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A D D R E S S

TO THE

S E N I O R C L A S S

O F

S T U D E N T S,

Who were to receive the Degree of

B A C H E L O R O F A R T S,

And leave the College. Sept. 23. 1787.

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B Y

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D.D. I.L.D.

President of the College of New-Jersey.

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P A I S L E Y:

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M.DCC.LXXXVIII

## A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

IT seems proper to acquaint the public with the reason and intention of this publication. It had been the custom in the college of New-Jersey, from its first establishment, that the President should address a particular exhortation to the senior students every year, who were to receive the first degree in the arts and leave college. But last year, he thought it proper to make a collection or summary of all the advices that had been given to the young gentlemen for their conduct in life, in different years, under distinct heads, in order that they might be published. He was the more induced to this, that several instances have happened of gentlemen, educated at this college, signifying that they thought they had received advantage, in many situations, by recollecting the advices given them at their graduation, for their conduct in life. He therefore now puts the whole into their hands, and into those of all who are willing to accept of it, as the fruit of long experience and considerable attention to the course of human affairs, earnestly wishing that they may be useful and eminent as citizens, scholars, patriots; and at the same time beseeching them, that in any, or all, of these characters, they may neither forget nor be ashamed to be Christians.

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AN  
ADDRESS

TO THE  
STUDENTS

TO THE  
SENIOR CLASS,

ON THE LORD'S DAY PRECEDING COMMENCEMENT,

September 23, 1787.

GENTLEMEN,

AS you have now finished the usual course of study in this place, and are to enter upon public life, in a variety of ways, as each shall be determined, by inclination or other circumstances; I willingly embrace the opportunity of addressing an exhortation to you, at this important and interesting period of your lives. I do not mean to say much, if any thing, that you have never heard before, but to lay hold of your present situation, with some hope, that what may be said now, will remain upon your memory, and have an influence upon your future conduct. That I may speak with the greater clearness and precision, I will divide what I have to say, into three branches: I. Your duty to God, and the interest of your souls: II. The prosecution of your studies, or the improvement of your talents as members of society: III. Prudence in your commerce with the world in general, your outward provision, and other circumstances in life.

As to the first of these, it is to all men, of the greatest moment. Some of you, I know, and more, I hope, are intended for the service of Christ in the ministry. To this we have the universal suffrage, that true religion is absolutely necessary, with which I heartily agree. But I with those who are destined for other employments, may not sometimes make a comparison here unjust in itself, and dangerous, perhaps, even ruinous to their own souls. Because true religion is necessary to a minister, and they are conscious to themselves, or at least, suspect that they are without religion; instead of laying to heart the things that belong to their peace, they only determine that they will follow some other calling. But alas, though the difference to the public is very great, the difference to the persons themselves, seems to me but very small. A clergyman without religion, to be sure, is a dreadful character, and when visible, a detestable one; but truly one would think at the close of life, it will be but little comfort to a man, that he must go to the place of torment, not as a minister, but as a lawyer, physician, soldier, or merchant. Therefore suffer me to say to you, and to all who now hear me, that the care of your souls is the *one thing needful*. All mankind, of every rank, denomination and profession, are sinners by nature. The ministers of the New Testament have received a commission to preach the gospel to every creature: "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

While I say this, I beg of you to consider that the advantages which you have enjoyed, will be an aggravation of your guilt, if they are unimproved. There is an equity as well as wisdom often to be observed in the providence of God. Unless reasons of sovereignty, that is, reasons unknown to us, prevent it, judgment will be inflicted, when a person or people is ripe for the stroke. Therefore as some plants and seeds, both from their own nature and from the soil and situation in which they are placed ripen sooner than others, so some persons, by the early pains taken upon them, and the privileges they

have enjoyed, fill up the measure of their iniquities sooner than others, and are more speedily overtaken with deserved vengeance. There are many common sayings that are the effects of error and prejudice; for example, that which you will be told by many, that the children of good men are as bad as any. If this is intended to insinuate that a regular and pious education affords no ground of hope for good behaviour in after life, it is at once contrary to reason and experience. But if we should say that when young persons piously educated, burst restraining bonds asunder, and are seduced into vicious courses, they commonly run faster and farther than others, it is a certain fact, which may be easily accounted for, and affords an important instruction to all.

After intreating you to lay religion to heart, I must beseech you to guard against being too easily satisfied in a matter of infinite moment. Do not think it enough to be prudent, cautious, or decent in your conduct, or to attain a character formed upon worldly principles and governed by worldly motives. I am not against (as you all know) introducing every argument against sin, and shewing you that loose practices are ruinous to name, body, and estate. Neither is it wrong that you should fortify every pious resolution by the addition of these motives. But alas! the evil lies deeper. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." True religion must arise from a clear and deep conviction of your lost state, by nature and practice, and an unfeigned reliance on the pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace of God.

Suffer me, upon this subject, earnestly to recommend to all that fear God, to apply themselves from their earliest youth, to the exercises of piety, a life of prayer and communion with God. This is the source from which a real Christian must derive the secret comfort of his heart, and which alone will give beauty, consistency, and uniformity to an exemplary life. The reason why I have mentioned it on this occasion is, that youth, when the spirits are lively, and the affections vigorous and strong,

is the season when the habit must be formed. There are advantages and disadvantages attending every stage of life. An aged Christian will naturally grow in prudence, vigilance, usefulness; attention to the course of Providence, and subjection to the divine will, but will seldom attain to greater fervour of affection and life, in divine worship, than he had been accustomed to from his early years. On the contrary, he will generally see it necessary, instead of trusting to occasional impulses to guard and strengthen the habit by order and form.

Be companions of them that fear God. Esteem them always most highly, and shun, as a contagious pestilence, the society, not only of loose persons, but of those especially, whom you perceive to be infected with the principles of infidelity, or enemies to the power of religion. Many of these are much more dangerous to pious persons than open profligates: as for these last, decency is against them, the world itself, condemns them, reason despises them, and prudence shuns them. He must have a very mean taste indeed, who is capable of finding pleasure in disorder and riot. If I had no higher pleasure on earth than in eating and drinking, I would not chuse to eat and drink with the drunken. Order, neatness, elegance, and even moderation itself, are necessary to exalt and refine the pleasures of a sensual life. Therefore I will not allow myself to suppose, that I shall afterwards hear any of you roaring and swearing in taverns, or wasting your bodies and estates by lewdness and debauchery, or that you take pleasure in those who do so. But be especially careful to avoid those who are enemies to vital piety, who do not pretend to speak directly against religion, but give every ill name they can think of, to all who seem to be in earnest on that subject, and vilify the exercises of religion under the names of whining, cant, grimace, and hypocrisy. These are often unhappily successful in making some uncautious persons ashamed of their Redeemer's name, his truths, his laws, his people, and his cross.

I need hardly observe that this is not to be understood as recommending pharisaical pride and superciliousness, far less a rash and presumptuous judging of the state of others. It is not only lawful, but our duty, to have a free communication with our fellow-citizens, for the purposes of social life: It is not only lawful but our duty to be *courteous*, and to give every proper evidence of respect and attention to others, according to their rank and place in society. What I mean to caution you against, is an unnecessary, voluntary intercourse, such as has inclination for its motive, and pleasure for its object. With respect to this, we need not hesitate to say, with the inspired prophet, "He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

II. I come now to speak a little upon the prosecution of your studies, and the improvement of your talents. Your education in a seminary of learning, is only intended to give you the elements and first principles of science, which should whet your appetite for more, and which will enable you to proceed with an assured hope of success. It hath been generally a favourite point with me, to recommend the union of piety and literature, and to guard young persons against the opposite extremes. We see sometimes the pride of un sanctified knowledge do great injury to religion; and on the other hand, we find some persons of real piety despising human learning, and disgracing the most glorious truths, by a meanness and undecency, hardly sufferable, in their manner of handling them. On this account, industry and application to study is of the utmost importance to those who are intended for the office of the ministry.

But I have it further in view, to recommend to you all, without exception, a life of diligence and application. Avoid sloth as a dangerous enemy. Fear it, hate it, and despise it. It is a common saying, that men do not know their own weakness; but it is true, and a truth more important, that they do not know their own strength. I desire that you will receive the following information from me, which, I dare say, every person of judgment and

experience will confirm, that multitudes of moderate capacity have been useful in their generation, respected by the public, and successful in life, while those of superior talents from nature, by mere slothfulness and idle habits, or self-indulgence, have lived useless, and died contemptible. There is also a disposition in young people, which, you know, I have often set myself to oppose; to think that loose, irregular sallies, and sometimes even vicious liberties, are a sign of spirit and capacity. The very contrary is the truth. It requires no genius at all to do mischief. Persons of the greatest ability have generally been lovers of order. Neither is there any instance to be found of a man's arriving at great reputation or usefulness, be his capacity what it might, without industry and application.

Suffer me here, in a particular manner, to recommend to you a firmness of mind and steady perseverance, as of the utmost moment to your progress and success. Whatever a man's talents from nature may be, if he apply himself to what is not altogether unsuitable to them, and hold on with steadiness and uniformity, he will be useful and happy; but if he be loose and volatile, impatient of the slowness of things in their usual course, and shifting from project to project, he will probably neither be the one nor the other.

I am somewhat at a loss what to say as to character and reputation; yet it is so important a point, that it must not be omitted. True religion should furnish you with a higher and nobler principle to govern your conduct, than the desire of applause from men. Yet, in subordination to what ought to be the great purpose of life, the approbation of the Supreme Judge, there is a just and laudable ambition to do what is praise worthy among men. This ought not to be extinguished in the minds of youth; being a powerful spur and incitement to virtuous or illustrious actions. A truly good man will seek no praise but by honest means, and will be superior even to disgrace itself, if brought upon him by adherence to his duty. Yet will he also be tender and careful not to give just

cause to any to impeach his conduct. If I might be permitted to direct your views upon this subject, I would say, consider that your character is already beginning to form. Every step you take further in life, will both ascertain and spread it. You ought also to be informed, that notwithstanding all the hackneyed complaints of the partiality and censoriousness of the world, a man's real character, in point of ability, is *never* mistaken, and but *seldom* in point of morals. That there are many malicious and censorious persons, I agree; but lies are not half so durable as truth. There is an impartiality in a diffusive public, which will shew itself where means of information are afforded to it. Therefore reverence the judgment of mankind, without idolizing it. Be as cautious as possible to do nothing that deserves censure, and as little concerned as possible what reproaches may fall upon you undeserved. It is not a contradiction, but perfectly consistent to say, a man should be tender and even jealous of his character, and yet not greedy of praise. There is an amiableness and dignity in the first, but a meanness and littleness in the last.

Another advice, near a-kin to the last is, do as much as you can to deserve praise, and yet avoid as much as possible the hearing of it. This is but another view of the same subject; and that it may be the more useful, and my intention in it the more manifest, I will extend it both to praise and dispraise. When you come into public life, and become the objects of general attention, not only guard against fishing for applause, and being inquisitive after what people think or say of you, but avoid knowing it as much as you decently can. My reason for this is, that whether you will or not, you will hear as much of the slanders of your enemies as you will bear with patience, and as much of the flattery of your friends, or interested persons, as you will bear with humility. Therefore prepare yourself for both, but seek for neither. Several eminent authors, as you doubtless know, have given it as an advice to young clergymen, and other

public speakers, to get a friend who is a good judge, and intreat him to make remarks upon their composition, carriage, delivery, &c. with fidelity. I have nothing to say against the goodness of the advice in itself; but at the same time, I have no great conviction of the necessity or even utility of it. It is very seldom that advice is asked in this manner, but with a view to obtain a compliment, and still seldomer that it is given with sufficient freedom and impartiality. If any man has humility and self-denial enough to wish to know his own faults, there will be little difficulty in discovering them. Or, if we could suppose there were difficulty to himself, his enemies or rivals, or talkative people, though they be neither the one nor the other, will supply the defect. Perhaps you will think, that in the strictures of malice and envy, there is generally an acrimony that has no great tendency to reform; like a rusty knife, which makes a very painful wound, though not very deep. I agree to this fully, and yet affirm, that there is so much the more virtue, so much the more wisdom, and perhaps I may add, so much the more pleasure in making this use of them.

I conclude this part of my subject, with advising you to maintain a friendship with one another, and to carry the intimacies of early life, through the whole of it. To this I add, that you ought to desire and cultivate the correspondence of men of piety and learning. Man made for society, derives his chief advantages of every kind, from the united efforts of many conspiring to the same end. As to piety, nothing is more essential to it than social communication; it properly consists in the supreme love of God, and fervent charity to all men. The Christian, also, hath need of the assistance of others in his passage through this world, where he has so much opposition to encounter. Those who deserve this character, are said to be pilgrims and strangers in the earth. Therefore they ought to keep together, lest they lose their way. They comfort each other in distress; they assist each other in doubts and difficulty; they embolden each other by their example, and they assist each other by their prayers.

This is no less the case in respect to literature. It has been observed, that great and eminent men have generally, in every nation, appeared in clusters. The reason of this probably is, that their society and mutual intercourse greatly adds to their improvement, and gives force and vigour to the talents which they may severally possess. Nothing is so powerful an incitement to diligence, or so kindles the best sort of ambition, as the friendship, advice, and assistance of men of learning and worth. The approbation of one such, is of more value to a noble mind, than peals of applause from an undiscerning multitude. Besides, the assistance which men of letters give to each other, is really necessary in the execution of particular works of great compass and utility. If it is by the labours of preceding ages, that it is now possible in one life to attain to such a degree of knowledge as we have sometimes seen; so it is by the concurrence of many friends lending their assistance, that one man has been sometimes able to present to the public a system of science, which, without that aid, he alone would have in vain attempted to bring to perfection. There is no circumstance which throws this new country so far back, in point of science, as the want of public libraries, where thorough researches might be made, and the small number of learned men to assist in making these researches practicable, easy, or complete.

III. The last head on which I promised to give you my advice, was prudence in your communication with the world in general, your outward provision and other circumstances that conduce to the happiness and comfort of life. On this subject, I begin with what I have often recommended to you, frugality in the management of your affairs; order and exactness in your dress, furniture, books, and keeping of accounts. Nothing could be further from my mind than to recommend the temper or conduct of avaricious men, whose sordid souls have no higher ambition, and indeed, hardly any other desire, than that of getting pelf. This is not only unbecoming a gentleman and a scholar, but in my opinion,

wholly inconsistent with the character. I never knew an instance of a person in whom this disposition took place in early life, that could apply to study, or that became eminent in any thing that was good. The opposite vice is the common fault of youth, and it is against this I would caution you. The frugality I would recommend, is that of an independent mind, that fears and scorns subjection to others, and remembers the just saying of Solomon, "That the borrower is servant to the lender." That frugality which arises from order and œconomy, is not only consistent with, but it is the parent of liberality of sentiment, and generosity of conduct. It is indeed the source of beneficence, for no man can bestow out of an empty purse. On the other hand, covetousness and profusion, are by no means repugnant to each other, and indeed they are more frequently joined than many apprehend. The stricture of Sallust, in the character of Catiline, *alieni appetens sui profusus*, has been often cited, and may generally be applied to loose and profligate livers. I hope therefore, you will learn betimes to distinguish between the virtue and the vice, and to adhere to the one as much as you despise the other.

I will make an observation here, which may be applied not only to the distinction of character in this instance, but in almost every other that has been or shall be mentioned. It will be much your interest, if you learn betimes to make not a hasty but a deliberate and candid judgment, when you infer character from appearances. The habits of life which men contract, give a bias to their opinions, and even a tincture to their conversation and phraseology. Persons inclined to levity and dissipation, will often ascribe to covetousness, what arises from very different causes. I have known even in youth, a person declining to engage in a party of pleasure, accused by his companions as mean and sneaking, and afraid of his purse; when, in reality, it was not that he loved money more, but pleasure less. It may sometimes happen; that a person of principle will see it proper to

decline meetings of festivity, though not directly sinful, as an unnecessary waste of time, or from some other circumstance to him dangerous and ensnaring. I have also seen persons more advanced in years, who from a habit, perhaps a necessary habit of strict temperance, and retired manner of life, were very sparing of personal expense, and even not much disposed to social intercourse, and therefore called close or covetous; and yet, when applied to for a pious and charitable purpose, would be much more liberal than others of an opposite turn of mind. Observations perfectly similar might be made upon the opposite character of liberality. It is not every kind of openness of heart that indicates profusion. We are told by Solomon, "That the liberal soul shall be made fat," Prov. xi. 25. And, by the prophet Isaiah, that "The liberal desireth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall be established," Isa. xxxii. 8. From these contrasted remarks, I infer, that as it is seldom necessary to judge peremptorily of others, so forbearance, and the most charitable allowance, is both our duty and interest.

In the next place, I recommend to you, humility of heart, and meekness of carriage. I consider, in this place, the grace of humility as a virtue especially serviceable to your earthly comfort. I consider, and mean to treat it as a maxim of worldly prudence. The scripture seems to point it out as peculiarly necessary for this purpose, and to annex the promise of earthly happiness to the practice of it: "Blessed are the meek, says our Saviour, for they shall inherit the earth," Matth v. 5. I would understand him as saying, every good man shall inherit the kingdom of heaven; but those who excel in meekness, shall of all others have comfort on earth. In many different views, we may see the propriety of this connexion. Nothing is more offensive to others, than a proud, assuming manner. It not only magnifies every fault, but vitiates even good conduct. It is not only odious to virtuous persons, but it is equally, if not more so, to those who are without principle. Some vices recommend a man to the vicious in the same line, as one

Drunkard is pleased with the sight of another; but nothing is so hateful to a proud man, as another of the same character, nor is offence sooner given or taken than between those, who, in this respect, perfectly resemble one another. This vice is not only odious to persons of understanding and reflection, but to the most ignorant, being as easily perceived, as it is universally hated.

The moral virtue of meekness and condescension, is the best ground-work even of worldly politeness, and prepares a man to receive that polish which makes his behaviour generally agreeable, and fits him for intercourse with persons in the higher ranks of life. The same virtue, by the composure and self-command that accompanies it, enables a man to manage his affairs to advantage, in whatever calling he may be engaged, or in whatever station he may be placed. A good shop-keeper is commonly remarkable for this quality. People love to go where they meet with good words and gentle treatment; whereas the peevish and petulant may be said to have a repelling quality about them, that will not suffer any body to approach them.

To complete the whole, meekness of spirit is as useful to a man's self, as meekness of carriage is acceptable to others. The meek suffer much less from the unavoidable evils of life, than those of a contrary disposition. Many cross accidents of the less important kind, are in a manner annihilated when they are borne with calmness. The injury they do us, is not owing half so much to their weight or severity, as to the irritability of their own minds. It is evident, that the same disposition must greatly alleviate calamities of a heavier kind; and from analogy you may perceive, that as it mitigates the sorrows, it multiplies and adds to the sweetness of the comforts of life. A moderate portion gives greater satisfaction to the humble and thankful, than the most ample possessions to the proud and impatient.

Nearly allied to the above virtue is the government of your passions, and therefore of this I shall say but little. Every one must be sensible how important it is, both for

the success of your worldly callings and your usefulness in public life, to have your passions in due subjection. Men of furious and ungoverned tempers, prone to excess in attachment and resentment, either as to persons or things, are seldom successful in their pursuits, or respected and useful in their stations. Persons of ungoverned passions are almost always fickle and changeable in their measures, which is of all things the most fatal to important undertakings. These generally require time and patience to bring them to perfection. As to public and political life in particular, the necessity of self-government is so great and so universally acknowledged, that it is useful to impute it in eminent men, not to principle, but to address and policy. It is commonly said, that politicians have no passions. Without enquiring into this, I shall only say, that whatever truth may be in it, it is still in favour of my argument. The hypocrisy does honour to the virtue. If the appearance be so necessary or so useful, what must be the value of the reality?

I will here take an opportunity of confuting, or at least correcting a common saying or proverbial sentiment, many of which indeed that obtain belief in a blinded world, are nothing but false colouring and deception. It is usual to say in defence of sudden and violent passion, that it is better to speak freely and openly, than to harbour and cover secret heart-malice. Perhaps I might admit that this would be true, if the inward rage were to be as violent, and continue as long, and return as often as indulged passion. Every person must agree, that wherever there is a deep and lasting hatred that never forgets nor forgives, but waits for the opportunity of vengeance, it deserves to be considered as a temper truly infernal. But in most instances of offence between man and man, to restrain the tongue is the way to govern the heart. If you do not make mention of an injury, you will truly and speedily forgive it, and perhaps, literally forget it. Rage is in this respect like a fire, if a vent is given to it, it will increase and spread while there is fuel to consume,

but if you can confine and stifle it, you will completely extinguish it.

To the government of the passions succeeds the government of the tongue. This indeed will, in a great measure, be the effect of the former, and therefore is recommended by all the same arguments; yet it deserves very particular attention separately, as a maxim of prudence. There are great indiscretions in speech, that do not arise from passion, but from inattention and want of judgment as to the propriety of time and place, and indeed many other sources. I would therefore, earnestly recommend to you, to habituate yourselves to restraint in this respect, especially in the early part of life. "Be swift to hear (says Solomon) and slow to speak." Forwardness in speech is always thought an assuming thing in youth, and in promiscuous companies, is often considered as an insult as well as an indiscretion. It is very common for the world in general and still more so for men of judgment and penetration, to form an opinion of a character on the whole, from some one circumstance, and I think there are few things more unfavourable in this way, than a talkative disposition. If the first time I am in company, especially with a young man, he talks incessantly, and takes the whole conversation to himself, I shall hardly be brought to have a good opinion of him, whether what he says be good or evil, sense or nonsense. There are some persons, who, one might say, give away so much wisdom in their speech, that they leave none behind to govern their actions.

But the chief danger of an ungoverned tongue, is, that it kindles the fire of contention among others, and makes enemies to a man's self. Solomon says, "Where no tale-bearer is, strife ceaseth." A little experience will shew you, how unsafe it is to use much freedom in speech with absent persons. In that case, you put yourself wholly in the power of those that hear you, and are in danger, not only from their treachery or malice, but from their mistakes, ignorance, and imprudence. Per-

haps it would be too rigid to say, that you ought never to speak to a man's prejudice in his absence, what you would be unwilling to say in his presence. Some exceptions to this rule, might easily be conceived; but both prudence and candour require that you should be very reserved in this respect, and either adhere strictly to the rule, or be sure that good reasons will justify a departure from it.

This will be a very proper place to give you some directions, as the most proper conduct when you suffer from the tongues of others. Many and grievous are the complaints of what men suffer from the envenomed shafts of envy and malice. And there certainly is a strong disposition in some to invent, and in many to believe slanderous falsehoods. The prevalence of party, either in religion or politics, never fails to produce a plentiful crop of this poisonous weed. One of the most important rules upon this subject is, that when an accusation is in any degree well-founded, or suspicious appearances have given any occasion for it, the first duty is to reform what is really wrong, and keep at a distance from the disputed limit.

This will bring good out of evil, and turn an injury into a benefit. But in cases, as it may often happen, when the slander is perfectly groundless, I hold it to be in general the best way wholly to despise it. Time, and the power of truth; will, of themselves, do justice in almost every case of this kind; but if you show an impatience under it, a disposition to resent it, or a solicitude to refute it, the far greatest part of mankind will believe it, not the less, but the more. If slander were a plant or an animal, I would say it was of a very strange nature: for that it would very easily die, but could not easily be killed. It discovers a greatness of mind and a conscious dignity to despise slanders, which, of itself, commands respect; whereas, to be either offended or distressed by them, shews a weakness not amiable, whether the accusation be true or false.

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This rule, I do not say, is wholly without exception. There may be cases where vindications may be necessary and effectual; but they are not many. And I think, I have seen in the course of my life, reason to make the following distinction: If the accusation or slander be special, and relate to a particular fact, fixed by time, place, and other circumstances, and if it be either wholly false, or essentially mistaken in its nature and tendency, the matter may be explained, and justice may be done. But if it be a general character that happens to be imputed to a man, he ought to attempt no refutation of it, but by conduct. The more he complains of it, the more he speaks of it, the more he denies it, it will be the more believed. For example, if it be affirmed that a man spoke profanely in a certain company, at a certain place and time, when he was not present at all, it may be easily and completely refuted; but if he is accused of being proud, contentious, covetous, or deceitful, although these accusations are pretended to be supported by a train of facts, it is better to let them wholly alone, and suffer his conduct to speak for itself. There are instances in history of accusations brought with much plausibility, and urged with great vehemence, which yet have been either from the beginning disbelieved, or by time confuted; which occasioned the Latin proverb, *Magna est veritas et prevalabit.*

All the above-mentioned particulars may be said to be the happy effects of wisdom and benevolence, united; or rather, perhaps, in the light which they have been stated to you, they are chiefly the proper fruits of that wisdom which "is profitable to direct." But I must add another advice, which is the immediate effect of benevolence and good-will; that is, be ready to assist others, and do good as you have opportunity. As every thing is liable to be abused, sometimes the maxims of prudence take a wrong direction, and close the heart against impressions of sympathy and tenderness towards others in distress. Some times indeed, the coolness and composure of spirit, and that self-com-

mand which is the effect of reflection and experience, is mistaken for a callous and unfeeling heart, though it is a very different thing. To give way to the agitation of passion, even under the finest feelings, is the way to prevent instead of promoting usefulness. A parent, overwhelmed with surprise and anxiety at a calamitous accident that has befallen a child, shall be incapable either of reflection or activity, and shall sometimes even need the assistance which he ought to give. But independently of this, there are certainly some persons who contract a habit of indifference as to the wants and desires of others, and are not willing to put themselves to any inconvenience, unless their own particular concerns may be promoted at the same time.

In opposition to this, I mean to recommend to you a disposition to oblige, not merely by civil expressions and an affable deportment, but by taking a real interest in the affairs of others. Be not unwilling to lend your advice, your assistance, your interest, to those that need them. Those who cannot spare pecuniary assistance, may do many acts of valuable friendship. Let every neighbour perceive that you are not ready to quarrel needlessly, nor insist pertinaciously on trifles; and if you live to obtain credit and influence, let them be employed to assist the deserving of every class. If you undertake to do the business of others, attend to it with the same fidelity, and if possible, with greater punctuality than you would to your own. Some are ready to excuse or justify a contrary conduct, by complaining of the ingratitude or injustice of mankind; but in my opinion, these complaints are contrary to truth and experience. There may be many particular persons both ungrateful and unjust; but in the world in general, there will be found a clearness of discernment, and an exactness of retribution. Our Saviour tells us, with respect to one fault, that of rash judging, what is equally true as to injuries of every kind, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again; good measure pressed down and shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto

your bosom," Luke vi. 38. This, in my opinion, may and ought to be understood both ways: As the churlish nabal generally meets with his match, so persons of a humane and friendly disposition shall reap the fruits of it to them or theirs. The truth is, the disposition itself is not in its perfection, but when there is no regard to an immediate return. If you give, looking for a speedy recompence, it is not giving, but selling. You may, however, safely trust to the promise of God: "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days," Ecl. xi. 1. I have known many instances of kindnesses that were both remembered and requited, after they had been long forgotten by him who bestowed them; nay, sometimes they may be repaid in another generation. It is no inconsiderable legacy for a man to leave to his children, that he had always been a friend to others, and never refused his assistance to those who stood in need of it.

It will not be an improper place, here to introduce a few words upon a subject, which has been often handled by writers of the first class: I mean private friendship. Some writers against religion, have actually made it an objection against Christianity, that it does not recommend private friendship or the love of our country. If this were true, it would be no fault; because the universal benevolence recommended by the gospel, includes all private affections, when they are consistent with it, and is far superior to them when they are contrary to it. But in fact, the instances of private friendship mentioned and alluded to in scripture, are a sufficient recommendation of it; and even our blessed Saviour himself, is said to have distinguished the youngest of his disciples with particular affection. I will therefore observe, with most authors, that there is no true friendship, but what is founded upon virtuous principles, and directed to virtuous purposes. To love a person who is not worthy of love, is not a virtue, but an error; neither is there any dependance to be placed in trying cases upon persons unprincipled at bottom. There never was a true friend

who was not an honest man. But besides this important truth, it is further to be observed, that there is a species of friendship which is neither founded on virtue nor vice, but mere weakness of mind. Some persons, having no resources in themselves, are obliged to have recourse to some other, upon whom they may lean, and without whom they seem as if they could neither think, act, nor even exist. This sort of friendship, is to be seen particularly in princes and persons of high rank, and is generally called *favouritism*; but the same thing may be observed in all ranks, though in the lower, it is not so conspicuous. We may say of it, that it is like some of those plants that are false and spurious in their kind, which have some of the appearances, but want the most valuable and essential qualities of those that are genuine. Such friendships are commonly contracted by caprice or accident, and uncertain in their duration, being able to be dissolved by the same means. Valuable friendship is the result of judgment as well as affection; it is one of the greatest comforts of life, as well as one of the greatest ornaments to human nature, and its genuineness may be discerned by the following mark—that though it is particular, it is not exclusive. When there is a great, but virtuous attachment to a person who deserves it, it will make a man not less, but more friendly to all others, as opportunity or circumstances shall call him to serve them.

You will perhaps be surpris'd, that, as I have so often express'd a desire of your being accomplish'd in every respect, that I have heretofore said nothing or but little on that politeness and grace in behaviour, which is so much talk'd of, and which, in some late writings, has been so highly extoll'd. What has been already explain'd to you, I hope, will lay the foundation for the most solid, valuable, and durable politeness. Think of others, as reason and religion require you, and treat them as it is your duty to do, and you will not be far from a well-polish'd behaviour. As to any thing further, that is external in mode and propriety of carriage,

it can never be learned but by intercourse with the best company. As to the writings above referred to, the chief of which are Rochfocault's Maxims, and Chesterfield's Letters. I think of them, as of many other free writings; that when viewed properly, they may be as useful, as by being viewed otherwise, they are generally pernicious. They contain a digested system of hypocrisy, and betray such pride and self-sufficiency, and such hatred and contempt of mankind, as may well be an antidote against the poison which they mean to convey. Nay, one would think the publication of such sentiments is ridiculous, because it is telling you that they desire to be polite; and, at the same time, that this politeness consists in taking you by the weak side, and displaying their own address, by over-reaching yours.

I must also observe, that such writers, give in general a very unjust, as well as dishonourable view of nature and mankind. I remember, indeed, Dean Swift says,

As Rochfocault his maxims drew  
From nature, I believe them true.

What must I say to this? Shall I say that he did not draw his maxims from nature? I will not; because I think he did. Am I obliged then, to admit them to be true? By no means. It is nature; but it is just such a view of nature, as a man without principle must take. It is in himself, that all the error and exaggeration is to be found.

Those who discover an universal jealousy, and indiscriminate contempt for mankind in general, give very little reason to think well of themselves. Probably men are neither so good as they pretend, nor so bad as they are often thought to be. At any rate, candour in sentiment, as well as conduct, as it is an important duty of religion, so it is a wise maxim for the conduct of life, and I believe these two things are very seldom, if ever, found either separate from or opposed to each other.

The last advice that I shall offer you, is to preserve a sacred and inviolable regard to sincerity and truth. Those who have received their education here, or at least who have completed it, must know how much pains have been taken to establish the universal and unalterable obligation of truth. This is not, however, mentioned now to introduce the general subject, or to shew the guilt, folly, and danger of deliberate interested falsehood, but to warn you against the smaller breaches of truth, now so very common; such as want of punctuality in appointments; breach of promise in small matters; officious falsehoods; that is, deceiving children, sick persons or others, for their good; jocular deceptions, which are not intended to continue long, or be materially hurtful to others. Not one of these is without sin before God, and they are much more hurtful than is commonly supposed. So very sacred a thing indeed is truth, that the very shadow of departure from it is to be avoided. Suppose a man only to express his present purpose as to futurity; for example, to say he will go to such a place to-morrow, though there is no proper obligation given, nor any right to require performance; yet if he does so often, he will acquire the character of levity and unsteadiness, which will operate much to his disadvantage. Let me therefore, recommend to you a strict, universal, and scrupulous regard to truth. It will give dignity to your character; it will put order into your affairs; it will excite the most unbounded confidence, so that whether your view be your own interest, or the service of others, it promises you the most assured success. I am also persuaded, that there is no virtue that has a more powerful influence upon every other; and certainly, there is none by which you can draw nearer to God himself, whose distinguishing character is, that he will not, and he cannot lie.

F I N I S.