

**LECTURES ON THE
FORMATION
OF CHARACTER**

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Lectures on the Formation of Character by Thomas M. Clark

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THOMAS M. CLARK

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FORMATION OF CHARACTER.

BY THE

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RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, HARTFORD.

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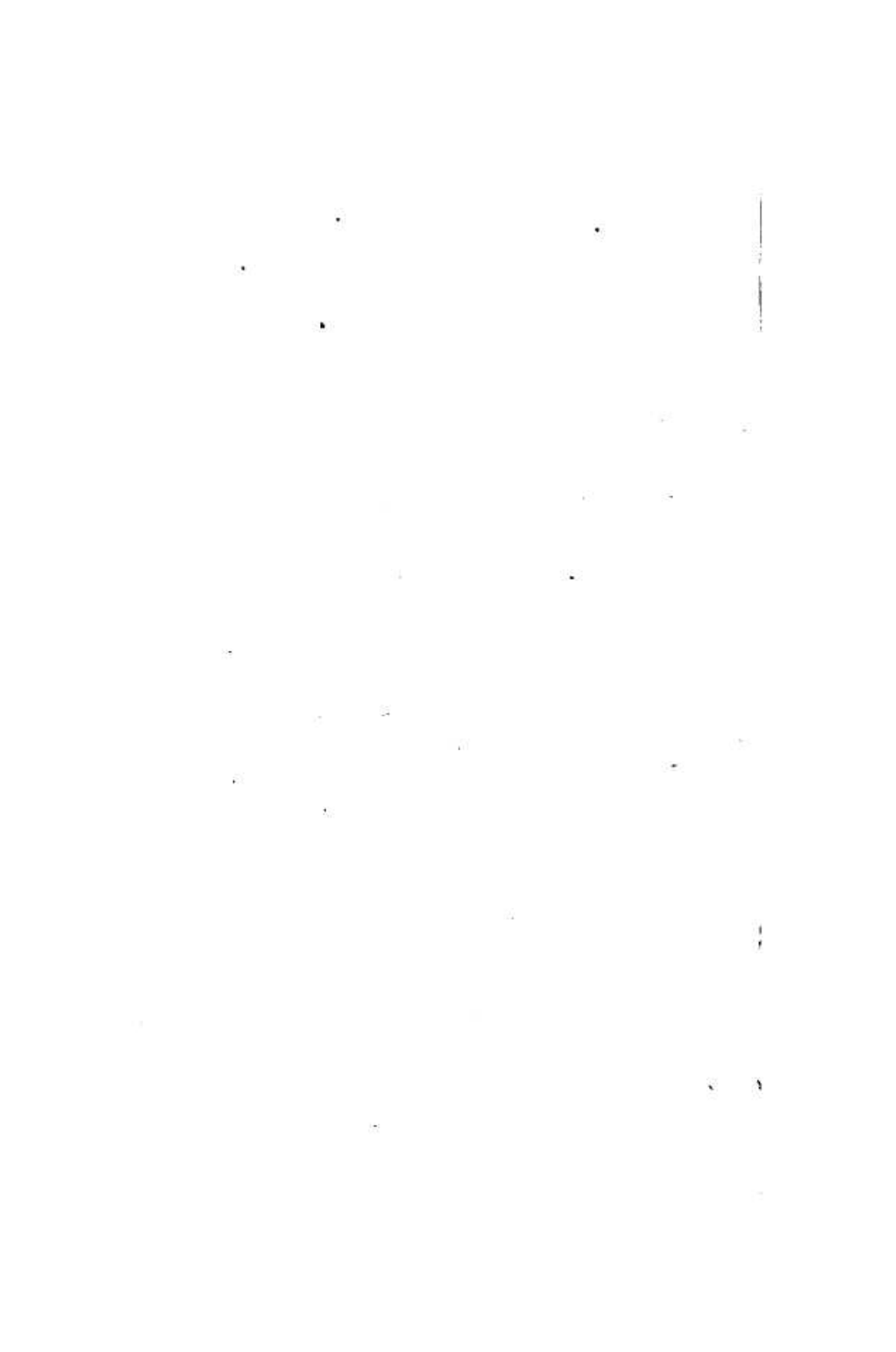
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LECTURE I.

FORMATION OF CHARACTER.

LAMENTATIONS III. 27.—It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

THE text is taken from a book, which is called "*The Lamentations of Jeremiah*;" a most appropriate title, for it would seem to have been written in the night-watches, with the wind moaning around the casement, and the black clouds chasing each other across the sky. We can see the prophet looking out from his window in the village of Anathoth towards Jerusalem, only three miles distant, which in former years he had been used to behold glistening with light at night-fall, and shining with brighter splendor at day-break, but now wrapped in gloom, and silent as the grave; and then we hear him breaking out with sobs and tears into the mournful cry, "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! all her gates are desolate! the young and the old lie on the ground in her streets."

But, after a season, his thoughts turn from the general desolation around him, to the contemplation of his own individual condition; "I am the man that hath seen affliction," is the prelude to this new strain of melancholy music. In the midst of the intense and bitter misery which fills his soul, the words fall from him, as it were in a parenthesis, "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth:" as though he said, it is well that the discipline of life should commence in the earlier stages of our pilgrimage; that such a character should be then formed, that we may be prepared for the experience and inevitable trials which await us; that we bend our necks to the yoke, before the habit of licentious freedom is established.

With this somewhat sombre preface, I open the series of discourses, to which I would now ask your candid attention. It is my desire to present to your notice a few subjects of great practical importance, with more especial reference to the condition of young men who are about emerging into their maturity. I cannot promise to say any thing which has not been better said before; and such a course of lectures as the present, might at first seem to be more than ordinarily superfluous in this city, where there has been, from time to time, so much admirable instruction addressed to youth. But it is

to be remembered that, every few years, a new company of young men appears upon the stage of action, and what is spoken to one generation does not reach the next. The style of life is also continually changing; dangers and temptations appear under new forms, and it becomes necessary to adapt our teaching to the actual emergency. The infidelity of the day is not what it was thirty years ago; the mode of doing business is not the same; the popular amusements are not the same; the current literature has been essentially modified. Some things have altered for the better, and others for the worse; but I know of no social improvements which have made the world, upon the whole, any safer place for the young or the old. It is very possible that the attention which is now given to the broad questions of general reform may make us careless, as it respects the correction of our own private sins and the discipline of our own souls. Some have seriously doubted whether the leading impulses now affecting society, are such as will be likely to induce an elevation and improvement in the tone of individual character. We are trying a great experiment in this age, the result of which is not altogether as certain as some imagine. It is to be determined whether or not the renovation of the world can be effected by intellectual culture, philanthropic effort, and scien-