

Original Lecture.

THE GENIUS OF MEDICINE.

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A just conception of medicine is essential to the best medical study, and to the most successful medical life. He who would be a physician indeed, must know the true character of medicine, its spirit, its genius. As thy faith is, so shall it be unto thee, has a far wider meaning than that which belongs to a single event of life. Thy faith! Thy conception, thy belief, thy ideal, thy fixed conviction, a power permeating the soul, *in-forming* desire and thought, pervading words and deeds, and living in thy life.

It is, therefore, believed that the Genius of Medicine is an appropriate theme for the occasion, the beginning of the annual course of lectures in this honored institution.

But what is the Genius of Medicine? As the prism separates the solar beam into the many colors which, again combined, make pure light, so we may take the various characteristics of this genius, which, by their union, make its living power.

First, this genius, this spirit of medicine, is scientific. A witty Frenchman,* referring to the scientific claims of medicine, gives, as a positive proof that a science does not yet exist, the fact that such alleged science is held to be common property, adding, in illustration: "My porter does not hesitate to diagnose a disease, to point out its cause, to prescribe a remedy, and to predict the result. He thinks he has a right to do so, and it seems that he has, for one readily listens to him, and often follows his advice."

But tried by this test many an admitted science would lose its claim. Meteorology is a science; but are weather prophecies confined to those who have studied it? There are many persons, both in country and in town, who have that—

"Old experience which doth attain
To something of the prophetic strain,"

and who often foretell with great certainty the weather which the day or the morrow will bring forth; at least, their prophecies are quite as frequently verified as the correct diagnosis and treatment of disease are made by the ignorant. Theology is a science, and yet a well-known lawyer, possibly more famous for

* Louis Peisse, *La Médecine et les Médecins.*

his oratory than for his legal learning, does not hesitate to decide the gravest theological problems—giving his solution from the platform, with the greatest generosity to his suffering fellow beings, at fifty cents a head—problems that have engaged the prolonged and profound study of great divines, such as Edwards, Stuart, Alexander, Hodge, Breckinridge, Thornwell. Law is a science, but some man who never gave a thought to Blackstone or Coke, except possibly as suggestive of winter fuel, may offer to solve legal problems, and sometimes may predict the decision of a court, or the verdict of a jury, quite as correctly as even a Philadelphia lawyer.

But, passing from this negative criticism, Comte's definition of a science as that knowledge which enables us to foresee and foretell results, justifies giving this name to medicine. Let any case of common disease be examined by half a dozen educated physicians; there would be in almost all instances entire agreement as to the nature of the malady, as to its course, and as to the means advisable to alleviate it, or to shorten its duration. The natural history of diseases is so well known the physician can, in most cases, foresee and foretell their course. "It is not essential to science that it be at any given time complete or free from error. It is called science in reference to the aims and methods of the intellectual process of which it is the result, not in reference to its own absolute correctness and completeness."

What adventurous explorer in any part of the domain of physical science dare say he has seen the pillars of Hercules; that there is nothing more to learn, or nothing to unlearn?

The certainties in diagnosis and in prognosis given in recent years by the thermometer, the microscope, the ophthalmoscope, the laryngoscope, the spectroscope, and the sphygmograph, add to the just claim of medicine to be called science; and, finally, the electric light waits to reveal pathological changes in the living hitherto recognized only after death.

In the department of therapeutics very important advances have been made in recent years; indeed, the treatment of disease becomes every year more scientific, less empirical. In this treatment physicians generally prefer a few and simple rather than many and compound remedies, an Enfield rifle, rather than a Gatling gun. But in this they imitate the great masters. Hippocrates used but few medicines. Sydenham half jestingly said that he could carry all the medicines he needed in the head of his cane; and Boerhaave, I believe, said the enlightened physician could practice medicine with opium, cinchona, tartar emetic, wine, and water. If Hoffman were to return

to this earth he, while still using his famous anodyne, would rejoice in the great advance made in therapeutics, and cheerfully recant the famous declaration of skepticism he made: *Fuge medicos et medicamenta, si vis esse salvus.*

While rejoicing in the important position which medicine holds to-day, the student must not forget that the foundations of our science were laid, and the form of the superstructure largely directed, by that noble Greek who must ever be among physicians as Alexander among warriors, Homer among poets, and Plato among philosophers, the divine Hippocrates. It seems certain that neither the Jews nor the Egyptians made any important contribution to the beginning of scientific medicine, though recently it has been stated* that the physicians in the time of the Pharaohs recognized the heart as the centre of the circulatory system, and referred the beating of the pulse to its movements. Still other discoveries are attributed to the priestly physicians of the Nile.

Nevertheless, the general rule is, as stated by Boyer, that in all peoples who have left durable traces in the arts and sciences, the arts have flourished first; the imagination awakens the other faculties; the poets open the scene, the philosophers and *savants* follow. But Egypt failed to take the first step. The Jews, indeed, had their poets, whose lips were touched with hallowed fire, and whose sublime utterances are for all the races and all the ages; but it must be remembered that this people had an admirable system of preventive medicine, and therefore but little necessity existed for the study of the cure of disease.

Daremberg † has clearly shown that Greek medicine, the origin of the medicine of to-day, came neither from the temples, nor from the gymnasia, nor from the schools of philosophy, but from the laboratory of physicians. In Homer the medicine is quite human, and even on Olympus the physicians of the gods used means familiar to the physicians of the Greek army. He further observes that theurgic medicine occasionally appears in the time intervening between Homer and Hippocrates, but true medicine still lived without eclipse, just as it lives to-day without eclipse by spirit-rapping, animal magnetism, or homœopathy. Æsculapius, who was the chief medical officer of the Greek army, seems to have been breveted for distinguished services; as he did not want an office he was given divine honors. But, sad to say, getting his godship had a very bad effect upon his character; he became so extremely avaricious, he did worse than engage in the grave-robbing business, he went

to breaking open the jail, and letting prisoners out, provided they paid him well; in other words, he restored the dead to life. As this sort of work threatened to depopulate Hades, Pluto, who was engaged in the wholesale undertaking business, made appeal to Jupiter, who, very properly and promptly, with one of those many thunderbolts which he had at hand, knocked Æsculapius forever out of time. Since then doctors have let dead people stay dead, influenced to this conservative conduct quite as much by fear of the fate of Æsculapius as by the reason which Molière has put in the mouth of Sganarelle: "The best of this profession is, that there is the greatest honesty and discretion among the dead; for you never find them complain of the physician who has killed them."

But, leaving myths that came into the history of medicine after Homer sang the wrath of Achilles, let us see something of the work that Hippocrates did toward the establishment of scientific medicine. He emancipated medicine from superstition and charlatanry; he coordinated facts that had been collected; separated between the true and false; he taught that pathology was a part of physiology; he urged the importance of careful clinical observation. Lord Bacon, whose great mind grasped so many subjects of human knowledge, irradiating all it touched, gives just honor and importance to medicine, but condemns "the discontinuance of the ancient and serious diligence of Hippocrates, which used to set down a narrative of the special cases of his patients, and how they were judged by recovery or death."

That the medical views of Hippocrates were eminently catholic is shown by the fact that many of the schools springing up after his day claimed his authority; but he belonged to none; he belonged to all, for he had uttered such truth as each had; he had united these individual truths in a harmonious whole, which they took asunder, trying, like some medical sects do to-day, to build a house with a single brick. Malarial fever is known to sometimes occur in puerperal women, and within a few years a question of priority in its description has been mooted relating to two distinguished American physicians. But the disease was most accurately described in the beginning of the present century by Oslander, and by Torti, at a still earlier date. I believe we must go back very much further, finding the first reference to the disorder in Hippocrates; certainly he has described a disease now known as puerperal septicæmia. Littré has shown that this man, whom Galen termed the greatest of physicians and the first of philosophers, ob-

* Dr. George Elbers, *Cotemporary Review*, June, 1883.

† *Histoire des Sciences Médicales*. Paris, 1879.

served facts more than 300 years B. C., which have been re-discovered in our day. Thus, in "the Epidemics," he describes a disease characterized by cough which was often followed by paralysis: this disease was diphtheritic angina, sometimes simple angina, as shown by Gubler and Trousseau. For twenty-two centuries the connection between angina and paralysis was not recognized. According to Laennec,* Hippocrates furnishes the germ of auscultation; he describes paralysis of the veil of the palate accompanying paralysis of the face; lesions of the right side of the brain causing paralysis of the opposite side of the body; muscular atrophy following paralysis; erysipelas of the throat complicating erysipelas of the skin; gangrenous erysipelas; hydatid cysts of the lungs.

The character and work of this wonderful man have thus been summed up:† A man, grave, modest, wise, charitable, careful of the dignity of his art, avowing his frequent powerlessness; a sagacious observer, endowed with exquisite medical sense, judging phenomena in their connection, he assured to medicine a form which has triumphed over the ages.

But further, the genius of Hippocrates made known what *Chauffard*‡ eulogized as the traditional truths of medicine. These primordial truths are the autonomy of life, the unity of existence, its spontaneity, and its own finality. These principles were the soul of Hippocratic medicine; they animated it, gave it life, and under their inspiration, though the anatomy and physiology of the day were in almost helpless infancy, a body of medical doctrine, a system of medical science, was formed. From age to age, through all the development of the science, these truths, the first views, because they are first in splendor and power, have remained in some way immutable, reappear with increasing power, lifted above all strifes, all vanishing opinions of the day, receiving a sovereign authority by common consent, transmitted from master to master, from teaching to teaching.

Medicine is not only scientific, but it is progressive; onward is ever the voice of its genius, and the example of its teachers and disciples. The progress made in the past fifty years is but faint prophecy of that which will be made in the next fifty; that which hath been but the earnest of that which shall be; for the scientific spirit is everywhere quickened, the means for scientific research constantly increased and improved, the great army of workers becoming

larger, and the facilities for inter-communication and for interchange of thought so great. It seems a sad thought that a successful medical book rarely lives more than twenty years; but the fact is a striking testimony to the rapidity of medical progress. How the words of our great master come to us with their simple majesty, and yet almost with the sadness of a threnody: "Life is short; art is long; the occasion fleeting; experience fallacious, and judgment difficult."

The very fact that so much remains to be discovered in medicine makes it one of the most inviting subjects of study, "for the sciences always studied with keenest interest are those in a state of progress and uncertainty; absolute certainty and completion would be the paralysis of any study."

Honest pleasure and just pride in discovery await the diligent medical student. Read *Aselli's* account of the joy he had when he discovered the lymphatics. Think of the undying glory which belongs to the name of Harvey, from his discovery of the circulation of the blood, a discovery which at first was denied by many of the physicians of his day, but gradually gained acceptance. Strange too, to say, one of the most learned of American physicians, the late Dr. John Redman Coxe, of this city, published a work to show that of all the ancients and moderns Harvey had least to do with the discovery which has made his name immortal.

Sometimes the zeal for discovery has been so great that a false fact has been found, and physicians have disputed the question of priority; thus two* of the profession in the seventeenth century quarreled as to which was the first to find an acid in the blood.

Important as are discoveries in anatomy and in physiology, those discoveries which are directly applicable to the prevention of disease, such as vaccination, or for the immediate relief of pain, such as the use of anæsthetics, adding at once to the power of medical art, seem the more important. The word "art" is probably derived from the Greek *αρη*, signifying *goodness, excellence, power, force*; it is, indeed, in medicine, its practical goodness, excellence, power, force. Increase in medical science is the enlargement of medical art. Science, knowledge organized in a system, a body of truth, reasons, but art acts; science has laws, art has rules; science does head work, art hand work; science asks *why*, art knows *how*; in medicine the one is the necessary complement of the other.

In one respect the medicine of to-day is probably inferior to that of Galen's time, the

* Physicians who understand percussion and auscultation have half of medicine, and two-thirds of diagnosis.—*Daremberg*.

† *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1883.

‡ *Des Vérités Traditionnelles en Médecine*.

* *Viussens and Chirac*.

inferiority being in the number of specialties. Then, there were not only oculists, lithotomists, herniotomists, and others, but also doctors who did nothing but bleed, some from artery, others from vein, and doctors who limited their practice to giving clysters. If the last specialty were revived in our day, those devoted to it would doubtless take the name of *clystero-didomatists*. Ah, how the length and euphony of that word, which can be rolled as a sweet morsel in the mouth, and which one speaks so trippingly on the tongue, *clystero-didomatists*, would excite the just envy of ophthalmologist and gynæcologist, who have so greatly enriched medical language with sesquipedalian and euphonious Greek compounds!

The genius of medicine is catholic. This catholicity is evident: first, in the physician's comprehending the entire nature of man, and thus understanding his true character. To the mere physiologist, man is simply a living organism, with machinery working not unlike that of a monkey or a dog, or some other inferior animal. The psychologist tells us, in the words of Phavorinus, which were written upon the walls of Sir William Hamilton's lecture room, in the University of Edinburgh: "On earth there is nothing great but man; in man there is nothing great but mind." The divine has his attention directed especially to man's moral nature, and seeks to bring it under the control of the highest motives and the most sacred influences. The political economist sees in man either producer or consumer; the legislator sees him the subject of poll-tax, if he be a man, but if he be a woman, only a promising candidate for the burden and responsibility of a poll-tax, which then, in the belief of those who are not yet educated up to the advanced thought of the times, would be a very great poll evil. The poet, the novelist, the philosopher, each has his ideal man, and generally this ideal is very different from the actual man as the physician knows him. The doctor comprehends the threefold nature of man—man intellectual, moral, physical—and thus comes to a true anthropology. He sees him, not in the framed and flattering picture of the artist, not arrayed in the clothing of social conventionalism, but without artificial adornment, and stripped of all disguise; he sees him at all times, in all places, in all circumstances; he knows the glory and the shame, the power and the weakness, the valor and the cowardice, the goodness and the wickedness, the selfishness and the self-sacrifice, the virtue and the vice, the joy, the hope, the gratitude, the love and the despair, the hate, the ingratitude, the sin and the sorrow of this human nature.

The genius of medicine is catholic as to its

creed. From Hippocrates on, true medicine has lived, despite the work of system makers and the defection of sects. Theurgic medicine, dogmatism, methodism, empiricism, humorism, pneumatism, iatro-mechanism, iatro-chemicism, vitalism, animism, no more did it permanent harm than can any of the unnamed pathies of the day.

" Like clouds that rake the mountain's summit,
Or waves that own no curbing hand,
How fast has system followed system,
From sunshine to the sunless land."

A whole truth, a half truth has sometimes been made the foundation of a theory of a school, while the great body of medical verities was ignored. How many false facts, too, as well as false theories, have been brought forward in medicine. Think of so able a man as Von Helmont believing and telling this story: A citizen of Brussels having lost his nose in a combat, consulted a surgeon named Tagliacozzi. The latter, to cure the deformity, took a flap from the arm of a domestic and the patient returned home. Thirteen months after, he was suddenly surprised by finding his nose becoming cold and immediately mortifying. How did this happen? After many lamentations and inquiries it was learned that the domestic from whose arm the nose had been borrowed died at the moment the organ became cold. Think, too, of the illustrious Sylvius, compelling his patients to drink from one hundred and fifty to two hundred cups of tea every day. Fortunately this practice did not prevail in 1774, in this country, when patriotic Americans were emptying the Chinese leaf, by the ship-load, into the sea.

Belonging to the same century as Sylvius, we have the illustrious Des Cartes proclaiming that man and all animals are mere automata, machines, and anticipating Professor Huxley's comparison of man to a clock. Des Cartes was more generous than some who have adopted his automatic theory, for he allowed man a soul, seating it upon the pineal gland, like an English sparrow on the top of a telegraph pole.

As Professor Huxley* has so highly commended his theory of automatism, let me quote a distinguished physician's† general estimate of his contributions to medicine. Des Cartes introduced into physiology, and maintained in anatomy, more new errors than he destroyed old. He was the parent of the worst part of the iatro-chemical school, and the Cartesian physicians were generally very bad physiologists, and only moderately good anatomists.

Des Cartes denied mind to animals; they did not feel any more than the plant feels the

* Address before the International Medical Congress, 1881.

† Daremberg.

warmth of the sun or the chill of the frost ; and thus vivisection was encouraged. He was himself a vivisector, and his example was followed eagerly by the recluses of Port Royal, who made the following a syllogism of their logic : " No matter thinks ; every soul of beast is matter ; therefore no soul of beast thinks." I would rather take my lesson in the treatment of animals from Coleridge's Ancient Mariner than from Des Cartes :—

" He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast."

The genius of medicine is catholic in its relations to science, to philosophy, and to social interests, and is one of the most important factors in the progress of civilization. But these topics can only be suggested, not enlarged upon.

Medicine is catholic in its practice. The physician is ready to relieve the poor as well as the rich, the mean as well as the noble ; the cry of suffering, no matter whether it comes from hall or hovel, from virtue or vice, from learned or ignorant, is his call to duty. Hippocrates expressly directed that the physician sent for by two patients, one poor and the other rich, should go to the former ; and the illustrious Bayle attended to poor clients, spending upon them in the latter years of his life a large part of that which he had accumulated by practice, saying that the rich could always get doctors. When an urgent call to the sick comes, the physician rarely thinks of his fees, but, if possible, goes at once. However, our charities for the relief of the sick poor have become so well organized, hospitals and dispensaries abounding, where the best professional services can be had gratuitously, there is less demand for the sacrifice inculcated by Hippocrates and practiced by Bayle and so many others.

The genius of medicine is beneficent. It is not necessary, before an audience so largely professional as this, to argue that medical agents have power to assist the natural course of certain diseases to recovery, to shorten the duration of others, to immediately arrest still others, and to lessen and remove physical suffering. inexorable death claims us all, at last, as victims, but his coming may be delayed, life lengthened, by the physician's art. The fact that quite a million of men and hundreds of women are engaged in the practice of medicine is proof that there is need for them.

Not only is the beneficence of medicine manifested in the cure of disease, but in its prevention. Sanitary science, preventive medicine, has rendered impossible those terrible epidemics which in past centuries ravaged the

great centres of population ; the sanitary state of a people is the criterion of their civilization.

While the most important sanitary work belongs to health officers, to the medical members of sanitary boards, and to physicians to public institutions, yet in private practice the opportunities and the demand for this work are great. The office of family physician, that position held by the great majority of the profession, brings more happiness where the medical adviser is sincerely respected, trusted, loved, than public honors or great wealth, and offers abundant opportunities to prevent disease and to promote health. Moreover, how much the family physician can do to set lives right, morally as well as physically ; to allay social discord, to correct misunderstandings, to comfort the sorrowing, to give garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness, to rouse a slumbering will, sometimes to reclaim the profligate, enforcing the highest lessons of virtue from the penalties of disease, in short, to make men, women, and children healthier, happier, better. Oh, what infinite sympathy the physician learns to exercise, the loving charity that must be his, forbearing harsh judgment and stern reproach, as he knows the frailties and the follies, the sins and sorrows of mortals !

Knowledge and love are necessary for this priestly calling. Hippocrates declared that ours was the most noble of arts, and that we must love man if we would exercise it aright.

Very justly, too, does he speak of the incompetent physicians of his day, who, of course, were relatively much more numerous than now, like the figures which are introduced in tragedies, for as they have the shape, and dress, and personal appearance of an actor, but are not actors, so, also, physicians are many in title, but very few in reality.

The genius of medicine is heroic. The heroism of physicians has sometimes come from their love of science ; but more frequently its source has been conscience and philanthropy. To them medicine is alike a code of morals and a mission of love. Doctors have inoculated themselves with the poison of specific disease, in some cases to study its effects, in others to allay the fears of hospital patients. On all the battle-fields, where masses of men are hurled against each other for the destruction of human life, the physician goes to save life. In hospitals, where contagious epidemics are rife, he makes his way, with never a thought of his own safety, if he can save others. When the pestilence rages in some of our Southern cities, and all who can flee from its terrors, physicians not only remain to combat the disease, but, if need be, a brave army of volunteers go to their help, laboring with them, and, in many

instances, dying with them. The Church has its noble army of martyrs embalmed in perpetual, loving remembrance. Medicine has its army of martyrs, whose names should never perish.

How many a surgeon, after performing tracheotomy in a case of diphtheria, has found the tube obstructed, his patient in peril of instant death, and has applied his mouth to the tube, removed the obstruction, saving his patient, it may be, but killing himself. When the *Alabama* was hopelessly disabled by the well-directed shots of the *Kearsarge*, the gallant surgeon, Lewellyn, got his wounded men in the only two boats left, but, though urged, refused to enter either of them lest, by overloading, the safety of his patients might be imperiled, and went down with the ill-fated ship, to sudden death, but to an immortal memory. It is needless to multiply cases; the history of medicine is full of instances where the physician has sacrificed himself for the good of others. Does any one suggest that Galen refused the request of Marcus Aurelius to accompany the army against the Germanic tribes, and that he ran away from Rome because of the plague? As to the first, possibly Galen had no taste for military surgery, and he wanted to finish, in the quietness of his Roman home, some one of the three or four hundred volumes he wrote. As to the second charge, running away from the plague, who knows but that was a campaign lie? The Greek doctors at Rome said all sorts of naughty things about Galen; scarcely scrupled at any means in their efforts to break him down; and, as probably some know, medical campaigns, even in this day, occasionally fail in always giving illustrations of the love of truth characteristic of George Washington.

Nevertheless, I am afraid the case against Galen* is too strong to admit of excuse; it can only be said that his conduct was quite exceptional; the great majority of the profession meet disease rather than run away from it, risking their lives bravely and cheerfully, if thereby they can save the lives of others.

Finally, the genius of medicine is reverent. This human body, even in its dumb dissection, speaks of power and wisdom that no merely human hypothesis can explain. Even conceding Hæckel's assertion of spontaneous generation as the beginning of life on this earth, and from this starting point tracing the evolution of man, it is utterly inconceivable that such result should be accomplished with-

out a directing mind. However, this opens too wide a discussion for the present occasion, though even Dr. Maudsley, in his recent work upon *Body and Will*, says, in referring to the ovum, "in its nature is inscribed the architectural *plan* or *form* of its development," and one naturally asks, "Who made that plan?" It is vain to attempt to get rid of the notion that a product implies a producer, that houses, and books, watches, and all wonderful pieces of machinery never make themselves, but that they are the thoughts of men given expression and form; the common sense of men revolts at the suggestion that this world, with its flora and fauna, is such an infinitely improbable accident as could be made by a blind evolution. If, says Voltaire, a watch proves a watch-maker, a palace an architect, how is it that the universe does not demonstrate a supreme intelligence? What plant, what animal, what element, what star, does not bear the imprint of Him whom Plato called the eternal Geometer? It seems to me that the body of the least animal demonstrates a profoundness and unity of design which ought to enrapture us with admiration.

It is useless for any one to tell us that monism and evolution explain the mysteries of organic life, and of man, the highest in earth's creation; we must still believe in design, and an intelligent designer, no matter how near to or remote from his work, no matter whether the chain of second causes has a dozen or a million links.

In the study of anatomy and physiology the evidences of design, of contrivance are apparent to every thoughtful mind. Let me suggest from the almost infinite number a few: some of the veins in the human body have valves, others, as the visceral veins and the vena portarum, are valveless, and the law, as stated by Marey, is, that those veins do not have valves which are not subject to localized and intermittent pressure. This difference cannot result from chance. The walls of the left ventricle of the heart are much thicker than those of the right; but in the foetus the walls are of equal thickness; a study of the difference between the intra-uterine and extra-uterine circulation gives a reason for this difference. Why should the sebaceous glands of the foetus be so active that its body is more or less covered with fatty matter? Because, immersed in the fluid it is, there would probably be a dangerous osmosis from its blood, and it would certainly present at birth a shriveled, wrinkled appearance, like one's hands after having been kept in water for some time. In the latter part of pregnancy the fibrin undergoes a wonderful increase. Why? As the most important safeguard

* Dechambre, in his interesting article upon *Deontologie, Dictionnaire Encyclopedique des Sciences Medicales*, suggests that Galen went away to escape the hatred of the Greek doctors. The plague of lying lips may be worse than any bodily plague, and the pestilent breath of the slanderer, who tries to traduce any one who is more prominent than he, may be feared more than physical disease.

against *post-partum* hemorrhage. But I cannot continue these illustrations. Observe, think, in the course of your professional studies, and you will find abundant reason for faith in final causes.

The great founder of pathological anatomy, Morgagni, said, "The more I study anatomy, physiology, pathology, and pathological anatomy, the better I know God, the soul, and its immortality."

I believe that whether we take medicine as a study, or as a practice, or the examples of the most illustrious men in the profession, we may justly say that the genius of medicine is profoundly reverent. "The grand voices of the profession unite with the grand voice of nature to affirm the existence and the attributes of a supreme legislator, that of our spiritual nature, of the faculties which distinguish it, and the certainty of our future destiny."