

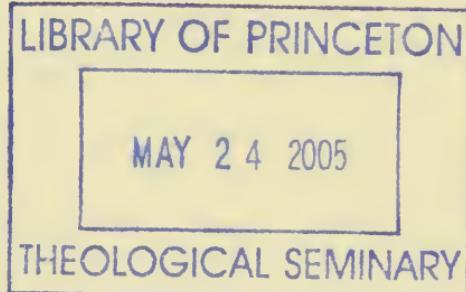


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A D D R E S S  
DELIVERED BEFORE THE

# ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

OF  
LAFAYETTE COLLEGE,  
EASTON, PA.

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BY  
WILLIAM E. BARBER, A.M.

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## A D D R E S S.

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GENTLEMEN :

The return of another anniversary of the Alumni Association, has again convened us together. We meet as brethren, after a long and distant separation, to exchange congratulations, and re-unite our hearts and sympathies under the roof of the old home-stead. We have left our various avocations, and laid aside the insignia of our daily toil, and have come up to cast our votive offerings of respect and affection, and whatever worldly laurels we may have gathered, during our absence, into the lap of our alma mater. Time, without destroying our loyalty to the distinctive society, whose badge we were proud to wear when actively engaged in the duties of this institution, has mellowed down the prejudices which once disturbed our intercourse, and uprooted the bitterness too often engendered by an undue emulation. We remember our youthful partizan manifestations, only to be amused at their folly, or to deplore the excesses into which they hurried us. All our former animosities are forgotten in the joy of this re-union.

Assembled thus, under circumstances peculiarly favorable to retrospection, we are transported back, through the lapse of years, to the sun-lit days of our collegiate discipline. Faces that bent with us over the books of study—forms that wrestled with us on the college *campus*—competitors, with whom, in bloodless conflict, we grappled upon the arena of literary contest—countenances of instructors, that were accustomed to greet

us in the recitation halls, and all the accompanying scenes of our scholastic life, arrange themselves in a beauteous panorama before us.

But we meet, not, merely, to resuscitate the associations of the past—to grasp the hand of fellowship, and renew the intimacies which time and distance have interrupted. Since the period when we stood upon the threshold of yonder edifice, holding in our hands the certificates of our scholarship; our brows flushed with gladness that the term of our preparatory discipline had expired, and our pulses beating high with the expectation of future success; we have tasted the enjoyments, and perchance, experienced the trials of that world, which was so long the object of our aspirations; and we now return to impart to one another the lessons we have learned in our intercourse with men; to collect into a common reservoir the accumulated results of our observation and experience, whence each may draw wisdom, strength, and encouragement for the more efficient discharge of the duties of his calling.

Without attempting any display of classical learning, but rather in departure from the usual routine of topics of discourse, which immemorial custom has sanctioned as appropriate to occasions like the present, we have selected a subject of a practical nature, with the hope that some crude thought, or desultory suggestion thrown out, may be found worthy of preservation, or, at least, may have the effect of directing attention to the importance of our theme. If we succeed in investing our subject with sufficient interest to attract the notice of any of the educated minds before us, the aim of our ambition will have been fully attained. We propose to show that *a knowledge of Human Character is essential to the usefulness of educated men.*

It is unnecessary to explain more clearly the meaning of the terms employed in the announcement of the subject. There is no obscurity in the language, nor can there be any misconception of the sentiment intended to be enforced. It is rather to be apprehended that the proposition is too self-evident to require any elucidation. But whatever acquiescence may be yielded to the statement of the truth, it requires only a superficial observance of the actions of men to discover, that but little credence is awarded to it in practical life. Without controversy, there exists throughout every grade in society, a deplorable ignorance of the capacities, propensities and general characteristics of human nature. Side by side, we journey

along through life, with a goodly company of fellow-travellers, and never so much as glance at the aspect or apparel of the companions of our pilgrimage. Especially is this ignorance perceived among men of studious habits and cultivated minds. Their chambers of study are their little worlds. The living, moving throng of human beings without are strange and almost forgotten. The human caravan is daily passing before their eyes, and few among them know, or imagine, what a world of interest is hidden in the character of each individual of that countless throng.

He who supposes that no other instruction is demanded for the duties of the world, than that which is imparted at a college, or an university, has mistaken the end of intellectual effort, and the object of existence. The studies of a collegiate course are designed more to discipline the mind for the acquisition of knowledge, than to furnish it with stores of erudition, to be garnered as a source of pride, and a subject of complacency. The graduate has but gained the vestibule of the temple of knowledge. Within, are contained unnumbered apartments, filled with objects of curiosity and absorbing interest. Some of these apartments the feet of predecessors have already traversed, but the greater number remain still unexplored. The farther the votary proceeds in his inquiries, the more his happiness will be increased, and the greater will become his capacity for usefulness.

The fountains whence information may be drawn, are infinite in number and variety. The most valuable, doubtless, are books. But they are not the only sources of knowledge ; and, it is to be feared, they are too frequently substituted for those other aids which, though not of equal value intrinsically, are, at least, necessary concomitants of the printed volume. Observation and reflection perform important offices in the education of the intellect. Nature, in all her diversified forms of interest and enchantment, are spread out for their exercise. We need not books to teach us that *her* scenes are transcendently beautiful, and that the order and regularity of her laws, and the method of her operations, in forming and combining the constituent particles of matter, are calculated to inspire us with amazement, and fill our minds with thoughts of beauty and sublimity. But we can go forth into the open field, and penetrate the dark shade of the forest ; and clamber to the mountain's top ; and see, and hear, and feel, for ourselves, the manifestations of the power, the majesty, and love of Him who has

created all scenes and harmonies for the enjoyment of his rational creatures.

The student of Nature is usually assiduous and unwearyed : for every step of his progress increases the fascination of the study ; every new fact disclosed, casts additional effulgence over the subject of investigation. The Mineralogist willingly endures fatigue and hardship in the prosecution of his favorite science ; the Botanist pursues, with unflagging ardor, the discovery and classification of plants ; the Ornithologist traverses the rugged mountain and the tangled brake with untiring energy, to obtain some bird of brighter plumage, or sweeter song, with which to grace his museum ; and the Astronomer, sedulously surveying the heavens through his telescope, deems the discovery of some new luminary, sufficient compensation for years of patient research. If, therefore, the inanimate and irrational parts of creation afford such stores of captivation and delight ; if it is a source of exquisite pleasure, in each flower that displays its beauty to the sun, and in each leaf that clothes the tree with verdure and symmetry, to recognize a familiar friend ; to call by name each bird, and beast, and shell, and insect ; and to be able to compass the heavens at a glance, and claim an intimacy and “ kindred ” with the stars ; how infinitely more fascinating should be the study of mankind ! For, “ What a piece of work is man ! How noble in reason ! how infinite in faculties ! in form and moving, how express and admirable ! in action how like an angel ! in apprehension how like a god ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals ! ”

But aside from the pleasure which the prosecution of this study affords, the knowledge of human character is of the greatest practical utility in all the avocations of life.

*It confers the power of directing the minds, and moulding the conduct of men.*

No one can be extensively useful without influence. True, few are entirely destitute of influence, either for good or evil. Example itself is contagious. The constant attrition of minds, by association and intercourse, is not without its sensible effect. Intercommunication of thought and sentiment produces a reciprocal change of purpose and opinion. Influence of this kind is unconsciously exerted. But there is an ascendancy which can, and should be acquired by the educated, more powerful than the involuntary assimilation effected by the contact of minds of different capacities, and the impressions made upon each by the constant interchange of thought.

All have experienced the power of *maternal* influence. With what solicitude the faithful mother watches the opening intellect of her child! How painfully she marks the evil tendencies in its disposition, and how carefully she labors to repress them, and to mould, with the sentiments of a better nature, the plastic mind of infancy! And if some redeeming traits of character should appear, how patiently and hopefully she toils for their development! Who can have forgotten the wonderful facility with which his mother, during the period of his childhood, could read the thoughts of his heart, detect the presence of deceit, or guile, and tear aside the veil of equivocation and untruth, with which he had expected to conceal from her the knowledge of his disobedience? To attempt to impose upon her a reason, or an actuating motive, which had no existence, was a fruitless task. Either the countenance was an infallible index of the heart, or her acquaintance with the character of the child, enabled her to indicate, unerringly, the course of conduct which the presence of certain scenes and temptations had induced. Neither time, place, nor circumstance, can eradicate the consciousness of a mother's influence. Like a guardian angel, it accompanies the individual far into manhood, reaching, in many cases, even to old age. It clings to us equally in solitude and society. Absence from the parental roof cannot impair its power. In the discharge of duty, the thought of a mother's approving smile encourages; in the haunts of vice and dissipation, the imagined sight of a mother's tear of sorrow reproves, with the authority of a second conscience. Even the assurance of a mother's death, rather augments than abates the strength of that ascendancy which she possessed in life. The beautiful fancy that the spirits of the departed are permitted to hover around the path of those they loved on earth; to rejoice at their struggles for the right, and to mourn over their aberrations; is a tenet in the creed of almost every mind. Harmless, as an article of faith, and doing no violence to the teachings of inspiration, it not unfrequently exercises a chastening and purifying effect upon the hearts of the living: cheering them in their despondency, and nerving them to the accomplishment of life's wearisome tasks.

The authority of a teacher of youth over his pupils, should be second only to that of a parent over his children. Among the innovations of the age upon the long-established usages, none seems to be more generally welcomed in schools, than the substitution of moral suasion for the wholesome discipline of

the rod. Whether the satisfaction arises from the discovery, after a fair experiment, of the actual superiority of the new system; or whether it proceeds from a vivid recollection of the energetic measures employed by the old disciplinarians in spurring the sluggish intellect, and administering correction to the refractory; and a disposition to shield the objects of fondness and affection from similar inflictions; are questions still in progress of solution. But this is undeniably true, that moral suasion will be utterly ineffective, without some conception of human character. Ignorance upon this point neutralizes the effect of the best instruction. That system of discipline which will render one youth an ornament to society, may qualify another to be a ringleader in every species of vice and sensuality. Stern and unsparing reproof, may goad the sensitive mind to desperation. The reckless offender heeds not the gentle admonition, and continued lenity inspires him with contempt for the authority so lightly imposed.

Many, otherwise competent instructors, learned, zealous, and gifted with a happy faculty of communicating information, often have occasion to lament, that their indefatigable labors are but meagrely rewarded. But how *can* he impart instruction successfully, who is unacquainted with the nature of the minds entrusted to his guidance and development? The same routine of education is not adapted to every intellect. The nutriment which will expand and invigorate one mind, will as certainly arrest the growth and impair the energies of another. The dull and plodding youth requires extraordinary incentives to activity, while the same incitements, presented to the ambitious, would prove hurtful by stimulating to over-exertion.

If teachers were more generally possessed of the capacity to discern the susceptibilities of the youth consigned to their care, our seminaries would be more flourishing; our literary institutions more effective nurseries of learning; the cause of education would be more highly esteemed, and the diffusion of knowledge greatly accelerated.

But the communication of instruction is not confined to schools and colleges. Knowledge may be constantly imparted in the daily walks and intercourse of life. In this point of view, the educated are, or should be, all teachers—not of children only, but of men. The object of education is not merely to furnish the man with the means of self-gratification, although many perceive no other ultimate end to be accomplished. “To do good, and to communicate,” is a duty enjoined upon us by

the highest authority. Active, earnest and unceasing efforts to ameliorate the condition of mankind, physically, intellectually, and morally, is an obligation resting upon every member of society. He who labours most assiduously in this work of philanthropy, will receive the highest recompense on earth, and the brightest crown of glory in heaven. There is no room in society for the drone. The indolent are rightfully despised.

By a wise provision in our code of laws, the vagrant is accounted a transgressor, and is adjudged worthy of imprisonment, lest his example should contaminate the community. The possession of affluence or talent increases the obligations of the individual thus highly favoured, to employ his endowments in advancing the happiness of his fellow-creatures, and suffering is the necessary consequence of refusal. Unless wealth be devoted to acts of charity and benevolence, it curses its possessor—it blights the finer feelings of the heart, and drains all the sources of happiness. But there is a species of covetousness equally sinful with the lust of sordid treasures. It is that disposition, often manifested by learned men, to accumulate and retain knowledge solely for the pleasure of its pursuit and the enjoyment which its possession bestows upon them. He who withdraws from the world into the seclusion of his study, for the selfish purpose of feasting alone upon the fruit which he has plucked from the tree of knowledge, is chargeable with abusing the gifts of Providence in wasting, upon his inordinate desires, stores of nourishing food, which, if distributed among his fellow men, might have fed many a famishing intellect, and stimulated many another into vigorous activity. As long as ignorance and superstition remain in the world, educated men have no right to hoard the treasures of learning which they have amassed. It is the design of Providence that the faculties of the human mind should be improved by education. For, until the understanding is strengthened, man cannot know his duty to his Creator. If, therefore, the cause of religion be the cause of God, and mental illumination prepares the way for spiritual knowledge; and if men are only stewards of the talents they possess, and bound to employ them actively in the service of their Maker, how grievously do they transgress, who bury their gifts in retirement, and withhold them from the purposes they were designed to subserve. The intellectual anchorite is an order of beings not recognized in the Divine government. The man that spends a lifetime in studying the habits of a single insect, or in endeavouring to discover the hidden mysteries in the life of a vegetable, though his pursuit may be replete

with interest, confers no real benefit upon the world, and falls far short of the end for which he was created. Not that every object of investigation should be brought down to the rigid standard of utilitarianism, in the general acceptation of the term, but that every occupation should tend immediately or remotely to the advantage of the human race and the glory of the Creator.

To the educated, bearing always with them the conviction that it is their duty to dispense the light that is within them—opportunities are constantly presented for communicating instruction. Not only in the legislative chamber—in the crowded church—in the court of justice—in the lecture room—and in the presence of the assembled multitude—but in the polished circle—in the social club—in the public conveyance—in the casual encounter upon the thoroughfare—and in the sick-room, there may be found occasions for scattering precious seed. In this sphere of duty, however, no one will labour long without perceiving the absolute necessity of knowing the general characteristics of the human mind. To impart gratuitous information to full grown men, is an undertaking of great delicacy. The pride of man will not brook the open and direct attempt to communicate unsolicited knowledge. For the proffered favour pre-supposes ignorance in the intended recipient, and there is too much vanity in the human heart to bear patiently such an implication. Incessant vigilance and caution, therefore, are necessary in this department of labour, so as on the one hand, not to offend by officiousness! and on the other, not to cast away the seed upon the barren desert or the sterile rock.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." The tumultuous battle field is not the proper place for a sermon upon the wickedness of war. The voice of the preacher is unheard amidst the din of clashing weapons and the curses of angry combatants. When the mind is fully occupied by some intricate calculation, or overwhelmed by tidings of the miscarriage of a valuable commercial venture; the croakings of the moralist are deemed intrusive. The barrister engaged in the conduct of a complicated cause; or the physician burthened with solicitude for the safety of a patient in the crisis of disease, is impatient under the well-meant exhortations of the zealous evangelist. To attempt to convince the angry man in the fury of his passion, of the sinfulness of his conduct, were as futile as to reason with the madman upon the causes of insanity, or remonstrate with the whirlwind for the devastation it had caused. Many men of the strictest rectitude

of purpose, instead of seizing the “golden opportunity,” account all moments golden, all seasons convenient, and all places equally becoming; and thus the cause which they love is often “wounded in the house of its friends.”

It is important also, to know the proper *method*, as well as the time and place, of exerting, influence. Here again, many sad mistakes are often made. Approach the poor inebriate with words of harshness and rebuke, and he will turn away with loathing, and curse you in his heart. But address him in accents of kindness; sympathize with his misery in such a way as not to alarm his pride; recall to his mind the scenes of his youth, his innocence and his happiness; and speak to him tenderly of the sufferings of his wife and child, and you will have touched a chord in his bosom, inaccessible to ruder hands. Then let in upon the darkness of his despair the sunshine of hope, and lead him gently away from the contemplation of his wretchedness, until you make him feel that he is still a man, and capable of elevating himself to his former dignity, and you may have effected in him the commencement of a blessed reformation.

There is a way of stimulating the coward to deeds of bravery and high renown. There is a way of melting into penitence the most unprincipled reprobate that ever mocked at a mother’s prayers, or ridiculed the sorrows of a gray-haired and broken-hearted father. There are incentives sufficiently powerful to arouse the energies of the slattern, and render him an efficient auxiliar, in every good work.

Some minds can be moved only by harshness and intimidation; others by the silken cords of persuasion and love. Argument, with many, only confirms them in error, but seem to yield them the mastery, and they will descend from their elevated stand, and, at length, concede whatever is required.

In the use of the means of influence, much care and circumspection are requisite, lest what is designed for good, should produce a disastrous result. The amount of injury committed by the imprudence, or ignorance, of well meaning men, can only be known in eternity. Many a youth, doubtless, who might have been the pride of a parent’s heart, has reached the disgraceful terminus of a course of crime, through the misdirection of indiscreet counsellors. Many a profligate, who had attained the verge of ruin, might have been rescued by a skilful hand, but was only toppled over the precipice. Many a transgressor might have been won back to virtue and to God by wise words, that was only hurried farther into transgression. Many a re-

turning prodigal would have found a father's house, and received a father's welcome ; but, intercepted by officious friends, he was driven again into exile and riotous living. Many an outcast who might have been reclaimed from his sinful career, when his heart yearned for the voice of pity and forgiveness, encountered only bitter upbraiding, and plunged deeper into iniquity. And many a child of promise, who might have attained the eminence on which a Newton or a Milton stood, has had his faculties stunted in their growth by the heavy impositions of hard task-masters ; or, disgusted with the uncongenial studies assigned him, he has refused to put forth further exertion, and has sunk into hopeless lethargy and insignificance.

They who were instrumental in causing such calamities, must expect to be visited with the retribution they deserve ; for if they had qualified themselves for their stations, as teachers and counsellors, these unhappy consequences might have been prevented.

The great number of the members of this Association, are engaged in the duties of a professional calling. To such, this subject forcibly commends itself. It is scarcely necessary to remind the Lawyer, that to be intimately conversant with mankind is essential to the attainment either of the emoluments or the honourable distinctions of his profession. Of this necessity he soon becomes sensible, after entering upon his career. The nature of his pursuit brings him constantly into contact with men. Abundant opportunities are afforded him of studying human character, in all its manifold representations ; for to no other individual is the machinery of human action so unconsciously exposed. It is peculiarly his province to contend with the subtleties of the human heart. With the ability to decipher the meaning of faces, and discern the passions and propensities that lie beneath, he becomes possessed of an instrument of tremendous potency. In the cross-examination of witnesses, he wrings the truth from the most reluctant. He detects and exposes all prevarications ; overthrows all subterfuges of falsehood ; subdues the bold and overbearing ; shames the impudent ; tranquillizes the agitated ; encourages the fearful ; and emboldens the diffident. Through every avenue of the heart he pursues the truth ; no dissimulation can baffle ; no effrontery confound ; no evasion escape detection.

In advocating the rights of the injured and oppressed, before a jury of the country, this acquisition is of invaluable assistance. It gives to retort its pungency ; to irony its shaft ; to sarcasm its poignant sting. It enables him to select weapons of argu-

ment of the finest temper, and to wield them with the most powerful effect. Capable of reading upon the countenances of the jury, the influence of every word addressed to them, he rivets the attention; he convinces the understanding; he carries captive the feelings; he secures the verdict for his client; and vindicates the cause of justice, truth and innocence.

But the high-minded Lawyer is sometimes required, in the conscientious practice of his profession, to dissuade from litigation; not only where the pecuniary interests of his client would suffer from the prosecution of the action, but also where the peace of society would be frivolously disturbed, and especially where the cause of morality or religion would be injuriously affected. No honourable man will lend himself to be the base instrument of gratifying malignity, nor will he obey the behests of the vindictive and the oppressor, whatever may be the magnitude of the promised remuneration. But it is not enough to refuse to undertake the management of the proffered cause. Another more compliant tool of malice, or revenge, may be found to consummate the deed of iniquity. It is the duty of the upright Lawyer to endeavour to obtain an abandonment of the intended wrong. For this purpose he will need a familiar acquaintance with human character. The most ungovernable passions of our fallen nature must be encountered, and all the resources of the active mind—reason, expostulation, ridicule and intimidation, must be successively employed to effectuate their overthrow. But if the victory should be gained; if the purposed injury to society should be prevented, and the threatened blow to virtue be intercepted; though the fame of the deed may never extend beyond the precincts of the council-chamber, the approbation of a good conscience, and the consciousness of having fulfilled a sacred duty, will be a reward far more satisfactory than all human applause.

The Physician finds frequent occasion for the application of this attainment, in the exercise of his noble profession. He also, is required to exert a controlling influence over other minds. He exacts, and expects, obedience to all his injunctions. He must reign supreme in the chamber of affliction. None should gainsay his authority, nor rebel against his reasonable requirements.

Without the moral power to enforce submission to his mandates, his ministrations will eventuate calamitously to his patients, and disparagingly to his own reputation. In his demeanor towards the subjects of disease, he is compelled to use the most

careful discretion. He must inspire confidence in his skill; dispel apprehensions of immediate danger; and excite hope of final recovery. In order, therefore, to act wisely under all circumstances, he should be able to ascertain, without delay, the peculiar disposition of those whom he is called to relieve.

But he is not confined, in the practice of his profession, to the cure of maladies of the body. He is sometimes summoned to "minister to a mind diseas'd," and commanded to

"Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart."

In such an emergency, mercury and depletion lose their talismanic influence; the infinitesimal medicaments of the homeopathic school affect not even the imagination; and hydropathy, with all its invigorating virtue upon the outward man, is powerless to reach the seat of the disorder. Strong common sense, and a familiarity with the laws of the mind and the character of the patient, alone, possess any efficacy.

Life or death may be suspended upon the language and deportment of the physician. Cases occur where it is essential that he should weigh every word, and exercise the most cautious circumspection over his conduct, in order to convey the sufferer safely over the fearful crisis of disease. At such a time every movement of his body, and every change of his countenance are closely watched by relatives and friends, and a single unguarded action or expression may precipitate the dreadful calamity. If the attendants that surround the couch of the invalid, are endued with strong mental control, he can explain, from time to time, with perfect safety, the condition of the sufferer; but if they are easily excited, and prone to give way to boisterous ebullitions of feeling, it is his duty to be silent, lest their agitation should reach the ear of the afflicted one, and accelerate the ravages of the disease. The patient himself, in cases of extremity, should be informed of his situation, and it depends much upon the manner in which the physician imparts the appalling truth, whether the communication will induce a serious preparation for the probable issue, or only aggravate the malady, and hasten dissolution.

Is this subject worthy of the consideration of him who ministers at the holy altar? Is it not practicable for him to direct

the minds of men to the contemplation of spiritual things from the elevated pulpit, and through the silent press, without an intimate association with them, and an attentive observance of their character? Does not the nature of his vocation exempt him from this necessity? By no means. There are ministers of the Gospel who hold it unseemly in members of their sacred profession to maintain a commerce with the world so familiar as the study of human nature would seem to require. No greater mistake can be made. He who commanded them to be "harmless as doves," enjoined upon them likewise to be "wise as serpents." They are great teachers of moral and religious truth,—they should be *wise* to know the appropriate time, and place, and method, of rendering it effective.

They are ambassadors from heaven,—they should be *wise* to take advantage of every circumstance which may promote the object of their embassy. They are watchmen in the church,—they should be *wise* not only to discover the approach of the enemy, but also to detect his presence within the walls. An indiscriminate intercourse with men is not advisable, nor is it necessary, for the acquisition of this wisdom. It would be highly unbecoming in them, to descend from the serene mount of communion with their Maker, and mingle with the stormy passions, the bitter prejudices, the noisy strife of political contest, and the clamorous wrestling for worldly honour and affluence, which are incident to secular employments. But the minister can avoid all such occasions of offence, and still become an adept in the knowledge of human nature.

How few profit by their privileges! Satisfied if they can gain an acquaintance with their own hearts, they seldom think of watching the motives which actuate the conduct of their fellow-men.

Secluded within the walls of the college, or the seminary, from the period of their childhood, they enter into the battle of life, unarmed and unprepared for the struggles that await them. Unlike men of other pursuits, instead of quietly taking their places in the ranks, and suffering themselves to be borne along with the crowd, until they can snatch a weapon of defence, and learn the art of warfare by actual experience; under the dictates of an erroneous conception of their duty, they strive to retire from the conflict, but only expose themselves to ruder blows, and become entangled in greater perplexities.

Without some knowledge of the world, the clergyman may be as learned as Chalmers; as profound as Edwards; as devo-

tedly pious as Payson or McCheyne, yet the sphere of his usefulness will be circumscribed within narrow limits—he is only partially qualified for the profession whose active requisitions and solemn responsibilities he has assumed. He is the subject of every practical joke,—the victim of every boyish amusement; and though admired in the pulpit for his splendid abilities and varied acquisitions, he is pitied, and even ridiculed, for his artless and infantile simplicity. He is constantly imposed upon by the plausible dissembler. He expends his benevolence upon unworthy objects of charity. He lends his influence to visionary, useless, and injurious projects. He moves through the community, continually violating the usages and courtesies of society, but is incapable of seeing the reflection of his conduct in the countenances of his observers ; and while all the world may be amused at his foibles, he is wholly unconscious of their derision. When either in the courageous discharge of his duty, or under the impulse of a zeal without knowledge, he has given offence, unable to perceive the indications of the gathering storm, he unwittingly places himself in its very pathway, and is beaten down, or swept aside with violence, astounded at the suddenness with which the calamity overtook him.

The divine should always prepare his discourses with a direct reference to the character and wants of his people, and the state of feeling in his congregation. He who preaches at random is likely to effect as little as he who prays at random. It is possible to sit under the dispensation of Divine truth, from youth to hoary age, and in all that time not to have had the sensibilities affected. The matter of the sermons may have been sound and evangelical, and the manner of the preacher earnest and impassioned, and yet words of fire may have fallen unheeded upon hearts of stone, which had penetrated into their inmost recesses had the proper mode of entrance been ascertained.

Some may be disposed to impugn the orthodoxy of these views, and to say that instruments are of no account, so long as the truth is preached in sincerity. But the doctrine of the special interposition of the spirit to supply the deficiency of the preacher, has long since been exploded. God works by instruments, and he requires his servants to be “thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Their fitness for the office is the strongest evidence that they have been called to the work of the ministry. Observation teaches us that those divines who have been most conversant with the follies and vices of men—whether they were once participants themselves, or only had a

favourable opportunity of observing them from a distance—are always the most efficient evangelists. They are the most capable of portraying the nature and bitter consequences of a career of iniquity. They can trace through all the labyrinths of the breast, the evil thought to its fountain-head. They can expose to the man of transgression, the corruptions of his life in all its hideous deformity. And they can present to the mind, motives for reformation, of irresistible power. Where the language of others would only obdurate, their appeals penetrate to the quick—alarm, humble, encourage, and incite.

In administering balm to the wounded spirit, and consolation to the afflicted ; in dissipating doubt ; in relieving perplexity ; in detecting spurious piety ; in repressing wild enthusiasm ; and in inflicting the discipline of the church upon the faithless professor—the minister necessarily meets with a diversity of character ; and happy will he be, in time and eternity, if he accommodate his words and actions so wisely to the various subjects of his ministrations, as never to err or injure, but in every instance promote the spiritual welfare of the souls intrusted to his charge.

Educated men have many infelicities, which have subjected them to ridicule and animadversion, from the days of Homer to the present time. Many of them result from ignorance of human character. It is only necessary, at this time, to allude to one. It is that excessive sensitiveness—that shrinking of the mind from a contact with the world—and that want of self-confidence which characterizes many of studious and retired habits. That it renders them unhappy, and injures their usefulness, they themselves are deeply sensible, and would eagerly grasp at any means of overcoming their embarrassment. Perhaps it never occurred to them, that their diffidence might be the effect of a deeply-seated and inordinate love of approbation.

Is it not true, that the diffident man bears with him an abiding consciousness of inferiority, and that he cherishes an insatiable desire to obtain the admiration of his fellow-men ? He performs no action that he does not immediately wish undone, that he may execute it more creditably. He expresses no sentiment that he does not desire to retract, lest it may prejudice him in the estimation of his audience. He is constantly upon the rack of uneasiness, with the apprehension that some rash word, or inconsiderate deed, may detract from his reputation for wisdom or sagacity, or obstruct him in the attainment of those marks of distinction to which he ardently aspires.

Diffidence must be carefully distinguished from modesty. The latter is eminently praiseworthy. The truly wise are habitually modest. As the mind becomes enlightened, the capacity to perceive the insignificance of all human attainments, becomes painfully enlarged. There are so many evidences of wisdom in the works of creation, the scope and design of which are incomprehensible to the finite intellect; so many sciences, with elementary principles scarcely yet discovered by the most profound; so many steeps of knowledge, with summits yet hidden in the immensity of space; and so many depths enveloped in darkness still unexplored—that the most gifted mind recoils within itself at the impossibility of encompassing the boundlessness of science. But the modest man, with all his humility, in view of the wisdom of Omniscience, is not distrustful of himself in the presence of his fellow-men. Nor is he so keenly sensitive to praise or censure, as the diffident. Under all circumstances, he maintains his self-possession, and with firmness, yet without any assumption of superiority; asserts his dignity, and vindicates his claims, to attention and respect. Bashfulness in the educated—until every method of surmounting it has been tried, without success—is a vice. The world makes no allowance for their mistakes, and it is questionable whether they are entitled to it. Timidity is attributed to stupidity, and the blunders of a bashful man are the lawful property of every jester in society. Cowper, one of the most modest of men, has written—

“Sweet bashfulness, it claims at least this praise,  
The dearth of information and good sense  
That it foretells us, always comes to pass.”

There is a happy medium between impudent assurance on the one hand, and fearful distrust on the other; but of the two extremes, the former, paradoxical as it may appear, is received with the greater favour by mankind, and presents fairer prospects of success in every undertaking.

Let the diffident man, then, turning his attention from his own imperfections, enter seriously upon the study of mankind. Let him notice the frivolous objects of their pursuits, and the trifling aim of their aspirations; the facility with which their minds are swayed by passion and interest; the childish follies of the greatest men, and the simple toys which will afford them gratification; and the readiness with which public opinion can be manufactured and unmade—and he will not only learn to respect

himself, but compel the respect of others ; he will acquire independence of thought and action ; and no longer stoop to worship at the shrine of a fluctuating popularity.

It is not properly within the purview of our subject, to offer any suggestions which may facilitate the study of human character. Every individual that enters upon it, will probably pursue a course peculiar to himself. Some may call to their assistance the recently discovered system of phrenology. But whatever may be the justice of the claims of this discovery to rank among the sciences—an examination of the cerebral developments in search of character, would be at all times inconvenient, and generally impracticable—physiognomy can be employed to a limited extent ; but words and actions are as important in the estimation of character, as the expression of the countenance.

In general, a close and vigilant scrutiny of the disposition of every man encountered in the walks of life, whether it be evinced by the language of the actions, of the lips, or of the features, will be rewarded betimes by a satisfactory insight into human nature. An occasional interview with an individual, unless he studiously endeavours to conceal the manifestations of his natural temper, will enable the attentive observer to learn at least his ruling passion, and the strong impulses of his nature. But to the adept, a word casually dropped in conversation—the sparkling of the eye ; the compression of the lips ; or the lights and shadows which alternate in the countenance—will furnish a key to the treasure-chamber of the thoughts and emotions.

Hasty conclusions, however, from a superficial examination, must be carefully avoided.

In the words of an apparent master of the science—

“ Sometimes at a glance thou judgest well ; years could add little to thy knowledge :

When charity gloweth on the cheek, or malice is lowering in the eye,  
When honesty's open brow, or the weasel face of cunning is before thee,  
Or the loose lip of wantonness, or clear bright forehead of reflection.  
But often, by shrewd scrutiny, thou judgest to the good man's harm :  
For it may be his hour of trial, or he slumbereth at his post,  
Or he hath slain his foe, but not yet levelled the stronghold,  
Or barely recovered of the wounds, that fleshed him in his 'fray with  
passion.

Also, of the worst, through prejudice, thou loosely shalt think well :  
For none is altogether evil, and thou may'st catch him at his prayers,  
There may be one small prize, though all beside be blanks ;  
A silver thread of goodness in the black sergecloth of crime.” TUPPER.

When the educated man has acquired this subtlety in judging of character, his capability of doing good is beyond computation. Clad in an impenetrable panoply of defence against imposition, deception and ridicule, like a skilful fencer, he can strike just where his blows will be most effective ; if necessary, disarming his adversary and prostrating him uninjured ; proving his superiority, and compelling deference to his skill.

He moves along in the masquerade of life with the power of piercing the various disguises of his companions ! and if justice, propriety, or good order, should require the exposure, he occasionally uplifts the masks that hide the visages of the company, and exhibits the scion of nobility clothed in the garments of the serf ! the boor, tricked out in the robes of royalty ! the hypocrite, in the garb of the saint ! the base, wearing the semblance of the honourable ! the mean and sordid, in the guise of the generous and charitable ; and the kind and gentle nature, concealed under an exterior of cold and repulsive austerity.

He is the true friend of the wretched and the destitute ; for he is sure of conferring his charities only upon the real and deserving sufferer.

He is the strong champion of the weak and defenceless "little ones," for he can anticipate the blow of the oppressor, and throw around them the mantle of his protection.

He is a successful peacemaker ; for he knows how to assuage the elements of strife, before they have ripened into the ungovernable tempest.

He is a light to the benighted mind, and a guide to the erring. In short, he can distribute with a liberal hand the wealth of a well-stored intellect, and the largess of a heart overflowing with goodness ; assured that his benefactions will neither be abused, nor return to him without having accomplished the object of his philanthropy.

In urging this subject upon your consideration, with such earnestness, we would not be understood as deprecating the value of literary and scientific attainments. It is farthest from our purpose to magnify its importance, at the expense of other means of training and expanding the intellect, which are of primary moment. The study of the ancient classics and the exact sciences, furnish the mind with a vigor and copiousness, which will be sought for in vain elsewhere. We claim for our subject only the place of an adjunct to other important acquisitions. It is but an instrument by which the energies of the cul-

tivated mind are made more effective. As a weapon is of no avail without the muscular arm to give it motion and efficacy,—as the magnifier is useless without the organ of vision—so the knowledge of human character is inefficient, without the disciplined and vigorous intellect to apply it to useful purposes.

Thus, gentlemen, feebly and inadequately, but with an earnest desire to make this annual meeting an occasion of good, the task assigned me by your partiality has been performed. We have enjoyed a pleasant season of communion and a brief relaxation from the cares and labours of our worldly pursuits. When the exercises of this commencement shall have been concluded, we will separate, to repair again to our several avocations.

Upon this spot—the scene of our early privileges, and the home of our most delightful associations, we may not meet again. But the links which bind us together in brotherhood have been strengthened by this interview. When we descend from this eminence of learning, to wrestle again with the world, we will bear on our hearts the interests of every member of this association. If, in future time, distinction or success should crown the honourable enterprises of any of our number, we will rejoice over his honours as if they were our own. If adverse fortune should occur to any, we will proffer our sympathies and good offices. If death, we will mourn, with the sorrow of bereaved brethren. The Institution, which was the birth-place of our mental endowments, will live in our memories till the latest hour of life. We will cherish the lessons of love to God, to man, and our country, with which she imbued our youthful minds, and her continued prosperity will ever be a source of pride and heartfelt elation. May we comport ourselves with such propriety that she will never blush to own us as her sons !





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