

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN STUDIES CHARACTER BUILDING

The taboo in the class room of any attempt to direct a course in good morals which might be associated with religious ideals, and the expurgating from text books timely expressions based on pious and reverent meditations of spiritual content, has not improved the general behavior of succeeding generations. One fears that the former familiar, patriotic axioms which once embellished almost every page of the early school text books are also approaching extinction!

The correlation of the teaching of morals and patriotism with the original seven liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric, dialectics, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy is impressive indeed for that period in which Abraham Lincoln was developing into manhood. A few excerpts from Scott's Lessons in Elocution which Lincoln is known to have studied are presented here as a sample of the literature which contributed to the building of Lincoln's exemplary character.

The young are slaves to novelty, the old to custom.

A man without ceremony has need of great merit.

Time is requisite to bring great projects to maturity.

Examine well the counsel that favours your desires.

Adversity borrows its sharpest sting from our impatience.

Nothing blunts the edge of ridicule so effectually as good humor.

Narrow minds think nothing right that is above their own capacity.

Let your conduct be the result of deliberation, never of impatience.

To say little and perform much, is the characteristic of a great mind.

Be moderate in your pleasures, that your relish for them may continue.

If we have sense, modesty best sets it off; if not, best hides the want.

Our good or bad fortune depends greatly on the choice we make of our friends.

The injuries we do, and those we suffer, are seldom weighed in the same balance.

The gratification of desire is sometimes the worst thing that can befall us.

Man's chief good is an upright mind, which no earthly power can bestow, nor take from him.

Self partiality hides from us those very faults in ourselves which we see and blame in others.

Precipitation rains the best contrived plan; patience ripens the most difficult.

The first ingredient in conversation is truth; the next, good sense; the third, good humor; the last, wit.

To have your enemy in your power and yet to do him good is the greatest heroism.

He who is puffed up with the first gale of prosperity, will bend beneath the first blast of adversity.

Guard your weak side from being known. If it be attacked the best way is to join in the attack.

The best practical rule of morality is, never to do but what we are willing all the world should know.

He whose ruling passion is love of praise, is a slave to everyone who has a tongue for detraction.

Men make themselves ridiculous, not so much by the qualities they have, as by the affectation of those they have not.

Indulgence not desire at the expense of the slightest article of virtue; pass once its limits, and you fall headlong into vice.

It is a saying of Socrates, that we should eat and drink in order to live; instead of living, as many do, in order to eat and drink.

To measure all reasons by our own is a plain act of injustice; it is an encroachment on the common rights of mankind.

Even self interest is a motive for benevolence. There are none so low, but may have it in their power to return a good office.

No man is so foolish that he may give good counsel at a time; no man so wise but he may err, if he takes no counsel but his own.

When even in the heat of dispute, I yield to my antagonist, my victory over myself is more illustrious than over him, had he yielded to me.

Apply yourself to acquire more knowledge than to show it. Men commonly take great pains to put off the little stock they have; but they take little pains to acquire more.

Let fame be regarded but conscience much more. It is an empty joy to appear better than you are; but a great blessing to be what you ought to be.

To deal with a man, you must know his temper, by which you can lead him; or his ends, by which you can persuade him; or his friends, by whom you can govern him.

It is idle as well as absurd, to impose our opinions upon others. The same ground of conviction operates differently on the same man in different circumstances, and on different men in the same circumstances.

When you decant on the faults of others, consider whether you be not guilty of the same. To gain knowledge of ourselves, the best way is to convert the imperfections of others into a mirror for discovering our own.

An infallible way to make your child miserable, is to satisfy all his demands. Passion swells by gratification and the impossibility of satisfying every one of his desires will oblige you to stop short at last, after he has become headstrong.

Solicitude in hiding failings make them appear the greater. It is a safer and easier course, frankly to acknowledge them. A man owns that he is ignorant; we admire his modesty. He says he is old; we scarce think him so. He declares himself poor; we do not believe it.