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SELF-CULTURE.

AN ORATION

DELIVERED AT

THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

OF THE

Philosophic Society

OF THE

COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY,

JUNE 27, 1865,

BY THE

REV. EDWARD N. KIRK, D.D.

PUBLISHED AT REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY AND THE CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE.

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O R A T I O N.

BRETHREN OF THE CLIOSOPHIC SOCIETY:

It is now nearly half a century since some of us sat where you sit to-day; but in what different circumstances! Our beloved country then stood midway between a successful struggle on the one hand, to secure our national independence, and a successful struggle, on the other, to save the national life. We had then come on the stage too late to feel the quickening impulses of the one, and too early to feel the influence of the other.

You, then, feel a stimulus that we did not feel. American citizen has a meaning now it never had before. The educated youth of our country have such a work before them as was not dreamed of in our college-days. And I confess that in this view the temptation to deal in patriotic themes to-day is very strong. But I will resist it; believing that the interests of our country may be more promoted by my coming into closer communion with you, I shall aim thus more effectively to aid you in preparing for the work assigned to each one respectively, and in securing those national and personal blessings which Providence is holding out as the prize before us.

At your call, we have come to share your joys; not indifferent to any one generous feeling that throbs in the heart of the youngest present this day, whether of the candidate

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for matriculation, the undergraduate, or him who is just emerging into the dignity and the immunities of Bachelorship.

We retain, in vivid recollection, how the world and college-life once appeared to us. Nor do we feel ourselves as far removed from you as you regard yourselves separated from us. Forty-five years forward in human life is a very long, an almost interminable vista; forty-five years of retrospect is almost as a day.

We have come to rejuvenate ourselves by meeting you, after nearly half a century of the experience of life; to tell you how we have found it; to look with you at college-life from our present point of view; above all, to help you appreciate the advantages of this period of life, and of your position here. Many of our college-notions we have found ourselves obliged to relinquish; and if you have inherited them we shall employ our most persuasive powers to induce you to relinquish them earlier than we did.

Among the most injurious was, the assurance that we could force men's respect; that proposition we have amended by substituting *earn* for *force*. Another was, with some of us, that the diploma; with others, that a jovial life, was the great object of being here. We have amended these by substituting for *diploma* and a *jovial life*,—*self-culture*!

It is a natural impulse that presses the youthful student toward the scenes of active life. Something within assures him that being in a college has little to do with success in life. All that he wants is, room for his wings, a chance to fly. Plodding over syntax and synonyms, listening to lectures about rocks and bugs, has little to do with those splendid schemes which rise on his enraptured vision, giving life its charms. He pants to put on the harness, to do the real work of life; to become a hero, a Michael Angelo, a Raphael, a Chatham, a Webster, a Ulysses Grant; to achieve something grand; to make a mark on the eternal rocks, that future ages may

recognize and honor the impress of his genius and his noble spirit.

I honor the impulse, but would simply give a change to its direction. Aspire, young friends, aim high, soar,—the impulse is noble, but it needs qualification and guidance. Fame is not the goal; men's admiration, power, position, are not the end to seek; they are too low for man made in the image of God. There is a better way,—a better end; your own Cliosophic motto gives you the key,—

“Prodesse quam conspici.”

Be, rather than seem; seek excellence and usefulness before admiration. It is often remarked, that success in college is not a criterion of excellence, nor an index of future success. The maxim needs examination; it is one of those half-truths that are half false. If a young man makes showy recitations and the college-honors the supreme motive to study, he is on the lower track; his motive degrades him; his aim hurts his moral nature; he will always be doing the same thing,—seeking show rather than substance; seeking self as the *summum bonum*. His is not the stuff of which heroes are made; his is not the path in which they walk who are enshrined in a nation's veneration and gratitude.

I would therefore say, aspire to be good, and to do good; to be truly great, and to do truly great things. But, remember, that here and now are to be formed the habits which control the future. Here is your gymnasium, your drill-camp; if you are to be great hereafter, here the foundations of that greatness are to be laid,—deep, broad, solid. Here you are to drill for the conflict of life; here to mould the future man.

Would you not be satisfied, while yet young and immature, if an infant Prince of Wales were brought here to be educated by you? or, still better, if a young angel were brought down

from the celestial world to be, by you, prepared for its future life and work!

But that is just what you have. More than that; you have a being more complex and wonderful than any angel intrusted to you; one that combines in itself all that the angel has, and then another nature besides; mind and matter, angel and animal: that being is yourself. More than that, you have this task to perform in a world where evil influences of immense power resist every good purpose. And the task assigned you is to be performed in view of the sublimest recompense and the most terrible penalties.

What more can you demand? A more difficult task? But there is enough here for the loftiest powers. A more honorable task? But there is enough here to satisfy the most aspiring. The civic crown has been given to the living sculptor, painter, and architect. Phidias, Angelo, Raphael, stand high on the imperishable rolls of fame. Wherefore? Because they have expressed the ideal in material forms. But your work is chiefly in mind; only subordinately in matter. You are to bring immortal spirit into conformity with the purest and grandest ideal. The sculptor and painter, at best, make only semblances; you are to make realities, vital and imperishable.

Understand then, young friends, that a college is a sacred inclosure, set apart to the highest of human employments,—*Self-Culture*, or the process of securing for one's self the highest possible degree of perfection, usefulness, and blessedness.

The advantages of the position for securing this end are great. That is the sole object and business of the place. Able men are set apart here for the specific purpose of aiding you to accomplish that end. The most valuable instruments that human art can furnish, are here placed at your disposal. All the learning of past ages, from every clime and nation, here offers you its aid. All your companions are here pursuing

the same lofty end. Hallowed memories are continually here to inspire your flagging zeal. Names are on the College catalogue that shine with an undying lustre. Yonder cemetery contains the mausolea of some of our country's brightest ornaments.*

Everything here conspires to one single end,—to send you forth qualified to enter upon a high and noble career of usefulness, honor, and blessedness; the highest end, next to the glory of God, that man can seek.

Yes, Self-Culture is your work here; a work to which all else on earth ministers. When science, art, literature, government, poets, orators, and teachers have finished their work, what is the highest result they have reached? They have done this, and this only: they have aided individual spirits to cultivate their own powers.

The vine grows ruggedly in the wilds; but we transplant it into our garden, trimming its luxuriant growth, furnishing it with a favorable soil, supporting its tender branches, shaping it to the sun-light; and the result is, a stronger, more productive vine. Nay, by the process, we change and refine its vital juices, and give its fruit a nobler quality. Such is the fruit of the proper culture of man. From a savage, he becomes a gentleman; from an ignorant boy, a learned man; from a vicious boy, a good man. Ordinary powers grow into extraordinary faculties; a life that might have drifted on the world's currents, as the idle weeds of the sea, becomes a freighted argosy, bearing back from barren isles the most precious golden treasures.

If, then, you agree with us, as to the true design of college-buildings and college-life; and if you agree that we have not set too high a value on the end they are designed to promote, I now invite you to notice how that end is to be secured.

* Edwards, Burr, Dickenson, and other eminent men were interred in the village cemetery.

How shall the young man in college secure the highest possible form and degree of culture ?

In entering upon our subject, we must notice that wonderful law which pervades every part of our physical and mental constitution; and which will therefore meet us at almost every stage of our reflections on it. I allude to the law which we denominate, Habit.

It may be thus stated: the repeated employment of any power of mind or body makes the repetition of such act ever more facile and more probable. It extends to the muscles, the joints, the senses, the postures, and motions; to the very secretions of the body; to the mind in all its powers; perhaps, we may say, to the very will in all the freedom of its nature.

It has two stages: the formative and the controlling. In the first, it overcomes resistance and difficulties. A child sits before a piano; he is to move his ten fingers in conformity to signs marked on the paper before him. See what difficulties are to be overcome: the eyes are to pass from one line to that below, and back again continually, so as to keep two sets of marks vividly in the memory. He is to remember, also, what key on the instrument corresponds to each note respectively. He is to notice the length of time each finger must remain on the key; and then to bring all of those ten fingers to move in exact conformity to those marks. Here are very great difficulties to be overcome. He must think, and observe, and try, and repeat. He must hold himself there though the sounds come swelling from the play-ground to tempt him abroad. This is the first stage. Would you witness the second, go hear Gottschalk or Thalberg draw the music of the spheres from those trembling chords. What ease, what mastery, what freedom, what joy, what power, what inspiration! That is habit forming,—habit formed.

This great law seems to be a part of the moral government of our Creator; operating on a limited scale here; reward-

ing all forms of virtue, from the lowest to the highest, and punishing the opposite vices. The formation of right bodily habits, resulting in comfort, skill, power, health, beauty; of bad habits, in discomfort, awkwardness, weakness, disease, deformity; the formation of good or bad intellectual and moral habits, producing equally their appropriate results here, and reaching boundlessly into that eternity which man enters a creature of habit.

Now, the period passed within the walls of the college is peculiarly that in which the first stage of habit is passed,—the formative period. This resembles the plunge of the swimmer, that gives a shock to be followed by an invigorating glow of delight; it is the season of struggle and resistance, of will and perseverance; of battling with every evil tendency within, and power without. Then the joints and the sinews of the body and the mind are being developed, and their modes of action fixed. The youth is then giving shape to the man. The college-curriculum has no magic in it, however. It is only a helper to the worker. It gives him simply his opportunity, and his needed aid and instruments.

And there is many a young man entering a college who would do better to spend half his first week on his knees, praying God to help him change his habits, than in going on as he has begun. It appals the imagination to contemplate the first week of some who enter these sacred inclosures. They seem to have come here only to be educated in vicious habits of body, mind, and heart; to confirm all that is bad in their nature; to corrupt others, and to cheat themselves and the world with a show of education.

But, young brethren, you, we trust, have come here to educate yourselves. And here a noble band of cultivated men stand ready to assist and guide you. But books, teachers, lectures, can do you no good, if you are here forming only

bad habits; all, or the chief, good they can do you, is to help you in the work of forming good habits.

Now we meet the question, "But what am I to do in college?" And in answering that inquiry for each one, I shall go over a wide ground, superficially, of course, but, I trust, securing two important results,—impressing you with a sense of the magnitude of your work, and, at the same time, of its importance—its sublimity.

The first step in any enterprise is to see what is to be done; and then to make an enlightened, earnest, unqualified purpose to accomplish it. Eschew, then, with a clear vision, and all the ardor of your young natures, the pleasures of sense, the enjoyments of indolence. Count them the enemies you are here to fight. Look out earnestly, seriously, on the future; on the spheres you are to occupy in society; on your coming manhood. What kind of a man ought you to be? That settled, then lay aside every weight and run for that goal; for the attainment of bodily and mental health, goodness, sound knowledge, disciplined powers; to have taste and judgment, and every noble executive faculty developed. Say to yourself, "I am to leave this Institution a thoroughly developed man, founded for study, for action, for the true enjoyment of life; for my God, my country, my race."

Having thoroughly chosen your end, the next step is, to arouse the soul to enthusiasm and hope in its pursuit.

No course of study ought ever to be dull, even though difficult. In fact, I consider enthusiasm a vital attainment for a student. And if I were a teacher I would spend my strength on a dull student chiefly in that direction; for your labor is mainly lost so far as you fail of that.

Then the student must contemplate his situation, his instruments, his opportunities, and his temptations. Let him say to himself, "Good and wise men have, at great expense, and with much labor, created this Institution. Here are eminent men waiting to help me. Here are books and apparatus.

Now, how can I, to the best advantage, use each for the accomplishing of my great end,—the full development of my manhood?"

I now invite you to notice the several branches of the work, beginning with—

I. *Physical Culture*, or the training of the body.

But what is the physical good the student is here to seek? Many and important objects are before him. The first of them is health, a prime element in a student's life. Morbid minds may have over-estimated it. It may, indeed, become our duty to resign it at the call of Him who has the right to order our lot; but in itself it is a great blessing. No wise man undervalues it. The pagan rightly conceived of the true end of self-culture when he spoke of the

"Sana mens in corpore sano."

One has said, "Health is a duty, a power, a joy, a beauty." Without it light is darkness; sweetness bitter; life a burden. The body is under a code of laws, complex and beautiful in their harmony, yet stern in their exaction; admitting of partial remedies, but of no atonement. There are laws of health, which we are bound to know and respect, as we do the laws of the country. The skin has its laws; so have the digestive organs, the lungs, the brain, and the nervous system. You are to learn those laws, and learn to conform your life to them. For instance, the appetites must be conformed to them. The gustatory organs lie in the front of the mouth. If you consult them alone, you hurt your higher nature, and enfeeble all your nobler powers. The animal is at the very entrance of the body. The angel is within; and he must either control the animal or by it be dethroned. Little indulgences of narcotics and stimulants make the body master at length.

To see a young man with a wine bottle before him, and a cigar or pipe in his mouth, puts him in a certain category for

us. We have seen the beginnings and the endings of this class of young men. He is "booked," as the English phrase it, for a useless life, an unlamented death, and a terrible account. To see a young lady doubled up in a rocking chair, with the spine curved on a radius of four inches, the shoulders doubled over the chest, and a yellow-covered book in her hand, involuntarily forces upon us the conception of an apple stewing over a slow fire. Mental and bodily vigor are there simmering and seething their bone and muscle into pulp. You have come here to attain the mastery of all your inferior natures, the appetites and passions; to "keep the body under." Melancholy histories rush on the memory as I stand here, and recall some of the most brilliant stars, once shining in this literary firmament. I recall one who disregarded the counsel others then gave him, which I am now repeating to you. His light was at length quenched in the quagmire of beastly intemperance. He learned much, but he had not learned the first lesson: Keep the body under the spirit.

Take care of your posture in studying, reading, and writing; for now, remember, you are forming it for life. By your attitudes you may be crowding upon some vital organs, especially the respiratory. Breathe pure air always, night and day, is a primal canon of Hygiene, and for this end the chest must be kept expanded. Next in importance, be in the direct rays of the sun as much as is consistent with indoor duties. Take such exercise as will contribute to expand the chest, and cherish the habit of breathing deeply. Keep a clear conscience and a cheerful spirit, for they contribute much to the healthful tone of the body. Development is another end to be sought, particularly of the higher senses and physical faculties—the eye, the ear, the voice. The capacity for development in the powers of vision, audition, and manipulation, is marvellous. The eye not only tells the mind of the plain, commonplace facts of life; it is also the inlet to all the beauties of earth and sky; to form, color, proportion,

motion, harmony, in their boundless, ever-varying developments. There is a museum in every square inch of the earth on which you tread; a gallery of portraits in every assembly of human beings; God's taste displayed in every landscape, in trees, and animals; in every bone and muscle and outline of your own wonderful frame. Let not the artists monopolize the enjoyment and the refinement which the observation of beauty and grandeur imparts. Go from college with an eye ready to appreciate what art and nature and real life will constantly present of a refining and cheering influence through the eye.

So, too, we might speak of the ear, and of the voice, that wonderful instrument which the sacred poet called the glory of his frame. But we pass to speak of—

II. *Mental Culture.* The first stage of education is not the acquisition of knowledge. Until the student comes to his professional course, the main object is to attain to the full and harmonious use of his own powers—the formation of right habits of thinking. It is not what a man knows, but what he is, that fits him for life's work. *Intellectual culture includes truthfulness, or delight in truth*; seeing things as they are, in clear daylight, undistorted by any refracting atmosphere of prejudice, or party, or interest, or fashion. Love truth, young friends; search for it as for hidden treasure. Cultivate the aversion to sophisms and intellectual tricks. Cultivate the patience that will wait respectfully knocking at wisdom's doors. Seek for her imprint on every fact you receive, and every general principle you adopt. To control the attention is perhaps the highest intellectual attainment man can make, and the chief duty of man. "Be a whole man to one thing at a moment," says one of gigantic intellectual stature. One hour of real study, following out a line of Homer, settling every point of prosody, inflexion, and syntax by the rules of the Greek language, is worth more in making the future man in the Senate, the Camp, or the Pulpit, than

all the twelve hours of study spent in reading the most elegant translations of Homer. Accuracy, thoroughness, an utter aversion to living in mental twilight—that is the requisite of a genuine student. This, in part, is the secret of Abraham Lincoln's rising to his astonishing eminence from such unfavorable surroundings. Next to it I would place—

2. *The habit of rightly exercising the judgment and the believing faculty.* Multitudes of well-educated men, as generally regarded, go stumbling through life, the dupes of sophistry and of designing men, and wasting their powers, because their belief does not embrace realities, but dreams, fictions of their own, or others' fancies. When you come to the real work of life, to social intercourse, to sit in the jury-box, on the judicial bench; nay, to plead before thoroughly disciplined minds; nay, to preach or to teach; nay, in the small affairs of the family, or in the great affairs of society, the commanding faculty is a sound judgment, one thoroughly versed in evidence and the right estimate of probabilities. To this end you must learn how to reflect, and how to read books, and to use conversation.

The third department of intellectual education is the cultivation of—

3. *Sound views and principles.* To benefit mankind, we must be able to bring all human feeling and action to a sound moral standard. Otherwise we cannot contribute to making the world better. The thorough establishing of correct principles of life is for ourselves, then, essential to usefulness. We need, moreover,—

4. *A correct taste.* There remains an unsettled debate on the question, whether there is a uniform immutable standard of beauty. On that question I have no hesitation in taking the affirmative. But I believe that the highest human standard is only proximate. Still, the standard of civilized men is higher than that of savages. And each of us should reach as high a position as the highest.

Another intellectual faculty, including the highest form of corporeal faculty, is—

5. *Utterance or the power of expression.* This includes much more than you can finish here, but a fair beginning must be made in the college course. As I am attempting to traverse a wide space, I must not linger long in any one spot, however attractive. You, young friends, are here, training to move the world in two directions—upward and onward; to counteract both the two forces of gravitation and vis inertiae. There must, then, be very positive force in yourselves, as well as a knowledge of the best methods of employing it. The electric battery gathers in silence its secret fires, and then it needs a good conductor to accomplish its ends. Here you are charging the galvanic battery that shall send its words of power rushing through the world. And now you must see to it that you have a good conductor. The wire is manufactured here. Make it good, make it the best; for that is becoming the fashion of the land. Learn to write and speak. Lay yourselves out for both. Waken every power that comes sluggishly to its task. From the high throne of the will send down an order to draft every man needed in the country's service. And if any one claims exemption, from feebleness or sickness, put him under the care of these distinguished doctors. They have sovereign remedies; no charlatanism here. They have high food and strong medicines. Young gentlemen, aspire, through speech and printing, to mould and move the age in which you live. To be brief, then, I would say, first of all, have something worth saying; then say it in the most effective way. In other words, get clear conceptions. If you live in a flat, foggy country, expatriate yourself, and go where the sun shines. Keep the heart in its right place, for, even in the inferior sense in which I now use the term, "out of it are the issues of life!" Lord Buchan has said, "Exquisite power has its root in exquisite sensibility." Quick, appropriate response of the heart to

everything, according to its æsthetic or its moral qualities, whether it be beautiful or hateful, good or evil, noble or ignoble, just or unjust, generous or mean, is the root of eloquence and of forcible writing. In all your observations of nature, from the roar of the thunder to the chirping of a cricket; from the frown of the awful mountain-crag to the smile of an infant, teach your heart to feel; train it to abhor legal rascality, and to admire nobleness in a beggar. Keep a heart in harmony with that which occupies the upper throne. Cultivate all the noble sentiments, the delicate appreciation of beauty and propriety; the deep indignation at oppression and overbearing pride. Language must be mastered; your own grand vernacular, manly, graceful, flexible English—fit instrument for the nations hoping to pioneer a wandering world into the land of promise, through thinking, and fighting, and praying. The thorough study of other languages will contribute much to a philosophic appreciation of your own. Be thorough in the study of synonyms. Power lies in discriminating, with delicate perception, the various shades of your own thoughts and feelings, and in accurately expressing them. Cultivate with the utmost care a clear, impressive utterance.

Henry Clay is said to have described the process of self-culture by which he attained to his eminent position as an orator. It was his practice, from an early period of his life, to select some passage of history daily, and go to the forest or the barn, and make an oration on that theme to the trees or the horses; striving continually to speak as if he was before the most learned and critical assembly.

It is said of Robert Peel, when a little boy, that his parents were accustomed to place him on a table after returning from hearing a sermon, and require him to repeat the text. After a time he was required to mention the subject. Next the divisions of the discourse were given. At length, it is said, he could repeat an entire sermon.

Elocution I venerate, as the art of completing the conductor between mind and mind. It is the railway builder, the telegraph constructor in the world of mind. But I must salute it, and pass on, after making one earnest request, that not a youth matriculated this year, not an undergraduate of this Institution, will consent to leave this hallowed place a Bachelor of Arts, until he has at least discovered what a world of wonders lies within his own physical frame, and his immortal nature; until he shall be forced to exclaim, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made!" You must know that a mine of infinitely more value than all the gold and silver beds of California and Nevada lies within your own breast. Dig the gold and silver out; smelt it in the King's crucible, until the dross has left it, then stamp it with his image, and send it forth a currency to enrich the world.

When I think of the Memory, the Imagination, the Judgment, the Taste, the Reason, the Conscience, the Affections, the Will, I am overwhelmed. Cultivate them, young brethren, cultivate them.

And must I go with the like speed and superficialness, over that grand department of self-culture, the training of your moral powers! We must at least glance at this branch of our subject.

III. *Moral culture* respects the faculties, dispositions, and habits, which constitute character, and which fit us for the duties of social life. Some of them refer supremely to ourselves, such as Integrity, Prudence, Calmness, Patience, Courage, Fortitude, Purity, Economy, Earnestness, or Enthusiasm.

Suffer a word on each of them.

Integrity requires the thorough mastery of the selfishness that makes any personal interest a temptation to do wrong to another. Cherish it; it is worth *infinitely* more than it costs.

Prudence is simply the habit of looking before leaping; observing where you are to alight before you move your feet.

Calmness, is the habit of controlling the nerves, so that if you should be in a house on fire, you will not throw the mirrors out of the window to save them; or utter words in anger, of which you must afterward be ashamed.

Patience plants an acorn, and does not dig it up the next morning to see if it has begun to grow.

Courage is the habit of placing Duty above Danger.

Fortitude lies rotting in Libby prison, and says, "Do not stop the war to save us."

Purity dwells in the inner shrine of the heart, and is essential to true manliness; defying the world to see any difference between what it seems and what it is.

Economy is the gentlemanly, desirable habit, of owing no man what you have not a reasonable prospect of repaying; of keeping the outgo inside of the income. Of

Earnestness, I may already have said enough. But I will quote a few lines from Powell Buxton: "The longer I live the more I am convinced that the great difference between men; between the feeble and the powerful, the great and the insignificant; is, *energy, invincible determination*, a purpose once fixed, and then 'Death or Victory.' That quality will do anything that can be done in this world; and no talents, no circumstances, no opportunities, will make a two-legged creature a *man* without it."

The social department of our moral nature includes the Domestic Affections, Patriotism, Justice, Friendships, Sense of Propriety, Respect for Manhood, Benevolence. I would speak a word of these.

Benevolence is the opposite of Selfishness and Envy.

Filial Affection. I saw many bad things in College, but nothing meaner than a want of filial reverence and affection. If anything is true in the history of this world, it is that the Fifth Commandment is the commandment of promise.

Mark the young man, who, on taking a letter from the post-office, and finding no money in it, angrily tore it into fragments, though that letter was moistened with a mother's tears; he lacks the first element of greatness. Mark that young man who is ashamed of being restrained by a regard to his mother,—he will never be a great man; the root of the matter is not in him.

Patriotism is to be cherished. Learn here what a country God has given you; what a Government; what institutions; and then abhor the traitor tongue that maligns them to an envious world,—the traitor hand that would trail our bright banner in the dust. Fit yourselves here to benefit and bless that country. Ascertain the defects of our people; acquaint yourselves with the perils of the country; and let it be your life-work to defend her from party purposes that would sacrifice her honor, strength, or life; from sectional jealousies of every kind; from political doctrines which annul the organic laws that made the Federal Government supreme in its defined sphere; from the anti-Christian schemes that would sap the strength of the Government, and the foundations of society; from that personal degeneracy, which is the result of political bribery, mercantile fraud, of luxury, and display.

These are giants; arm yourselves to meet and subdue them.

But, while observing your country's defects, remember Ham; his lineal descendants, his moral offspring are on our soil; and their skins are white. Like him, they went out from beholding their mother's shame, and told it to the world. Noah's curse is now pursuing them. Settle the question, young brethren, whether our civilization is the fruit of Christianity, or of Naturalism and Rationalism. You must know its genius, to work intelligently and effectively for its advancement. Of all the other moral virtues, I will here simply say, go forth from this sacred place, to be the enemies of Vice, of Injustice, of Oppression; to diffuse Knowledge, In-

dustry, Virtue, Brotherly Love, Happiness; to harmonize conflicting interests and feelings; to make a country the world may delight to imitate. It is the very peril of our age that it places the Intellect and its products; Material Science and its acquisitions; Commerce and Art, and their fruits, above that personal moral excellence which is infinitely more valuable than all these, valuable as they may be. There is yet too low a moral tone in our traffic, in our political life, in our social life. And you that would bring society upward, must yourselves occupy a higher place than that society.

What a lesson God has been teaching the young men of our country in the history of our martyr-President! It was the purpose of Him, who assigns to each man his lot, that the birth and training of Abraham Lincoln should be in the lowliest rank of society; that he should belong to that lowest class, the poor whites of a slave State; that he should be born in poverty, without your academic advantages, much less your college privileges; rising first to a strength of logic that overthrew the giant Douglas, in a debate of weeks; then sitting on the highest throne on this earth, and displaying an administrative power unequalled by any crowned head of this century. Hear him declare of himself: "I have no outside polish, and do not expect ever to have. My education is very limited; but I know what belongs to the inside of a gentleman." Yes, he does; and because the inside is right, Edward Everett, our accomplished gentleman, our most thorough scholar, declares that, at the Gettysburg ceremony, Lincoln was, in manners and address, the peer of French ambassadors, and the *élite* of the land, gathered around him.

Self-culture has then one other, its crowning sphere,—the formation of a religious character.

IV. Religious culture is the highest preparation for the present life; the only effectual preparation for the unseen

future life. The grandest thing in man is not his animal beauty, vigor, or skill,—not his brilliant, mighty, intellectual faculties; but his heart,—his capacity for knowing, loving, serving, communing with his Father and Redeemer,—for esteeming all human and angelic excellence, and loving everything made in God's image. The Holy Spirit can enter, penetrate, permeate, abide in our spirits, as light enters the crystal, without interfering with any of its functions, while imparting to it all its glory, or its highest powers.

We are fallen; in an abnormal state; and what we need is, a recovery of our own original excellence, and to have our well-being placed on a sure foundation; a recovery of our own personality, as it came from the hand of God, in our first parents.

And how shall we attain to that glorious issue? how come to that true knowledge of the Infinite One, which is the crown of science; to feel His feelings, as the glory of our sensitive nature; to receive His impulses, share His serenity and joy, His purity and love; in a word, enter into His eternal rest? how, come to the adoption of His ends and His law, as the highest function of the human will, the perfection of our being, the sum of all wisdom?

This is to be done by going out of ourselves to that glorious Being, who has united our nature to the Divine by a mysterious assumption, and made our recovery possible,—our final security complete.

With Christ, we have a twofold work to perform. The first step is, to enter into a vital union with Him, by those only bonds which can link spirits together,—faith and love. The next step is a life-work, of growing into His likeness. The only thorough self-culture involves this. He that will arrive at the fulness of the stature of perfect manhood, must pass beyond the heroes of Pagan Rome, the sages of Pagan Greece; yea, even the very chief apostle of Christianity, for his ultimate model. His work is that of the sculptor, who,

having found some splendid fruit of Grecian art, places it in his studio; you enter,—and behold he is rapt in admiring contemplation of this model. Then, fired with enthusiasm, he turns from that to the rude block of marble before him; cutting and filing, dashing off as incumbrances every particle of the precious-stone which hinders the perfection of the likeness. This must be brought to resemble that. To secure this resemblance is the work of his hand, and of his soul,—of his life; *Hic labor, hoc opus est.*

Young brethren, to shine as planets in the upper firmament, you must get all your light from the Central Sun.

“Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season; its leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”