

Mr. President:—We have met this evening to pay the last sad tribute of respect, to the worth of a deceased member of this Society, the late Thomas Harris. It is to me, sir, a matter of deep regret, that this duty has not been consigned to abler hands than those of the humble individual who now addresses you, to some one capable of doing justice to the fine talents and many virtues which characterized him while living.

When we contemplate the close life, the termination of man's career, the varying scenes which chequer the troubled course of his short life, the darkness and chaos which hang over the tomb, the many opinions, vague phantasies, and skeptical doubts in relation to a future state of existence, all tend to invest the death of a human being with a mysterious and solemn influence upon the minds of men of reason. To-day man puts forth the tender bud of hope, to-morrow blossoms and bears his blushing honors thick upon him. The third day comes a killing frost, and consigns him, in the bloom of life, to a premature grave. With what care, then, should we employ every moment of the time allotted to us, in our short sojourn here, that when we are brought upon the bed of death, we can have the consoling assurance in a retrospection of our past life, that we employed the time as profitably as circumstances would permit.

The duties of man are many and arduous, commencing life the most helpless of animated creatures, by the power of his mind he soon teaches the brute creation to yield implicit obedience to his will, and as the powers of that mind expand, and its

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The duties of man are many and arduous, commencing life the most helpless of animated creatures, by the power of his mind he soon teaches the brute creation to yield implicit obedience to his will, and as the powers of that mind expand, and its

latent energies are developed, the character of the man is formed; and if those energies are guided by correct principles, enables him to approximate nearer and nearer, in a moral point of view, to the perfection of his great Creator. So was it with the individual whose loss we now deplore. Gifted by nature with superior talents, which he had taken great care to cultivate and improve, combining as an eminent degree, the vigor and energy of youth, with the wisdom and prudence of age, he was an example which all young men may be proud to imitate. Though exposed to all the vices which beset young men, in every city of any magnitude, he resisted all temptations with the firmness of a stone. His life was a pattern of strict morality, probity and virtue, and in his death a family had lost one of its worthiest members, and society one of its brightest ornaments. His loss will be deeply deplored by every one who had the honor of his friendship, for to know him was to respect and esteem him in the highest degree. And when the time arrived which the vital spark was to quit its mortal abode, he expressed that confidence, that resignation to the will of the omnipotent, which is an inseparable combination of a well spent life like his. But while we pour forth the manifestation of sorrow over the deceased, let us not forget that we have our duty as men to perform. Often during his illness, did he inquire about the association, and expressed a strong desire that it might go on and prosper. It remains for us to see that wish fulfilled. His discerning mind perceived that an association of this kind was one of the best, per-

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haps from the peculiar circumstances in which we are placed, I may say, the very best that could be formed; for such is the pecuniary condition of the great mass of our people, that a collection of standard literary works can be obtained only by associating their means in this manner, and in its public debates it furnishes a wide field for mental improvement, which cannot be obtained by us elsewhere, in consequence of that unjust and blighting prejudice, which withholds from us our inalienable rights, and withers all our energies.

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Would [had] our young men but follow the example of him who has been so recently removed from among us, in resisting all the alluring baits to draw them from the paths of rectitude and virtue, and persevere in the cultivation of their intellectual faculties, we should soon arise from that degraded situation in which we have been placed for centuries, to the highest pinnacle of fame. But, sir, such men as he was rarely met with; we shall seldom look upon his like again. Let us, however, remember his dying injunctions, to uphold this Association, and every institution which like it, tends to our moral or political elevation. And when we reflect upon our situation, how important do those admonitions appear; the victims of a prejudice, as severe and unrelenting as it is unjust, which paralyzes our energies, and cripples all our powers, robs us of the attributes of freedom

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and of man, and consigns one-fifth of the population of this country, to a state of hopeless bondage, it behooves us to make all the exertions in our power to rise from this debasing state of thralldom.

This Association has been formed for the moral, mental, and political improvements of its members, and what can be of greater moment than the proper improvement of the human mind—that which makes man the lord of the creation? Man is a creature whose character is formed almost entirely by education; he comes into the world the most helpless being of all animated creatures; none are so utterly incapable of self-preservation as the young infant. And whereas, all animals know by instinct their natural enemies and friends, man has to learn, by sad experience on the instruction of others. * * * * *

The human mind, how Godlike in its attributes, free and untrammelled in all its actions, it avouches its divine origin. The body may be incarcerated within the walls of a dungeon, loaded with chains, and lacerated with the whip, but the mind is beyond the reach of the tyrant's power, no walls can confine it, no fetters hold it in subjection.

In view of these facts, how important it is that the mind should be properly cultivated and its latent powers brought into early and vigorous action. As the refiner melts the gold, separates it from the ore, purges it from the dross, and brings forth the polished and shining metal, so a virtuous education purges the mind of those debasing passions and savage barbarities, which in a state of nature,

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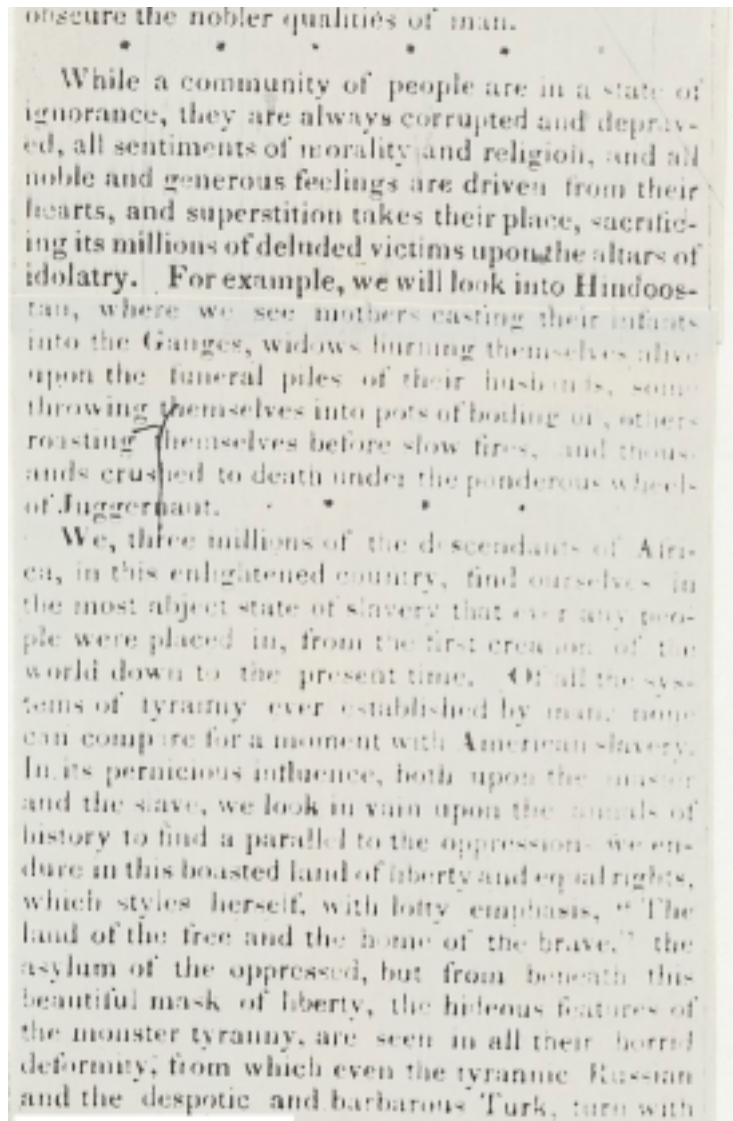
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obscure the nobler qualities of man.

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While a community of people are in a state of ignorance, they are always corrupted and depraved, all sentiments of morality and religion, and all noble and generous feelings are driven from their hearts, and superstition takes their place, sacrificing its millions of deluded victims upon the altars of idolatry. For example, we will look into Hindoostan, where we see mothers casting their children into the Ganges, widows burning themselves alive upon the funeral piles of their husbands, some throwing themselves into the pots of boiling oil, others roasting themselves before slow fires, and thousands crushed to death under the ponderous wheels of Juggernaut. * * * * *

We, three millions of the descendants of Africa, in this enlightened country, find ourselves in the most abject state of slavery that ever many people were placed in, from the first creation of the world down to the present time. Of all the systems of tyranny ever established by [many] none can compare for a moment with American slavery. In its pernicious influence, both upon the master and slave, we look in vain upon the annals of history to find a parallel to the oppressions we endure in this boasted land of liberty and equal rights, which styles herself, with lofty emphasis, "The land of the free and the home of the brave," the asylum of the oppressed, but from beneath this beautiful mask of liberty, the hideous features of the monster tyranny, are seen in all their horrid deformity, from which even the tyrannic Russian and the despotic and barbarous Turks, turn with



horror and indignation.

And now, sir, while we have such a striking example before us of the uncertainty of human life, and how liable we are at any moment to be called away, may we so regulate our conduct, that we too may be ready to meet the summons without regret. And dispensing with those idle pleasures and frivolous amusements which benefit neither mind nor body, but tend to enervate and destroy both, turn our attention to the cultivation of that part of our being which shall survive unhurt, "the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and crush of worlds."

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