

I.
Jehovah's Gracious Appeal to the Young.

A SERMON,

ON OCCASION OF THE

DEATH OF THOMAS JAS. EARLE
OF ABERDEEN,

A MEMBER OF THE

SOPHOMORE CLASS,

IN THE

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI.

PREACHED IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, OF OXFORD,
MISS., DEC. 7TH, 1856,

BY

JOHN N. WADDEL, D. D.,

PROFESSOR OF THE GREEK LANGUAGE AND ANCIENT LITERATURE.

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UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI, DEC. 9, 1856.

DR. JOHN N. WADDEL,

DEAR SIR:—We, the undersigned, have been appointed by each of the respective classes in the University, to request, for publication, a copy of your sermon, delivered in Oxford on last Sabbath. We are actuated not only by considerations of love for our late departed companion, but also desire a copy for our own benefit; and believing, as we do, that its noble precepts will exercise a salutary influence upon many youths, we sincerely hope that you will grant the united wish of your devoted pupils.

J. A. BARKSDALE,
V. L. TERRELL,
McGEHEE DANDRIDGE,
LEWIS WEST,
W. COWAN,
D. E. SMITH,
FRANK HOLMES,
J. T. HOLMES, *Committee.*

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI, DEC. 10, 1856.

MESSRS. BARKSDALE, TERRELL and others:

GENTLEMEN — Your note of the 9th, conveying the request of the respective classes in the University, that I should furnish for publication, a copy of my sermon, on occasion of the death of your late lamented associate, James T. Earle, has been received. It is a source of sincere gratification to me to learn, that the solemn subject then presented has been impressed upon your minds, and with the fervent prayer for the Divine blessing upon the effort, I submit the sermon to your disposal.

Very truly and sincerely,
Your friend,

JOHN N. WADDEL.

Univ. M^o. March 11. 57.

A. dear Sir

I have been
troubled with the error of the word
"I have" in the first line, and
corrected the word "I have" in the first
line, & read it "I have" as it is in
the M^o. & M^o.

Yours in haste

C. L. M. M. M.

SERMON.

“Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth.”—JEREMIAH III: 4.

THE records of the dealings of God with His ancient covenant, yet wayward people, is but one extended parable, representing the nature of his intercourse with all the sinful race of man. Aside from the primary design present to the divine mind, when Abram was called to be the father of a race, chosen as the repository of His truth, and the channel of its transmission to remote ages, we may surely discover, as a secondary purpose of great importance, that, in all the various events of their history, their triumphs and defeats, their prosperity and adversity, their glory and their shame, God intends to teach us, as by a parable, the great truth that his blessing rests upon obedience, and his curse falls upon disobedience to his law. Nor are we less clearly taught by the smiles of his goodness upon them when they walked in his ways, by his frown of displeasure when they forsook his service, by the warnings of his righteous servants, by the pleadings he condescends to make with them, and the gracious invitations he so often extends to them to return from their evil ways, that this dispensation to them well and truly shadows forth the manner of his treatment of all the erring children of men. This is, indeed, the full development of that Great Name announced in vision to Moses: “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” Indeed, there is not, in all the reve-

lation of God to man, any attribute of his character so marvelously displayed, when considered in connection with our aggravated rebellion and ingratitude, as his condescension and kindness in endeavoring to restore us to his lost image and forfeited favor. The exhibition of Omnipotence, in the world of matter and of mind, would be a subject of astonishment to us were we to make it our sole study. The proof of his Omniscience, alone, could not fail to impress us with awe and to convince us that he is God; and the declarations of his word in regard to his Omnipresence, never fall upon the ear or recur to the mind of the devout and reverent, without suggesting solemn and influential reflections in regard to his majestic and glorious character. But when we think of such a being as this—a God, who is too wise to be deceived as to our conduct and its secret motives—possessed, also, of that attribute by which he is everywhere present and at every moment; from whose all-piercing eye there is no concealment; so mighty as to be able to avenge himself on all his rebellious creatures, and to punish all their violations of his law, and their defiance of his government—and with all this knowledge and power, forbearing to exercise his vindictive justice upon them; but on the contrary, with a tenderness of compassion unparalleled by any representation of human emotion, pursuing wayward man with the pressing offers of his abounding, loving kindness, we cannot avoid the conviction that his mercy is his crowning glory. We love to contemplate this great truth in all its serene and unclouded lustre and magnificence. Yes! Enthroned the Deity amid all the matchless glories of his inaccessible majesty—clothe him with all the attributes conceivable as belonging to his character; demonstrate, if you will, that he “is a Spirit, Infinite, Eternal and unchangeable in His Being, Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice and Truth,” and while I confess that you have arrayed before me the proofs that he is far above all human conception in his exaltation, yet I will

turn away from such a God as this, because I find no mention of the attribute upon which alone a sinner can venture to hope.

If God have eternity of being, he is great and incomprehensible, I admit; but I have no feeling towards him save that of awe. If he possess unlimited power, I can, and must admire, and wonder; but I cannot love him. If he be a God of holiness, I shrink in conscious guilt away from his presence. If a God of justice, I know my own deficiency in conformity, and my own repeated and aggravated transgressions of his law too well to think of him with other feelings than those of terror and dismay. If he be a God of truth, then I feel that being bound by this attribute, he must execute the threatenings which he himself has issued against the sinner, and I can only stand afar off in guilty trepidation, awaiting the period of retribution. It appears evident, therefore, from such a delineation of the character of the Deity, that however much we may wonder, revere and adore, we never can confide in him as a God of love. But add to all this, that he is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his goodness, as well as in all his other attributes, and then all the scene is illuminated at once, as a landscape lately darkened by clouds, now warmed and enlightened by the brilliancy of sun-light. And though I still entertain the most unqualified reverence and awe for his character, I mingle with these sentiments the emotions of a most confiding love. While conscious of my own guilt and infinite inferiority, I still adore his mysterious existence, and dread his omnipotence, and shrink from his holiness, and feel dismayed at his justice, and tremble at his truth, I find in his goodness an attribute which neutralizes all that is dreadful and terrifying, and there I take refuge from all my natural and guilty fears. And hence the word of Divine Revelation represents the Almighty in this light. He would indeed be no God for sinners of the human race, were he to omit this attribute of goodness from his character. All the other elements which

combine to constitute the character of Jehovah, while they might furnish subjects of adoration, wonder and joy to angelic and glorious spirits in the heaven of bliss, would only be elements of terror to the sinner, and the sure guarantee of eternal death.

Let us rejoice in the scriptural view of the paternal character of God, which is presented all through the sacred volume, and let us dwell upon this aspect of it set forth in the words of our text. In the context, we find as the occasion of their utterance, the following state of things: The kingdom of Israel, which had been so happily united under the magnificent reigns of David and Solomon, after the death of the latter, had been rent into two separate and independent empires, one consisting of two tribes, and known as the kingdom of Judah, and the remaining ten tribes constituting the kingdom of Israel. After this disruption, the latter rapidly apostatized from the worship and service of the true and living God, and prostituted themselves to idolatry. The result was immediate abandonment of God, and captivity by the Assyrians; and desolation after desolation swept with remorseless fury over the unhappy apostates. With this terrible display of his just anger against an unrighteous nation fully presented for their contemplation, it was a reasonable expectation on the part of God, who still claimed as his the kingdom of Judah, that they would be solemnly warned to return from their unfaithfulness and idolatry, and walk in the way of his commandments. But not so. "Judah took not warning, and was not afraid to continue, and to grow even more impudent in the most abominable and senseless idolatries. And after all that Judah had witnessed of the long continued captivity and misery of Israel, the people in general did not fall in cordially with good Josiah's reformation, but only feignedly, reluctantly and hypocritically." It would really seem, therefore, that "all things considered, Israel, with all her wickedness, was more

excusable than Judah had now become with her superior advantages. She had been first blessed with many pious kings. Secondly; she had enjoyed far greater advantages than Israel. Thirdly; she had been borne with in greater patience; and fourthly, had the doom of Israel set before her as a warning. Of course, under such circumstances, her guilt was greatly aggravated." Jeremiah, who was contemporary with the good king Josiah, commissioned of God, addresses the people of Judah, and recapitulates the history of the people of Israel—how they had apostatized from the true God and gone after idols, and that in consequence of such unfaithfulness, the Lord had given them up into the hands of their enemies. He reminds them that God, still merciful and long-suffering, instead of abandoning Judah, who to some extent imitated Israel, had sent them a pious king to restore the kingdom to its purity. The prophet then represents Jehovah, as it were, saying to them: In view of all these things, "wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth? Warned, corrected and invited to repentance, will ye not come again and seek mercy from that God who has always been the father and the guide of Israel? Will ye not entreat me again to take you under my fatherly guidance? Will ye not do it immediately, without further delay?" Thus we have before us, in this passage, a picture truthfully representing the tender relentings of the changeless compassions and mercy of our Heavenly Father. I have adopted it as the suggestive and fruitful basis of a discourse to the young on this occasion, because I feel that this is the feature of God's character most likely to attract their interest, and because the occurrences of the memorable week just past seem to me loudly to demand that the young of this community should have the claims of God pressed upon their attention with earnestness, and that the minister should, in God's stead, ask of every *youth*, of every *young man*, of every *member* of the

University, especially, in language of affectionate remonstrance, “Wilt thou not *from this time* cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth?” Yes! “from this time” — whatsoever you may have been doing heretofore, will you adopt this language, “from this time;” whatsoever you may have seen *others doing* in past years, will it not be your solemn and immovable resolution that “from this time” you will choose God as the guide of your youth? and to enforce my message I will make prominent two thoughts which seem to me to arise naturally out of the subject:

First. The implication that youth needs a guide. Second. That there are advantages in your thus resolving connected with the present time.

First. The necessity of guidance never ceases at any period of human life. There is no individual possessed of such profound practical wisdom as to be able to travel unaided the pilgrimage of life, foreseeing all the difficulties which throng his pathway, and avoiding the evils which menace his onward journeyings. Age itself, with all its accumulations of experience, is defective in the knowledge which is necessary to direct us amid the endlessly diversified circumstances and occurrences of life. I do not now allude to what is generally understood among men by “getting on” in life. I earnestly desire to fix your attention upon the great subject of life in its connection with eternity. Simply to breathe and live, even though amid all that constitutes life in its loftiest state of prosperity, abundantly furnished with wealth, laden with honors, or surrounded by the fascinations of earthly pleasure, — this — oh! *this* is not “the whole of life.” Were this all, you might find many a guide who could offer to your acceptance reliable directions for the attainment of these objects; and those who have attained the heights of earthly bliss can truly and wisely point out to you the land-marks and way-marks which lead successfully to the eagerly sought summit.

But the journey of life lies through perilous regions. There is but a single narrow and obscure track, traveled by few, leading up a steep and rugged ascent which will conduct the pilgrim to the green and flowery mount whereon repose the faithful servants of God, their toils and perils and conflicts forever ended. But ah! there is a broad and beaten track whose smooth and gentle descent — crowded with joyous multitudes in fond pursuit of pleasure — invites the unwary stranger to join this innumerable band and taste of earthly happiness; and while he hearkens to the charming voice that lures him from the hill-side view of toil and weariness, ere he is aware, he is swept along by the rushing tide of living, moving influence, and precipitated into the bottomless pit of endless perdition, which terminates this attractive avenue of death. Just where these two ways diverge — while some of the young before me have made their choice wisely, and are now climbing, with trustful hearts and earnest spirits, the upward, narrow path; while others are but just setting their footsteps in the wide, frequented road, and alas! many, it is greatly to be feared, are rushing madly on, and have made fearful progress on the road to ruin — just here, let me take my stand, and ere you have gone beyond the reach of my voice, let me entreat you to list to the warning notes I shall utter in your ears. Young man! let me tell you, there are perils just before you, — I feel that you will bear with me now, while your hearts are yet softened by the touch of God's afflictive dispensation so recently dealt upon us in the death of one of your associates — oh! hearken to me, I entreat you, ere the wound which grief and sympathy have opened in your hearts becomes closed and seared, while I seize the opportunity to enforce some of the lessons conveyed to us by this sad event.

I have said that every period of life is in need of guidance, but when we consider the situation of the young in all its deeply interesting peculiarities, it cannot fail to strike the mind

with emphatic force, that there is pressing need for guidance to those who now occupy that stage of human life. The peculiar characteristics in this connection are its *dangers* and its *advantages*. I shall proceed rapidly to allude to them, leaving the application to subsequent reflection under the guidance and blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Your first dangers arise from the state of your own hearts! I am not here to bring railing accusations against you, nor to adopt the language of stern denunciation, but I have no sympathy with that shallow and fashionable philosophy which loves to elevate human nature into a rank of exaltation to which every day's observation, every man's experience, the records of profane history, and the declarations of sacred scripture, combine to show it has no claim; and, taking these as our lights, we need not hesitate to repeat that the depravity and corruption of human nature constitute the exhaustless and alarming source and fountain of all the moral hazards that beset your onward pathway. Oh! how important, then, is self-knowledge! Chilon, of Sparta, left as the concentration of all the wisdom which he had acquired during life, the pregnant maxim, "know thyself;" and so important and valuable was it regarded among the ancients that they assigned to it a heavenly origin. Now, we press upon you the necessity and importance of assuming this as the first lesson in the great science of self-knowledge, that man is a fallen and depraved being. Without this principle established at the outset, every system of morals will be radically erroneous, and all future progress in morality will consequently be deceptive. For, not being aware of the real source of your danger, and all the moral perils you are continually encountering as you advance in life, it will be an utter impossibility that you should know how to begin to watch or guard against the foes to your purity and peace—for they assail you on every side—they come at any moment; they present themselves arrayed in every conceivable

shape and form, and ere you are aware they have gained the mastery. No vigor of resolution will suffice to protect you, no considerations of propriety, no meditations upon the evil consequences of a given course of immoral conduct will defend or secure you from the repeated assaults of these secret enemies. You have formed an inadequate estimate of their strength and power because you have failed to trace them to their true source. They come not alone, nor most formidably from abroad, but from within. They are not foreign foes only, but those also of your own household. The assailants you meet with from without would be powerless to effect evil against you were it not that there is a treacherous foe—a traitor within the fortress, parleying with the enemy and ready at all times to throw open the door to his admission. It is the heart which is corrupt by nature that renders you corrupt by practice; the fact, then, that we all carry this corrupt heart about with us renders it an impossibility for any one to resist, unaided, the temptations that environ his pathway, or to pursue, unguided, a career of safety and virtue through life. You have tried it even now, young man! brief as has been your career, limited as has been your experience, you can attest that the position is a true one, that “it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” You have met the enemy in the form of some attractive pleasure, and under strong and irresistible temptation, you have yielded. Aided by “an inflammable and prurient imagination,” natural to youth, a rashness and impetuosity of temper, thoughtlessness and recklessness of disposition, pride of independence, and a waywardness that refuses to be counseled, the impetuous rush of youthful passion in all its force, has swept you away for a time, and when the period of gratification has ceased and the immediate results have presented themselves to the view, and the more remote consequences suggested themselves in dim perspective in the future, you have been awakened in many

instances from the temporary insanity, and resolved "in all the magnanimity of thought," that such an ignominious defeat shall never again degrade you. But anon the wily foe comes again, and when the armour of virtuous resolution has been laid aside, in an evil hour of false security, and the voice of the charmer sings softly and sweetly, you are overpowered once more, and Sampson slumbers in Delilah's lap again. The treacherous syren binds you in the cords of inextricable habit until shorn of the locks of your strength, you lie passive in the hands of your victorious foes, their mockery and derision. You may be amazed at the impotence of all the resolutions you have formed to defend you from such results, but you must at least have learned that they are utterly unavailing. I can whisper to you in friendly tones of earnest anxiety, the secret reason of this sad result — it is the inborn depravity of the human heart. Now, young man, you must learn this sad and unpleasant truth ere you be fitted to take the first step towards self-protection : and knowing this great truth that underlies "not only all true religion, but all true philosophy," you will see where your error lies. You will learn the folly of endeavoring in *your own strength* to fight against *your own heart*. You will see that it is a waste of effort to attempt in your own wisdom so to guide your way as to avoid these humiliating defeats. It is your own unrenewed will which constitutes the mighty foe. How, then, can you, without some more powerful ally, ever hope to succeed against your own will? Would to God I could press this cardinal, fundamental doctrine upon you so as to preclude the necessity of your purchasing the conviction of its truth at the monstrous price of a fatal experience. But were I to dip my pen in the colors of heavenly truth, and with the seraphic imagination and descriptive eloquence of an angel, attempt to paint before you the image of a hideous, naked human heart, in all its moral deformity, I could never come up to the picture drawn in the

dark coloring of truth by the pen of inspiration. Listen ! oh youth, and learn the doctrine of the Bible on this subject : “ Out of the heart,” says Christ, “ proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, blasphemies.” And then Paul, to the same import : “ There is none righteous, no, not one ; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way ; they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one ! Their throat is an open sepulchre ; with their tongues they have used deceit ; the poison of asps is under their lips ; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness ; their feet are swift to shed blood ; destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.” These being the streams that issue from the heart, the nature of that poison welling up there must be most deadly. I point out this truth to you, then, in order that the source of all the moral hazards through which you must pass in your onward course, being known, you may no longer delude yourselves with the hope of being able to guide your own way, or defend yourselves against your foes. I know there is a high-sounding theory that falls gratefully upon the ear, which teaches man to rely upon himself alone ; but every one who has learned in the school of Christ can tell you that “ self-reliance ” in this sense “ is but another name for pride.” That “ all such hopes and structures of pride are so fragile and unreal that a breath of air may blast them, and reduce their possessors to a condition as friendless and pitiable as that to which the haughty king of Babylon was brought down by a voice that fell from heaven.” Since these are the facts in regard to your own hearts, it is easy to see that the source of all your evils and of all your dangers can never be the source of guidance and of safety. May we not ask you, then, in view of this state of things, in view of the inevitable dangers you must encounter, in view of the

inadequacy of your own resources, either to guide or to defend yourselves, "wilt thou not from this time cry unto God, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

Second. Your dangers also are from *without*. Of this class of dangers none are more formidable than wicked companions. These have conducted the unsuspecting youth, sent forth from the pure atmosphere of the domestic circle and thrown upon the wide theater of college life, step by step, from one degree of sinful indulgence to another, until shipwreck — utter, hopeless shipwreck of all happiness, purity and peace, has been the sad result. Stealthily do they approach, until with soft and gentle insinuations they have succeeded in gaining the confidence of the unwary victim of their intended sacrifice. Then by ridicule of the pious restrictions of home, by representing it as unmanly to yield obedience to the rules of virtue inculcated by a pious father, or to remember the admonitions and tears of a fond mother; by scoffing at the sanctuary and services of God; by painting the unholy joys of the revel and the wine cup; by ever sounding the praises of fashionable pleasure and sensual gratification; by presenting the proposal of social banding together for purposes of unlawful enjoyment — "cast in thy lot with us" — by these and a thousand other methods of seduction, which have been in use since the days of the Royal Preacher, this hapless youth — the child of fond hope, of joyous yet trembling anticipation, of anxious solicitude, of tearful prayer — first learns to listen, then admires, and at last embraces his own ruin, temporal and eternal. He begins by a partial abhorrence, a shrinking from these enticements, but too soon, alas! he is found "walking in the counsel of the ungodly," then "standing in the way of sinners," then "sitting in the seat of the scornful!" He is found "in the way of evil men, who speak froward things, who leave the paths of uprightness, who walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice to do evil, who delight in the frowardness of the wicked,

whose ways are crooked, and they are froward in their paths," and thus finally he reaches the climax of his woes and falls into the hands of her whose "house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead;" of whom it is said that "none that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life." Oh! here, just here, let me stand at the margin of this wide sea of iniquity, and call unto the young man about to launch his frail bark, in the language of earnest and affectionate entreaty, "Come back! come back! once more to the firm, safe landing of virtue and of peace! The surface of the sea of Pleasure where you stand, and for a short distance onward, is smooth and unbroken by a ripple, and the light of earthly Hope is dancing upon the waves, luring you on in unsuspecting security. But as you leave these safe moorings of virtuous bliss farther and farther behind, your vessel will be found whirling in giddy circles, narrowing at every successive turn, and moving more and more rapidly round and round until you find yourself hopelessly inclosed in the vortex of this ^æ ~~mal~~strom of Degradation and of Death." I care not what may be the form of pleasure, whether the wine-cup, or the scene of debauchery; the card-table, or the midnight assemblies for all these purposes, I warn you that these will *all* terminate in this same deep and awful destruction, unless you pause and retrace your footsteps. Or, if you be only now undergoing the severe ordeal of temptation and seduction, to which you have not yet yielded, to you I would say, there is no safety where you now stand. You may deem your own heart stout enough to resist, and your early principles deeply enough inculcated to sustain you in your resistance, but if you have no more efficient aid than these, fall you must. There is but one Rock of Security—but one Guide out of this labyrinth, or amid these perplexities of temptation and sin. That Rock is a firm faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which will bind you as an anchor amid the troubled waters of

Life; that Guide is the Holy Spirit of God who alone can take your feet out of the paths of the destroyer and plant them on the Rock of Ages, who alone can pilot you through the perils of the great deep of Life, and shelter you in the haven of Eternal Rest, and land you upon the banks of everlasting deliverance. Oh, then, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto God, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

Another awful source of danger to young men is the influence of *bad books*. This is emphatically the age of books. The Press, even with the aid of the power of steam, can scarcely keep pace with the teeming productions of the intellect of this age—can scarcely issue with sufficient rapidity, the books that are furnished for publication. Every mail-coach and steam car that moves upon our highways, and every steamboat that traverses the broad bosom of our waters, groans with the weight of books seeking readers whose minds are to be instructed or poisoned by their contents. In the midst of such a vast quantity of Literature, it cannot be otherwise than that there is a fearfully large proportion of works that are replete with most deleterious influences, especially fatal to the minds of the young. And there is not a more potent engine of evil, than a bad book. It makes its appeal silently, but eloquently. It sets forth its sentiments of evil, clothed in all the attractive drapery of beautiful language, and in such a disguise it wins its way, the more effectually, to the very penetralia of the soul. Carefully does it shun rude and vulgar phraseology, and yet, with its finely wrought style, conveys the very poison of death into the mind. Like luscious fruit amid verdant foliage, which charms the eye and tempts the appetite, its taste is death. There are no works of this day more fatal in effecting these results than works of fiction covertly conveying infidel sentiments. We have, it is true, works of pretended science, such as "*Types of Mankind*," by the notorious pair, "Gliddon and Nott;" but these, by the high

claims they assert to a character for science, are at once brought to the searching ordeal of criticism, and after ~~a~~ ^{scarcely} ~~century~~ are proven to be a mass of wickedness and ignorance, and on them the stamp of public repudiation has been placed with such sternness, that they exert little or no influence upon the youthful mind. There may be works of fiction which, rightly viewed, are capable of exerting a happy moulding influence upon the mind, but the books I deprecate are the fashionable works issued from the press under the title of Novels, which, in the form of heroic character, or philosophical reasoning, or romantic incident, secretly convey sentiments the most hostile to virtue and the Christian religion. I need not undertake to specify — “their name is legion.” They are

“ ————— ^{on} Crammed full
 Of poison^{ous} error, blackening every page;
 And oftener still, of trifling, second-hand
 Remark, and old, diseased, putrid thought;
 And miserable incident, at war
 With nature, with itself and truth at war:
 Yet charming still the greedy reader on,
 Till done — he tries to recollect his thoughts
 And finds ————— ”

them either “dreaming emptiness,” or thoughts of wicked, blasphemous rejection of all that is “true and lovely and of good report” in the system of christianity. If the attack upon the citadel of Virtue were open and undisguised, then it would be an easy matter to meet and foil it, for we should be guarded and ready. But not so! In the disguise of Virtue it comes the apologist and the eulogist of Vice. Under the garb of religion, or at least an external respect for it, the sentiments are so artfully presented as to promote insidiously the tenets of a most decided infidelity. And while I cannot here specify works of this type, I will say that the surest evidence of the character of a book is always to be found in the influence it

exerts upon the taste for other reading. These books, then, tried by this test, will be inevitably found to be of the very worst tendency. When they have once taken fast hold of the mind, they destroy any taste the reader may previously have cultivated for solid reading; and if it should so happen that these be the first books put into the hands of our youth, such a taste, in all probability, will never be formed. The Bible, with all its sublime lessons of wisdom, will become odious and disgusting, and the youth under this morbid appetite, loathes all wholesome mental aliment; and that intellect which, under proper training, might have grown to gigantic proportions, will gradually shrink to the statuë of frivolous imbecility; and that heart which, under Divine guidance, might have been the sanctified abode of truth and holiness, will surely be inhabited by all that is polluted in passion and all that is corrupt in principle.

Now, oh, beloved youth! let me beseech you to shun this channel of wickedness — “avoid it! pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away!” Drop from your grasp the poisoned trash which is thus to stupefy and enervate your intellect, and ruin your soul! I do not warn you of danger without pointing you to the place of safety; I do not tell you there are perilous paths, without offering you a guide to conduct your erring footsteps to a place of safety. Here is the Book which, if you will receive it, will be a “lamp to your feet and a light to your path:”

“————— Hast thou ever heard
Of such a book? The author—God himself;
The subject, God and man, salvation, life
And death — eternal life, eternal death —
Dread words! whose meaning has no end, no bounds —
Most wondrous book! bright candle of the Lord!
Star of eternity! the only star
By which the bark of man could navigate

The sea of life, and gain the coast of bliss
Securely ! ”

Young man ! have you not a Bible ? Do you not remember the parting gift of that tender mother, when she bade you farewell with tearful eyes, as you were about to go beyond the reach of her kindly offices, though not beyond the influence of her prayers ? Or perchance you found deposited in your trunk the precious book ! Oh ! retire to your room this day, from this house, and clasp to your heart this inestimable treasury of heavenly wisdom, and make it your daily meditation and your nightly study ; but oh ! reject it and awful will be the fate which awaits you. You will

“ ——— Die unpardoned, unredeemed, unsaved,
And at the hour of doom shall be cast out
To utter darkness, in the night of hell—
By mercy and by God abandoned—there
To reap the harvest of eternal woe ! ”

In view, then, of this awful truth, “Wilt thou not from this time cry unto God, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth ? ” Let this suffice for the dangers. And while I press upon you the earnest exhortation of my text, I feel that I occupy high ground this day for the enforcement of the appeal, by offering you, secondly, the advantages for making this resolution, connected with the present time. I waive considerations drawn from the known and admitted impressibleness of the human heart in the days of youth, or from the familiar fact that impressions then made are more durable and permanent than those made at any subsequent period. These reflections convince us all that the period of life which embraces the majority of my hearers this morning, is one of the most critical in its nature ; for now the soft and pliant material of the heart is ready to receive the impress that is to shape the character and mould the destiny for eternity. This

reflection of itself would seem sufficient to lend tenfold emphasis to the phrase of our text, "*from this time.*" But I hasten to connect these remarks with the sad occurrence which has recently cast its gloomy shadow over our community, and more especially over our University. It is but a fortnight this day, that your ranks were unbroken. There was no visible mark of God's displeasure upon you, or among you, and no breach in your numbers by the hand of death. Health glowed on every cheek, and sparkled in every eye, and every heart bounded with joyous exultation and buoyancy of spirit. And had the announcement been made at that time that ere the revolution of two brief weeks, one of your number would be sleeping that sleep which knows no waking till the resurrection morn, the declaration would have been received with indifference and incredulity. But now, morning after morning, in yonder chapel,

"Ye gather to your place of prayer
 With slow and solemn tread,
 Your ranks seem full, your mates all there,
 But the soul of one has fled !
 Ye reckon it in days since he
 Strode up yon foot-worn aisle,
 With his bright eye flashing gloriously,
 And his lip wreathed with a smile.
 Oh, had it been but told you then
 To mark whose lamp was dim,
 From out that band of fresh-lipped men,
 Would ye have singled him?"

Oh, no ! He who now lies low in death was hardly the one whom you would have selected to fulfill the prediction. There was no solemn whispering voice that sadly floated on the air, and told him he must die on Tuesday morning last at 2 o'clock. He had no warning of his doom. Disease seized his manly, well-knit frame, and prostrated him in a moment upon the bed

of suffering. Fever kindled in the brain, and reason was dethroned. The light of his clear intellect was intensified into the baleful fires of insanity, and the malady went from point to point of his system with a triumphant march, conquering as it went, with a steady step that turned not aside for all the skill of the healer's art, until finally it seized upon the citadel of life, and the icy touch of death closed the scene. He is gone! "Man dieth and wasteth away, yea! man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" It is not for us to answer this solemn question; we have nought to do with that subject; we only know that he is in the hands of a wise, merciful and just God, who cannot but do right. There we leave him. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." My business is now with the living,—not the dead. Sad were my reflections on that solemn occasion, when his comrades and his preceptors in mournful procession accompanied his remains through the campus on his last journey homeward. I thought that he was leaving the campus for the last time, that he was surrounded by his college friends for the last time, that his class—chief mourners on the sad occasion—were with him for the last time, that he had recited his last lesson on earth. The mournful toll of the college bell that rang out his knell, would never again summon him to prayer or exercise—it could not "fall upon the dull cold ear of death." And often did my thoughts follow the melancholy cortege that attended his remains to that spot, so lately left in joyous light-heartedness, that home which once knew him, never more to know him again. And I thought of the scene that has transpired ere this, in that once blissful spot—the tearful eyes, the broken hearts that are there! But all these are the inseparable accompaniment of such a sad event. The element of chief interest in this death, and that, too, which speaks with most stirring emphasis to you, is that it was a young man, a student of the University, who fell a victim to the destroyer; and as my eye

ran along the extended line of youthful mourners, the question arose in my bosom, unbidden, "Who next?" And I ask it now, this morning, of you, my young friends assembled before me, who next of our number will be called by death to follow James T. Earle? Is it I? Is it you? Or you? or you? Ponder the question well, I entreat you, and when your heart grows soft at the recollection of your departed friend, so early cut down in the morning of life, oh, do not harden it by turning away from the friendly voice of warning! Oh! when your heart is swelling, and your eyes are filling, and your voice is faltering in speaking of the departed; when you think that no more! no more! oh, never more on earth, shall his voice greet you in morning salutation, or his hand grasp yours in friendly cordiality; that never again will you meet him in college hall, or in the charmed circle of youthful association; then, while your heart is softening under these natural and generous emotions, and earth seems for a time to have lost its grasp upon you, let the solemn reflection, I too must die, come heavily down like lead into the deep waters of your inner spirit, and fit you to improve this sad and melancholy dispensation. I have insisted upon the need you have for a guide in life, and I have shown you that life is full of perils.

But let us not forget that Death, also, must sooner or later be encountered by each of us; and let me tell you, young man, you need a guide in death! There is a dark and shadowy vale through which all must pass. Whom will you have to accompany you through it? Spirits of vindictive justice, who will arraign your unsanctified soul before the bar of an offended God! will you choose them as your guide? Oh! they await all the finally impenitent! but then you can make a better, a wiser choice now! Come! oh come, beloved young friends, and when God asks "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" say with David, "When thou saidst seek ye my face, my

heart said unto thee, thy face, Lord, will I seek." Then as you contemplate such a scene as this you may say, "This God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." But hasten, I entreat you—you have not a moment to lose! How know you but that disease has already marked you for its own, and that you, too, at the midnight hour, may become the victim of a rapid and resistless malady, extinguishing the light of your intellect in the darkness of phrenzy? Then there will be no time, no capacity for thought or prayer! Be in haste, then, I entreat you, to "Cry from this time, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth!" For

"Few are our days, those few we dream away,
Sure is our fate, to moulder in decay!
Rise! immortal soul, above thine earthly fate!
Time yet is thine, but soon, 'twill be too late!"