College course – not as a debatement of literary criticism, merely – cold, negative, but running far deeper than that. Instead of turning the attention to manners only, and thereby diverting it from the thought which is the life, I should rather deal with the thought, helping to cast it with shape and utter it worthily and thus giving growth and grace and vigor of the mind.

But in a second higher vein, I regard this Dept. as embracing more than is strictly included in the term Rhetoric, especially in the sense generally given to it as entrusted with the crowning and consummating office (if I may so speak) of nurturing that power of expression without which the discipline and culture of the College course would fail of its best fruits, and which is taken, - not without reason – as the measure of a man's ability. In this view this Dept. affects what every man most cherishes and most sensitively regards, that is the expression of himself – the outward manifestation of the thoughts and feelings which are most real, most characteristic, most sacred to him.

You must see from this that I do not consider it the chief part of a professor only to “correct themes,” though this, it would seem, is all that is generally expected of him. How tired I have got of the congratulation or commiseration – much the same in principle – of even distinguished literary men. Let me quote a few fresh instructions – all from eminent scholars. “Well you have the easiest Dept. in College: you only have to look over compositions” Another. “I pity you for the drudgery you have to do in reading themes.” Another. “I would not have a friend of mine stay in that Dept. more than two years for any consideration.” Again. “What we want in that Dept. is a man of taste to correct the compositions.” One more. “I often envy you your Dept. (mark the reason) you only have to look over themes while I have a daily recitation.” Those are samples. I say no more.

Now “correction” is necessary; but I do not know that a few pencil marks on the margin of a theme will make it any more serviceable in kindling the students' next fire; nor upon this system is the student in any better position for writing his next theme from

the bad he is told, that his composition is faulty – that he did not handle his subject well – his thoughts were crude – his style was bad &c. First of all I say let us have something to correct. Let a young man be encouraged to put forth – put forth his best, even if it is for the present worthless. Let the poor fellows thought and striving have a little sunshine – a little watchful kindness – a little help to foster a reaching tendril about something solid and sound – gentle disengagement of another tendril, if need be, from the embracing of an unworthy or rotten thing. Nurture first. I insist, let a man come out, - even if thereby some egotism must needs be developed – till we see what manner of plant he is: then, when he can bear it without bleeding to death, nip, prune, check, by degrees till you begin to see the glorious form growing out before you into the shape and symmetry God meant for it, lifted up from the earth, and from blind and baffled endeavor, shooting straight up in the vigor of its own nature, to daylight and to heaven. Let a professor enter with mind and heart in this way into his work, and he will find no “drudgery.” For me at any rate, if such duties as these be drudgeries then I do drudgery without knowing it.

I always felt when I first knew with inside life of college – not very long ago – that there was a radical defect in the position and conduct of the Dept. of Rhet. Not that I did not appreciate and reverence and love the man who labored in it; but that I felt for myself that I was never reached – that I was still working alone, instinctively and blindly; which surely ought not to be the case. So this view of mine has not been taken from books, nor drawn out as a fine theory, but has grown out of what I have known and seen and felt, and still feel and see and know. I have endeavored to the best of my abilities, under peculiarly discouraging circumstances, to improve upon the former state of things. The former system embraced a recitation of some four weeks in the sophomore year, in a treatise on Rhetoric which begins by telling the youthful student that the indispensable requisites for a good writer are “Extensive Knowledge – discipline of mind – Habits of patient reflection – Method – Power of amplification.” Qualifications which every boy knows he cannot lay claim to, or hope for with season, till after long years. In my opinion this is beginning at the wrong end of the matter. Besides trying to supply the needed encouragement and stimulus by way of familiar lectures, I have crowded in (under protest) a recitation in Whately’s Rhet. for a thorough, invigorating study of the principles of Rhetoric, though I believe that privilege is not to be granted to me another year. Then on the old plan there were themes written, faithfully corrected, returned, and burned. Without changing materially the face of things – for that would not do – I have virtually superseded that course by adopting a regular system of rewriting; for the sake of “getting at” the student’s mind (and heart too; for he has one) and also for the sake of securing the practical use and application of the criticisms and suggestions. I enclose a scheme of this for the Junior Year. You will see that it brings every man in the class directly in contact with me during a fortnight of every term – all that time he is coming in occasionally for conversation and I keep the run of his thoughts and know the shape of his mind, till he gets this theme fully rewritten, and thus has actually carried a point once for all, and is ready to make new advancement. In order to give as much reality and life to the rewriting system as possible, I have the rewritten theme in the Third Term prepared with reference to speaking; thus returning to the old practice of “original declamations,” which is a valuable exercise. Then again in the Senior year we are just starting a course in “English Literature” – to use a comprehensive term. In this I have first an introductory course of lectures embracing a historical and philological view of the language, its origin,

progress, and applications, and taking up the earliest monuments of the Anglo Saxon literature one by one following down the several periods both with respect to the language and its authors. When we come down to Chaucer's time we take up the study of his "Canterbury Tales" as the earliest English, students can easily master, and then passing from him to the other great authors and orators of our language. You will bear with me if I tell you how I propose to pursue this course in one point. Whenever any important matter comes up in our course, such as allusion to manners and customs now obsolete – points of literary criticism and historical research – old legends, traditions, &c. – I shall assign the particular examination of the topics to the class individually – with references to the materials and sources of information, and appointing an essay to be prepared by the individual and read before the class: this combining the general instruction of the class, with the particular advantage of each one's preparing a carefully matured and written historical or literary essay. In this way I hope to supply in some measure our lack of direct instruction and guidance in history. This course is extra and voluntary, but thus far it has been fully and regularly attended by the class. In connection with this I have a special class in the study of pure Anglo Saxon. Considering that this also is extra besides the general course, and that the time we give is taken only out of "dignity-days" as they are called, I think it worthy of notice that so many attend the exercises of this class.

Let me say moreover that I am preparing also several lectures on various topics belonging strictly to Rhetoric – such as "The nature, (?), and office of Rhetoric" – "Truthfulness, as an element in Style." "The Laws of Mental Growth." "The Logic of Expression." These I prepare to deliver to the Junior class in the Summer Term.

You will see that my plan involves threefold the labor of the old system. Indeed I have the old system, with all that I have described in addition. Certainly one would not volunteer to do so much work as this unless he saw some good resultings from it. I see the good, and though no one else should recognize and appreciate it, I have a sufficient servant in the consciousness of fulfilling my duties with fidelity and zeal. I have been beset for tow or three years past to take the department of Modern Languages, but so long as I feel the responsibility upon me of carrying out this system I have entered upon, I shall allow myself neither to be seduced nor driven from any place.

I have written you freely and fully, as a friend, I have no right to measure very much on that title, but the interest you expressed while here, was something very different from the coldness which I usually experience, and therefore you are punished with this array of fools caps. There are other things which I have hardly refrained from saying, but you do not know me well enough yet for me to venture them, and I do not know that they would be of any moment. I have already written more, and more freely, than I meant to do, but here you have my views and intentions at great length, and at the end(?) and above all, the great respect and esteem of

Yours Truly
J. L. Chamberlain

To: Nehemiah Cleaveland, Esq.
Westport (?) Conn.