

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF THE

COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY,

AND

AN ADDRESS

TO THE

MEMBERS OF THE SENIOR CLASS,

MAY 15th, 1859.

BY JOHN MACLEAN,

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE.

Published by Request of the Senior Class.

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DR. MACLEAN'S
BACCALAUREATE SERMON.

PRINCETON, MAY 15, 1859.

NASSAU HALL, May 16th, 1859.

REV. DR. MACLEAN :

Dear Sir :—At a meeting of the Class of 1859, the undersigned were appointed a committee to request, for publication, a copy of your Baccalaureate Sermon and Address, delivered yesterday in the Chapel.

Hoping that you will comply with our request, we remain,
dear Sir,

Most sincerely yours,

OTIS B. WEBSTER,
J. NEWTON DICKSON, } *Committee.*
WM. B. WRIGHT,

TO MESSRS. O. B. WEBSTER, J. NEWTON DICKSON, and WM. B. WRIGHT, Committee of the Senior Class:

My Dear Sirs :—In compliance with your request, I place at your disposal the manuscript of my Sermon and Address of the 15th instant.

With the best wishes for the welfare of every member of your Class.

I am most sincerely and affectionately

Yours,

JOHN MACLEAN.

May 20th, 1859.

S E R M O N .

1st Corinthians, ix., 25. "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things."

In this passage there is an allusion to the ancient games of Greece. The members of the church at Corinth could not fail to take notice of the allusion, or to perceive the lesson which the apostle would have them learn from the fact mentioned in the text. For ages the Isthmian games had been celebrated, with great splendour, almost within the precincts of their city. No one was permitted to enter the lists, unless he had submitted to the prescribed discipline : and no one was crowned, however successful, unless he conformed in all respects to the established rules. During the contests, the combatants were encouraged by the presence and the applause of the immense concourse assembled, from all parts of Greece, to witness their exploits, and to bear home in triumph the successful competitor. To these things the Apostle also alludes in his 2nd Epistle to Timothy ; and again in the Epistle to the Hebrews. " And if a man strive for the masteries, yet is he not crowned, except

he strive lawfully.”—2 Tim: ii. 5. “Wherefore seeing we are also compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”—Hebrews xii. 1.

The severity of the discipline to which the combatants subjected themselves; and the import of the phrase ‘temperate in all things,’ may be learned from a passage in the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus, chapter xxix :

“Would you be a victor in the Olympic games? So in truth would I.—But consider both the things which precede and those that follow: and so make the attempt. You must live by rule; eat as you are directed; abstain from dainties; exercise at the appointed hour, in heat and cold; not drink cold water, nor wine at pleasure: and in a word, you must submit yourself to your master as to a physician.”*

In these ancient games, none were permitted to take part, but freemen of Greece, or those of Grecian descent. Not so however in the contest for the crown of life. In this contest there is no such distinction. It is open to all:—to the Greek and the Jew, to the Barbarian and the Scythian, to the bond and free, to male and female, to old and young.

*See Upton's *Epictetus*, page 710. London, 1741.

These allusions to the restraints imposed upon the competitors for the Olive, the Laurel, the Pine, or the Parsley, were not intended to teach us, that those, who aspire after an unfading crown, must regulate their conduct by the rules of the Grecian games : but merely, that as in these games, none could obtain the object of their ambition and of their strenuous effort, without great self-denial ; so in the christian contest none could expect to be conquerors, who failed to obtain an entire ascendancy over their appetites and passions. Nor are we to infer from his allusions to the conduct of those who took part in these games, that the object at which they aimed was approved by the Apostle ; or that professing christians may without any impropriety engage in like diversions. When the Apostle commends to the notice of the Corinthians the self-denial of those who strive for the mastery, he adds, “ now *they* do it, to obtain a corruptible crown, but *we*, an incorruptible ”—plainly implying that he and the christians at Corinth had no part in these struggles for earthly distinctions : and that they had a nobler and higher end in view.

Between the christian’s course and the course of him who strove for the mastery, there was in some respects a striking analogy. Of this resemblance the sacred writer avails himself, to point out and to illustrate the christian’s duty, in view of a given case ; and to excite him to emulation in matters in which emulation is lawful ; and to urge him not to be out-

done by one, whose aim was to obtain a perishable crown, and the fleeting honours and distinctions consequent upon its acquisition ; while his high aim was a crown of life, which will endure forever.

The object of the Apostle in adverting to these matters was to incite the christians at Corinth, to acquire that self-command, which is necessary to the attainment of any high aim : and which is especially necessary for those who aspire to that glory, honour, and immortality, the right seeking after which is to be rewarded with eternal life.

Without some considerable degree of self-control, some subordination of the appetites and of the passions, nothing truly honourable or useful can be achieved by man. It is true indeed, that men chargeable with almost every crime that can blacken human character have risen to great influence and power, and have left indelible memorials of their deeds and of their infamy. But in these cases, the passions have sometimes been bridled, and the appetites curbed, even if it were with the set purpose to give them the reins, when the end of the temporary self denial should be gained.

Did Alexander the Great conquer the world, before or after he gave himself up to debauch ? Did he impose no restraints upon himself, when engaged in the execution of his mighty projects ? And did not the want of self-control deprive him at once of his conquests and his life ; and, at the very height of his

ambitious career, lay his glory in the dust? The history of this man is a confirmation of the position which I have assumed, viz: that success in every great enterprise must be purchased at the price of self denial. Having mentioned the defeat of Darius at Arbela and the entrance of Alexander into Persepolis a certain writer observes: "From this time the glory of Alexander began to decline. Master of the greatest empire in the world, he becomes a slave to his own passions, gives himself up to arrogance and dissipation, shews himself ungrateful and cruel, and in the arms of pleasure sheds the blood of his bravest generals. Hitherto sober and moderate this hero sinks to the level of vulgar men."

If in a case like the one just presented self-denial be requisite to ensure success, how much more essential must it be, where the aim is to effect something honourable or useful. It is the law of our nature that we must labour in order to make any valuable attainment. The remark is true in regard to every walk in life. Who makes proficiency in his studies, the indolent or the industrious? Who rises to affluence, the loungeur at places of public resort, or the man who devotes himself diligently to his calling? Diligence in business implies self-denial, and when the self-denial is proportionate to the capacity of an individual the result of his diligence will be greatest possible. I do not mean to assert that a man of irregular habits will in no case accom-

plish any thing useful, but that strict temperance is necessary to the highest possible result.

Would you excel in your respective callings? You must be temperate in all things. You must do as others have done before you: yes, you must first conquer yourselves. What gave Demosthenes his pre-eminence among the orators? Was it merely his great natural powers? Was it not rather his untiring diligence, and his self-denying efforts? With intemperate habits, especially had they existed in early life, would Newton, Locke, or Boyle have reached that high eminence which they attained as inquirers into the mysteries of matter and of mind?

Had Roger Sherman, the shoemaker, been a man of idle and dissolute habits, would he have become the distinguished senator, with but few equals among the most eminent statesmen in our land?

Had Nathaniel Greene, in early life, been a victim of appetite, would he have risen, from his humble position at the anvil, to the first rank among the leaders of the American Army?

Had the printer, Franklin, been an idler, would his fame as a philosopher and statesman have been the admiration of Europe and America?

Where is the man to be found, who by the mere power of intellect, without application and with some degree of self-control, ever arose to eminence? The seeming exceptions serve only to confirm the rule: and even in the excepted cases there have been

periods in their lives, when rising superior to the cravings of appetite and passion, they have laboriously devoted themselves to the accomplishment of those objects on which their fame is founded. Such examples however are dangerous to youth, who, fastening attention chiefly upon the glaring vices and the noble exploits of these men, may readily imagine that sinful indulgence ordinarily forms no impediment in the way of prosecuting successfully the greatest undertakings.

Where there has been one scholar of irregular habits, who like Porson, the English Coryphaeus in Grecian lore, could be styled at one and the same time the glory and the disgrace of his university, how many hundreds have altogether failed to arrive at eminence, simply from the fact, that instead of being lords, they were the slaves of their appetites?

But why appeal to the instances which have been cited? Note the facts as they exist among yourselves. Who lead their classes? The idle and the dissipated, or the studious and the temperate? The undecided and wavering, or those of firm and inflexible purpose? Sometimes we see a conflict between a desire for pre-eminence in scholarship and a propensity to self-indulgence, and as the one feeling or the other preponderates, so has the individual succeeded or failed in his nobler aspirations. What young man, just entering into business, has the fairest prospect of success? He that is known to

possess a fair moral character, industrious habits, and a thorough knowledge of his profession, trade or calling? Or he who in his preparatory training was idle and inattentive, and now that he is arrived at manhood has neither a perfect knowledge of his business, nor an ability to use to the best advantage what he does know, from the simple fact that his unsubdued inclinations will not permit him to exert himself as he ought to do.

Bear it in mind then, my hearers, that nothing great, that nothing honourable, that nothing useful can reasonably be expected from him who fails to govern himself. He that would strive for the mastery must be temperate in all things. He that would improve his powers to the greatest possible extent, must exercise them to the greatest degree of which they are capable. He that would gain the respect of his fellow men must be the disciple of virtue. Talent, however great, if neglected or perverted is unworthy of esteem. Mere power may be regarded with wonder, but not with respect. If employed for the accomplishment of useful purposes power is justly an object of admiration; if for base and wicked ends, an object of detestation. Whatever then may be your native powers, let them be properly regulated, as well as employed on proper objects. If the objects be wrong, the greater your talents and your assiduity, the worse will it be for the community of which you are a member. If those

powers be not properly regulated, there must be a failure to a greater or less extent in the execution of your plans. It is only when with right aims, and with minds properly disciplined, and with manners sedulously formed, we devote ourselves to some appropriate employment, that we can hope to accomplish the greatest amount of good. These requisites for doing good can exist to any extent only in connexion with the strictest temperance. The man that possesses them is a temperate man. Were he not, he could not have them.

Since then temperance is so essential, shall we not inquire when and how temperate habits may be best acquired ?

This brings me to the object which I have more immediately in view, viz : to urge upon my youthful hearers the importance of cultivating, with the utmost assiduity, their moral habits, and to make some suggestions as to the proper mode of cultivating them.

I need scarcely remark, that a person's character and standing are in general determined by the training he receives, and the habits he acquires in early life. If therefore a youth purposes to be temperate in manhood, he must not while a youth revel in the delights of sinful pleasure. He must, while the task is easy, learn to curb his appetites and to deny his passions, and to form the purpose and the habit of regulating his whole deportment by the rules of

sobriety and chasteness. In lessons of this kind he cannot be too early instructed. The lessons indeed should be suited to the age of the learner ; and in avoiding the extreme of self-indulgence, the pupil should not be taught habitual penance. Let there be neither the freedom of Sybaris nor the austerity of Sparta. Temperance is the proper government of the appetites and passions. Within certain limits they may be lawfully indulged. These limits are best learned from the word of God ; and we should be careful not to go beyond them ; and if in given cases entire abstinence be necessary in order to attain the end in view, such abstinence must be regarded as a part of the requisite regimen for the formation of temperate habits.

In all ordinary cases, a youth thus trained will, when arrived at full age, be able to govern himself ; and to curb those passions, which if allowed full play would hurry him on to ruin ; while the young devotee of pleasure, in similar circumstances, will have neither the ability nor the inclination to resist those cravings of indulged appetite which take no denial, and the renewed gratification of which renders him more of a slave than he was before.

In youth there is passion, but it is rather ardent than strong ; and if rightly curbed it may be turned to good account ; otherwise in manhood it will be almost incapable of control. On this point there exists among the young a practical error of the most

serious character, viz: that they can indulge their appetites and their passions just to any extent they please, and at their mere will they can refrain from all indulgence ; not recollecting, if they indeed believe it to be a fact, that every instance of such indulgence renders them less disposed and less able to refrain. Expostulate with a youth who has occasionally fallen under the power of appetite, on the danger of his situation, he is tempted to smile at your supposed simplicity. He has no idea of becoming a drunkard or a debauchee, no, not he ; and confident of his strength he fears no danger, inexperienced he sees none. And yet if he would but reflect seriously on the subject, he must be convinced that many a victim of lust and appetite became such by a course similar to his own. Although he sees the fatal termination of that course, in the case of every one else, he imagines that in his case there must be something different from that of the individuals whose unhappy end is presented to his view, and that this difference is in his favour. Learning also that there have been those who indulged, yet escaped the awful wreck of health and fame, he hopes that he shall be equally fortunate, and that though he may partake of the cup of Circe, he shall not share the fabled fate of the companions of the Grecian chief. All such are on the brink of a fearful steep, from which they may possibly withdraw in time to escape the awful end of those who slide, ere they think, into the flood of

eternal woe ; yet it is far more probable, that they will lose their hold and be lost forever. And it often happens, that they are the least apprehensive of danger, who are farthest advanced in the career of shame and ruin. Their true position is seen by all but themselves. For themselves they have no anxiety ; all their solicitude is generously bestowed on others.

Let the character, position and prospects of such an one be faithfully portrayed, and let the picture be presented to his view ; will he recognize the likeness ? Will he not rather conjecture that it is intended for some one else, one perhaps to him unknown ?

Do not, my youthful hearer, if a faithful monitor should tell you of his fears and of your danger, treat his remarks as idle tales. In a matter of this kind, he will be more likely to perceive the truth than you yourself ; and there is but little reason to think that he will exaggerate your departures from the path of rectitude and temperance. It is far more probable that he will say less than he thinks, for fear of giving offence, and thus defeating his object in his expostulations with you, on the subject of your conduct. Receive then all such expostulations in the same spirit that they are given ; take the friendly warning, and extricate yourself without delay from your perilous position. Commonly the youth that permits himself to pass the bounds of sobriety once

will find it easier to do so the second time than the first: and every succeeding aberration from the path of sobriety will render the next one less difficult. If then you have never fallen under the power of lust or appetite, maintain your present ground, you can more readily do it now than after a single fall. If you have once and again been overcome, seek to recover yourself before you shall be brought to contend with the force of a corrupt habit superadded to the natural cravings of sinful propensities. The attempt at recovery must be made before you reach this point; or it will be almost hopeless. Ever remember that the victim of appetite is the victim of Hell; and let it be your fervent prayer to Almighty God, that through the gracious aid and teaching of his Holy Spirit, you may be kept from all temptation to sinful indulgence, and be enabled to lead temperate and virtuous lives.

Let us now consider by what means the habits of temperance are to be formed. In doing so, I shall not discriminate minutely between the case of those who hitherto have been kept from excessive indulgence, and of those who occasionally have listened to the solicitations of depraved appetite and passion.

The preventive and the cure are the same. The thoughts must be employed on other and nobler matters, and the feelings enlisted in their behalf. It was by directing their attention to the victor's crown, and by exciting the spirit of emulation, that the

competitors in the ancient games were rendered willing to submit to the severe regimen imposed upon them. And it was in hopes of correcting the dissolute habits of his son, that Phocian, the noblest of the Athenians, so justly celebrated for his integrity, his eloquence, and his military skill, permitted him to make trial in the foot races of the Panathenea, "not that he set any value" says Plutarch, "on the victory, but that the preparations and the previous exercise might be of service to him, the young man being of a disorderly turn and addicted to drinking." And it is sometimes the case, that by exciting powerfully some other passion, he who was in danger of becoming the victim of some sensual pleasure has been rescued from the threatening ruin and has risen to eminence and fame. A desire to shine in the national councils, and to exert a controlling influence in the affairs of state, occasionally has succeeded in suppressing the clamour of less noble passions. A love of wealth and the self-denial requisite to its attainment have effectually restrained for the time being all disposition to share in the revel. But unhappily if these new incentives to action should cease to exert their influence, through disappointment often attendant upon the most vigorous efforts, or from the men referred to having obtained the objects of their earnest pursuit, there is danger that they will finally fall under the power of appetite, and tarnish their fair fame, won by so much self-denial and toil.

It is evident then that this plan of remedying the evil is merely the introducing of a new disease in the room of another more immediately destructive. It does not restore the system to soundness and health. Something more is requisite, if you would acquire habits that will remain unshaken by vicissitudes of fortune, and by the combined assaults of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and of the pride of life. You must keep in view the unfading crown of glory, and the purity of heart and life necessary to its attainment. It will be of but little avail to have your eye upon the crown, if you lose sight of the conditions on which it is conferred. Purity of mind is absolutely essential to purity of life and morals. No mind can be pure, in which corrupting thoughts are permitted to find a lodgement, and corrupting thoughts can be excluded only by the introduction of those of a different character. Happy indeed is it for us, that our minds have this power over their own operations ; and that they can exclude such thoughts as are not agreeable to them ; but unhappily for many, they often exert this power for the exclusion of subjects, the due consideration of which might be attended with the very best results. Some persons imagine that they are not responsible for the character of their thoughts ; but surely, if the remark just made be true, it is an idle imagination. Under this false impression however, many a youth gives full play to his fancy, and in thought and with-

out remorse indulges in sinful pleasure. No such person can be a man of pure morals. The fountain of thought and action is polluted, and so must the issues be. No person can be a successful competitor for the crown of life, unless in the words of the Psalmist, he can say, "I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love". And if we would keep our minds pure, and our lives unspotted, we must labour to have the word of God abiding in us. This will effectually restrain the rising of evil desires; and then our loftier aspirations will become more easy and free. Have you such aspirations? Do you long for glory and for honour? Seek then the crown of life. This is an object to attain which might satisfy the loftiest ambition. It is a prize for conquerors only. It is at once the evidence and reward of merit. It confers the highest honour and the truest glory. Was there glory in the contests of the Grecian games, because the struggle was self-denying and arduous? How much more so, in the case of which we speak. To obtain the prize, you must be untiring in your efforts, and persevere through life. Was there glory in the fact, that the crown was awarded in the presence of admiring and applauding multitudes, who were eye-witnesses of their exploits? So too in the presence of assembled worlds shall the Judge bestow the crown of life. Was there glory in the fact, that on his return to his home the victor entered the city in a triumphal car, the walls being levelled for his

admission? So too in the Christian contests, through the opening heavens shall the victor pass in triumph to the place of the saints' everlasting rest. Is there not in all this, glory sufficient to satisfy your ambition? Would you have some additional trophies to adorn your triumph? If so, listen, while I speak of an enterprise, the complete execution of which will afford full employment for all your powers; and will secure for you the highest honours that man can reach. I mean the work of saving souls. In proportion to your fidelity and success in this work, will be your reward and glory. "They that be wise," says the prophet Daniel, "shall shine as the firmament, and they turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever."

Picture to yourselves the aged Apostle to the Gentiles, when, at the close of a life devoted to the glory of God and the salvation of his fellow-men, he is enabled to say, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing." 2 Tim: iv. 6-8. With what calmness and dignity does he contemplate his departure, and the cruel death with which his career on earth was to be terminated? "I am ready to be offered, and the time of

my departure is at hand." Nothing remains for him but to submit to the stroke and to receive his reward: "a crown of righteousness," the value of which is increased by the consideration, that it is not to be conferred upon him alone. What noble feeling this, to exult in view of the advancement of others to like dignity. Who would not desire to die like Paul? His death is glorious, but the glory ends not here. Every one in all future time rescued from eternal ruin, and brought through his instrumentality to participate in the glory and joys of heaven, will add to the lustre of his crown of rejoicing. If they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever, what will be the lustre of that constellation which includes in it the star of which we speak, unrivalled as is that star in magnitude and brilliancy; and unseen only when looked for amidst the unclouded effulgence of the Sun of Righteousness.

If Paul could say to the Thessalonians, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." 1 Thes: 19-20. What will be the exultation of this faithful herald of salvation, when he shall behold assembled on the heights of Zion an almost innumerable company saved, through his labours, from ignorance, degradation and the wrath of God; and made to share in the joy and triumph of the saints redeem-

ed through the blood of Christ? The merit of their salvation belongs to Christ alone ; not so the joy at their deliverance. This is shared by all his servants, and especially by those whom he counts worthy to be employed in the great work of saving souls. Would you not be partakers of this joy? What is the satisfaction arising from the belief, that our labours have been most successfully expended in improving the temporal condition of our fellow men to the joy that he must experience, who in heaven shall be permitted to see the rich fruits of all his sufferings and toil, in the everlasting happiness of even one immortal soul? Far be it from me however to say one word in disparagement of efforts to elevate the human race, and to better their condition in matters pertaining to this life; such efforts are honourable and useful, neither are they inconsistent with others intended to secure eternal interests, yet for importance they cannot compare with those labours, the direct object of which is to save the immortal soul.

To this work apply thyself, youthful aspirant for honour. The work is difficult, and calls for self-denial ; but it is a glorious work, and it will repay your utmost exertions. Let us now suppose your earthly career terminated, and you about to enter into the immediate presence of your Judge ; in what character would you prefer to appear before him? Would it be that of the learned judge, the able statesman, the gallant defender of your country's

rights, the man of letters or of science, the faithful teacher, the upright citizen, or in that of the devoted missionary of the cross? You might appear in any one of these characters, and yet meet the approbation of your Judge, and be welcomed by him as a faithful servant, worthy to enter into his everlasting joy. And it is doubtless the duty of some christian men, to engage in these various callings; and their doing so does not hinder them from participating in efforts to interest their fellow men in the great work of salvation; yet they have not the high honour of him who is counted worthy to undergo trial, shame and toil, to carry the tidings of salvation to those that are perishing for lack of knowledge. If the post of danger be the post of honour, then is there honour for the missionary; not indeed the honour that comes from man, but the honour that comes from God. If after bidding farewell, to friends, and home, and native land, you steer your course to some heathen shore in tropic or polar clime, and there spend your days in faithfully labouring to plant the standard of the cross, and to win souls for Christ; you need desire no higher honour; none higher can be conferred on you in this life, and in the world to come, your reward will be proportioned to your zeal, your fidelity, your sufferings and your toil. Think you Paul does not consider himself amply compensated for his shipwrecks, for his stripes, for his perils on the deep and on the land, by being

permitted to witness the happiness of those who through his labours have been brought to Mount Zion on high, to partake of the joys of the saints, and to unite in their anthems of praise unto him, who having washed them in his blood has made them kings and priests unto God his Father ?

Every faithful missionary may hope to have like cause for joy.

Think not however that you will be secure, because you purpose to engage in this work, or that you will be safe when you have once entered upon it. You must prepare yourself for it by the most rigid self-denial. If the private christian needs to be temperate in all things to obtain the crown, much more is this the case with the minister of salvation. For he has not merely the same work to accomplish for himself that the private christian has ; but he has an additional work, and one which demands his constant attention. Paul did not think himself safe, because he was engaged in labours more abundant than the other Apostles. What says this hero of the cross ? “But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection; lest by any means when I have preached to others I myself should be a cast-away.” Who then without watchfulness may consider himself safe ? The Apostle suggests the possibility, and observation seems to establish the fact, that there have been instances of men, whose labours have been rendered effectual to the salvation of others, and yet they themselves have

been lost ; a solemn and fearful lesson to all who are in the gospel ministry, or who have that ministry in view.

But be your profession or occupation what it may, we must all take part in this conflict. If we gain the mastery, we shall gain the crown. If we fail in the contest, we shall miss the prize. Strive then earnestly for the mastery. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, praying with all prayer and supplication for divine aid and guidance. And may God in his infinite mercy grant, that we may all come off more than conquerors through our Lord Jesus Christ.

ADDRESS
TO
THE SENIOR CLASS OF 1859.

My young friends of the Senior Class :

In the discourse to which you have just listened, I have endeavoured to impress upon your minds the important truth, that you cannot hope to accomplish anything, that will be of lasting good to others or of lasting honour to yourselves, unless you be in all things strictly temperate. And you have doubtless observed, that the temperance of which I have spoken is not simply freedom from all excess in the indulgence of appetite, it is self-government in indulgences of every kind. With this self-control, you will be able to exert your natural faculties to the utmost extent of which they are capable ; and accomplish an amount of good, which you could scarcely have imagined to be within your power. I take it for granted, that it is your desire and purpose to live to some useful end ; and whatever may be your natural endowments, with the training you have had, it is possible for every one of you to ren-

der valuable service to your fellow men and to the church of God. Do not think, that you can do but little for the benefit of others, because you possess only moderate abilities. The most of the good that is done in our world is done by this class of persons ; men not of genius, but of virtuous habits and of untiring industry, who give themselves with all diligence to the calling or profession which they have chosen, and labour assiduously to discharge the duties pertaining to their respective positions in life. I would not underrate true genius, wherever found it is a gift of God, one of unspeakable value, and one too, the prosession of which involves heavy responsibilities. If these are fully met, the man of genius will merit the esteem and reverence of his fellow-men, and will receive the approval of his God ; but genius neglected or perverted has no claim to our respect ; and deserves the reprobation of the virtuous and good. But no man, whatever may be his talents, can be an honour or a blessing to his race, if he be without self-control, and if there be any difference, the man of genius has greater need of that self-control of which we speak, than the man of inferior abilities. For if he fall a victim to appetite and passion, he will be the greater curse to himself and to others.

To whatever class then, as it respects intellect, you may severally belong, let me pray you to make it your daily aim throughout life, to acquire and retain

complete command over yourselves. Aim also to form a right estimate of your talents and of your responsibilities, neither thinking of yourselves more highly than you ought to think ; nor underrating the value of those talents with which God has entrusted you. For these talents, be they few or many, you are to give account to the Judge of quick and dead, at his appearing : and the reward or punishment will be in strict proportion to your faithfulness or neglect.

2. In determining what shall be your profession or calling for life, let me urge each one of you to decide this question in the fear of God : and after fervent prayer to Him, for divine guidance in coming to a decision. In entering upon a consideration of this question, do so with the full intent of engaging in that work, in which you honestly believe you can do most for the glory of God and for the good of your fellow men. Remember that the question is not whether you can be a christian, and save your own soul, and yet devote yourself to this or to that calling, but in what calling you can best do your whole duty to God and man. In determining this point, you must have respect to the order of your talents, your opportunity for their improvement, and the leadings of divine providence : these are all to be taken into the account, in forming your judgment. For your own sake, for the sake of your fellow men, and above all for Christ's sake, seek to make an honest decision. It may require you to give up all

hope of attaining to wealth, and honour and influence : but remember that the reward will be in proportion to the self-denial. “ And every one,” says Christ, “ that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”

3. To whatever profession or business you may devote yourselves, seek to qualify yourselves thoroughly for the proper performance of its duties. Remember that you have no right to jeopard the interests of others, for want of the requisite knowledge and skill to discharge aright the duties of the profession you have assumed. The more important the profession, the greater is your obligation to be proficient in it:—And in this connexion, let me advise you, in whatever profession you may be employed, to make some particular department of it a subject of special attention. So numerous are the interruptions to which a professional man is subjected, by the necessary demands made upon him, that few men can find the time, even if they have the ability, to devote themselves to the enlargement of the boundaries of knowledge in all departments of their several professions : and yet if they would each one select some one branch, and aim to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with it, their different contributions, though individually small, would in the aggregate add much to the stock of knowledge previously

attained. The course suggested does not involve a neglect of other departments of knowledge, and especially in one's own profession, with all parts of which he should make himself familiar : but it merely implies a more minute and careful examination of a particular branch than it is in one's power to bestow upon all. The habit of mind formed and strengthened by this plan of study is one of great value in itself : and will be found of real service in our inquiries into matters foreign to our ordinary field of research. Not only so, but the thorough investigation of any one subject often requires a careful study of others related to it : and will call for a range of inquiry, that would not have been thought of beforehand.

In the selection of the particular branch which should be made the special object of attention, regard should of course be had to the natural tastes of the individual concerned, to his opportunities for study, and to the probability that his researches or his experiments can be made to tell on the advancement of knowledge. To illustrate these remarks, take the case of a Minister of the Gospel. Let him select Scripture-history, or a particular portion of it, as his subject for close and special study : to confirm and illustrate it, by references to ancient traditions, ancient usages, other histories, sculptured remains, &c., accounts of modern travels through the lands where the incidents in Scripture-history occurred. Or let

him take up the subject of prophecy, study its fulfilment, explain the true method of interpretation, and the limits within which a judicious commentator will confine himself. If his taste is in a different line, let him expound some one book or more, and devote himself to the study of the types and symbols of Scripture : or make himself thoroughly acquainted with the important truths and doctrines taught in the holy scriptures, and with the best methods of stating and defending these doctrines.

Should any one devote himself to scientific pursuits, let him not vainly strive to excel in every department, but make himself master of some particular one. With great propriety, and with great profit, he may give such attention to all the various branches of science, as will give him a clear idea of their nature and extent, and of the relations in which they stand to each other.

So too in the professions of law and of medicine. Let the physician and the lawyer each explore the whole of his vast field of labour, and be prepared to meet all the demands that may be made upon him for his services, in the ordinary course of professional business : still it will be greatly to his advantage, and also to his reputation, if by minute and close attention to some one branch of his profession, he becomes eminent in it.

While on this head, let me caution you against a weakness not unfrequently met with : viz., a desire

to appear learned in matters out of the range of one's professional pursuits. It is seldom that the attempt does not expose the person who makes it to contempt and ridicule. Nothing but an overweening opinion of one's self could induce any person to be guilty of such folly : unless it be his belief, that although he knows but little, his hearers or readers know still less.

On another head, kindred to the one just spoken of, let me also caution you. "Never aim to appear profound." Rather express yourself in the plainest terms you can ; and you will obtain the very thing which every wise man aims at, if you are able to express yourself so clearly and distinctly, that every one who hears feels the force of what you say, and almost imagines that he could do what you have done. Especially should you heed this caution, should it be your duty to instruct others in things pertaining to their spiritual and eternal welfare. The clothing of common thoughts in the garb of philosophy is as incongruous as the use of the buskin would have been in the earlier comic representations of the Grecian stage. Avoid it every where, but especially in the pulpit.

My next advice is this. Exercise yourselves, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. Do everything from a sense of duty, "and whatever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus ; giving

thanks to God and the Father by him."—Colossians: III. 19. Ponder the admonitions contained in the chapter read for our instruction this morning. Occurring as they do immediately after the apostle's argument concerning the necessity of justification by faith and of cognate matters ; they shew us that the doctrine of salvation through grace has no tendency to encourage continuance in sin ; but on the contrary calls for holy living and the practice of every virtue. In no way can you more effectually add to your usefulness or comfort, than by giving all heed to the precepts in the twelfth chapter of Romans.

Would, that I could bid you farewell in the full belief, that you were all sons of God, devoted to his service, and that your lives would be spent in efforts to honour your Redeemer and to promote the spiritual interests of your fellow men. Then I should have but little or no apprehension for the future. You might be cut off while yet in the spring time of life, and before your plans for active usefulness were begun to be put in execution, or were even fully matured in your own minds ; yet having a purpose to serve God, you will thereby only have a change of place, and be permitted to render a higher and better service in heaven than you could ever render on earth. The supposition is by no means an improbable one.

One who in his infancy had with many prayers been dedicated to God, and with many pious coun-

sels had been trained up in the knowledge of his duty, would this day have been of your number, had it not pleased our heavenly Father to remove him from the associations and friendships of earth, and translate his spirit, as we hope, to a holier and happier sphere of activity and usefulness. Anticipations that he would have an honorable and useful career were freely indulged by his beloved father and other friends : and yet how suddenly, and, were it not for our hope of a future life, we might say, how sadly were these fond expectations disappointed. If as we trust, he died in the faith of Christ, we may say of him, he is not dead, but sleepeth : and when Christ cometh, he will awake his sleeping dust, and bid it come forth to an unending life.

The present occasion, and the recent decease of the late venerable President of our College, serve to remind me of the counsels, which for thirty-one years, he was wont to give to successive classes, the members of which having completed their College course of study listened to him as you now listen to me, for the last time. Many of those to whom his counsels were given preceded him to the grave : and at the last he himself was permitted to rest from his labours, and to receive his reward ; and the years can not be many, when he who now addresses you will give place to some other, and go to give an account of his stewardship ; and among other things of the fidelity with which he has instructed you in regard to your

duty. And my young friends, unite with me in the fervent prayer, that I may end my course with joy ; and that I may meet you all, not one of you wanting, around the throne of God in heaven.