

THE WORLD  
A SCENE OF CONTEST:

The Baccalaureate Sermon

PREACHED BEFORE THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY,  
JUNE 25, 1876.

By JAMES McCOSH, D.D., LL.D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE.



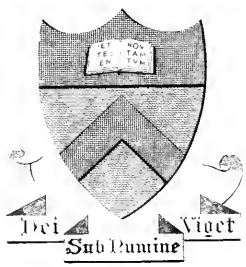
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## THE WORLD A SCENE OF CONTEST.

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*"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."* — Gen. iii. 15.

**T**WO extreme views have been taken of the character of our world:—

One, that it is without wisdom or design or goodness, the sport of Chance, or bound in the grim grasp of Fate. Those who favor this view dwell with pain, or with pleasure, on the disorders which they see everywhere: on the elements warring with each other; on wind tossing wave, and the storms destroying the works of man and the useful products of the earth; on the cross-purposes, the mishaps, the disappointments, in our lot; on the cruel pains, separations, and calamities which befall us; on the infirmities, disease, and death which attack our bodily frame; on the oppression of the weak, the helplessness of unprotected orphans, and the wailings of widows; on the ingratitude for favors exhibited by mankind; on their deeds of deceit, betrayal, and vengeance; on the wicked prospering, and the good defeated, — and they affirm that a world so full of such scenes cannot have come from an all-mighty, an all-wise, or an all-good

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God. These were the facts persistently put in the front by the ancient sceptics ; and, in modern times, they so impressed the two Mills, father and son, that they could discover no unequivocal proof of the existence of a God of infinite power, and were not disposed to believe in a Deity whose power is so limited that he cannot prevent the evil. Doubts arising from the same damps and vapors have so beclouded the vision of many not wishing to be sceptics, and not professing to be philosophers, that they have hid from their view the Sun that shines in these heavens.

On the other hand, there are some who see nothing in our world but order and beneficence. They fondly dwell on the fitness seen in every part of the plant and animal, and especially in our bodily frame ; on the revolving seasons, and abounding health and happiness ; on the pleasures thrown open to us in our homes, — how dear the word ! — in friendships and the social circle ; and the means of instruction afforded by schools, colleges, and churches. Science has confirmed these views by establishing the universal reign of law ; and those who are instructed in its harmonies delight to think and speak of the regular movement of sun, moon, and stars, of the formation and growth of worlds, and the development of vegetable and animal. It is the theme illustrated in the many works written in our language on natural theology. Every grateful heart will think and speak and sing of the goodness which has followed us all our lives, and has been turning what was seemingly evil into a blessing.

But does either of these views, taken by itself, account for the whole facts? As against the one, we have beauty and bountifulness pressing themselves on us so that we have only to open our eyes to behold them in heaven and earth, in revolving seasons and unfolding providence. But our world certainly presents another and a very different aspect. Sin and pain are also in our world, and force themselves upon us whether we will or no. Whatever else is true, this is true also. How it may have become so, we may not be able to tell. The *how* is a very difficult question in all subjects. The man of science is often telling us the fact is so and so, but has to add, "How it is so, I am not able to say." The profound theologian, Augustine, has put the question, "Where is evil, and whence comes it, since God the Good hath created all things?" To this our Quaker poet answers, simply but wisely, —

"No victory comes of all our strife ;  
From all we grasp the meaning slips ;  
The Sphinx sits at the gate of life,  
With the old question on her awful lips."

There is certainly evil in our world. This is a fact quite as sure as any fact that we can specify in science or in practical life. That there is evil is quite as certain as that there is good. We have as clear and decided proof of the existence of the one as of the other. There is pain in our world, and this is certainly an evil, — pain often keen and long-continued, lasting for hours and days and years, without the possibility of alleviation ; and the sufferer has to say

in the evening, "When shall it be morning?" and, in the morning, "When shall it be evening?" There is the deeper evil of sin, of ingratitude, unfaithfulness, deceit, malignity. Whatever else is true, this is true also,—that we have sinned. We feel it in ourselves: we take guilt to ourselves, being convicted by our own consciences. We have to resist the evil in others. No explanation, no history of our world, is adequate, at first sight or at last sight, which does not look at and embrace both classes of facts.

On the one hand, there are order and beneficence. These press themselves on the notice of every one, unlearned as well as learned. Science has succeeded in showing that beneficent law reigns in all knowable space and time: the same substances are found in sun and distant stars as in our earth; and the same forces of water and fire operated millions of years ago as they do now. But, then, sin and suffering are forcing themselves on our attention. From their very first appearance and all along, the lower animals have been liable to pain and death. The two—the good and evil—are strangely mixed with each other. These beautiful and bountiful laws are made to work mischief. Gravitation draws down a rock to crush us. Chemical affinity mixes poison to gender disease. On the other hand, there are skilful laws to bring good out of evil, alleviating disease, and purposely bringing it to an end. There is a singular fitness in the structure and arrangement of the internal organs of our body; but, then, how liable are heart and brain to become deranged!—a point



fixed upon and used for his purposes by Comte, the founder of the Positive school. Sir John Herschell dwelt with evident delight on the formation of the eye, as showing such indubitable traces of design ; and no researches of science will ever be able to diminish the wonder excited by the adaptations of coats, humors, and muscles to the rays of light. On the other hand, Helmholtz alleges that there are defects in that organ which would not be allowed in the construction of an optic glass by a mechanic.

What are we to make of this double class of facts, so mixed up with each other? Two theories have been proposed, neither having much show of reason, — one, the Manichæan, that there is an Evil Spirit, independent of God and contending with God. This is inconsistent with the idea of God, — the One, the Self-existent, the Creator and Source of all things, — and of what we see of the unity of the world. Another supposition has been started, that, before man appeared, our earth was the scene of war between God and devils, who are seeking to regain their old ascendancy. No fact can be adduced in favor of this theory, which is a mere fancy, with nothing to support it. So we may turn to the account which is given in the Word of God, to learn whether it is in accordance with the twofold phenomenon.

According to Scripture, moral and physical evil has intruded into our world. We have traces of it before man was created, in the fall of angelic beings, who are ready to tempt Adam and Eve. From the very day when man fell, we have a contest going on in our

world. I do not assert, with some of our older divines, that pain and death came upon the lower animals because Adam fell. But it is a noticeable fact that death has reigned all along since living beings appeared, even over those who have "not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," on that earth on which man has sinned. Our world is thus of a piece in itself, and its history is consistent throughout. The science of these later years is ever speaking of the struggle for existence in ages past, and of the weaker races giving way before the stronger. Our world is still, as it has ever been, a scene of struggle and of warfare. All history and our whole experience testify to this effect. It is the account given throughout the Scriptures. It is the picture set before us in the text.

The language has reference first of all to the serpent literally, as going on its belly, as crawling in the dust, as stinging the heel of the family of the woman. There is enmity between the serpent and the woman: in the venom of the serpent, and the shrinking from the serpent on the part of the human race; and in the superstitious feeling which has gathered round the animal in so many countries. But underneath the symbol there is an ethical truth. The tempter, to avoid alarm, came in the form of the gliding and parti-colored serpent, the most subtle of all the beasts of the field which lay beyond Eden; but himself of a vastly more subtle nature, being no other than that "old serpent, the devil." There is an enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman,—

“the seed of the serpent,” the seed of evil, the wickedness on the earth organized by Satan; and “the seed of the woman,” not “seeds” as of many, so the Apostle argues (Gal. iii. 16), but seed as of one; not “she,” as the Vulgate and the Church of Rome would make it to magnify Mary, but “he” or “it,” pointing to One who was to contend with and conquer the evil. The fathers of the race might not have understood this as fully as we do, with the higher knowledge that we have; but in fact they did know that the One here spoken of and round whom their hopes clustered was to have power to crush their arch-enemy, and yet was to be one of the human race, the seed of the woman, liable to suffering and having his heel bruised. There is to be a contest between the two and between the seed of the two, — the serpent crawling in the dust is to bite the heel of the seed of the woman, but as he does so the seed of the woman is to put his heel on the serpent’s head and to crush it. We have here, in epitome, the history of our world, the history of man, the history of redemption, all in one.

I. THERE IS A CONTEST IN THE WORLD. We have a vivid history of it in the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testaments. We have first a picture of a garden with every tree that is lovely to the eye and good for food, but a serpent creeps into it, and leaves, as his trail, temptation, sin, and death. The tree of life is visible, but a flaming sword guards it. Driven out of Eden, in order to earn subsistence man has to contend with a stubborn soil. There is strife in the family of

the erring pair: "And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." In the worship of God now established, there are not only fruits offered in thanksgiving, there is a lamb slain, as if to make atonement for sin. In the antediluvian world there is a contest between two races, between the family of Seth and the family of Cain; Enoch, who walks with God, being the representative of the one, and Lamech, making a boast of polygamy and murder (in the earliest preserved poetry), the representative of the other. This contest culminates in the opposition between Noah, the preacher of righteousness, and an ungodly world perishing in the waters. It is renewed after the flood; and God has to separate Abram from his country, his kindred, and his father's house, that he might be the head of a people to keep up the knowledge of the true God and of the coming seed of the woman upon the earth. It breaks out in the feud between Jacob and Esau, and in that between Joseph and his brethren. It is acted before us on a grand scale, with the greatest of ancient nations as spectators, in the terrible struggle between Moses and Pharaoh, and the judgments descending on the Egyptians. On the children of Israel escaping from bondage, a song of war and of triumph is sung: "The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name." . . . "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously," — a song sung ever since in the church of God, and to be sung by the church in heaven, where they "sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb."

The deep problem discussed in the Book of Job is, What is the meaning of suffering, and how does it stand related to sin? The field of battle is very much like that which the Hebrew youth saw when he left his flocks to visit the army of Israel: "And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them." And ye see a giant power defying the armies of the living God; but ye may also see one who seems but a stripling, and using very humble weapons; but who can say, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." In the book of Psalms, the imagery is largely borrowed from war, but the weapons are spiritual: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty: and in thy majesty ride prosperously;" but then the weapons are "truth and meekness and righteousness." (Ps. xlv). These psalms have been sung ever since in the church, and have been so because they come home to the experience of God's people: "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech: that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace; I am for peace, but when I speak they are for war." Heaven mingles in the battle, and a sufferer has to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The greatest of the Jewish prophets, the grandest of their poets, had to sing: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities;

the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed."

The same contest reappears in the New Testament. Our Lord "came unto his own, and his own received him not." He tells us that "offences must come," adding, "woe be to him through whom they come." When he appears on our earth, Satan, afraid of losing his power, combines his hosts against him, and exercises a power, such as has not been allowed him before or since, in possessing the souls and bodies of men. He has to remove misapprehensions as to the effects of his mission : "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth ? I tell you, nay ; but rather division." There are terrible scenes in all wars, but especially in those domestic wars in which fellow-countrymen and friends are fighting with each other. Our Lord had to speak of such scenes in the Christian warfare : "For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father ; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother." Peter was amazed, and began to rebuke him, when he had to say that "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."

He warned his disciples that the world would treat them as it treated him : "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." The most active of the Apostles had to say, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one ; thrice was I beaten with

rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren." Even in the church of God, tares sprang up where only wheat was sown, showing a previous deposit of the seed of evil. A falling away is predicted, and "the man of sin is revealed who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." Speaking apparently of the times in which we live, Peter says, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." In the closing book of Scripture, trumpets are sounded and vials are poured forth. This continues till the holy city, the new Jerusalem, comes down from heaven.

What we see in the world corresponds to this picture drawn in Scripture, Do we not see both good and evil in our world? There is certainly good in our world. There are high intellectual powers, and deep earnestness and strong affection, — the affection of a mother for her children. All these are good in themselves, and evil only so far as they are abused. We find courage and honesty in man, and modesty and virtue in woman. Our world shows us irrepres-

sible zeal, noble enterprises, unceasing activity, and schemes of enlarged benevolence. But, on the other hand, there are wars and rumors of wars, constituting so large a portion of human history; the feuds of cities and villages and rural districts; and rivalries, jealousies, and quarrels in the bosom of families. The world still shows such scenes as Eve saw when she had to look on the dead body of one son slain by the hand of another son. The people of this country had a severe struggle before they could earn their independence. The stain of slavery has had to be washed out by blood. The influence of Christ is everywhere seen, felt, and acknowledged; but the power of Antichrist is thereby provoked into activity. When good men set up a church or a school, bad men set up, perhaps opposite it, a place of temptation to intemperance or licentiousness or gambling, or some other evil. At the foot of Sinai, where God was showing his awful wonders, the people gave themselves up to idolatry in the day, and in the evening sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. In our seasons of revival, while numbers are fleeing to Christ, some are repelled, and fall into more than common wickedness. Zion has its towers: "Walk ye about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces." But opposite them, and frowning upon them, and opening fire upon them, ye may discern the "gates of hell." The enmity of the world came forth in the early church in persecution dire and unrelenting. This is no longer permitted in lands where Christianity has had its full



influence ; but the hostility manifests itself in jeers and scoffs, which the young feel it difficult to bear. The Psalmist had to say, "They that sit in the gate speak against me, and I was the song of the drunkard." We may see the same enmity in every country, every village, every college, and every school, as it showed itself when the children mocked the prophet, "Go up, thou bald head." We have still such scenes as were presented in the family of Jacob when Joseph was hated of his brethren. We see it when the youth is mocked because of his strict morality, of his prayers, and his religious earnestness.

The battle is raging all around us, and each one is taking part in it, whether he knows it or not. If we are not on the side of the good, we must, whether we are aware of it or no, be on the side of the evil. Our Lord says, "He that is not with me is against me." God has a cause in this world, and all who are truly serving him have to fight for it, have to fight for his Word, for his law, for his Sabbath ; have to contend against the evil, against intemperance and deceit, and other prevailing sins.

At times, we cannot say which side is to gain the victory, which is, apparently inclining now on the one side, now on the other. But there is a power above, swaying and determining the whole, even as Moses, seated on the hill, decided the battle for Joshua, in his fight with the Amalekites. The issue is certain, and already we see signs of it. The good is growing and prevailing. In the physical world, we see wastes and forests disappearing, and cultivated fields and

human habitations taking their place. We find wild beasts destroyed, and man, with domestic animals, spreading all over the earth. The serpent's brood is being bruised under the heel of man ; and we look for the time when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them." In the struggle, the weak and diseased disappear, and the strong and the healthy take their place. Life is being gradually prolonged, and the time is coming when "the child shall die an hundred years old." And there are stronger agencies at work on the earth than the mechanical, or even the intellectual : there are moral and spiritual powers coming into greater and greater prominence, and exercising a wider influence in churches and schools and mission stations. The heel is being wounded ; but then that heel is on the serpent's head, and is to crush it for ever. "The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Already faith beholds "Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

"The whole creation groans,  
 And waits to hear that voice  
 That shall restore her comeliness,  
 And make her wastes rejoice.  
 Come, Lord, and wipe away  
 The curse, the sin, the stain,  
 And make this blighted world of ours  
 Thine own fair world again.  
 Come, then, Lord Jesus, come."

II. **THERE IS AN INTERNAL STRUGGLE.** There is a division not only in society at large, but in the individual ; not only in the house, but in the heart.

There is a sense in which there is a struggle in every heart. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (James iv. 1.) Peter speaks of "fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Pet. ii. 11). These lusts are often inconsistent with each other. Thus, the same man may be swayed by ambition and the love of ease, and the two war against each other; he would wish to have honors, but is too indolent to toil for them. Seated in a region above them, the conscience will from time to time strive with these lusts, but ineffectually, — as we have seen an opposing wind ruffling the surface of a mighty river, which, in the mean while, flows on as determinedly as ever. So it is with the stream of human nature: there are passions which war against each other, and reproaches of conscience disturbing them; but the current moves on tumultuously, but resolutely. Such is the war in the heart of the natural man. But there is a more marked contest in the breast of the spiritual man.

When the children of Israel entered the land of Canaan, the command was that they should utterly exterminate the Canaanites. They were to break down their altars, and make no league with them. But, neglecting to take counsel of the Lord, they were deceived by the Gibeonites; and, disobeying the specific command given them, they entered into league with the Canaanites. "The Canaanites would dwell in that land: and it came to pass when Israel was strong he put the Canaanites to tribute." The

consequence was that the Israelites had to endure for centuries the punishment incurred by their disobedience. Though as a whole subdued, the Canaanites continued to harass the Israelites ; and on one occasion they all but regained possession of the country, when Sisera, the captain of Jabin, king of the Canaanites, "came out with nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years oppressed mightily the children of Israel." Which things may be an allegory to us. The Lord's command to us is utterly to exterminate our sins. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out ;" "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." But, neglecting this clear injunction, we spare some of our sins ; often like Saul, who spared Agag the king, we spare the chief, the besetting, sin : and our sins will dwell in our souls, and we imagine that we can, as it were, put them to tribute ; that is, that we can keep them under, and use them as we please, and even turn them into a source of pleasure. We are like the ancient Samaritans, of whom it is said, "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods." The sins allowed to remain struggle for the mastery, and sometimes oppress the soul mightily ; and we are troubled with reproaches as to the past, and fears as to the future. On the occasion of the Israelites entering into league with the Canaanites, the angel of the Lord appeared, and declared that, in consequence of their disobedience, the Canaanites would ever after be as thorns in their sides ; and when the children of Israel heard these things, they lifted up their voice, and called the name of that place Bochim, or weep-

ing. Often does the Christian in his journey come to a Bochim, when he discovers that his sins are thorns in his side,—messengers of Satan to buffet him; and he has to set up a weeping because of them.

What is the Christian life? It is a work, it is a warfare. It is a campaign in an enemy's country. It is a voyage through winds and waves. It consists in the conquest of sin in a sinful nature; in the attainment of holiness by an unholy heart. The Christian life is life from the dead. It is like life in an infected city; it is sustained in the midst of deleterious and deadly influences. The sinner, as yet in his sins,—unconverted, careless,—is not engaged in the battle, and is not aware of the strength of the enemy. Those who are going down with the stream, floating on its bosom, may not know its power; those only who are bearing up against it are conscious of the power of the current. The children of Israel sat contentedly by the fleshpots of Egypt as long as they submitted to their slavery; it was when they were seized with a spirit of independence that they felt how hard their tasks, and how harsh their taskmasters. It is when the captive would break his chains that the iron enters his soul. If you have tried to love God, you have found how difficult it is to raise these hearts above the objects of the earth. If you have been striving to keep up a heavenly temper, you have felt that your affections flow downwards like the stream, instead of mounting upward like the evaporations drawn up by the sun. You have experienced

the activity and malignity of the powers of evil in the struggles of regeneration, as God led you against your evil nature, your cherished inclinations and confirmed habits, to give up the world, and devote yourselves to God. You are made every day to discover their influence and their strength, as you would conquer sin, as you would reach holiness of heart. As you would make progress, you are made to feel them as hindrances restraining you. As you would mount upward, they act as weights dragging you down.

It is a contest between the lower principles of man's nature, and the higher, quickened and sanctified by the Spirit of God. It is a struggle between selfishness and benevolence, between lust and conscience, between appetite and reason, between pleasure and duty, between love of ease and zeal for good, between cowardice and courage, between the fear of man and the fear of God, between deceit and candor, between malignity and love, between immediate gratification and final blessedness, between earth and heaven. The powers of evil, on the one hand, are numerous and varied — their name is legion, for they are many. But so, on the other hand, are the powers of good to meet and confront them, — the gifts and graces bestowed by God ; and the two sides have often to fight detachment with detachment, and hand to hand. The fight is briefly described by Paul: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. v. 17). This is a description of universal Christian experience. We have seen that in

the Old Testament, and especially in the Psalms, there is constant reference to a war. We have a minute description of the struggles in Romans vii. : "I find a law which, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." He has to add : "O, wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" In this language, a reference is made to a barbarous custom. The Romans chained the prisoner to a soldier ; and it might be, when the prisoner died, the soldier found himself tied to a dead body. Virgil paints in all its horrors the practice of the tyrant Mezentius, who bound the living to the dead, hand to hand, and mouth to mouth. Paul felt as if he were a living man joined to a dead body, and had to cry, Who will deliver me from this corpse ? Look to the confessions of Augustine, to the letters and lives of the reformers, to the diaries of later Christians, and we find them all uttering the same sentiments in different tongues ; mourning over a remainder of sin with which they are earnestly contending, and which they hope finally to conquer. It is interesting to notice this uniformity of Christian experience, and to observe believers separated from each other by so many ages, and living in such different states of society, so much the same in feeling and in character. We perceive

that our religion is the same in all ages, — the same grace of God acting on the same human nature.

There are persons who wrest this truth, as they do the other truths of Scripture, to their destruction. They urge that, as all believers have infirmities, they may be allowed to have theirs. They show from the Bible and from the history of the church, and from all that we see around us, that no one is absolutely perfect, and they bring this as an excuse for their past sin, and as a plea to allow them to continue in it. I admit the fact, that even the children of God have their infirmities; but did you ever hear of their allowing themselves in these, or pleading the misconduct of others as a justification of their own offences? If you are doing so, it is a proof that you are not one of them. For it is a characteristic of all of them that, instead of excusing their sins, they mourned over them, and contended resolutely with them. If the flesh has been lusting against the spirit, it is equally true that the spirit has been contending against the flesh. If we appeal to one of these truths, we are required to accept the other also as being bound up indissolubly with it. If we have an awful picture of the sin of David, we have also a deeply affecting picture of his penitence. We are told that Peter denied his Master, but we are also told that, afterwards, he went out and wept bitterly. The Christian may have sins that beset him and prevail against him, but he has no cherished, no willingly allowed sins. His besetting sins are those which he most zealously guards against. The sins which have prevailed against him



are those with which he ever afterwards most earnestly contends.

We are to beware of giving allowance or tolerance to sin, of yielding any thing to it or entering into any kind of truce with it. One spark may ignite a whole building, one discordant string may make the whole music harsh; so one sin encouraged may destroy all consistency of character. In what a pitiable plight is the Christian when he has yielded to seduction, and fallen back into the service of the world and sin! His state is that of Samson when he betrayed his secret, and was bound so easily, and became the object of derision to the Philistines, and had to grind for their profit and pleasure. The Israelites could not gain one other victory as long as Achan, who took of the accursed thing, was in the camp. Is there some one here asking, Why have I so little peace? Why am I making so little progress? Why am I not advancing as rapidly as I did years ago, or months ago? Probably you may find the cause of the whole, not in any sovereign appointment of God, but in some remaining sin which is grieving the Spirit, and depriving you of all holy zeal and courage. Cast forth this traitor, and you will find yourselves going on from victory to victory.

But, do I hear some timid child of God, ready to give up the contest, saying, "Never was any one so tempted as I am"? "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favorable no more? is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? . . . Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?"

(Ps. lxxvii. 7-9). See that you add with the same complainant, "This is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." If the issue depended on yourself, you might give up the fight. But "fear not, for they that be with us are more than be with them." Your duty is clear: wrestle till the breaking of the day, till the day dawn and the day-star arise in your heart.

The two opposing forces, the grace of God and sin, must contend till the one drives out the other. They can no more live at peace in the one heart than the ark of the covenant and Dagon could dwell in the same temple: on the very first night in which the ark was placed in the temple the idol was prostrated to the ground; after they had set him up again, it was found that his head and the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold, only the stump being left. Thus it is when the grace of God enters the heart; sin is first cast down, and in the end is utterly destroyed. Christ could say, ere he expired, "It is finished!" The disciple can also say, ere he leaves this world, "It is finished!" Every enemy is subdued, every sin conquered. The Christian dies, like Samson, midst the glories of his strength; he slays, in his death, the last of his spiritual enemies. He dies in armor, as we have heard of the soldier expiring at the very time when his troops were raising the shout of victory. The last sound which he hears on earth is the clash of arms in the last contest with sin, and the first sound which he hears in heaven is the song of triumph, "Blessing and glory and honor and praise be unto

him that sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb that was slain." The soldier of the cross can say, as the earthly scene closes and the heavenly opens, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day."

GENTLEMEN OF THE GRADUATING CLASSES, ACADEMIC, AND SCIENTIFIC,— We would send you forth from these walls as soldiers of the cross. We shall be disappointed should you turn out to be of those who aim simply at obtaining as many as possible of the comforts and enjoyments of this world, saying, with the Epicurean, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die;" or even of those who have the higher ambition to distinguish themselves and gain the laurels which this world places on the brows of its votaries, only to find how soon they wither and become an incumbrance. You have to "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold of eternal life." You have foes within and without to contend with. You have to defend the right, to oppose the evil, and propagate the good.

For this work and warfare you have received a suitable training in this college. We have sought to give you knowledge which may be useful, whatever calling you elect to follow,— as cultivators of the soil, or merchants, or lawyers, or physicians, or engineers, or ministers, or missionaries. We have striven to call forth, to cultivate, and to discipline your powers of

mind, and to enable you to form habits of application, of regularity, and perseverance. We have labored to teach you what is right and what is wrong, and to found duty on the basis of the Word of God. Would that we could impart to you such an impulse as is given by that mighty engine in the Centennial Exhibition which sets miles of machinery working. We have explained to you again and again the way to Christ and salvation. God himself has, I believe, been visiting and teaching you. Not a few of you are to go forth baptized with his Spirit. All of you will remember in your future lives, in time and in eternity; the solemn scenes through which the college passed four or five months ago, when there were among you such anxiety, such earnestness, such meetings for prayer, such wrestlings of soul, such dealings with every student. Some of you have for years past been professing followers of Christ. But, in this last year, you have been quickened and refreshed; you have been working for your Master in the sphere appropriate to you,—among your fellow-students, among those whom you love and with whom you have associated. We send you forth now as veterans to fight the battles of the Lord in the fields which God may allot to you. Some of you, I hope many of you, will feel as if you have a call from God, as clear as if it were uttered by a voice from heaven, to devote yourselves to the service of the Lord in the work of the ministry; some, I expect, regarding the field as the world, to the work of the missionary; and you will not let any obstacles or difficulties keep you back. The good soldier

does not fear danger ; like the war-horse of the book of Job : “ He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha ; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting,” and he rushes into the thickest of the fight. That is the bravest youth among you — he may seem the most timid — who parts with father and mother and sister and home and country, to carry salvation to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge ; and the mother, as she stands there weeping at her door, in taking her last look of him in parting, though she might not have had the strength to stay him for all the honors the world would heap upon him, is yet, in the depths of her heart, proud of him, and thanks God for giving her such a son, and knows that, whether she will meet with him again on earth or no, she will meet him in glory. Some have only lately enlisted in the service. Your names are on the roll of an honorable company ; but, we remind you, it is a company of soldiers. I can conceive that there is some youth here who, in looking on these opposing armies facing and frowning on each other, feels like the stripling David, when he came from his hills and from his sheep to see the battle ; and, as he hears that giant evil defy the living God, will feel his whole soul stirred within him, and will go forth to slay the enemy, though it were only with a sling and a stone, “ in the name of the Lord of hosts.”

But remember that you have not only a battle to fight when the foe faces you : you have to undertake a campaign, with, it may be, marchings and counter-

marchings, in heat and in cold, in sunshine and in storm. You may have to contend with lassitude and with weakness, with lust and with passion within, and without with selfishness and deceit on the part of your fellow-men. It is as well you should know and realize what is before you. You have to wait and watch, as well as to march and fight. You have especially to guard against the sins that conquered you before, and that will seek out of revenge to regain their old dominion. Where the embankment was broken, though now mended, it will be most apt to give way. "What king going to make war against another sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand." You need to put on the whole armor of God that you may stand, and having done all to stand. With far less than ten thousand, you have to stand against one who cometh with vastly more than twenty thousand, and you must needs apply for and obtain a higher strength than your own.

If you would succeed, you must be making progress. You have "faith," but add to your faith "virtue,"—the old Roman virtue, — courage, manliness that holds the face to the foe, and knows not what it is to flee. You have to choose your side, and see that you choose it not because it is the strongest side, or the popular side, but because it is the right side. And, when you have done so, be not ashamed of it. Youth is commonly spoken of as fearless and courageous; but it

is often cowardly in the extreme in regard to the opinion of companions. See that you speak out resolutely and bravely on all questions involving right and wrong. You must form no compromise with the foe. The good soldier cannot for himself enter into terms with the enemy. You would form some combination with the wrong; but the idol fashioned is like the image partly of iron and partly of clay, seen by Nebuchadnezzar, and the parts did not cleave one to another, "even as iron is not mixed with clay, and the wind shall carry them away like the chaff of the threshing floor, and there shall no place be found for them." The mixture of purity and impurity must be impurity. The union of truth and error must be error, perhaps the most dangerous of all errors, as the truth may be made to impart currency to the error. The deviation from the straight line on the one side or other must be crookedness. The mixture of hot and cold is lukewarmness, more offensive to God and man than either the hot or the cold. "I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." The vacillating man is inconsistent, and is followed and respected by no one, and so cannot exercise any influence for good. He who follows the straight course will in the end be respected by all. He who endeavors to gain the favor of both sides will be apt to secure the confidence of neither, will be very much in the position of a neutral between two armies, — exposed to the fire of both. "Ye cannot

serve God and mammon." He who would serve both is, in reality, though he may not be aware of it, in the service of mammon.

There is no help for it: you must go on. "There is no discharge in that war." The enemy, though so far conquered, is not finally subdued, and shall not be so till completely exterminated. Many an imagined conquest has been changed into a defeat, by those who thought they had gained the victory, giving up the contest prematurely. If you give up, the enemy will turn upon you, and your last state will be worse than the first,—reconquered, humiliated, and despairing. You are now in the position of the children of Israel at the Red Sea: no doubt there are waters before you; but the enemy is behind you, and your safety lies in trusting in the Lord and obeying his voice. "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." But you ask how long are you to continue in this warfare. I answer till your enemies are destroyed, till all your sins are blotted out. If you reply that this must be unto death, I say that even unto death you must still be pursuing. Let this be the inscription on your standard: "Be thou faithful unto death, and Christ will give you a crown of life."

But I feel that there are some here who have not yet come to the Saviour. You have heard truths which have saved others, and would have saved you had you embraced them. You have this last winter passed through scenes which you can never forget, when



class-mates, perhaps room-mates and personal friends, were flying to the place of safety like doves to their windows, and you were left out. What a thought would it be should some of you be consigned to the dark side of "the deep gulf fixed," to look across and see others saved, while you are lost; to find yourselves in hell when you might have been in heaven! May these truths stick within you as barbed hooks till you are drawn out, as Moses was, from the water.

This Senior Class in the Academic Department is the largest that has graduated from Princeton college. The best members have been distinguished for their sterling ability, the solidity of their acquirements, and the weight of their character. This Senior Class, the first graduating in the Scientific Department, gives good promise of what our School of Science is to be. It will be an inexpressible pleasure to me to confer on you all that degree you have earned by years of study. We have been meeting together from week to week, indeed from day to day most of us, for now three or four years. It would be a proof that our natures were very cold if we did not feel, and feel deeply, at the thought of separating. Your Alma Mater will look after you with deep interest, rejoicing in your joy, sympathizing with you in any sorrow with which you may be visited, pleased above all when she hears of your being good and doing good. She will inquire after you, and she wishes you to visit her from time to time to report what you are doing, and that she may keep up her acquaintance with you. We cherish the hope that at

last we will meet, no wanderer lost, in that place  
where "ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth  
not away."

"Breast the wave, Christian, when it is strongest,  
Watch for day, Christian, when night is longest,  
Onward and onward still be thine endeavor,  
The rest that remaineth endureth for ever.

Fight the fight, Christian, Jesus is o'er thee,  
Run the race, Christian, heaven is before thee.  
He who hath promised faltereth never,  
Oh, trust in the love that endureth for ever!"

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