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THE IMPORTANCE OF VIRTUOUS HABITS IN YOUNG MEN,
AND THE MEANS BY WHICH THEY MAY BE ATTAINED.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE

COLLEGE CHAPEL

TO THE GRADUATING CLASS,

MAY 14, 1854,

BY

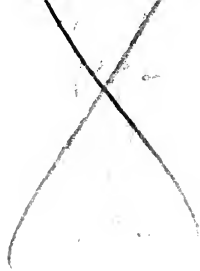
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PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY.

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YITSEVIMU
YIARELI
L.M. NOTEDOMAN

BACCALAUREATE SERMON.

WHEREWITHAL SHALL A YOUNG MAN CLEANSE HIS WAY? BY TAKING HEED
THERETO ACCORDING TO THY WORD.—*Psalm* CXIX. 9.

IN every human enterprise it is important to begin well. And in no case is this remark more appropriate than in the journey of human life. A wrong step in the commencement generally gives direction to the whole future course. And if after we have proceeded some distance in the wrong way, we attempt to retrace our steps, the effort will be attended with great difficulty, and much time and labor will be lost in regaining the right road. In forming a plan of future conduct, two things demand the utmost attention of every young man. First, the object at which he should aim, and next, the means necessary to secure it. In our text the Psalmist suggests an object worthy the attention of every individual, and especially of the young, and he points out the means by which it may be attained. ‘Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.’ To cleanse his way, is the object, Taking heed to his way according to the word of God, is the means.

To the consideration of these two points, we at this time invite your attention. To *cleanse his way* is evi-

dently a figurative expression, which signifies to escape from moral pollution and to attain purity of heart and life. In the Sacred Scriptures it is usual to represent sin, or moral evil under the notion of pollution—something which defiles the soul and renders it offensive and disgusting. Sin destroys the beauty and loveliness of rational beings, tarnishes the bright image of God in which man was created, and invests the soul in a garb so foul and loathsome as to excite the disgust of all holy beings. In the Sacred Scriptures sin is represented as an abominable thing from which God averts his eyes as being too pure to behold evil.

Integrity, purity, holiness and piety, (all of which are included in the general expression to *cleanse his way*), are important and necessary to all men of every age. Yet there is a peculiar propriety in inquiring by what means a young man may *cleanse his way*.

1. Because a young man is in more danger of contamination than any other. This danger arises from the inexperience and ardor of youth, and from the peculiar temptations to which that age is exposed. The extent of his own observation is limited, and he can seldom be persuaded to listen to the experience of those who have gone before him. When the victims of sensuality, in the last stage of moral degradation, without reputation or property or health, are presented to his view, he cannot believe there is any similarity between these extreme cases and his own. He cannot believe that these outcasts from society, now clothed in rags, tottering in the streets, or emaciated in the hospital, or confined in the penitentiary, had when of his age that high sense of honor, that delicate regard to the feelings of their friends, and that strength and decision of character which he possesses. He feels himself injured and

insulted by the suggestion that he may one day become such as the degraded and miserable being whose very aspect fills him with disgust. When you point him to such examples, he looks around him and beholds some who have advanced farther in a course of dissipation than he at present intends to go, enjoying a high degree of health, respected by their friends, admitted to reputable and fashionable society, occupying honorable stations, apparently free from care and imparting cheerfulness and joy to all their associates. And why he asks, may not he walk in the same path, so smooth, so enchanting, so well adapted to his buoyant feelings, especially as he is determined to avoid everything mean and disreputable, and to associate only with intelligent and genteel companions. And if on some special occasions he should go beyond the limits which rigid moralists would approve, he alleges it is nothing more than others have done who still maintain a decent and respectable standing in society. With these views, and encouraged by these examples he is induced to go farther until it is too late to recede. Thus we have seen on a summer evening a gay and beauteous insect, charmed by the brilliancy of a lighted taper, sporting around the dazzling object, alternately approaching and receding, coming nearer at each successive circle, until touched by the flame it falls to rise no more.

It has been said that such is the deformity of vice that it needs only to be seen in order to be shunned. This is true when viewed in all its consequences present and remote. But it is not true when the aspect usually presented to youth is contemplated. It is then dressed in all the seductive charms of pleasure, of wealth, of fame. Every thing calculated to excite the appetite and to inflame the passions of youth, is held

out to view. Fragrant flowers delightful to the sight hang in graceful clusters on each side of the winding path which leads to the mansion filled with *dead men's bones*.

There are also persons already initiated into the mysteries of iniquity, prepared to meet young men, when they go forth into the world, and to lead them into the paths of corruption and crime. Vice like misery loves company. Whether this arises from the social principle common to all men or from a consciousness of guilt which dreads to be alone, we shall not now stop to inquire. The fact is so, that those who are corrupt make strenuous and successful efforts to corrupt others. Under the guise of friendship they present allurements, which the inexperienced know not how to resist. At one time addressing their appetites and passions, at another appealing to their love of honor and distinction, representing some sins as manly and honorable, and indeed as necessary, in order to maintain a standing in fashionable society. And if they succeed in corrupting the morals of a youth under their tuition, the religious principles in which he has been educated, will soon give way and cease to place any barrier in the road to ruin. When his moral habits have received an evil bias, no foreign influence is necessary in order to induce him to abandon the religious principles in which he has been instructed. Under the high excitement of his feelings and of the various objects with which he is surrounded, he finds no leisure for serious reflection. Or, if in some transient moments, the thought of God and the retributions of eternity should disturb his guilty pleasures, his own ingenuity will find pretexts to justify his conduct and to calm his fears.

From long observation, we are persuaded that the

rejection of the gospel generally begins with the corruption of the heart, and the loss of virtuous habits. We repeat it, men usually become infidels or what is the same thing, adopt erroneous principles, in order to suit the corrupt habits, which they have formed. In some cases, it is true, a contrary process takes place. The reading of infidel or erroneous books, or the conversation of irreligious and licentious companions, suggest doubts, respecting the great truths inculcated in the Bible. And when the principles of piety are obscured by the mists of scepticism, the only effectual restraint to the indulgence of licentious and malignant passions is removed.

Young men of literary taste are peculiarly exposed to the poison conveyed through the press. Scepticism and licentiousness are interwoven with almost every species of literature. It is found in the most polished histories in the English language, in philosophical disquisitions, in natural history, in poetry and fiction.

A young man must abandon all thought of mental improvement, if he be not in the course of his reading exposed to the deadliest poison, presented in the most insinuating and dangerous form. Indeed, sources of moral contamination accessible to all classes of the community, have been opened. Infidelity and licentiousness in a form calculated to reach the most ignorant and stupid, are presented to every age and sex, in public lectures, in weekly papers, in essays and tracts. To this contaminating influence, young men are more exposed than any other class, and they are more likely to feel the blighting effects, because the principles inculcated with so much zeal are calculated to inflame those passions which the best regulated discipline can hardly restrain. An appeal which few have firmness

enough to resist, is also made to their vanity. They are told it is mean and unworthy a liberal mind to receive the dogmas inculcated by parents, and to submit to the restraints imposed by the precepts of the gospel: that the time has come when they should cast off the leading strings of the nursery, and walk forth with an independent and unshackled step. To the youthful heart such suggestions are extremely gratifying: and many flattered with the idea of independence, resign themselves to the guidance of their new instructors, and become the dupes of the wildest follies, and the slaves of the most degrading passions.

2. Again the inquiry, wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way, is made with peculiar propriety; because habits acquired in early life, usually become fixed, and are scarcely capable of being changed at any future period.

No fact is more indubitable, none more confirmed by the experience of every individual, and by the testimony of all ages, than that now stated. Yet this is a truth in the philosophy of human nature, which young men are slow to learn. Few young men, we believe, deliberately determine to abandon themselves to a life of idleness and dissipation, and consequently of insignificance and wretchedness. Their intention is, after a short period of self indulgence, to change their course. And if one individual in a thousand can be recollected who abandoning the follies of youth, has risen to distinction in life, it is sufficient to encourage others to make the experiment. Examples of this kind are treasured up in the memory and handed down from generation to generation, while the cases of hundreds and thousands of others who have ignobly perished, are totally forgotten. Thus a single prize in a lottery is told and trum-

peted throughout the land, and not one syllable is uttered respecting ten thousand blanks in the same drawing. The capital prize in the next lottery attracts the notice of numerous adventurers, each one hoping to be the favorite of fortune. But suppose the anticipations of the youthful adventurer should be realized, what does he gain? A few days of sordid gratification, and years of regret that his best days have been uselessly and criminally wasted,—that he must carry with him through life a broken constitution and have a continual struggle to resist the return of habits formed in early life. Be it remembered that in a vast majority of cases, reformation never takes place. A fire has been kindled which all the art of man cannot extinguish. It burns within, and at each successive hour acquires fresh vigor.

3. Another consideration which gives intense interest to the inquiry, by what means a young man may cleanse his way, is the large number of youth lost to their friends, their country and the world in consequence of the corruption of their morals at an early period of life. We cannot form an accurate estimate of the number, who from this cause die in early life, or become utterly useless to society. Some attempts have been made to ascertain the number who die annually in the United States, by the single vice of intemperance. And the amount on the most moderate calculation is truly appalling. Add to this the victims of other sins, of lewdness, of gambling, of duelling, and how vast must be the amount? Of this fact, any one can convince himself, if he will take a single village or neighborhood, and count up all who from these causes have gone to a premature grave. Or let him look around the circle of his acquaintance and note those who have gone, or who are in the road to ruin, through the indulgence of criminal

passions. And let it be kept in mind, that through the delicacy of friends many pine and sicken and die, in consequence of sins unknown to the world. Take only those cases where the cause is obvious, and how much talent, how much intellectual acquirement, and how much promise of usefulness and distinction, are blighted and lost through the corruption of morals in early life ! In what city or village, or neighborhood, do we not see parents mourning over a lost son ?

If all the young men who have perished during the last ten years, or all who shall probably fall in the next ten years to come, from this cause, were cut off in one day, what lamentation and mourning would be heard throughout our land ? Egypt on that memorable night when the first born in every house was smitten, did not present a spectacle more appalling. In the wise and benevolent order of Providence, all do not fall at once, so that the youth in each neighborhood may have before their eyes every year and month, a beacon to warn them of danger. And what is to be more regretted, these victims are not always the ignorant, the mean and worthless : young men of education, of talent, of respectable connexions, to whose future eminence their friends and country were looking forward with fond anticipations are among those whom the destroying angel has marked as his victims.

4. The good which a man, who in early life adopts correct principles and forms virtuous habits may achieve, and the mischief which he will probably accomplish if he take a contrary course, make it highly desirable that young men should be correct in their principles, and pure in their morals.

Every individual however low in station, or inferior in talent, has an influence on the happiness or misery

of those around him. As a father, a son, a husband, he holds in his hands the domestic peace, and in many cases the eternal destiny of the domestic circle.

Not unfrequently the moral influence of an individual whether good or bad, extends to a much wider sphere. 'One sinner destroys much good.' By his conversation and example he corrupts others, and they again become centres from which moral pollution emanates. And thus the contagion is spread from neighborhood to neighborhood, and conveyed from generation to generation. It is also an encouraging circumstance that an individual, especially if he commences in early life, may effect much good. The history of the church and of the world, demonstrates that the moral and religious reformation of nations as well as of individuals, is effected through the instrumentality of human agents. Not only distinguished men, whom God has raised up, in great emergencies, but each individual in whatever sphere he may be placed, is capable of contributing immense and incalculable aid to the cause of virtue and piety. And to what better cause can a young man consecrate his talents and influence?

5. Finally, purity and holiness is the only qualification which can elevate the soul to its true dignity, and prepare it for heaven. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' 'And without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' On this account it is important and necessary that the young as well as the old should cleanse his way. And if it be true, as we think experience sufficiently demonstrates, that comparatively few become pure in heart, i. e. sincerely pious, after they have passed the meridian of life, how important is the inquiry, 'wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?'

Of this short life, youth is the seed time for eternity. And if this season pass unimproved, the probability of a joyful harvest is greatly diminished. Every young man ought to bear in mind this solemn fact, when he is laying plans to spend the morning of life in sinful folly, and to attend to the concerns of his soul in old age. God may leave him as he has others, to reap the fruits of his own criminal folly.

Such are a few of the dangers to which young men are exposed, and such the importance of avoiding vicious habits.

II. It remains that we consider very briefly by what means a young man may escape the pit into which so many have fallen. The Psalmist in our text has pointed out the only certain and effectual means by which a young man may cleanse his way, viz: by taking heed thereto according to the word of God. That is by attention, and attention according to a certain rule—the word of God.

If one or the other, or both of these be neglected, the end will certainly fail to be attained. A man who treads a narrow path surrounded with deep precipices, will be in great danger unless he takes heed to his steps. He may have received the most accurate and explicit instructions respecting the road—he may have in his pocket a map or chart representing the track he is to follow—marking the paths likely to lead him astray, and the precipices over which preceding travellers have fallen, and yet if he forget his instructions and neglect to consult his chart, he cannot hope to reach in safety his desired destination; nor can the best moral and religious instructions, avail a young man, who dashes on heedless of consequences, not regarding all he has heard or read respecting the dangers that sur-

round his path? As a moral agent every individual must think and meditate, and compare the different objects placed before him, so that in view of their relative importance, he may decide which he ought to choose and which to reject. Young men are extremely jealous of their independence, afraid to have it suspected that they are swayed by any foreign authority, or governed by any will except their own. If then they would act wisely they must think, what is the nature and what the tendency of their actions. If they do otherwise, they in fact renounce that independence, which they affect to idolize, and yield themselves to the impulse of every surrounding object. Submission to the authority of the Bible is often refused on the ground, that it would take from a man the liberty of thinking and acting for himself. The truth is, there is no duty which the Bible more frequently and solemnly enjoins, than that a man should think and act according to his own conscience well enlightened. And there is no sin more severely condemned than the want of consideration. The want of consideration ruins the temporal and eternal interests of a large number of mankind. When men are involved in difficulties in consequence of their sins, they more severely blame themselves for the want of consideration, than for any thing else, ascribing their calamities to their own rashness, folly and want of thought.

It will readily be admitted that no one can succeed in an important worldly enterprise, unless he wisely arrange his plans, and attentively use means necessary to their execution. And can any one without vigilance and precaution hope to escape the snares and temptations that surround his path?

The want of reflection is the common and besetting

sin of young men. They sometimes imagine that this heedlessness is laudable and becoming their age. Not conscious of any positive intention to do wrong, they excuse themselves for acts admitted to be criminal, when done after deliberation and forethought. But if God has endowed man with the power of reason and choice, made him capable of distinguishing right from wrong, and of perceiving the connexion between cause and effect, can it be no crime to neglect to exercise the noblest attribute of human nature, and to follow the guidance of blind impulses, possessed by brutes in a superior degree? In what strong and pathetic language does God remonstrate with men on account of this heedlessness and want of consideration? ‘The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: But Israel doth not know; my people do not consider.’ Is. i, 3. ‘Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.’ Deut. xxxii. 29. Attention then is indispensably necessary. There is no royal high road by which either young or old can escape the pollutions of the world, and get to heaven without their own care and reflection.

2. But if a young man is anxious to cleanse his way, by what light shall he direct his steps? What guide shall he follow amidst the dangers that surround his path? There is only one infallible guide,—one steady and brilliant light, which never leads astray the weary traveller. I mean, the word of God, contained in the Holy Scriptures—‘the only infallible rule of faith and practice.’ “The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, en-

during forever. The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired than gold; yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey comb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward." This eulogy is as true as it is elegant. And whoever will make the experiment,—lay it down as a first principle, to take the word of God as the rule of his conduct,—endeavor to imbibe its spirit, to obey its precepts, to cherish its hopes,—will find from his own experience that the encomium is not exaggerated.

Where else can we find a perfect standard of duty? Where else an unchanging light to shine on our path? Every other standard will be found defective. Every other light fallacious. Can a young man follow with safety his own reason independent of divine revelation? It is true, experience and reflection may induce a man to exchange one sin for another. Profligacy may give place to avarice or ambition. The penuriousness of old age may succeed the prodigality of youth. But in these changes there is no approximation to real purity or moral rectitude.

Again, will conscience unenlightened by the word of God restrain the passions, and guide the footsteps of impetuous youth? Conscience derives the acuteness of its perceptions and the energy of its decisions from the truths of the Bible.

It is true there is a foundation laid in the human constitution to distinguish right from wrong. There is a mirror in the human breast, which shows to a man his own deformity, when the light of divine truth is brought to bear upon it. Yet we know from experience that conscience may be so perverted, as to call good evil, and evil good. And even when duty is

known, and acknowledged, this inward monitor, not strengthened by the truths revealed in the Bible, remonstrates in a voice so feeble as not to be heard amidst the din of passion, and the tumults of life. But let the light of heaven shine on the conscience, let the sinner be brought under the inspection of a holy God, whose omniscient eye attends him in the darkness of midnight, as well as in the light of noonday, let the retributions of eternity be placed in his view, and then conscience will speak in a voice not easily disregarded.

Once more, does a young man depend on the regard he has to his own reputation or in other words, on the approbation and disapprobation of his fellow men to restrain him from every thing base and grossly immoral in his conduct? Is he acutely sensitive to whatever affects his reputation, and does he instinctively shrink from whatever would sully his fair name? And does he believe that this consideration will keep him far from the commission of every foul deed, and lead him to cultivate those amiable dispositions and pleasing manners, which conciliate the respect and love of mankind? Now who does not see that this standard of moral conduct must vary with the sentiments of those with whom an individual associates? If the community in which he moves be pure and virtuous, the person whose standard of duty is the opinion of others, will at least in appearance, be pure and virtuous. If he be surrounded with those of a contrary character, he must according to his own principles, adopt their sentiments and imitate their conduct. Having no fixed and independent principles of his own, he imbibes his opinions and shapes his course according to the circumstances in which he may be placed. And is he not as likely in the journey of life to pass through a foul as a

pure region, to breathe a noxious as a healthful atmosphere? We have already seen that the influence of corrupt companions is one of the dangers to which a young man is exposed, and unless he has some guide different from the opinion of those around him, he will move with the current and descend into the gulf in which so many have perished. It is true, and we rejoice in the fact, that public sentiment may be favorable to purity of morals. But whence is this sentiment derived? What purifies and elevates the tone of moral feeling in any community? We answer unhesitatingly, the Bible. Where this is wanting, or where its precepts are not regarded, there no such moral sentiment exists. As far as sins interfere with the immediate interests and pleasures of others, so far and no farther will these sins be condemned and punished. Take, for example, the conduct of those who carry a regard to reputation to its utmost extent, who have established a refined, though unwritten code of laws, to which every individual aspiring to the character of a gentleman must submit. What sins do these laws of honor prohibit? Or rather what sins do they not tolerate and foster? Intemperance, lewdness, gaming, impiety and even lying, (provided it do not affect one of the honorable fraternity) will not exclude a man from the society of those who acknowledge no law except that of reputation. The only principle regarded as sacred and inviolable, as far as we understand the subject, is to permit no imputation affecting that impalpable and undefined something called honor, to go unpunished, that is, to take revenge for every real or imaginary insult. And if his character should be tarnished by any foul imputation a gentleman according to this code, must wash himself pure in his brother's blood, or fall in the attempt.

We must return then to this old and too much neglected book, in order to find a perfect and unerring standard of morals. Here not one sin, but all sins are forbidden—not one duty but all duties are commanded. These laws reach the motives as well as the actions—the thoughts as well as the words. Here we find motives addressed to the intellectual and moral constitution of man, suited to rouse his attention, to alarm his fears, to cherish his hopes, to awaken his conscience and to enkindle his love.

Especially the adorable method of salvation provided for sinners, presents such a view of the justice and love of God as fills the mind with awe, and melts the heart in gratitude. The Son of God coming from heaven to earth to redeem sinners, is the most amazing display of divine love, that men or angels have ever witnessed. If the agonies of the Redeemer voluntarily bleeding and expiring under the weight of sin which he bore in his own body on the tree, do not cause the heart of the sinner to relent, it must be harder than the rocks rent asunder on that awful occasion.

It is not strange that when the apostles would excite believers to entire devotedness to the service of their Lord and Master, they should remind them of the love of Christ, because no other motive goes directly to the heart with such resistless energy. Even the stupid Hottentot, and the beastly Greenlander shed tears of gratitude at the simple recital of what the Son of God did and suffered for guilty men.

There is another thought connected with this part of the subject. When any one is desirous to cleanse his way, i. e. really to become pure and holy in the sight of God, he must be conscious that his soul is already polluted, that he has contracted a stain which all his tears

cannot wash away. The Bible directs him to go to that fountain that is opened for sin and uncleanness, assuring him that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. Here the troubled conscience finds peace on grounds consistent with divine justice.

The word of God begins with the heart, where all real reformation and purity of life must commence. This holy book does not conceal from a young man the real state of his heart. It tells him in plain and honest language that his heart is corrupt, depraved and naturally destitute of purity or holiness in the sight of God. It informs him that he must have a new heart, that he must be born again, that all his desires, motives and principles of action must be changed, so that he shall love God supremely, and have a regard to his glory in all his actions. It moreover declares especially, that this change in the state of the heart is effected not by moral means, but by the agency of the Holy Ghost attending the presentation of divine truth to the heart and conscience. It points out also the way in which the aid of the Holy Spirit is secured. 'Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.' And this exhortation is accompanied with the assurance that our Father in heaven is more ready to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children.

Now where else are rules so perfect, motives so powerful, means so well adapted to the intellectual and moral constitution of man, to be found? Where else is such provision made to cancel the debts due to divine justice, or to cleanse, purify, and prepare the soul for heaven? Here, young men, you have an unerring guide which if attentively followed will preserve you from the

pollutions of the world, and conduct you to that happy place where nothing that defileth shall ever enter.

YOUNG GENTLEMEN OF THE SENIOR CLASS,

How different is the position which you and myself this day occupy? Having finished the usual course of Academical study, you are soon to leave these literary retreats and to commence the duties of life.

On the other hand, having nearly completed the number of years appointed for men to remain on earth I am shortly to withdraw to the shades of retirement, and to wait with submission and patience for the summons which we must all obey. In my own case what has been done, whether good or bad cannot be recalled, and what has been left undone, cannot now be performed. The die is cast, and there it must remain fixed, immutable forever. Fifty and four years ago, I stood in the attitude in which you now are, looking forward to that uncertain future before me. Now I look back on what has actually occurred. Ah! how different in many respects the reality from youthful anticipations. Your work is still before you. Mine is finished and the record made. Your history the recording angel has not yet written. And what it shall be, depends under God on your own voluntary exertions. Your names may be enrolled with those of the great and good of other ages, or with those whose memory shall perish. Let me say to you, you have now arrived at a critical and important period of life. Standing on the line which separates youth from manhood the first step you take may give direction to your future course, and decide your future destiny. Be assured that what you shall now do is a subject of deep solicitude to your parents and friends, and especially to those who have re-

cently directed your studies. On this occasion I might suggest to you many thoughts on various subjects worthy to be remembered in future life. But I will not divide your attention. The single thought which I desire you to remember as my last counsel, is, that to be good men is more important than anything else. On this depends your own comfort in life, and in death, and as far as your influence extends, the interests of your country, and the everlasting destiny of those with whom you may be connected. A very fatal, and, as we believe, a very common error with young men, is to think moral character of secondary importance—that the cultivation of the heart demands less attention than that of the intellect—that to be great is more desirable than to be good. This false estimate leads to consequences most fatal. It often defeats the very object at which the young aspirant aims. He sees the gay and flattering world before him. Its pleasures, and honors, and wealth occupy his thoughts and present to his ardent imagination, the most brilliant and enchanting prospects. The cultivation of his intellectual powers, and the acquisition of knowledge he deems incompatible with serious devoted piety, and sometimes with strict morality. The names of those few men who were alike distinguished for talent, and for irregular moral habits are familiar to his mind, and he vainly imagines that the same path which they trod, will lead him to distinction and glory. But how often is the fire of ambition extinguished in the cup of low sensuality and talents, which might have shone with no common lustre, been buried and lost before their possessor reached the meridian of life?

If a youth of ordinary intellect, who, by regular industry and virtuous habits, might have been respecta-

ble and useful, be so unhappy as to entertain the preposterous opinion, that literary or professional eminence and profligate morals, have a natural connexion, speedy and inevitable ruin, will be the consequence.

When his understanding is clouded and his vital energies palsied by the cup from which he hoped to receive inspiration, he usually fails in his first efforts in professional and public life. Disappointed, chagrined, and overwhelmed with shame, he seeks to forget his sorrows, by the same means which produced them. And then his future history is soon told. He is ruined.

This, we venture to say, is one great cause why so many young men who have passed through a regular course of preparatory study, fail in professional and public life. Their expectations are greater than their industry. They hope to unite two things not usually compatible, viz : the pleasures of self-indulgence and the rewards of professional eminence. My young friends, avoid this error. Be assured the natural consequence of such expectations is disappointment, despair, and the total abandonment of yourselves to the lowest infamy. Let it be indelibly impressed on your minds, that to be good men, pure in your personal habits, honest in your intentions, benevolent in your aims, is your first duty, and your highest glory.

I am aware that it is often difficult to make young men feel that moral worth is more important than intellectual greatness. Dazzled by the exhibition of splendid talents, of bold and successful achievements, they do not observe the motives nor the consequences of these exertions. All men love excitement. They admire the heaving of an earthquake, the bursting of a volcano, or the fury of a tornado, but who would be willing to be exposed to the violence of these convulsions of na-

ture. Such is intellectual and physical greatness unconnected with moral goodness,—an object to be dreaded rather than desired.

In mere intellectual strength there is nothing calculated to secure confidence—nothing more worthy of moral approbation, than there is in the muscles of an ox, or in the energy of the electric fluid. The value of intellectual power depends on the object to which it is consecrated. It may be an instrument of good or of evil, of life or of death.

Greatness and goodness you must have observed are not inseparably united. Men of high intellectual and physical power may be the slaves of grovelling and debasing appetites and passions, or they may be actuated by the fury and malignity of demons. A man may be good who attracts little attention, and makes no noise in the world. Whenever one of these characters separate from the other must be chosen, no young man should hesitate a moment which to prefer.

Vice tarnishes the most brilliant talents. How mean and pitiable, to behold the conqueror of nations, or the statesman whose hands have held the sceptre of empire, subdued and vanquished and enchained by his own low and debasing passions! Yet such has been the fate of many whose exploits have amazed and astonished the world. Never seek greatness for its own sake. Cultivate your talents, improve your opportunities, with a view to a nobler end—the diffusion of happiness, and the exercise of virtue on an enlarged scale. And believe me that the consecration of your talents, whether great or small, to some useful and honorable purpose, is the only thing which can shed a pure and unfading lustre over your name and memory.

An immortal soul polluted, debased and sensualized,

is the most vile and despicable object in the universe. Stripped of its artificial splendor, rejected by God, and excluded from the society of the pure and holy, carrying within itself the source of its own abhorrence, it must be inconceivably wretched. Pagans might hope to purify themselves, and to gain a seat in heaven by deeds of valor: but the pure light of heaven shows a different path. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'

Remember, that in order to cleanse your way, to escape the pollutions of the world and to attain genuine purity of heart and life, the Bible is the only safe and infallible guide. In the same degree that you depart from this standard, you will become corrupt and put in jeopardy your present and eternal interests. The Bible has formed a part of your course of study in this institution, and I am persuaded that no study to which you have attended is more important. Cast not away your Bible when you leave this place, carry it with you wherever you go, and whatever be your occupation. Consult it daily, and make its precepts the rule of your life, its doctrines the standard of your faith and the foundation of your hopes.

If I saw a mariner in the midst of the trackless ocean casting away his chart and his compass, and committing his vessel to the guidance of the winds and the currents, I would not be so certain of his destruction, as I would be of yours, if I saw you throwing away your Bible and attempting to direct your way through life regardless of its admonitions and warnings. Remember also there is nothing even in the Bible which like an amulet or charm can protect you from danger, by merely carrying it with you, and giving a nominal assent to its divine origin. It must be read and believed

and obeyed. Dark and dreary, and hopeless would be the prospect, if I must this day dismiss you without being able to point you to such a guide and to commit you to the protection of that God whose word I recommend as a light to your feet, and a lamp to your path. This week we shall separate probably, nay certainly, never all to meet in this world, and to unite as we have often done in offering our prayers and praises to the Most High God. But we shall all meet on that "great day for which all other days were made." And God grant that when our earthly course is run, we may meet at the right hand of our final Judge, and receive from his lips that most joyful of all plaudits, "Well done good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord." God bless you.





