

Dr. very properly impresses upon the minds of his students the value and necessity of physical *courage*, in such a world as this, where there are so many malign influences at work, which can only be met and neutralised by *opposing force to force*. He further shows that even Christian virtue itself is impossible without it, and calls to mind that the loftiest poetry in the Bible is employed in celebrating the deeds of brave men—a circumstance of no slight significance to the reflecting mind. We are never to forget—indeed we will not be allowed to forget—that we are “born into a state of war;” and whether in our individual or social capacity, if we desire *peace* we must approve ourselves able to fight for it when required. The idea that, in a world where mean, thoughtless, and above all, unprincipled men, are numerous, we can move along quietly without a struggle, is very fallacious. As well might we adopt the one-sided philosophy of the simple Hindoo, of whom the story is told, that he became so enamoured of the sublime maxims of our religion that he was induced to pay a visit to England in order to see and admire, in their own homes, that wonderful people who had sent forth to the ends of the earth, the teachers of such noble doctrines. Landing at Liverpool, he had scarcely set foot on the sacred territory, when he was assailed by a drunken sailor who unceremoniously dealt him a blow on the side of the head; whereupon, in the mistaken spirit of his newly adopted creed, he “turned to him the other also!” In fact, without the possession of this quality, honest men would be continually at the mercy of the impudent and rapacious, and would soon be elbowed out of the world. But, as the author observes, this courage must be *calm, manly, rational and virtuous*. Discreetly used, it serves to protect its owner better than a drawn sword, or a Colt’s revolver. Moreover, if we aim at success in any department of science or learning, this quality is equally indispensable in such *peaceful battles* to enable us to conquer difficulties.

But moral courage is the main subject of the present lecture. Moral courage!—Where, in this age of conventionality and sham, art thou to be found? In a world where “all seek there own,” art thou only a superior kind of prudence, which enables its lucky possessor to realise better board and lodging than the man of timid and vacillating mind who is not endowed with an equal share of self-confidence? Is it true that, according to the high transcendental school of philosophers, the whole of our boasted civilization, no less than our individual enterprise, however lofty in appearance, will in the end be found to resolve themselves into nothing more generous than the seething contents of a frying-pan?—But a truce to cynical reflections. Suffice it to say, that we fully believe that there are some at least to be found who would not, under any circumstances or for any consideration, knowingly trifle with the

claims of truth, justice or humanity—sell their birthright for a mess of porridge, or barter their mental independence in exchange for any quantity of bread and butter. In other words, we believe that the “moral hero” is not altogether an extinct species of the genus *homo*, even in our degenerate age; although it must be confessed that the specimens are by no means common. Yet this is not exactly the point aimed at in the present lecture, there being many degrees in the moral thermometer before we reach the highest development of human character.

We need scarcely say that the excellent Essay of Foster, on “Decision of character,” which everybody has read, is upon a kindred subject, and in so far touches common ground. Irrespective of the objects aimed at, we cannot withhold our admiration from the latter quality; but high moral courage is much more rarely found, and the feelings called forth by it of a far loftier description. It may be said to be the union of this quality of *decision* with high moral purposes and aims,—in the words of the author “when fully developed, moral courage may be regarded as a sort of general outcome of many virtues and graces.” With both the one quality and the other, the *will* has much to do. The will is that power of the mind which chooses and determines what is to be done and what is not to be done. It may exist in the greatest strength and vigor in irreligious men. Indeed, most of the men whose names are famous in history—our great warriors, statesmen and politicians,—all those whose names sphere high in the firmament of renown—usually display an immense *force of will*. They form their plans, whether right or wrong, and show a resolution that never wavers, and a constancy that never flags, in the execution of them. Now, moral courage, when enlightened and directed by the spirit of true religion, makes us as resolute in following after the dictates of truth and rectitude, as worldly men are in carrying their purposes into effect. Such resolutions, such vigor, and constancy of will have existed in all truly religious men—in all those who have been useful to the world whether by their example or teaching. Let us consider, for instance, the constancy of the first martyrs and confessors, who stood unmoved before their merciless persecutors, and cheerfully laid down their lives rather than deny their Lord and Master—suffering death oftentimes lingering, painful and ignominious. And what but this strong *faith* in Him could have supported them amid such awful trials as they were called on to endure! Animated by his Holy Spirit, they felt themselves superior to all the terrors of the rack, the gibbet, and the stake. It was a ray from the same divine fount, which falling upon the heart of a poor Monk, animated him to almost superhuman exertions in behalf of a pure Christianity,—filled him with such strength of zeal and vigor of purpose as shook the world to its centre, and inflicted upon an idolatrous and corrupt creed a wound, from which it is de-

clined never to recover. Moses, Elijah, Paul, Athanasius, Luther, Knox, were all men of great vigor and constancy of will. Having had their wills renewed and strengthened, they seem to have felt they had the words of God to speak and the work of God to do; and their biographies show that though they were not perfect in all respects, being men, yet neither obloquy, nor poverty, torture, nor all the powers of earth and hell combined, could break the iron inflexibility of their determination to speak God’s words and to do God’s work.

Our author’s analysis of the nature of moral courage is no less skilful and ingenious than his enforcement of it is pointed and eloquent. First of all, he says, while it may to some extent, be modified by physical causes it is plain that it depends for its strength and efficient action mainly on the condition of the mind. It must draw its strength from some of the highest principles of heaven, and deepest feelings of the human heart. It is no transient emotion but an abiding principle, which is ever gathering fresh vigor. Continually, in all our actions, we must be either fighting on the side of right, under the God of light, order and justice; or on the side of wrong, under the Prince of Darkness. To perceive clearly our relation to God, our minds have need of divine enlightenment. No man can be a moral hero, who has not a clear and profound faith in *all the claims of justice*. The MORAL COWARD is essentially unjust and dishonest; unjust to God, and then dishonest to his fellow men: he is likewise his own greatest enemy. In addition to honesty, there must be a great reverence for the government and laws of God, as exemplified in the case of the Christian martyrs. In the highest forms of moral courage, there must also be *pure and ardent love*—love so great that it will prompt to benevolent deeds, not merely to the wise and grateful but what is far more, to the thoughtless and ungrateful, towards whom a bare sense of *justice* might tend to produce a cold severity. In this connection, how unspenkably great the sublime moral heroism of the great Saviour, in thinking of us when we were yet his enemies, and in seeking, by the sacrifice of himself, to reconcile us to God! If we would know what are the principles essential to moral courage in its highest forms, whither can we go for an example but to the great Redeemer of mankind? In the next place, a *good conscience* is indispensable. “Tis conscience that makes cowards of us all.” Out of an evil conscience all sorts of cowardice will spring. On the other hand, all heroisms are strengthened by a good conscience—strong faith acting on a good conscience is the chief means of moral courage. To the conclusion at which the author arrives under this head is deserving of attention. It is “that he who has little moral courage has but a feeble hold on great principles; a dim perception of justice, weak faith, and a rickety conscience.”