

**THE DESIRE OF REPUTATION; AN
ADDRESS, BEFORE THE
PHOENIX AND UNION SOCIETIES
OF HAMILTON COLLEGE, JULY
28, 1841**

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The desire of reputation; an address, before the Phoenix and Union societies of Hamilton college, July 28, 1841 by Albert Barnes

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ALBERT BARNES

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THE

DESIRE OF REPUTATION;

AN ADDRESS,

BEFORE

THE PHOENIX AND UNION SOCIETIES

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

HAMILTON COLLEGE,

JULY 28, 1841.

BY ALBERT BARNES.

Wie ein redlicher Mann, den Verleumder umwölken, verachtet
Sich zu vertheidigen, schweigt; denn bald verzicht das Gewölk sich.

KLOPFSTOCK'S MÄSSLICH, Gesang xvi.

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1841.

THE DESIRE OF REPUTATION.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

THE subject on which I propose to address you at this time, is, THE DESIRE OF REPUTATION. My aim will be accomplished if I can set before you the reasons why that desire is implanted in the human bosom; its value as a principle of action; the modifications under which it appears, and the perversions to which it is liable; the true principles which are to guide us in seeking it, and the field which is now open, especially in this country, to secure an honoured name.

I have selected this subject because there is not a heart before me that does not beat with a generous desire to be known and to be remembered; because there is no aspiration of the bosom that is more likely to become perverted, and to be a source of injury; because, for the young especially, it is desirable that the proper metes and limits of its indulgence should be laid down with care; and because I am persuaded, when properly understood, it may be made an important auxiliary in the cause of learning, patriotism, virtue, and even true religion. I will not despise or condemn any thing which I believe to be an original law of our nature, however it may have been abused; I will not believe that any thing which God has implanted in our bosoms may not contribute to the most exalted excellence of man.

The desire of an honoured name exists in all. It is an

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original principle in every mind, and lives often when every other generous principle has been obliterated. It is the wish to be known and respected by others; to extend the knowledge of our existence beyond our individual consciousness of being; to be remembered, at least, for a little while after we are dead. Next to the dread of annihilation—the most fearful thought which crosses the human soul—we dread the immediate extinction of our names when we die. We would not have the earth at once made level over our graves; we would not have the spot where we sleep at once forgotten; we would not have the last traces of our existence at once obliterated from the memory of the living world.

I need not go into an argument to prove that this desire exists in the human soul. Each one has only to look into his own heart to find it always there in living power and in controlling influence. I need not ask you to cast your eyes upon the pages of history to see the proofs that the desire has found a home in the heart of man. I need not point you to the distinguished heroes, orators and poets of past or of modern times; nor need I attempt to trace its operations in animating to deeds of noble daring, or its influence on the beautiful productions of the chisel or of song. Ovid showed it when looking down into far distant ages, and anticipating the judgment of future times, he said:

Jamque opus exegi: quod nec Jovis ira, nec ignes,
 Nec poterit ferrum, nec edax abolere vetustas,
 Cùm volet illa dies, quæ nil nisi corporis hujus
 Jus habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat ævi:
 Parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
 Astra ferar: nomenque erit indelebile nostrum.
 Quæque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
 Ore legar populi: perque omnia sæcula famâ
 (Si quid habent veri vatum præsagia,) vivam.

METAMOR. XV. 871.

Horace expressed the same emotion, and the same conviction that he would be remembered, in the beautiful language

“*Jamque exegi monumentum ære perennius.*”

Milton was warmed by the same generous flame, and felt that there dwelt within him the innate power of rearing a monument which would convey his name to latest times, when he uttered this sentiment: “I began to assent to my friends here at home, and not less to an inward prompting, which now grew daily upon me, that by labour and intense study (which I take to be my portion in this life) joined with the strongest propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to after times, as they should not willingly let it die.”* Klopstock, in one of his best odes, has described the instinctive desire of future reputation, and of living in the memory of posterity, when founded on a virtuous principle:

“Sweet are the thrills, the silver voice of fame
Triumphant through the bounding bosom darts!
And immortality! how proud an aim!
What noble toil to spur the noblest hearts!
By charm of song to live through future time,
To hear, still spurning death’s invidious stroke,
Enraptur’d quoirs rehearse one’s name sublime,
Even from the mansions of the grave invoke:
Within the tender heart e’en then to rear
Thee, love! thee, virtue! fairest growth of heaven!
O this, indeed, is worthy men’s career;
This is the toil to noblest spirits givæ.”

Dr. Good.†

* The Reason of Ch. Gov. urged against Prelacy. B. xi. Intro.

† Reizvoll klinget des Ruhms lockender Silberton
In das schlagende Hertz, und Unsterblichkeit
Ist ein Gedanke,
Ist des Schweisses der edlen werth!

The desire of a grateful remembrance when we are dead lives in every human bosom. The earth is full of the memorials which have been erected as the effect of that desire: and though thousands of the monuments that had been reared by anxious care and toil; by deeds of valour in the battle-field; or by early efforts at distinction in the forum, have perished; still we cannot traverse a land where the indications of this deep-rooted desire do not meet us on every side. The once lofty column, now broken and decaying; the marble from which the name has been obliterated by time; the splendid mausoleum, standing over remains long since forgotten; and the lofty pyramid, though the name of its builder is no longer known; each one shows how deeply this desire once fixed itself in some human heart. Every work of art; every temple, and statue; every book on which we carelessly cast the eye as we pass along the alcoves of a great library, is probably a monument of this desire to be remembered when life is gone. Every rose or honey-suckle that we plant over the grave of a friend is but a response to the desire not to be forgotten which once warmed the cold heart beneath. And who would be willing to be forgotten? Who could endure the thought that when he is committed to the earth no tear would ever fall on his grave; no thought of a friend ever be directed there; and that the traveller would never be told who is the sleeper there?—Even the poor slave that desires to be remembered by his fellow-slave when he is

Durch der Lieder Gewalt, bey der Urenkelin
 Son und Tochter noch seyn, mit der Entzückung Ton
 Oft bey dem Namen genennet,
 Oft gerufen vom Grabe her.
 Dann ihr sanfteres Hertz bilden, und Liebe, dich
 Fromme Tugend, dich, auch giessen ins safte Hertz,
 Ist, bey dem Himmel! nicht wenig!
 Ist des Schweisses der Edlen werth!

Der Zürchersee.

dead, feels the working of this mighty principle, *and is a man*—for the brute never has it—and he has in this, at least, the impress of human nature enstamped by his Maker on his soul.

To this universal desire in the bosom of man to be remembered when he is dead, the living world is not reluctant to respond; for were there no higher principle, the living wish to ask at the hands of others what they are desired to show for the departed. Affection, therefore, goes forth and plants the rose on the grave; rears the marble, moulded into breathing forms, over the dust; and, like Old Mortality, cuts the letters deeper when the storms of time efface them; and hands down in verse, and song, and marble; on the lyre and the monument, the names of those who have deserved well of mankind.

“Patriots have toiled, and in their country’s cause
Bled nobly; and their deeds, as they deserve,
Receive proud recompense. We give in charge
Their names to the sweet lyre. Th’ historic muse,
Proud of the treasure, marches with it down
To latest times; and Sculpture, in her turn,
Gives bond in stone and ever-during brass,
To guard them, and t’ immortalise her trust;
But fairer wreaths are due, though never paid,
To those, who posted at the shrine of truth,
Have fallen in her defence.”

TASK, B. v.

Why is this passion implanted in the human bosom? Why so universal? Why is it seen in so many forms? I answer, It is one of the proofs of man’s immortality; the strong, instinctive, universal desire to live—and to live on for ever. It is that to which philosophers have all along appealed, in the lack of better evidence, to sustain the hope that man would survive the tomb. It is the argument on which the eye of Plato fixed to sustain his own soul in the darkness which enveloped him, and which has been

put in the mouth of every school-boy, in the language of Addison.

“ — Whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
 This longing after immortality?
 Or whence this secret dread, and inward horror,
 Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul
 Back on herself, and startles at destruction?
 'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;
 'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
 And intimates eternity to man.”

CATO, Act v.

And while this desire lingers in the human soul, as it always will, man cannot forget that he is immortal; it will be in vain to attempt to satisfy him that he wholly ceases to be when the body dies. He will not, he cannot believe it. He would not always sleep. He would not always be forgotten. He would live again:—live on in the memory of his fellow-man as long as the flowers can be made to bloom, or the marble to perpetuate his name; and then still live on when “seas shall waste, and skies in smoke decay.”

Nor is this the only design of implanting this desire of remembrance in the bosom of man. It is not merely to be an argument for, and a memento of our immortality; it is to be one of the means to excite us to virtue and to noble deeds. It is the operation of one of the beautiful laws of our nature, though, as we shall see, sadly perverted, designed to stimulate us to great and generous efforts. Men may call it selfish—and so it may become. They may call it ambition—and so it often is. But who knows not that the worst passions are usually the perversion of that which is most generous and exalted? And who knows not that one of the objects of all the lessons of experience, philosophy, and religion is to call man back from the erratic course on which a wicked heart has thrown him, to the operation of