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THE DUTY OF SELF-CONTROL



An Address to the Students of Princeton
University, in Marquand Chapel,
Sunday afternoon, January 30, 1898.
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At a meeting of the Faculty of Princeton University, held February 2d, 1898, the following action was taken by a unanimous vote :

Resolved, That the thanks of the Faculty of Princeton University be tendered President Patton for his wise and timely address on Temperance given Sunday, January 30th, in Marquand Chapel, and that in the judgment of the Faculty it should be printed and widely circulated.

Resolved, That a Committee of the Faculty be appointed to carry this action into effect.

The committee appointed under the last resolution consisted of Dean Murray, Professor Duffield and Professor West.

THE DUTY OF SELF-CONTROL.

At their meeting in October the attention of our Trustees was turned to the recent agitation which has so seriously involved the good name of Princeton University. A committee, of which I was chairman, was appointed to consider the whole subject and report at a subsequent meeting of the Trustees. That report was presented and adopted at the meeting held on the twenty-third of December. It was resolved that a strict, literal, and impartial enforcement of the existing laws respecting intoxicating drinks be enjoined upon the Faculty; and that the President of the University be asked to make a statement to the students upon the whole question at such time as may suit his convenience.

I come before you this afternoon for the purpose of carrying out the wishes of the Trustees in respect to the second point in the report just referred to. As we have just observed the day of prayer for colleges, I do not know that a more fitting time could be chosen for the purpose of bringing this important subject to your notice.

I bear grateful testimony to the high moral tone of the students of this University. I know that they have been misrepresented and misunderstood. Their hilarity, their boisterous outbursts of exuberant energy, their song-singing which often has a more Bacchanalian sound than I could wish, and in some instances their inexcusable acts of wrong-doing have produced impressions which the facts will not justify; and they have on many occasions been charged with drunkenness for no other reason than that under the influence of the gregarious instinct which sometimes assumes an almost irrational mode of expression, animal spirits have been allowed

too much freedom, and speech and action have not been kept within those metes and bounds which mature men in the busy walks of life are apt to associate with sobriety. I am sure that so far as good behaviour is concerned the undergraduates of Princeton are not behind the undergraduate body of any university in the land; and I am proud to say, on what I feel is good authority, that the Princeton undergraduate of to-day does not suffer by comparison with the Princeton undergraduate of bygone years. There never was less reason for adverse criticism of Princeton than during the period in which it has been so unsparingly bestowed upon us. I have taken pains to find out the truth, and I am still unshaken in my conviction that the tendency in Princeton is steadily in the direction of a diminished use of alcoholic drinks. Still, I must not be blind to facts; and after making all allowance for wilful misrepresentation or mistake I am constrained to believe that there is far more of what is called moderate drinking among us than the wisest and best friends of Princeton could wish; and that there are those among you who are putting their future in peril by the excessive use of stimulants. Instances of intoxication are comparatively rare, but they occur nevertheless, and there is a tendency I find, even among some of those who cannot be charged with it themselves, to think too lightly of the sin of drunkenness. I shall not discuss the general question of intemperance, nor consider the relative degrees of wisdom that characterize the different modes of dealing with it. On the latter question good men, actuated by the purest motives, differ widely, and we as Christian men are bound to respect their conscientious judgments. Some think that the matter should be dealt with by legislation, either by absolute Prohi-

bition or by the restricted sale of intoxicating drinks. Some, with conscientious regard for individual liberty, are opposed to what are known as sumptuary laws. When we admit that the sale of a commodity should be restricted we so far forth concede the principle of State control. The question after that is one of degree, and the answer to it is to be found in considerations of expediency and by inquiring which method best serves the end in view. The Prohibitionist must not be scorned as the invader of liberty; and the advocate of high license must not be denied his right to be regarded as working in the interests of Temperance. I am not here concerned with the general question as to what is wise legislative policy. It is with the ethical side of Temperance and not its political side that I am dealing. It is not of Temperance in general, but of Temperance in Princeton University, that I wish to speak. And speaking under even these limitations it is not with the disciplinary side of the question that I wish to deal in what I say this afternoon. There is nothing unnatural in the desire of the Trustees for a vigilant enforcement of what has for many years been the law of the University in regard to alcoholic liquors. That law is wise and wholesome; and while I am in full sympathy with your feeling that the University man is not to be treated as though he were in a preparatory school, I am ready to take my full share of responsibility for the report which, as chairman of the committee dealing with the question, I made to the Board of Trustees. I am in full sympathy with the action of the Trustees with regard to the enforcement of the existing law, and I feel that the administration of that law can be wisely left to the good sense and Christian judgment of the Dean of this University.

In what I say this afternoon I wish to bring the moral influence of this pulpit to bear upon the grave question with which we have to deal. I am sure that the good sense of the better part of the University will be in sympathy with the maintenance of a high disciplinary standard. I am confident that in the long run our course will commend itself to the calm and balanced judgment of the Christian public. I believe that we shall find it possible to have such a wise execution of this law as will accomplish the ends which we wish to realize without fostering hypocrisy or developing the vice of secret drinking. But we shall have need of great wisdom, and I think I may fairly ask all who have the interests of Princeton at heart to trust the men who are called to the responsible position of guiding her affairs.

There are two classes of men whom I have particularly in mind: those who have already fallen into intemperate habits and those who are in danger of forming those habits. I know that there are some who do not make much of the distinction between these two classes, and who therefore, as they happen to be habitually lenient or severe in their judgments, are apt to waste too much pity on the man who is guilty of habitual intoxication or else to treat the moderate drinker as a drunkard. But the distinction is a valid one, and simple justice requires us to make it. Now, I wish to say that drunkenness is practically an unpardonable sin in our academic life. I do not forget the duty I owe men to counsel, to warn them, and to labour for their improvement. There have been men in all these years of my administration who know how faithfully they have been dealt with in regard to this sin which ruins both body and soul. But with the utmost desire to

reclaim the erring, and making every allowance for the mistakes of youth, it must be understood that a man cannot be guilty of repeated acts of intoxication and continue in this University if his offence is known to the authorities.

I wish more particularly, however, to say a kindly word to those who are understood to be moderate drinkers. I shall take the liberty of giving them some advice; and the basis for that advice I must find of course in the New Testament. I do not believe that the moralisation of society has reached the point of superseding the Bible. I cannot accept any conclusions of the so-called Christian consciousness that would contradict or transcend the ethics of Jesus and St. Paul.

There is, let me say, no great difficulty in morals where we recognize our duty as defined by objective law. The difficulty emerges when the conscience must first issue the command which she has to obey; for in this case there is required not only the will to do what is seen to be duty, but the clearness of vision necessary to the forming of a conscientious judgment. I can only hope for my advice that it may help you to form a conscientious judgment. Some of you will remember what Kant said in regard to the autonomy of the will, and how he insisted that the law to be moral must be self-legislated. Of course Kant carried this idea too far; but there is nevertheless a sphere of conduct in which the conscience must be autonomous. It is precisely in respect to this very matter of the autonomy of the individual conscience that St. Paul, writing under the influence of Inspiration, makes his conspicuous contribution to Christian Ethics in his great utterance, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat

no flesh while the world standeth." This is the language in which Paul enunciates his conscientious purpose in respect to a concrete matter in the light of the principle of Christian expediency. This passage, taken in connection with others of a similar import, may be regarded as giving us the Pauline doctrine respecting the autonomy of the individual conscience. According to this doctrine then there are certain things concerning which there is no objective law; and therefore since there is no objective law defining conduct, I am absolutely free in reference to them. Were there any law in regard to these things I should not only be bound by it, but I should be open to the criticism of my fellow-men if I disobeyed it. For binding me and my fellow-men alike it would be the rule of each for himself and the canon by which every man might fairly judge his neighbor. Now in regard to these matters about which there is no objective law, I must occupy the double position of first enunciating and then obeying the command that is to rule my will. The consequence of this position is very obvious. If an attempt is made to impose an external law upon my conscience which I know is not binding, I resent it and assert my liberty; and I do well in so doing. It is just because so many do not recognize this sphere of the autonomy of the conscience that they undertake to make what they feel is law for them the law for other people also, and so become censorious; and criticise and blame where they have no right to criticise and blame. On the other hand, while I may very properly assert my liberty if it is assailed, I may also conscientiously conclude that it is my duty to forego the exercise of my liberty. In doing this I issue a command, and am as much bound by this subjectively-enunciated command as though it

were a binding objective law. I do not hold then that the doctrine of Christian expediency resolves itself into prudence. A conscientious judgment of duty is duty, even though it be dictated by a benevolent regard for others or a prudent regard for one's own interest. The voluntary abstention from the doing of that which—so far as any objective law is concerned—I am at full liberty to do, may appear to me to be a duty and in so far as it seems to be a duty it is a deliverance of conscience and binding upon me in the sight of God. But it must be understood that while being self-enunciated I am bound to obey the command, I would if it were not self-enunciated, resent any attempt to impose it upon me from without, seeing that there is no external law to serve as a common measure between minds in regard to the matter with which it is concerned. It is easy from this to see the double and what at first appears to be the inconsistent attitude of St. Paul where on the one hand he sharply rebukes the man who presumes to dictate to his neighbour, saying, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth;" and, on the other hand, exhorts men to use their liberty under the restraints of the law of Christian charity and, for the sake of others, refrain from the doing of what in itself considered they are at perfect liberty to do. Of course I am saying nothing new in this account I am giving of the Pauline doctrine of Christian expediency. It is only what the Alexanders and the Hodges and all the great lights of Princeton divinity have said all along. But I am afraid that in contemporary discussions of the temperance question, this principle which it seems to me is vital to the whole

controversy is very commonly lost sight of or altogether misunderstood.

Paul enunciates the duty of having a benevolent regard for the conscience of the weak brother in connection with a discussion regarding the practice of eating meats offered to idols. The apostle would do nothing that would weaken the moral purpose or shake the moral integrity of his neighbour even though the thing he refrained from doing was perfectly innocent in itself. To eat meat offered to idols was not intrinsically wrong: but in the judgment of some this might seem like a concession to idolatry: and under these circumstances the apostle would refrain from the exercise of his liberty. In other words, says Paul, we are to consider not only what our own conscience has to say, but how our act may affect the consciences of others. I must not do what my conscience allows if in doing so I tempt my neighbour to do what his conscience condemns, since for him to act in violation of his conscience would be for him to sin. "Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other." Now I venture to say that we all recognize this great altruistic principle. For all to whom the New Testament is authoritative, the principle is an objective law. The carrying out of that law must, in the nature of the case, be largely left to the individual conscience. Men apply this principle in different ways in regard to the use of wine. Some conscientiously abstain at all times; some as conscientiously are governed in their abstinence by considerations of time, place and circumstances. We must not charge men with hypocrisy or intemperance or fanaticism because they do not agree with us in the application of a principle which we all alike recognize as obligatory. But you and I should ask ourselves the

question, How can I best carry out this great principle? Speaking, then, to you to-day I could wish that there might grow up in your hearts the feeling that you ought not to do any thing that will endanger the Christian manhood of one of your friends or classmates. Let us begin to put this Pauline principle in practice in the spheres where our influence is most palpable. The way to feel the power of the principle is to apply it in concrete cases. The weak brother who so easily loses his self-control, who is so easily overcome by temptation, is constantly giving you the opportunity to put in practice the Pauline doctrine. I venture to say that most of you have a weak brother among your acquaintances. He is your room-mate, or a member of your club, or he belongs to the same athletic organization, or he goes with you on the trip of the Glee Club. He is apt to be what is known as a nice fellow, generous, warm-hearted, buoyant, full of good impulses; and you love him. Here is a chance for you to act on Paul's principle. I am sure that you and I have acted on this principle a great many times. Let us continue to act on it, and we shall find that the area of altruistic abstention from what is allowable is constantly widening. We shall find ourselves saying: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." And if in due time this principle should take the form of a universal proposition, so far as the use of alcoholic liquors is concerned, you will have the satisfaction of feeling that the law in this universal form is not one which has been forced upon you from without, but one that has emanated from your own conscience; that it is binding upon you because self-legislated; and that it leaves you free from any tendency to a censorious judgment of your neighbor, whose application of the

Pauline principle of benevolent regard for others is confined to concrete instances and is conditioned by time, place and circumstances.

But besides your benevolent regard for your neighbor I think I may wisely ask you to have a prudent regard for your own best interests. If any duty is intuitively given us in consciousness it is Temperance, I mean the duty of self-control. Let me caution you, then, against habits which put this self-control in peril. In doing this I feel sure that I can count on the moral support of a great many who themselves hold no extreme positions. There are a great many men in mature life who have no conscientious scruples against taking an occasional glass of wine, who, nevertheless, feel that it is not a good thing for young men in college to contract the habit of drinking even in the most moderate way. I confess that my conscience is in accord with this feeling. You are young, you are in health, you suffer from no depression of spirits, you enjoy life in abundance; there is no reason why you should seek to have it more abundantly in the temporary exhilaration that comes from alcohol in either its diffused or concentrated form. I feel sure that the good sense of temperate people everywhere will approve of our law respecting intoxicating drinks whatever may be their individual opinions respecting the political doctrine of prohibition or the moral doctrine of total abstinence. And so I come to you this afternoon and ask for your coöperation with us in promoting Temperance in Princeton University by giving this law your conscientious support. I confess that I have on more than one occasion been gratified and strengthened by the example of men who have no conscientious scruples against the moderate use of wine, who have

used it and would use it again if they desired to, but who have, if I may say so, outgrown the use of it and have ceased to care for it. I am not indifferent to the excesses I sometimes see ; but I hope I am correct in supposing—this at least is my observation, and this is what I am told by men who are far better able to judge than I am—that there is a tendency in social life if not to a diminished use of wine at least to the use of it in diminished quantity. The man of the world's social philosophy, unless I greatly err, is looking in the direction of moderation. Let us carry this social philosophy a little further. Let us lift up a high standard in respect to the great duty of self-control. Let us discountenance convivial drinking. Let us avoid the habitual use of stimulants in any form. I know I am safe in giving you this advice. I know that if you will act upon it it will be to your advantage. It will at least eliminate one of the contingencies from the problem of your success in life. I should be sorry if the professional career of any one of you were blighted by habits of conviviality contracted here. I should be sorry to see you start in the great race of life under the terrible handicap of ill repute.

My brother, I envy you your place in this world. You are in the morning of your life. You are on the threshold of your manhood. You have a future. Your prospects are bright. But a great struggle is before you. You need the unhampered use of all your powers: good health, an unclouded mind, trained intellect, good manners, strict integrity, high moral purpose, indomitable energy. You have great advantage in education. But you will meet your match in the keen competition of business and professional life. You will from the very outset of your career be

engaged in a great fight with circumstances. Success will mean that you have the power in no small degree of influentially affecting the lives of other men, of inspiring their confidence, controlling their judgment, shaping their conduct. But you must first learn the lesson of self-control; you must rule your own spirit if you are to be masterful among men. You must fight out to the finish the great battle of duty against inclination, of reason against appetite, of conscience against lust, of the spirit against the flesh. I do not feel much confidence in the world's panaceas. They work too much on the outside. Your life is the product of inner principle and external environment. The world's schemes of reformation make too much of circumstances and too little of character. I would lessen temptation were it in my power; but I would also have you know that the great moral victories are gained in the face of temptations and by giving them battle. I would do all that can be done to make your environment here favorable to moral life. Let legislation put what restrictions on evil it wisely can. Let academic law find strict enforcement. Let public sentiment exert deterrent influence. Let there be such a spirit of high-toned behaviour among our students that men will fear the penalty of social disapproval. Let the influence of religion, the sweet memories of home, and the prayers and counsels, the hopes and ambitions of fathers and mothers whose yearning hearts in these their declining years are turning in strong, tender, unselfish, anxious affection toward you, invite you to live the manly, upright, Christian life. But when all is done we shall find that it is in the very centre of your being that the work of reformation must begin. It is here that the profound

philosophy of Christianity reveals itself. For it and it alone can subdue the will, can sanctify the affections, can change the heart, can regenerate the character. And it is in the hope that you will know the power of the Gospel that I summon you to take up arms at once against the fleshly lusts that war against the soul. Fight appetite. Learn lessons from your training for other contests. Keep your body under. Don't break your moral training. You may win another and a brighter garland for the brow of your *alma mater*. You may add another star to the crown of her rejoicing. For your own sake, and for her sake, and for the world's sake, and for the sake of Him who came to seek and to save you, determine now to win the great battle of your life which shall make you master of yourself.

I do not think that this battle against appetite will be so easily won by some of you. I do not think that any of us is so safe that he can afford to boast. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." It is a constant battle with temptation in some form or other that we have to fight. And notwithstanding holy influence without and high principle within; in spite of public sentiment, and righteous law, and warning conscience, and religious faith, and hallowed memories, and hopes and fears, and the softening touch of grief, and the calm of quiet Sabbath days, a man may yet in some unguarded moment be the victim of his besetting sin. Do you not remember what George Herbert says ?—

Lord, with what care hast Thou begirt us round !
 Parents first season us : then school-masters
 Deliver us to laws ; they send us bound
 To rules of reason, holy messengers,

Pulpits and Sundays, sorrow dogging sin,
 Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,
 Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,
 Bibles laid open, millions of surprises,

Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulness
 The sound of glory ringing in our ears ;
 Without, our shame ; within, our consciences ;
 Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears.

Yet all these fences and their whole array,
 One cunning bosom sin blows quite away.

I have been speaking with especial reference to one form of temptation. But you know that the Bible doctrine of temperance—*ἐγκράτεια*—does not have any exclusive reference to matters of meat and drink. There are other temptations besides those that have been specially referred to. You need to learn this duty of self-control with reference to your whole moral life. And the best aid to your moral life is religious faith. It is when you feel your weakness that you are really strong. It is when most conscious of insufficiency that you will feel that your sufficiency is of God. Learn to distrust yourself and lean on Christ. Lay aside every weight and sin that doth so easily beset you and run with patience the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus.

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to preserve you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory, and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”

