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A D D R E S S

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YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATION

FOR MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT IN ALBANY,

AS INTRODUCTORY TO THEIR

ANNUAL COURSE OF LECTURES.

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A D D R E S S .

MAN, in the constitution of his nature, stands related equally to the material and the immaterial world; and thus constitutes a sort of connecting link between the higher and the lower orders of existence. Above him are purely spiritual beings; who act independently of bodily organs, and whose mode and sphere of action we very imperfectly comprehend. Below him is matter, in its various forms and combinations;—matter combined with animal instinct; matter combined with vegetable life; matter as you see it in the stones of the mountain and in the clods of the valley. Man is neither all matter nor all mind; but a wonderful compound of both. If, in consideration of one part of his nature, he is compelled to look down to the earth, and say unto Corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister, he is privileged, in view of another part of it, to look up to heaven, and say to the brightest angel that burns there, Thou art my brother.

But notwithstanding man is a complex being, it is the mind that gives him his chief importance.

There is indeed much that is wonderful in his physical organization ; and his happiness in this life is more or less connected with it ; but take away this thinking immortal principle, and all that is left of man is an erect and well-formed animal. And as it is the mind that emphatically constitutes the man, and gives him his rank in the scale of being, so the mind has rights that are inherent in its very constitution, and that have been guaranteed to it by its Almighty Creator. And yet these rights are often lamentably encroached upon, and tamely and ignobly yielded up. In the conflict between the animal nature on the one hand, and the intellectual and spiritual on the other, the former urges unreasonable claims, while the latter not unfrequently surrenders its legitimate rights. To understand what the rights of the mind are, how they may be invaded, and how secured, is essential to our fulfilling the great purpose of our existence. I trust, therefore, as this association is designed to aid in the great business of intellectual and moral culture, you will think it in accordance with the spirit of the occasion, that I make **THE RIGHTS OF THE MIND** the subject of the few remarks that I am now to submit to you.

And, first of all, let me say, the mind has a right to *its appropriate aliment*—viz. **TRUTH**.

What food is to the body, truth is to the mind ; and as the body is constituted in such a manner as to receive food and be nourished by it, so the mind is equally adapted to the reception of truth, and its faculties thrive in proportion to the amount of

important truth which it receives and digests. Truth supposes evidence ; and the mind is so constituted as to discern evidence and feel its power. As the intellect is first addressed by truth, and is more immediately concerned in the reception of it, it is here that its first effects are experienced ; but so intimately are the moral emotions connected with the intellectual exercises, that no truth of a moral character ever expends its legitimate influence upon the intellect alone ; but if it is not impeded by some countervailing influence, it reaches onward to the affections, and helps to mould the elements of the moral character. There is not a faculty of the soul, to the proper culture of which truth is not essential ; and if it is essential to the development and growth of each particular faculty, surely it is not less so to the harmony and perfection of all the faculties, constituting the entire intellectual and moral man.

You perceive, then, that the great purpose of the acquisition of knowledge is not gained, merely in having it treasured up in the mind, or even in the practical uses to which we may find occasion to apply it ; but ultimately, and I may say chiefly, in the influence which it exerts upon the mind itself. The details of science with which the student is occupied, may indeed be of great use to him in various departments of life ; but this is nothing compared with the higher end of quickening his faculties, and fitting him for yet loftier pursuits and attainments. No matter what the particular kind of truth which occupies us may be,—whether it be

mathematical or moral, practical or merely speculative, we may rest assured that its end is not accomplished in respect to us, unless some of our faculties have received from it a higher impulse or a better direction.

Let no one say that if the mind be only fed, it matters little whether the aliment with which it is furnished be truth or error. As well might you say that if something only be received into the body, it is no matter whether it be bread or arsenic. Rely on it, error is not the aliment which the Creator of the mind designed for it: no, it is the mind's poison; and it cannot be received there, but it will peril the health of man's noblest faculties. Admit, if you will, that some of the intellectual powers may thrive upon it; that the reasoning faculty may grow more sharp, and the imagination more fertile, and the memory more retentive;—yet to say nothing of the fact that even this is a miserably distorted growth, all experience proves that the *moral* faculties wither, and of course the harmony of the soul is destroyed, under its influence. Not that all error is equally prejudicial; or that many errors may not be received without *perceptibly* affecting the character of the mind; nevertheless, the *tendency* of error in all its forms is evil; and in some of them, incalculable evil. It is error that paralyzes the conscience; that perverts the will; that quickens into life the viper passions; that robs man of his humanity and changes him into a fiend. The spirit of error was the genius of that wild and horrible tempest,

which, less than half a century ago, shook the whole civilized world. If you ask me why the green fields of France were drenched with blood, and every wind that swept over them was charged with death-groans, I know of no other answer to give, than that the French had become a nation of Atheists.

Let no one apologize for the admission of error, on the ground that the convictions of the judgment are not subject to the control of the will. You cannot indeed receive truth unless you perceive the evidence on which it rests; but the laws of evidence are as unchangeable as the laws of physical relations; and though the operation of these laws supposes a certain state of mind, yet it is a state of mind, for the possession of which you are responsible. Whether, or in what degree, you are to be impressed by the evidence of any truth, depends primarily on the degree of attention with which you contemplate it. Be it so that you reject some great truth because you do not perceive the evidence that sustains it—yet, if the evidence was fairly within your reach, and you *might* have perceived it, if you had examined it with due attention, or with an unprejudiced mind, then surely you cannot claim that there is no responsibility attached to your unbelief. And if I mistake not, this is just the history of a large part of the skepticism that prevails among men, in respect to the most momentous truths that have ever been proposed to them. It is not that these truths do not come attended with sufficient evidence, that they are not

received ; but it is because the mind refuses to contemplate it ; or if it approaches it at all, it is with the shyness and aversion with which one would approach an enemy. I have seen a smile of triumph lighting up the countenance of the rejecter of Christianity, as if he had been holding the scales of evidence with an impartial hand, till it was impossible that any one could gainsay his conclusion ; and yet that man had scarcely read so much as a single book in the Bible in his whole life. He knew enough of it to be satisfied that it contained the sentence of his own condemnation ; and hence he determined that he would not believe it ; and whatever attention he bestowed upon it, was designed, not to settle the question whether it was true or false, but to quiet his accusing conscience by proving it a base imposture.

But while it is essential to the proper growth of the mind that it should be truth and not error which it receives, it is not enough that the mind should merely *receive* the truth ;—there is yet another process necessary before it can serve the purpose of intellectual aliment—I mean that of continued reflection. Reflection is to the mind just what digestion is to the body ; and as, without the latter, the food which the body receives can never answer the purpose of nourishment, so, without the former, the truth which finds its way into the mind, can add nothing to our intellectual strength or stature. Hence it is not uncommon to find persons of an inquisitive turn and of retentive memory, who seem to have treasured up almost every thing which

they have ever heard or read ; and yet, for want of reflection and self-application, they never attain to any thing like intellectual maturity. Such a mind resembles a building in which there is every variety of elegant furniture ; but thrown together in such utter confusion that he who would find any thing, would never think of looking in the place where it ought to be, till he had searched every place where it ought not to be. Remember, then, if you really desire that your mind may have a consistent growth, you have something to do beyond merely acquiring knowledge : instead of having facts and principles thrown together as a mere mass of intellectual lumber, you must have them so carefully arranged as to be able to command them at pleasure : you must see that they become incorporated with your mental and moral operations ; and then your mind will not only be a treasury of useful knowledge, but its faculties will brighten and expand into an ever progressive maturity.

I pass to another of the great rights of the mind—viz. its right *to be active*. And this indeed is implied in the preceding : for, while truth is the appropriate aliment of the mind, the mind is necessarily active in receiving and digesting truth.

When I say that the mind has a right to be active, I mean something more than that activity which is one of its essential attributes, and which discovers itself in the very humblest grades of intellectual existence. The mind of the infant while it is yet in the cradle, is active ; but I mean

something more than that. The mind of the poor slave, whose native element was darkness, and who has always been crushed beneath the hand of oppression, is active ; but I also mean far more than that. The mind of the mere votary of sense—the butterfly in the shape of a man, is active ; but neither does that come up to the idea which I wish to convey. When I speak of activity as one of the rights of the mind, I mean activity in the sense of well directed effort ; that kind of effort which is essential to the acquisition of useful knowledge, and to the culture of the intellectual powers.

But methinks I hear you say, if the mind has a right to be active in this high sense, then surely this right is often interfered with by the arrangements of Providence ; for who does not know that a large part of mankind are, by the very circumstances of their birth and education, cut off in a great measure from all intellectual pursuits ? I reply to this, that not a small portion of those whose means of intellectual improvement are thus circumscribed, have been voluntarily instrumental in placing themselves in these untoward circumstances ; and as for those who have not, while I would reverently bow before the sovereignty of that Providence which appoints their lot, and remember that of him only to whom much is given shall much be required, I see enough in the character of man as an alien from his great Creator not only to justify the abridgment of his original privileges, but to render it truly wonderful that any privilege should be continued to him. Man has an original

right to cultivate his own faculties ; and whatever God in his retributive dispensations may do, no *mortal* can invade this right without being guilty of robbery.

But notwithstanding the greater facilities which some men enjoy for the culture of their minds than others, there is reason to believe that the mass of individuals form too low an estimate of their own opportunities, and that multitudes take for granted that they are condemned by the circumstances of their lot to very humble intellectual acquisitions, when there is really no obstacle to the training of their minds to a habit of vigorous and useful activity. Be it that you are a mechanic, and are obliged to earn your living by the labour of your hands :—Do you imagine this is a sufficient answer to any appeal that can be made to you for the culture of your mind ? But you surely cannot have forgotten that it was a mechanic who taught us how to enchain the lightning, and whose hand has been more active than almost any other in moulding the character and guiding the destinies of our country. The humblest mechanical trade, even where it is persevered in through life, is in no wise inconsistent with the exercise of the mind's right to be active—to become really great both in its acquisitions and its achievements.

And how shall this right and the object which it contemplates be most effectually secured ? I answer, by early forming the purpose of giving the faculties as little dispensation from exercise as will consist with their greatest vigor ; and by relieving

the tedium attendant on a uniform course of mental action, not so much by absolute repose as by change of employment. Suppose you are professionally devoted to intellectual pursuits ;—suppose you are a physician, or a lawyer, or a statesman,—it is proper that the energies of your mind should be concentrated chiefly on the particular object to which you are devoted ; but as it is impossible, from the very nature of the mind, that that should always occupy you, it is of great importance that you should have some other object or objects in view, some other field of inquiry or of reflection open, to catch your thoughts and hold them in a state of useful activity, when they might otherwise wander upon frivolous concerns, or sink needlessly into a state of indolent repose. And suppose that, instead of being habitually and professionally engaged as an intellectual man, you are destined to spend your life in selling wares, or making furniture, or any other similar occupation,—still with this employment you are to connect the sense of mental responsibility ; and while your hands are occupied with what is material and must perish with the using, your minds may often be ranging the fields of truth, and conversing with immaterial objects, and thus growing in strength and dignity. And in the intervals of labour especially,—in seasons when the bodily powers need rest while the mental faculties have not been wearied, and, more than all, in the long winter evenings when the cold without makes the fire seem so grateful and cheerful within ;—how important is it that the mind should

be kept thoroughly awake, and usefully employed ; that either by being brought in contact with other minds or by surrendering itself to study and reflection, it should be in a way to increase both its powers and its acquisitions. There are instances *now* of great men among our merchants ; and great men among our mechanics ; and great men among our farmers ; and if all of these several classes would avail themselves of the right which the God of nature and the God of Providence has given them to an habitual state of mental activity, great men would rise up on every side of us ; and where we have dwarfs now, we should have men of ordinary stature ; and where we have men of ordinary stature now, we should have giants.

The mind has also a right *to be free* : and though there is no one of its rights that is more sacred than this, there is perhaps none that is less understood or more abused.

What is freedom of mind in the view of a reckless and profligate youth ? It consists in turning a deaf ear to parental counsels, in breaking away from parental restraints, in broaching wild and dangerous principles, and in reducing those principles to practice in a wayward life. And what is freedom of mind to the man who is forever venturing out on the wide sea of rash speculation ? It is nothing less than cutting loose from principles of sound reason, and exposing one's self to be wrecked amidst the quicksands of error and folly. Wherever you find a man who glories in having cast away the Bible, or one who, in his eagerness to get out of

the beaten track, has got into a track of absurdity and nonsense, there you will find one who makes no small account of having an untrammelled mind. If this were true intellectual freedom, it would be a curse to the mind that it had a right to enjoy it.

That the mind is constituted essentially free—free in every sense that is consistent with its being a created and dependant being, is a truth so obvious to the most superficial self-inspection, that it may safely be said that no one, who had not been blinded by false philosophy, ever doubted it. I may indeed form *purposes* which I cannot execute; but no man can hinder me from thinking my own thoughts, or holding my own opinions: no man can even *know* the operations of my mind, except so far as I am pleased to reveal them to him; and any attempt to control them other than by fair and legitimate means, is a shameful infringement of the liberty which God has given me. An individual may indeed endeavour to shake my conviction, and actually succeed in changing my views, by argument; by considerations adapted to my intellectual and moral nature; and I have no right to charge him with being unjust or oppressive; but if he use threats instead of reasons, or even if he attempt to beguile me into a servile acquiescence in his opinions, he stands chargeable before high heaven with invading an inalienable right of my nature.

To descend a little to particulars, let me say the mind has a right to be free from the dominion of *prejudice*; and especially from the shackles of authority. You will not, I hope, imagine, that I in-

tend, by this remark, even to connive at that spirit too lamentably common in our day, that affects to look with contempt on commonly received opinions ; that sees nothing but folly in the wisdom of the past, and nothing but wisdom in the folly of the present. The truth is, that the fact that any opinion or set of opinions has been generally held for a long time, especially by enlightened and virtuous men, is a presumptive argument in its favour ; a reason why no wise man would take for granted, without thorough examination, that it is not true. But we know that errors and great errors, may become incorporated as it were into the character of a generation ; and that they may be propagated from one generation to another, and become so thoroughly established, that even the greatest and the wisest shall render them the homage of an unqualified assent ; and perhaps it may not be until they have become hoary with age, that some giant mind rises up, and drags them out from the mazes of a false philosophy, or the hiding places of superstition, and slays them before the world. Whatever opinions may be proposed to us on mere human authority, it is enough for us to know, as a reason for not receiving them merely on that ground, that, while they who have held them are as fallible as we, we to whom they are proposed are as rational as they ; and it would be a most ignoble prostration of our intellectual dignity to receive opinions upon trust, of which we are as well qualified to judge as they from whom we receive them. And in addition to this, let it be borne

in mind that, even if the opinions which come to us in this way are just and true, they can never be worth half so much to us as principles of action, as if they had become settled in our minds partly at least in consequence of our own independent reflection: for in the latter case they are held far more intelligently—more in their legitimate connexions, and of course are more likely to reach the springs of moral action in the way the Creator intended.

As the best illustration of this point that I can think of, let me refer for a moment to the duty that devolves upon us all in reference to that most interesting of all subjects—our common Christianity. It has pleased a benignant Providence that our lot should be cast within the light and influence of the gospel; so that all of us have had our minds early brought in contact with it in a greater or less degree; and most of us probably have had it incorporated with our earliest and most hallowed associations. You were taught something of its doctrines and its duties perhaps as far back as when you were in the arms of your mother; and as you came forward into life, every thing was done that could be by parental assiduity to fix your faith in the divine authority and leading truths of this religion. Now then, since you have reached that degree of maturity that enables you to think for yourself, what is the duty which you are called to perform in reference to that system of religion which, during the period of your childhood, you have taken chiefly or wholly upon trust? Will you say,

let us break its bands asunder and cast its cords from us, as an hereditary prejudice which it is unworthy of an enlightened mind to cherish? That would be virtually saying that you know by intuition that multitudes of the wisest and best men of every age have been miserably deluded; and that you are so confident of this that, notwithstanding the subject to which their supposed delusion relates, involves your own most important interests, yet you hesitate not for a moment in putting it away from you as the miserable rubbish of a by-gone age. Will you then rush to the other extreme, and say that Christianity is too sacred a subject for you to examine, and that you deem it far safer to settle down with the views of your parents and perhaps your ancestors for many generations, than to run the hazard, by any investigation of your own, of getting away from the hereditary creed? That would be too much like attributing infallibility to the fallible; it would be not only yielding up a right which God has given you, but disobeying a command which He has laid upon you. Your duty clearly lies between these two extremes. The fact that Christianity has been incorporated among your earliest associations, and has been so almost universally received in the community in which you live, especially by the greatest and the best, is certainly a reason why you should not reject it without examination. But then, on the other hand, the fact that you are qualified to judge for yourself, and especially that God requires you to judge for yourself, is a reason why you *should* thus judge;—in

other words, why you should hold Christianity as a conviction, and not merely as a prejudice. I am fully convinced that the man who rejects Christianity, does it at the greatest possible peril; but notwithstanding this, I could not, even as a christian minister, ask any man to receive it without examination. I would proclaim to him what I believe to be its great and holy truths, and then send him to the law and the testimony, to search with the spirit of the Bereans, and judge for himself whether these things be so.

If we will test the correctness of our opinions, especially in regard to subjects of deepest interest, it is important that we call to mind the influences under which they were formed;—the circumstances which were calculated to give a bias to our judgment. Truth is in its nature immutable, and is the same in all circumstances; but circumstances have a mighty influence in the formation of our opinions. Who does not know, for instance, the powerful influence of example;—how easily most minds are swept along by the current of popular opinion? And who has not felt the force of a strong affection operating in the same way; and found himself predisposed to adopt the opinions of those to whom he has been specially attached? If then, any of our opinions upon subjects of great moment have been formed under such an influence, though it is no reason why we should surrender them, it may be a good reason why we should carefully review them. And in general, the stronger our inducements are to believe in any proposition from external circum-

stances, the more reason we have to be specially on our guard against embracing a delusion.

The mind has also a right to be free from the dominion of *passion and appetite*. This not only prevents the mind from acting right, but in many cases it would seem to prevent it from acting at all. Behold that human being lying in the street and in the mire under the influence of intoxication! Go to him, and bid him rise and shake himself from all that loathsomeness, and he will heed you just as little as does the stone that lies beneath his bleeding head. Stand and examine him as closely as you will, and detect, if you can, a single characteristic feature of the man, apart from a human form. And then again, contemplate the man whose anger has waxed hotter and hotter, till it has mounted up into a paroxysm of rage; and see how incapable he is of any thing like sober thought; and tell me who you imagine would be willing in such circumstances to rely upon his judgment. The truth is, in each of these cases, the angel spirit that inhabits the human bosom is enchained: its noble faculties cannot come forth to their appropriate work: in the one case the brute, in the other the fiend, has got the mastery over them. And so it is with other passions—such as the love of worldly gain, or the love of worldly glory—let either of them become the ruling passion of the man, and those great and god-like faculties which were made to exercise dominion in the soul, are doomed to perform any drudgery to which this tyrant passion may summon them. Man has a right to be free from this unhal-

lowed control. No doubt the passions hold an important place in our constitution, and when properly regulated, throw back a healthful and quickening influence upon the intellectual powers; but if, instead of keeping their subordinate station, they mount up to the throne, the dignity of the mind is gone. If your face is set right, the passions are of use to urge your progress; but reason must be the pilot to direct your course and guide your motions. Without the former, like a ship without a gale, you would at once be becalmed: but without the latter, like a ship committed to the winds, you would be driven wide of your port and foundered in the ocean.

I may add under this general branch of the subject, though it is little more than an amplification of the last thought, that the mind has a right to be free from the undue influence of *external objects*. I say *undue* influence, because external objects were made to influence the mind to a certain extent; and the mind is so constituted as to turn them to good account; rendering them subservient not only to our present accommodation, but to the higher purposes of intellectual culture and spiritual devotion. But after all, if the mind would reach the great end for which it was made, its exercises must not terminate upon external objects: it must rise higher than the sun, moon and stars; even to the throne of Him by whom those bright orbs were created. It must penetrate the veil that shuts out the realities of invisible existence, and become conversant with the great objects and in-

terests of futurity. It must be able to soar away into the nobler regions of thought, and to enrich itself with treasures even from the works of nature, which he who loves this world for its own sake alone, is equally unable to find and to estimate. Let these external objects which surround me have the influence which the Creator intended; but let them not hold my immortal spirit in an unworthy bondage: let them not claim or receive the supremacy of its regard: let it be trained to sublime excursions, and make itself at home among the things that are unseen and eternal.

The mind has a right to *the assistance of other minds* in the prosecution of the great objects which it is designed to accomplish. As man is not only a finite but a fallible being, with his intellectual faculties yet in their infancy, it is manifest that he stands in need of the aid of other minds for the successful training and development of his own. And as God has endowed him with a social nature, and brought him into various social relations, it is equally manifest that he designed that man *should* be the helper of his fellow-man in the attainment of the great objects of his existence. I say then it is most clearly intimated, not only by the nature of the mind itself, but by all the arrangements of Providence in respect to it, that each mind has a claim upon others within whose influence it may be cast, for all the aid they can render to enlarge and quicken its faculties.

And as each individual has a claim to the cooperation of others in his own efforts at intellectual

and moral improvement, so each is bound to contribute according to his ability to the common stock of well directed thoughts, and pure and elevated feelings. There are some whose contributions are general ; extending not only to their immediate circle, but to the world ; not only to their own generation, but to posterity. Newton, Bacon, Locke, have opened new and glorious fields of thought for the world in all its generations ; and it is hardly too much to say that there is not a great mind of the present day that is not working, in a greater or less degree, under an impulse which they have communicated. But these are among the greater lights in the intellectual firmament, that rule the day : there are stars innumerable ; and some of them so feeble that a little glimmering is all that you expect from them ; but still they are made to shine for the benefit of the intellectual creation. *Let* them shine with all the lustre they possess. Let even the humblest intellect remember that there are claims upon it from other intellects which it can never set aside ;—that, under any circumstances, it should labour to render man more intellectual, more moral, more happy.

Need I say *how* the labours of one mind may be rendered subservient to the benefit of others ? The man who makes a great discovery in science, who finds out more than those who have gone before him, of the relations of the physical or intellectual or moral world ; or the man who embodies great and original thoughts on any important subject in a palpable and enduring form ; leaves a legacy to

his *race*—a legacy, in the appropriation of which men of humble and of commanding intellects may alike be benefitted. But as it is not the privilege of the mass of minds to operate on so extensive a scale, or by so elevated an instrumentality, it is important to inquire how *ordinary* minds, in ordinary circumstances, may minister to each others' improvement. And to this I reply, first, by redeeming the ordinary intercourse of life from whatever is unprofitable and frivolous, and directing it to purposes of real utility. If young men, in their casual intercourse, habitually realized the obligation to aid, by every means in their power, the cultivation of each others' faculties, it is not easy to conceive how quickly, under such an influence, you would see the mind springing forward in the pursuit of great and useful acquisitions, and how rapidly it would expand in such an atmosphere, just as the flower unfolds its bosom to the sun. But there is yet another way in which the same purpose may be answered; in a more formal and perhaps in a more effectual manner:—I mean by associations, like this of which you are giving so admirable a specimen, for the express purpose of mutual improvement. Here one mind, and then another, and then another, sets itself deliberately to direct and quicken the thoughts of the rest; and the subjects which are here discussed, are carried out of the lecture room into your more private associations and ordinary intercourse; and they become matter of reflection and conversation there; and thus by your attendance here, if the end of the

institution is answered, you secure a stated intellectual repast, from which you derive substantial aliment for your better faculties. You have a claim upon the services of other minds ; and here especially that claim is met : those services are rendered.

It is a mistaken notion, against which we ought to guard, that minds of a higher order and richer accomplishments can never be benefitted by those of smaller powers or acquisitions ; and that the latter are absolved from all obligation even to attempt the improvement of the former. The truth is that, as men are constituted with different intellectual and moral tendencies, so there is a corresponding difference in their employments and acquisitions ; and though the man who makes shoes for the feet of an astronomer could not be expected to aid him in his ethereal investigations, yet it is by no means certain, if the astronomer would sit down by the shoe-maker's bench, but he might hear from him that which would make him wiser on some other subject ; possibly something which he might turn to account even in the prosecution of his own appropriate researches. Never was there a greater mistake than to suppose that what is commonly called a liberal education is essential to qualify one for rendering any service to the intellectual interests of his fellow men. I know men whom I expect always to find in a merchant's ware house or in a mechanic's work shop, into whose company I love to fall ; because I am almost sure to hear something from them that quickens or

elevates my faculties ; whereas I know many a man whose glory it is that he has a diploma laid up in his desk, and that his name figures in a college catalogue, whom I always wish to avoid, except for the humiliating purpose of learning a lesson of human vanity or affectation. I bow before Common Sense as a teacher, though it meet me in the coarsest attire and in the humblest circumstances ; and if I am not benefitted by its suggestions, I doubt not the blame will be my own. Let no one, then, imagine that it is the exclusive privilege of any particular class of minds to labour in this great cause ; rather let each class feel the obligation to task their powers to the utmost, and let all be united in the goodly fellowship of mutual improvement.

The mind has a right to be *respected* ; both by *itself* and *other minds*.

When I say that it has a right to exercise *self-respect*, I do not mean that it has a right to be *proud* either of its faculties or its acquisitions ; for there is always enough in the abuse which its faculties have received, and even in the scantiness of its best acquirements, to say nothing of the infinite distance at which it is placed from the Supreme Intelligence, to render it proper that it should be found in the posture of humility. But still man has a right to respect himself, in consideration of the distance at which he is placed above the inanimate and brute creation ; of those faculties which so evidently qualify him for noble pursuits and point him to a lofty destiny ; of that field which

spreads around him, and which opens before him far down into the future, in which his mind may operate with an unwearied and ever growing energy. And I venture to say that no man can view himself as possessing these attributes and sustaining these relations, without the feeling of self-respect; without an instinctive sentiment of reverence for the majesty of his own nature. And as this feeling is perfectly legitimate, so it should be universally cherished; for it is adapted to nerve the mind for greater and nobler efforts. If you will show me a man who has so degraded his spiritual nature by sensual indulgences that he has lost sight of his dignity as a rational being, and ceased to respect himself, I will show you one who has lost the most powerful incentive to all useful effort, and on whose tombstone, if Truth is permitted to write the epitaph, will be inscribed nothing better than “Here lie the remains of a human animal, who never rose above a mere cumberer of the ground.” If a man estimates himself as a brute, like a brute he will live, and like a brute he will die; but if he bears in mind that there is a spark of divinity in his bosom, a germ that is destined to be of immortal growth, a principle which allies him to the most exalted seraph,—can he, under the influence of such reflections, fail to act with reference to the nobler purposes of his being?

But the mind has equally a right to be respected by *other* minds; and it always is respected in proportion as its faculties are rightly directed and actively employed. Indeed, it has a claim to a cer-

tain kind of respect independently of the development and the direction of its faculties : there is a dignity belonging to its very nature, an original capacity for action and enjoyment, which stamps it as a noble piece of divine workmanship. In that wretched object who has his home in the most loathsome haunts of sensuality, there is something that I feel constrained to respect. I see indeed how well he has learned to play the brute ; and I charge him to his face with being a blot upon the nature that he wears ; nevertheless, when I remember that he is really a man, I involuntarily pay him homage. I cannot forget that amidst all that loathsomeness, there is greatness, and strength, and immortality.

But it is quite a different kind of respect to which men are entitled, who apply their faculties to the great purposes for which God designed them. In the one case it is part of God's original image, marred, abused, polluted, though it be, which awakens our homage ; in the other it is the legitimate use of those noble powers—it is man yielding a voluntary obedience to the laws of his own nature. The former is the respect which every human being must receive : the latter that which every human being should deserve. You have a right to be respected as a man ; but a still higher right to be respected as a great and good man ; and the world will be not less ready to award to you the latter than the former.

I will only add, (and it is little more than an inference from what has gone before,) the mind has

a right to *great and lofty aspirations*. It was evidently made for higher purposes than it accomplishes in the present life; and if we were to discard the doctrine of immortality, it would be an everlasting enigma, how infinite wisdom could have made such a superior being for such an inferior purpose. But this doctrine once admitted,—and it is written in a degree at least on the very tablet of nature,—and it ceases to be a wonder that man should exist here under such inauspicious circumstances. For he has a right to anticipate a state of existence, in which these powers will burst into something yet greater and nobler, and from which the noblest efforts that he ever made here, will appear less than the crude conceptions of an infant. I speak to that principle within thee, which at this moment hears the words I utter, and reflects upon the truths I propound;—and I say, *thou*, immortal mind, who art hereafter in the full vigour of thy powers, to look upon the wreck of this material universe—thou hast a right to aspire to that in coming ages which is too great for thee now to comprehend. Thou hast a right to aspire to a progressive and unlimited course of intellectual and moral perfection. Thou hast a right to the universe as the field of thy researches in all that is beautiful and grand and God-like. Thou hast a right to aspire to an eternal companionship with greater minds than thou hast ever known on earth—even with the native inhabitants of the skies.

If the time allotted to this exercise were not so nearly exhausted, I should endeavour to show you

a little more particularly how the subject of these remarks illustrates the dignity of human nature ; and how essential it is that the rights of the mind should be carefully guarded, in order that the mind may fulfill the destiny which has been allotted to it. But instead of continuing this train of thought, I will only, in the close, congratulate you, Gentlemen, that the occasion of your meeting this evening proves that you have anticipated me in the reflections I have thrown out, by the very laudable interest you have manifested in relation to this very subject. It is to secure and maintain the rights of the mind that this association has been formed ; and the fruits of your labours, the substantial testimonies of your success, are already in some measure scattered around you. You are here contending against the encroachments which the animal part of man would make against his nobler nature ; and if your influence is more directly aimed at the culture of the intellectual faculties, yet it reaches indirectly, and through various channels, the moral powers. I give you the thanks of fathers and mothers for this provision to attract their sons away from the gilded haunts of death. I give you the thanks of this entire community, for opening in the midst of them this healthful fountain of intellectual and moral influence. I listen, and I seem to hear posterity also charging me to offer you the expression of *her* gratitude ; for she is coming up wiser and better, in consequence of being blessed through your instrumentality. I congratulate you on what you have accomplished. I

congratulate you on all your favourable prospects. I especially congratulate you on reviving your fraternal intercourse, and coming back to this agreeable occupation, after the usual interval. I pray you, at every step of your progress, to remember your responsibility; to remember that you are at work to secure the rights of the immortal mind to unborn generations.