

1845

The Supremacy of Mind :

A

LECTURE,

INTRODUCTORY TO THE

ELEVENTH ANNUAL COURSE OF LECTURES

BEFORE THE

YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATION

OF THE

CITY OF ALBANY.

BY REV. SAMUEL W. FISHER.

ALBANY:
MUNSELL AND TANNER, PRINTERS,
58 State street.
1845.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

Albany, 6th Dec., 1844.

REV. SAML. W. FISHER :

Dear Sir—At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the "Young Men's Association," held last evening, the following resolution was unanimously adopted: and in pursuance of the direction of the Committee, I have the honor to transmit you a copy.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Association be presented to the Rev. Saml. W. Fisher, for the able, eloquent, and instructive Introductory Lecture delivered by him, before the Association, on the 3d instant; and that he be respectfully requested to furnish a copy for publication.

The Committee trust you will be pleased to yield to their request; and by authorizing the publication of your interesting address, confer an additional favor on the Association, and gratify many of our citizens with its perusal, who were deprived of the pleasure of hearing it.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Very Respectfully,

Your obedient Servant,

STEPHEN PAUL,

Corresponding Sec'y of the Young Men's Association.

Albany, Dec. 13, 1844.

STEPHEN PAUL, ESQ., Cor. Sec'y Albany Young Men's Association.

Dear Sir: It gives me pleasure to acknowledge the receipt of your note, containing the request of your Committee for a copy of the Introductory Lecture, delivered before the Association. I cheerfully accede to their request, and herewith transmit you a copy for publication. It is perhaps well for me to add, that in revising it for the press, I have somewhat altered the conclusion. With the best wishes for the continued and increasing prosperity of your Association,

I remain truly yours,

SAML. W. FISHER.

NOTE.

This Lecture was also delivered as introductory to the Ninth Annual Course of Lectures before the Young Men's Association, Troy, N. Y.

LECTURE.

AMONG the leading distinctions which exalt us above the mere brute, the attribute of mind is not the least. It is not indeed the only, nor in all respects the chief. If we are not simply animal, neither are we purely intellectual. For there is a moral in our nature that soars above even the intellectual, and creates between man and the mere world of animal instinct the bridgeless gulf of separation. Yet while we give the crown to the heart, we claim for the intellect the seals of office, as the chief executive standing next to the throne.

In every part of human life, mind in its action creates distinctions and displays the impressive results of its invisible power. The very *form* of our animal nature, has stamped upon it peculiar dignity, as a temple reared expressly for the abode, not of the most noble of brutes, but, of one born in the divine image—of a participant in that sublime nature, that unfathom-

able intelligence which pervades and compasses all being. Erect while all else is prone, his lofty bearing is the superscription of his Maker to the nobility of the nature within. Every part of this wondrous frame bears in its construction the marks of its designed adaptation to the wants, not of a purely instinctive, but of a *rational* inhabitant. Physical superiority was obviously not in the eye of the architect ; certainly it is not attained. The deer can outstrip us ; the eagle outsoar us ; yet so admirably is this material structure adapted to act the executive of the intelligence within, that we can speed on its deadly mission a physical agent that will overtake and bring them both to the dust. Compared with the powerful horse and patient ox, the strength of the human frame is weakness itself ; yet as the agent of the indwelling mind, this puny arm can tame the fiery courser and harness these brute forces to his chariot and his plow. There is a passionate energy that flashes from the lion's eye ; but there is a singular intelligence speaking in the countenance—gleaming from the eye of man, before which the forest-king has been known to quail. Look also at that splendid dome of thought, that crowns our physical frame, with its orbs of intellectual

light sparkling beneath, and its organ of speech, through which mind communes with mind, and you cannot fail to perceive how every part of this exquisite organism proclaims the existence and force of an intelligent spirit. And if you would see in all its vividness, this stamp of mind upon our very framework, go to the halls of legislation, when on some occasion like that which gave birth to our "Declaration," the deep spirits of a nation's wisdom are roused and the waters of a nation's eloquence are stirred to their profoundest depths. Then the intellect, energized by emotion, sparkles in the eye—glows in the countenance—plays around the uncovered brow—kindles on the lip—streams from the fingers—wakes into action each muscle of the body—and speaks in one harmonious and deep-toned voice through all the harp strings of this physical frame.

If you take still another view of this point, and compare the modes in which man and brute respectively meet opposing forces, you will see in effect the wonderful adaptation of this body to carry into execution the purposes of the mind. The brute, in his efforts to overcome a physical power, is dependent solely upon his own individual physical resources. The af-

frighted deer tries his speed with the swift-footed hound ; the tiger joins in the death-struggle with the lion ; the bird overcomes the force that draws him earthward by the instinctive use of his own strength, and they all employ only the natural instruments peculiar to each, without the smallest power of varying, combining or extending them. But man, feeble in body and vastly inferior in purely physical attributes to the instinctive creation, has a mind, which by a dexterous combination of his limited personal resources, subjects to his control the force not only of the animate but of the inanimate world. He employs nature to overcome nature ; arrays foreign forces the one against the other, and by a skillful disposition of those agencies, of which *mind* has given him the mastery, he accomplishes results surpassing the combined exertions of all the brute power on the globe. By various instruments and forces other than his own, he rears his mill dam—constructs his water wheel, and then compels the force of gravitation acting through the yielding fluid, to grind, and saw, and spin, and carry forward the various processes by which the materials of his food and clothing are prepared for use. He employs an elastic vapor to aid him

in constructing and then in propelling huge vessels, by land and water, laden with riches from all quarters of the earth. The wind—the water—the tide, in its flux and reflux—the fire—the impalpable gases,—the very fluid whose explosion shakes the firm earth and flashes its fearful thunder in the sky, all of them in some degree yield to his will and play the part of his instruments. There is scarcely a material agent or a known power of the physical world that he does not, at least in part, master and compel to minister to his necessity, his comfort or his luxury. Even the orb of day, whose delicate and imponderable rays are the pencil with which the Infinite colors so exquisitely the forms of vegetable beauty that adorn our earth, even he, God's great painter, must employ his matchless skill as a limner for man. While a subtile and ordinarily invisible fluid is first discovered—its hidden existence and powers developed by the experimenting hand of genius, and then subsidized for our use, it becomes the fleet post-horse of the mind, by which with a rapidity as unmeasurable as that of Heaven's bolt, thought, argument, fact, all the vast coinage of the ever active brain, career from intellect to intellect, over states—over rivers—over

continents, so that ere the voice has died away in which it was uttered, the word spoken is whispered on the other side of the globe. All this, and vastly more than this, man has effected through the wisdom of his intellect, united to the agency of this weak frame. And thus through the very imbecility of his body, does his mind shine forth with resplendent lustre, and exhibits to us the physical man as bearing in his construction a peculiar adaptation to be the successful agent of the intelligent soul.

In order to establish the peculiar dignity of mind and thus lay a foundation on which we may stand in urging upon you its cultivation, I propose to trace it out as it is seen forming an element of all the noblest aristocracies of life. It is an undoubted fact, that life has its aristocracies, and such too as are inseparable from the operation of civilized society, arrange, and modify, and mould it as you may. They are not indeed always either governmental or hereditary aristocracies, which belong rather to the past and the other side of the globe, and which to our republican vision are instinct with evil, but such as embrace that which is most highly esteemed and influential in society. Commencing our survey of these with the *aristocracy*

of *fashion*, let us see if we cannot trace in it, an evidence of the dignity and force of our intellectual nature. Do not understand me here as designing to discuss the qualities of the race of dandies—a class who approximate more nearly than any other to Plato's men, "unfeathered bipeds." I do not speak so much of persons as things. The term *fashion* is used legitimately as indicative of external forms, and the term *aristocracy* as denoting that class of outward forms consisting of dress, furniture, architecture, &c., which are held in the highest estimation. It is obvious that there is every where a gradation in the character of these outward forms, ascending from the coarse attire of the ditcher to those fine and delicate robes which command admiration and impart delight. In respect to the furniture and architecture of your dwellings and halls, there is the same gradation from the rude to the exquisitely wrought, from the unfinished settee to the splendid couch—from the mud hut and log cabin to the lofty palace and magnificent temple. Now it is a known fact that precisely the same distinction in regard to outward forms runs entirely through human society. Even the savage has his gradations in this respect, and the more elevated

cabin of his king, and his more costly robes, evince that he too is affected by this universal aristocracy of fashion. As we proceed upward, however, from this lowest state of existence, we find this appreciation of outward forms constantly developing itself, until, as in the highest state of Grecian, Egyptian, Roman and Modern civilization, the actual structure of society is to a great extent moulded by it. Now we contend that this fact is of itself illustrative of the mental dignity and intellectual force of man. This distinction of forms, this appreciation of the more beautiful and grand, exists nowhere but among the higher orders of being. The most intelligent of brutes have never risen to the possession of this power. It is peculiar to the rational, and never descends to the instinctive. In itself it is the same appreciation of the beautiful and the grand—of order and sublimity, more or less refined indeed according to the intellectual cultivation of individuals, but yet virtually the same with that which, existing in the mind of the architect of creation, has cast the material world into such countless forms of beauty and grandeur. It is the same principle existing in us, and which modified by our peculiar circumstances, inspires admira-

tion for rich robes and exquisitely wrought furniture, and well proportioned architecture, that operating upon the divine mind has curved the ocean and painted the flowers, and hung over and around the setting sun his gorgeous canopy of clouds. Our standards of taste may in some respects vary, while the love of the beautiful and the sensibility to all that is magnificent, may remain in full force. One may prefer to encase his limbs in the dress of the orient and another in that of the occident; one has an imagination most deeply affected by the gloomy architecture of the Egyptian, another loves most to contemplate the fine proportion and majestic harmony of the Grecian temple, while still another is awed by the solemn and irregular grandeur of the ever branching Gothic; one may bow down to the genius of Raphael as the type of the noblest and most exquisite school of painters, while another enrols himself a disciple of Rubens, and yet after all there exists in each one the same genuine love for beauty and order and grandeur, which we see revealed in the spire of grass, the majestic oak, the sparkling star, the blue canopy over our heads and the verdant carpet beneath our feet; and thus in our love for these most exquisitely wrought and beauti-

ful forms, do we reflect one of the most delightful of those high attributes, which exalt the infinite Jehovah.

But in addition to the mere love of the more excellent of natural forms, there is joined with it an appreciation of the mental power that has produced them. When you contemplate an exquisite or a magnificent work of art, you not only admire its beauty and yield to the force of its grandeur, but if you will suffer your mind to pass beyond the work itself, you will instinctively do homage to the intellect that gave it perfection. In this appreciation of the mental power put forth in works of art, consist the true immortality of the artist. St. Peter's and St. Paul's are not merely the proud mausoleums where the genius of Angelo and Wren lie buried in state; the intellect of these men lives in them, and breathes through them, and lifts itself up in their domes and spires immortal in dignity, before the eyes of passing generations. The works of art are the human intellect embodied in voiceless yet speaking forms. The aristocracy of fashion is the assemblage of the master productions of master artists. It is one mode in which mind makes itself known for the appreciation of mind. It

is man working on a similar field and in the exercise of similar intellectual power with his Maker, creating that which may meet the same impulse toward the beautiful and grand, which exists in the higher nature of the Creator.

Now in proportion as men rise in their appreciation of that which is most admirable in works of art, do they usually become more truly refined and intelligent. As society advances upward, the dark cabin gives place to the commodious and finely proportioned palace ; the person is arrayed in garments of a finer texture and more tasteful form ; while the style of the enclosures and the arrangement of the surrounding grounds, display the advancing refinement of their possessor. Thus when I enter a dwelling, no matter if it be far removed from the bustle and the external polish of the city, yet if I see a garden well arranged, and flowers with their perennial beauty smiling upon me from the window, I feel sure that there is within a refined intellect, that can appreciate at once the forms of natural loveliness and the mind of their great Architect. So let a person of cultivated mental powers, who never may have heard of Egypt or Greece, wake up amidst the solemn temples of Thebes or upon the Acropolis, and he will stand

awe-struck at those monuments of gigantic *mind*. And precisely the same principle which in these cases evinces that here mind shines forth in its dignity and glory, runs through all the forms of art which every where compose the true aristocracy of fashion. Its lustre and its dignity is the stamp of intelligence impressed upon it. As mind disappears, the aristocracy of fashion vanishes. The temples and the palaces crumble while the tent and the hut of the kraal are planted amidst their ruins. The comforts and elegances of life give place to the rude existence of a savage, fattening on worms and lashed to labor by the gaunt form of famine, while in his gross person and clouded eye, the glories of our intellectual nature are almost totally eclipsed.

Next in order to the aristocracy of fashion, is that of wealth.

It is a fact open to the notice of all, that the possession of large means ordinarily confers consideration. Wealth is not only power in the merely physical resources it supplies and the direct influence it enables its possessor to exert upon the dependent, but in the popular elevation it usually brings with it. Now some of this influence of property, seems to us to be due to its presumed connection with a refined or a

vigorous mind. The mere fact of the possession of a hoard for the future, is certainly not adapted in itself to elevate the man above the squirrel or the bee, who in summer prepare the stores of winter. And surely it would be a libel upon our common nature to suppose that all the power of property is due to a selfish expectation of personal benefit. To some extent and in some cases this feeling may form an element of the influence of wealth; but he must be blind indeed, who would make it the sole element. From the nature of the case it must be confined to individuals, and cannot account for the general influence of property beyond the circle of dependence. Nor can we account for it wholly on the ground of the display of beautiful forms, which it enables its possessor to make, in his costly furniture and equipages, and dwellings. For even in this case, the person would only seem to borrow somewhat of the mental glory of his artists, and thus flutter in their plumage. But this influence of property is often equally great, independent of these things and in their absence. It seems impossible to account *for all* this influence, without proceeding upon the supposition that there is usually a *presumed connection* between the possession of property and a vigorous or a refined mind. I

speaking here only of a *presumptive* and not a real connection. The existence of such a presumption is all-sufficient to make up the complement of influence emanating from wealth. The fact of its existence is one thing ; whether it has any just foundation is quite another. The proof of the existence of this fact, is rather a matter of personal consciousness, than of visible demonstration. If for instance, a person, by his own efforts, in the present state of society, has raised himself from poverty to affluence, it is a natural presumption, that he has effected so great a change by the vigor of his intellect, the wisdom of his plans, the energy of his character, and by that which enters into all true genius, the power of mental application. It may be indeed that his success is due rather to circumstances than to his individual power, to the steady application of the lowest qualities of mind, or to a system of dishonorable traffic. Yet with this fact the presumption has nothing to do, and in the absence of direct knowledge on the subject it is perfectly natural to suppose, that the acquisition of his influence is due to the steady exertion of mind in that one direction, similar to that which has carved out the fame and the power of the statesman, the orator and the great captain.

In the case of one who has inherited property the presumption is virtually the same. It is perfectly natural to presume that such high advantages for mental improvement have not been enjoyed without corresponding results. Whatever the facts may be in any given case, we *expect* in general that a man who from his youth has enjoyed the instructions of the best masters and had scattered around him from the cradle the materials of knowledge and intellectual refinement, will have attained something noble and large — a degree of information and refinement superior to that possessed by those destitute of his advantages. If, owing to parental indulgence or his own perversity, he should grow up, unlettered and uneducated, a rational expectation is disappointed—a natural presumption is broken. A wealthy ignoramus in such a case destroys the illusive spell and reverses the enchanter's wand. The very fact that he is *presumed* to have attained to the heights of intelligence because he has possessed every facility for the lofty ascent, lends tenfold vividness to the contrast and power to the reproach.

Leaving, however, particular cases and returning to the general statement, with which we set out, it seems clear to us that when we enter

a village, our impressions always are, at first, in favor of the presumed intelligence of the wealthy proprietor. If, on entering his mansion, I meet with mental imbecility, rudeness and ignorance, the quick revulsion of feeling—the blank disappointment is the most unerring testimony to the force of that presumption of intelligence, in which we naturally indulge, until facts destroy its power. And thus it appears that even the aristocracy of wealth leans for a portion of its dignity upon its presumed connection with cultivated mind—even large possessions without it cannot dignify its possessor, nor exalt ignorance and imbecility to a station of respect.*

* To prevent the possibility of misconstruction, it may be well to remark that it is foreign to the argument, as it is to my belief, that the possession of wealth infers of course superior intelligence. Such a theory would not stand an hour, amidst the too numerous opposing facts. It is a matter of curious speculation, however, in what way the presumptive connection between vigor of mind and wealth, referred to above, arose. It would be unjust to a large class of men to assert that it had no sort of foundation in fact. We think it cannot be denied, that as a body, the men who make their own fortunes are characterised by shrewdness, tact and energy. Where there is one "Lord Dexter," with his successful follies and fortunate, but mad ventures, there are a dozen acute and intelligent Lawrences. It is too often the case, however, with such men, that their mental power all *lies in one direction*, and that they fail in attaining comprehensive views and large mental acquisitions. The same remark is true in reference to the majority of the most able men of all professions. Few seem to possess the taste or the time for those more general studies which give to the intellect a wide range of action—a point of survey lofty as the mountain crag on which the eagle builds his eyrie, and exalt the man above the low and narrow walk of a single profession.

Let us turn now to the aristocracy of official station, as a brilliant illustration of the influence of mind. There are in society some offices of special trust and responsibility, which attract to themselves, in a peculiar manner, the respect of the community. It needs but a glance at these official stations, to perceive that along with uprightness of character, vigorous mind enters as an important element into the honor with which they are crowned. To be an efficient judge—a successful governor, there should be in the man himself a mental power of no common kind, rendering him equal to his station. Such stations involve the decision of questions complicated and profound, which demand a clear mental vision in conjunction with a right and vigorous will. The men who are to preside over courts civil or ecclesiastical; who as senators are to give character to the legislation which is to determine the prosperity of a nation; who are to represent us at foreign courts and canvass the wide field of international law; who are to preside over our colleges, educate our rulers, marshal our armies, and guide our navy, are called by the very nature of the stations they fill, to exercise talents the most commanding and wisdom the most pro-

found. To place imbecility on the pinnacle of such exalted station, is to make sport of the dearest interests of society. Mind, vigorous mind, educated for its work, claims these positions as its own. Seated there it works with its own mighty lever, for the accomplishment of vast and glorious results. The intellect of a Napoleon, a Newton, a Washington, a Franklin, and a Dwight, was all in harmony with the lofty stations they occupied, and from them shone forth luminously upon the world. Station—office to them was only a higher point from which each star might shoot its intellectual fire over a larger sphere, within a wider horizon of intelligence. They befitted their high positions, and to the world illustrated the fact that these elevated offices gathered no small measure of their lustre from the intellectual glory of their incumbents.

Society may presume that a man is mentally competent to the discharge of the duties they impose, and under that presumption place him on these heights, but should it be revealed that they had enthroned imbecility, disgust and shame would go down through all ranks to the very child upon his mother's knee. The very title of these offices creates the expectation that

vigorous mind is in possession of them ; and surely it would be impossible long to preserve them in honor, were their incumbents usually characterized by the want of mental power. Thus in the aristocracy of official station, you can see how great is the influence of mind in creating for them a dignity and glory essential to their permanence and success. Here on the high places of society, a clear, a profound, a ready intellect, is the orb which circles in its own proper sphere. They are only lofty eminences from which, not ignorance and imbecility may display themselves, but knowledge and vast mental power irradiate the world.

In leaving the aristocracy of station, the aristocracy of profession will afford us a closing illustration of the train of thought we are endeavoring to unfold. In the outset it may be well to remark, that in our land at least, all honest occupations are truly honorable, and entitled to the respect of society. But it is nevertheless a fact that all are not equally *influential*. While as genuine republicans we regard every station and every virtuous profession as deserving our respect, yet we cannot avoid recognizing the fact which reveals itself as the inevitable operation of causes beyond our con-

trol, that there are some professions which gather to themselves in the eye of society a peculiar dignity and a special influence. I speak of facts as they are—not as in our speculations we may imagine they ought to be. A brick-layer and a lawyer, equal in other respects in character, are not equally invested with influence from their respective occupations. There is in all society, with scarcely an exception, to some extent a gradation of profession. Some are invested with a higher influence and deeper hold upon the minds of men than others. And perhaps it is impossible wholly to change this order, which society has itself created, by its own spontaneous operation. It is not my design, however, to justify the fact, but in part to account for it, and trace out one of the leading influences, in accordance with which this gradation has been constructed.

In the main then, and after admitting the existence of exceptions, it will be found that those professions which are usually held in the highest estimation among the most civilized nations, are those which are more purely mental in their character. In the ruder states of society, physical attributes and those pursuits which nerved the arm and disciplined the eye

and invigorated the body, held the foremost rank. The Achilles, and Hector, and Milos, and Goliahs, and Samsons, were *the* great men of their age and clime. Although even then the inspiration of the poet and the wisdom of the prophet were not without their influence. But as society advances from the rude to the refined, and civilization enlarges its boundaries, mere brute force loses its dignity, and mind usurps its place and bears off its crown. Our modern *athletæ*—the pugilists of the nineteenth century, hold a very different rank from that of their famed predecessors, who displayed their muscular energy in the amphitheatres of Athens and Rome. The ancients crowned the victors with the amaranth and seated them beside their kings; we dress them in fustian and send them to the penitentiary.

With the advance of the world in science and the invention of new modes of warfare, a new order of occupation has been wrought out, and been followed by a readjustment of the prizes of honor. The pursuits and tastes of men become more refined and intellectual; science and art rise into general estimation. Military tactics, the art of rapid and skillful combination of force in war take the place of

mere physical strength. War itself becomes a science, in which the master intellect, though with unequal forces, usually remains the victor. While what are termed the liberal professions, the pursuits of educated mind, rise to the possession of commanding influence over the body of society.

Extreme cases will most forcibly illustrate our position. Take then a hod carrier and a member of the bar or the medical board. Indisputably there is a vast difference between the spheres of influence in which those persons move—a difference arising from the fact that the point on which one revolves is low in public estimation while that of the other is elevated. Both may be honest and even good men. The hod carrier may be equal to the professional man in native intellect, and he may, by the exercise of a vigorous mind, sometimes sway the greatest influence of the two. But if so he can only do it in spite of his position, and ordinarily without any aid from it. So that in such a case it would after all be the out-breaking of great mental power, which, like that of Burns and Hogg, imparted to its possessor large influence far beyond his own circle. Such men sometimes burst upon society like meteors from the bosom of darkness; the more

startling as they are unusual and unexpected. While their brilliancy and their power is wholly intellectual, and which were it placed in a higher position, would usually fill a vastly enlarged sphere. But in ordinary cases, the influence of the one is limited, compared with that of the other, and limited by the position he occupies. One is engaged in a kind of labor that demands the smallest exercise of mind ; while the other is called to the investigation of questions that require the most patient and vigorous efforts of the human intellect. The miner may delve in the earth and put forth little more mind than a burrowing mole, similarly employed ; while the student tasks his understanding to its utmost capacity in evolving the great principles of jurisprudence or the pathology of disease incident to our corporeal frame. Hence, in part at least, for there are other collateral causes combining with this to produce the result, the latter stands before the community in a high and influential position, while the former occupies the other extreme.

Now as in these cases intellect vindicates its dignity and asserts its appropriate position in the estimation of cultivated society, so to a greater or less extent, its influence can be seen

in deciding upon the order of estimation in which the various occupations of men are actually arranged. The posts that demand little skill and intelligence, usually range lowest; while as greater power of mind is requisite to fill them properly, they ascend in influence. If here and there a profession, that demands great abilities is undervalued, it is so ordinarily either from ignorance of the fact or from some counteracting moral cause. But in the main, if a profession requiring great intellectual power be honest and essential to the comfort and refinement of society, it will in time take and maintain its true and that a lofty position in the estimation of men. Thus cultivated intellect arranges the gradation of human pursuits, and in the order of the professions displays its dignity and commanding power. As the water crystalizes according to a certain law, upon the withdrawal of a degree of heat, so society upon the withdrawal of ignorance and brutishness, spontaneously classifies itself according to a law of intellectual power. And in so doing there is evinced alike the force and native dignity of the human mind.

But besides the aristocracy of profession, in this general sense, it is equally true and equally

pertinent to our subject, that each profession and trade has usually its own aristocracy, formed mainly according to the intellectual power of its members. In the law, and medicine, and the ministry, there are heights of professional attainment—distinguished minds among a multitude of laborious minds; stars of greater magnitude and brilliancy. The Blackstones and Burlamaquis and Marshalls—the Harveys and Coopers and Rushes—the Whitfields and Edwardses and Halls and Griffins, indicate a higher order of intellect in their several professions than the mass exhibit. So it is with your merchant princes—your Hancocks and Morrises and Bartletts and Jameses. Each profession has a wheel within a wheel. The master mechanic has reached a post which demands of him a more vigorous intellect than is necessary to drive the plane or the needle. And as his sphere of intellectual power enlarges, he ascends in his own profession to a point of increased influence. Thus Whitney and Arkwright and Fulton and Watt, placed themselves as artizans upon the very topmost heights of their professions, and graved their names so deep and legible that the world may read them for centuries. Thus Reynolds and Chantry

painted and chiselled their way up to the loftiest positions open to them—the one ennobled as the prince of painters, the other as the chief of stone cutters. It was the outflashing intellect, working in the hand of the mechanic, scheming in the brain of the merchant, pleading with the tongue and pen of the jurist and divine, that lit up in the living firmament, this galaxy of lustrous stars. There they shine, the calm, clear radiance of mind, shedding its glory over the face of human society and lighting it up with a portion of the splendor of a higher sphere. In all these illustrious names—names written out

“ On the living sky
To be for ever read by every eye,”

there is a testimony to the dignity and force of mind, which time will only brighten, never obscure. In this aspect then of the aristocracy of the professions, as well as from all the other points which have passed under our view, we see portrayed most vividly the elevating power of *mind*.

I have developed this train of thought thus at length, for the purpose of evincing to you, that in the attainment of many of the highest

prizes of honorable earthly distinction, a vigorous and cultivated mind is not an unimportant element of success. It is time, however, that I proceed to point out to you some of the various applications which you may make of the knowledge and mental discipline, acquired in your attendance upon the library and debates and lectures of this Association.

The most prominent object to which a cultivated mind may apply its powers, is *that profession* which you have chosen as a means of honorable subsistence. There is a difference, as I have already remarked, in the degree to which different occupations task the intellect. There are some which necessitate the incessant exercise of the highest powers of the mind. There are others which allow, without requiring, intellectual effort in a high degree. To plead well—to preach well—to understand the pathology of disease, a man *must think*; but he may sell a yard of tape or a piece of goods and do it well without much mental effort. Admitting then this difference in the absolute requirements of different professions, yet it should be remembered that most of these *allow* the exercise of large abilities and a well-stored mind. Let us take the case of the merchant already referred

to. It may demand no great amount of knowledge to be an expert salesman, and go through with the more ordinary parts of his business, but if he would thoroughly understand his profession and carry his intellect into it, he will find a thousand things connected with it that may give scope and employment for his most vigorous powers. Let him study the character of the articles that he sells; the growth of their materials and the method of their construction. He may investigate the origin, and form and development of the cotton plant—the countries that produce it—the process by which the staple is prepared for the factory—the mode in which it is spun and woven and dyed, until it comes forth the beautiful and delicate fabric fit for queenly robes; and in the course of his research he will have traversed a wide field of knowledge, and examined some of the most interesting inventions of the age. And in this way let him push his examinations into the shawls of Cashmere—the teas and silks of China—the gossamer fabrics of the land of the gay troubadour—the woolens and cutlery of England—the beautiful products of the looms of Turkey and Persia, and the spices of Arabia, and he will soon find himself at home in all parts of the world. In-

ventions and arts and sciences will gradually enlarge his mind, and crowd it with the material of a new life of thought. The fabrics that once he handled, as the savage the telescope, whose construction was to him a perfect mystery, now have a new and singular power to interest and quicken his intellect. They are speaking volumes of rich lore ; foreigners from a thousand climes, bringing with them a thousand new and wonderful ideas. His store is an assemblage of the mind and art of all nations—a specimen gallery of the productive handiwork of the world. From its shelves the Turk and the Persian—the Hindoo and the Chinaman—the Gaul and the Briton—the Puritan and the Cavalier look down peacefully upon him and offer their contributions to his intellectual feast. Gifted with the knowledge of which we have spoken, he can see and hear and hold communion with these personages, invisible though they be to the leaden vision of ignorance and sloth.

And besides this direction of study and thought, if he aims to become an accomplished merchant, he must investigate the character and capacity of the great markets of the world—search out the nature and the extent of their pro-

ductions ; understand the physical positions and commercial relations of various nations, their exchanges, tastes, social character and wants, and accustom himself to survey intelligently the varying aspects of commerce, with the causes at work to destroy or promote its prosperity. The young merchant who early commences, and with the power of true genius, perseveres in, such a course of investigation and such an application of mental power to his own profession, without question will in time rise to a high rank in the scale of intelligence, and build for himself a character more truly desirable than the proudest fortune ever gathered by human hands.

Take also the pursuits of the farmer. A person may cultivate the soil, like the horse in a cider mill, treading the same unvarying circle of the habits and maxims of his fathers, with scarcely any exercise of the higher powers of mind. But he may also apply to such a pursuit, the most profound researches into the nature of soils, and the chemical agents which most affect the growth of vegetable life. Since the era of your Buels and Wadsworths, and the treatises of Liebig, book-farming is daily growing into repute, and our most successful culti-

vaters of the soil, other things being equal, are the most intelligent.

In respect to the mechanic, it is scarcely necessary to remark, that there is open before him, the same wide field for the employment of mind. If he would be among the most skillful of his profession, he will find a thousand objects to which his intelligence may be applied with the happiest effect. If for instance, he would rise to the character of a perfect architect, then in the beautiful language of another, he "must be practically acquainted with all the materials of building—wood, brick, mortar and stone ; he must have the courage and skill to plant his moles against the heaving ocean, and to hang his ponderous domes and gigantic arches in the air ; while he must have taste to combine the rough and scattered blocks of the quarry into beautiful and majestic structures ; and discern clearly in his mind's eye, before a sledge hammer has been lifted, the elevation of the temple."

In the various branches of mechanics, also, there is room for almost boundless improvement. In all probability we have not yet reached the heights of excellence in some of those branches, which have been attained in the past;

which now look out upon us from the vast and mysterious pyramids of the Nile; and of which they alone remain the silent memorials without imparting to us a single hint, that would enable us to discover the great mechanical agencies by which they were piled up to heaven. Nor can we contemplate the triumphs of a Watt and a Fulton, without feeling that the mechanic is upon a wide and unexplored territory, where genius properly trained and rightly directed, cannot fail of discovering either new forces or new methods of applying those already known, which may effect great changes in the aspect of the world. Surely the power of combining afresh the various forces of nature is not yet exhausted. Inventions in the arts; advances in the sciences; improvements in machinery that are to greatly reduce the present necessity for toil and produce, of all that is rich and beautiful and needful for human luxury or support, a much larger amount in proportion to the means employed, seem to lie just ahead. Perhaps there may be among you some mind equally capable with that of Whitney, of bringing to perfection a machine, which in its ultimate influence upon commerce, may far surpass his world-famed cotton gin; or a me-

chanical genius, which like that of Cartwright and Fulton, will revolutionize the weaving and the transportation of the world. Surrounded by such a creation, with the myriad forces of nature that are known, at his feet, and it may be many yet to be detected by the prying eye of genius on every side of him ; with the materials for working up to perfection in any line of labor he may choose, let no young man despair of a successful application of intelligence to his own profession. It may be, you are destitute of what is called genius. But what is genius ? Why to some minds the embodiment of it, is a learned blacksmith, forging metals in his smithy eight hours a day ; mastering scores of languages from the mellifluous Italian to the jagged Sanscrit in an equal portion of time ; and then electrifying large audiences by his burning words and gorgeous imaginations. To others, a misanthropic poet with bare neck and bushy hair, is the very type of genius ; while to still another class it is a pregnant creative brain, from which, like that of Napoleon, or Scott, or Chatham, the mighty scheme or the beautiful image comes forth as instantaneously and as perfect as the creation sprang into being and order from the teeming mind of the great First Cause.

Now I do not deny that there are intellects by nature invested with greater powers of invention and profound thought, than others. It is not according to the ordinary rule of divine operations, to create a dead level in the world of mind. It is an opinion, in strict accordance with the intellectual phenomena of the race, and with the analogy of a world, on every part of which is impressed the most astonishing diversity of form, weight and color, that the human intellect, like the human countenance, has always its own native characters in some of its lineaments diverse from all others—that there are men who with the same training as others, will yet overtop the multitude, and stride with amazing rapidity up the dazzling heights of science. But while it seems thus clear and natural, that the same law of original formation should prevail in a degree in the world of mind that has reigned in the material creation, we yet hold that the great mass of men may possess to some extent, that power which constitutes the chief force of genius—the *power of mental application*. The ability to hold the mind steadily and long to any given subject until you have viewed it in all its parts and in every light, is the highest attribute—the prime element of genius. This power is one

susceptible of vast increase by cultivation. And the man who has the ability to fix his attention deeply upon any branch or topic of scientific pursuit, has the great element of that splendid success which crowns the name of Newton with imperishable lustre. Let every young man seek to bring into his own profession all the intelligence within his reach, and though he may not win a place in the constellation of the immortals, he will nevertheless elevate that profession and command the respect of all within the circle of his acquaintance.

I have a friend, who, though he has numbered little more than thirty summers, has contrived in the midst of a laborious life, to make great progress in science. Having received a good academical education, he early entered a bookstore. Here, in the midst of ceaseless toil, and effecting far more than most men in their own line of business, he has mastered several foreign languages—maintained an active correspondence with some of the most distinguished literati of Europe—investigated thoroughly most of the natural sciences—gone up into the heights of astronomy, and down into the depths of moral philosophy, and made himself familiar with books of all kinds, from the last number of the

“Journal of Science,” to the deep solutions of the “Principia,” and the sublime speculations of the “De Natura Deorum.” His life is one incessant development of the idea of *Industry*. No hour—no moment, but has its employment ; and no day passes without some new line traced out on the canvass of his life. Such devotion wherever it is found, must as surely work out a glorious issue—a fine and noble development of the intellectual man, as the revolution of the earth brings forth the changing seasons. Such mental application would encircle all your professions with intellectual light, and open in the book of civilization a new leaf of glory. Remember that science and art, far from being in the decrepitude of age, we have reason to believe are yet in their vigorous youth ; and there are yet to be ascended eminences of intellectual achievement towering into the everlasting sunshine, as far above the past, as the massive pyramids of Pharaoh, and the sublime dome of St. Peter’s exceed in vastness and beauty the log cabins of our western wilderness. Let each one by the force of his intellect, strive to enlarge the intelligence and elevate the mind of his own profession, and society will feel the upward impulse thrilling to her lowest extremities.

Another large subject for the application of your intelligence is spread out before you in the relations you sustain to our civil government. There is a proper sense in which you are young sovereigns. You, in connexion with your fellow citizens, are the ultimate source of political authority. Between you and the actual legislation, indeed, there intervenes an intelligent instrumentality; yet it is equally true, that the ballot box must ultimately sanction their acts or hurl them from their seats. In your citizen character, you are to pass upon the great questions of state. And here there is open for you a subject to which you may apply the profoundest reason—the maturest judgment—the largest intelligence. Your problems of commercial restriction and national enlargement in the acquisition of new territory, and a currency coextensive with the country and others like them, which our state and national progress are constantly presenting to us, are not to be solved by a mere knowledge of the rule of three, and Webster's spelling book. Profound questions, demanding clear heads, vigorous powers of reasoning, large mental acquisitions, and great patience in the collection of facts, for their settlement, are every day opening upon us. Where in

ancient or modern times was there ever a finer field for the application of the general intelligence of the people? Sciolists are not the men for these times. We are settling precedents that are to reach forward for ages. In law and legislation—on the bench and in the senate chamber, we are yet busy in rearing and giving perfection to the structure within which hundreds of millions are to repose or perish. You may not only be called upon to work upon this grander edifice than the nations have yet seen, at the ballot box, but at the very seat of legislation itself. The intelligence of our mechanics and merchants, and lawyers, and physicians, goes up into the capitol; and there you may be called to the discharge of duties which will tax all the might of the mightiest mind. In view of these high duties, history with all its thrilling pictures of thrones, and aristocracies, and curule chairs crumbled by the hand of time, stands ready to teach you wisdom; Grotius and Bacon, Newton and Herschell, flaming beacon lights of law and science, ever shine to instruct you; while the genius of the past and the present, smiling down upon you from the shelves of your libraries, pleads with you by all the desolation of the past and all the opening glory of the future to get

yourselves in readiness for the work, which your position inevitably imposes upon you, as the young sovereigns of the model nation of the world.

Nor are these the only ways in which your intelligence may advantageously display its power for good. There is a social life in which we all mingle and which we must sustain. Each of you creates for himself or enters into it already created, a little world, where the mind unrobes—where wit and sentiment, and discussion exhibit their sweetest attractions—where love and friendship soften the sternness engendered by the selfish conflicts of life—where intelligence and refinement shed around the charm of a perennial verdure. There is one little world where the tool and the pen—the bond and mortgage—the day book and ledger may not enter; but where social nature should be free to expand itself joyously over the interesting circle. Here the really intelligent man may contribute vitally to the elevation of society. It is not by playing the pedant and ostentatiously displaying his mental acquisitions, but by an influence emanating from an enlightened mind, as the heat from the fire, diffusing itself unseen, while it warms and blesses. Society would be a far

more elevating school, and conversation a richer feast—a fuller flow of soul, if they, who gave them character, knew and acted on the principle, that whatever may be the outward fashion, “the mind’s the gold for a’ that.”

There is still another subject for the application of your intelligence which cannot be passed by. There is an aristocracy of virtue, as well as of mind. Without it, intelligence is itself only a blind force, such as Milton has embodied in his gigantic creation of the prince of fallen angels. Without it no man is perfect. Reason is God-like, but true religion in the heart is more truly Deity itself. The intellect is a prince, wisdom is noble—

“Yet this great empress of the human soul,
Does only with imagined power control,
If restless passion, by rebellion’s sway,
Compels the weak usurper to obey.”

If you would be a *man* in all his nobler characteristics, then the heart must beat true to every right affection. Intellectually no person is perfect, who is the slave of vice. There is a cog broken out of the wheel; there is a mental weakness which reveals itself in the loftiest intellects of this class, the world has ever seen.

Here too, in religion are found the deepest

questions—vital to our highest interests, and profound beyond the longest line of mortals. Here Socrates reasoned, and Plato speculated, and Cicero put forth the powers of his philosophic mind. Here Bacon toiled, and Newton studied, and Locke sank his shaft of thought deep into this mine of truth. It is the grandest subject for the application of the most consummate intelligence. It involves the past, the present, the future. It carries us back to the birth of creation ; it conducts us onward over all the intervening centuries, through all that is most deeply interesting in the changing history of the world ; it pierces the future and opens into the distant depths of eternity vistas of immortality. No man is *educated* who is either ignorant or unsettled here. Some of the otherwise finest intellects our country, or the world can boast, have left behind them an imperfect fame—a character distorted—a genius sullied by vice, or darkened by skepticism. The memory of such men has no fragrance. Their intellectual might, awakens our astonishment at its greatness, and our regret at its abuse. We may admire the force of their genius, but we can never render them the tribute of affectionate respect. No man can neglect so sublime a subject of thought,

or one which involves such tremendous issues as religion, without so far forfeiting his claim to the character of an intelligent and thoroughly educated member of society. And every *young man* especially, should bring to it all the force of the profoundest intelligence within his reach, lest the skeptic fling him into a morass where he will struggle only to sink, or the fanatic kindle in his bosom the meteor blaze that heralds the blackest night of darkness. In the attainment of well settled, robust, and profound views on these high themes, you need to invigorate your intellect and lay its proudest offerings on this altar of noblest truth.

YOUNG GENTLEMEN—

This institution was originated, these doors were opened, and your library was gathered to develope and enrich *mind*—the young mind of this city. Thus far it has nobly fulfilled this design. From the past action of this and kindred associations, their utility is no longer a matter of experiment. Long ago they have fully established their claims to the good wishes of the old and the energetic support of the young. They have called into action some of the best minds of the nation. They have formed new

points and orbits, upon and within which the educated mind of the country might revolve. They have signally promoted the healthful interchange of literary men ; spreading their influence, and giving scope to their talents in fields far removed from their own firesides. They have provided for our citizens occasions on which they might listen without trouble, and at the most trifling expense, to lessons of wisdom from the most brilliant and gifted intellects in the range of our common country. They have given to society discussions of deep interest on a vast variety of subjects. They have organized into healthful and united action much of the young mind of the nation. They have done more than amuse it. They have come in to the aid of other conservative influences, in rousing it to right action, in cultivating scientific tendencies, in substituting for the vulgar wit of the bar room, and the indecency and dissipation of the theatre, the miscellaneous intelligence of the reading room, the learning of the library, and the calm and pure excitement of the lecture. They have both stimulated mind and opened the field on which it might expatiate. They have nourished genius ; thrown open to the youth panting for knowledge, the embalmed mental treasures

of every age ; and made the world's jewels common to all. In themselves they are not a substitute for the school or the academy. But their influence is all in harmony with the noblest institutions of our country, conservative of law, morality and religion, lending a brighter tint to society, and imparting new dignity to the various professions of life. The lecture room may not be the place for the acquisition of the profoundest views of science ; but surely it stimulates the mind to work out in its own silent laboratory the largest intelligence. It cannot take the place of self action, but it has a powerful influence to rouse us to such action. It cannot make a man, but it can encourage the young by their own patient toil to reach up to the stature of men. Society needs a thousand influences to develope and train up its hidden mind. In all ages of the world it has sought for either animal or intellectual excitement. Its thirst for amusement of some kind, is seen in the festive days and games of the Greek—the saturnalia and the gladiatorial exhibitions of the Roman—the theatre, and bull fights, and races of the Moderns. And it has been for ages a problem for the wise to solve, so to control and guide this feverish love of excitement, as to redeem it from its

brutalizing, its enervating influence, and enlist it as an efficient aid in the moral and intellectual renovation of society. To some extent your associations solve that problem. They minister to this love of excitement a healthful food. They attempt not to repress, but to guide it to noble and elevating ends. They have thus established for themselves a position of power from which they could not be shaken, without casting down a bright orb from our winter skies. While they remain as they are now, religion and morality lend them their hallowed sanction ; while every well wisher to the youth of our cities, rejoice in their success. Could there be found one with views so low and soul so contracted, as to refuse his aid to sustain you, or carp at your noble mission to the young mind of our land, to such might we address with all propriety, the scathing rebuke of the poet—

“Breathes there a man with soul so dead?—
 If such there breathe, go, mark him well ;
 For him no minstrel raptures swell,
 Proud though his title, high his fame,
 Boundless his wealth, as wish could claim ;
 In spite of title, power and pelf
 The wretch, concentered all in self,
 Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
 And doubly dying, shall go down
 To the vile earth from whence he sprung,
 Unwept, unhonored and unsung.”