

**AN ORATION PRONOUNCED
AT CAMBRIDGE, BEFORE
THE SOCIETY OF PHI BETA
KAPPA. AUGUST 27, 1824**

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An Oration Pronounced at Cambridge, Before the Society of Phi Beta Kappa. August 27, 1824 by
Edward Everett

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THE REQUEST OF
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TO MAJOR GENERAL

LA FAYETTE,

THIS Oration, delivered in his presence, is respectfully and affectionately dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that this is essential for ensuring transparency and accountability in the organization's operations.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and tools used to collect and analyze data. It highlights the need for consistent and reliable data collection processes to support informed decision-making.

3. The third part of the document focuses on the role of technology in data management and analysis. It discusses how modern software solutions can streamline data collection, storage, and reporting, thereby improving efficiency and accuracy.

4. The fourth part of the document addresses the challenges associated with data collection and analysis. It identifies common issues such as data quality, consistency, and integration, and provides strategies to overcome these challenges.

5. The fifth part of the document discusses the importance of data security and privacy. It emphasizes the need for robust security measures to protect sensitive information and ensure compliance with relevant regulations.

6. The sixth part of the document concludes by summarizing the key findings and recommendations. It reiterates the importance of a data-driven approach and provides actionable insights for the organization's future success.

ORATION.

MR. PRESIDENT, AND GENTLEMEN,

IN discharging the honourable trust of being the public organ of your sentiments on this occasion, I have been anxious that the hour, which we here pass together, should be occupied by those reflections exclusively, which belong to us as scholars. Our association in this fraternity is academical; we engaged in it before our alma mater dismissed us from her venerable roof, to wander in the various paths of life; and we have now come together in the academical holidays, from every variety of pursuit, from almost every part of our country, to meet on common ground, as the brethren of one literary household. The professional cares of life, like the conflicting tribes of Greece, have proclaimed to us a short armistice, that we may come up in peace to our Olympia.

But from the wide field of literary speculation, and the innumerable subjects of meditation which arise in it, a selection must be made. And it has seemed to me proper that we should direct our thoughts, not merely to a subject of interest to scholars, but to one, which may recommend itself as peculiarly appropriate to us. If 'that old man eloquent, whom the dishonest victory at Cheronæa killed with report,' could devote fifteen years to the composition of his Panegyric on Athens, I shall need no excuse to a society of American scholars, in choosing for the theme of an address on an occasion like this, *the peculiar motives to intellectual exertion in America*. In this subject that curiosity, which every scholar feels in tracing

and comparing the springs of mental activity, is heightened and dignified, by the important connexion of the inquiry with the condition and prospects of our native land.

In the full comprehension of the terms, the motives to intellectual exertion in a country embrace the most important springs of national character. Pursued into its details, the study of these springs of national character is often little better than fanciful speculation. The questions, why Asia has almost always been the abode of despotism; and Europe more propitious to liberty; why the Egyptians were abject and melancholy; the Greeks inventive, elegant, and versatile; the Romans stern, saturnine, and, in matters of literature, for the most part servile imitators of a people, whom they conquered, despised, and never equalled; why tribes of barbarians from the north and east, not known to differ essentially from each other at the time of their settlement in Europe, should have laid the foundation of national characters so dissimilar as those of the Spanish, French, German, and English nations; these are questions to which a few general answers may be attempted, that will probably be just and safe, only in proportion as they are vague and comprehensive. Difficult as it is, even in the individual man, to point out precisely the causes, under the influence of which members of the same community and of the same family, placed apparently in the same circumstances, grow up with characters the most diverse; it is infinitely more difficult to perform the same analysis on a subject so vast as a nation; where it is first not a small question what the character is, before you touch the inquiry into the circumstances by which it was formed.

But as, in the case of individual character, there are certain causes of undisputed and powerful operation; there are also in national character causes equally undisputed, of improvement and excellence on the one hand, and of degeneracy and decline on the other. The philosophical student of history, the *impartial observer* of man, may often fix on circum-

stances, which in their operation on the minds of the people, in furnishing the motives and giving the direction to intellectual exertion, have had the chief agency in making them what they were or are. Nor are there many exercises of the speculative principle more elevated than this. It is in the highest degree curious to trace physical facts into their political, intellectual, and moral consequences; and to show how the climate, the geographical position, and even the particular topography of a region connect themselves by evident association, with the state of society, its predominating pursuits, and characteristic institutions.

In the case of other nations, particularly of those which in the great drama of the world have long since passed from the stage, these speculations are often only curious. The operation of a tropical climate in enervating and fitting a people for despotism; the influence of a broad river or a lofty chain of mountains, in arresting the march of conquest or of emigration, and thus becoming the boundary not merely of governments, but of languages, literature, institutions, and character; the effect of a quarry of fine marble on the progress of the liberal arts; the agency of popular institutions in promoting popular eloquence, and the tremendous reaction of popular eloquence on the fortunes of a state; the comparative destiny of colonial settlements, of insular states, of tribes fortified in nature's Alpine battlements, or scattered over a smiling region of olive gardens and vineyards; these are all topics indeed of rational curiosity and liberal speculation, but important only as they may illustrate the prospects of our own country.

It is therefore when we turn the inquiry to our country, when we survey its features, search its history, and contemplate its institutions, to see what the motives are, which are to excite and guide the minds of the people; when we dwell not on a distant, an uncertain, an almost forgotten past; but on an impending future, teeming with life and action, toward