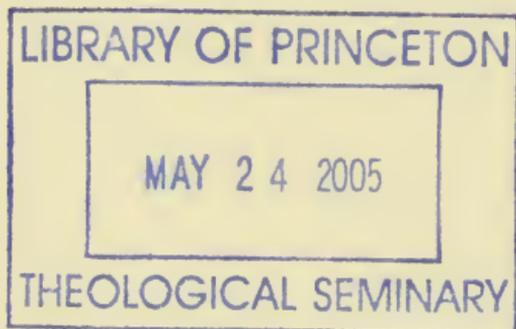




3.15.12 .

From the Library of  
Professor William Miller Parson, D.D., LL.D.  
Presented by Mrs. Parson  
to the Library of  
Princeton Theological Seminary

LB 2325  
.L77





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2010 with funding from  
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

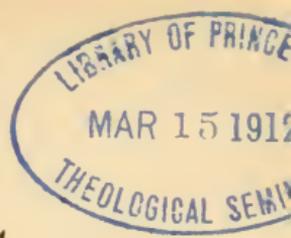






Literary addresses.

AN



# ADDRESS

BEFORE

## THE ZELOSOPHIC SOCIETY

OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

JANUARY 25th, 1842,

BY

ROBERT T. CONRAD.

---

PHILADELPHIA :

PRINTED FOR THE ZELOSOPHIC SOCIETY,

By J. Young, Black Horse Alley.

1842.



UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, }  
January 26th, 1842. }

SIR,

We have the honour to transmit to you the thanks of the Zelosophic Society, for the Oration delivered last evening, and to request a copy for publication.

Very respectfully,

We remain, yours, &c.

CHA'S GRAHAM BREWSTER,  
JOHN P. BROCK,  
ALBERT W. DUY,  
BENNEVILLE J. ESSER,  
ANDREW Y. LEVERING,  
HORACE R. WIRTZ.

} Committee.

HON. ROBERT T. CONRAD.

---

PHILADELPHIA, *February* 17, 1842.

GENTLEMEN,—In compliance with your polite request, that I should furnish my address for publication, I send you herewith the manuscript.

With great regard,

I am yours, &c.

ROBT. T. CONRAD.

Messrs. Chas. Graham Brewster, John P. Brock,  
Albert W. Duy, Benneville J. Esser,  
Andrew Y. Levering, Horace R. Wirtz,

*Committee.*



# ADDRESS.

---

GENTLEMEN,

*Of the Zelosophic Society,*

*of the University of Pennsylvania :*

Every season of life has its dreams, its waste of time and mind in unrealities, and youth, perhaps, more than any: still it may be doubted whether the earlier stages of our journey are not more practical and laborious than those of after life. Youth has every motive to exertion, and these appeal to minds and frames which move, as the spring moves near its fountain, with a sparkling alacrity, unknown to the broad river of advanced life. They who treat it as a season spanned only by rainbow hopes, and dreamy imaginings, sacrifice to a fiction, their own memory of its care and labours. It is the season of practical exertion, and as such, I will endeavour to consider its duties, with a simple and frank fidelity.

However much we may have done in our academic hours, who reverts to them without a pang for that which was left undone? In this, as in all things, the greatest prodigality accompanies the greatest wealth. The most marvellous instances of early assiduity are among those to whom fortune has been a step-dame, and who were forced, like Prometheus, to snatch, with a furtive hand,

the ethereal and immortal fire. "Sweet are the uses of adversity;" and had science wooed, from the couch of affluence, those glorious spirits who, like Hercules in his cradle, strangled the early influences of a hostile fortune, it may be doubted whether they would not have been found indolent and ease-enamoured. Even the muse finds a less ardent lover when she woos his love, than when in her coyness she flies, or in her anger repulses him. Most men regret the want of literary leisure: yet how comparatively meagre and worthless have been its fruits. The golden mass of our literature has been mined from the dwelling place of truth and taste, by those who wrought for bread. Leisure and ease relax the mind. As a general rule, those have most leisure who are most engaged; the intellect that is spurred into activity by imperative duties fills up, with profit, the chasms of time in its way; while the leaden and narcotic spirit of the man of leisure waits in vain for the moment of inspiration and action. Cæsar addressed from his camp in the Gallic war his treatise on arms to Tully; and Tully himself composed his works, in the hurry of a life crowded with the most important events.

The regret which follows early opportunities neglected is the regret of a life, for it is irreparable. In this country, the contest of life is too hot and hurried to afford time to repair the deficiencies of the past. The present hour is omnipotent, and careless of the past or future, demands a homage too engrossing to permit us to retrace our steps to the groves of the academy. We cannot leave

the field even to put on our neglected armour. But were it otherwise, the efforts of age could not supply the short-comings of youth. The mind is so framed that youth is given for acquisition, manhood for action. The youthful mind receives impressions with the rapidity, and retains them with the fidelity, of the steel impressed by the Daguerrotype; but every succeeding year clouds the light and dulls the steel, until at length, the mind becomes almost the mirror of the passing lights and shadows of life. The memories latest and liveliest in the mind are those of boyhood.

It is too generally believed that a profound and comprehensive education is less necessary here than in Europe; but in no country are the objects of the intellect so lofty as here, and in no country should its aids be so ample. In Europe, most men are educated for the rank in which they are born; they aim at a defined point in a defined sphere, and if they attain it, live and die there. Here the *strata* of society are pervious; and he who aspires must be fitted for all, and rise through all. And he can do it. The deep spring of genius may have mountains cast upon it:—chance will, in some instances, direct it to the surface, and, even upon the mountain top, it will bubble up, sparkling in the first rays of the sun when the world below is yet darkened; or the slow process of industry may perforate the superincumbent mass, until the spring of genius bursts, as the water follows the earth-auger, in glittering power and beauty to the day. In other lands, genius may go down

to the church-yard unhonoured: here there is no spot shaded from the sun; and if the seed and soil be genial, the mind will burst, under the summer of equal freedom, into greenness.

In a republic, at least in ours, every man is a public man; and this is not merely the theory of our society—it is the fact. Almost every superior intellect is connected directly or indirectly with the business of the republic. Education should therefore be most comprehensive and complete; and we must regret that too often the aspirant instead of passing years at the Palestræ, is hurried, unexercised and unmatured, into the game of life.

The true object of education is lofty as the destinies of man are lofty, for it controls those destinies. It is not to make him a successful juggler on the stage of life, to enable him to win wealth, pleasure or power; it is to gain the true prize of existence—a wise and just self-approbation. This object is not sufficiently cherished. In loftiness of sentiment, the ancients, though destitute of the aid of Revelation, were our superiors. Ethics occupied the first place in their studies. Xenophon applauds Socrates for turning all his inquiries and conversation upon “what was pious, what impious; what honourable, what base; what just, what unjust; what wisdom, what folly.”

But with youth, an admiration of moral grandeur is natural. A young man destitute of that generosity of sentiment would be an anomaly in nature—a dawn with-

out light—a spring without verdure. Scarcely, however, has he left the precincts of the college, before this sentiment is checked and chilled by the world-wise cautions of grave and affectionate seniors. The throbbing impulses of honour, patriotism and virtue are often rebuked as unwise and unprofitable, and the enthusiast is instructed that these feelings though well enough in those who can afford to cherish them, are to be entertained, by those who must elbow through the thronged avenues of fortune and ambition, only in a constructive and convenient sense. There are few men without a remembrance of such counsels, shed like a mildew over the healthful spring-tide of the soul. They are neither wise nor just. A selfish decrepitude, it is said, sometimes seeks companionship with the youthful, in the belief that, mingling their breaths, they may exchange their physical conditions. And thus far the superstition is true; though such communion imparts no health to age and disease, it dims the eye, pales the cheek, and saps the life of youth and health. In response to the counsels which rebuke what is termed a romantic enthusiasm, I would say:—Never fear that you can be too virtuous; but continue to clasp to your heart the first, best gift of God—a generous admiration of high thoughts and noble deeds. The leprosy of low and sordid thoughts and feelings will come soon enough to encrust your heart with that selfishness which is death to virtue. Retain, then, the freshness of your morning as long as you may, happy if you can bear, even to the grave, that delicate and

ennobling sense of the pure and lofty which, in the worst vicissitudes, makes life a glory and earth a heaven. One of the favourite themes of misanthropy is the sterility of gratitude and the falsehood of friendship. To say that vice is without gratitude and fidelity, is no more than to say that midnight is dark: but the wisest and best men, those who have sought true friendships, and deserved them, have not found them insubstantial or transient. They who speak of gratitude and friendship as shadows, are mostly incapable of virtue themselves—men born blind who deny that the sun shines. The best economy of life is an economy of its friendships and good feelings. For my own part, I am convinced that there is no error more lamentable than that which teaches a doubt that good is, even here, repaid with good, kindness with kindness, friendship with friendship, and love with love, to the uttermost.

The virtue least taught and most needed is courage. It is the greatest, for it fosters and fortifies all the others. Indeed nothing worth winning is won without it, for

Great things through greatest hazards are achieved,  
*And then they shine.*

By courage I do not mean mere daring—brutes and cowards may, at times, boast that—but the fortitude which is devoted to the right, and dares all and bears all, in its support. Nor is it to be confounded with a querulous acerbity. Men there be, and in high places, who boast courage for quarrelling without danger, as

hares who skulk or fly all day, quarrel feebly among themselves by moonshine. The wars of such heroes are like the bickering of northern lights, in which the superstitious descry insubstantial armies in conflict—the courage of shadows. True courage is wise and well-tempered. The mind is its kingdom, and its reward is a consciousness over which fortune has no power. It is without temptation, for it knows no triumph that is not truth's; without terror, for the united world cannot wrench from its bosom the pride of worth and the delight of virtue. With it, the mind is a well-governed vessel, guided upon its appointed voyage; without it, a wreck, under a mutiny of passion or of terror, driven into new seas by every blast, to sink at last from its own decay and feebleness. It is that condition of the mind which is impregnable to temptation, fear, or ungoverned hope—that manliness, that fidelity to virtue, which has no word in our language, but which you will recognize as the *virtus* of the Romans, which forms a just decision of character, a hatred of meanness though in high places, a contempt of danger, and a fidelity to truth even amid the crash of empires. And by this, or by nothing, must you be upheld. With it, the just man aspires to the rank of gods: without it, virtue is an easy prostitution, and vice a feeble loathsomeness.

In matters of opinion—and opinion is the Baal of our generation—danger is most in apprehension. Moral courage is safety. Those who dare the danger attendant upon right seldom fail to find it

A dwarf dress'd up in giant's clothes,  
That shows far off still greater than it is.

Brutus is represented as declaring in his death that virtue is not a real good. He who, after the sacrifice of Cæsar, retired to Lanuvium to dream away the days which should have saved the republic, who erected shadowy theories in the place of plain duties, and wedded virtue for her dower of honour only, might, even when dying in her betrayed cause, complain of her want of reality. Ages have extolled his courage, though his course betrayed an imbecile indecision; while Cicero, whose life manifested that spirit which subdues natural infirmity and dares a *dreaded* danger, who begged Brutus to meet the battle for a world in Rome itself, and led the way even while he declared his life forfeit by it, is quoted by every tyro as a coward. It is a specimen of the falsehood of history and the worthlessness of opinion. But to return from this digression, even were virtue, as Brutus declared it, a false divinity, still would courage be the omnipotence of humanity. Without it, the virtuous may live, as the dove lives, harmless; but it can only be said, they lived. With it, even the bad rise to power and honour.

It may be doubted whether our countrymen are not deficient in this *virtus*. Fear is to us, especially in the region of opinion,

Tristius haud illis monstrum; nec sævior ulla  
Pestis, et ira Deum, Stygiis sese extulit undis.

It might be thought from our green and shrinking diffidence, that we were still in our pupilage. Never lived a people whose policy was so gorgeously crowned, never lived a people so united, so prosperous, so calmly and mildly free. The most limpid stream will bear in its course a portion of the earth over which it flows; and the current of our politics may be tinged with the imperfections incident to humanity. But annals so pure, peaceful and happy, the world has never known. Yet are we distrustful of them and of ourselves. So far has this want of fortitude been encouraged, that our nervousness has become a jellied and shivering susceptibility. We fear that our constitutions are not perfect—and they are altered; we fear that our pecuniary institutions are not safe—and they are crushed; we fear the policy of our government—and change it; we fear the change—and change again. And thus we go on, until the public mind becomes a kaleidoscope in which every thing is varying, and each object as it is attained melts into something else. “They” said Randolph, “who love change, who wish to feed the cauldron and make it bubble may vote for future changes. Give me a constitution that will last for half a century—that is all I wish for.”

Nor is this fear inconsistent with rashness. No man is so imprudent as the coward. Courage does not risk so much as fear. The reign of the facile and feeble first Charles exhibits more instances of rashness than the career of Alexander or Napoleon. Impelled by distrust or panic, we too often rush into unconsidered opinion or

action. We brush away the experience of ages, as it were a cobweb; tear down institutions hoary with the moss of time, yet green with the ivy of wisdom; and substitute sudden innovations, glittering with the glaring colours of false taste, or grotesque with the novelty of ungoverned fancy. To this we may ascribe the hasty innovations which deform our legal system. We are now taught that, in nature, worlds are formed from nebulae and moulded by the patient hand of eternity into habitable and happy orbs: thus was our legal system formed from the shadows of early error; thus, percolated through centuries, and purified and organized by experience, did it take the shape of nature and truth, until wisdom itself wondered at its almost mysterious accordance with our necessities, and at the calamities which ensued from the derangement even of its minutest parts. To the distrust of which I have spoken, must we attribute the innovations with which puffed-up ignorance has covered that system, until its pyebald inconsistencies mock and dismay the student at every step. To this too, we may ascribe the success of that empty empiricism which defies science and probability, and adopts its thousand blundering and fatal modes of antedating the maturity of our obligation to the universal creditor—death; to this too, the wild philosophies which give the mind of a nervous child, when asleep, supernatural power to voyage through regions heretofore traversed by the wings of angels only; and to this the more dangerous fantasies which fabricate new faiths, the profane absur-

dity of whose creeds would have shocked the dullest ignorance that preceded the light of revelation.\* This very boldness arises from the want of that spirit which, while it inquires into all things, holds on to that which is good. Inconsiderate and sudden movements of the mass are seldom safe or wise. The herds of buffalos in our far west, are said to be swayed by uncertain impulses into a movement which becomes a panic, and the vast throng presses furiously forward over the precipice or into the flood, to certain destruction; and of this character are many of the unconsidered impulses of a mercurial people. The distrust which relies neither on the old or new, but lives always in a troubled and changing atmosphere, arises not from one erroneous opinion, but from the change of opinions. It assumes that

Of old things all are over-old,  
Of good things none are good enough;  
We'll show that we can help to frame  
A world of other stuff.

---

\* As by wicked incredulity many men are hurt, (so saith Wierus,) of charms, spells, &c. we find in our experience many, by the same means, are relieved. An empirick oftentimes, or a silly chirurgeon, doth more strange cures than a rational physician. Nymannus gives a reason—because the patient puts his confidence in him; which Avicenna prefers before art, precepts and all remedies whatsoever. 'Tis opinion alone (saith Cardan) that makes or marrs physicians: and he doth the best cures, according to Hippocrates, in whommost trust. So diversely doth this phantasie of ours affect, turn and wind, so imperiously command our bodies, which as another Proteus or Cameleon, can take all shapes, and is of such force, (as Ficinus adds,) that it can work upon others as well as ourselves.

*Burton's Melancholy.*

Irresolute minds vary with every change of confident counsellors ; they mingle the opinions successively presented, as the gamester shakes his dice ; and at every throw a different result is produced. The man of high moral fortitude, on the contrary, has that spirit of adamant, upon which the patient and temper-tried chisel of truth alone can make an impression ; but once made, that impression is fixed as some of the memorials graven on the rocks of our land, which mock the curiosity of our antiquaries : centuries, with all their storms have passed over them without dimming a line or changing a character.

We have, as a people, courage enough, and to spare. That heroism cannot be questioned which made field and flood witnesses of a superiority in daring and enduring that wrested triumph from those who considered her their slave. Nor does our national pulse beat with a feebler spirit now. The slightest theme of wrong ruffles the country into defiance ; and should the contest come, as come it may, it would be met with a shout of welcome that would ring from the Atlantic to the cottage-dotted prairies of the farthest West. And is it not strange that a people thus inspired should shrink before influences so inferior ; and that the fear of the press, the fear of cliques and factions, the fear of censure, however diminutive the penny trumpet through which it is sounded, should cow the better part of man in those whom real danger would make heroes ? The fierce spirit of Macbeth could dare

The rugged Russian bear,  
The arm'd rhinoceros, and the hyrcan tiger;

but became the "baby of a girl," when confronted with an empty chair which his imagination had filled with spectral horrors. But we cannot be blind to the truth, that mere military courage, is not the highest courage, for those who have boasted most of it have been, in loftier spheres, irresolute and feeble. 'The lives of many of whom biography has been proudest prove, that

" Fool is the stuff of which heaven makes a hero."

The absence of *virtus*, prompts in social life submission to all that is considered potential. The follies of fashion are the fruits of a tyranny which is feared while it is despised. Some there are who flutter in its light, and consider "motley the only wear," to gratify the little throbbings of a childish vanity; but the mass bow to its unreasonable decrees because they fear it. In dress and matters of a like character, the concession is too trifling to be considered; but there are other usurpations which cannot escape our contempt: as, for instance, the homage paid to wealth, even when won by acts which should link a shame to every dollar;—or to rank, though achieved by meannesses which render it a degradation;—or, still worse, to the pride of family, a pride which cannot wander back to a grand sire without stumbling over a tailor's goose, a shoemaker's stall, or a blacksmith's anvil. I do not say that these pretensions, false any-

where, but absurd here, are respected; but I do say that they are feared and cultivated, and that the unthinking mass of what is termed the "*higher circle*"—and in this country no class thinks so little—regard these claims to homage with a deference not yielded abroad to the oldest blood that stagnates in the herald's book.

In professional life, it assumes the shape of a domination of ranks, circles and cliques, who, attaining power by the force of association, seek to establish a professional peerage, and to frown down the young commoner, however gifted, who has not their seal to his aspirations. How many have, under the fear thus inspired, sunk into despondency—how many burning and divine spirits have been extinguished,—who can tell? But the sceptre is broken. The spirit of the age has burst through the barrier which surrounded the professions; and now, he who merits success may attain it. Still the ruins of that barrier are to be surmounted; and the young adventurer, from false modesty, (a frailty too often imprudently fostered, and the real ingredients of which are cowardice and vanity) often sinks at the outset, before a rivalry which a brief season of exertion would teach him to despise. Let not the youthful candidate for professional eminence mistake the shuddering which repels him from the field which he has chosen. It is oftener vanity than modesty—a vanity which fears a failure to reach its own over-elevated standard;—or cowardice—a cowardice which shrinks from that of which it believes itself to be capable;—or a sluggishness, which, though it would

graciously accept the laurel, were it twined by other hands around its drowsy brows, dares not strike or struggle for it. These weaknesses generally find a self-excuse. Were it not so, the clipped eagles whom we too often find in the humbler circles of the professions, would long since have displaced the confident and oracular owls that heavily flap and flutter above them.

Nor are the influences of this weakness less felt in the circles of trade and business. He who by slow gains, studiously hoarded, seeks to win the sufficiency that will feed him in age and bury him in death, may do it without courage. Avarice has often effected this, and avarice is nothing but the cowardice of cupidity. But he who would achieve a more liberal position, needs courage and fortitude. Mere enterprise is not courage. True courage weighs its designs before it adopts them, and then adheres to them through every reverse; and it seldom fails. He who trembles at every rumour, and changes with every change, seldom wins affluence. The absence of this commercial virtue, the presence of panic, distrust and change, have shed universal dismay and calamity upon our city. The words of Seneca describing a city consumed, do not exaggerate the fate to which a want of firmness and fidelity to self, has led us: "*una dies interest inter maximam civitatem—et nullam.*" Perhaps there is no successful merchant living, who cannot refer to a crisis in his affairs, when a want of fortitude and a betrayal of his embarrassments, would not have induced ruin and beggary.

In public life the necessity of that fortitude which constitutes the dignity of man, is still more conspicuous. Without it, no public man can be honest. The true rule is,

“To thine own self be true,  
Then wilt thou not be false to any man.”

The dread of the censure of the wise and good is a virtue; but the fear of miscreated popular opinion is, in all stations, inconsistent with honesty. And it is, even with the politician, the party astrologer who calculates his destiny, as it is ruled by the revolutions, not of the heavenly, but earthy masses, equally inconsistent with success. Politics is a moderated state of war, and courage is there as necessary as in a campaign. The want of it prompts the conciliating, instead of the crushing, of enemies—a policy like that of Rome in her decline, who weakened herself and strengthened her foes, by bribes and concessions which assured her fall. It induces a betrayal of friends in their time of weakness; forgetful that the example must be visited upon the exemplar, for no one is true to the man who is false to others. It leads to expedients, which stimulate for one moment, and betray to greater weakness the next; and it embraces every diseased error that may woo it, false to the truth which it had wedded, and which alone will be true to it. The mind has no more divine attribute than a love of true glory; it has no more feeble and contemptible meanness than the pruriency of mere praise. Next to the desire of a divine immortality, is the glory

perpetuated by the memory of good deeds. Such were the sentiments that led Cicero, perhaps the most perfect character of olden record, to entreat his friend Luceius to write his life, avowing and glorying in his hope of immortality. But between the ambition which seeks, even in its setting, and after it, to leave a glow upon the world which it has warmed and lighted, and the vanity that claims immediate flattery, there is all the difference that exists between the glow-worm that lights its little blade of grass, and the sun that floods the universe with radiance. The mere love of praise, deserved or not, from the wise or the worthless, is a disease which infects all the mind. To gain it, the readiest paths are pursued, and the readiest paths are the basest. He who is content to live upon huzzas, may find his food upon every common. Excellence, wins its way slowly, painfully, and by self denial; vanity needs little more than a conformity to the prejudices and vices of the mob and the moment. The courage of true glory, not seeking the echoes of the day, despises its censures: vanity, to secure its applause or avert its condemnation, will incur self scorn and the scorn of the worthy. And yet it is moderate in its demands. It does not seek permanent excitement; the cup of praise which intoxicates for the moment, and passes off in fume and nausea is welcomed: it does not ask the praise of the good; a shout is to it a shout, come whence it may: it does not require the applause of many; for its world, like its ambition, is contracted. These mendicants of praise, who live upon

small favours from small men, are unworthy to be considered aspirants. True ambition

“ Would rather wander thro’ the world, a beggar,  
Than live on sordid scraps at proud men’s doors.”

One of the worst results of the prevalent passion for immediate praise, is the annihilation of all distinctive applause. Ambition, though lit up by the loftiest inspirations, must now be content to feed upon the garbage that is gorged by the meanest puff-seeker. The trashiest droppings of the press, are praised in terms which spoken of Milton to Milton would have raised a blush upon his brow—“sicklied o’er” as it was, with the pale shadow of a mighty and majestic genius. The wretched retailer of empty phrases, mouthed before a gaping and shouting mob is praised in the stereotype sentences which record the triumphs of men whose lips, like those of the prophet, are touched with hallowed fire. And what is the worth of such praise? What man of real merit will not disdainfully leave it to the rout, who follow the press and the public, as certain fish follow vessels to live upon their tributes of offal? Yet has it one advantage: the praise given to any who asks it is too utterly prostituted to tempt genius from its forthright of honor. He who seeks glory seeks not such glory. Less common, it might win him from the true object of ambition—self-approval; but thus degraded, it has no charm for him whose goal is eternity, and whose prize a glory to which the radiance of earthly fame is a dimness and a shadow.

To the same cause may be ascribed much of our false taste. Time was, when he who communicated the most truth in the fewest words, was considered wise; but now the aim seems to be to say the least in the longest time. Such efforts remind us of those dim gatherings in space, described by astronomers as a diffused nebulosity.—Thoughts now are made for words, not words for thoughts. Orators determine the merit of their efforts, as the surveyor measures a tract of land, by the line; and value the acquisition by the number of acres covered. Phocion studied not so much what he should say, as what he should leave unsaid; had he lived in these times, when nothing is left unsaid, he would have encountered a difficulty, which in his age, was unknown.

The science of government is the loftiest science, for it protects and advances all others. The duty of politics in this country is two fold, to represent, and to inform the people. The former may be effected by every mind not idiotic, as every rill, not wholly defiled, may reflect the clouds that pass above it. The latter demands the moral courage which distinguishes the statesman from the mere politician. The public man who has honesty and courage will shrink from the advocacy of no sound measure or opinion, because it may be unpopular. Such a spirit can know no reverse. The meretricious smile of the moment, has, it is true, often been turned from honesty; it has been its eclipse, not its extinction; it burned brighter from the contrast. But that spirit, if true, cares not to shine. Its light is inward, its hopes upward, its

reward immortal. The honest politician, I repeat, can know no reverse, for truth never changes; he may sigh for his country—never for himself.

The courtier of the mass is the slave of the mass. His fears prompt an homage to those who have the greatest, though perhaps the basest and worst, means of controlling the event of the moment. Flattery, in all its protean shapes and debasements, is resorted to; and principles are worn and changed like a garment, with every change of the political atmosphere. And yet "corruption wins not more than honesty." Political vice even in its moment of triumph, finds its rewards crumble, like the gold paid in fabled compacts with the evil-one, into withered leaves or scattered ashes. Its strength is a weakness, and its triumph a dishonor. The force of association is a favourite engine with the politician. The constitution is bond enough for the true patriot; but those who delight in stirring up the small eddies of political life—eddis in which the corruption which has been swept down by the current is stayed and revolves in dull circles, bloating and decomposing, until having, for its time, infected the air, it sinks and is borne away—those who linger around these pools, regard them with a superstition beyond that which was, of old, paid to fairy stream or haunted well. The praise of these ward senates is to the hour-slave, who seeks to be reflected in such a mirror, sufficient glory; their denunciation is political death. But everything which has power has for him a fear. The fear of office, of the press, of the brawler who raises

a huzza at a meeting, or the driveller who drinks his way into the heart of the tap-room—all are terrible: and thus, amid the basest wishes and fears, does his soul vibrate. Not such were the Statesmen, who in 1624, 1682 and 1776, “ascertained the sacred rights of man.” Those three periods may be considered the eras in which human nature rose to its loftiest elevation. Each was a mount Ararat, upon which rested, for the time, the ark of liberty, when all around rolled the turbid and turgid waves of despotism. Not such were the spirits of those glorious revolutions; and not such, let us hope, are the statesmen of our own time. And even of those who haunt the low paths of political life, many have capacity for that which is better and loftier, and lament the necessity, (as if the wide world had a necessity which should prompt to dishonor,) that enforces their debasement. Better were it, that those who, misled by a glimmering of false ambition, toil in such scenes, should seek the truer glory of cherishing an independent spirit by an independent fireside. The greatest of the ancients preferred the first station in a frontier village to the second at Rome; a loftier and purer philosophy would teach, that the first place in the affections of a virtuous household is a more shining position than any which the meanness of perverted political life can confer. For what, at last, are the rewards of political life? A few—let us believe the worthy—clamber up, over every crushed enjoyment, into a barren greatness, to encounter envy and hatred (which Cyprian calls the *serræ animæ*, the

saws of the soul,) to be the subject of calumny, ingratitude and wrong; and after a period spent upon the rack of office, they retire, with health, intellect and fortune wasted, to a home which politics too often renders desolate. But to the mass of aspirants, its crown of thorns is not even surmounted by the idle feather that tells its unhappy triumph. In this country, no man is *sibi nati*; every good citizen is bound to participate in the duties which guard the common weal; but no wise man will mingle farther in the strife than patriotism demands. Perhaps no man ever acted in public life without realizing the justice of the remark of Demosthenes, who said that, if to be a judge or be condemned, were put to his choice, he would be condemned.

It would be profitable to trace the presence and results of the want of spirit and independence upon our general modes of thought; especially in relation to literature, and the capacity of the race for improvement. In literature, it must be owned that we have not achieved what might have been expected from us. We have thrown off a nominal dependence upon Europe; but the chains which are heaviest and most benumbing—those which wrap the mind—are still upon us. Our native land, our position, history and destinies, grand and peculiar as they are, should have, but have not, a literature of their own. In habits of mind, taste and sentiment, we are still a province, and lack the spirit even to will our independence. Our authors are forced to write for English taste and English approbation, to secure American applause. Until we can

acquire the spirit which thinks and acts for and from itself, we cannot expect to win or deserve great excellence in anything. It is not adversity and opposition that have checked the developement of American genius. To true intellect, where there is a will there is a way. There may be some minds like subterranean caves, where the sleep of night has never been broken, which, if lighted, would throw back the splendour reflected from millions of virgin gems breaking, for the first time, into radiance. But there are few such cases. Genius and adversity, like Cæsar and danger, are "lion cubs littered in one day;" but genius "the elder and more terrible." I have seen farmers lash the bark of young trees with a thong of withes to promote their growth; and genius, thus scourged by the iron hand of adversity, rises into loftier power. Affluence, prosperity and praise have crushed thousands, where opposition has retarded one. Difficulty and hope are the pillars of light to ambition, to guide it through the desert, to its promised land. Adversity, then, is not so much our foe; the only influence which we need fear, is the lack of that spirit which, instead of being satisfied with an imitation which is the more despicable the more it is triumphant, dares to disown all masters but truth and nature; and leaves the wings of the mind free as the eagle, not taught, like falcon, to quarry by rule, and obey the signal which, should it soar beyond its bounds,

"Will lure the tassel—gentle back again,"

One of the inspired and inspiring lessons taught in the literature of the ancients, is the innate and divine aspiring for the better, the better when in ignorance, the better when enlightened, the better when refined and purified, and still, and still, *the better*. Religious freedom is the foster mother of free intellect; while religious bigotry and fear may be seen, in all ages, treading out the rising fires of the mind. Under the influence of the former spirit, we see Socrates teaching a doctrine of purity, gentleness and piety—a doctrine that made the heart the seat of virtue, and Duty its source, supporter and reward. After ages realized the general harmony of his doctrines with that system taught by the source of all moral light. But it is worthy of remark, that while the sperm of falsehood, the millions of errors begot by bad heads upon bad hearts, die and are forgotten, there is something essential and divine in truth which preserves it. Though Socrates perished, there was no hemlock could destroy the truths he taught. He found in Xenophon and Plato disciples worthy of him; and in studying another of his disciples, Cicero, we pause to ask, was not this man a Christian? Indeed, an eminent author and divine has said of him, that he was a Christian before the coming of Christ; and certainly, there was an elevation and purity in his doctrines and life, which proved the native divinity of the human intellect, even in the “disastrous twilight” which preceded the advent of Christianity. Having alluded to that sacred era, let me add that to it and the faith which then shed a moral

day upon the earth, must we look for the source of the only true *virtus*, the courage that sits, a monarch, upon the heart, with none to make afraid. That era brought and taught equal dignity, equal rights, equal hopes and equal rewards, to virtue in all stations. And virtue is the only freedom. The voluntary slave in a republic, whether bound by his vices or his subserviency, is more a slave than the wretch who hates the chains in which, sleeping or waking, he pines away his life. How noble the sentiment of an old English poet.

“Let them fear bondage who are slaves to fear:  
The only freedom is an honest heart.”

Every duty of life, whether in the warring world or at the pain-tended bed-side, duty to parents, children, friends, but most of all to The Parent—demands fortitude. Happily, the time has passed when open persecution against religion was to be breasted; but the underflowing current of opposition and prejudice exists; and he who enters into active life finds, at every step, the value of that fortitude which will maintain, amid neglect, association, temptation, sophistry, and more than all, ridicule and satire, the religious principles which, in the calmer and purer moments of study, he adopted. Yet, if groping without the aid of revelation, the main truths of religion were discovered by the glimmering light of nature, that intellect must be feeble indeed, which, uniting classic to modern study, can find place for the coward doubting which would defraud us of the only hope which life can boast worth cherishing—death and its reversion of immortality.

Even the earliest writers abound in sublime appeals to those eternal truths which the outer darkness of their faith could not wholly exclude. Thus the chorus in *Ædipus*, lamenting the decay of virtue and religion, recognizes a heaven-born code of justice. I will attempt a paraphrase of the passage, giving, I trust with some fidelity, the train of thought in the original.

The beamy Code ! Oh, be it mine  
 To tread the path the just have trod ;  
 And prove that stainless law divine,  
 Its birth-place, Heaven—its father, God.  
 Sprung not from man, to know decay,  
 And pass, as he must pass, away ;  
 Nor by oblivion rock'd to slumber cold :  
 'Tis instinct with a God, and never waxeth old.

Insolent pride, our country's blight,  
 With gilded ills o'er-pamper'd long !  
 It dashes o'er the clifly height,  
 To die the tortur'd waves among.  
 But for that spirit firm and clear,  
 To God and to our country dear,  
 Ne'er may it faint ! To it, to me, be given,  
 To know no hope, no pride, no patron, but in Heaven.

Who walk unaw'd in word and deed,  
 And truth and faith a scoffing make,  
 Who scorn thy sky-encircling creed,—  
 Their triumph evil doom o'ertake !  
 If they who boast dishonest gain,  
 And holy thoughts and things profane,  
 Should triumph,—where's the virtue-shielded heart  
 From which will fall, repuls'd, wild passion's shatter'd dart ?

Never again the choral voice  
 On wrong o'er thrown would pour the strain ;  
 Never again thy shrines rejoice,  
 Thy hapless sons ne'er smile again,

Did not th' eternal system prove,  
 Thy justice, purity and love ;  
 And leave the doom'd, in guilty ruin hurl'd,  
 The scorner now the scorn'd—the bye-word of a world !

It is the policy of those who dread the improvement of man, those who would have the world ever as it is, to doubt the capacity of the race for progressive improvement. In this country, to doubt it is a faint-hearted treason to the destinies of our people. Has not the history of the race been the history of progression? 'The ancient powers in mechanics are now so familiar that we forget the centuries which produced their discovery and perfection. The very origin of much of the truth now possessed is unknown : but how much do we owe to those who struggled in that misty and unrecorded past—the intellects which started the advance of the mind, an advance which time has only accelerated, which opposition has only checked to accumulate its power for renewed and irresistible progression, and which, under heaven, will go on—go on, until earth is made, if not a heaven itself, at least the vestibule of heaven ! And let those who mock at these hopes, remember that they mock the religion which has promised a millenium. What man will say that he has reached a point beyond which he cannot improve and elevate his nature? And if no man has seen or known a barrier to human improvement, why should he libel the scheme of the universe by conjecturing one? What we are, we know ; but what we may be, no man (unless he has been and done his best, and who has?) can pre-

sume to say. The native instinct of the mind, undegraded by sensual passions, is to soar, not grovel; and where pure intellect is, there is virtue. No man is at liberty to ascribe the debasement of his nature to necessity. He is his own master, and controls his own fate. It is the merest folly to imagine that fate sends men into the world hood-winked, to stumble over predestined ills and vices.

“ The weak, low spirit, fortune makes her slave,  
 But she’s a drudge when hector’d by the brave;  
 If fate weave common thread, he’ll change the doom,  
 And with new purple spread a nobler loom.”

And the real triumphs of such intellects are not the mere embellishments of life; but the improvement of the moral and physical condition of the race. Already, has the intellect effected that which renders civilized man, in the eyes of those who still linger about the post from which civilization started, a God—controlling the elements, over-coming nature, and looking down upon conquered impossibilities. In reviewing the parturient centuries that have borne these truths, we cannot but be struck with the fact, that the divinity of truth is proven by the immortality of its triumphs. Through all time, amid all the revolutions that have shaken the earth, truth has lived on. We glory, too, in the regular progression of the intellectual nature of man. What has been, in all walks of the mind, is inferior to what is. Even now, the soul of the age is swaying the world,

“ Like a strong spirit charm’d into a tree,  
 That leaps and sways the wood without a wind.”

The amount of acquisition is greater; and the intellect is swelled into loftier dimensions by the truths upon which it is fed. Nor do I doubt, that hereditary improvement is thus induced; and that one of the great objects of life is the elevation of the race, by a rising succession of examples of moral and mental excellence. But the most kindling consciousness which the student can cherish is, as I have said, that truth is indestructible; that he who has unveiled it may pass away, but the truth will never. We read that vegetable seeds buried by convulsions of nature under mountains, and remaining thus for centuries, will if uncovered—as was the case in the resurrection of Pompei—germinate with ready vigor into verdure and beauty; and truth thus, though covered with mountains, will, in its own good time, spring forth again, bright with its unconquerable immortality. For ages cannot tire out the foot of truth; error, calumny and persecution cannot quench her spirit; she can sleep, as she has slept, through the midnight of centuries, and arise as from a refreshing slumber, to go upon her way. She has, as an archangel, a hierarchy higher than time, or chance, or change. The memorials of the intellect in the cause of truth, are deposited in the archives of heaven, an imperishable inheritance for those who win them. Wealth and power and rank and rule are lost at the grave; but truth goes with us to that country, not “undiscovered,” beyond the tomb, to be there our glory and our exceeding great reward.

The spirit of improvement is, even now, heaving the world with its strugglings, though we, in the strife of life, see it not. The combatants at Cannæ, in the din of the battle storm, amid clashing shields, braying trumpets, shouts and groans and horror, knew not that, at that very moment, the hills around them were rocking and waving to and fro with the heaving of an earthquake. Thus has the conflict of life blinded us to the vast organic commotions prevailing around us. Nor can the spirit which is struggling into life be smothered. It cannot be stifled, as the Corybantes drowned the cries of the infant Jove, with the clash and din of the warfare of society. Against every obstacle, it has advanced, and will advance, until the dignity and destiny of man are vindicated.

FINIS.







503216  
05-12-05 32180

LBC

214

MS





LB2325 .L77

Obituary addresses delivered on the

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00085 2162



