

**MAN**

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Man by William Jennings Bryan

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By  
WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

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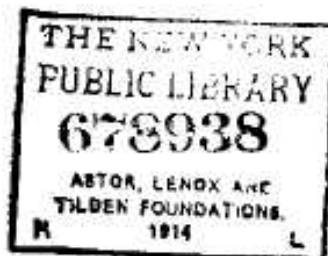


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**T**HE Psalmist asks Jehovah, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" And answering his own question he adds: "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor."

Man, in the sense in which the term describes the human being to whom the Creator has given dominion over earth, and air and sea, and upon whom He has imposed responsibilities commensurate with capabilities and possibilities—man, as thus defined, is an appropriate theme for an occasion like this, and its con-

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sideration is worthy not only of those who, having completed the course of study prescribed by this institution, go forth to meet life's problems, but worthy also of the thought of those who are older.

Miracle of miracles is man! Most helpless of all God's creatures in infancy; most powerful when fully developed; and interesting always. What unfathomed possibilities are wrapt within the swaddling clothes that enfold an infant! Who can measure a child's influence for weal or woe? Before it can lisp a word, it has brought to one woman the sweet consciousness of motherhood, and it has given to one man the added strength that comes with a sense of responsibility. Before its tiny hands can lift a feather's weight, they have drawn two hearts closer



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together and its innocent prattle echoes through two lives. Every-day that child in its growth touches and changes some one; not a year in all its history but that it leaves an impress upon the race. What incalculable space between a statue, however flawless the marble, however faultless the workmanship, and a human being "afame with the passion of eternity."

If the statue can not, like a human being, bring the gray hairs of a parent "in sorrow to the grave," or devastate a nation, or with murderous hand extinguish the vital spark in a fellow being, neither can it, like a human being, minister to suffering mankind, nor scatter gladness "o'er a smiling land," nor yet claim the blessings promised in the Sermon on the Mount. Only to man, made in

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the Divine likeness, is given the awful power to choose between measureless success and immeasurable woe.

Man shares with the animal a physical nature—he has a body, the citadel of the mind, the temporary tenement of the soul. It is necessary that this link in the endless chain that connects the generations past with the generations yet to come shall be made as strong as conditions, heredity and environment, will permit. Infinitely varied are the physical capabilities bequeathed to us by our ancestors. Some of us are heirs to virtuous estates with which no courts can interfere; some of us bear in our bodies the evidence of ancestral sins and are living proof of the fact that the iniquities of the parents are visited upon the children. All of us

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inherit both weaknesses and elements of strength. It is within our power to conserve and to increase the strength that has come down to us, and it is also within our power to dissipate the physical fortune which we have received. Nothing but a proper conception of the creature's stewardship under the Creator can protect the individual from the rust of inaction, the wear of excess and the waste that arises from a perverted use of the powers of the body.

If civilization can be defined—and I know of no better definition—as the harmonious development of the human race, physically, mentally and morally, then each individual, whether his influence is perceptible or not, raises the level of the civilization of his age just in proportion as he contributes to the world's work a