

**OPPORTUNITY,  
AND OTHER ESSAYS  
AND ADDRESSES**

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Opportunity, and Other Essays and Addresses by J. L. Spalding

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**J. L. SPALDING**

**OPPORTUNITY,  
AND OTHER ESSAYS  
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# OPPORTUNITY

AND

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OTHER ESSAYS AND ADDRESSES

*John. C. McClurg*  
BY  
J. L. SPALDING

Bishop of Georgia

It is strange that most students should inquire with much diligence concerning the virtues of plants, the motions of the stars, the transmutations of metals, and other similar subjects, while few or none make it their purpose to acquire a good mind, though all other things are to be esteemed not so much for themselves as for their influence on the right use of reason. — DESCARTES.



CHICAGO  
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1900

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1884. 1. 1. 2. 1. 1.

OPPORTUNITY  
AND  
OTHER ESSAYS AND ADDRESSES

CHAPTER FIRST

OPPORTUNITY <sup>1</sup>

Human happiness has no perfect security but freedom, freedom none but virtue, and virtue none but knowledge; and neither freedom nor virtue nor knowledge has any vigor and immortal hope, except in the principles of the Christian faith and in the sanction of the Christian religion.

JOSIAH QUINCY.

HOW shall I live? How shall I make the most of my life and put it to the best use? How shall I become a man and do a man's work? This, and not politics or trade or war or pleasure, is the question. The primary consideration is not how one shall get a living, but how he shall live, for if he live rightly, whatever is needful he shall easily find. Life is opportunity, and therefore its whole circumstance may be made to serve the purpose of

<sup>1</sup> Address delivered at the opening of the Spalding Institute, Peoria, December 6, 1899.

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**OPPORTUNITY**  
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us on to braver hope and striving. If I am left alone, yet God and all the heroic dead are with me still. If a great city is my dwelling place, the superficial life of noise and haste shall teach me how blessed a thing it is to live within in the company of true thoughts and high resolves.

Whatever can help me to think and love, whatever can give me strength and patience, whatever can make me humble and serviceable, though it be a trifle light as air, is opportunity, whose whim it is to hide in unconsidered things, in chance acquaintance and casual speech, in the falling of an apple, in floating weeds, or the accidental explosion in a chemist's mortar. Wisdom is habited in plainest garb, and she walks modestly, unheeded of the gaping and wondering crowd. She rules over the kingdom of little things, in which the lowly minded hold the places of privilege. Her secrets are revealed to the careful, the patient, and the humble. They may be learned from the ant or the flower that blooms in some hidden spot or from the lips of husbandmen and housewives. He is wise who finds a teacher in every man, an occasion to improve in every happening, for whom nothing is useless or in vain. If one whom he has trusted prove false, he lays it to the account of his own heedlessness and

resolves to become more observant. If men scorn him, he is thankful that he need not scorn himself. If they pass him by, it is enough for him that truth and love still remain. If he is thrown with one who bears himself with ease and grace, or talks correctly in pleasantly modulated tones, or utters what can spring only from a sincere and generous mind—there is opportunity. If he chance to find himself in the company of the rude, their vulgarity gives him a higher estimate of the worth of breeding and behavior. The happiness and good fortune of his fellows add to his own. If they are beautiful or wise or strong, their beauty, wisdom, and strength shall in some way help him. The merry voices of children bring gladness to his heart; the songs of birds wake melody there. Whoever anywhere, in any age, spoke noble words or performed heroic deeds, spoke and wrought for him. For him Moses led the people forth from bondage; for him the three hundred perished at Thermopylæ; for him Homer sang; for him Demosthenes denounced the tyrant; for him Columbus sailed the untravelled sea; for him Galileo gazed on the starry vault; for him the blessed Saviour died. He knows that whatever diminishes his goodwill to men, his sympathy with them, even in their blindness and waywardness, makes him