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Title: "The Duty and Dignity of Man," by George B. Creamer

Format: Commencement Oration

Date: July 12, 1860

Location: OrationsX-1860-C912d

Contact:

Archives & Special Collections
Waidner-Spahr Library
Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu

George B. Creamer
Class of 1860

The Duty and Dignity of Man.

This world has been aptly compared to a stage upon which all men are merely players. Each one has his own Life-Drama to enact; each one his own peculiar duty to perform in the great tragedy of life. We live, perform our allotted duty as best we can, and then pass away; and the reward the reward is to him who best performs that duty.

Therefore it becomes every one to comport himself with a manly dignity, a resolve that his maxim shall be, everything subservient to duty.

With some life is but a strife for gain and advancement, a longing after something, we know not what, that can be of no practical benefit either here or hereafter. With others

Life is real. Life is earnest;

And the grave is not the goal.

The greatness to which we should aspire, is to fill our own station well, honorably and perfectly. The lofty mountain summit, towering up in its cold rugged sublimity, does not equal in beauty or utility the verdant-hill side or the lowly teeming valley; yet its stern granite features overshadow both.

But a less conspicuous position does not imply inactivity or sloth; for the star that appears dimmest to our visions may be intrinsically and in the eye of God the brightest.

Practical utility however small is preferable to impracticable greatness however large and in whatever sphere it may make itself evident to us.

Dignity in respect to his intellectual nature should be striven after by man. For the intellect is as native gold encased in clay. That the mind is not only separate from the body, but exercises an almost unbounded influence over it; is demonstrated by every day's experience. The human countenance speaks intelligence. The soul stamps expression upon the face, and leaves its sign manual there, the title page of its own autobiography.

But intellect constitutes not alone the whole of man's dignity. It elevates, exalts, distinguishes him above the brute; but there are also moral qualities, and capacities, underlying the other, which constitute in him the religious element. Man is still a moral agent, capable of moral judgment, and moral action, and when he stands up in the dignified position of a good man, physically, intellectually, and morally, is a glorious being.

Man's duty must be in consonance with his dignity, and therefore no small duty is his, obligations of no trifling character rest upon him. He has a manly part to play in the great drama of life. Human life is no play thing, nor is time a fool ball; yet there are many who make them such. The golden particles of our probation are inestimable as to their value. Time is the capital upon which we trade for eternity; and every hour is associated with our future destiny.

Man's duties to his God are superior to
and take precedence of all others. God
has claims upon us, which we may not dis-
pute, based upon creation providence and re-
demption. But every man owes himself
a duty - a duty to elevate his own destiny
among men. But some men are so benevo-
lent to those around them that they nev-
er seem to take thought for themselves. He
that feels not his own dangers, and takes no
measures to extricate himself, will surely
become a blind leader of the blind.

Distinction is not valuable for its own sake,
nor is the ambition of it a quality of real greatness.

Let all be loyal in the discharge of duty, for
the consciousness of duty well discharged in
any station, sanctifies alike and compensates
the utmost reverse of hope or fortune.

Geo. D. Creamer

Wm. B. Cleaver

Commencement Oration of George B. Creamer, Class of 1860
Transcribed by Sarah Skalak, June 2008
Edited by Tristan Deveney, July 2008

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