

15
ON THE LOVE OF PRAISE.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED SEPT. 23, 1810,

BEING THE

SUNDAY PRECEDING COMMENCEMENT.

BY SAMUEL STANHOPE SMITH, D.D.
PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF NEW-JERSEY.

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A
SERMON,
&c.



Whatsoever things are of good report,—if there be any praise, think of these things.....PHIL. iv. 8.

THE supreme motive, in the heart of every good man, to honorable and worthy actions, to goodness, to virtue, and universal holiness is, the pure love of goodness, of holiness, and of virtue. The Spirit of God, however, has not disdained to employ, as an auxiliary principle of duty, that love of praise, or of standing well in the opinion of our fellow men, which, though common to mankind, is often felt most sensibly by generous and noble minds.

As virtue presents to us only what is amiable in disposition, what is honorable and manly in conduct, or what is useful to society, it is not wonderful that it should be the object of general approbation. In like manner all the noble endowments of our nature, all distinguished acquisitions in science, all extraordinary efforts of genius, all great talents for the management of affairs, if they are seen to be directed by disinterested and virtuous principles to public good,

command the applause of mankind. And, in return, the approbation, and esteem of our fellow men, being among the most precious rewards of virtue, in this life, are also justly ranked among its most powerful and laudable incentives. Youth are particularly susceptible of the influence of this principle. And praise may justly be held out to them, as a motive to stimulate every improvement of their natural talents, and their moral powers. Not that false praise which vanity solicits for superficial or frivolous attainments; not that corrupted praise which vice bestows on the ingenuity which is employed to defend its pleasures; nor those mistaken plaudits which the ignorance and passions of the misguided multitude too often yield to the art and cunning which mislead them;—but the praise which is bottomed upon piety and virtue; upon solid goodness and usefulness; the praise of actions which God, which conscience, which the world, when all their ends and motives are known, will approve. For this reason the apostle has said, “Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are **honorable*, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are lovely,” before he adds, “if there be any *praise*, think of these things,”—that is, let your desire of praise be connected with truth, with honor, with justice, and with

* This is the meaning of the original word translated *honest* in our version.

all that is amiable in life and manners. But this principle, however justifiable and laudable, when properly directed, is susceptible also of great perversion and abuse ; and, instead of invigorating, and unfolding the germs of goodness and worth, or of greatness and nobleness of character in the hearts of youth, may be made the instrument of misleading them into the most pernicious deviations from duty, or inciting them to vice.

Let me, then, propose to your consideration *the love of praise* under two views.

I. As it is a laudable and useful principle of action—and,

II. As it may be corrupted, and possess a dangerous influence on the heart.

1. The love of praise has, evidently, been intended by our Creator as one of the most powerful incentives to actions great and honourable in themselves, and beneficial to mankind. No principle raises human nature to a higher tone of exertion. And when all its activity is directed to good and noble ends, it may justly be expected to lay the most solid and sure foundation for reputation and esteem in every sphere of life. The collisions of interest, indeed, or the predominance of party passions may, for a season, depress merit, and elevate imbecility, or vice to distinction :—Vanity may, for a time, be caressed by the insidious flatteries of those who despise, while they court it ;—Wealth,

though acquired by crimes, may receive a deceitful and interested homage from dependants ; the splendor of conquest may dazzle for a while the misjudging world, and cover with a false and temporary lustre, the iniquities by which they were achieved, and the miseries which follow in their train ; but, they are talents guided by wisdom and piety, and directed to promote the interests of humanity, which unite the suffrages of all mankind, and embalm to posterity the memory of good men, and the fame of the benefactors of nations.

In examining the principles of human conduct we will often find this passion pervading with a useful influence all the active springs of our nature. It serves to polish the manners, and circulate those amiable attentions which contribute so much to the pleasure and enjoyment of life. The delicacies of conversation, the elegancies, the refinements, the charms of social intercourse which distinguish civilized from savage man, all spring from the mutual desire of pleasing and the reflected hope of being respected and beloved. Praise often cherishes in the youthful breast the seeds of future worth, and infuses into them the principles of a vigorous growth. And a generous emulation to excel is usually regarded, at that period, as the presage of all that is wise, and virtuous, and manly in after life. Praise has trimmed the lamp of the student, has guided and animated the hand of the artist, and often

administered the noblest incentives to the fires of genius. To what, indeed, do we owe the poets, the orators, the statesmen, the patriots, the heroes, who have adorned, and shed a glory on the respective nations which have given them birth? I will not exclude the operation of other, and of higher principles in the formation of many of these great characters; but certainly one, and that, by no means the weakest in its influence, has been the proud hope of being rewarded with the esteem of their country; or the still prouder hope of enjoying that immortality in the memory of men which genius so often confers on its possessor; or which the public gratitude sometimes endeavours to bestow on illustrious services rendered to the interests of humanity. Those nations have, accordingly, flourished most who have best known how to touch this powerful spring of great and honorable actions. A statue, a tripod, a triumph, even a laurel crown, or an oaken wreath, bestowed as a mark of the public favour, contributed to elevate the genius of Greece and Rome, above that of all other nations.—What dangers will not men encounter, what labors will they not undergo, what self denials not endure, in order to obtain a high place in the esteem of mankind? None can be entirely insensible to it except those who are conscious to themselves that they want worth to deserve it. Base and malignant must be that heart which is wholly indifferent to the opinion of the world.

The love of praise, therefore, when cherished in its due degree, not only incites the youth to useful improvement, and prompts the man to the performance of actions of conspicuous merit, but is intimately connected with those respectful and benevolent regards to mankind, which form the finest ties of human society. *Whatsoever things, then, are lovely, in themselves, and in the esteem of the world, if there be any virtue, and if their be any praise resting on these amiable and solid foundations, think of these things.*

From so many considerations does it appear that the love of praise, when directed to proper objects, and preserved within proper bounds, is a legitimate, and a laudable principle of action. Our blessed Saviour himself, who was the most humble and self-denied of men, has not disdained to employ it as a motive and reward of good deeds in the example of the grateful sister of Lazarus, who had just given him a costly testimony of her affectionate attachment:—"Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." And God hath denounced it as a curse on the wicked, that "*their name shall rot;*" but, "*blessed shall be the memory of the just;*" "*They shall be had in everlasting remembrance.*"

As a noble encouragement to piety, to virtue, to philanthropy, to the cultivation of all your intellect-

ual and moral powers, remember that these are the qualities which chiefly command the esteem of mankind, and procure for their possessor that "good name which is better than precious ointment;" and is infinitely more to be valued, than the splendor of riches, or of power. The one is exposed to envy, the other begets affection and confidence; the one may excite admiration, the other commands esteem; the one may awaken in the bosom, the pride of superiority, a cold unsocial sentiment, the other attracts love, than which a sweeter consciousness comes not to the heart. Riches and honors pass away, or descend to others who enjoy the benefit, and forget the favor. The memory of a good man is precious. While he lives he marches encompassed with his virtues, which attract round him the hearts of his fellow citizens; and when he dies, he carries with him their regrets and their tears.

Ah! did the princes and rulers of the earth know wherein their true glory consists! They would find it, not in the splendors which dazzle the eyes, and repel the groans of a miserable people; not in the power which imposes its yoke on subject nations; not in the mercenary flatteries with which they are worshipped in life; nor, at death, in the magnificent monuments, and proud inscriptions which lie to posterity; but in the felicity of their country, in the blessings and prayers of nations made happy by their wisdom.—Those who have extorted by arbi-

trary force, or stolen by insidious arts, a false glory during their lives, shall be held up in their true light to posterity. Their private faults, the public evils which have flowed from their vices, will be dragged from beneath the veil with which power, or dependent adulation had attempted to cover them, and condemned, by the faithful severity of history, to the reprobation and contempt of future ages.—But the justice and magnanimity of great rulers, the wisdom and integrity of able legislators, and statesmen, the illustrious actions, or the generous sacrifices of patriots and heroes, the talents which have adorned the age in which they flourished, the extraordinary mental powers which have given direction to the great movements of the world shall, in the language of the sacred writer, *be had in everlasting remembrance.*

In every station of life, then, in which men may be placed by divine providence, they may justly regard an honest fame as among the purest and holiest motives of a noble and virtuous conduct. *Whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think of these things.*

That a fair reputation is a valuable possession, that the love of praise, when directed by just principles, and preserved within due bounds, is not only an allowable but a laudable motive of action, will not be denied. But, like all the best propensities and powers of our nature, it is capable of being perverted,

and it often is perverted, to ends very different from those for which it was implanted in the heart of man by his Creator.

2. Of its abuses, therefore, I am next to speak.

It may be excessive. It may be ill directed, and become the minister of vice.

The praise of men, as has been already said, far from being the governing motive of our conduct, should only be auxiliary to the pure love of virtue, and a pious submission of heart to the will, and the law of God. It should be subordinate, as a principle of action, even to the approbation of our own consciences, and to that self respect which it will ever be the care of a wise and good man to cultivate. The noblest enjoyment of virtue and piety, next to the sense of the favor of God, is derived from the conscious rectitude of our own conduct; and that inward tranquility and peace which a self approving conscience sheds through the whole soul. A good man will always be able to rest upon himself, if the caprice of the world should deny him his honest fame, or even the malignant arts of his enemies should succeed for a time, to overwhelm him with calumnies.

The desire of praise, when it becomes excessive, and this is its first abuse, puts your happiness too much in the power of others, both for your comfort and your duty. For although great talents will generally be admired, and virtue esteemed; yet, many events may occur to rob the best of men of

that reputation to which their merits justly entitle them. They may be sunk in obscurity ; they may be thrown, in the course of providence, into situations unfavorable to the display of their talents, or their virtues. Ignorance may not be able to appreciate them ; prejudice may distort them ; misfortune may cast them under a cloud ; party passions may taint them ; slander may tarnish them ; envy may corrode them ; the unsuspecting candor, frankness, and honesty of the most innocent minds may often lay them open to the attacks of artful, and designing enemies. Beware, then, of setting your heart too fondly on a possession so perishable and uncertain. For if you fail to attain it, by having formed a wrong estimate of your own powers, or the opinions of the world ; or if you should be deprived of it, by the arts of rivals, or of enemies, you will be overwhelmed with anguish. But, seek first the praise of God, and of your own hearts. Hence you will derive the truest and most lasting happiness. And although the approbation of your fellow men would be a sweet ingredient in the enjoyment of life ; yet, the want of it will, in that case, inflict no fatal wound on your peace ; you will have a happiness secured, above the arts of malice, and the storms of misfortune.

It deserves to be particularly remarked, in the next place, when this passion becomes too visible, mankind often take a pleasure in disappointing our

vanity. And the truth is, vanity forfeits a great part of the esteem which would otherwise be paid to the virtues with which it is sometimes connected. Not even the splendid talents, and illustrious services of Cicero, could save him from the contempt and ridicule of his cotemporaries. When he would have it believed that he was wholly devoted to the republic, he seemed to be not less devoted to his own glory, and was thought by many of his countrymen, to be a patriot only for fame.

To repress still further the criminal excess of this passion, which invades that supremacy of duty and love which we owe to God, reflect how often is praise unjustly withheld, by ignorant or envious men, from your most deserving qualities, or your most meritorious actions; how often it is injudiciously bestowed upon the undeserving; how often it is given to the most frivolous accomplishments; how often it is won by the most superficial appearances of merit; how often it is stolen from the multitude by base compliances, and hypocritical professions; and how often, if you possess power, or wealth, or beauty, it is impossible to distinguish sycophancy from esteem, and flattery from sincere attachment.—Reflect moreover, that the breath of mortals, however soothing to our vanity, cannot soothe the cold ear of death, or follow us beyond the grave. If it hangs over our tombs for a few moments, like a light vapour, it is soon dissipated by the passions which occupy and

agitate the surviving world, or sinks down in the chill night of an eternal oblivion. Nothing but the testimony of a good conscience, and a sincere trust in the Redeemer, can support the soul when all human things are passing away, and it finds itself entering alone through the valley of shades* into the eternal world.—Let not the praise of men, therefore, if you receive it, unduly elate you; nor, if it is withheld, be too much depressed, if you have the much higher praise of your conscience, of your works, and of God.—

As the love of praise, when it is suffered to hold too high a place in the heart, will necessarily disappoint you, and will often defeat its own aims; so, by receiving a wrong direction, it becomes the minister of sin.

If the applauses of those with whom you associate are the chief objects of your ambition, What temptations do they not lay in your way, when you happen unfortunately to be connected with men who substitute fashion for duty, and who justify vice by example? Your contempt of religion, and of sober manners will, in such connexions, often outrun fashion itself; you will be ambitious to obtrude your example among the first in every modish scene of dissipation.

* *The valley of shades*, was the name by which a dark vale, not far from Jerusalem, was distinguished, which furnished to the sacred poet the allusion contained in this figure.

But, most dangerous is this passion in the associations of young men, who are yet in the full tide of folly ; whose reason has not been enlightened, and whose passions have not been chastened by experience ; who mistake sprightliness for wit, and effrontery for talent. Here, he who can point out new roads to pleasure ; he who can most ingeniously defend the vices of fashion, or with the greatest dexterity wield a stroke against the authority or the doctrines of religion ; he who is most daring in his own conduct to overleap the bounds prescribed by the prudence of wisdom, and the caution of experience, will always be encouraged with thoughtless and giddy applause. Leaders in vice who are bold and assuming, ever meet with followers and imitators, sooner perhaps, than the patrons and examples of virtue and piety, who are modest and retiring. Here, in the noisy plaudits of your companions, you will learn to drown the voice of conscience, and the awful menaces of religion ; here will you soon be incited ostentatiously to trample on the restraints, which you miscall the prejudices, of a pious education ; and to contemn the sober opinion of the world. You will affect to be more impious and profligate than you are, till you become as profligate and impious as you affect to be. Ah ! how many unhappy youth, aspiring to distinction among such associates, have precipitated their own destruction !

Looking a little higher, among the ranks of literature, and turning over the volumes of infidelity,

and immorality, which the press has so copiously poured upon the present age, I say to myself of these pernicious writings, that spring from the corrupt affections of the heart, How many have their immediate source in that vanity which aspires to gain the reputation of superior wit, and strength of mind, by attacking all ancient systems, by boldly assailing the sacred doctrines of religion, and maintaining every extravagant novelty of opinion. All the libertine, all the vain, all who *are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*; that is, unhappily, the greater portion of all the higher circles of society, are ready to extol with excessive praise, and crown with ~~the~~ laurels of genius, the authors who would emancipate them from the thralldom of religious fear, and lay the spectres which haunt the gloom of the grave. In an age of luxury and pleasure, this misapplication of talent opens an easy path to that airy temple which false wit, and superficial science, have erected on an humble eminence, decorated with artificial flowers, in opposition to the genuine temple of Fame, planted on the summit of an arduous cliff, the ascent to which is always difficult and laborious. The incessant applauses of the giddy throng who surround it below, seduce a crowd of authors, who hasten thither to offer their works on the altars of vice.—Alas! deplorable talents! corrupted while they corrupt! Applauded by those only whom they are helping to destroy!

In the false and pernicious direction given to this passion, in the next place, we may find the cause of many of those disorders which, in all ages, have disturbed the tranquillity of free governments. Often it created the most dangerous ferments in the little republics of Greece. And we do not want examples among ourselves of the most odious factions excited, and nourished by this principle. It is not always the love of *a little brief authority*, nor even the mean avarice of gaining a few extraordinary emoluments in the public service, which sets your consequential and restless demagogues on work, (although not a small proportion of our pretended patriots are governed by these unworthy motives), but, frequently, vain men, with no other talents than presumption and loquacity, are ambitious of obtruding themselves into public view. Restless, and ambitious of vulgar praise, they declaim, they harangue, they endeavour to seize on some popular topic to stir the commonality into violence and frenzy. The best characters are the subjects of their slander; the best measures they find some low and mercenary ground of defaming; while they study to raise into a flame a fickle, envious and ignorant populace, with whom a violent and wordy zeal is generally the proof of patriotism. Little scrupulous of the means they employ to accomplish their end, the public good, which is their loudest pretence, is their least concern. All their object is to rise into favor on the agitated

tide. And, for a while, perhaps, they ride in triumph, supported on the bubbles they have raised. The bubbles soon break under them, and leave them to sink into their native obscurity ; other favorites, then, not less ambitious, and, possibly, more unprincipled than themselves, agitate this multitudinous ocean by a new storm. They hurl their predecessors into the troubled waves, in the midst of which, like them, they ride, for a little while, till, in their turn, they are precipitated by new pretenders. In the mean time, their country suffers innumerable evils ; till, at last, they make the very name of patriotism to be abhorred ; and the distracted, and so often deluded people, seek some dreadful remedy for these political disorders at length become intolerable.

But, perhaps, a still more deplorable effect of this misguided passion, is seen when it ascends to the very seat of Moses and the apostles, and corrupts, in the mouths of the teachers of religion, the purity and simplicity of its truths. On this subject two opposite evils often dishonor the sanctuary of truth. While some, studious only to please the circles of polite fashion, *prophesy smooth things*, and bring down the standard of evangelic morality to what fashion prescribes, or the delicacy of luxury will bear ; others, destitute of talents to edify the church of God by the extent and variety of their knowledge, or the powers of a cultivated elocution, address

themselves to catch the applause of zeal from the misjudging multitude, who seldom are able to distinguish an assumed fervor from the genuine warmth of sincere piety. With noise, with rant, with terror, by whatever engines will move and agitate rude minds, but equally distant from the genuine spirit of religion as the vicious complaisance of the former, they pursue their unworthy ends. There are demagogues in religion as well as in politics, whose chief aim it is to render themselves conspicuous in a party. But all the flashings of their fiery zeal cannot conceal from a true discernor of the human heart, the vanity and self-love which, under the mask of humble devotion, are helping to blow the flame, for the purposes of their own vanity. Among all impieties, hardly can one be mentioned more odious to Heaven, and to all good men, than thus to stand up in the temples, and in the name of the Most High, only to seek our own glory. To soften down to the taste of fashionable pleasure, on the one hand, those holy and eternal truths on which depends the salvation of immortal souls; or, on the other, to convert the humble, devout, and reasonable service of the living God into the frantic howlings of the idolatrous worshippers of Moloch, or of Dagon. I know not which should most shock a rational and pious mind, to see an Adonis present himself, like a servant of the Graces, before the awful altars of Jehovah; or to see an ignorant and presumptuous mortal throwing himself into a counterfeited frenzy;

dealing out the denunciations of Heaven on his fellow creatures, according as his own passions impel him ; approaching his Creator and Redeemer with the most indecent familiarities of expression ; and pouring forth his own incoherent rhapsodies, instead of *the words of truth and soberness* ;—Those divine truths which we ought always to touch with the same reverence and awe, with which the priests of Israel approached the ark of the covenant, or Aaron and his sons entered into the holy of holies.—Oh ! impiety ! thus hypocritically to employ religion to serve the base purposes of our own vanity ! to dare attempt to make God, if I may speak so, pander to our vile praise !—

Thus the love of praise, when it is excessive, or ill directed, may, in many ways, corrupt the heart. We have often seen it, when lavishly and indiscreetly bestowed, deprave those excellent dispositions which at first deserved it. Acquired, in the beginning, by the exercise of the most modest virtues, it has at last inflated the heart with an odious vanity, and created a spirit self-conceited, arrogant, and intractable. Ah ! how little does vanity, or pride, become a man in the midst of his fellow men ! a brother in the midst of his brethren !—above all, a worm of the dust in the presence of the infinite Creator !

But though the love of praise when it is excessive, or misplaced, is attended with so many evils

and dangers, yet have we seen it, when properly regulated, ever united with a generous emulation to excel, and become the parent of the most valuable improvements in society, and of the highest virtues. Separate it from the pernicious principles with which it is often conjoined, and I will again and again repeat, with the apostle,—“Whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think of these things.”

But, it is time to address myself to the last duty of this day, giving my parting counsels to those youth who have just finished their course of studies in this institution, and offering up for them my most fervent prayers.—

Young Gentlemen,

We now touch on the last moments of our union as instructor, and as pupils. It is a moment always accompanied with many serious reflections. You are parting from the retirements of your studies. The vast, and various prospect of life is before you, with all its uncertainties and dangers, its hopes and disappointments, its rivalships and contentions, its labors, and its duties. I look upon you like a mariner who has just passed an agitated ocean, while you are, as yet, only launching amidst the waves. He hopes, he prays for the success of so many young and ardent adventurers; but he trembles at the hazards in which he knows you will presently be in-

volved. At a moment, then, in which many recollections and anticipations naturally press upon the mind to dispose it to solemnity, and to awaken in our bosoms many tender, as well as serious emotions, may I not hope that instructions to which you have often listened with deference, will make upon your hearts a more lasting impression than on ordinary occasions.

In the course of your studies it has ever been an object with the government of this institution to nourish in your bosoms a generous emulation to excel, and to fan that love of praise, which, united with the love of science, and the nobler sentiments of duty, would stimulate you to the highest exertion of the best powers and faculties of your nature. Still continue to cherish that useful principle which will impel you forward in the career of honorable improvement. In the youthful breast it can hardly be excessive. Not yet tainted by the envy of rivalry, or the intrigues of ambition, which so often corrupt the passions of riper years, its earliest tendencies are to lead you to virtue ; to prompt you to the cultivation of every talent, the acquisition of every accomplishment which will awaken in your favor, on all sides, the voice of praise. How lovely is youth when we behold in it all the symptoms of a virtuous sensibility ; all the ardor of a generous emulation ; all the noble purposes of duty ; all the modest consciousness at once of worth, and of the

imperfection of its attainments ; all the auguries of future honor, and usefulness !

Cultivate a generous love of praise. At your age, it will be a powerful incentive to virtue : to genius it will be like the animating rays of the sun, which give life, action, and energy to the whole creation.

What then are those qualities which procure for their possessor the highest honor and distinction among men ? Are they not the great endowments of the mind, and the good affections of the heart ? On a noble magnanimity, on diffusive benevolence, on unshaken integrity, on a warm, rational, and dignified piety, on extensive science, on a powerful and manly eloquence, on the masterly ability of combining and applying all the branches of knowledge for the purposes of public utility, are founded the most solid claims to public honor and respect. Superficial talents, and showy but hollow pretensions, may deceive the multitude for a moment ; but experience and time, which disclose the true characters of men, and the sounder judgments of the wise, which ultimately prevail over hasty and ill founded opinions, will strip from them the laurels with which ignorance had crowned them.

It is the union of talents with virtue which forms the true foundation of lasting praise. Virtue will procure for you higher confidence from your fellow citizens, talents spread round you greater lustre. It is on the union of both that you should build your hopes of honor and esteem.

Be not in haste, then, to enter on the exercise of those various liberal professions to which most of you intend hereafter to devote your faculties. Wait with patience the developement of the full powers of your minds; and continue long to collect, with persevering industry, from every source, the treasures of knowledge, which are necessary to fit you to appear with distinction and eminence, before you advance into the public theatre of life. A prudent delay will, in the end, be gaining both time and reputation. But if you are impatient to display your talents, or to enter on the acquisition of a pitiful gain, and therefore content yourselves with hasty and superficial preparations, you will probably march through your whole course with feeble, nerveless, and obscure efforts, which, if they do not cover you with contempt, will, at least, leave you sunk among the vulgar throng who make up the mass, or drag at the tail of their respective professions.

Whence is it that we hear from the pulpit so many insipid, and common-place discourses, without illumination to gratify the understanding, and without energy to impress the heart? Seldom, perhaps, is it to be ascribed to the absolute defect of natural talents; but to the want of due preparation for discharging honorably and usefully the functions of this holy office. Whence is it that many a young preacher, after being well received for a few discourses, becomes at last spiritless, and insipid, and addresses only fatigued, and listless audiences? He

has exhausted his scanty intellectual funds, and has nothing new to produce from his impoverished treasury.

Whence is it that the noble and dignified science of justice, so often degenerates into a pitiful pettifoggery and chicanery? Young men, without diligence and application, meanly furnished with juridical knowledge, and destitute of the rich and varied powers of eloquence derived from a general acquaintance with other arts, have addicted themselves only to the meagre forms, and the dishonorable quibbles of the law.—And is it not lamentable to see, in so many instances, men, ignorant of the first elements of civil and political science, presuming to prescribe laws to the republic; and pretending, without the smallest consciousness of their own insufficiency, to direct the relations, and settle the jarring interests of the state with foreign nations! Interests, relations, laws, which require a consummate knowledge of the principles of civil society, the most extensive information concerning the political, commercial, and military state of the civilized world, the most vigorous powers of combination, a penetration which pervades at a single glance the most complicated systems; a comprehension able to embrace at one view the most remote consequences; a perspicacity fitted to unravel the most intricate questions of policy.

Among your most valuable attainments, let me

add, that it is especially important, in a free country, to cultivate a forcible and persuasive eloquence. I may surely address myself to an American scholar in the language which Sir William Jones has used to a Young British nobleman whom he was desirous of training up to the knowledge and management of public affairs. "I am fully convinced, says he, that an Englishman's real importance in his country will always be in a compound ratio of his virtue, his knowledge, and his eloquence, without all of which qualities little real utility can result from either of them apart."

But, remember, it is not the noisy declamation of a town-meeting, nor the crude and incoherent garrulity which so often fatigues the attention, and delays the public business, in our legislatures, which will enable an orator to combine the great interests, and guide the movements of a nation. To perform this with success he should thoroughly comprehend those interests, he should possess a perspicacious mind, clearly to develop them, he should be able to foresee, and to obviate all difficulties which will oppose the execution of his plans, he should derive light and information from all ages, he should understand the true character, powers, and resources of his country, he should discern the best means of drawing them into operation, he should know how to touch all the springs of human action. Behold what a field is before the real statesman! These

were the powers which gave Demosthenes so great an ascendant over all the corrupted politicians, and noisy demagogues of Athens. These were the powers which made even the most polished orators, who knew only the modulation of periods, and charmed the ear without enlightening the understanding, yield to his superior illumination and energy. He did not deem it sufficient to declaim with angry and boastful vehemence against the public enemy. This would have been an easy task to a far inferior orator. He penetrated and displayed the artful designs of the Macedonian king;—he unfolded the true interests of Greece; he pourtrayed in strong colours the storm which impended over his country, he pointed out, at the same time the resources with which she was able to meet and dispel it; he shewed to Athens her own strength; he entered into the minutest details of her finance; he understood the views and intrigues of every state which could affect the interests of his own country; he knew how to resuscitate from the slumbers of luxury, the ancient vigor of the republic; all the stores of history were open to his use; all the lights of science, all the powers of language, were summoned to his aid.—Were these mighty effects the fruit of superficial attainments, of hasty studies, of precipitately intruding himself into the management of affairs? You know his history—his labors; his long continued, and intense application; his obstinate conflicts with the

difficulties which nature opposed to his success. But he resolved to become the first statesman, and orator in Greece ; and he became so. But, why propose such an illustrious and transcendant example to young men who, as yet, are only entering on their literary career ?—Because every young man, who desires to excel, should, from the beginning, have his view and his ambition fixed on the highest models. But this example, while it is calculated to excite the ardor of your emulation, is fitted also to encourage your hopes, and may serve to shew you how much is in your power. For it is a maxim which ought to be engraven on the heart of every ingenuous youth to whom nature has not been extraordinarily deficient in her gifts, that, like the Athenian orator he can accomplish whatever he is firmly resolved to do.

But, let me add, that the love of praise, when it is not made the handmaid of vanity, but is modest and well-directed, will make you studious especially to gain the approbation of those whom it is your duty, and whom it will be your chief honor and happiness to please. To be ever ready to do good to the lowest of mankind is an exalted virtue ; but to be ambitious of the applauses of the ignorant and fickle multitude is a low aim ; and to collect them is not a difficult task to those who can stoop to the dishonorable arts which are necessary for this purpose. Be it your ambition to deserve the esteem

of the wise and good, whose opinion will stamp a worth upon your name. Cultivating their esteem, you will be supported also by the consciousness of your own hearts ;—That noble consciousness which God has made, next to his own approbation, the most precious reward of virtue ; and which will console you like Socrates, and like Phocion, or, to take a higher example, like Daniel, if, at any time, the malignant arts of rivals, or of enemies should prevail against you.

Prepare to deserve, hereafter, the approbation of your country by meritorious and distinguished services, as so many of the sons of the college have done who once occupied the place in which you now stand. Men who have not enjoyed the advantages of liberal culture are permitted to confine their views to a narrow sphere. But education imposes higher duties on her sons, and enforces them by the sublimest examples. Patriotism was the first of virtues to a Greek, or a Roman. He sucked it in with his first milk ; he inhaled it with his vital breath ; to strengthen this passion all his studies, his discipline, his exercises were directed.

But passing all other considerations, permit me to press upon you one which cannot fail to touch the heart of an ingenious youth. Among your highest aims let it ever be, to deserve the praise, and the love of those to whom, immediately, you owe your existence ; and who have the deepest stake in your honor and felicity.

The sweetest recompence which, as dutiful sons, you can receive for all the self-denials of your early virtues, must be to witness the happiness, and the honest pride of those who have loved you with supreme tenderness, whose hearts have throbbed with ten thousand anxieties over your inexperienced years, who have made so many painful sacrifices to your education, when they behold all their sacrifices, their anxieties, their love, repaid by your duty, and rewarded by your improvement. I seem to participate with them the tender delight, the sweet rapture in which they are dissolved, when they believe they are embracing in their arms their worthy sons. If the world were filled with your praises, methinks the idea dearest to you, must be the delicious pride which your reputation and honor must reflect to the heart of an affectionate parent. Ah! what a motive to improvement! what a reward for excelling! The most amiable trait in the character of the great Epaminondas was his filial piety. Being asked which was the happiest circumstance in a life distinguished, as his was, by illustrious deeds, and the admiration of his countrymen; "it was," says he, "that after my victory at Leuctra my father and mother were both living to enjoy the honors paid me by my fellow citizens." If ~~the~~ virtue displays a more resplendent lustre surrounded with the glory of heroic actions, yet this lovely sentiment, ^{alone} in my opinion, confers more real greatness on the Theban

hero than all his victories. The thought of rendering happy a father, or a mother by our own virtues and honors, how precious to the heart of a dutiful son ! There are no personal gratifications he would not forego, there are no sacrifices he would not make, to enjoy it. But why do I speak of sacrifices ? When it is your own virtue, honor, reputation, when it is, in a word, your own happiness which makes them happy.—Imagine you see the tear of tenderness and delight start in their eyes at these your first honors ; and, with their venerable and beloved forms before you, resolve that they never shall have cause to blush for their sons.

But if, in any instance, they have already descended to the tomb, and left you to maintain the honor of their families, let your virtues prove the noblest monument to their memory.

Would to God that I could inspire this pure and virtuous sentiment into the bosom of every American youth ! It would, along with religion, to which it is intimately allied, be the surest foundation of the prosperity and glory of my country.—“ Honor thy father and thy mother, saith the Spirit of God to the people of Israel, that thy days, thy existence as a nation, may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

I have recommended the praise of your friends, of your country, and of mankind, as a motive to duty ; and pointed out the good effects that may result

from your desire to obtain it. Bear with me however, a few moments, while I caution you against the dangerous consequences which may spring from the abuse of this passion.

Many young men who have early discovered a certain promptness and vivacity of parts, courted and caressed as the life of every gay company, have cultivated only those superficial talents which made them entertaining companions, and attracted the unthinking applauses of levity and mirth. Having glittered awhile in the circles of fashion, or of dissipation, they have afterwards sunk into insignificance and all their early promises have perished.

Their vanity, nourished by the praises of their friends, led them to imagine that they already shone with the lustre of genuine wit at the summit of the mountain, while they only flashed like meteors at the bottom for a few moments and disappeared. Between sprightliness of parts, and the capacities of a great mind, between promptness of wit, and solidity of understanding, between the brilliancy of certain companionable qualities and mature wisdom, there is a wide difference. And young men, fascinated by the noisy plaudits bestowed on these frivolous accomplishments, have too frequently misapplied their time, and given a wrong direction to the early efforts of their genius. Thus have been blasted all the opening blossoms of hope; and the first rich promise of fruit has withered and dropped from the tree before it came to maturity.

When vanity assumes a merit to itself for the novelty, the extravagance, or impiety of the principles it maintains, it presents to us one of the most fatal symptoms of a depraved heart. It is dangerous even to sport opinions of which you are not firmly persuaded, in order to gain the praise of ingenuity and wit. But lost, and commonly beyond recovery, is the unhappy youth whom the vanity of receiving the applause of loose and profligate companions leads to place himself at the head of associations for vice. Stimulated by their flatteries, he outgoes even his own desires for indulgence; and far outgoes his convictions of what is consistent with reason, or with duty. In proportion to the ascendancy he has assumed among them, must he be more profligate than they; aim a more poignant ridicule at virtue, more impious scoffs against religion. Oh! fatal vanity! which is hastening the perdition of the soul, and laying up for them the eternal execrations of those whom they have ruined by their example, and who are now ruining them by their guilty praises. “*Of you, I may say with the apostle, I hope better things, though I thus speak.*”

But, in the conclusion of this address, suffer me to repeat to you, that, however laudable in youth is a generous love of praise, it should never hold the chief sway among the motives of your conduct. It should ever be subordinate to a pure and ardent love of virtue, and reverence for religion, and even

to a just and noble respect for yourselves. But, the first object of desire to every reasonable being should be the approbation of God. He who embraces all being in himself is the sov'reign good. What is the transient breath of mortals compared to *his favour which is life, and his loving kindness which is better than life?* Vain is all human glory, separated from virtue and from the love and service of the living God. The laurels of the conquerors of the world have long since withered on their brows—the proudest monuments of princely vanity have been long since levelled with the dust, the most splendid works of genius and of art consecrated to the fame of illustrious men, are continually passing to oblivion, and the world itself shall perish; but those who love God shall *inhabit with him the praises of eternity.*

Never can you too profoundly impress it on your hearts that God your Creator possesses the supreme right to all the powers of your being. From him they are derived, to him they ought continually to tend. How amiable and lovely in youth is piety, which draws down the spirit of heaven to earth; which opens on the beginning of life the fairest blossoms of hope; which consecrates to our adorable Creator and Redeemer the bloom of existence; and is preparing in the heart the ripened fruit of a blessed and glorious immortality. The early contact of the soul, If I may speak so, with infinite purity, which is effected by the power of devotion, at once

ennobles and purifies its being, and prepares it for those holy and ineffable joys which perfect spirits taste in the presence of God.

Retiring as you now are from these studious retreats in which you have spent many hours of refined and social pleasure ; and dissolving many pleasing ties which have hitherto united you with your literary associates, let these separations remind you of that more serious moment when you must part with all human friendships ; and when the world fading from your view, shall leave you no support in the conflict with death, and no consolation at the bar of Heaven, but the mercy and grace of your Redeemer, and the review of life spent in obedience to his holy will. So live, and employ the talents which God has given you, that the Supreme Judge, assembling round you in that day your good works, may, from this tribunal, proclaim them to the universe, to your everlasting glory and praise.

As I am now performing the last office which my station requires in superintending this period of your education ; for your diligence, for your laudable ambition, in any instance, to excel ; for all that you have done well for your own honor and interest, or for the general interest of morals and letters in the college, accept my thanks. For nothing is dearer to my heart than the improvement in every useful and ornamental endowment of those whose education has been committed to my charge.

If, in the course of your studies, I have, through inadvertance or mistake, injured the feelings of one person in the class, I trust that my motives, and the arduousness of my situation will excuse it. All that is past is forgotten, except your virtues. Henceforward I regard you as equals, and, as men. One emotion only occupies my heart in a fervent aspiration to heaven, for your honor and usefulness in life ; and for your everlasting salvation. O blessed Jesus ! Saviour and advocate of mankind ! who dost offer the sincere prayers of thy people before God, deign to present this prayer with acceptance at the heavenly throne !

Adieu !