

THE ROMEO HIGH SCHOOL

DEDICATORY EXERCISES

New High School Building,

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Continued from
last week

The American, by intuition, if not by destiny, becomes a business man. I use this term in its broadest sense as including all the mechanic arts, agriculture, trade and commerce. If a

man enter any one of the professions, he does not therefore renounce the inalienable right of an American to do business.

Even congressmen must have their Credit Mobilier and Star Route schemes. Not all the clergy can deny themselves in this direction. Indeed they are obliged to have considerable knowledge of business. The Pastor is generally the soul of the church building enterprise, must urge and assist the finance committee, be counselor and director in many of the great benevolent enterprises and educational interests of his denomination, to say nothing of paying off church debts, and making one dollar do the work of two in his own personal expenses.

Under such circumstances you need not be surprised if he be occasionally tempted to use his acquired knowledge to gain a little filthy lucre for his own self, though it may be true as it doubtless is, that he thereby becomes unfit for the work of the ministry.

We name, therefore, Business, as an educating force. It must be evident to the most superficial observer that the immense business of this country, foreign and domestic, cannot be carried on without much thought, sound judgment, knowledge of human nature, untiring energy and unconquerable will; all these are possessed by Americans as a class, without limit. And why? Because each man starts with the understanding that he must succeed.

One failure teaches him a lesson by which he profits in the next attempt. So long as a man honestly and perseveringly attempts to gain his ends, learning wisdom by experience, a thousand wise counsels are his, many outstretched hands offer help.

If he sink down in hopeless cowardice, the multitude sweep over his prostrate form, crushing him to dust and ashes as unworthy of the name of American.

In this apparently mad struggle after wealth and position, these men are receiving their education, and they have no time nor sympathy for coward or laggard. Their intellects are disciplined and sharpened by the daily conflict and the actual necessity of out-thinking their neighbors. The memory of many business men and their clerks is educated to an extent that would be considered fabulous to the uninitiated. It is no unusual thing

for the principals and confidential clerks in immense establishments to become encyclopedias of all the goods and possessions of the firm.

It is not possible to enumerate all the particulars in which business draws out and educates the man in all those characteristics which go to make up the thoughtful, logical, untiring, self-reliant, practically educated American. Each and every pursuit in life does this to a greater or less extent.

Business of some kind is the National idea.

We have no class worth mentioning, and I pray God we may never have, of idle, worthless, self-styled Gentlemen; spending their adult years in forgetting what they learned in youth, and claiming a divine right to live on the products of other people's brain or muscle.

There are certain things essential to the man of business, which are to him, what the different systems of lectures are to the student at college. *First he must have his newspaper.* It is a common remark that the newspaper and other periodicals have become popular educators, and yet but few people ever intelligently consider the immense power of the press as an educating force upon the American mind. Let us consider for a moment the figures supplied by the United States statistics: In 1880, we had of dailies 971, with an aggregate circulation per issue of 3,506,375. Of weeklies, semi-tri-and bi. Of monthlies, semi-tri-and bi. Of quarterlies and semi-annuals, in all 11,314, with an aggregate circulation per issue of 28,213,291. It can readily be seen that the aggregate annual issues are beyond comprehension.

All this immense mass of literature is bought, paid for and read by Americans; by men, whose minds have been and are being continually sharpened and disciplined by the public schools and business of the nation; men who read to understand and remember. If it be said that each man is likely to read most attentively what relates to his profession or calling, it is only proved that they are pursuing the studies best adapted to them;—in the great school of life they select their studies, a privilege generally granted and improved in the upper classes of most well regulated colleges.

Consider the range of subjects treated in these periodicals. The history of the world as it transpires each day, which is of as much value as the histories of nations dead and buried a thousand years ago.

The latest discoveries in art and science. The geography of the earth, and the manners and customs of the people of every nation under heaven, by intelligent travellers who correspond regularly for all classes of periodicals.

All questions of morals and religion. The best as well as the poorest works of fiction, and poetry. Philosophy, theology and metaphysics. In fact the entire range of thought of the human mind. And yet there are those who talk of the uneducated Americans. As if such a mass of information could be read, understood, thought over, talked over, and mentally digested by a people, without drawing out and educating them as a whole.

Time and space do not permit any figures of the bound books published and read; we know that the aggregate is vast, and that as an educating force they are very great.

As the fourth great educating force, we name the church and pulpits. Not that it is second to any other, but that in classification, it happen to fall in this place. Allowing an average of two sermons per week to each church, and this is a low estimate, we have several hundred thousand discourses each Sabbath, aggregating many millions annually.

You may make your own estimate of the power of this educating force acting as it does on the intellectual, moral and religious nature of the American people. It is fashionable, just now, to deny the learning and power of the pulpit. Nevertheless I dare affirm that the ministry buy more books of science and understand them better than any other class of men. Their attainments in other branches of learning is not often disputed.

That the church and pulpit have not lost their power, will appear when we remember that these churches are built, sustained and cared for by the freewill offerings of the American people.

If Americans as a whole are the most moral and religious people in the world, it is because they make the most ample pro-

visions for the Spiritual Education of themselves and children through the Sunday-school, the church and pulpit. The voluntary method is not only successful, but it is a sure index of the estimate in which the church is held by the people.

The Lyceum and general Lecture System has also played an important part as an educator of the people. It is peculiar to this country, has doubtless done much good, but is not as popular or as powerful as in former days. Of this I can only speak in general terms for I have not been able to obtain any properly authenticated statistics, either in whole or part. We all know however, that it has been one of the favorite institutions of the land.

As to Lyceums, we have them ranging from the Debating Club, held in the little log school house, to the Young Men's Halls, Library Associations, and kindred institutions with which our cities abound.

As to Lectures, every theme in the range of art, science, law, philosophy, metaphysics, theology and politics, is discussed from every conceivable point of view. The lecturers embrace every grade of talent and every class of society; statesmen, politicians, showmen, poets, scholars, travelers, bishops, preachers, D. D.'s, M. D.'s, LL. D.'s, A. M.'s, down to Nasby, Mrs. Woodhull and Geo. Francis Train.

As we enumerate the educating forces, we must not forget to speak of the political campaign preceding the State, Congressional, and Presidential Elections. By many these are supposed to be unmixed evil. Because there is agitation, there is excitement, there is apparently great anger, hatred and conflict, it is supposed that great evil must result.

All this is a mistake. These political campaigns are our great National safety-valves, where we blow off our superfluous steam which would otherwise explode and ruin us,—and besides they are one of our most important educating forces.

We have had one grand explosion it is true, but that was because the South loaded the safety-valves, denying freedom of thought and speech, trying to bury freedom beyond the possibility of a resurrection. Therefore it asserted its Divine Power in a mighty upheaval that shook the nation to its foundation. As an

educating force, the great political campaigns can hardly be over-estimated.

The whole country is flooded with campaign documents, much of a personal and therefore worthless character; but the vast majority, more or less of clear argument upon the living issues before the people. Lecturers and stump speakers of every grade of talent canvass the country, discussing the questions at issue, generally with much clearness and force. The people attend *en masse*, listen carefully, criticise closely, and think much. Afterward, among themselves, they rehearse the arguments pro and con with such additions as their own minds may suggest.

Thus, the average American is well educated in the science of self-government, and the duties of the hour, by the very force, which to foreigners unacquainted with our ways, appear calculated only to destroy. Free discussion is the only safety to the liberties and progress of a free Republic.

The ignorance of the southern masses, their entire isolation from these mighty educating forces, alone made the late rebellion possible.

Our hope for the future must be found in bringing them out of the darkness and isolation of Southern Sectionalism, into the light, and under the power of our national system of education.

War as an educating force can not properly be forgotten or overlooked in our enumeration.

There are some things which men and nations will not learn except under the severest discipline.

We have had four wars, as a nation. One in which we were born. One in which we established our right to live. One in which we were wrong, and by which we hastened our day of punishment. And one, which we call the war of the Rebellion.

Of this last we may say that we have not yet learned all of its lessons well, but we are certain that it has settled for us some principles of truth and justice from which we will never be moved.

It is not within the province of the present lecture to define the lesson that seems to be so clearly taught us in this terrible school of war, through which we have so recently passed. It will be sufficient to remind you that its influence and results upon the

nation and national character will be as lasting as the national life. I may be permitted to remind you of some of its revealings.

The war revealed to us the weakness of ignorance and superstition. The South was brave to desperation, and superstitious, without faith.

The college graduates were more numerous in proportion to the inhabitants than at the North, but the Schoolmaster had not been allowed to enter—the masses were utterly ignorant. The Press was in bondage. The Church and Pulpit submissive, teaching—cursed be Canaan. No opposition was permitted in politics—the itinerant lecturer unknown.

The South marshalled its hosts, but only to see them melt before the Thinking Bayonets, the Speaking Sabre, and Religious Artillery.

Our armies went forward thinking, preaching, singing, praying, holding elections regularly, and fighting continually. There could be but one result in such a war with such contending forces.

Richard Winter Hamilton has so eloquently and truly expressed our experience as a nation, that I cannot forbear quoting the passage though written thirty years ago and first in behalf of another people and war.

"The men who loved the Divine word were, in the hour of their country's peril, the men of steel. They sought peace, but they knew that it might be too dearly purchased. They hated war, but they knew that it was a better alternative than submission to injustice and collusion with dishonor. Reluctantly they called the sword from the scabbard, but, when drawn, they spared not the quarrel. They stood for all that is dear in affection and great in principle. They urged a fearless way. They reached the true heroic. The Sword of the Spirit flashed from their hands, and they were invincible. Their soul gathered all dint and courage. They could resolve. They could resist. They could die. Truth to them was all. Life had no end, death no reward, but its defence."

You will have observed by this time, that it is no part of my purpose, to define the extent to which Americans are educated, but to show that there are forces at work moulding and fashioning each generation. That the representative American the coming

man, is to be the result of not one force, but many acting upon him, that there is an education of the race as well as of the individual. The children of each generation are in advance of the generation that preceded them,—whether for good or evil. Not that I would teach what is known as Evolution, in any sense or degree, God forbid! Agassiz is right when he says, "The influence of man upon animals is, in other words the action of mind upon them. As finite intelligence may cause the original pattern to vary—therefore a superior intelligence accounts for all physical and mental progress. The race progresses because the infinite intelligence presides over all, and is leading us on to Perfection. And the coming Man, educated by these mighty forces with God over all, when will he come? When he does come what will he be, Mentally, Physically, Morally? These are questions of great interest to the thinking man. Who will be rash enough to attempt an answer?

To me it seems that we are in almost as chaotic a state as was the earth when "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

I learn of Agassiz that ours is the oldest continent; that from the time when the Laurentian Hills lifted themselves above the universal ocean, to when earth was fitted for the habitation of man, there were millions of years of fierce strugglings between the two great forces of fire and water. Many other forces were at work, but these seemed as giants for mastery, for universal dominion, and to whom all others were but subjects. There were mighty upheavals and repeated submergences. Then was the reign of ice, succeeded by the last submergence, and our continent seemed to sink beneath the waves of the universal ocean forever, but only to rise again slowly but more perfect than before, to be adorned with beauty and endowed with the highest forms of life, that she might become a fit habitation for man, soon to be created in the image of the eternal Mind.

May we not from this learn a lesson. Our land has been the center of many conflicting forces ever since the nation lifted its head above the universal ocean of despotism.

We have not been permitted to work out our destinies alone. People of every land, nation, tribe and family of earth have come

to our land to share with us in this conflict for manhood and freedom.

This flood of emigration has vastly increased in volume since the roar of cannon over the fall of the rebellion echoed around the world. We are an aggregation of all peoples, languages, manners, customs, prejudices and traditions. Who can tell what beauty, what strength, what moral power shall yet be evoked from this chaotic mass by the forces which are at work educating the individuals and the races here meeting.

Let us not expect the coming man for the present, nor for many coming generations.

Before he stands upon the ruins of a thousand forms of error and wrong, there must be many a moral upheaval, many a fierce conflict between right and wrong, good and evil.

Men's passions will rise above reason and patriotism, selfishness will assert itself, the rights of others, the weaker will be trampled under foot, and then war will come again as the avenger of Justice and the purifier of the nation.

Though waited for long, the time will come when the perfectly educated Man will stand upon the primeval rocks of the oldest continent and give laws to the world, when he will be found in the pulpit, at the Bar, in the Halls of Learning in all places of business, and wherever there is need of a Man.

Let us not be discouraged because we seem working so far from the end,—that we must die while all is yet chaos and conflict. Let us learn another lesson from Geology. I go with Hugh Miller, or Hitecock or Dana or our own Winchell and listen to their translation of the language of the Creator, written on tables of Stone, His Book, whose leaves are the stratified rocks.

I learn that each age has had its own forms of vegetable and animal life, that these have lived, done their work and perished. Not that quite, for they have left their impressions upon each successive layer of the Earth's crust as lasting as the rock itself.

Thus it is, that the workers of each generation and age have done their work and left its impress on the completed whole.

Fellow workers in the Education of Man, You and I represent here to-day some of these influence, that shall yet with all others develop the perfect type of American and let us hope, of Man.

We shall soon pass away and be forgotten, but if we do our work, well it will never pass away, for we are writing our lives and influences upon imperishable mind. It will be sufficient for us, if we are recognized by the Grand Architect of the Universe as workers, however humble, in carrying out his plans and purpose for the elevation and salvation of man and if our names are found at last, written in the Book of Life.



Continued next week

